



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 15

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August 23, 2022

Calendar/Business Meeting

President's Report - Camille Casaretti

Welcome to the CEC15 August Calendar Meeting and thank you for taking the time to join us this evening. We just wrapped up our Business Meeting where we reviewed a number of important resolutions, discussed school liaisons for this new school year and adjusted our budget in order to better support our community and our communication methods.

We're still in the summer months and CEC15 members have been working diligently to represent the voice of district 15 families. Last week we were invited to meet and speak with the US Secretary of Education, Miquel Cardona. Nancy Randall and I joined Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez and other CEC leaders across Brooklyn as well as D15 parents and Deputy Supt Nicole Lanzillotto.

It was an intimate gathering and I was able to share our district's stories about how project based learning and Schoolwide Enrichment Models are making a world of difference in our classrooms. These education models are inherently diverse because children can participate based on personal interests. Enrichment is the key to encouraging students to help develop their gifts and talents. Children can grow in a way that is far beyond the results of a typical classroom structure.

So many people came together to help during the worst days of the pandemic, sharing food and helping neighbors. As we explore schoolwide enrichment models in our schools, we are going to need families and community members to offer their time, skills and talent to help in the classroom. We are all doing what we can to give our children everything that we can to help them academically, socially and emotionally. We are going to be calling on all of our community advocates and volunteers to help our schools and families get what they need.

We also discussed how the decrease in enrollment, coupled with a slew of new IEPs has caused a sizable shift in the ratio of students with disabilities. Special Education services are now offered to 25% of New York City students. This ratio will actually allow us to grow our Collaborative Co-Teaching classes and allow for great inclusion across grades and within schools. We have to work with what we have and this is a great way to create smaller class sizes with more teachers and adults in the room.



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I know that our schools and families have been greatly concerned with Mayor Adams' slashing of our school budgets. CEC15 continues to advocate for another \$50 million dollars to be added to our district school budgets. There was a second City Council Hearing yesterday about restoring the budgets. Thanks to those who were able to attend and speak out. City Council is also opposing the Mayor's cuts to restorative justice. As Eric Adams continues to try to starve our schools of funding it's just another reason to end Mayoral Control. Please don't forget the chaos that this Mayor has caused when you go to vote in the next election cycle.

And speaking of voting, the polls are open tonight until 9pm. You have an opportunity to vote for our new House of Representatives CongressPerson and our new State Senator. Because the district lines have changed, this is a very important primary election. You can still make it to the polls and listen to this meeting at the same time. That's a big ask, but that's how important it is.

Our next CEC Calendar Meeting is going to be held on Sept 20th and the Office of District Planning will be giving a presentation on the District Data. Come with your questions or send them in advance so we can be prepared. Please invite your school communities to come to this meeting. We're going to look at current enrollment trends as well as the impact that charter schools have played on our district enrollment.

I have two more things I want to share with you. One is a word of gratitude for our school safety agents who are really here for our children, who understand that children come to school with a lot of trauma and who take the time to really get to know everyone in the school building. What we need to see developing in our schools is a school safety team that addresses not only physical safety but the mental health of our students and staff. Just like our teachers and staff, our safety agents should be trained in restorative practices and these school teams should include social workers, and other mental health professionals that can really help our students get the care that they need and deserve.

We see a lot of work being done around mental health supports in our school based health clinics, which should be expanded to all schools. Instead we are seeing clinics closing with no fair or reasonable notice to schools or families. Thank you to the hundreds of families who have been working with us to advocate for a reopening of these clinics. We need to make sure that these closures stop happening. We are in the same place that we were five years ago but now there is a pandemic. The idea that any clinics would be closing at this time is outrageous. We need to look at how to expand these clinics so that more of our schools can have access to these



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resources which include a Nurse Practitioner, Physician's Assistants, Medical Assistants and a Social Worker.

CEC15 understands the value of having access to these clinics and we would like to celebrate the SUNY Downstate staff by honoring them with Certificates of Appreciation for all the work they have done to support our students and families.