



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 15

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February 11, 2025
Business Meeting

President's Report - Antonia Ferraro Martinelli

Good evening everyone. Thank you for joining us tonight. I have a very full report tonight. Over the past week, CEC15 has received impassioned letters from families concerned about the new administration's executive orders related to students and education. I will read those letters for you now.

Parent Letters on Executive Orders

Dear CEC 15,

My child is at PS —, and we have loved our time there. I am deeply concerned about President Trump's 1/29 Executive Order, "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schools." Our district has a diverse student population that includes transgender and gender nonconforming students. Adhering to the guidelines of this executive order would grievously harm these students, betraying the trust of them and their families alike.

Will you please publicly reaffirm our district's commitment to celebrating, protecting, and respecting all students and their identities and be clear with the DoE leadership that we need them to resist this attack on students and teachers' civil rights, human rights, and First Amendment rights? If there are other ways you can think of to stand up for our students, please let me know. There are many of us parents who are ready to stand up for the rights of kids, teachers, and school staff.

*Sincerely,
Parent*

Dear CEC,

*Please do everything you can to protect our trans and NB children. An affirmative statement from everyone on every level of government and institutional authority is necessary now to strongly stand against the new administration's virulent transphobia.
Do the right thing - say no to this.*

Teacher in the NYCDOE and parent of 2 DOE students.

I feel strongly that I respond to these letters. I will read that response now.

CEC15 President's Response to Executive Order Letters

Dear District 15 Families and Community,

CEC15 has received letters of concern regarding various Trump Administration Executive Orders^{1 2 3} and their potential impact on school funding^{4 5} and the rights of our diverse student body.⁶ I believe advocacy for all our children is more important than ever, and I appreciate the ongoing efforts of families to support students by sending such letters.

In the absence of statements from NYCPS I am compelled to respond to concerns about the executive orders. It is an open question as to how enforceable or legal they are; legal analysts

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/title-ix-enforcement-directive-dcl>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-indoctrination-in-k-12-schooling/>

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/keeping-men-out-of-womens-sports/>

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<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/expanding-educational-freedom-and-opportunity-for-families/>

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<https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-advances-school-choice-supporting-charter-schools>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/us/trump-executive-orders-local-control-schools.html>

have called their legality and constitutionality into question,^{7 8 9} and numerous lawsuits^{10 11 12} have already been filed. What I do know is that the federal government cannot dictate to states and cities how their schools function and what curriculums they use. Regardless of questions of legality, there are workarounds to safeguard student rights and I implore our NYCPS to stay the course and develop those workarounds.

What do I mean by workarounds? After the Supreme Court decided in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*¹³ that K-12 schools could not consider race in admissions, the Obama administration issued guidance¹⁴ that enabled school districts to integrate by looking at measures of poverty. This formed the basis for our diversity plans. This type of thinking is essential right now. It is crucial that NYCPS, together with school and community leaders, stay focused on the mission of ensuring that all children in New York City receive a high-quality education in a safe, caring environment.

I also want you to know that as President of CEC15, I have been reaffirming our organization's commitment to celebrating, protecting and respecting all of our students at every single meeting. I have and will continue to demand that the DOE leadership resist attacks on students' and teachers' civil rights, human rights, and First Amendment rights.

I have been doing this through the issues I elevate at our public CEC meetings and in meetings that I regularly attend with our Chancellor. CEC15 has been doing this through the resolutions the council has passed, such as [CEC15's Resolution to Prevent and Respond to Hate Speech](#).¹⁵ And I have been doing this through the banned and challenged books that I highlight in meetings. I often share banned books that reflect identities celebrated by our cultural and heritage months and various overlapping holidays. This month we celebrated Black History Month and Lunar New Year. To honor Black History Month, I featured *All Because You Matter*

⁷ <https://www.nilc.org/articles/analysis-of-trump-day-1-executive-orders-unconstitutional-illegal-and-cruel/>

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<https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/news/fact-sheets/background-unlawful-impoundment-president-trumps-executive-orders>

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/where-do-legal-cases-against-trumps-executive-orders-stand-2025-01-30/>

¹⁰ <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/tracking-the-legal-challenges-to-trumps-executive-orders>

¹¹ <https://natlawreview.com/article/dei-whirlwind-continues-new-lawsUIT-challenges-constitutionality-anti-dei-orders>

¹² <https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-lawsuits-list-executive-orders-doge-citizenship-2018514>

¹³ <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/551/701/>

¹⁴ <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>

¹⁵

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/951dd9a1-96ac-438b-8642-d89cc6651997/downloads/6e7a1ac2-4590-4f19-9535-bef161121cd1/Approved%20-%20CEC15%20Resolution%20to%20Prevent%20and%20Res.pdf?ver=1738866252853>

by Tami Charles, which offers love, hope and affirmation through the Black experience. And to honor Asian and immigrant families, I featured *Drawn Together* by Minh Le, which tells the story of a grandson and grandfather, struggling to communicate across a language barrier, but find connection through art.

CEC15's recent Legislative Breakfast largely focused on the threats of this new administration. The event had more than 80 registrants including elected officials, principals, teachers and school staff, and parent leaders. Many important topics were raised, including SCA accountability, libraries, arts funding, protecting migrant and asylum-seeking families, school transportation, the importance of Title I funding, the importance of mental health professionals and mandated services, and the need to revise building utilization plans in buildings collocated with charter schools.

Here again CEC15 featured banned and challenged books. These books were raffled to attendees. The list of books honored the experiences of the trans or gender-questioning children, Native American, African American, Jewish, Hispanic, and immigrant children. The books included:

I am Enough by Grace Byers

Hold Onto Your Music by Mona Golabeck and Lee Cohen

Dreamers by Yuyi Morales

Fry Bread by Kevin Noble Maillard

Planting Stories by Anika Aldamuy Denise

When Aidan Became a Brother by Kyle Lukoff

We are Still Here! by Traci Sorell

These books were challenged in 2022 by the Northampton (PA) Area School District (NASD) school board, which unanimously voted to table a donation of fifty books from The Conscious Kid, a non-profit organization focused on equity and promoting healthy racial identity development. They rejected the donation after just ten parents complained during a meeting. One of ten parents/grandparents to object to the donation claimed, "*The Conscious Kid* uses Marxist critical race theory." Some of the people had not even read any of the books.

I feel that elevating banned books does what proclamations can't. By sharing these books, I aim to shine a spotlight on the creativity and excellence of writers whose work reflects the rich and varied lived experiences of children in our own communities. Others may call it DEI, but I call it reality.

Therefore, I will keep calm and carry on with the mission of supporting all our students. But I will also keep an eye on protecting the democratic infrastructure that makes supporting students possible. Protecting the independence of democratic institutions and functions should be, *must* be a nonpartisan concern to all Americans.

This is why it is so important for all community members to participate. I urge parents and caregivers who want to have a voice in our children's collective education to consider running for a seat on a Community or Citywide Education Council (CCEC). CCECs are a small but impactful part of our local democratic infrastructure. CCEC elections for the upcoming 2-year term will be happening soon, and if you have a child in a New York City public school, you can [run for a seat](#). The deadline to apply is soon!

2025 Selection Process Schedule:

- January 13 - February 16: Candidate application period
- February 28 - April 2: Candidate Forums
- April 25 - May 13: Parents vote online
- May 14 - June 2: Run-off elections, if necessary
- June: Election results announced
- July 1: Members-elect take office

Regardless of whether you wish to run, we need parent voices at our CCEC meetings. Community attendance is critical to engage on these topics. Please join us for our next Business or Calendar Meeting, or join us for an upcoming workshop or community celebration.

Save the Dates for these Upcoming Events

- Thurs. Feb. 13, D15 Arts Showcase 4pm - 7pm - Brooklyn HS of the Arts
- Tues. Feb. 25, 6:30 pm Calendar Meeting - PS 32, 317 Hoyt Street
- Tues. Mar. 11, 6:30 pm Business Meeting - 131 Livingston St. Rm 301
- Wed. Mar. 12, PBL Showcase, MS 51 350 5th Ave. 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Thank you again for your support of District 15 schools, and the children and families who depend on them. Rest assured, I will continue to be clear with the DOE leadership that District

15 families expect them to resist attacks on students and teachers' civil rights, human rights, and First Amendment rights. Hearing your voices helps me do that.

Keep Calm and Carry On Supporting All Students,

CEC15 Signatories

Antonia Ferraro Martinelli, CEC15 President

Leslie King, CEC15 Co-President 1

Vanessa Gonzalez Ueoka, CEC15 Co-President 2

Nancy Cruz, CEC15 Secretary

Katina Rogers, CEC15 Treasurer

Jonathan Davis, CEC15 Parliamentarian

Hans Arrieta, CEC15 member
Kwame Egerton, CEC15 member

D15 Presidents' Council Signatories

Elton Dodson, D15 Presidents' Council Co-President
Elizabeth Sanders Greyson, D15 Presidents' Council Co-President

Various CEC15 members have signed on to this letter along with the Presidents of the District 15 Presidents' Council. This Presidents' Report will go out to the District 15 community and I am hopeful the letter can form the basis of an official action that the Council votes on as a whole and sends to the DOE.

Updates

CEC Vacancy

CEC15 still has a vacancy for the parent of an English Language Learner. Eligible parents are those whose child has been designated an ELL through a test given in 1st Grade.

Add to Chat:

CEC15 currently has a vacant seat on the council for the parent of a Multilingual Learner student and is accepting applications. Please apply to the DOE directly at CCECinfo@schools.nyc.gov. Do not submit the application to CEC15. Eligible candidates will be invited to attend a candidate forum (date to be determined). Do not delay your application.

[Applications](#) in nine languages and all information about eligibility to CECs can be found [here](#). Please also visit CECd15.org to learn more about our organization.

Basic eligibility rules require that the applicant be a parent of a student in grades Kindergarten through 8th, or in a Pre-K program, who currently attends a non-charter public school or Pre-K program in the district where the applicant wishes to serve on the CEC. Please follow the links for more requirements.

District 15 Schedule of SLT Meetings

I recently found this schedule of SLT meetings. This is a helpful resource for parents and CEC members. The District 15 Schedule of SLT meetings is on the District15brooklyn.org website under Events.

Add to Chat:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Tz-PssOiXAYh9k4T3XcK43YWfG6wVNAO/view?usp=sharing>

 **D15.SLT.10.31.2024.pdf**

Coalition for Equitable Education Funding

I also attended an Education Budget Teach-in hosted by the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding. According to the coalition:

Governor Hochul's proposed changes to the Foundation Aid formula would result in New York City schools getting nearly \$350 million less than they would without these changes.

Updates to the State's outdated per-pupil funding formula are sorely needed. However, it is critical that such updates fully capture the needs of today's students and account for the enormous variation in the cost of living across New York State. The Governor's Executive Budget fails to meet this goal—and would shortchange New York City schools as a result.

I have shared with you their one pager.

 **CEEF Foundation Aid One-Pager - 2.2025.pdf**

They have several actions concerned parents can take.

Add to chat: Coalition for Equitable Education Funding

Email Governor Hochul and your state legislators and tell them not to shortchange NYC schools.

English link: <https://bit.ly/DemandFairFunding>

Spanish link: <https://bit.ly/DemandFairFundingES>

Email Mayor Adams and urge him to extend funding for these important programs.

English link: <https://bit.ly/NYCEdBudget26>

Spanish link: <https://bit.ly/NYCEdBudget26-ESP>

Stay involved: Sign up to receive updates and learn about additional opportunities to take action from the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding.

English link: <https://bit.ly/EdFundingUpdates>

Spanish link: <https://bit.ly/EdFundingUpdatesES>

Summer Rising

Families will be able to apply for Summer Rising seats in [MySchools](#) starting on Tuesday, March 4, and until Friday, March 28, 2025. School staff are available to support families in the application process by ensuring they have their student identification and account creation codes needed to apply in [MySchools](#).

The NEW NYCPS Office of Policy and Advocacy

Last week there was a call with Katie Jedrlnic who has been appointed to lead the newly-formed NYCPS Office of Policy and Advocacy. She has worked in Albany for many years and at the DOE as the Director of State Legislative Affairs. The office seems to be tasked with connecting different offices within the DOE to enable them to communicate with each other more effectively as they address legislative and policy issues and to better connect with parent leaders on resolutions and advocacy.

The second part of the call was principally to share info on Project Open Arms, which is a, *“comprehensive plan to support families seeking asylum and ensure children are provided a full range of services. This multi-agency plan highlights wraparound services to ensure newcomer families and their children will have access to critical academic, social-emotional, and language-based supports needed to be successful in New York City Public Schools.”* Notice was sent out last week that a Know Rights event originally scheduled for February 12th will be rescheduled.

Panel for Education Policy

And finally, the Panel for Education Policy will be meeting on Wednesday, February 26, 6:00pm at Clara Barton High School - 901 Classon Ave, Brooklyn 11225.