



## COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 15

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June 17, 2025  
Calendar Meeting

### President's Report - Antonia Ferraro Martinelli

Welcome to CEC15's June Calendar meeting. We are here tonight for our final meeting of the 2024-25 school year at PS 58 in Carroll Gardens. **Principal Katie Dello Stritto is here to share some of the great work going on at the school.**

This is my final President's Report. I want to thank Borough President Antonio Reynoso for appointing me to my fourth and final term. I want to thank Superintendent Alvarez and Deputy Superintendent Lanzillotto, all the D15 staff, all the CEC15 members, our Administrative Assistant Chenise Powell and of course all of you District 15 families, including my own family who supported and tolerated my evening meetings. I want to share some of your accomplishments this year. CEC15 sent a long list of 92 repairs and potential Capital Plan projects to the School Construction Authority (SCA), the Division of School Facilities (DSF), as well as our city council members and Brooklyn Borough President. We held a very successful Legislative Breakfast attended by dozens of elected officials, school staff and parent leaders. We passed resolutions to demand equitable access to OMNY cards, greater accountability from SCA, and we demanded NYCPS deactivate X and Meta accounts. We formalized a statement and a resolution opposing the Trump Administration's executive orders that attack education and student identities. We supported the Panel for Education Policy's resolution affirming NYCPS as a welcoming place for all students, including migrant students. We passed a resolution demanding improved access to PSAL sports. We successfully advocated for the return of 8.5 classrooms from Success Academy Cobble Hill Charter to the 2 high schools and D75 Star program with which it is collocated. It has been a busy year and I have had the utmost pleasure working with every member of this council. I have learned so much from every council member and dedicated parent I have met over the past 8 years.

I was first elected to this council in 2017 at a similar moment to today. Trump had just been elected for the first time, but our council got a lot done in those years because parents were motivated and committed to equity. We reformed the middle school admission policy and rezoned subzone 3 in a way that both preserved zones and created a mechanism for integration.

We were able to accomplish this because we were guided by lengthy public engagement processes, in which the facts were established, the community could clearly see the challenge and everyone had an opportunity to be heard and shape the possible solutions. That's the blueprint for lasting change.

I have high hopes for the district and the new council to continue District 15's legacy and initiate new lasting changes. I hope the district continues to tackle challenges through focused public engagement: approaches like forming PAR (Participatory Action Research) Teams tasked to produce recommendations that benefit all students. I hope the mindset persists that we do not have *Good* schools or *Bad* schools because ALL District 15 schools are GREAT schools. I hope that when the new council members are faced with polarizing issues, they remain focused on students and families. Ask yourselves how you can take the politics out and put the people in.

I remain available to support the new council in whatever way they request. I am just an email or phone call away. And I will continue supporting parent leaders through my work with PTALink and New York Appleseed.

Now for my final book recommendations and updates.

Happy LGBTQ+ PRIDE Month and Caribbean - American Month. And I wish you a joyous Juneteenth on Thursday.

To honor those months I have two banned books that discuss gender identity within the context of Pacific Island cultures. Can you believe I found two such books?! America is a great and diverse country.

[Kapaemahu](#) by Hinalaimoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer, and Joe Wilson tells the mo'olelo (story) of the Māhū, individuals of dual male and female spirit, who sailed from Tahiti to Hawai'i, and the four boulders they imbued with sacred healing powers that reside in Waikīkī today. It is an Indigenous Hawaiian story with a queer and non-binary focus. In 2023, this book was [challenged](#) in Virginia by a conservative community group named Clean Up Samuels Library that sought to remove the book on the basis of discussions of same-sex romance and transgender topics.

[Ho'onani Hulu Warrior \(2022\) by Heather Gale](#), also explores Māhū gender duality. The book tells the true story of a young girl in Hawai'i exploring her identity. She feels she is between kane and wahine and dreams of leading the boys-only hula troupe at her school. [This book was challenged in St. Augustine, Florida](#) for being a 'controversial topic' centering around gender identity.

And for Caribbean - American Month - I have [American Street](#) by Ibi Zoboi. This coming-of-age novel, which explores the Haitian immigrant experience, has been challenged and [banned](#) in schools across the nation, including in [Elmhurst, Illinois](#) and York, Pennsylvania.

The book opens with a young Haitian girl, Fabiola Toussaint, traveling to the US with her mother. In the airport, the mother is detained by U.S. immigration officers, leaving the teen to travel alone to relatives she only knows from phone calls, who are waiting in a city and country she has never been to. The rug has been pulled out from underneath Fabiola, who we learn is a US citizen, but her mother is not. She doesn't understand why her mother has been detained, where she should go next, and whether she will ever see her mother again. We follow her experiences with her cousins in Detroit, as she clings to the hope that she will be with her mother again.

And for Juneteenth I have Sing a Song - Kelly Starling Lyons tells how the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing" inspired generations and became a Black National Anthem. The book was part of a donation of books from the organization, [\*The Conscious Kid that was banned in Northampton, Pennsylvania in 2022\*](#) for apparent Marxism.

## **Updates**

### **CEC Elections**

The results of elections for Citywide and Community Education Councils have been announced. Congratulations to new CEC15 members:

Katina Rogers  
Angelica Jadunandan  
Qingxia Zhu  
Elton Dodson  
Cara Zwerling- Moelle  
Jonathan Davis  
Kenneth Ebie  
Kim Wanliss  
Angelica Cesario  
\*the D75 seat remains vacant

And Congratulations to current CEC15 member Nancy Cruz, who was elected to the City Council on High Schools (CCHS).

Visit the Candidate Profiles [page](#) to see all the winning candidates for each council. Members-elect will take office on July 1st.

All CEC members are required to attend an orientation and various training sessions throughout the year.

New CEC Member Orientation Schedule:

- In-Person Session:
  - Saturday, June 21, 2025 | 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM (Childcare will be offered)
- Virtual Sessions:
  - Wednesday, June 24, 2025 | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
  - Friday, June 26, 2025 | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

### **Annual Evaluation of the Superintendent - Deadline to submit public feedback is June 20**

One of CEC15's mandated duties is to evaluate the superintendent. The public is encouraged to participate in this annual evaluation and can provide feedback through [this form](https://forms.gle/GTqvyhWMHc5DeaVt9). All public feedback and CEC15 member feedback is submitted both to Superintendent Alvarez and the DOE. <https://forms.gle/GTqvyhWMHc5DeaVt9>

### **Student Safety & Independence Training for Families**

Chancellor Aviles-Ramos and Deputy Chancellor Foti announced the launch of Student Safety & Independence Training for Families. The pilot consists of 5 expert led travel sessions to empower and support children with disabilities.

Launching this month, the pilot consists of five virtual, expert-led training sessions that will equip families with critical skills such as understanding intersections and pedestrian safety, mapping and planning safe travel routes, using tools like transit maps and ID cards, problem solving for unexpected situations, and strategies for social interaction and navigating public spaces. After completing the online training, the participating family member and student will each receive an OMNY card to begin supervised travel sessions, gradually increasing the student's independence with real-world practice.

### **In other good news for students with disabilities**

SCA is building an elevator at PS 29. I received a construction notice from SCA last week.

**Sunset Park families attended CB7's meeting on June 12** to speak in opposition to the new building Brooklyn Rise Charter intends to lease (signed 35 year lease) from a developer on a gas station, as well as their intention to expand to a middle school. Voces Ciudadanas authored a [statement](#) opposing Brooklyn Rise Charter School's intention to site the school in Sunset Park in a new building. Charter CEO was present as well.

Speakers in opposition to locating the Charter in Sunset Park, cited various concerns including:

- Location - siting a school on a former gas station
- A Corridor of Schools- This 6 block section of Sunset Park is already well-served by 8 schools: IS 136, MS 821, MS 428, PS 1, PS 958, PS 24, PS 516, and Brooklyn Prospect Charter (4 middle schools, two of which are directly across the street)
- Student Population Decline - competition in a declining population of children

- Cost - the DOE must pay the developer for the lease on a new building,
- Academics - Brooklyn Rise is not serving ELL students as well as the district (-11%). And in recent days, Brooklyn Rise has referred 3 students with IEPs to the local public schools because they cannot provide the services mandated by their IEPs.

See the video of the June 12 CB7 Meeting:

[https://www.youtube.com/live/02hBSvrrJi4?si=Z-42Gg56CF4E\\_ePF](https://www.youtube.com/live/02hBSvrrJi4?si=Z-42Gg56CF4E_ePF)

## PEP Updates

Results from the PEP Parent Member elections were also announced. **Congratulations to Faraji Hannah- Jones** who will represent Brooklyn! The 1 year term begins in July.

## May PEP Meeting

The next PEP meeting is Wednesday, June 18, 2025, at 6:00pm (EST) at the **Christopher Columbus High School** (925 Astor Avenue, Bronx, New York 10469). The Panel will consider a proposed resolution entitled, [Resolution for Employee Protection Provisions and Student Transportation Contracts](#). Speaker sign-up will begin at 5:30PM, at the door, and will close promptly at 6:15PM.

Whether you attend or not, you can **send written testimony to the 24 PEP members** using [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezM7S0zfCMXb\\_BiXecJSnxsfl1E27CbCTwT0TfIzuZbe3cAQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezM7S0zfCMXb_BiXecJSnxsfl1E27CbCTwT0TfIzuZbe3cAQ/viewform)

In my continuing segment called, **Federal Government Watch:**

## The President's FY26 Budget Requests Drastic Education Program [Cuts and Consolidation](#)

On May 30, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education released its [Fiscal Year 2026 proposed budget request](#). Key programs that have long sustained and supported high-quality education for students across the nation were zeroed out including [Full-Service Community Schools and Promise Neighborhoods](#) and Education for Homeless Children and Youths.

Trump's budget [proposal recommends reducing](#) that overall funding from \$6.5 billion to about \$2 billion and combines 18 grants into what the U.S. Department of Education refers to as a K-12 Simplified Funding Program (SFP), which would be a new single-state formula grant (a.k.a. block grant), which the administration says would give districts "flexibility" to spend the money "without the unnecessary administrative burdens imposed under current law." This means districts would not be required to spend this money on these specific programs.

The request heads to Congress.

### **Immigrant Detentions Impact School Communities**

**In the last month, 2 NYCPS students have been arrested by ICE and today mayoral candidate and D15 parent [Brad Lander](#) was arrested by masked ICE agents** while escorting a defendant out of immigration court at 26 Federal Plaza.

In the last month, Dylan Lopez Contreras, a Bronx student and an [unidentified 11th grader in Queens](#) have been detained by ICE. Both were attending a routine immigration court date at time of arrest.

New York City's Law Department filed a [legal brief](#) in support of the [Bronx high school student detained by immigration authorities](#).

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2025/06/02/adams-rebukes-trump-ice-tactics-supports-bronx-student/>

**These arrests, raids and street abductions by ICE are not in service of protecting communities from criminal gangs. It is pure fascism.** This is about people trying to follow the rules to be here legally, complying with immigration laws, attending their hearings, being dismissed without explanation and then being deported as they walk out of court. Our Federal Government is acting in bad faith to say the least. The NYC parent community and our elected officials must not tolerate the detention of students, their parents or our elected officials themselves. I stand with Brad and those standing up for justice when it carries personal risk and all the families living in daily fear. You'll be glad to know Brad Lander was released. Thinking in terms of calls to action; one might be a law banning masks on law enforcement. Also, folks can write to their legislators in support of Andrew Gounardes bill, the NY4ALL bill [S2235A](#), which prohibits and regulates the discovery and disclosure of immigration status, so that immigrants can live their lives without fear.

And finally, the most consequential thing happening in education news is,

### **The New York City Mayoral Primary - June 24, 2025**

The importance of this primary election for schools cannot be overstated because schools are governed by mayoral control. Forget November. November is irrelevant. Only June 24 matters and early voting began June 14 and will end June 22. Whoever wins this primary will likely become the mayor in November. This is ranked choice primary. So similar to the high school application process, rank the candidates as you like them. If you don't want to go to school for any reason, do you rank it? If you don't want to travel to the school or the school has a poor

track record, do you rank the school? No. You do not. It is the same with mayoral candidates in a ranked choice primary. Only rank the Mayors you can live with.

That concludes my updates.