



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 15

Office: 131 Livingston Street, Room 301, Brooklyn, New York 11201

CEC15@schools.nyc.gov | tel. 718-935-4267 | facebook.com/CECD15 | CECD15.org

May 27, 2025
Calendar Meeting

President's Report - Antonia Ferraro Martinelli

Welcome to CEC15's May Calendar meeting. We are here tonight at the brand new Upper School of PS 896 - School of Creativity and Innovation in Sunset Park. **Principal Ruth Rodriguez- Rivera is here to share some of the great work going on at the school. And we have Rob Aguilar from Councilmember Avilés office.**

Now for some Updates

CEC Elections

The voting period closed on **May 13**. We look forward to hearing the results in June.

CEC15 Vacancy

CEC15 currently has two vacancies on the council: one for the parent of an English Language Learner and another for the parent of a District 75 student.

Please apply to the DOE directly at CCECinfo@schools.nyc.gov. Do not submit the application to CEC15. 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.

Annual Evaluation of the Superintendent

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](#). All public feedback and CEC15 member feedback is submitted both to Superintendent Alvarez and the DOE. <https://forms.gle/GTqvYhWMHc5DeaVt9>

Upcoming District 15 and CEC15 Events:

Wed. May 28, 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm D15 Recognition Ceremony, MS 88 544 7th Ave.
Fri. June 6, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm District 15 Learning Together Field Day, Prospect Park Picnic House
Tues. June 10, 6:30 pm Business Meeting - 131 Livingston St. Rm 301
Tues. June 10, 6:30 pm D15 Superintendent's Town Hall
Tues. June 17, 6:30 pm Calendar Meeting - PS 58 - 330 Smith St.

May is Jewish American Heritage Month, Asian American, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and Military Appreciation Month.

Hidden Voices: Jewish Americans in United States History Volume 1

New York City Public Schools Chancellor Melissa Aviles-Ramos honored the month by announcing the publication of Hidden Voices: Jewish Americans in United States History Volume 1. This resource will be distributed to all schools for the 2025-26 school year, with five districts concurrently participating in a pilot to provide feedback and strengthen the use of these resources in the classroom. These materials are designed to be integrated with the Passport to Social Studies and Civics for All curricula.

Banned Books to honor Jewish American Heritage

Maus - by Art Spiegelman

Maus, is Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel depicting the Holocaust. Spiegelman considers himself the "poster boy for books being censored." In 2022, *Maus* was removed from the eighth-grade curriculum by [vote of the School Board](#) in McMinn County, Tennessee, for rough language and a single panel showing the naked corpse of a woman following her suicide. Suicide is a terrible, seldom discussed part of the survivor story. I was a member of a dance troupe that performed a ballet entitled, "Sh'ma" (*Hebrew for Listen*). It was the story the choreographer's family that survived the Shoah only for the patriarch to commit suicide because of the trauma.

On a somewhat lighter note, **The Boy Who Thought Outside the Box - by Marcie Wessels** was part of a donation of books from the organization, *The Conscious Kid* that was [banned in Pennsylvania in 2022](#) because a handful of parents deemed books reflecting different cultures Marxist. The book is the real life story of Ralph Baer, who experienced bullying and discrimination as a boy in Nazi Germany. His family immigrated to New York in 1938 and he grew up to invent the video game.

I also have some **Banned Books to honor AAPI Heritage**

Drawn Together by Minh Lê is also in the style of a graphic novel. It depicts a boy and his Vietnamese speaking grandfather finding common ground through drawing.

“Right when I gave up on talking, my grandfather surprised me by revealing a world beyond words.”

A Different Pond by Bao Phi is a Caldecott Honor Book. It is about a boy and his immigrant father having conversations about a distant place and time during an early morning fishing trip.

Both of these books were also part of the same donation of books from the organization, [*The Conscious Kid that was banned in Northampton, Pennsylvania in 2022*](#) for apparent Marxism.

New Building for Brooklyn Rise Charter School in Sunset Park

I attended C7’s meeting Wed, May 21 and spoke 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. The developer has begun demolition but construction is pending environmental review. 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 4 block section of 4th Ave is already well-served by 6 schools: IS 136, MS 821, MS 428, PS 24, PS 516, and Brooklyn Prospect Charter (4 middle schools, two of which are directly across the street)
- Demographic 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%)

See the video of the May 21 CB7 Meeting:

[CB7 May Board Meeting](#)

See Brooklyn Rise Charter’s May 1 CB7 Testimony:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/k9EhyEYNV2A>

C7 announced that in an effort to support transparency, they will be scheduling another meeting for the public to comment on this development. They will announce this meeting in their newsletter. I will share it when I have it. The public is encouraged to attend and comment in -person or virtually in large numbers at that meeting.

PEP Updates

Interviews were held on May 22 for candidates for Brooklyn PEP Parent Representative

There were two candidates: Faraji Hannah- Jones and Dr. Meryem Bencheikh-Ellis. Presidents of CECs will vote to select between the two to begin a 1 year term in July. The voting period begins May 23 and concludes on May 31, 2025. The video was shared with members. Please send me any feedback you have on the two candidates

May PEP Meeting

The next PEP meeting is Wednesday, May 28 at 6pm at **Michael J. Petrides School** (715 Ocean Terrace, Staten Island, New York 10301) 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

Librarians Equal Literacy

Amazing news! Last week, on May 1, [INTRO 1125—THE LIBRARIANS COUNT BILL](#) passed with a unanimous vote in the NYC Council. This is a major win in restoring school librarians and libraries to all NYC schools. LEL is grateful to City Council Members, especially Lincoln Restler and Rita Joseph who introduced the bill and have been true champions for school libraries, Shahana Hanif who has been another incredible advocate and all of the other Council Members who supported, co-sponsored and voted to pass the bill.

They thank everyone who was able to attend the rally at City Hall to celebrate.

Borough Hall 2025 Graduation Awards

Brooklyn Borough President, Antonio Reynoso is happy to announce the release of Borough Hall's 2025 Graduation Awards. If you are a Brooklyn Public school, charter, or private school, please [apply here](#) to nominate students. This year's awards celebrate students' academic achievement as well as other qualities that we should be fostering more in our communities. There are three awards:

- The Merit Award is given to a student who has demonstrated outstanding academic achievement across subjects.
- The Perseverance Award is given to a student who has overcome challenges to improve in their academics and/or achieve graduation.
- The Brooklyn for All Award is given to a student who has demonstrated a spirit of generosity among their peers and/or within their Brooklyn community.

- Submissions for graduation awards will be open until **Thursday, May 29, 2025** at 5:00 PM EST. Duplicate entries will be discarded. Schools must ensure that all information provided is accurate, especially the spelling of names.
- Awards will be delivered by the week of **June 9, 2025**. Private Schools, Charter Schools, District 75, New Visions, Transfer Schools, and Urban Assembly public schools will be able to pick up their awards at Brooklyn Borough Hall. All other public schools will be able to pick up their awards at their Superintendent's office.
- If you're interested in inviting Borough President Reynoso to your graduation, please [submit this form](#). Submitting the form does not guarantee the Borough President's presence, but someone will confirm his availability and attendance in the coming weeks.

If you have any questions in the interim, please do not hesitate to contact Donovan Swanson, Director of Programs and Education Engagement at donavan.swanson@brooklynbp.nyc.gov.

All means ALL Rally on June 5th at 10:30 AM in front of City Hall
Sponsored by PISTnyc, NYC Comptroller Brad Lander, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, NY Appleseed, and Advocates for Children

Join the Rally to let our elected officials know that **All means ALL**—that educational programs are not universal, they are not equitable if they continue to exclude students with disabilities.

The organizers seek to uplift the urgent need for NYC to address the ongoing inequities for students with disabilities, including the need: for afterschool programs with a pathway for students with disabilities to participate, to improve bus service for students with disabilities, for greater building accessibility and for preschool special education seats.

Attached is a save the date flyer—please share it widely! And if you would like to attend the rally please register here: <https://bit.ly/AllMeansALL>

New York State Budget

Hochul's bell-to-bell [smartphone ban](#) in schools made it into the final budget. Chalkbeat has an [explainer](#) on what we know — and don't yet know — about how New York's recently-passed statewide cellphone ban will play out in New York City schools. While there are lots of details

still to be worked out, state officials have given some hints about who will be exempt, guardrails around enforcement, and costs.

- Students who need their phones for language translation or caregiving responsibilities may qualify for exemptions.
- Phones without internet access are still allowed.
- And schools that allow students off campus for lunch can give students their phones when they're out of the building.
- Hochul allocated \$13.5 million to support local school districts to implement this ban, but the OMB estimates it will cost \$25 million in NYC alone.

Foundation Aid Recap

Governor Hochul will invest at least \$37 billion toward education, but as a result of adjustments to the state's foundation aid formula, NYC will still receive hundreds of millions less than it would have received under the previous formula. NYC will receive more funding overall, but the initial proposal meant that NYC would receive \$350 million less than before the proposed changes. In the end, approximately \$30 million was restored by expanding the weight for English Language Learners, but the regional cost index for NYC was not adjusted, so NYC came up short. According to the article linked, only Westchester's regional cost index was adjusted. (My understanding is that Westchester is somehow tied to the other Hudson Valley counties in this formula, but there is a huge cost of living disparity amongst them. So if they didn't adjust Westchester, it would have negatively impacted Orange, Rockland, etc.)

<https://www.nydailynews.com/2025/05/08/new-formula-for-n-y-state-education-aid-turns-out-to-be-bad-news-for-nyc/>

https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2025/04/gov-kathy-hochul-announces-254-billion-state-budget-deal/404905/?oref=csny_alert_nl

Alliance for Quality Education's STATE BUDGET MASS CALL:

WHAT HAPPENED & WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Thursday, May 29, 2025 at 6:30 PM ET

After 38 days of delay, New York's state budget process is finally complete. But behind the numbers are real consequences for our public schools, our communities, our working families - ultimately, our future. Join us next Thursday, May 29, at 6:30pm for a State Budget Mass Call to break down what happened, where our priorities landed, and how we keep building power for what comes next.

RSVP to join us on Zoom

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

Trump's Cuts to Americorp Hit Sunset Park After Schools

In April, the Center for Family Life learned more than \$200,000 of the program's [AmeriCorps funding had been slashed](#) for the remainder of this school year. It also lost nearly \$750,000 in AmeriCorps funding for next year. This funding supports 54 AmeriCorps volunteers who help families with educational enrichment programs serving some 800 children from 11 public schools. Funding from AmeriCorps typically covers a stipend for the volunteers, who mostly come from the neighborhood, as well as money toward their college tuition. Without AmeriCorps volunteers, there could be hundreds of fewer slots at the after-school programs.

House of Representatives Passes Federal Voucher Program

The proposal would [use the federal tax code to offer vouchers](#) that students could use to attend private secular or religious schools, even in states where voters have opposed such efforts. Critics also point out that private schools do not have to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). They are not obligated to educate any and all students and can turn away those with disabilities. The budget now goes to the Senate.

<https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/sweeping-private-school-voucher-program-tucked-inside-us-house-gop-tax-bill>

<https://www.npr.org/2025/05/23/nx-s1-5397175/trump-federal-voucher-private-school>

Good News! Update on Federal Department of Education

A federal judge last week blocked the Trump administration from firing thousands of workers at the Department of Education, ruling that the announced terminations were a thinly veiled effort to dismantle the entire department without congressional approval.

In addition to blocking the firings, the judge's order bars the Department of Education from transferring its functions to other agencies and from carrying out Trump's executive order to close the department altogether. The order also requires the department to reinstate employees terminated since Trump's inauguration to "restore the Department to the status quo such that it is able to carry out its statutory functions."

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/05/22/education-department-court-ruling-firings-00365170>

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 begins June 14 and ends June 22. Whoever wins this primary will 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 rank choice primary. Only rank the Mayors you can live with.

That concludes my updates.