



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 15
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

March 11, 2025

The District 15 Community Education Council (CEC15) held a meeting on Tuesday, March 11, 2025. After reviewing all the evidence and facts, CEC15 approved the following statement:

Dear NYCPS Chancellor Melissa Aviles Ramos,

The District 15 Community Education Council has heard from families expressing concern that several of the Trump Administration's recent Executive Orders^{1 2 3} and recent Federal Department of Education [letters](#)⁴ may negatively impact school funding^{5 6} and impede the rights of our diverse student body.⁷ In the absence of adequate statements from NYCPS we feel compelled to respond to concerns about the executive orders. As parent leaders, we share these concerns, and we believe advocacy for all our children is more important than ever.

We condemn the Executive Orders that will have a negative impact on education, including (but not limited to):

- [Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling](#) (January 29, 2025)
- [Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports](#) (February 5, 2025)
- [Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government](#) (January 20, 2025)
- [Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families](#) (January 29, 2025)

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/>

⁴ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/hitting-pause-on-the-dear-colleague-letter>

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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>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/us/trump-executive-orders-local-control-schools.html>

The terrain is constantly shifting, and it is an open question as to how enforceable or legal these executive orders are; legal analysts have called their legality and constitutionality into question,^{8 9 10} and numerous lawsuits^{11 12 13} have already been filed. What we 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 we implore NYCPS to stay the course and develop those workarounds.

What do we mean by workarounds? After the Supreme Court decided in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*¹⁴ that K-12 schools could not consider race in admissions, the Obama administration issued guidance¹⁵ to help school districts understand how to integrate in compliance with *Brown v. Board of Education*, by looking at race-neutral indicators of poverty. This formed the basis of District 15's choice-based, middle school lottery.¹⁶

Moreover, executive orders and [letters](#)¹⁷ cannot be confused with Supreme Court decisions. We agree that discrimination is illegal and immoral. This is why District 15 eliminated the use of a discriminatory screening process that resulted in the second-most racially segregated middle schools in the most racially segregated school system in the nation. Screens be they academic, disciplinary, attendance or talent-based are proxies for discrimination. It is therefore 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, even in the face of federal overreach.

CEC15 has been reaffirming our organization's commitment to celebrating, protecting and respecting all of our students at every single meeting. We have and will continue to demand that the DOE leadership resist attacks on students' and teachers' civil rights, human rights, and First Amendment rights. We have been doing this through the issues we elevate at our public CEC meetings and through the resolutions the council has passed, such as [CEC15's Resolution to Prevent and Respond to Hate Speech](#),¹⁸ [CEC15 Resolution To Ensure Equitable Access To OMNY Cards For All NYC Public School Students](#),¹⁹ and

⁸ <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>

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/where-do-legal-cases-against-trumps-executive-orders-stand-2025-01-30/>

¹¹ <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/tracking-the-legal-challenges-to-trumps-executive-orders>

¹² <https://natlawreview.com/article/dei-whirlwind-continues-new-lawsUIT-challenges-constitutionality-anti-dei-orders>

¹³ <https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-lawsuits-list-executive-orders-doge-citizenship-2018514>

¹⁴ <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/551/701/>

¹⁵ <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>

¹⁶ The D15 Diversity Plan adopted a framework for enrollment targets similar to the framework outlined for charter schools in amendments to the NYS Charter Law. NY Charter schools have to make good faith efforts to enroll comparable numbers of students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, are designated English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities as compared with the Community School District in which they are located.

¹⁷ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/hitting-pause-on-the-dear-colleague-letter>

¹⁸

<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>

¹⁹

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/951dd9a1-96ac-438b-8642-d89cc6651997/downloads/5e672094-4357-4e0b-9482-82d91d1759e3/Approved%20Omny%20Cards%20Resolution%202024.pdf?ver=1739550749961>

[Resolution Opposing 60-day Limitation on Shelter Stays for Families of Public School Students](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/951dd9a1-96ac-438b-8642-d89cc6651997/downloads/0b17ecbe-5ca2-40f4-a586-6439eaa135da/Resolution%20on%2060-day%20limitation%20on%20shelter%20sta.pdf?ver=1739550750023).²⁰ And we have been doing this through the banned and challenged books that President Antonia Ferraro Martinelli highlights in meetings. These books reflect identities celebrated by our cultural and heritage months and holidays. For example, this month we celebrated Black History Month and Lunar New Year. To honor Black History Month, President Ferraro Martinelli featured *All Because You Matter* by Tami Charles, which offers love, hope and affirmation through the Black experience. And to honor Asian and immigrant families, she 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, 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 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.

President Ferraro Martinelli has stated that she feels 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," she said in a recent [open letter](#). "Others may call it DEI, but I call it reality."

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<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/951dd9a1-96ac-438b-8642-d89cc6651997/downloads/0b17ecbe-5ca2-40f4-a586-6439eaa135da/Resolution%20on%2060-day%20limitation%20on%20shelter%20sta.pdf?ver=1739550750023>

CEC15 will keep calm and carry on with the mission of supporting all our students. But we 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.

We call on NYCPS leadership to resist attacks on students and teachers' civil rights, human rights, and First Amendment rights using any and all channels available to you. We ask you to reassure families that you will stand by all of our students.

Sincerely,

CEC15

This statement was duly adopted by Community Education Council 15 on March 11, 2025 by a vote of the members present, including: Antonia Ferraro Martinelli, Leslie King, Vanessa Gonzalez Ueoka, Nancy Cruz, Katina Rogers, Jonathan Davis, Hans Arrieta, and Donalda Chumney.