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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Youth, Education & Libraries Committee
Monday, September 21, 2020 - 6:30 PM
This meeting will be conducted via Zoom

Minutes:

Members Present: Peter Patch, Chair, Taina Borrero, Alida Camp, Stephanie Barreto Lastra (DOE), Elizabeth Rose, Ysabel Abreu (for MBP Brewer), Rami Sigal, and community representatives.

Note: On behalf of the Community Board 8, I want to thank DOE for their ongoing effort and energy to respond to community needs, and to provide channels of communication with our CB8 community. As moderator, I want to express my personal appreciation for our valiant DOE representative, Stephanie Barreto Lastra.

Discussion Points

The following were specific points raised at our CB8 Youth & Education Meeting on Monday evening (9/21):

1. Devices: The distribution of devices to families is not working. Recommended practices for parents are not working.
 - a. One parent was told to go to her school to request a device. Her school had no devices to distribute and told her to go buy one herself for her child, as well as a hotspot.
 - b. To have a policy that is not working only creates frustration for parents and students.
2. Communications: One parent reported that - after trying many times - it was impossible to reach the DOE by phone.
 - a. Trying several times, the phone prompts went back to the starting point. It was impossible to get a human response or leave a message.
 - b. If phone communications don't work, would it be possible to leave a message about how to send a text or email message, that would get a response - even if with a delay.
3. Student Priorities: As one participant stated, the current approach 'solves the problem for no one.' Every family has students home much or most or all of the time.

- a. Suggestion: Would it be possible to give in class instruction priority to those most need of in-class instruction (the younger students, Pre-K and primary) and special needs?
 - b. Allocate available class space in all school buildings to these priority students.
 - c. Older students, who have sufficient capacity to get some benefit from remote learning, would be 100% remote, until the COVID situation permits higher class density - or full classes - at which time DOE would revert to in-class instruction for all students.
4. Observation: There are no perfect solutions - or easy answers - to deal with the COVID health, safety and available space issues.
- a. As one person stated: There are no good answers. The policy alternatives are all among problematic choices and even worse choices.

Peter Patch, Chair