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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Youth, Education & Libraries Committee
Wednesday, October 28, 2020 - 6:30 PM
This meeting was conducted via Zoom

Minutes:

CB8 Members: Peter Patch, Rami Sigal (Public Member), Alida Camp, Taina Borerro, Gayle Baron, Lori Bores, Barbara Chocky, Brian Correia, Rebecca Dangoor, Billy Freeland, Ed Hartzog, Jane Parshall, Elizabeth Rose, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Russell Squire, Marco Tomayo, Shari Weiner

Introduction & Purpose: To assess where we stand in taking on the challenge of COVID, at each level: Pre-K, Primary, Middle & High School. What is working and what are the remaining issues?

Key Points in Discussion:

- Update from the Chancellor regarding schools, policies, meals, testing, technology and safety protocols.
 - Primary focus on keeping students safe.
 - State academic testing is being waived during the pandemic.
- Chancellor: Window to go from remote to hybrid – November 2-15.
 - Note: Students can always switch from hybrid to remote
 - However, schools must always rework their class structure ('pods') if significant numbers of students switch from remote to hybrid.
- Student representative, Rami Sigal, described participating on a fully remote basis at the Clinton School, with schedules based on two-week cycles, with six-eight in the physical classroom, instruction conducted via zoom.
- Our guest, the Principal of a school on Long Island, described the challenges of leading a school during the COVID crisis, including the use of cubicles and masks, the need to monitor parents' social activities and to follow up by contacts and tracing families and students participating in those events (including possible super-spreader events), with 14 days quarantine requirements), two teachers (lead teacher and assistant) in each class, and the extra funds required for distancing, polycarbonate partitions, cleaning and technology.

- Rapid testing (results in 15-20 minutes) is used for students who are symptomatic; parents and visitors are not allowed in school during the pandemic. Two physicians are available to the school, along with support from parents who are medical professionals.
- Social & emotional learning, mandated by the state, receives additional focus by the school during the pandemic, particularly at the middle school level.
 - State and local health authorities providing responsive guidance on 24-hour basis.
- **Particular concerns:**
 - The degree to which effective learning is going on, vs. the issue of ‘COVID-slide,’ resulting in students following behind on satisfying grade expectations regarding the curriculum.
 - Special concern for primary school students learning to read at grade level; possibly requiring two-to-three years to catch up. Note: Grades 1-3 learn to read: after 3rd grade, student read to learn. (If students have not learned to read by 3rd grade, they are at risk for education going forwards.
 - Sports and after-school activities curtailed or totally shut down during COVID.
 - Summer youth employment largely shut down during COVID.
 - Remote access to zoom requires both devices and functioning wifi – not available for all students, including students in shelters.
 - Longer period of remote learning during COVID will create more students falling behind.
 - Need for ventilation in classes. Architects can be indispensable in addressing this.
 - How to motivate community groups to adopt COVID-safety measures:
 - Use masks
 - Socially distance
 - Avoid large events.
- **Possible steps to alleviate the risks and concerns going forward**
 - Peer to Peer tutoring.
 - Possible 1-on-1 phone counseling
 - Math – to understand the symbols and the logic – may require on-site coaching.
 - Kahn Academy (free for all) and IXL.com offer online materials, which can be helpful.
 - Encourage children to read, to support this critical skill.
 - Jacqueline Swallow, Representative from the 67th Street Library, pointed out the resources available through the NYPL, ranging from reading to technology, to training. (Currently limited by COVID, but selected services available on a remote basis.)
- **Specific issue and concern: Early voting lines at Wagner put all students and faculty at risk.**
 - Note: Voting locations are supposed to be separate from the student population. On election day, participating schools are closed.
 - CB8 Youth and Education Committee to press local elected officials to address the risk at Wagner School.

Peter Patch, Chair.