



Community Education Council For District One

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Daniella Philips – District 1 Superintendent

To the Attention of Saskia Thompson

CC: Ursilina Ramierez, Sayde Campoamor

The Community Education Councils of District 1 and 2 write to you today to urge you to stop the ill-advised colocation of the new Career and Technical Education (CTE) School at the University Neighborhood High School (UNHS) in the fall of 2014.

To proceed with this co-location would not only hamper a well performing school, but would also be setting the new CTE School up for failure.

Structurally, UNHS is simply too old and too small to accommodate the addition of 500 more students over a 6 year period without creating significant health and safety concerns.

UNHS - originally built as an elementary school in 1903 - frankly does not offer the basic infrastructure to meet the needs of on high school community never mind two.

It has no gym.

It has no auditorium.

It has only a warming kitchen and not much of a cafeteria (capacity of fewer than 150).

The downstairs entry way, made up of pillars and tile floors, serves as a lobby, gym, cafeteria and auditorium.

The roof leaks and the basement floods, the ventilation is poor and the stairwells narrow.

The school has only four student-use bathrooms.

There is only one science lab and very little technology due to poor wiring.

The current electrical infrastructure of the building severely limits access to technology which will need to be greatly expanded to meet the specific curricular requirements of the CTE Graphics and Media oriented school.

A major proportion of the student population at UNHS is categorized as high needs: 36% of students are ELL/ESL and 24% are SSWD, requiring rooms for a college office, CBO after school enrichment and tutoring programs, and mainly for pull out academic intervention/ related services.

The rooms are 500 square feet, a space arbitrarily deemed full size by the foot print, which just a few years ago deemed them half sized, resulting in a biased "underutilized" on paper diagnosis by OPM.

Despite these many challenges UNHS went from a D to a high B to an A by DoE's Progress reports since the pre-engagement provoked by the D grade 3 years ago. This is not a school that deserves to lose support and resources but should instead be encouraged, supported and celebrated

We understand that the UNHS colocation site was rejected by Success Academy Charter School as a site for the new proposed downtown elementary level charter school, forcing OPM to put it in Murray Bergtraum in place of the CTE school.

While Lower Manhattan is in dire need of more elementary school seats, parents have expressed their desire for a *zoned* neighborhood elementary school with the certainty of admission (i.e., no wait list) and they have not asked for more *choices* in elementary schools, particularly in the form of a charter school.

The CECD2 does not support co-locating charter schools with district schools including high schools and has passed two (see resolutions # 30 & 54). Furthermore the CECD2 has passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on charter applications in D2 until the needs for and performance by charter schools can be assessed and clearly articulated by the entire District 2 community.

The CECD2 questions the merit of co-locating an elementary school with a high school, whose facilities needs are very different from those of elementary schools, and is concerned for the potential impact of the co-location on the high school students (potential loss of instructional space, the disruption associated with relocating rooms, etc.). The CECD2 is also concerned about the safety of elementary school students sharing the building with high school students, particularly when anecdotal evidence indicates charter school administrations are often unwilling to work with the host public school administrations (e.g., the Success Academy Charter School Hell's Kitchen, whose administration has refused to attend advisory committee meetings to develop a safety plan).

The two proposals – co-location of a new CTE school with UNHS and a new Success Academy with Murray Bergtraum – were released at the 11th hour of the prior administration seemingly in a rush to implement as many colocations as possible December 31st and the CECD2 is uncertain about the thoroughness of the planning behind these proposals (rash planning last year led to the creation of Stephen T. Mather Building Arts & Craftsmanship High School in M520, whose facilities cannot accommodate the new school's curriculum needs, necessitating a building swap

with the Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management, another new school. Creating and siting new schools requires careful and thorough planning, which the Department of Education has not demonstrated on a consistent basis, and relocating schools, particularly start-up schools, is disruptive to the students and the faculty, creating unnecessary challenges.

Murray Bergtraum, if there is room, is a much better site for the new CTE school for a number of reasons- Bergtraum is already, a High School building housing a least one CTE school.

Additionally, the relative proximity to BMCC will allow for students to move back and forth to the campus of this CUNY college partner for the planned hybrid HS/AA degree program.

At a joint public hearing on the colocation held in September, virtually all attendees decried the absurdity of the co-location, as recorded and submitted for review prior to the Panel for Education Policy meeting on October 7th. Despite public opposition, the plan was approved.

While there has been ongoing consultation in the community, completely engineered by the Office of Portfolio Planning, the message back from the community has been consistent- the proposed co-location **is a bad fit** and **will harm both schools' chances for success by creating unsafe and impractical conditions.**

For these reason this colocation is the subject of a lawsuit, to stop it from happening as described here:

<http://thevillager.com/2013/11/21/appeal-to-fight-co-location-at-l-e-s-high-school/>

<http://nypress.com/charter-fight-heads-to-court/>

We herewith formally propose that the new CTE School be reassigned to Murray Bertram High School should there indeed be available capacity to accommodate the new CTE School. Additionally, Murray Bertram exists in closer proximity to Borough of Manhattan Community College, a vital partner to the model set forth for the CTE School.

Sincerely,
Lisa Donlan – CEC1 President
Shino Tonikawa – CEC2 President