



OFFICE OF THE BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT  
THE BRONX COUNTY BUILDING  
851 GRAND CONCOURSE  
BRONX, NEW YORK 10451

RUBEN DIAZ, JR.  
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

TEL. 718-590-3500  
FAX. 718-590-3537  
E-MAIL: rdiazjr@bronxbp.nyc.gov

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Hon. David C. Chang  
Chair of the Panel for Educational Policy  
52 Chambers Street  
New York NY 10007

Dear Dr. Chang:

I write to you, and to all of the members of the Panel for Educational Policy, regarding the following important matter. This past month the Department of Education announced that they are proposing the closure of seven Bronx schools. As you and the members of the Panel are aware under the DOE's accountability framework, "schools that receive an overall grade of D or F on the Progress Report are subject to school improvement measures. If no significant progress is made over time, a leadership change (subject to contractual obligations), restructuring, or closure is possible. The same is true for schools receiving a C for three years in a row and for schools that the Chancellor has determined lack the necessary capacity to improve student performance."

However, in many of these current closure proposals, there are inconsistencies within the Department's own measurement standards that I believe require substantive debate and review by the Panel for Educational Policy before any final decision is made regarding the fate of these schools. According to the Educational Impact Statement released on the proposed closures four of the seven Bronx schools should not be closed based on the DOE's own standards. Those schools are: Columbus High School, the School for Community Research and Learning, Frederick Douglass Academy III and Global Enterprise High School.

The Educational Impact Statements for these schools state that "While the overall scores on the DOE's accountability tools do not meet standard criteria for closure", the schools have "shown a lack of capacity to improve student performance in significant and consistent ways" and after "consultation with internal stakeholders," determined that the aforementioned four schools had not made sufficient progress to remain open.

In continuing to review these impact statements, as well as the schools' progress reports, there are very legitimate questions that need further clarification for the students, families, educators and school principals of these affected schools. If a school is given various measures to meet, and by the Department's own standards have met these measures, then why would they face closure?

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The Educational Impact Statements mention a conversation with internal stakeholders, but nowhere in those statements are those stakeholders identified, nor is the content of their conversations described. Furthermore, it seems that it was these conversations that led to the decision to propose closure for these four schools that did not meet the Department's own criteria for such an action.

There is also a disconnect between the Quality Reviews of some of these schools versus the recommendation for closure. The following are a few examples of this disconnect:

### **New Day Academy**

2006-2007: School scored a Proficient on its Quality Review

2007-2008: School scored a Proficient again on its Quality Review

2008-2009: School scores a Proficient once again.

Quote from latest Quality Review.

"The principal and administration lead by example and combine clarity of vision with excellent communication skills to drive school improvement. The principal has made careful strategic staffing, resourcing and scheduling decisions which clearly support improved student achievement."

### **Christopher Columbus High School**

2006-2007: On Quality Review, school is deemed "Proficient school with many well developed features."

2007-2008: School scored a Proficient rating on its Quality Review.

2008-2009: School scored a Proficient rating on its Quality Review. Here are some quotes from the review:

"Christopher Columbus High School makes all students feel valued and part of a community, which also echoes the experience of faculty and parents. The principal and assistant principal for organization give strong direction within a nurturing and positive framework, where they listen to all constituents' voices and foster respect and personal responsibility throughout."

### **Frederick Douglass Academy III**

2006-2007: The school scored a Proficient rating on its Quality Review

2007-2008: School Scored a Well Developed Rating on its Quality Review.

2008-2008: School scored a Proficient rating on its Quality Review. Here is a quote from the review:

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“The school makes clear its high expectations for all students to do well and progress to college, even though many of them enter the school performing below their grade level. These high expectations are embodied in the way that students are referred to as ‘scholars’ and is a feature of a culture where young people show high levels of commitment to their studies.”

**Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education High School**

2006-2007: School scored a Proficient rating on its Quality Review.

2007-2008: School Scored a Well Developed Rating on its Quality Review.

2008-2009: School scored a Proficient rating on its Quality Review. Quote from review:

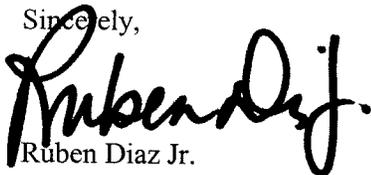
“The school offers its students a pleasant and peaceful environment for learning, with popular, good quality, specialized hands-on programs within the career and technology classes. Students work hard at subjects they enjoy and consequently make good progress. The administration has developed good practice in collecting and using student information to improve instruction and progress in attendance, English language arts, math and social studies.”

If a school’s overall Quality Review ratings do not coincide with the recommendation for closure one must ask is it that the Quality Review process itself is flawed or is the process for the recommendation on school closures flawed?

I understand that difficult choices need to be made in the best interests of our city’s students, but I demand that the Panel for Educational Policy review all of these proposals fully and address publicly each and every instance where the facts do not align before casting their votes at January’s meeting.

I thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,



Ruben Diaz Jr.