

**MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HELD ON MAY 23, 2006
AT THE RIVERDALE YW/YMHA**

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT: See attached Attendance Sheets

Chairperson welcomed the approximately 100 people in the audience consisting of parents, Community Board #8 members, concerned local residents and officials. She also thanked the Education Committee members and Community Board No. 8 staff for their able assistance and outreach to the community concerning this meeting.

The Chancellor of the City of New York, Joel Klein was then introduced and spoke about his NYC background, that "New York City is a model for school reform" and the \$13.1 billion dollars in the capital plan to build 100 new schools and repairs to older schools. He then responded to the following questions:

- on the need for local Gifted and Talented programs in Region 1, especially in the Kingsbridge/Riverdale CB8 area, he assured us that he is prepared to open gifted and talented programs in 2007 in this community. The chairperson reiterated that this community believes in the concept of "Neighborhood Schools" and wants the Gifted and Talented programs in their local schools in Community Board No.8.
- in responding to a question about why the Whitehall Annex, which was used to house local students, and could be used for pre-Kindergarten classes and State mandated reduction of class size in early grades at local elementary schools, has been given over to High School programs for students outside of our community, he replied that he must use space as is needed city-wide, not just for the smaller community.
- concerning the overcrowding, violence, under achieving and unacceptable low graduation rates at John F. Kennedy High School, the Chancellor said he could not comment because of certain allegations that are presently being investigated. He asked the community to give him "some time" on this issue.
- responding to a question on special education the Chancellor commented that he favors more inclusion classes.
- on the question about giving up some areas of curriculum (like history and science) for the sake of test scores, he felt that we (Department of Education) need to do a better job in those areas although testing has and always will be "a window on accountability." Parents feel they are powerless when it comes to their child's education.
- on the lack of parent and community input to policy making, the Chancellor replied that the ultimate decision does not come from just the parents. The Chancellor must listen to all input and make the final decision.
- on the lack of aides in Kindergarten classes of 27 special needs students, the Chancellor will look into it.
- on the matter of cell phones, he supports the present policy of not being permitted in schools. The Chairperson then replied that since this is also a very important safety issue for the parents city-wide, he must re-evaluate his position and find a better solution.

The Chairperson then thanked Mr. Klein for being our guest speaker at the Education Committee, and noted that this was the first time that Chancellor of the City of New York has appeared in the Community Board No. 8 area. She assured the audience that the unanswered questions will be sent to the Chancellor's office. His replies will be read at a Fall meeting of the Education Committee meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Bowden, Education Chairperson
Assisted by Glenn Encababian and
Robert Press