

CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

February 22, 2011

Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Timothy McNiff
Archdiocese of NY
1011 First Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Re: Merger of Holy Cross and Sacred Heart Elementary Schools

Dear Archbishop Dolan and Superintendent Dr. McNiff:

Manhattan Community Board Four (CB4) would respectfully like the Archdiocese to reconsider its recent decision to merge Holy Cross School at 332 West 43rd Street with Sacred Heart of Jesus School at 456 West 52nd Street.

On February 15, 2011, CB4 hosted a public meeting for the community of Holy Cross School. More than 150 concerned parents, students and community leaders came out in support of keeping Holy Cross School open. Every parent and student who spoke echoed the same sentiment: Holy Cross is a cherished neighborhood institution that provides the students with a safe, disciplined and supportive environment.

Holy Cross School is slated to merge with Sacred Heart of Jesus School at the end of the 2011 school year. In November 2010, the Archdiocese of New York announced 32 schools that were “at risk” of losing financial subsidies from the Archdiocese¹. Each “at-risk” school was given the opportunity to prepare a long-term financial sustainability plan for the school. These proposals were evaluated and it was determined in January 2011 that 27 schools in New York State would no longer be receiving financial subsidies from the Archdiocese. Holy Cross was never on either of these lists; Sacred Heart was on the original list of 32 schools. However, on January 20th, 2011, the Holy Cross community received the devastating news that Holy Cross would be merging with Sacred Heart.

¹ Reconfiguration Committee Recommendations Regarding “At-Risk” Schools Accepted by Archdiocese of New York. <http://www.archny.org/news-events/news-press-releases/index.cfm?i=18750>

The Holy Cross community is dumbfounded and outraged. They have received no word from the Archdiocese about the nature of the merge and have not been given an opportunity to present a financial plan. This is unfair to the parents and students of Holy Cross. While CB4 recognizes the difficult decisions the Archdiocese must make in these tight economic times, we do not believe that merging Holy Cross and Sacred Heart is the best option, especially without taking into consideration a myriad of factors expressed to CB4 from the community, as outlined below.

- There is a safe and secure playground across the street to Holy Cross School for the children to use before and after school and during recess. Sacred Heart does not have a playground.
- Holy Cross is easily accessible from any of the five boroughs. There are ten subway lines with stops within a quarter-mile radius of Holy Cross and countless bus routes. Sacred Heart is located much further west than Holy Cross and there are no subway stops within a quarter-mile radius of Sacred Heart.
- Currently, there are approximately 200 children enrolled at Holy Cross. It appears to be the expectation that almost all of these children will transfer to Sacred Heart, which has a surplus of space and classroom seats. However, many parents have stated they will not send their children to Sacred Heart.
- Clinton/Hell's Kitchen is already at capacity for school seats with exceeding demand in the coming years. By 2019, planned residential construction in the neighborhood will add an additional 1,350 new elementary school students². The community is currently served by three public elementary schools. Even with the planned expansion of PS 51, there will still be about 1,000 elementary students without planned seats in less than ten years. These numbers do not take into consideration the possibility of an additional 200 schoolchildren that choose not to attend Sacred Heart.
- There is currently no public middle school in the community.
- At a time when Mayor Michael Bloomberg is proposing a 2011 budget that includes cutting public school funding and laying off more than 6,000 faculty, it has been made clear to the Holy Cross community that not all of the current teachers and staff will be absorbed in the merger, thereby increasing the number of teachers without jobs.

² Report on Planned Construction in Clinton-Hell's Kitchen and Its Impact on Area Public Elementary School Capacity: 2009-2019.
<http://www.tomduane.com/pdf/Sen%20Duane%20and%20CB4%20Report%20on%20Looming%20School%20Overcrowding.pdf>

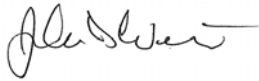
- Parents and students of Holy Cross have expressed their gratitude and appreciation for Sister Mary Theresa Dixon, the Principal at Holy Cross. Sister Mary knows every child's name, greets the children at the door every morning and takes an extreme interest in the development of every student.

Holy Cross School has been in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen for over one hundred years and is beloved by the students that attend the school and is a model of Academic Excellence. The eighth grade class has been awarded over \$256,000 thus far in scholarship money.

The closing of Holy Cross will have a detrimental effect on the entire community.

CB4 supports the Holy Cross community in their fight to save their beloved School.

Sincerely,



John Weis
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board 4

[signed 2/22/11]

Gretchen Minneman
Co-Chair

Quality of Life Committee

[signed 2/22/11]

Corey Johnson
Co-Chair

Quality of Life Committee

CC:

State Senator Thomas Duane
Assembly Member Dick Gottfried
Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal
Borough President Scott Stringer
Public Advocate Bill de Blasio
Speaker Quinn