



BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #1

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EDUCATION & YOUTH

January 13, 2022

MINUTES

Mr. Hakiem Yahmadi, Chairperson said good evening welcome to Community Board 1. Could the members please introduce themselves. I know the Superintendent he had a long day I was with him earlier today in another meeting. So, Superintendent I know you have a couple of power points to share with us. I guess the main thing that everybody would like to know, how is the virus effecting the schools since we came back to session January 3rd.

Mr. Rafael Alvarez, Superintendent Community School District 7 said good evening, everyone, I heard Chairman Yahmadi say that you wanted to know how we were addressing COVID and what the numbers look like in terms of attendance in our schools. So, I'm going to address that, and I just want to share some things that are going on and I do have Donna Murphy here who is the Executive Assistant to the Executive Superintendent who unfortunately has been doubled booked this evening. With that being said, I will share a screen.

So, some of you know me I'm Superintendent Rafael Alvarez I've been here since August 2018 and what was considered a rough transition from former Superintendent Lisa Alvarez and then by Richard Cintron who covered temporarily. So, I'm accompanied by Dr. Frank Hernandez who is a former Principal from PS49. I just want to welcome you to the new year of health, wealth and happiness and figuring out how do we go forward from here. Just wanted to give you a little bit of details about District 7 because things have changed. A lot of the Community Board and a lot of members in the community think that I am Superintendent of all Charter Schools, the Public Schools and High Schools. It just doesn't work that way in New York City we breakdown the numbers very differently while I am responsible for everything that comes down from the State in the Community School District as the Superintendent, I'm only responsible for 23 Schools, 14 Elementary, 5 Middle/Intermediate/Junior High, 1 – 6-12, 3 – K-8, 3 – Early Childhood Sites, and 1 – Blue Ribbon School (X359) in our district. So, this just gives you a little bit of the Schools that I'm responsible for. So just so you know there are several Superintendents responsible for Schools in District 7 particularly as it relates to the High

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School's so, we have so we have Rene Perk who's in charge of District 7, 9 and 12 High Schools and we have Allen Chen who's responsible for the International Baccalaureate Program Schools Specialty Schools, Richard Cintron is in charge of the New Visions High Schools, you have Paul Rotunda who's in charge of the Transfer High Schools and you have Burt Walsh whose also a part of the Infinity Program High Schools and then you also have the District 75 Superintendent whose in charge of all District 75 Programs and then finally you have the Superintendent Robert Asway whose in charge of programs such as you find at the local correction facility, youth facility, juvenile detention center at the Horizon he's in charge of the School Programs so as you can tell there are several of us.

Just to give you an idea District 7 because we're small we have to be stronger and we utilize our Assistant Principals, Principals, some of our parents, Teachers and even some students in these different programs that we offer across our district where the district collectively meets in each of these things. So, we have a Principal's Advisory that Principals are elected to be on by other Principals same thing for the AP Advisory, we have representation for Student Advisory from every single school that meets with me monthly to discuss some of the local issues that they're facing as students and seeing how I, the Superintendent can help them address those particular issues across the district they're also working on community service projects. We have the Equity Team that's looking at Equity from the perspective of the district and how we're trying to address disproportionality across our district, we have our Boys to Men every school has representation of black and brown boys who we're training to engage and empower them as we elevate their abilities to help figure out how we disrupt and dismantle historic disparities of achievement and opportunities for our young men and we're also doing that for the girl's and I think that when I first came here you all heard about our GEMS in the past. We have a Data Team whose looking at the data crucially across the district and seeing what, do we need to do to make an impact across our schools. Our Math Team because we struggle as a district in mathematics as a borough as well, we have a Literacy Team so that we can bring some cohesion across K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9 to 12 across our district. We have Equity Ambassadors these are staff member in every single school community that get trained monthly through our Equity Offices across the city and their job is to really jump into the conversations of what's going on in their schools and saying have you thought about this, did you not look at this proportionality of girls to boys, or why is there a larger ratio of black and brown boys being suspended compared to their counterparts. They're the ones that kind of help shift the thinking of the school leadership and thinking of how, do we figure out to address those things. In order to grow as a district we have a Para Professional Institute so, these are Para's that we're training to become Teachers within our own district, we have a Parent Empowerment Group so in District 7 we've been able to get about five parents vendor licenses to be vendors for New York City Public Schools so we have Danielle Poole for example who used to sit on CEC who does Zumba Classes for some of our parents, we have Martha Guzman who does a lot of portraits and painting, we have another parent who sells books. We haven an advanced Leader

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Institute there are several staff members, Coaches and Teachers who go to the Advanced Leader Institute actually, the Advanced Leader Institute is Assistant Principals looking to become Principals. The Coaching Leadership are people in Coaching positions looking to come out of the classrooms and be Assistant Principals, and they meet on a monthly basis and in fact one of these groups is meeting this evening from 3-5 PM. Then we have the Teachers Leaders Institute that's by a Teacher Leader across our district, she was considered the Big Apple Award winner last year one of the 15 or 20 Teachers out the 4,600 hundred Teachers who applied to become the Apple Award winner she was one of them and now she's out of the classroom and training Teachers to be more effective.

Now I'll touch on Chancellor Banks vision and commitments. He's really focused on high quality early childhood support which we're really deep in as we were the first district to have 3K and pre-K. He's thinking about reimagined academic experiences, and we've been having a lot of our schools do inter visitation especially across our Blue-Ribbon School 359 the Concourse Village School and several other Schools across our district. To think about what does it look like to reimagine academic experiences, we've been fortunate to have Goldie Muhammed do a lot of curriculum lesson planning with Teachers and helping them understand criticality. I'll give you an example of that, let's say that a Math Teacher is teaching around how to calculate distance right, rather than teaching how to calculate distance, how about we use the experience how to calculate distance which is a standard that we have to address. But thinking about from the perspective of what was the plight of the African American for example during the 1940's and 50's and how did calculating distance impact travel plans when they were either going south or to the mid-west, and really getting kids to critically think about what it took to be able to do those things and why, and that's how you introduce them into calculating distance and the importance of why calculating distance is always something necessary and bringing it back today. Another reason we have to calculate distance if we're taking the train to School so, now we go to a different borough and so the bus rides and traffic and taking all these things into consideration, so it's really about how to reimagine academic experiences from just text book language that often don't reflect the students that they serve and then focusing on the whole child not just by instruction, but what are we doing socially and emotionally for the kids in our particular community. So, those are the charges we have from Chancellor Banks and we're fortunate that in District 7 that we've already been committed to a lot of these things and beyond at this point. I just want you to see the priority for the city with its high expectations and rigorous instruction. Our Executive Superintendent created goals for us and then through that lens I identified what we were going to do as a district and that ended up becoming the non-negotiables that I made my district commit to for example Universal Screeners we're doing this as a district. You might have heard that other districts across the city, everyone has the Universal Screeners, but they were able to select what they wanted. We utilized our Principals, Assistant Principals and Teachers to think about what was something that we wanted to do collectively so, that there was coherence across every single School. So,

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all of our catered too Teachers have provided the academic Math and ELA Universal Screeners and all of our 3-8 Schools are using the I-Ready so, that way we can find the cohesion across our district holistically. All of our Assistant Principals are involved in active research so, they each have to take on their own project of advancing academic success for our students by doing research that we train them in on a monthly basis this is their AP Conferences all staff have to be part of the School Leadership Team. Remember I told you those monthly meetings they have to participate in those monthly meetings for those programs that I just showed you. All of our elementary Schools are participating in computer science for all. Every single School in District 7 is part of the Urban Debate League in Algebra for all program the Urban Debate League where our students in District 7 compete against each other throughout the year 3 times a year and then they compete citywide. We're proud to say that out of over 4 thousand students who competed last year 3 of our students in our district ranked in the top 10 not top 10 percent, top 10. Then thinking about how we create assessment plans to really think about how we're targeting our individual students. Same thing again, we had to create a welcoming, affirming environment all Schools District 7 had to have research based social, emotional learning programs and in District 7 we used a panorama survey that surveys our parents and students and surveys 3 times a year to identify how our students are feeling how they're feeling about their Teachers, how they're feeling about their learning and what kinds of things they want to see and then those surveys have to be utilized in conjunction with the academic goals in thinking how they're supporting this to move forward. So, we're seeing more student voice we're seeing more students interacting more and having a say in what's happening in their curriculum. We wanted to ensure that attendance was higher I'm going to talk about that a little bit later so, every single School had to have an Attendance Team meeting and they had to have protocols and all of my staff in the district meets with the Attendance Teams to identify where they're at and where there's some gaps. Every School had to participate in Boys to Men, ever School had to have a GEMS Chapter, every School had to have a Student Advisory and student participation. In terms of inclusive curriculum assessment, we are currently doing a few things. We have collected our Schools Curriculum Maps to identify where there are the gaps when it relates to culturally responsive assisting education. As a district we have a team of Teachers, students, parents, District Staff, Borough Staff and then Central Office Staff who are helping us look at the Curriculum Maps that Schools are currently using to provide instruction and seeing where there are gaps where they can increase their cultural responsiveness to students. So, we're in the process of giving Schools feedback so that they could start thinking of how they increase or at least infuse some more cultural responsiveness into their curriculum. Every School has an Equity Team in my district, every School has an Equity Ambassador in my district, every School has an Instructional Leadership Team where they're focusing on how they're providing instruction across their Schools. Every Schools CEP in this district has at least one goal that's in alignment to equity and how they're going to dismantle and disrupt inequities in a particular sub-group of students that may be struggling across their School.

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Last but not least we're doing the leadership development we have to develop within so that we can grow within so, that includes hiring people from the community, that includes developing people in the community so, that the community can then provide the services to its own community, and I'm very committed to ensuring we do that. So that you get an idea we had to norm what it looks like to have a portrait of a graduate in District 7 and so in collaboration with CEC, with our parents, with students, with our Teachers, with our Administration everyone got to look at what they thought of a portrait of a graduate so far this is what we've come up with scholarship through academic excellence, collaborators and effective communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, outstanding and altruistic citizens leaders who are critical thinkers and creative problem solvers artistic and athletic, resilient, reflective, and responsible and self-aware and committed to social justice. So, this is what a portrait of a graduate would look like if you left from District 7 and every School has its own version of this, but this is ultimately what we're expecting all of our students in District 7 to leave with. So just to give you a little bit about attendance we've been above the borough's average and we've been above the city's average each time and that can be very difficult here in the South Bronx right because there are a lot of variables that effect a students ability to get to School whether it's an issue with temporary housing, or having to deal with a parent with a Doctor's appointment or work or babysitting another relative whatever it might be, that might be the obstacle for students to come in. Because we work so diligently on attendance, we're ranking number 3 out of all the districts in the Bronx, and currently there's about 8 districts in the Bronx including the High Schools that are involved and I think we're going to surpass because lately our attendance has been higher than those other districts. But as of the end of December District 7 was at 89 percent and the Bronx as a whole was at 88.1 and the city as a whole was at 88.5. In terms of no-shows, we currently have 4 students who are considered no-shows, that means from whenever they were registered in School to now, they have been no-shows we've been diligently working with those. In the most case the 4 students that we're discussing are from my High Schools because as they reach a certain age, they're not required to attend there's a whole process that goes about before we can remove a student from the Department of Education. So, what does that look like for my district these are all the Schools that I'm responsible for this is as of Monday so as you can see there's been a drop in attendance because of the first week of School back in the New Year where we had some drastic attendance issues across the entire city. What I can have you know is that even though there were issues across the entire city District 7 had the highest attendance all week-long last week and that goes to why it's important for our Schools to stay open particularly in a community like District 7. Our families need the schools our children need the schools it's probably the safest place for them to be and supporting them academically because they can't continue to lose on their attendance. With there are some things that we have done or have been able to accomplish in 2021 and 2022 we were able and we're the only district that has gotten 2,500 hundred hotspots from T-Mobil for up to 5 years in partnership with the United Way that means 2,500 hundred hotspots were given to our students in District

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7 where the parents did not have to pay, and they were getting Wi-Fi connectivity without having to worry about the added expense. In addition to that we were able to provide it to our District 7 High Schools that are not under my Superintendency, and we were able to provide also technology. So, every single student in my district has technological equipment to use at home. We made sure that all the schools had trained all the leaders and some of the lunchroom staff members in therapeutic crisis intervention, how to deescalate situations and I'm proud to say that at least in my district we have the lowest number of incident reports less issues, less suspensions the least amount of everything as to incidents that are occurring in Schools.

District 7 has over 150 workshops that are being offered to parents through our districts website which is www.csd7.org you can register for workshops that are virtual and in some cases in person. There are a thousand things happening in the district I just wanted you to get a glimpse of some of the things that we're doing.

Ms. Donna Murphy Executive Assistant to Executive Superintendent Dr. Tobia said a couple of things on this side and thank you Superintendent Alvarez for putting it together. So, just that you know we have a series called Master Classes for Principals and parents but since it's a community meeting let me talk a little bit about the parents. We have one tonight called How To Be The Best Me I Can Be and I think we have one tomorrow night. The whole goal of it is to really share with our parents some really good set of skills that everybody can use as well as to facilitate and strengthen relationships between our Schools, the home and the community so we have that going on. Dr. Tobia meets continuously with our Superintendent to make sure all of those goals that actually Superintendent Alvarez just shared we're moving towards meeting them and developing a stronger School system for the students. We meet monthly with our parent leaders we meet monthly with our family leadership coordinators, our family support coordinators everyone who touches our families and communities meet monthly so we can make sure that everything we do is aligned together and that we're speaking one language. We're working with parents and parent coordinators to make sure that we are hearing their voice because we know that it's really important to make sure that we're building trust, to make sure we're building access especially around language around special education because that's really important to our communities as well as many other things. We're working on making sure that translation and interpretation is one of the most important things that we think of and do, we're interacting with our communities and we're doing some training around special education. We do have the Bronx Expo we're going to be doing Jun 1, 2 and 3 and we will reach out to you guys to make sure that we're encouraging you collaborating with you to be part of everything we do. So that is what we're currently doing I will drop my email and phone number in the Chat. If you guys have any questions or concerns, or think of anyway we could partner better.

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Mr. Rafael Alvarez, Superintendent Community School District 7 said one thing I can share is that District 7 probably donated about 10 carloads, full carloads fronts, backs, trucks and all to the Bronx fire so, it's amazing to me to see how the poorest Congressional District when seeing people in crisis can lend its hand together even without having much to be able to provide to those less fortunate, then they are. So, I'm proud of my small community my parents and my families all who have collectively galvanized together to provide whatever supports we can for those students are struggling due to the Bronx fire. So, we stand committed to supporting anyone who is in need of support, and we continue to do so, and I'm proud of the District 7 community for standing up and standing proud on the first day of donations.

Questions and Answers

Mr. Hakiem Yahmadi, Chairperson called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion made to adjourn. Motion duly seconded. Motion called and carried.

MEETING ADJOURNED.