

**THE CITYWIDE COUNCIL ON
HIGH SCHOOLS**

**Report on the Effectiveness of
New York City's Public High Schools:
2004 - 2005**

**Submitted by:
CCHS Report Committee
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INTRODUCTION

About the Citywide Council on High Schools

The Citywide Council on High Schools officially came into existence on July 1, 2004. We were created under the authority of the Chancellor as an independent, elected body representing the parents and guardians of all New York City public high school students. Our role is to act as an advisory panel regarding all policy concerning the high schools and to compile a report on the effectiveness of the high schools.

We endeavored to accomplish our mandates in a number of ways. As individual regional representatives we attended a variety of parent functions including PTA/PA meetings and PTA/PA Presidents' Council meetings. We also participated in a variety of fact finding activities, toured schools, testified at City Council hearings, attended rallies and workshops, met with DOE officials, etc. Most importantly we held a public meeting on the second Wednesday of each month in which we explored a series of topics relating to issues of concern to parents regarding our high schools. DOE officials, council members, teachers, building administrators and parents all contributed information and opinions at our meetings. Much of this report is based upon what transpired at those meetings.

Major Issues

Several major broad stroke issues or themes became apparent as we explored educational policy concerns throughout the year. Chief among these themes were autonomy vs. central control, the explosive growth of small high schools and, the multifaceted problem of overcrowding. These issues are alluded to throughout this report in a variety of forms. The controversy regarding autonomy vs. central control became a contentious topic as teachers took to the streets to protest what they viewed as dictatorial micro-management of their classrooms by Tweed. In other areas, such as programming and graduation requirements, some high schools may have too much

autonomy. The DOE seems to have it often askew; seeking to control what it shouldn't and failing to control what it should. This issue along with issues concerning the small high schools and the issue of overcrowding are dealt with throughout this report.

Overview

The body of this report is divided into eight chapters. The first seven chapters deal directly with topics explored at our monthly meetings. Each chapter begins with a discussion of the topic and concludes with a series of specific policy recommendations that we urge the DOE to implement. The eighth chapter is a presentation of the results of a survey of parent leaders. The report then concludes with an epilogue that looks optimistically to the future.

Acknowledgements

Although, I was the primary author, many people contributed to the compilation of this report. Serene Dhondy, CCHS Member, Region 4, served on the Report Writing Committee and reviewed each Chapter and added many good ideas throughout. Vanessa Hampton, CCHS Member, Region 2. Beverly Marshack, CCHS, Region 9, in conjunction with Joan Makris, Parent Support Supervisor, Region 9 and Aixa Torres, Parent Support Officer, Region 9. Gloria Cahill Parent Support Officer, Region 3, was instrumental in the dissemination of the parent survey in their respective regions. Jonathan Cantor's tireless data entry and analysis efforts were extraordinary. Jean-Claude Brizard, Executive Director of Secondary Schools, and Lori Mei, Executive Director of the Division of Assessment and Accountability, provided invaluable technical and statistical support and assistance. Elizabeth Schnee and all the PA presidents in region 3 were a constant source of information and inspiration throughout the writing of this report. Finally, the hundreds of parents who attended our monthly meetings sharing their wisdom and their opinions as to what was right and what was wrong about our high schools provided much needed and appreciated perspective

Anthony Scarnati

CHAPTER 1

The Admissions Process

The 2004-05 high school year actually began well in advance of the September 13th start of classes. According to Bonnie Gross, Director of High School Admissions, some 96,000 eighth and ninth graders applied for a seat in the public high schools during the 2003-04 school year. Those 96,000 applicants had the opportunity to apply to their choice of up to 12 high school *programs*. Many of the city's 380 high schools offer a variety of programs giving eighth and ninth graders over 1,000 high school programs to choose from. The process and the choices can indeed be daunting. In order for the high school selection/admission process to be effective it must begin **before** the eighth grade, indeed, Mr. Jimenez, Director of High School Operations, contends that the selection process needs to begin at the very start of middle school in the sixth grade. Certainly given the vast array of schools and programs from which to choose an early start is essential.

The high school admissions process is essentially a middle school issue, however, the process impacts high school students and parents as well. Several thousand of the applicants were in fact ninth graders enrolled in either a public, parochial or private middle school or high school. In the weeks preceding the start of classes many students new to the city or the system sought seats in the high schools. Those "over-the-counter" registrants had previously enrolled directly at the high school of their choice. The new enrollment system no longer allows a high school to enroll students "over-the-counter". The enrollment of these students posed quite a problem for the Office of Admissions from mid-August through September.

The Office of High School Admissions established 18 Enrollment Centers throughout the five boroughs. Each was charged with the task of finding an appropriate placement for the thousands of students who were not placed during the 2003-04 admissions

process. The enrollment centers were also expected to resolve requests from thousands who sought to transfer from the school to which they were assigned. The enrollment centers, which began operating in mid-August, were at first overwhelmed by both the volume of requests and technical problems created by the initial start-up process.

Members of the Citywide Council on High Schools monitored the opening of the enrollment centers. Barry Kaufman and Walter Lynch visited enrollment centers throughout the five boroughs to get a first-hand look at their operations. They witnessed initial operations ranging from strained to chaotic. Central personnel were not asked to work with computers that were neither set-up nor on-line and with cell phones that were not activated. These initial problems were rectified within a day or two; however, the initial down time created undo backlogs and unnecessary frustration for parents and students as well enrollment center personnel.

The majority of the requests for placement were new registrants who were either new to the City or New Yorkers new to the system. These previous "over-the-counter" registrants were the client group the Enrollment Centers were designed for. Many of those who came to the enrollment centers in August, however, had already been placed in a high school and were seeking a transfer. This created both confusion and frustration. Personnel at the enrollment centers seemed unsure as to how to accommodate even the most logical of requests. Barry Kaufman noted a parent at a Staten Island enrollment center whose child was assigned to New Dorp High School. The parent was seeking a transfer to Tottenville High School, located literally across the street from their home. The parent's request was denied. Walter Lynch noted a similar circumstance in Queens where a child who resides in Astoria but was assigned to Beach Channel High School (a nearly 2 hour commute) sought a transfer to a neighborhood high school or "any high school less than a hour from the family's home". The enrollment centers seemed powerless to handle these transfer requests, however; these and other hardship, safety, transportation and medical transfers are handled further up the D.O.E. ladder at Tweed. Bonnie Gross cautioned that many of these

problems would not exist if parents and students took more care in the application process to focus on issues of transportation and limited their choices to schools that they truly would like to attend.

The start of classes on September 13th created an even greater surge of activity at the enrollment centers. Parents, seeking to enroll their children, formed long lines at enrollment centers across the five boroughs. The city's major daily newspapers reported the frustration of parents who were unable to get their children enrolled within the first 3 days of the new school year. Michelle Cahill, one of Chancellor Klein's top deputies, went on a tour of the centers to see the situation first hand. Lines were so long that parents were prevented from getting onto a line after 1:00 PM at centers that closed at 4:00 PM. The vast majority of the parents and students at the enrollment centers in September had not participated in the admissions process in the previous year and were, therefore, in need of placement; others were seeking a transfer to a more desirable high school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The CCHS endorses the following recommendations designed to alleviate the frustration of parents, students and enrollment center personnel.

1. Each enrollment center must be staffed with adequate numbers of trained personnel.
2. Each enrollment center must be equipped with the technological resources necessary to provide an efficient delivery of services.
3. Guidelines must be developed to allow enrollment center personnel to grant transfers when circumstances warrant one.
4. Create a **High School Admissions Office** in each middle school/junior high school to guide students and parents through the high school admissions process. High School Admissions Offices should be modeled after the College Admissions Offices that are found in virtually all NYC public high schools.

5. The Office of High School Admissions should be responsible to train personnel to staff each middle school's/junior high school's high school admissions office.
6. Each middle school/junior high school should be required to certify that each of their eighth and ninth graders has been placed in an appropriate ninth or tenth grade program by the end of the school year.

It is the hope of the CCHS that the above recommendations will be implemented in a timely manner. We urge the DOE to implement recommendations 1 through 3 by August 2005 and to implement recommendations 4 through 6 by September 2005.

CHAPTER 2

School Safety & Security

A safe and secure environment within and around each high school building is the essential prerequisite to an effective high school. Issues relating to safety and security must be addressed first and foremost by each and every high school administration as they develop strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of their individual schools. The Department of Education's Office of School Intervention & Development, headed by Senior Counselor Ms. Rose Albanese-DePinto, and the Citywide Council on High Schools have been and will continue to be developing strategies and policies to enhance school safety and security, the goal being a disciplined academic environment within each New York City public high school.

Problems of safety & security reached the crisis level at 16 "impact schools" during the 2003-04 school year. The Office of School Intervention & Development addressed that crisis. Aggressive intervention strategies were employed at these 16 schools including: alternative placement for the most disruptive and violent students, a greater police presence, the deployment of "safety teams" responsible for discipline in designated areas within each building, the improvement of each school's physical plant to create a more "welcoming learning environment", and the development of a "school safety rubric" to evaluate each school's progress. Ms. DePinto and her staff have continued to monitor these schools employing the safety rubric as an evaluative tool. The hope was that this approach would create a "new culture" within each of the impact schools. Early indications are that this approach has been quite successful.

The success achieved at the 16 impact schools is certainly welcome news, however, in a system of some 380 high schools the measure of success must go well beyond improving the 16 most dangerous and chaotic schools. Chancellor Klein has gone on record that a goal for the 2004-05 school year will be to instill greater

discipline at other city high schools as well. According to Chancellor Klein:

"Hallways are not a meeting place. They're not a place for people to congregate. We need order and discipline, and we need to enforce it". ("Klein Says Discipline Will Be Tightened". NY Times. 9/9/04)

Indeed, academic research echoes the Chancellor's concern. The need for establishing order in all of our high schools is paramount. We can no longer tolerate a system that allows for the existence of good schools and bad schools, safe schools and dangerous schools, orderly schools and chaotic schools, schools in which teachers and administrators are in control and schools in which they are not. An approach designed to change the culture of a school must not be limited to a handful of the neediest schools, it must be applied to all schools in need.

The Office of School Intervention & Development is in the process of drafting a "Blueprint for Safety" for all schools. It is hoped that this "Blueprint" will be a significant step in the cultural transformation of our City's high schools and in the development of order and discipline that all agree is the essential foundation for success in our high schools. Anthony Scarnati, region 3's representative on the CCHS, will be an active participant in the review processes for the development and implementation of this important policy initiative.

The process to create more safe and secure schools is everyone's concern; from the Mayor to the Chancellor, from Tweed to the Regions, from school administrators to faculty & staff, from parents to students, each has a vital role to play. It is the building principals, however, who must be held directly accountable for the level of discipline in their schools. As an orderly school environment is tied to effective education for all, safety must be a high priority, a foundation upon which the entire plan must rest. It is therefore imperative for the Department of Education to provide high school Principals with all the tools and support necessary to establish and maintain order within their schools.

Parental concerns about the safety of their children are, of course, paramount. Parents need to be reasonably secure in the belief that their child's school is a safe haven. The Citywide Council on High Schools recognizes this and seeks to support all reasonable efforts to improve school safety, order, and discipline.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The CCHS endorses the following recommendations designed to create more disciplined and orderly high schools, thereby, enhancing the safety and security of all high school students and staff.

1. Hallways, stairwells, lavatories, and other non-classroom areas must be free of loitering. To insure this we recommend:
 - a. Generally, students should not be allowed to be in a hallway, stairway, bathroom, or non-classroom area without purpose or a hall-pass while classes are in session.
 - b. A log of hall pass use must be maintained.
 - c. "Safety teams", similar to those in impact schools, must be established to monitor hallways and lavatories in a designated area within a building. An assistant principal should head each safety team and be responsible for maintaining order in the corridors, stairwells, lavatories, and other non-classroom spaces in their designated area.
2. Selective enforcement of school rules sends a counter-productive message to students that rules can be broken without consequence and the practice, therefore, must be stopped. We recommend a narrower discipline code that is enforceable and affords responsible students more freedom of movement and expression.
3. We strongly urge an end to the system-wide prohibition against cell phones since individual school communities may have reasons to ban or permit the phones. The cell phone is no longer a convenience; it can be a necessity that allows parents to be in contact with their children while they are traveling to and from school. A cell phone is a child's link,

not only to their parents, but to emergency services, as well. The small percentage of students who misuse their cell phones should not preclude their use by the vast majority who use them responsibly. The prohibition against cell phones is a prime example of a largely unenforceable rule that becomes selectively enforced.

4. High schools are places of learning. Students are expected to garner credits toward graduation as they attend classes. Students who fail to earn the necessary credits toward graduation are considerably more likely to become disruptive and, therefore, place a disproportionate strain on a school's disciplinary resources. We strongly recommend guidance assessment and possible placement of students who, after 3 years of high school, have not earned at least half the credits needed to graduate, for possible placement in an alternative setting that might better address the student's needs. Such students' account for approximately 11% of total high school enrollment according to data provided by the DOE's Office of Assessment.

The CCHS agrees with the Chancellor's stated objective that our schools "... need order and discipline, and we need to enforce it". We believe our recommendations are a common sense approach to establishing and maintaining order and discipline by modifying the existing high school culture. We strongly urge the adoption of these recommendations for the 2005-06 school year.

CHAPTER 3

Restructuring Large Failing High Schools

Generations of New Yorkers have been educated in large public high schools. Indeed, the majority of today's New York City public high school students attend a school with an enrollment of 1,500 or more. A number of large high schools, however, have failed in their efforts to educate our children. It is these high schools that have been targeted for restructuring since the mid-1990's, a trend that continues and promises to intensify. The CCHS examined the Department of Education's restructuring efforts in a series of presentations before the Council on November 11, 2004 at, apropos to the task, the George Washington Educational Campus, the restructured George Washington High School.

The George Washington Educational Campus (GWEC) is comprised of 4 distinct high schools housed within a single, large building located in Washington Heights (region 10). The success of GWEC is undeniable. The reasons for its presumed success are, however, debatable.

According to the school's current administration, the old George Washington High School had an enrollment in the early 1990's of approximately 3,800 students. The graduation rate hovered around 30% - 35%. Regents' exam passing percentages were equally abysmal. Average daily attendance figures were in the 50% range. The students were immersed in a culture of failure and generally held the school in contempt. George Washington High School, by virtually any quantitative or qualitative measure, was failing its students and the community at large. Today, the restructured GWEC is a picture of success and hope. Students, across the 4 new schools; attend, pass regents' exams and, graduate at a rate that soars to near 90%, according to figures presented by school administrators. There is some debate about the statistics; however, even using the lowest estimates, quantitative measures of success are stellar. Student

leaders and parent representatives speak glowingly about the pride they feel in being associated with GWEC.

Administrators from GWEC and region 10 spoke, with great certainty, about the reasons for their success. They focused on the reduced school size; each new high school's enrollment is approximately 600, and the strict discipline within each school and across the campus. Each school established its own disciplinary code and enforced it strictly. Each school's administration was determined to make their school a place where students felt safe and secure; a place where academic promise would be nurtured and students would be held accountable, a place where higher standards of conduct and academic achievement would be the norm. The administrators at GWEC were able to effect a remarkable cultural change.

Why has the restructured George Washington Educational Campus been such a stunning success where the old George Washington High School had stood as a symbol failure? We know how the administrators at GWEC and region 10 answered this question; however, other factors seem to have come into play as well. First, the total enrollment at the old George Washington was in the mid-to-upper 3,000's range; the new GWEC's 4 school total enrollment is approximately 2,500 - 2,600. That decline in total enrollment represents a net loss of over 1,000 students or an approximately 30% reduction in total enrollment. What likely became of those students will be discussed later. Who were those 1,000 students? What impact would maintaining enrollment at the old George Washington level have had on the attendance, regents' passing and, graduation rates at GWEC? Second, average class size at the old George Washington H.S. was the current citywide standard of 34. The average class size at the new GWEC was and is still 28. The U.S. Department of Education's study "School-level Correlates of Academic Achievement" (2000) concluded, "any relation between small enrollments and high achievement...may be explainable in terms of smaller class sizes in these schools" (p.38). Are the true correlates of success at GWEC the weeding out of the least successful and most incorrigible students combined with the establishment of smaller classes or; was it the combination of smaller schools and more

effective leadership? The data, although unclear and inadequate, seems to suggest a combination of those four factors produced the success at GWEC.

While the correlates for success may be unclear the desire of the Department of Education to restructure large failing high schools is crystal clear. In the Department of Education's "Plan of the City of New York to Provide a Sound Basic Education to All of Its Students" (2004) it states that it will meet this challenge in part through the "restructuring {of} large middle and high schools" (p.17). Was the omission of the word *failing* accidental or a portent of a more aggressive restructuring plan to come? It is in the face of this proposed monumental change in the structure of high schools that the CCHS urges caution and offers the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We strongly urge the consideration of the following recommendations as the Department of Education goes about the process of restructuring large high schools.

1. Do not lose sight of the fact that larger schools do have certain advantages over smaller ones. The ability to offer a wider array of elective courses is one important advantage. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Education report cited previously contends, "larger secondary schools may have resources that contribute to higher achievement" (p.38).
2. Commission a study to answer the key question we have posed, i.e., what is the relative importance of each of the apparent correlates of success at the smaller restructured high schools?
 - a. weeding out the least successful and most incorrigible students
 - b. establishment of smaller classes
 - c. size of the student body
 - d. effective leadership
3. We must also question the cost effectiveness of restructuring. It may be more cost effective and more academically successful to create smaller high schools for our failing

students thereby reducing enrollment and class size in our large high schools.

4. Bring an immediate halt to the practice of overcrowding existing large high schools as a way of reducing the total enrollments of the newly restructured ones. The current practice seems to convert large failing high schools into smaller successful high schools while at the same time converting large successful high schools into ever-larger failing high schools. This practice is especially abhorrent to the majority of our city's high school parents whose children attend large successful high schools like Benjamin N. Cardozo in region 3 or A. Phillip Randolph in Region 10. The total combined enrollment of the restructured schools should be equal to the total enrollment of the previous school.
5. Develop a long-term comprehensive strategy for the restructuring of all failing high schools, irrespective of size.
6. Bring an immediate halt to the practice of reducing budget allotments to large schools in order to offer enhanced services, such as smaller class size, to the newly restructured high schools.
7. Treat all of our high school students equally by expending as great an effort to insure the continued success of our large successful high schools as the D.O.E. does in restructuring our large failing high schools.
8. Do not lose sight of the fact that many of our large high schools are architectural wonders of bygone eras that were designed and built to inspire generations of high school students.

CHAPTER 4

Health and Physical Education

The approach to physical education instruction in the NYC public schools is currently undergoing a rather radical transformation under the direction of Ms. Lori Benson and her team of physical fitness professionals. Soon to be gone are the days of 'rolling out the basketballs' for 30 minutes of 'free-play'; in its place will be a program of instruction that emphasizes fitness awareness along with the skills and knowledge necessary to develop a lifestyle that engenders physical fitness. At the heart of the new "Physical Best" program is the individual *fitnessgram*, an assessment of a student's level of physical fitness that will serve as a guide for the student and his/her teacher and parents as to the child's fitness needs. The *Physical Best* program will focus on learning activities related to aerobics, muscular strength & endurance, body composition and, flexibility. The goals relating to the development of lifetime fitness awareness and activities are admirable, especially given the "obesity epidemic" (Newsday. 3/18/05) among New York City adolescents.

Questions regarding physical education in the high schools are related to means, rather than goals. The CCHS certainly endorses the goals of the *Physical Best* program; however, concerns abound regarding the best and most efficient means of achieving those goals, especially in light of issues regarding overcrowding and tight budgets. We wonder how successful attempts at individualized fitness goals and training can be in a physical education class containing upwards of 70 students and 2 teachers? We wonder how successful the *Physical Best* program can be in classes that actively engage students for, after allowing time to change clothing, 25 - 30 minutes? We wonder about what seems another instance of the administration's intellectual arrogance to say fitness professionals got it all wrong in the 1950's, 60's and 70's but today we now have gotten it right; will fitness professionals 20-30 years from now look upon contemporary approaches, such as *Physical Best*, with equal disdain? We wonder if available resources should be concentrated on those students who are least physically fit, rather than being diffused equally among students

at all fitness levels? Finally, we wonder why NYC public high schools routinely require students to take twice the NY State and NYC requirement of physical education classes?

RECOMMENDATIONS

The C.C.H.S. believes the time has come to deliver physical education in a more efficient and productive manner. We, therefore, endorse the following:

1. Adherence to the New York State Education Department's requirements and options for physical education in the high schools as stated in:

Chapter 11: Regulations of the Commissioner

Subchapter G: Health and Physical Education,
Part 135: Health, Physical Education and Recreation
Section 135.4: Physical Education

(ii) ... All secondary pupils shall have the opportunity for regular physical education...**3 times per week** during one semester and **2 times per week** in the other semester.

(c) for pupils in grades 10 through 12 only, a comparable time each semester in **extraclass programs** for those pupils who have demonstrated acceptable levels of physical fitness, physical skills, and knowledge of physical education activities; or

(d) for pupils in grades 10-12 only, a comparable time each semester in **out-of-school activities** approved by the physical education staff and the school administration.

2. We, therefore, recommend that all high schools explore:
 - a. 3/2 physical education program
 - b. Physical education credit for participation on junior varsity and varsity teams
 - c. Physical education credit for participation in approved out-of-school activities including sports teams, dance classes, fitness classes and the like.

3. We urge the Department of Education to work with the Police Athletic League and the Department of Parks and Recreation to

create more opportunities for high school students to participate in team sports such as basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball and soccer.

It is our belief that following the above recommendations will have the following positive impacts on our high schools:

1. By allowing physically fit 10th - 12th graders physical education options outside the regular school day it will allow our physical education teachers to concentrate their attention on those students who are least physically fit and most in need of the benefits of the *Physical Best* program, thereby, helping to achieve the admirable goals of the *Physical Best* program more efficiently.
2. It will help to alleviate school overcrowding by:
 - a. allowing a substantial number of students to earn necessary credits outside of the regular school day.
 - b. freeing up a period in a student's program allowing the student to take an additional academic class, thereby, allowing the student to graduate sooner than would otherwise be the case.
3. Principals will be able to reduce the number of physical education teachers on staff and shift those resources to areas of acute shortage such as guidance and college advisement.

The C.C.H.S. recommends the implementation of the above recommendations for the 2005 - 2006 academic year.

CHAPTER 5

Graduation Requirements

Anthony Scarnati (region 3) conducted research regarding the graduation requirements of New York City public high schools. His findings are described below.

The New York City Department of Education's high school graduation requirements for a Regents diploma for students entering the 9th grade in September 2005 are as follows:

1. English: 4 units (years)
 2. Social Studies: 4 units
 - a. Global History: 2 units
 - b. American History: 1 unit
 - c. Economics: 0.5 units
 - d. Participation in Government: 0.5 units
 3. Science: 3 units
 4. Math: 3 units
 5. Art: 0.5 units
 6. Music: 0.5 units
 7. Second Language: 1 unit
 8. Health & Physical Education: 2.5 units
 - a. Physical Education: 2 units
 - b. Health Education: 0.5 units
 9. Electives: 3.5 units
- Total: 22 units

In addition students are required to pass each of the following Regents examinations with a minimum score of **65**: Comprehensive English, Global History & Geography, Mathematics, Science and U.S. History & Government.

(Source: DOE Website, Appendix B)

The NYC requirements listed above are identical to the NY State Education Department's Diploma Requirements as delineated in the NYSED's Regulations, section 100.5, part 7, subheading [iv]: *Earning a Regents diploma*.

Based upon Mr. Scarnati's experience in the schools he knew that additional diploma requirements were layered on top of the Department's requirements. He researched the diploma requirements of the high schools in Region 3 and found the following to be true:

1. Neither the regional superintendent's office nor the Department of Education possessed information regarding individual school's graduation requirements.
2. The information regarding graduation requirements beyond DOE requirements submitted to the regional superintendent's office by each high school principal in region 3 was largely inaccurate. Schools merely listed requirements regarding community service and for special programs. Mr. Scarnati suspects that many, such as Benjamin N. Cardozo H.S. in the example below, have other requirements as well.
3. Example:

Benjamin Cardozo High School Graduation Requirements

 - a. States that the NYC diploma requirement in Phys. Ed. is 3.5 units. When in actuality it is 2 units.
 - b. College Writing (elective)
 - c. Senior Thesis as English 7
 - d. One additional year of science
 - e. One additional year of mathematics
 - f. Three additional years of foreign language

(Source: BNC Student Orientation Handbook, Fall 2004)
4. An analysis of the BNC requirements above yields the following:
 - a. Students must complete an additional 7 units above the DOE/NYSED requirements.
 - b. In order to complete the additional requirements a student would need to devote all 3.5 elective units to requirements and take an additional 3.5 units for a

total of 25.5 units rather than the City & State mandate of 22 units.

5. Overcrowded high schools, like Benjamin N. Cardozo, are tacitly requiring their students to spend more time in school than is required; an admirable goal, however, one that exacerbates the problem of overcrowding.
6. If overcrowding is indeed a "crisis" in the high schools then high schools should make students aware that they can, in fact, graduate in 6 or 7 semesters fully prepared to enter college or the world of work with a Regents diploma.
 - a. I would even go as far as to say that if overcrowding is indeed a "crisis" then high schools should be encouraging early graduation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents and students need to be armed with accurate information regarding graduation requirements in order to reasonably plan for the future. The fact is any high school student who has met the NYSED/ NYC Department of Education's diploma requirements is entitled to graduate. Schools must make this absolutely clear to students and parents. Many high schools currently are not doing so.

The C.C.H.S. recommends the following:

1. A D.O.E. review of each high school's diploma requirements.
2. A change in wording in ALL high school handbooks reflecting the difference between graduation **requirements** and **special diploma** requirements that a school may have.
3. A clear statement in ALL high school handbooks that students are absolutely entitled to a Regents' endorsed diploma upon completion of the NYC DOE diploma requirements.

4. The use of NYC DOE graduation requirements as a possible means for alleviating the overcrowding that appears to be adversely affecting many of our high schools.

CHAPTER 6

Guidance Services

ANNUALIZATION

NYC Public High School students need better guidance services. Of course the simple and most direct action that we, as an advisory council, can take is to demand that more guidance counselors be hired. If so simple and direct a solution were feasible, it would have been implemented long ago. An examination of the current system with an eye toward a reallocation of guidance resources, placing *THE CHILDREN FIRST*, leads to a series of steps that should be implemented BEFORE the end of the current school year. The largest burden placed upon guidance counselors is assisting students with course selection and helping them create a program of classes. In most NYC high schools this onerous task is done twice each year. It is the recommendation of the C.C.H.S. that ALL STUDENT programs be annualized. The benefits of such an approach, citywide, would be enormous. Those benefits include:

1. More time for guidance counselors to offer guidance unrelated to programming.
2. The elimination of the annual "reorganization" day at the end of January and, therefore, adding another instructional day to the calendar.
3. The elimination of a second round of the academically disruptive practice of "equalization".
4. Elimination of a second round of "class contracts" and explanation of class rules, thereby, adding yet another day of instruction.
5. If most courses are also annualized it will result in greater teacher accountability, especially in Regents courses.

It is important to note that these benefits appear to accrue at zero cost; indeed, it can be argued that annualization will result in a significant net saving.

QUESTION POSED TO THE CHANCELLOR:

Has the DOE considered requiring all high schools to annualize their student programming as a way to significantly ease the strain on our overburdened guidance counselors, while at the same time increasing teacher accountability in single-year Regents courses, such as US History & Government?

CHANCELLOR'S RESPONSE:

"Many of our high schools have already annualized programs and some coursework. While not every course in a high school can be annualized, we believe that annualization will go a long way in reducing the reorganization needs of our high schools and is better for students, teachers and guidance counselors. Nevertheless, we need to begin to have this conversation with many more principals in consultation with teachers, parents and students. They are in the best position to make this determination for their school. Carmen Farina has directed J.C. Brizard to begin this dialogue with the High School Advisory Council."

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend the implementation of the following steps:

1. Individual schools should not be permitted to opt out of annualization of student programming without showing clear justification based upon **legitimate pedagogical concerns**.
2. Preliminary annual student programs must be generated in the spring and finalized in the summer.
3. Real-time linkages should be established between Placement Centers and high school program offices to allow for the

programming of new students AND the equalization of classes
BEFORE school begins in September.

It is our position that these recommendations be implemented for
the 2005-2006 academic year.

CHAPTER 7

Best Practices in Our High Schools

Members of the CCHS toured high schools in every borough and region of the city throughout this academic year. We were able to get a look "up close and personal" at a number of novel programs and approaches to education that we believe inspired students to push themselves to achieve at a level that many students thought was unattainable. We commend those educators, from regional superintendents to principals to teachers, whose vision and creativity served to motivate their students, our children, to achieve a level of success above and beyond that which is required.

Programs and approaches to teaching & learning such as:

- Beach Channel High School's "Beach 100 Academy"
- John Adams High School's "Jump Start Academy"
- Telecommunications High School's "Learning Module" approach for level 1 & 2 readers
- The High School of Mathematics, Science and Engineering's "Inquiry-Based" approach to problem solving in mathematics

are beneficial and should serve as models for other high schools throughout the city.

The CCHS believes that more of our high schools should support student involvement in co-curricular academic activities and competitions related to science research, social science research and math team. High schools as diverse as Franklin K. Lane, Benjamin N. Cardozo and, Townsend Harris; for example, had students entered in the New York City "History Day" competition sponsored by the Museum of the City of New York. Opportunities for our students to showcase their academic talents abound and we hope that more of our students, especially those in schools that have not traditionally participated in such activities, will begin to.

We have seen what talented, creative and innovative teachers and administrators are capable of. We applaud their efforts and marvel at their accomplishments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The CCHS endorses the following recommendations:

1. All high schools should be encouraged and rewarded for developing and implementing unique programs and approaches that motivate students to achieve at a mastery level.
2. All high schools should be given the necessary resources to develop programs in science research, social science research and, math team.
3. The D.O.E. should conduct research regarding new, innovative learning programs in order to develop a menu of model programs in a number of different academic areas.

CHAPTER 8

Parents Speak Out

The C.C.H.S. conducted an informal survey of New York City high school parent leaders in an attempt to learn about parent concerns regarding the high schools. Parent leaders were defined as those parents who are active in PTA's or PA's. Respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of a series of issues of concern to high school parents on a scale of 1 through 10, with 1 being unimportant and 10 being most important (see Appendix A for full survey). A total of 150 parents completed surveys. The great majority of the responses were from region 2 (Bronx), region 3 (Queens) and, region 9 (Manhattan). The issues of greatest concern to the parent leaders surveyed were:

RANKING	ISSUE	RATING 1 - 10
1	TEACHING	8.8
2	SAFETY	8.6
3	ACADEMIC STANDARDS	8.4
4	COLLEGE ADVISEMENT	8.3
5	GUIDANCE	8.2
6	DISCIPLINE	8.0
6	ENROLLMENT/SIZE	8.0
8	REGENTS PASSING %	7.9
9	LEADERSHIP/PRINCIPAL	7.7
9	LEADERSHIP/ ASST. PRINCIPALS	7.7

(for complete results see Appendix B)

Parents are clearly focused on that which matters most, i.e., what transpires in the classroom. The DOE would be wise to keep this simple truth at the forefront of all policy decisions: nothing is more important to parents than teaching and, by extension, their children's teachers.

EPILOGUE

The shift in control of our schools from the Board of Education to the Mayor was a momentous institutional change in the history of education in New York City. This institutional change must, however, be accompanied by equally momentous cultural changes within both the schools and the central administration of the schools. To effectuate cultural change we must 'think outside the box'. We can no longer accept the familiar refrain: "It's always been done this way" as justification for the status quo. This report is heavily laden with culture morphing ideas that will make the high schools safer and more disciplined, less crowded, more efficient and, more successful for all of our children.

The work of the C.C.H.S. has raised more questions than it has answered. That is a good thing; indicative of our efforts in examining complex realities. We are most hopeful that our dedication and determination will bear fruit in the coming academic years in the form of better high schools for all our children; that, after all, is our goal. We remain confident that as we parents continue to work together we can implement real educational reform throughout the hundreds of high schools educating hundreds of thousands of our children.

APPENDIX A

High School Class Size Matters

Testimony of Prof. David C. Bloomfield

1st Vice President, CCHS Member

Before the New York City Council Commission on CFE Implementation

January 13, 2005

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I come to you today in different roles. In my professional capacity I am head of the Educational Leadership Program at Brooklyn College, where I teach aspiring New York City school and district administrators. In my personal capacity, I am Vice President of the Citywide Council on High Schools and the parent of a New York City public high school student. In all of these roles, I bring one message: CLASS SIZE MATTERS IN HIGH SCHOOLS.

As one example of the literature on the effectiveness of lower class size in high schools, I refer you to Francine Deutsch's work, How Small Classes Benefit High School Students, in the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, vol. 87, June, 2003. In studying research on classes of between 12 and 30 high school students, Dr. Deutsch found that high school students in smaller classes are more engaged and that the classes promote enriched curricula, positive student-teacher interaction, increased time on instruction rather than discipline, and high teacher morale.

In observing my own child's education and the teaching that goes on in too many of the high schools that I routinely visit, it is clear that large class size is undermining instruction, particularly in writing. Large class size and heavy class loads prevent teachers from giving the number, variety, and length of writing assignments necessary for

college and career success. A class of 30 creates a mammoth amount of teacher work in grading, let alone an impossible task for effective feedback. Teachers in all subjects are thus reduced to short, in class essays aimed more at Regents preparation than life.

Feedback is often minimal.

In crafting your recommendations, I call on you to not forget the high schools when it comes to class size reduction.

Thank you.

APENDIX B**SCHOOL:** _____ **REGION:** _____**PART I**

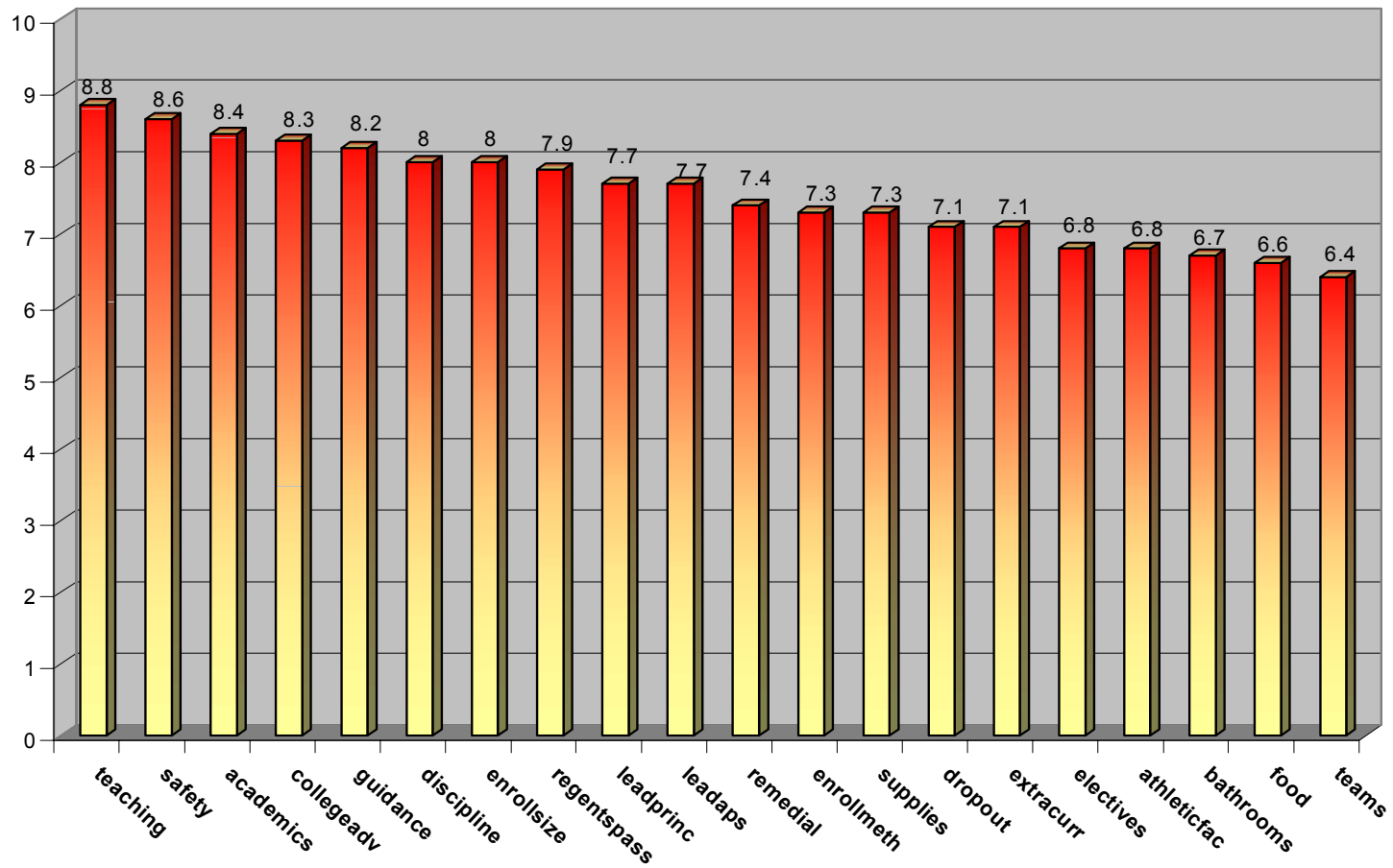
The CCHS is interested in your opinions regarding the high school that your child currently attends. Below you will find a list of issues about which parents have expressed varying degrees of concern. We would like you to rate, on a scale of 1-10, the degree to which **EACH of those issues** is of **concern to you** regarding your child's current school.

Unimportant	----->	Most Important
1	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	10

- ___ 1. Enrollment: Size of student body.
- ___ 2. Enrollment: Method used to place students in your high school.
- ___ 3. Discipline
- ___ 4. Safety
- ___ 5. Dropout rate
- ___ 6. Regents passing percentage
- ___ 7. Elective choices
- ___ 8. Bathrooms
- ___ 9. Supplies
- ___ 10. Food service
- ___ 11. Guidance services
- ___ 12. College advisement
- ___ 13. Academic standards
- ___ 14. Athletic facilities
- ___ 15. Athletic teams
- ___ 16. Extracurricular activities
- ___ 17. Leadership: Effectiveness of principal.
- ___ 18. Leadership: Effectiveness of assistant principals.

APPENDIX C

PARENT CONCERNS



APPENDIX D

Savitri Singh
Region 1

Dr. Vanessa S. Hampton
Region 2

Anthony Scarnati
Region 3

Serene D. Dhondy
Region 4

Walter Lynch
Region 5 - Treasurer

Marcela T. Stewart
Region 6 - Recording Secretary

Barry A. Kaufman, Ph.D.
Region 7 - President

Beverly Marshack
Region 9 - 2nd Vice President

David C. Bloomfield, Esq.
Region 10 - 1st Vice President

Vanessa Modafferri
Student Representative
