

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

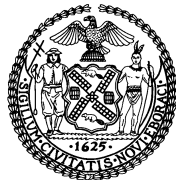
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January 8, 2013

Commissioner John King
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner King:

I am writing on behalf of New York City's 1.1 million school children and their parents, to express outrage over the lack of transparency and accountability in the process and outcome of the Contracts for Excellence (C4E) law here in New York City. As you are aware, the law requires that C4E funds be used to reduce class sizes in New York City public schools. Instead, class sizes have increased four years in a row and are now the largest they have been in 13 years in the early grades. The public process as outlined in the law has also been ignored. As Chair of the Education Committee in the New York City Council and the lead plaintiff of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit, I find this extremely troubling.

First, can you tell me if the 2011-2012 C4E plan submitted by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) was ever approved? If so, where is it posted? There is a list of districts on the State Education Department (SED) website at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/C4E/11-12_C4E/doc/2011-12_approved_C4E_districts.html whose 2011-12 C4E plans were approved, but New York City is not among them. The C4E law was to provide enhanced transparency, and yet there is no indication of the status of last year's plan.

Second, what is the status of City's plan for 2012-13? The calendar on the SED website at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/C4E/12-13_C4E/doc/C4E_Calendar_for_2012-13.htm shows that districts were supposed to publicize their plans by September 14, 2012, public comment was supposed to occur between that date and October 13, and the district's assessment of comments was supposed to be posted by October 25, 2012. None of this has yet occurred in New York City, to my knowledge. In fact there have been no borough hearings scheduled, as required by law, or Community Education Council meetings where the C4E plan was presented, which the DOE has substituted for borough hearings during the last few years.

The C4E law as written was supposed to enhance public input and accountability, by requiring that the district draw up its plan, hold public hearings and consider public input, and then revise its plan according to that input before it was submitted and approved by the State. The State was supposed to take public comments into account before approving it, or asking the district to amend it. These steps have not been followed appropriately in recent years. Instead, the City has been allocating and spending these funds before holding hearings, in a manner that is unaccountable to the public, with the State's approval occurring many months later.

I urge you to hold New York City accountable to the public process demanded by the law, and if the City is to receive these funds, the DOE must show greater efforts in reducing class size, as the law requires. Anything less does a disservice to our public school students and their constitutional right to receive an adequate, equitable education.

A quick response from your office regarding the matters outlined above would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Robert Jackson
Chair, Committee on Education

Cc: Chancellor Dennis Walcott, New York City Department of Education