

Presentation at New York City Council, Committee on Education, Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools

December 11, 2014

New York City Council Chambers - City Hall

Submitted by David Goldsmith, representing District 13 Task Force for Equal Access to Academic Excellence and Diversity

My name is David Goldsmith. I am the President of the Community Education Council for District 13 and Co-Chair, along with Barbara Freeman, our district superintendent, of the D13 Task Force for Equal Access to Academic Excellence and Diversity. Thanks for inviting representatives from D1, 3 and 13 to share our experiences of the work we have been doing in our schools on diversity and equity.

The D 13 Task Force includes parent leaders from PTA's, SLT's, the CEC as well as our Superintendent, principals, school staff and members of the community at large. Our task force initiative was born from experiences in the "PS 133 Task Force". The TF had been created to help identify consensus on what would be an ideal enrollment plan for a "rising star" District 13 elementary school that faced the possibility losing the diversity so valued by all in its community.

Those at the PS 133 TF table included both superintendents, representatives from both CECs and Presidents Council, elected officials, parent leaders and principals representing at least 10 different schools from both districts as well as community organizations.

I would like to share the District 13 "takeaways" from this planning experience:

1.) **The PS 133 plan should only be seen as a well-intentioned first effort.** From the moment we reached an agreement with the DOE to implement this student enrollment plan we understood that the plan had many inherent flaws. Given the unwillingness of the Bloomberg administration to tackle this issue, we felt it was at least a best first step. **Why a first step and not a long term solution?...because:**

2.) Supporting diversity and academic excellence in one school while leaving other schools to “fend for themselves” in our highly segregated school system can in fact have the unintended negative effect of increasing segregation in surrounding schools. The PS 133 planning process proved to all of us that the enrollment policy or pattern of one school has a very large impact on many other schools. Such impact CANNOT be ignored!

3.) The District 13 Task force was created because we learned that the only viable approach to creating the diverse and highly successful schools we want for all must be one that considers the challenges facing all the schools in our district. This dictates planning on a district wide level.

I'm here to report to you that we in District 13 know we must and can do better than the single school diversity plan we helped create at 133.

Here's where we are now:

-A working group of principals, parent leaders, joined with our Superintendent, meeting since last year, has recently reported out to the D13 Task Force with its conclusions and recommendations.

-We are planning a district wide community based series of Town Hall meetings throughout D13 this year to help the stakeholders reach a consensus in the vision of what policy we need to promote great schools for all and diversity.

-- We have decided to work with Michael Alves and Enroll Edu, who all over the country have designed viable legal student assignment plans that promote diversity, school improvement and equity. We plan to create a pilot model proposal that will help get the diversity and the academic excellence in our schools that all of our families want.

We in District 13 join with those in Districts 1 & 3 in asking the Mayor and the Chancellor to support our communities in our effort to find viable, practical and fair solutions to the well documented extreme levels of segregation that cripple our schools and harm our children.