



CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION-  
PUBLIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

**THE ROAD FORWARD  
FOR  
NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**SPEAKER:**

**EVA MOSKOWITZ**

**CEO  
HARLEM SUCCESS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL  
&  
FORMER CHAIRWOMAN,  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**JANUARY 18, 2006**

**Luncheon Series**

### **ABOUT CEI-PEA**

The Center for Educational Innovation – Public Education Association (CEI-PEA) is a New York-based nonprofit organization that creates successful public schools and educational programs. Our staff of experienced leaders in public education provides hands-on support to improve the skills of teachers and school leaders, increase parent involvement, and channel cultural and academic enrichment programs into schools. The benefits of this hands-on support are multiplied through a network of more than 170 public schools in New York as well as work in other major urban school systems across the country and around the world. We operate in cooperation with, but independently of, public school systems, providing private citizens the opportunity to make wise investments in the public schools.

### **ABOUT THE LUNCHEON SERIES**

CEI-PEA's luncheon series provides one of the only forums in which the full range of stakeholders—parents, principals, teachers, policy makers, leaders of nonprofit organizations, funders, newspaper reporters—are able to meet and discuss critical issues affecting public education. Topics of the luncheons range from educational research on innovative instructional models, to analyses of educational policies, to practitioner models for effective school leadership.

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

Special thanks to Bob Isaacson, Executive Director of CUNY TV, for broadcasting the CEI-PEA luncheons to the public. CUNY TV's educational, cultural and public affairs programming is an invaluable resource for our city, and we are proud to be a part of it.

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## **NOTE FROM THE CEI-PEA PRESIDENT**

In the seven years that Eva Moskowitz has been in the public eye as City Council member and now head of a charter school, she has proven her unwavering commitment to public education. During her tenure as Chair of the Council's Education Committee, she held 125 oversight hearings on everything from procurement practices to work rules in the teachers' contract. In the process, Eva has made some powerful enemies. But that is what a true advocate for children must bear.

CEI-PEA was honored to host Eva as speaker at our luncheon series on January 18, 2006. Eva spoke about her experiences on the City Council and the lessons she learned from those 125 oversight hearings as well as more than 300 school visits and countless PTA meetings. She painted a picture of the key issues that must be addressed for the New York City public school system to advance, and she outlined how she intends to improve public education at her new charter school, Harlem Success Academy.

Whether you agree with her or disagree with her, you cannot deny that Eva Moskowitz is one of the most dedicated New Yorkers when it comes to public education. And that was evident in her January speech.

What follows is an edited version of the transcript. We have done our best to maintain the energy that Eva brought to her remarks and the commitment she brings to public schools.

[SIGNATURE]

Sy Fliegel

## INTRODUCTION

**Sy Fliegel:** Good afternoon. It is my great pleasure to introduce today's speaker, Eva Moskowitz.

*"... she changed the priority of the City Council, and she was always out there fighting for what is right for children. ."*

In 1999, Eva was elected to represent Manhattan's 4th District in the City Council. Shortly thereafter, she was unanimously elected to become Chairperson of the Education Committee. Now that was a committee that had been dead for 12 years. In four short years, Eva passed more legislation, did more for children, than had happened in the prior 12 years. She, herself, is a product of the New York City public school system. She's a forceful advocate for public education. *The New York Times* has called Eva an "expert on education issues." When she was Chairwoman, she changed the priority of the City Council, and she was always out there fighting for what is right for children. Now the *New York Daily News* noted that, "Eva belongs to an all-too-small group of reform-minded public officials." And, of course, the *Wall Street Journal*, said, "Bravo."

Everything Eva does she does with great enthusiasm and, even more importantly, with what I think is great courage. She does what she thinks is right for children and for parents and for teachers. Any time you show great courage, you don't make friends everywhere you go. But Eva moves ahead. And she's now moved to be the CEO of the Harlem Success Charter Academy. By the way, I think it's always good to put in the title words like "success" or "excellent" or "great." I like to introduce myself as the "Great American Educator." [Laughter.]

Eva's commitment to transparency and fundamental reform led her to hold hearings on school employee labor contracts. The hearings received national attention. The *Daily News* wrote that "Eva showed moxie, vision, and a sense of duty." *Newsweek* hailed Eva as "A brave New Yorker." She has fought for increased teacher pay, and improved working conditions, but has also called for an end to work rules that hinder effective teaching and learning. For the first time in this contract, there were some major changes to work rules in New York City that will greatly benefit children.

In addition to her work on education, Eva is widely recognized as one of the Council's most accomplished legislators. The author of 10 local laws, she influenced a wide range of policy areas from tenants' rights to gun control.

1 Eva founded the Women's Caucus and led efforts to reform the Council's

internal rules. The Democratic Leadership Council named Eva as one of the party's top ten rising stars, and she is currently one of 24 participants in the Aspen-Rodel Fellowship in Public Service, which brings together the very best of the nation's emerging leaders.

Eva holds a PhD in American History from John Hopkins University and earned her BA with honors from the University of Pennsylvania—where my Board Chairman, Judy Berkowitz, was a Trustee for many, many years. You may think it's a minor thing to mention. I know it isn't. [Laughter.]

She also wrote an interesting book; she's the author of *In Therapy We Trust: America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment*. So it's my pleasure to introduce an outstanding woman of great accomplishment and courage, Eva Moskowitz.

[Applause.]

## GUEST SPEAKER

**Eva Moskowitz:** Good afternoon. Can everyone hear me? Thank you, Sy, very, very much and thank you CEI-PEA for having me. I have had the benefit for more than six years of consulting with and getting guidance and advice from those at CEI-PEA. They've been enormously helpful in preparing me for hearings, telling me about people to talk to. When I prepared my hearings, it was not just about doing research, it was about talking to practitioners who could educate me on the various topics, and CEI-PEA is an enormous wealth of knowledge in that regard. So I thank them for this opportunity, and for all the advice, and I'm hoping they are going to give me more advice in my new role.

I spent, as you know, the last six years as an elected official and four as Chair of the City Council's Education Committee. It was a wonderful experience. I think that both Joel Klein and Randy Weingarten are very glad my tenure is over. [Laughter.] While it was not my intention to make anyone's life difficult, I did hold 125 oversight hearings in that brief period of time. It was a very rigorous schedule, and I did so at I think a very critical time in our city's history vis-à-vis education. I was a strong supporter of mayoral control, and, in fact, my first set of hearings as Chair of the Education Committee was on mayoral control. But I also thought that in the context of mayoral control, there had to be someone minding the store, as it were, and

*“...I was a strong supporter of mayoral control... But I also thought that in the context of mayoral control, there had to be someone minding the store...”*

making sure that the hard questions were asked of the Department of Education, and the inadequacies there got some level of attention and focus. In addition to holding those oversight hearings, I would do about 10 PTA meetings a month, all around the city. And I was at schools approximately once a week. I had a goal when I started as a member of the Education Committee of visiting all of the city’s public schools. At

that time it was 1,356 schools, now it is 1,456 schools. I failed miserably; I went to about 300 of them. But on every single one of those schools visits, whether it was a successful school or not a successful school, I learned an enormous amount about what was not going as well as it should in terms of education. I’m very grateful I always made an effort to talk to everyone from the custodians to the school secretary to parents to teachers to principals to the librarian—anyone who would allow me five minutes of their time to figure out what schools really needed, what we were doing right and what we were doing wrong.

I took the attitude as Chair of the Education Committee that no topic was too small or too controversial for us to hold a hearing on, and, hence, I held hearings on everything from toilet paper to copy paper. It seems amazing that one could have a \$15 billion operating budget and yet have gross shortages of toilet paper, but that is the case in the New York City school system. The same goes for copy paper. We didn’t just focus on shortage areas. I went through every instructional topic: science, social studies, math, literacy, the arts, special ed, And I went back to them multiple times because that was the only way to hold the Department’s feet to the fire on those topics. Before every hearing, I would review the transcript of the previous hearing. No one at the Department of Ed, by the way, did that, and so they were constantly making promises to us. Often it was perhaps understandable because the old people were no longer there. For the arts education hearings, we went through three different people, and the new person had no idea that the last person had promised, for example, that every elementary school with more than 500 children would get two arts teachers. It sounded kind of implausible to me at the time, but I thought since I had them on the record saying that—then at the next hearing, whatever happened? This is how it went:

“Does every school with more than 500 children have two art teachers?”

“What? I don’t know. I never heard that before.”



And I would say things like, “Well, if you look on page 36 of the transcript, you’ll see that Mr. Giamondo—does anyone remember him?—he said that every school with more than 500 kids was going to have an additional art teacher.”

“Oh, well that was then, this is now.”

And that was a fairly typical exchange.

But to make things harder for the Department of Education, we not only held hearings on current instructional topics, we also held hearings on things we thought should be instructional topics. So I held a hearing on civics education, which was not its own instructional topic, to ask the Department, “Well, what should kids know on the workings of government? What should the civics curriculum look like? Why did we have a civics curriculum in 1950 and no longer have one now? Is someone making a clear, concerted policy decision, or is it just falling through the cracks?”

I alternated instructional topics with operational topics. We did everything from the Galaxy budgeting system, which was one of the more amusing ones because the Department of Education had done a new version of it, and they said that it was completely user-friendly and they had done massive training, in principle. When I made a request fairly far in advance that I wanted them to bring Galaxy on a PowerPoint, so the public could see and we could see, and they could walk us through, they had trouble figuring out what any of it meant in front of them, and that made short shrift of the claim it was user-friendly and transparent. They had to call over to Tweed to get someone else to come, and then that person didn’t know and it went on and on. It was, again, not intentionally a circus, but it ended up being a circus.

We also did hearings on the procurement process. Again, the Department claimed that it was no longer Soviet-style; they had made massive improvements, and that they were buying items at market prices. And I had my staff do research at random. Come up with 25 items and figure out how much we can get them for, and we couldn’t find the materials for as much money as the Department of Education was paying. [Laughter.] And so that seemed to belie the claim that we were paying market prices.

As you know, the most controversial hearings I held were the hearings on the labor agreements. Those were difficult days. I knew that when I held them, that it could mean the end of my political career. My staff and I had a

meeting, and they wanted to make sure that I fully understood that I was potentially taking myself out of politics. Interestingly enough, I didn't actually think that was true, but I was prepared to make that call. They turned out to be right and I was wrong. But, leaving that aside, I really thought that since I had run on the platform of education, since that was the impetus that had got me into the business of politics, that I couldn't ignore the elephant in the room. I knew that the labor agreements were important to the running of the schools, in some ways much more important than mayoral control. I knew even when Mayor Bloomberg got control that he really didn't get very much at all. He got an opportunity for accountability and he ended the finger-pointing of the Chancellor blaming the Board, and the Board blaming the Mayor. That particular song and dance could be avoided by mayoral control, but I never thought that mayoral control meant that Chancellor Klein could actually run the schools, and I actually think that Joel and Mayor Bloomberg thought they could. I think they since have learned otherwise. But the labor agreements really control every aspect of the school system.

My starting premise was that teachers are underpaid, and the working conditions for teachers are completely inadequate, but also that there are work rules that impede instruction and learning and so I held five days of hearings. I was advised, by the way, by many people to only take on one contract. People said to me, "Just take on the custodians' union contract. They are not as beloved as teachers." But I thought that that would be also a wrong choice, that the most important resource we have are our faculty members. And if there is something in the labor agreements that is impeding us from educating kids, then we had to take on the 800-pound gorilla. So I did, and I produced a "Cliffs Notes" of the contracts. It was very important to me to be faithful to the document. It's the only time in my political career that my PhD in history was useful at all. I was trained to read texts and to be faithful, and so there are a few copies around—luckily I didn't get sued for making them look like Cliffs Notes, and I think we called them Council Notes to avoid infringing on intellectual property rights—but these Cliffs Notes summarized what are very extensive documents. The teachers' union contract is 200 pages, and when you included portions of state law and the side agreement, it's anywhere between 600 and 800 pages. I wanted something digestible, so the Cliffs Notes are about 20 pages. I did that for the teachers' union contract, the custodians' union contract, and the principals' union contract.

I think the hearing I am proudest of was my last hearing of the 125 – and it was incredibly agonizing for me when I realized that I had one last hearing

to do. I wanted to go up until December 31st, but my staff wouldn't let me, so I held my last hearing on December 7th. I was trying to figure out for the last one, what topic should I do? And I had so many topics that I hadn't gotten to. But, when I asked myself the question, "What is the single most important factor in a child's education?" I concluded that teacher quality should be the subject of the last hearing. Obviously, I had touched on teacher quality in all of the hearings, when I held hearings on science and math. But I thought it was appropriate to dedicate the last hearing to the subject of teacher quality. What do we mean by teacher quality? What does it look like? How do we measure it? Do we measure it? Do we think about teacher quality as much as we think about student performance? And I concluded that, with all these high-stakes tests, the Department of Education had really done very little thinking about teacher quality. And that is a tremendous oversight.

From these 125 hearings, and six years as a Council member, and 300 school visits, I thought I would share with you a few of my conclusions, and then talk a little bit about my new venture, and then throw it open for questions.

One of my conclusions is that the problem of student achievement often is thought of exclusively in terms of our poorest and neediest students. And I certainly have done a lot of work on the achievement gap. It is a glaring problem; I'm very proud of the report that I did. I was the first person to ask the Department of Education to break down Regents diplomas by race and ethnicity. I was shocked by the results. I knew it was bad; I didn't know it was as bad as it is. Nine out of ten Black and Latino students do not receive a Regents diploma. So we've got a situation where we've got a new way in which Black and Latino students are sitting on the back of the educational bus. It's a new invention because we haven't had the Regents local diploma distinction forever (although it has had various incarnations). This is just a profoundly troubling statistic. But all the way down—and by the way, when I held hearings on that topic, the Department couldn't answer the basic question of, "Where does this achievement gap begin?" Okay, we see it in high school; we see nine out of ten. But, is it growing exponentially? Are we okay in kindergarten, but not okay by 5th grade? They couldn't answer those sorts of basic questions about the achievement gap.

But lest you think that the problem of education in New York City or around the nation is one that only affects our poorest, more vulnerable students, you would be coming to a radically wrong conclusion. The middle class and our highest performing kids are also eating from the same trough, if you

will. They are also not being adequately educated, and the statistics are pretty amazing and compelling on this front. Internationally, the United States ranks 23 out of 29 industrialized nations in science. Our math cur-

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riculums do not compare in any way, shape or form to the Japanese and the Germans. The higher order thinking that the students in those countries are doing make us look like we are engaged in a bunch of superficial skill-building activities. So, we’ve got a problem, which is not only of national proportion but it is also one of international proportion. I think that that is not always recognized in the public discourse about public education and I think that the administration, frankly, contributes. I’m a public school parent and I am often being told I should be satisfied because my kids do not go to the school that other kids suffer in, which is

true. My children are in a District 2 school. But in the District 2 school, my kid is getting science once a week for half a year, no foreign language; I don’t think the math is adequate. I mean, there is a whole set of ways in which the educational inadequacy runs the socio-economic race and ethnic spectrum. And I think we have to grapple with that problem.

One of the things that I’ve learned from my four years of vigorous oversight is that it’s easy to get complacent—although I know no one in this room is—but in terms of the larger public, that allows us to say Mike Bloomberg and Joel Klein are going to take care of this problem for us, that they are knights in shining armor, and don’t worry, they’ve got the reform-thing going and they are going to solve our problems. And that of course is false for two reasons. First, they are only going to be around another three years, and that is going to go by like that. But second of all, unless, in my view, we deal with the education monopoly, they are still tinkering at the margins. As many of you know in this room, I’m a big believer in competition. I support competition in the form of charter schools. We must raise the cap. We must expand the number of educational options. We must also shut down charter schools that are not high-performing. But I think that we’ve got to find a way to make the benefits of competition real. Right now, they are not. There are only 47 charter schools serving 12,000 kids in a system in which there are 1,456 schools and 1.1 million children, so they are not having the benefit, even the very high-performing ones are not having the benefit that those of us who are embracing competition believe that they should.

I am obviously more convinced than ever that the labor agreements are a problem. I would agree with Sy that some progress was made in the recent contract negotiations. But, let's just put this in context. First, none of the other contracts affecting the schools was dealt with. This City has not dealt with the custodians' union contract in 40 years. Real estate is very important to the running of the schools. Principals basically have to ask permission of their custodians in order to use their school's building. They're not really public property. I mean, that's what it comes down to. The custodians' control—and some are very good, and some are not so good. But the whole mechanism of the way we pay custodians, of who has control over the building, is not serving the interest of children. The principals' union contract was also not dealt with in these contract negotiations. But even if you just look at the teachers' union contract, we have a very, very long way to go. My example would be that finally, this contract removed perhaps one of the most egregious aspects of the contract, and that is the inability of school managers to fire personnel. But, what was changed was that, now, confirmed sexual molesters can be fired. If you're not a good math teacher, that process has not been changed. So let's just keep that in perspective, that it took us a long time to get to the point where the process has been expedited if you, in essence, commit some sort of sexual offense. It hasn't been expedited for everything else. That system is unworkable in terms of being in the interest of kids.

Finally, I would point to a rules-based school culture and the disciplinary process that one has to go through to deal with a child who has violated the principles of school culture. I'm sure some of you have seen the organizational chart that a group did; I mean it's impossible to understand. I see Dave Bloomfield is here, who before my committee did a roll-out of that chart.

I want to briefly mention the tragedy of the Nixzmary Brown case in this context. I'm sure everyone in this room and in the city shares my view of the heart-breaking nature of that case, and it's been very hard to read these stories. I personally can't get through them just because they are so disturbing, the images. First I should say that, obviously, the parents are first and foremost responsible for this tragedy, and obviously the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) did not do its job. But it's been very interesting to me the approach the media has taken to the school. The way the question is being asked is, "Did the school follow the rules?" And, the school appears to have complied with the law, although we don't know because a full investigation has not yet been conducted. But I thought we were going for more than compliance with the law. Is that the standard? Or,

is the standard, "Did the school do everything in its power to save Nixzmary?" What the media have reported is that the school called four times. They say in the news reports that the school reportedly called ACS, the police, and the state hotline. Those are the phone calls that I have been able to piece together through news reports. Do you know how many phone calls I make as an elected official to fix a pothole? Twelve. If you want a pothole fixed in the city of New York, you have to make a minimum of twelve calls, and even then, you are not guaranteed to get it fixed. So if you suspect child abuse, isn't the bar that you protected the child? And even if we're not dealing obviously with the tragedy of child abuse, I just think that the response to Nixzmary is part of the problem. When we educate children, what we're supposed to be asking ourselves is not, "Did we comply with the state law of having gym three days a week?" Not with the state law of whether we have art X number of days. The question is, "Have we done an excellent job educating all the kids in our building?" And to me, the Nixzmary case is really emblematic of the low bar we are setting for the schools.

Well, now I have an opportunity to set the bar high, as I am trying to do. I am so excited to be the CEO of a new charter school. I thought that I would like it a lot. I absolutely love it, and the reason I love it is really because of the freedom it allows you to get education right. I've been spending a lot of time kibitzing from the sidelines and thinking about what is wrong with the New York City school system, but to have the opportunity to get it right from the get-go, and the responsibility to get it right, is extremely exciting. The Harlem Success Academy is a charter school that, thanks to the State Education Department (SED), just got its charter January 10th, and we thank SED very much for giving us the green light and all of their support in the process. We will be opening with 155 kindergarteners and first graders. The goal is to be a K-8 school. We will be located in central or west Harlem; we are waiting on the Department of Education (DOE) to give us a building. People ask me frequently "What's the theme of the school?" We don't have an arts theme. We don't have a technology theme. Our theme is "excellent education" and to do whatever it takes to make sure that every single child in our school succeeds. We have a narrow definition of success, and we have a broad definition of success, and we are gunning to succeed on both of those fronts.

The more narrow definition is of course, the high stakes exams. We consider it our full responsibility to prepare kids for the reading, math, social studies, and science exams. We have a fairly traditional instructional approach in order to get there. We are using Success for All, which is a literacy and math program used in over 1800 schools nationwide, servicing a

million children. The reading program is fairly phonics-based. But we have a very progressive view of the whole child. So our school will have a tremendously rigorous arts curriculum. We have a sports curriculum. We will be the only public school in the City of New York to offer kindergarteners science five days a week. I believe very strongly that it is important to get science in from the get-go. Many of you may have heard of my hearings where I talk constantly about science being a second-class subject. It will not be at Harlem Success. We know that we have to do extra work in order to make our teachers comfortable with the subject matter, and to be as competent as they are, most elementary school teachers have a higher degree of training in literacy than in math and science, and so we will need to compensate for that.

One thing I just wanted to say in conclusion is that one of the things that has been most fascinating—and I should say I've been on the job all of two weeks, I started Monday, January 2nd, so I don't want to claim to know more than I do—but in the last two weeks, the educational planning that I have engaged in with my staff would not be possible in the New York City school system. Just not possible. The questions that we are asking you're not allowed to ask in the New York City school system. So, for example, we're asking the question, "What should the length of the school day be to best educate our kids, both from the point of view of their developmental stage, and based on what we know we need to teach our kids?" And we have concluded, and this is going to shock some of you early childhood specialists, that our kids will be educated from 8:20 in the morning, until 5:00. That is a very long day, and we know it. We have a graduated schedule, so they are not going to do that the first week. They are going to build up to it. There are other charter schools both in New York and around the country that have done it. They do report that there are a lot of meltdowns. I see Diane and Leslie here. We have talked about the meltdowns. They have given us very good advice about how to handle the meltdowns, but just to give you a sense of comparison, this will give us two and a half extra years of instruction by the time our kids graduate from our school. Two and a half years of extra instruction. You couldn't do that in a traditional public school.

All of those decisions that we can make based on what's in the interest of our kids, are impossible to make in traditional public schools. We are having very extensive discussions about the compensation of our teachers. Not only first year teachers, and I am pleased to report that we will be offering between five and seven thousand more than the New York City school system. Of course we also expect a longer day, so that would only be fair. But we can ask a very precise question. One of the things we are thinking

about is, for example: is someone who has taught five years at another school worth the same as someone who has taught five years in our school? Because we have trained that person, that person is on board with a certain culture and vision, we are concluding that someone who has been at our school for five years is worth more to us than someone who has been at another school for five years. You can't make any of those distinctions at the New York City school system. There is a salary schedule. It is incredibly hard to read, because there is A, B, C and D depending on how many credits, if you're grandfathered in, but basically, it is simple seniority plus a few educational credits.

Finally, we can't make instructional decisions like the one we just made yesterday. I have been spending a lot of time on science instruction, wondering how to deliver it best, and the experts I spoke to in various schools around the country said to me that unlike social studies, for science you really need 60 minutes because you have equipment, you have kits, and the set up and close up time takes somewhere between eight and twelve minutes. The younger the kids are, the more time it takes to put those things together. In the New York City school system, you can finagle double periods, but it's a chunk, and it can't be longer, and it's not supposed to be shorter. So, we couldn't do our 60 minutes of science. And it becomes very clear—I had approached the contract more as an academic if you will, in terms of looking at the text, the language of the contract. Now I am looking at it as a practitioner, where I want to be free to ask at every juncture, "What is in the best interest of our kids, and equally important, what will make our teachers most effective?" Which are obviously two interrelated questions. And I can ask that freely at every turn. It's extremely liberating. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

## QUESTION & ANSWER

**Laurie Tisch:** My first question is that research shows that charter schools haven't done any better than traditional public schools, if you look across the country. Some are better, some are not better, but across the country it hasn't really been proven to be any different, so I'd like to hear your opinion on that.

The other question I have is that I think a lot of the things you want to do in your school are extremely exciting: the science, the arts, paying the teach-



ers more. What I don't know, though, is what's the goal? If your school is successful, is the goal for all New York City public schools to replicate this model? Can it be done for the budget that the New York City public school system runs on? I just don't know what the long term goal is if in fact you reach your first goal, which I think you will.

**Moskowitz:** Let me try to answer the first and then the second question. The first question was people claim that the research shows that charter schools nationally don't do any better than traditional public schools, and I would say a couple of things to that, with the disclaimer that I am no expert on the national. I have enough trouble understanding New York City. I think it's important to remember that the point of charter schools is not simply that they will outperform, but they will be closed-down if they don't perform. And part of the problem with traditional public schools, I mean I'm sure some of you are old enough in this room to remember the old Benjamin Franklin school. It had a two percent graduation rate for years on end. Didn't anyone notice that there were, like, six kids graduating from that high school? I mean, how does that end up happening year after year after year?

In terms of New York, I am very confident that the New York City charter schools are outperforming the traditional public schools. Now, we have the advantage that we have a lot of educational entrepreneurship here; there is a lot of philanthropy; there are a lot of resources. I mean, I have even noticed a difference, you know, between this year and three years ago. And again, they're not all the same quality, but there are very talented people going into the business of opening charter schools and by the way, it makes my life much easier. It used to be that there was Sy and Harvey here at CEI-PEA. I mean there was no one else to talk to. And now they're an additional resource, but there are a lot of people out there, and I am looking at representatives here from Achievement First, where they are doing a phenomenal job and we have them on speed dial. We bother them a lot because they really know what they are doing. This is also nice because unlike politics where everyone is sort of mean, in education, everybody shares. [Laughter.] You know, even though we are competitive in terms of the performance of our schools, there is much more sharing of information. So I would say in New York City, I am confident that the schools are outperforming. That's not to say that some shouldn't be shut down. That needs to happen as part of the process.

In terms of your second question about what the goal is, you know that's a very interesting and extremely important question. My mandate is both to get this particular school right, and to try and make some progress towards

the replication challenge. Because right now, 12,000 are being served, and there are 1.1 million, and if we can't solve the replication problem, then I think charter schools have extreme value for the children that go to those schools, but don't have larger value, policy value.

My goal is for the New York City school system to go the route of the U.S. Post Office. It's not out of business, but there is FedEx and UPS. And the U.S. Post Office is better because there is FedEx and UPS and all the others. And I believe that if we can get the replication model right—we're far from there yet—that what you will see is traditional public schools will get better because they are in competition. I mean, we already are very sensitive to our competition. We see other charter schools as our competition, as well as traditional public schools. And just to be clear, my goal is to be the best charter school in New York City, and I hope that's a constructive impulse.

**Henry Stern:** There's an educational dispute going on in New York City. I don't want to compare it to the big Indians versus the little Indians, but there is a group of people whose spiritual leader is Diane Ravitch and who include Saul Stern, Andrew Wolfe from the Bronx, and some others, who are quite upset with the new curriculum. These are people who believe in phonics rather than whole word, and old math rather than fuzzy math as it is called, who don't think that children have to sit in little circles and talk to each other, who are not overly fond of teaching self-esteem as a goal or political correctness and all the rest of it. Now you're in a charter school, the educational establishment of the city takes a very different view. Not only the former Ms. Lamb, but her successor Carmen Farina, Chief of Instruction, feel quite differently about these matters. Do you have a position on these issues? Or are you too new to express, or too scared? [Laughter.]

**Moskowitz:** I'm certainly not too scared. I may be too new. But I don't even think that's right. I mean, I've done a lot of work from 50,000 feet above ground. I have not been in the trenches doing this, and you know my general view was several fold. First, I did think that the Everyday Phonics was not sufficiently phonics based for my taste, and I do have criticisms of constructivist math, although I think that, you know, where your kid falls on the spectrum may affect your judgment. It tends to be not particularly helpful for kids who can think very conceptually, and more helpful for kids who need that level of experiential learning to grasp the concept, but we have a sort of one-size-fits-all in the New York City school system, and so it doesn't allow for that more differentiated approach. But I have trouble getting as worked-up as any of the folks you mentioned about curriculum because I

don't think curriculum makes for good education. I think you can have a great curriculum and a lousy teacher and your kids are going to be in big trouble, and vice versa.

To me it was always sort of a side/political discussion, not that it didn't have some merit, but a little distracting. You know, I don't have a single faculty member yet. Admittedly I started two weeks ago, so I'm not going to panic yet, but I am panicked by looking at the resumes. We've gotten about 400 resumes in, and if you want to understand what the problem with student achievement is, all you have to do is look at 400 people who want to be teachers. There's no shortage of people who want to be teachers. The problem is highly educated, highly qualified teachers. That is the problem. They can take a curriculum and make it work. I am making some choices about curriculum, but however phonics-based our literacy program is, a good teacher is still going to teach sight-words. The debate is not an ideological one, it's a practical, one: are your kids meeting the standards? And I can't get too drawn into those ideological debates when we've got a practical problem of educating teachers, and the really big problem is the qualifications and level of preparedness of our teachers.

[Applause.]

**Michael Meyers:** Before the mayoral election, we got rosy reports from the media about New York City school progress. We had promises from Chancellor Klein, they are going to strip the teachers' contract up and pare it down to maybe eight pages. Everything was rosy. And then they negotiate the contract, and even CEI-PEA, if I remember, gave them a good grade on the progress made...

**Fliegel:** Did you say "even"?

**Meyers:** Even CEI-PEA gave the mayor a good grade on terms of changes on the union contract. But after the mayoral election, all of a sudden we get all these negative reports, including the stats that you gave us that 9 out of 10 of the Black and Hispanic students are not getting Regents diplomas. We get the revelation from you that surprised even Henry Stern that the only change in the union contract that affected the rules was with respect to sex crimes or offences as opposed to ineffective teachers—and this could go on and on and on in terms of the disaster after the mayoral election. My question to you is: Did the media give the mayor a pass, and if so, why?

**Moskowitz:** Yes, the media did give the mayor a pass. But so did Freddie Ferrer. I mean Freddie Ferrer had an open opportunity to challenge the

Mayor's accomplishments. Whoever you believe makes the best mayor, and as you know I supported Bloomberg, there was a very diminished educational debate and I think that we are all poorer because there wasn't a mayoral education debate about what is and isn't happening. I tried very hard not to give the Mayor a free pass both before I endorsed him and after. In fact, when I called him—he didn't call me, I called him to offer to endorse him—I said, "If you choose to accept, I should let you know that I am having a hearing in two days on science where I am going to give you an earful about your inadequacies, so you might not want to have the press conference the same day, to avoid those mixed messages." But, the area where I think the media fell very flat and was really the editorial pages, all of which from The New York Times to Newsday gave the Mayor a pass on the scores.

I held six hours of hearings, much to the Chancellor's chagrin, and you know various people called me grouchy. I'm never happy and I was always wishing that I could just go home and celebrate. And the reason I couldn't go home and celebrate was because on the state exams, 4 out of 5 major cities in New York State improved dramatically. The charter schools improved even more, and the Mayor was making the claim that this was all due to Children First. Well, they don't use Children First in Rochester, so how could it be due to Children First? Also, 30 to 40 principals told me that they thought the exam was easier, and it happens. I asked at my committee hearing, "Has anyone ever thrown out an exam when it was believed to have been easier than last year's?" I held the hearing on Monday and on Friday, Rick Mills threw out I think it was portions of the Math B exam because it was too hard. I asked testing experts, "Has anyone ever thrown out the exam because it was too easy?" and they were silent for a while and then an academic who I think was from Harvard, said, "Well there was one state that offered free tuition to college based on high performance on a high school exam, and when they had all these kids who were then eligible for free tuition, they decided that the exam was too easy." That was the only case he could think of.

In the first year of Children First, you'll remember, the scores went down. And Randi Weingarten and others were saying, "You see, Children First doesn't work." I mean that's sort of silly. You can't tell in one year. You've got to be looking at five years. You need to know how many kids are exempt. That's the other thing that I looked at and found very, very troubling. I looked at the school where Bloomberg made his announcement. There were about 28 kids who took the exam. There are 100 fourth graders. There were lots of instances in which maybe overall the number of kids

who were exempted was only 5,000 and maybe that number was true, but at individual schools, the numbers can vary tremendously. Charter schools know this because they are so small that you know you have one teacher who is not as high-performing and you see a real difference. You know, when you don't have the numbers, it's much more sensitive to slight variations, and so we just need to be much more thoughtful about these tests and I think the media shouldn't have said, "Take a bow." They should have done data analysis on schools. I mean, if a school is going up 40 percentage points, I don't know, that seems a little fishy to me. What is going on? And if it's real, let's do what they are doing! Let's drink their water because it's something pretty amazing.

**Joe Reich:** First of all, I'm very glad that you're coming into the charter school business, which I happen to think is a big part of the solution. But, what I don't understand, Eva, is it's night and day when you talk about the freedoms that exist in one area that don't exist in the other area. You look in the automobile industry and General Motors and Ford for years had stupid managements dealing with strong unions and now they are all going bankrupt because people can buy a Toyota or whatever they want. How do we get a system where parents and children can choose their schools and there is the freedom to run them the right way, grafted onto the monopoly. At what point do we really begin to influence it?

**Moskowitz:** It's a great question, and obviously I don't have any kind of definitive answers. One of the things that I would like to do is if you look at the schools that have done replication—we have KIPP and that's a national model—you don't get the benefits of competition when you've got essentially one school in each city. What my goal is with Harlem Success is to have concentrations in neighborhoods. If you have five schools in a neighborhood, it seems to me you could have the U.S. Postal System and FedEx comparison. The local school is going to have to deal with the competition at some point because the successful school will draw all their students and steal their faculty. I mean, those shouldn't be bad words, right? We're going to try and get the best school we can and we're going to hustle to do it. And we're not going to worry about people's feelings in that sense. I don't think you can do that unless you really concentrate because we've got 47 schools.

I also think that the replication, which is very contrary to the initial charter school law, I think there was this vision, and it's a very nice vision, that they would be sort of organic and sort of bottom up and there would be, you know, neighborhood people who would want to start a school. I have found this incredibly challenging; I wish I'd gone to business school. What was I

thinking getting a PhD? It's not particularly helpful in my current context. I mean, it is a \$3 million business and I'm meeting with accounting firms and, you know we love Sheila and the authorizers but we're terrified. We've got to do everything right. We want to make sure that we don't do anything wrong. And the level of due diligence that is required to do this—and maybe it wasn't envisioned that way, I wasn't involved in the 1998 effort—it requires a sort of knowledge base and expertise that I think is really not a mom and pop type of operation and so I think that replication is going to be the way to go.

And by the way, I could fundraise for this school. For me it's sort of nice, you don't need to be limited to \$1,000 a pop, which is, you know, to get to a million dollars when these fundraising calls, I'm sort of envious that people can find people who might be able to give \$10,000, that seems easy by comparison. But we're very, very mindful because we want to do replication. At Harlem Success, we want to educate our kids for the exact same dollar figure that the traditional public schools do. Both because we want to replicate and we're not going to be able to guarantee that level of fundraising even if we could do it now, but also I think that's the only way to demonstrate the policy implications and so we literally are obsessed with that per pupil spending figure. And, God forbid we go over. You know, all my cell phones and electronic devices start ringing that I've got to cut something. [Laughter.]

**Fliegel:** I want to thank Eva, and I want to thank you all for coming. Have a very pleasant day.

[Applause.]

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## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

28 West 44th Street, Suite 300  
New York, NY 10036-6600  
Phone: (212) 302-8800 Fax: (212) 302-0088  
Website: [www.cei-pea.org](http://www.cei-pea.org)

Center for Educational Innovation -  
Public Education Association  
28 West 44th Street, Suite 300  
New York, NY 10036-6600

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