

Education Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 15, 2017
6PM to 8PM
Cedric McClester, Chairman

This meeting, that was held at the Community Board's main conference room, combined with the Youth Services Planning Committee under their chairman, Larry Robinson.

The Committees heard from a social worker from the New York City Autism Charter School. The school, currently in East Harlem is replicating their program, September 2017, at the 116X Campus on Fox Street. Ms. Moira Cray, LMSW, BCBA, the Director of Transition and Community Outreach, spoke to the assembled group about the impending school, and answered concerns from committee members.

The school will co-locate with schools and community based organizations already situated on the 116X campus. Ms. Cray expects that only 5 classrooms will be used, and that the Autism school will not use other facilities in the building—other than bathrooms. The school will start with 12 students and increase to 20. The ages of the students will range from 5 years old to 21. The student body can go up to 32 youngsters. Teachers in charge of classrooms will be NYS Special Education Certified. There will be teacher assistants as well as social workers and support staff. Each student will have an Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.). The classes are ungraded. The students range in autism to heavy to mild to none.

Autism affects the brain and is a lifelong disability. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) estimates in a 2014 study that 1 in 68 children have autism with boys (1 in 42) and girls (1 in 89). Children with autism respond to concrete language, not abstract. A diagnosis is made via a behavioral evaluation. There is no medical test or marker. One may see body rocking or hand clapping traits.

The school in East Harlem was started by two mothers of children with autism. The school is not backed by Foundation money. The City underwrites the charter. Students will be chosen by lottery as is the case for all charter schools. Preference will be given to students in this community board area and siblings. Anyone can apply to the school. Applications are available now. The application deadline is April 1st of this year. The lottery for the Bronx program will be held on May 15th at 9AM. The lottery for the program in East Harlem will be held on May 12th.

There will be staff training on site and support. Staff undergoes a rigorous evaluation procedure. New staff is evaluated every 3 months, then 6 months for returning staff, the every year for more experienced staff.

Students from other programs on the 116X campus will be encouraged to meet and even work with the students with autism. In terms of security, instructional staff is always present with the children.

The Education and Youth Services Planning Committees also heard from Myisha Taylor of the Bronx Charter School for The Arts. The school is currently in the process of renewing its charter. The school is located at 950 Longfellow Avenue at the corner of Garrison Avenue in the Hunts Point section of Bronx Community Board 2. It has been around for 12 years, currently has 310 students, and resides in its own building. Bronx Charter School for the Arts is a K through 5 school with a special education component. The school is planning to expand to 6th, 7th, and 8th grades which means finding other quarters to handle those grades- a possible co-location.

The school teaches education through the arts-music, theater, dance, and visual arts. Many students, upon graduation, go to other charter schools and St. Ignatius- a local parochial school.

The school is headed by a Board of Trustees. There is no foundation backing. NYS Certified teachers are on staff as well as diverse staff from the community.

Applications are available until the 6th of April. A lottery will take place on April 7, 2017.

Mr. Justin Lamorella, of NYC Planning spoke about the process of doing a Southern Boulevard study. He spoke about involving the community in long term comprehensive planning of street infrastructure through the Community Board. In a demonstration, Community Board members were asked to put different colored stickers on a map indicating what they wanted in a particular area.

Patrice Crooks of the New York Public Library spoke about the NYCHA Digital Literacy initiative that will increase free technology classes throughout the South Bronx. Tech Connect will be in 96 branches of the library. Project Code will take place in 8 branches, including Hunts Point. Students can learn Microsoft Office, Google Dots, 3D Printing, and Coder Games. The Hunts Point Library will have Spanish speaking classes as well. There is a waiting list at the Hunts Point Library for Homework Help. It is advised to enroll in the summer session.

Mr. Thomas of FEDCAP spoke about the organization's Youth Training Network, High School Equivalency Preparation and program in pathway training in culinary arts for ages 16 through 24. FEDCAP is located at 2432 Grand Concourse. The program is for youngsters out of school and not working.

Richard P. Sherman
recorder