

September 16, 2022

Chancellor David C. Banks
New York City Department of Education

Re: Call to Permanently End Middle-School Screens

Dear Chancellor Banks,

It is with great concern that we write to you on behalf of 39 organizations and over 400 individual students, parents, and community members regarding impending admission decisions for the 2022-2023 school year. Specifically, we are troubled that this administration is purportedly preparing to reverse course and allow discriminatory admission methods to restart at the middle-school level despite two years of equitable progress.

A reinstatement of middle-school screens would result in direct harm to our most vulnerable students and families both academically and socio-emotionally, and would exacerbate segregation in one of the most segregated school systems in the country. We request that this administration act on over a decade of research and advocacy by organizations, students, parents, and educators and call for the **permanent elimination of middle-school (MS) screens citywide.**

A Synthesis of Facts in Support of Eliminating Middle-School Screens:

Diversity at previously screened, highly sought-after middle schools has increased citywide.

Within the first year of removing MS screens citywide, 50 of the most selective middle-school programs saw an increase in offers going to students from low-income families and students learning English as a new language.¹ Several schools were witness to considerable shifts in offers going to historically marginalized student groups: The Christa McAuliffe school in Brooklyn saw an 11% increase in offers to English Language Learners, Mark Twain Middle School saw an 11% increase in offers to students from low-income families, and NYC Lab Middle School for Collaborative Studies also saw a 23% increase in offers to students from low-income families.²

¹ Reema Amin, Big changes to this year's middle school admission process yielded modest demographic shifts, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/5/11/22431085/nyc-middle-school-offers-2021-integration> (May 11, 2021)

² Michael Elsen-Rooney, Pandemic admission screens pause boosts diversity at NYC middle schools, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-middle-schools-pandemic-middle-school-screens-suspension-20210511-bvnten6fmmhibek3jzl6hyna6e-story.html> (May 11, 2021); Reema Amin, Big changes to this year's middle

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Community School District (CSD) 15, which effectively removed screening from all middle-school programs in 2018 only required one enrollment cycle to see a dramatic increase in offers to low-income students, students learning English, and students in temporary housing.³ Prior to their policy change, only three of the 11 middle schools in District 15 were within the target range for diversity (i.e. 40-70% of offers going to high needs students). Within the first year, 8 of the 11 schools met goals for diversity and recent data on 2020-2021 offers shows that the increase in diversity has stayed consistent, with 7 out of 11 meeting the target range.⁴

Preliminary data on the effects of removing middle-school screens shows promising progress toward a less segregated, more inclusive school system. A reversion to screens not only stunts this progress, it also puts NYC at risk of supporting a policy clearly attributed to denying NYC's most vulnerable students access to public learning opportunities.

The segregative and detrimental effects of screening are well-documented, making any allowance for schools to return to MS screens an unsound policy that is not supported by research.

In 2019, New York Appleseed released a report debunking the notion that residential segregation is the driving force behind middle-school segregation in NYC.⁵ In 2018, only 17% of middle schools relied solely on a student's place of residence (or elementary school) for admission.⁶ The segregation present in the city's most diverse Community School Districts (such as CSDs 2, 3, and 15) appeared to be caused not by geography, but by intentional policy of the NYCDOE.

Subsequent reports only affirmed Appleseed's findings and calls to eliminate MS screens. In 2019, The School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG), commissioned by former Mayor de Blasio, produced two reports which found that, "New York City's schools with exclusionary admissions practices are among the most homogeneous middle and high schools. These schools disproportionately under-serve the city's Black students, Latinx students, students with disabilities and multilingual learners compared to the makeup of the entire student population."⁷ The NYC Bar Association released their own intensively researched report, which

school admission process yielded modest demographic shifts,

<https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/5/11/22431085/nyc-middle-school-offers-2021-integration> (May 11, 2021)

³ Brad Lander, Nyah Berg & David Tipson, The White Flight That Wasn't: New Data Reveal That Brooklyn School Integration Is Working,

<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-new-data-reveal-brooklyn-school-integration-is-working-20191114-ygw2flcqkngqne5ctz2ewfu3qy-story.html> (last updated Nov. 14, 2019)

⁴ Jillian Jorgensen, Admission changes fuel more diverse middle school offers,

<https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2021/05/11/admissions-changes-fuel-more-diverse-middle-school-offers> (May 11, 2021)

⁵ New York Appleseed, Student Assignment to Public Middle Schools in New York City,

https://www.nyappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Middle-School-Advocacy-Briefing_01_19-PDF.pdf (Jan., 2019)

⁶ Id. at

⁷ School Diversity Advisory Group, Making the Grade: A Path to Real Integration and Equity for NYC Public School Students,

concluded in calling for the elimination of competitive admissions at the elementary and middle-school level, further reasoning, “Competitive admissions for very young children are pedagogically unsound because research demonstrates that all children derive educational and social benefits from diverse classrooms with students of differing races, economic status, and learning ability.”⁸

In addition to the well-documented systemic inequities that screens perpetuate, there is also cause for concern on the effect such processes have on individual students. A researcher who followed 36 eighth graders through Chicago’s competitive high school admissions found a young Black girl internalized her rejection to a selective school, taking her rejection as a sign that she “set too high standards for myself,” and wishing she “could have done better like them,”—them being those admitted.⁹ City leadership should be wary of authorizing any policy that negatively impacts the self-worth and self-esteem of its young students and compounds on the historical trauma that Black and Latino students, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, students in temporary housing, and English Language Learners internalize from decades of exclusion in public policy decisions.

Previously used selection criteria such as attendance and state test scores are still invalid and inequitable measures of a student’s achievement.

Selection criteria previously used by screened middle schools and high schools remains largely incomplete and unreliable due to the unavoidable disruptions that COVID-19 has had on student learning. For example, attendance fluctuated throughout the 2021-2022 school year due to surges in coronavirus cases, forcing many schools to toggle between virtual and in-person classes, and many families to weigh health risks of in-person learning.¹⁰ State testing data is also likely to continue as an incomplete and invalid indicator of student achievement as a result of ongoing learning interruptions from the pandemic and NYC schools experiencing an increase of families opting-out of testing.¹¹

https://cdn.givingcompass.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/22123200/1c478c_4de7a85cae884c53a8d48750e0858172.pdf (Feb. 7, 2019); School Diversity Advisory Group, Making the Grade II: New Programs for Better Schools, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1c478c_1d5659bd05494f6d8cb2bbf03fcc95dd.pdf (Aug. 26, 2019)

⁸ NYC Bar Association, Eliminating competitive admissions at the elementary- and middle-school programs and schools, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/documents.nycbar.org/files/2019521-CompetitiveAdmissionsDOE050119.pdf> (May 1, 2019)

⁹ Kate Philippo, Competitive high school admission policies send students strong messages about their worth. Students are Listening,

<https://chicago.chalkbeat.org/2019/9/16/21108821/competitive-high-school-admissions-policies-send-students-strong-messages-about-their-worth-students> (Sept. 16, 2019)

¹⁰ Alex Zimmerman, Reema Amin and Christina Veiga, An early test for Eric Adams: solving low attendance and a school staffing crunch, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/1/3/22865904/eric-adams-nyc-schools-staffing-shortage-covid> (Jan. 3, 2022)

¹¹ Amy Zimmer, Some NYC schools see more families opt out of state tests amid rising anxiety, https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/4/19/23025988/nyc-opt-out-state-tests-jamaal-bowman-east-harlem?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1650366536 (Apr. 19, 2022)

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The elimination of MS screens is a popular, highly demanded policy change amongst students, parents, educators, and community members.

In 2019, over 5,000 students, parents, organizations, DOE employees and other educational stakeholders across multiple petitions and sign-on letters demanded that the DOE eliminate discriminatory admission methods and provide inclusive, equitable and high quality learning opportunities for their children.¹² Their calls were supplemented by many reports and briefings—several of which are mentioned in this letter—that span over a decade of work.

To reinstate screening is to erase the voices of thousands who wanted this change, and ignore the needs of historically marginalized communities.

Conclusion: A majority of students in New York City started the school year with less resources because of school budget cuts—fewer teachers, less programming, and fewer counselors. We implore this administration to not make a quality education even more elusive to families through condoning the restoration of discriminatory middle-school admission policies. We call on Chancellor Banks to **permanently end the use of middle school screens.**

Respectfully,



Nyah Berg
Executive Director, New York Appleseed

Further Supported By:

Organizations:

1. Advocates for Children of New York
2. Advocates for Justice
3. Alliance for Quality Education
4. BNS/BCS Parent Action Committee
5. BLM at Schools NYC
6. Black at Specialized
7. Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
8. Class Size Matters

¹² Teens Take Charge, Petition to tell the DOE to end discriminatory admissions screening, <https://www.change.org/p/nyc-doe-end-discriminatory-admissions-screening>; Culturally Responsive Education Working Group, NYC schools for transformative change letter, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E3ehlcrY5co_NTPy9TPgu6Q3MDezL7XnSuvO6quWc1c/edit ; Community School District 2 Educators & Parents, Educators for an End to Middle School Screening, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OAVva-Og8FmMukoiqA_xJny49z8YOsM4y89lVB5vjts/edit ; IntegrateNYC, End Discriminatory Screens Campaign, <https://integratenyc.org/whats-new/2020/06/24/update2>

9. Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
10. Community Education Council District 4
11. Community Education Council District 14
12. Cypress Hills LDC
13. D15 Coalition for Equitable Schools
14. D15 Parents for Middle School Equity
15. District 28 Action for Equity
16. Dignity in Schools Campaign- New York
17. D28 Equity Now
18. Education Council Consortium
19. Education Justice Research & Organizing Collaborative (EJROC) at NYU Metro Center
20. EduColor
21. Gowanus Houses Art Collective
22. Grupo Juego y Lectura de Sunset Park
23. IntegrateNYC
24. Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE-UFT)
25. MS 51
26. MS 136, principal
27. Mural Justice Project
28. New York City Coalition for Educational Justice
29. New York Edge Inc
30. NYC Opt Out
31. Parents Supporting Parents NY
32. Parents to Improve School Transportation (PIST)
33. PRESSNYC
34. Reclaim Pride Coalition
35. Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) NYC
36. Students Break the Silence
37. Teens Take Charge
38. Territorial Empathy
39. Voces Ciudadanas Inc

Individuals (students, parents, educators & community members):

1. Abby Kornfeld
2. Adia Tucker
3. Agnes Laird
4. Agnieszka Warsicka
5. Aimee Fox
6. Aixa B Rodriguez
7. Alan A. Aja
8. Alana Jones
9. Alexander Artz

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10. Alexandra Freidus
11. Alexandra Haridopolos
12. Alex Stevens, D13 parent
13. Alina Tenser
14. Allison Kleiman, NYCDOE School Counselor
15. Allison Moulard
16. Allison Pariani, Teacher at MS447
17. Altagracia Montilla
18. Amanda A.
19. Amanda Abry
20. Amanda Aschettino-Ramirez
21. Amanda Clarke
22. Amanda Vender
23. Amanda Zinoman
24. Amity Murray, Parent
25. Amy Althoff
26. Amy Alvarez
27. Amy Gropp Forbes
28. Amy Sumner
29. Anabel Soto
30. Anaiah
31. Ana Rojas
32. Andrea Begor
33. Andrea Castellano
34. Andrea Chu
35. Andrea Dovalle
36. Andrea Harris
37. Andrea Quintero, Parent
38. Andrew Borges
39. Andrew Godsberg, Parent
40. Andrew Zinn
41. Angela Walker
42. Anna Alfredson
43. Anna Lee
44. Anna Lewis Riquier
45. Anne
46. Anne Hager
47. Anne McGroarty
48. Annie Kountz
49. Anthony Cannonier
50. Antonia Ferraro Martinelli, CEC15 Recording Secretary
51. Arsenia Margaret Reilly-Collins
52. Ashley Hughes

53. Ashley Strohm
54. Ayishah G Irvin, PA President-Teachers College Community School, CEC D5 Treasurer, PTA Treasurer-FDA, President Council President D5
55. Ayisha Kalin
56. B. Kaiser, teacher
57. Barbara Barnes
58. Bertrand Moulard
59. Beth Botshon
60. Bliss N Broyard
61. Brandon Roiger
62. Brian Peters
63. Brittany L.
64. Britta Sorensen
65. Bryony Romer
66. Camille Casaretti, CEC15 President
67. Candice Simon
68. Caolan Madden
69. Cara Marcous
70. Carlos Alegria Ly
71. Carolyn Kelly
72. Carrie Gleason, PS 315 Parent
73. Cheryl Freeman
74. Chia-Hua Hu
75. Christina DiZebba, NYC public school teacher and parent
76. Christina D. Prince
77. Christina Gavin, 75X754 UFT Chapter Leader, MORE UFT, IWW
78. Christina Theodoro
79. Christine Sparks
80. Cindy Chau
81. Clayton Patrie
82. Colleen O'Connor-Grant, PS3 Charrettee School SLT
83. Councilwoman Kristin Richardson Jordan
84. Courtney Epton
85. Courtney Frank
86. Cristine Maisano, Educator
87. D. Awusi
88. Damali A. Carrington
89. Dana Rappaport
90. Danette Lipten
91. Daniel Alicea, Educators of NYC
92. Daniel Filipak
93. Danielle Marchant
94. Daryll Pierre

95. David Peck
96. David Siren Eisner
97. Debbie Sonu, Assoc Professor of Education
98. Denesia Stroom-Blair
99. Diandra Verwayne
100. Diane Castelucci
101. Dionne Davis
102. D Patricia Jewett
103. Dr. Jonathan Ryan Davis
104. Edgar Alfonseca
105. Elena Chatziliis
106. Elijah Godsberg, 11th grader
107. Elizabeth Jones
108. Elizabeth M D Arcangelo
109. Elizabeth Oltmans Ananat
110. Elizabeth Soto-Cardona
111. Eliza M Bates
112. Elka Samuels Smith
113. Elvita Dominique
114. Emily Earle
115. Emily Fox
116. Emily Grote
117. Emily Mann
118. Erica Masiello
119. Erica Silverman
120. Eric Goldberg
121. Eric Wright
122. Erin Hopkins
123. Erlyn Ikeda
124. Esther B Robinson
125. Eugenie Kim
126. Evan O'Connell
127. Fayola Fair
128. Felicia Martinez
129. Fien Bosiers
130. Franca Bonnet
131. Frank Marino, Teacher M.S. 839
132. Frederick J Rood, NYC Department of Education Teacher
133. Frederique Quennie Lamy
134. Gabo Camnitzer
135. Gabriel Fontes
136. Gavin Healy, PhD
137. Gia Wolff

138. Gina Morales
139. Grace Cho
140. Gregg Mitchell
141. Gregory Close
142. Gretchen Nealon
143. Hannah Berkin-Harper
144. Hayley Hernandez
145. Heather Brown
146. Heather Dailey, LMSW
147. Heather Prendergast
148. Helene Abiola
149. Helen Williams-Fishburne
150. Holly Ellis Spiegel, Secretary, CEC 22
151. Howard Chirlin
152. Ian McDermott
153. Ilan Desai-Geller
154. Ilona Clara Nanay
155. Iris Soto
156. Isaac P Jones
157. Ivana Espinet
158. Ivy Anderson
159. Ivy Anderson, School Social Worker, D2
160. Jacqueline Gonzalez
161. James Walter Martin
162. Jamie Mirabella
163. Jana Zindell
164. Jane S. Maisel
165. Jane Trachet
166. Janice Bloom
167. Janine Sopp
168. Jasmine Benitez
169. Jasmine Nicole Garcia
170. Jasmine Y. Ma, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Urban Education
171. Javier Salamanca
172. JD Davids
173. Jeannine Kiely
174. Jeff Magness
175. Jennifer Blood
176. Jennifer C. Bernstein
177. Jennifer Hirshlag-Ward
178. Jennifer Maravegias
179. Jennifer Milligan

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180. Jenny Hirsch, parent
181. Jenny Latham
182. Jessamyn Lee, PTA of PS 84 Jose De Diego
183. Jesse B Cowling
184. Jesse Phillips-Fein
185. Jessica Baker, CEC4 council member
186. Jessica Byrne, CEC 22
187. Jessica Luck, parent in District 2
188. Jessica Lysons
189. Jessica Sain
190. Jessica Smith
191. Jessica Vergara
192. Jia Lee
193. Jill Weidman
194. Jody Drezner Alperin
195. Johanna Bjorken, parent
196. Johanna Dominguez, D4 CEC
197. John Antush
198. John Hartmann
199. Jonathan Greenberg, District 30 CEC
200. Jordan Wright
201. José Alfaro, LCSW
202. Jose Carlos Casado
203. Joseph Castillo, parent in District 2
204. Josephine Ishmon
205. Joshua Fox
206. Joy Leonard
207. Judith Kafka, parent & professor of educational policy and history of education,
Baruch College
208. Julie E. Sebunya
209. Junior Sanchez
210. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, parent in D4 & D2
211. Kara MacDevitt
212. Karen M.
213. Karissa Nieves
214. Kasha Cacy
215. Kate McCreary
216. Kate Menken
217. Kate Singh
218. Kathleen Jayes
219. Kathleen McCullagh
220. Kathryn Krase

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221. Kathryn Pope
222. Kathy Malone
223. Kathy Park Price
224. Katie Harlan Eller
225. Katie Peinovich
226. Katie Tuss
227. Kay Kramme
228. Kay Mack
229. Keerthana
230. Kelly Bare, parent of a 9th grader & a 6th grader
231. Kelly Boyd
232. Kemala Karmen
233. Keshet Sivan
234. Kimani Fowlin
235. Kim Phillips-Fein
236. Kim Van Duzer
237. Kirsten Cole
238. Kiyoko Fuchimoto
239. Kori Goldberg
240. Kristen Berger, parent & former CEC 3 Middle School Committee Chair
241. Kristen Pfeffer
242. Lan To
243. Laraine De Angelis MS Ed.
244. Lara Wechsler
245. Laura Larimer
246. Laura Mead, parent
247. Laura Tamman
248. Lauren Clavin
249. Lauren Gropp Lowry
250. Lauren Harrison
251. Lauren Scott, District 15 School Leader
252. Lavina Maykut
253. Lawrence Fishburne
254. Leah Oppenzato
255. Leo Godsberg, HS Senior
256. Lesley Téllez
257. Leslie King
258. Letitia Doggett, Public School Parent of 2 students
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260. Lily Dalke
261. Lindsay Allanbrook
262. Lindy Arpante

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263. Linnea Vedder
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265. Lisa Raymond-Tolan
266. Lisa Waldron
267. Lisette Ayala
268. Lisette Sand Freedman
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270. Liza Featherstone
271. Liz Rosenberg
272. Lori Whyte, PSC SLT
273. Lorriane Williams, CEC23, Parliamentarian
274. Lupe Hernandez, CECD2, Borough President Appointee
275. M. Jordan
276. Madeline Richer
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278. Maeve L.
279. Mahalia Watson
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285. Maribel Gonzalez, CEC 9
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287. Marielin Heth
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289. Marilyn Stotts
290. Marisa Ricciardi
291. Marissa Manzanares, LCAT, CEC D14 Recording Secretary
292. Marlene Rossi
293. Marta Martinez
294. Martina Meijer
295. Maryann Jacob
296. Mary Jane Skelly
297. Mathew B. Hirsch
298. Matthew Driscoll
299. Matt Schneider
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301. Meema Spadola, public school parent
302. Megan Devir
303. Megan Hester
304. Melanie Kotler

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306. Melissa Wacks, LCSW
307. Melissa Williams, MSOT, OTR/L
308. Melody Sosa
309. Mercedes McGee
310. Meredith Winfrey
311. Michael Kieffer
312. Michele Greenberg
313. Michelle Dellatorre
314. Michelle Orchard
315. Ming Chan
316. Miranda Kemelmacher
317. Mira Vega
318. Miriam Nunberg, D15 Parents for Middle School Equity
319. Miya Hideshima
320. Mizuo Peck
321. Molly Dubow
322. Nadine Valme
323. Naima Beckles, District 6 Parent
324. Nathan Stripp
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326. Neil Shea
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329. Nicole Olsen
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332. Noemi Maller
333. Nora Keane
334. Olivia Swisher
335. Paula Calle
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339. Preeti Natarajan
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350. Rebecca Stein
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357. Rosa G. Diaz
358. Rosamaria Noel
359. Rosy Clark
360. Ruby Van Meerendonk
361. Rytva K. Soni
362. Samara Smith
363. Sameer Gupta
364. Sam Rosaldo
365. Sandra Granillo
366. Sara Catalinotto, mother & founder of Parents to Improve School Transportation
367. Sara Greenfield
368. Sarah Factor, NYC DOE teacher
369. Sarah Slichter
370. Sarah Stone, IntegrateNYC
371. Sarah W Beck
372. Saraivy Orench
373. Sari Fensterheim, D15 parent and teacher
374. Scott M. Sommer
375. Selmira Carrasquillo
376. Seth Bomse
377. Shamika Daniels
378. Shannon Hartman
379. Shaquanna Cicero
380. Sharon Rowell, CEC12
381. Shayla R Michel
382. Sheri Simmons
383. Shino Tanikawa
384. Shirley Lam-Cheung
385. Simone Dornbach, D28 CEC Member
386. Simone Hannah-Clark
387. Sonja Shield
388. SP, D2 Parent
389. S. Samara
390. Stacie Lee

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391. Steven Wilson
392. Sunita Prasad
393. Suzanne Troiano
394. Tahisha George
395. Tajh Sutton, Public School Parent, PTA delegate
396. Tamara Gayer
397. Tamar Mintz
398. Tamika Mapp, State Committeewoman 68th AD
399. Tamuira M. Reid
400. Tanesha Grant, Executive Director of PSPNY
401. Tanya Wendt
402. Tara Grove
403. Taylor Hom
404. Tazin Azad
405. Ted Chang
406. Ted Pauly, D15 & D21 parent
407. Ted Thompson
408. Temu Kramme
409. Terrance Johnson
410. Theodore S Brooke
411. Thomas Sheppard, CEC Presidents' Representative Panel for Educational Policy
412. Tiffany Aristy-Martinez
413. Tiffany Jones
414. Todd Baran
415. Tomas Hunt
416. Tracy Jordan
417. Travis Malekpour, UFT Delegate
418. Vanessa Gonzalez Ueoka, CEC15 Co Vice-President
419. Veronica Ortiz
420. Victoria Messina
421. Vivian Liu
422. Washieka T Torres
423. William Font
424. William McCracken
425. Ximena Frankel
426. Yuichi Seki
427. Zaida Vasquez
428. Zandra Cuevas