

**STATEMENT
BY
COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD 26
ON
SCHOOL SYSTEM REFORM**

AT FORUM SPONSORED BY

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1992

Presented by COREY B. BEARAK, Member, CSB 26, Legislative Co-Chair

Thank you, on behalf of Community School Board 26, for this opportunity to highlight the need to reform New York City's School System and recommend improvements which will make a difference in the quality of education offered our children.

Indeed, New York City's public school system requires real structural reform. Unfortunately, the recommendations of the Marchi Commission and subsequent pending state legislation ("Del Toro Bill") offer no prescription for the change needed in school governance.

Both the Marchi and Del Toro proposals would maintain the basic system which, to date, fails to adequately educate too many of our school children. Rather than focus on the basic structural failure of central governance, both propose changes in community school district size and the election process and tinker with the makeup of the central board. We did not require a commission to redraw district lines and improve the process for electing community school board members. We needed the commission and the Del Toro bill to revamp the entire system of governance at the root of the problems: a central administration which focuses on policy matters best handled at the borough and community levels rather than (until recently) on ensuring accountability.

The conflict among the members of the central board and between the board and the chancellor further indicate the inherent failure of the current structure. No matter how good the people are, the current system creates natural areas of conflict. Moreover, the current structure diffuses accountability for educational success among too many parties, both at 110 Livingston Street [the chancellor, the board, its members], local districts, those who appoint the board [the mayor and borough presidents] and those who make funding decisions [the mayor and the council, the state, the chancellor and central board, and the district]. An improved system would increase accountability and educational outcomes.

Community School Board 26 unanimously urges improvements which would vastly improve the state of public education in the City of New York. First, abolish the central board of education and make community school board members responsible for pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 education. This includes continuing education and afterschool programs and special education. Second, Borough Boards of Education, composed of District board members would administer the high schools and "city-wide" special education. A search committee comprised primarily of community school board members proposes candidates for chancellor to the Mayor who in turn submits her/ his selection to the City Council for Confirmation.

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Indeed, no need exists for a Central Board. Every necessary function assigned to the central Board of Education can be effectively carried out by the Chancellor. As the city-wide authority, the Chancellor shall be responsible for (a) monitoring; (b) ensuring that districts meet State educational standards; City-wide governance; (c) labor relations; (d) legal services; (e) transportation; (f) food services; and (g) employee licensing and the administration of salary and employee benefits.

The adoption of these recommendations would make the system more cost- and education-effective. Doing so further streamlines administration. It also keeps education decision-making close to the schools and increases the ability of parents to participate in and influence educational decisions. It also clearly imposes on the Mayor and the members of the City Council, all duly elected officials, the responsibility for funding basic education programs. This gives the Mayor and the Council a clearer opportunity to be held responsible for educational outcomes, especially in the absence of specific tax levy authority for the City School District. CSB 26 urges City Council support for these recommendations.

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[prepared by Corey Bearak, Legislative Co-chair, based on CSB 26's April 22, 1991 (Attachment B) and April 8, 1992 (Attachment A) statements. Approved by CSB 26, December 3, 1992.]

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD 26 ON THE
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TEMPORARY STATE
COMMISSION ON NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Community School Board 26 appreciates the reaffirmation of, and commitment to, decentralization shown by the Temporary State Commission on New York City School Governance (the Marchi Commission) in maintaining Community School Districts the basic units of local school governance in the City of New York. Community School Board 26 regrets that the commission's final recommendations did not sufficiently reflect its starting propositions. Thus, Community School Board 26 unanimously urges the following improvements which, we submit, will vastly improve the state of public education in the City of New York:

1. MAKE COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS RESPONSIBLE FOR PRE-K THROUGH 12 EDUCATION.
 - A. ABOLISH THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION.
 - B. MAKE COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARDS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE/ JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS, SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION.
 - C. ESTABLISH BOROUGH BOARDS OF EDUCATION COMPOSED OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND "CITYWIDE" SPECIAL EDUCATION.
 - D. COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARDS SHALL CONTINUE TO SELECT ALL SUPERVISORS FROM SUPERINTENDENTS TO PRINCIPALS, EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, SUPERVISORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS.
2. A SEARCH COMMITTEE, COMPRISED PRIMARILY OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, PROPOSES CHANCELLOR CANDIDATES TO MAYOR WHO SUBMITS THE SELECTION TO THE COUNCIL FOR CONFIRMATION.
3. NO WARDS SHOULD BE CREATED WITHIN COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS. ELECT CSB MEMBERS AT LARGE TO AVOID PAROCHIALISM.
4. NO MAJOR INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS. OVERSIZED DISTRICTS SHOULD BE REVIEWED FOR SIZE REDUCTION.

The adoption of these recommendations would make the system more cost- and education-effective. Doing so further streamlines administration. Doing so keeps education decision-making close to the schools and increases the ability of parents to participate in and influence educational decisions. It also clearly imposes on the Mayor and the members of the City Council, all duly elected officials, the responsibility for funding basic education programs. This gives the Mayor and the Council a clearer opportunity to be held responsible for educational outcomes, especially in the absence of specific tax levy authority for the City School District. (A narrative explanation follows on the next page)

NARRATIVE TEXT EXPLANATION [PAGE ONE]

1A. No need exists for a Central Board. Every necessary function assigned to the central Board of Education by the Marchi Commission can be effectively carried out by the Chancellor. As the city-wide authority, the Chancellor shall be responsible for (a) monitoring; (b) ensuring that districts meet State educational standards; City-wide governance; (c) labor relations; (d) legal services; (e) transportation; (f) food services; and employee licensing and the administration of salary and employee benefits. The Chancellor shall appoint the city-wide financial officer and issue an annual report. The Chancellor shall meet on a monthly basis with delegates from each Community School Board. The meeting shall be open to all community school board members.

1B. Adult and Continuing Education should be the responsibility of the Districts. This will facilitate programs that meet the basic needs of disparate districts. The allocation of funds to the districts shall be per capita, according to the program and the number of eligible students. The City Council and the Mayor shall allocate funds to the programs (Instruction, Special Ed., High Schools, Community Districts, etc.). The Chancellor shall establish the criteria for district financial officers. District financial officers shall be appointed by Community School Boards upon the recommendation of the Community Superintendent subject to the approval of the Chancellor.

1C. Unlike State Senator Joseph Galiber's plan for Borough Boards, the composition of each Borough Board of Education shall be by either community school board presidents or community school members designated by their boards. Each Borough Board of Education shall be responsible for ~~all~~ high schools (including specialized and alternative schools) and "city-wide" special education programs and inter-district integration in that borough. The members of each Borough Board shall serve until their term as a Community School Board member expires. Their votes shall follow the instructions of their boards. Borough Boards may shift allocations from High School to Community Districts unless specifically barred by the Mayor and the Council in the adoption of the Budget (See "terms and conditions" under the City Charter's section on the Budget.). The Chancellor shall also appoint for each borough a Deputy Chancellor for Monitoring. Each Deputy Chancellor shall meet on a regular basis with representatives of the Borough's community school board.

1D. The commission correctly limits the role of the Chancellor in the selection of community superintendents. While the commission reversed itself from its draft and now recommends that community school board members shall have the final selection of principals, this must be extended to all supervisory personnel. Community School Boards, not the Community Superintendents, should have the ultimate decision in the selection assistant principals and District Office supervisors. As a district's chief pedagogue, the superintendent remains well-qualified to examine and investigate supervisory candidates. The essential role of the community school board remains determining which qualified candidate best fits the needs of

NARRATIVE TEXT EXPLANATION [PAGE TWO]

the school and the district. Rather than decrease opportunities for corruption and abuse, the draft's proposal would, in fact, achieve the reverse. Under the current system, even if a School Board member were to exert influence on a Superintendent in the selection of a supervisor, that member would still have to exert similar influence on at least four other colleagues. Maintenance of the present system continues to subject the appointment of supervisors to public scrutiny. Final decisions by Community School Boards would continue to require a public vote. In addition, assistant principals, once appointed, may serve a decade or more. Community Superintendents may not serve as long. It is not proper to subject a community to a supervisor, however qualified, who does not reflect local needs. Appointment by the Community School board helps ensure this crucial goal of Decentralization.

2. The chancellor shall be appointed by the Mayor following the recommendation of a search committee composed of community school board members. The community school board/ search committee members shall be selected from among the members in a borough by the Community School Boards in that borough. The search committee shall recommend at least three (3) candidates. The Mayor's appointment shall be subject to City Council confirmation. The Chancellor must also meet educational requirements for the position set by the State Commissioner of Education.

3. Community School Board members shall be elected at large. The proposal for wards would parochialize already small to moderately sized districts. Similar to the current system for electing State Supreme Court Justice in a regular election, voters shall be able to vote for up to nine (9) Community School Board members. If wards are established, candidates should be limited to running where they live.

4. No need exists for some 50 districts. Existing districts which are too large should be broken up. Overall, fine-tuning of district boundaries may be reasonable. More money can be saved and directed to our children to the extent the increase in the number of new districts is moderated. In the current fiscal situation, the money planned to fund new districts as a result of an expected downsizing of the central Board would be better spent on classroom teachers, guidance and other in-school services.

5. Additional Points: (a) Who will remove the appointed citywide board if standards are not maintained, yet community school board members could be removed; and (b) School Based Management cannot be legislated. It is a programmatic tool that should be introduced to effect improvements at the school level.

[Approved unanimously by Community School Board 26, April 18, 1991. Prepared by Corey Bearak, Legislative Chair, based on the work of a committee including Mr. Bearak and Jane Littell and Arlene Pino.]

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