



DANIEL SQUADRON
SENATOR, 25TH DISTRICT

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TRANSPORTATION

November 21, 2011

Dennis Walcott
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Walcott:

I write regarding the zoning of Lower Manhattan schools. As you are aware, Community Education Council District 2 (CEC2) issued a resolution opposing the revised zoning proposal on November 16. I join CEC2 in their concern about the zoning proposal, as well as the broader issues related to school overcrowding in Lower Manhattan.

As I previously wrote to you on November 4, simply rearranging school zones will not address the serious overcrowding problem in Lower Manhattan. While I appreciate that the Department of Education (DOE) is doing what it can to prevent waitlists, the School Construction Authority (SCA) and DOE must proactively plan for increased classroom space and improve its method for projecting student enrollment.

I remain concerned about the accuracy of the projections upon which the draft zoning plan is based. Department of City Planning population projections, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene birth records, and surveys of siblings could better prepare districts and schools for increased capacity. The SCA could improve the accuracy of projected demand with my bill S2884, which includes mechanisms for more accurate student population projections, more transparency and feedback in planning, and a stronger voice for parents and the public.

I also share CEC2's concern about the impact on P.S. 1, a Title I school that could have its status, and attendant funding, jeopardized. With many new students, additional sections will require the conversion of the art, music, science, computer, resource, and family rooms into classroom spaces, depriving the teachers and students of much-needed space for its high-needs population.

DOE must take dramatic steps to meet the growing demand for school seats in Lower Manhattan. In fact, if no other buildings become available, perhaps DOE should look to a building in Lower Manhattan that already has classroom space. The Tweed Courthouse currently hosts the Innovate Manhattan Charter School, and will be home to the incubated Peck Slip School in 2012-2013.

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Since the Tweed Courthouse already meets the complex criteria for siting a public school, DOE could consider increasing the number of classrooms in the Tweed Courthouse building and relocating offices to another office facility. One option is Tower 4 of the World Trade Center, set to open in 2013 with over half a million square feet already leased by the City of New York.

The revised zoning proposal poses a significant challenge to the CEC and the community. Insufficient data makes hard decisions about the future of our community schools that much more difficult. I urge you to work closely with CEC2 in the preparation of a zoning proposal that reduces waitlists and creates a new zone for the Peck Slip School.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. If you have any questions you may contact Mary Cooley in my office at (212) 298-5565 and mcooley@nysenate.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel Squadron", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Squadron
State Senator
25th Senate District