



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

Old Boys High Parents, Teachers And Students Rally Against Co-Location

Senator Velmanette Montgomery

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Old Boys High Campus in Bedford Stuyvesant currently houses Bed-Stuy Prep and Brooklyn Academy transfer schools, Pathways to Graduation (P2G), a District 75 program, a Living for the Young Family Education Program (LYFE) and Uncommon Collegiate Charter High School. With the exception of Uncommon Collegiate, all of the schools in this building provide education and services to youth as old as 21 who struggled in traditional high schools.

Many of the students have already had life experiences that interfered with their educational progress such as homelessness, foster care, abuse, loss of a parent, unplanned pregnancies and interactions with the criminal justice system. Tailored resources and smartly managed partnerships with organizations like DREAMS Youthbuild, Citibike, BRIC, CAMBA, Dance Theatre Etcetera, The Children's Village, New York University and Columbia University have created an environment where these students can flourish.

"Learning has been a breeze for me at Brooklyn Academy because of the small classroom setting and individualized attention," said Malik Joseph, Brooklyn Academy Student

"Students will feel like DOE has failed us again and are putting us back where we started in large classes with not enough attention," said Nilander Miranda, Brooklyn Academy Student

"If it wasn't for Brooklyn Academy to help me better myself, I would be stuck and have no education and I would've dropped out of school," said Kharisma Marcelle, Brooklyn Academy Student

"We cannot just move our kids around like pieces on a chessboard then blame them for not succeeding. The schools at Old Boys High provide a second chance for our kids. They are thriving here because they have space for small classes, wrap around services and unique educational programming," said State Senator Velmanette Montgomery. "Uncommon Brooklyn East clearly needs a new home. We need to have a discussion about an appropriate location for them but I resent the idea that the success of one group of kids needs to be sacrificed for another."

The current proposal would introduce 5th – 8th graders to a building serving 16 to 21 year old students, take four classrooms from P2G, consolidate the two transfer schools to one floor and add yet another school to share communal spaces. Even in the current space, most rooms are multipurpose to accommodate programming, counseling, tutoring and serve as a meeting space for parents and support staff.

"Our commitment to quality education includes adequate and safe space. We should not alleviate space concerns in one building at the cost of creating an unsafe space for children in another space. Nor should we undermine successful educational programs by stifling their progress by shrinking their space," said Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright. "My office remains open to working with the DOE and school leadership to find an appropriate and successful solution for all."

The Community Board 3 Executive Committee stated, "Brooklyn Community Board 3 Executive Committee does not believe 5th graders should be co-located in a school building that 16 to 21 year olds attend."

"It's disingenuous for the DOE to characterize Brooklyn Academy or Bed-Stuy Prep as "struggling" in order to justify a consolidation and bring in a charter school. The overcrowding at PS 9 is horrendous, but it's unfair of the DOE to drop this injustice at our doorstep," proclaimed Catherine Jacobs, English Teacher, Brooklyn Academy.

"School buildings might be about the number of room and square footage, but the education of our children is not," said Miari Roberts, IEP Teacher, Brooklyn Academy.

"These are the students that fell through the cracks and we are the net that catches them before they hit the ground," said Nicole Greaves, Pathways to Graduation. "We don't just educate our students, but save lives every day. This school is their safe space where they don't have to worry about being bullied, harassed, threatened and victimized again."

"Dance Theatre Etcetera provides arts programming for many New York City transfer high schools such as those located in the Old Boys Campus. These schools are working hard to provide nurturing educational environments for young people who need extra support to succeed," stated Martha Bowers, Executive Director Dance Theatre Etcetera. "The last thing the Old Boys Campus needs is another school that will create overcrowding conditions for the four schools already located there and cause a serious disruption to valuable programs."

"The Panel of Education Policy should listen to parents, students and educators that are asking for today's vote to be postponed and continue to search for an alternative solution to relocating the Uncommon Brooklyn East Collegiate Charter School. The majority of students attending school at the Old Boys High School Campus are some of New York City's most at risk students. These students thrive in a school environment that maintains consistency, small class sizes and offer personalized instruction," said Zakiyah Ansari, Alliance for Quality Education. History shows us the disruption of this school community by introducing a new charter school into the building and consolidating programs would likely interfere with the positive outcomes that are currently happening on this campus."

Contact:

Shakti Robbins-Cubas

State Senator Velmanette Montgomery

cubas@nysenate.gov

718-643-6140

To view footage of the testimony from students and teachers from Old Boys High School at the April 25th Panel for Education meeting, visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/default.htm>