

October 21, 2013

Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
52 Chambers Street
Tweed Courthouse
New York, NY 10007-1222

**RE: COMMUNITY WIDE OPPOSITION TO CO-LOCATION OF ANOTHER
MIDDLE SCHOOL IN IS171 BUILDING IN BROOKLYN**

Dear Chancellor Walcott:

We, the undersigned represent the thousands of parents, students, faculty members and residents of the Cypress Hills community, who stand united in our strong opposition to the NYC Department of Education's plans to co-locate another middle school in the I.S. 171 building in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. We have met with officials of the DOE's Division of Portfolio Planning and five hundred and twenty outraged parents, students and residents participated in the public hearing on October 8, 2013. Yet, we feel like our voices have **not** been heard and our legitimate and well-documented arguments have **not** been investigated nor acknowledged.

We oppose the co-location of another middle school at I.S. 171 because:

- 1) Our school is making academic progress with the general student population and the large numbers of ELL students (21%) and students with IEPs (13%) - - we refer you to the Department's Education Impact Statement and our school's progress reports over the last two years which show steady gains and a positive shift in social environment. Our attendance rate is 92% also demonstrating that our students are deeply engaged in learning and that we have a supportive school climate. We are a true "community school" where 300 students on a daily basis are served in our afterschool program and 175 young people and parents are involved in evening and weekend educational and weekend programs such as ESOL classes. We have attracted significant government and philanthropic support for our extended learning time programs.
- 2) The co-location of another school would disrupt the Department's own plans to pioneer the Middle School Student Success Center (MSSSC) at IS 171. The Success Center just opened with the DOE's help and currently our adult Counselors and trained Youth Leaders are assisting 8th graders through the complex high school choice process. Our goal is that students will make better and more informed choices that will support their eventual success in college and that the partnership between the Center and the school will drive changes in the

plans -- reducing the size of the school's budget (forcing us to decrease the variety of course offerings) and downsizing our dedicated teaching staff.

- 3) The IS 171 building does not offer our students the basic facilities they need now for a high quality education and is ill-suited for a co-location. Over ten years ago, parents successfully advocated with the DOE to end the co-location of PS 7 in the IS 171 building; a co-location that resulted in extreme overcrowding. IS 171 does not have a gym or science labs. We do not have art or dance studios. We do not have bathrooms on each floor. We use every inch of our current space for classrooms, support services and small group instruction.

Because we feel so deeply about this issue and because we feel that our concerns have not been addressed, our school community will be protesting outside of Tweed on Monday afternoon. We respectfully ask that a delegation of students and parents from IS 171 be allowed inside of Tweed to hand deliver letters to the Chancellor. We also ask for an immediate and thorough reconsideration of the co-location and a rescission of the plan prior to the October 30th vote of the Panel for Educational Policy.

Sincerely yours,

Mariluz Rodriguez, PTA President

Mercedes Perez, UFT Chapter Chair IS 171

Michelle Neugebauer, Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Nydia Velazquez
Honorable Martin Malave Dilan
Honorable Rafael Espinal
Honorable Erik Martin Dilan
Chief Academic Officer Shael Pulakow-Sumsky
Deputy Chancellor for Portfolio Planning Saskia Levy Thompson
Carrie Marlin
Estelle Acquah