



The Courage to Navigate a Path to School Integration

Webinar Transcription: August 15, 2019

Pamela MacDougall: Good morning everyone. We are going to start our webinar right now. We seem to be having some audio issues but hopefully everyone can hear me now. Welcome to our webinar, The Courage to Navigate a Path to School Integration. Today's webinar presenters will be Terry Hofer, Director of the New York School and District Services from WestEd. Vanessa Coleman, Principal Consultant for the American Institutes of Research and Anita Skop, Superintendent of NYC District 15. The webinar facilitators for today are Nyla Bell, Senior Education Equity Specialist at the Center for Education Equity and Pamela MacDougall, Research Assistant at WestEd. Feel free to reach out to us if you have any technology issues. Feel free to type it in the chat or send us a question.

The Center for Education Equity is a project of the MAEC in partnership with WestEd and the American Institute for Research and it is one of four regional equity assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

The CEE's goals are to improve and sustain the systemic capacity of public education systems to address problems caused by segregation and inequalities and increase equitable education opportunities for all students regardless of race, gender, religion, and national origin.

CEE publishes a month exploring equity issues digest that includes personal, practical and research perspectives on an important topic related to education using a variety of formats including equity briefs, webinars, the practitioner perspectives blog and communities of practice.

We will go over the webinar etiquette. If you have any questions we ask you to type it into the Q&A box which you will be able to find on the right-hand side. You can also use the chat box to share any comments or engage other participants during the webinar. At the end of the webinar we will ask you to complete a brief survey that will pop up for you. On occasion a website is referenced it may be posted in the chat box for you to copy and explore after the webinar concludes. We also provide close captioning which can be accessed using the box on the right-hand side of the screen.

Participants will learn about the life cycle of socioeconomic integration effort from preparation to planning to implementing to reflecting and the role of courage in persevering on the journey of one school district in New York City that is leading a bold new socioeconomic integration effort. I'm going to turn the presentation over to Vanessa Coleman.

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Vanessa Coleman:

Thank you Pam. Welcome everyone. I'm going to take a few minutes and a few slides to introduce this topic, socioeconomic integration and framing, for our guest panelists who will tell you a specific story about a specific district's journey which I think is why most of you have signed on.

I want to start with a definition of socioeconomic integration -this definition that was defined by folks here by the Center for Education Equity and our partners at the Sentry Foundation. Socioeconomic school integration is a public policy designed to improve opportunities for students by reducing the negative education effects associated with school poverty concentration and providing a diverse environment that benefits all students.

We know the issue of school integration is most noted by the 1954 Brown decision, which assured in 30+ years of utterly mandated school racial integration. As early as 1968, there are indications in Supreme Court rulings that are providing support and reinforcement for the 1954 decision; from the 1968 decision that introduces the factors used to gauge school compliance, with the mandate of Brown to 1969; with all deliberated decisions, and into the 70s with approving appropriate remedies to overcome the role of residential segregation and perpetuating racially segregated schools. By the time 1980 rolls around schools desegregation was at its highest. We had a number of rollbacks before 1992 where the federal government begins to provide and allow reprieves for school districts and no longer mandated to follow those orders. Those rollbacks have created a different kind of environment that complicates the schools segregation issue.

There was a time when neighborhood segregation drove school segregation. 2015 Data shows further variations across the country, the school segregation is higher than neighborhood segregation.

We know school segregation is complex and rooted in history, structural racism, structural policies, parental behavior, and their nuanced variations across the country. We know that factors like wealth disparities and housing segregation have greatly influenced students of color and low income students of all races to be concentrated in the same school thanks to the Shawn Newman works. Wealthier households have a choice to relocate to residential zones. Once there the families will invest their political, social, and resource capital into those schools. We also know open enrollment and charter schools have been opened as a strategy to disrupt the effects racial segregation has had on school enrollment. However, there is evidence that indicates such school choice options have had no influence on school segregation - nationally, or has increased it. School choice programs have become increasingly popular but in many places kids attend schools in their neighborhood and as a result school integration depends on neighborhood integration in some places and we know neighborhood integration isn't the only factor.

In 2013-14 the U.S. Government accountability office, which is the independent nonpartisan agency charged with examining how tax pays dollars are spend and provide federal agencies with objectives and information, has indicated more than one in six students attended schools where the vast majority of classmates were both poor and black or Hispanic -over twice as many as in 2000. Students in those schools are more likely to be held back in ninth grade, kicked out of school, taught by inexperienced teachers and less likely to be offered critical classes.

The Sentry foundation and many others have been vocal about the benefits of socioeconomic

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integration, specifically students in integrated schools that are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to enroll in college and integrated schools that helped reduce the racial achievement gaps. Integrated classrooms encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. Many believe an integrated learning environment goes further at preparing students for a diverse society.

Since 2007, the Supreme Court decision that determined schools should work to achieve racial integration, but these integration policies should not depend on a student race or ethnicity. There has been some challenges. The ruling and no mandated desegregation districts have struggled to define and adopt integration policies that do not rely on race and ethnicity and also effectively integrate schools. Back in 2013 the Department of Education did provide some guidance for race neutral and generalized race strategies but those have since been rescinded.

There are many strategies in place today. Some use a single strategy and many use a layered approach with multiple strategies. The message here is policies and strategies the district adopts should be in response to a district specific context, and we will talk more about that shortly.

One of the reasons why we are all kind of familiar with the headlines and the responses that are often heard or some of us felt when employing new policies or even opening conversations about creating new policies and certainly by the time we get into implementation.

I guess what I would like to offer as a way of introducing our next presenter is getting clear about local context should have evolved stakeholder perspectives and engagement because we do not know all the concerns out there so we guess from other's experiences and even some of our own. There are many examples of community response and backlash to policy and strategy changes but intentional planning and engaging in implementing will aid the community in collectively defining these policies and strategies. Next up we will hear about one district's journey but before that, I will pause and take any questions folks might have at this point.

Pamela McDougall: It doesn't look like there are any questions yet but if anyone does have questions, feel free to post them in the Q&A box. Or if you have questions as we move forward you can post those in the Q&A box and we will come back to them during the next Q&A session. I'm going to turn our presentation over to Terry Hofer.

Terry Hofer: Good afternoon all. I'm happy to be part of this today. Over the past two years, the New York State Education Department has convened a group of school districts to encourage greater racial ethnic special education language center, multilingual learners and multi lingual in Title I schools. Just because one was "encouraged" as New York State put it in framing that the opportunity, does not mean an individual or district has the courage to follow through on the encouragement. I have had the pleasure over the past two years of observing each of the districts as they advanced their process of designing plans and project and pilot projects. When district from New York engage in the processes to share their journey in the hope it informs, motivates, and inspires others. We have with us today Anita Skop, Superintendent from New York City District 15. Welcome, Anita and thank you for joining. Your district has been a part of the New York State Education Departments PLC and working at this for a while now. We ask you start off by giving us a brief update of the current state of milestones you have achieved and then we will take a step back and give you an opportunity to share your

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- Anita Skop: Hi everybody and welcome to District 15 in Brooklyn. We thank you for visiting us. We are currently getting ready as are all of you for the upcoming school year and what makes it different this year is that the entire middle school application process changed and we are now a system that does lottery with the preference for students in categories I will discuss shortly and this radical change. This is a change that is two years in the making. Getting us to a place where out middle school we are very hopeful we will become more integrated and more equitable for all of our students.
- Terry Hofer: Thanks, Anita. As we move forward this afternoon I will be asking you to share your district's journey through the four phases of the process of preparation, planning, implementation and reflection. These are four phases we have captured in a Center for Education Equity publication entitled "A Playbook on School Integration" that will be coming out in the weeks ahead. Folks can follow along with Anita's story as she reveals it through those four phases. But first let's get started by learning a bit more about your district by starting with some data.
- Anita Skop: We are in fact what I like to call a micro-chasm for the entire city of New York. We have geographically segregated schools. Our district is kind of like a figure 8 shape which you will see shortly. In the northern end of the district we have largely affluent families in brownstone Brooklyn. A very high level of income, high levels of education and very sought after area. However, we also have different areas in our district and in the southern ended the district we have a large population of English-language learners. We have a large population of immigrant families who are in very different socioeconomic status then the families in the North and you can see that from this slide. You are looking at both the ethnic makeup and free and reduced lunch, you should know all the children in New York City at this point receive lunch but we are going to use that term in this slide to reference economic status, so please bear with us with that. What is very important to understand is this district has children who live in temporary housing. The district has children who live in project housing or city housing. All of these things have an impact on our schools and they are very geographically segregated. When I came to District 15, which was 10 years ago, something I was aware of was in fact the middle school process was a choice process across the district. It was a process by which parents were ranking schools and then these schools were ranking the kids based on the parent's choice. As we look at the slides and as you see, you will see how different areas of the district are and you can see down on the bottom of this figure 8 you can see there is a large population of students at lower economic levels and at the top it is a much larger population of students at higher economic levels. You can look at the ethnicity if you look at the colored circles. You can see the green represented the white students and are largely present at the northern end of the district whereas Hispanic students and Asian students are largely present in the southern end of the district. Our district is gentrifying and we will talk more about that, but it is significant in terms of the segregation that exists within the district.
- Terry Hofer: I skipped ahead a slide before giving you an opportunity to respond but I wanted to show the overall district demographic and to give you a brief opportunity to speak, while some look at your overall district demographics as they appear on the screen and come away with the take away that 'Wow, looks like a pretty integrated district given this high-level data.'
- Anita Skop: If you look at the district you will see we are a large district. We are over 30,000 children from grades pre-K and up. Some of the schools fall under its different superintendency because they are high schools, but the pre-K falls under my superintendency; I have two high schools.

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It is an interesting division in New York City. What you can see looking at this specific slide is we truly are a macro chasm of New York City. Even though when people talk about our district they say, 'you are rich district.' If you look at the economic disadvantage, 55% of our children fall into that economic disadvantage category. If you look at our racial makeup, the largest population in our district is Latino. Consequently we really do reflect the population of New York City. If anything the level of white population in our district is slightly higher than it is in some other district as well.

Terry Hofer: I just wanted viewers to take a minute and zero in on the English learners data point, 16.4% of the district. I am going to skip over to the next slide so you will see how that relates down across the district.

Anita Skop: If you look at this slide, and it is a perfect example you will see most of our English learners are in the southern end of the district. Here is our figure 8. You can see we have a very large English language learner population, also economically disadvantaged at the southern end of the district. A little background, when I came into the district, I was shocked to find out there was parent choice as to where kids went to middle school. I am a product of the public school system and my children are products of the public school system and I have never heard this before so I was surprised. Not only was I surprised I was bowled over because what immediately began to happen was most of the complaints I got as a superintendent were about the application process for middle school. Again and again I would hear it was stressful and too hard for children. It was something nobody was happy with. Parents would say there only three good middle schools and District 15 and my child did not get into that and what are you going to do about it? The process is too stressful for our little ones. There were so many things happening that were unusual to me. For example, kids were being interviewed. Letters of recommendation were being requested. Parents were paying somebody to prep children for their interview for middle school. This was something creating a lot of stress and even for the parents who had these economic advantages, by sheer numbers alone there was no way everybody was getting into three middle schools so it was a situation where nobody was really happy with it. We began to look at the way to make it more equitable and more reasonable for all parents because the breakdown of who went to the middle schools was clearly geographic. Certain elementary schools were seen as being preference to and better so people would say a four is not a four in every school. Schools were screening, the three popular schools were screening for academics, attendance and behavior and this meant children as parents who did not have the wherewithal to support them in a way with tutors and travel expenses and all kinds of things had no access to these things. Another thing that was going on is schools would give when I call brownie points and applications and mandate parents went on a tour of the school. Parents would get on a computer in the minute the appointments for tours of the school went live they would get their name in immediately. That worked very well if you had the luxury of sitting in front of a computer for 45 minutes and waiting for something to go live and it did not work if you were working two jobs and had no idea or no tech knowledge. There was a huge skew in terms of who got to go on these tours and who was preference to go on these tours. In addition there was the language issue. Parents might have been able to go on a tour but if they did not speak English they didn't understand what the tour was talking about. Consequently, there were a lot of things that preference certain kinds of kids. The other thing that happened is letters of recommendation. Teachers were literally asked to write a letter of recommendation individually for each child for the entire class. Since the parents were going to see the letters of recommendation, the question of veracity would come into play because parents were adamant about wanting a letter that ensured their child would get into the school they wanted so there were lots of

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loopholes and we began the process of cutting the loopholes. We began looking at how things were happening. One of the first things we did was get rid of sibling preferences. There were no more legacies. If your child had gone to that school, you no longer had the back door into that school. We got rid of the concept of mandatory tours for parents. We eliminated as I said letters of recommendation. Our final move is we went to something called blind ranking and I need to take a moment to explain that. As I said earlier, when parents ranked the schools, the schools got to see how the parents ranked them in schools would say if you do not rank our school first or second, you are not going to get a chance of getting your child into this school so parents were panic stricken and could not really rank schools because all they were trying to do was get them into the three schools. When we decided to go to blind ranking it simply meant these schools no longer had the opportunity to see how parents were ranking them and in fact had to look at every child who applied to that school through their application only. This was a huge step but it was still not enough. There was still a sense of this is still not working, it is still high stress and nobody is really happy about this. It was really difficult. I have to take a moment to talk about my principles who went with me on this journey and were intensely committed to making it better. This includes elementary school principals and the middle school principals because it was clear the process was cumbersome for everybody and completely inequitable for everybody. This is why we decided this was the journey we wanted to take. We were given the opportunity in the summer of 2017 to begin to do some work around this.

Terry Hofer: Anita, I just want to clarify at the bottom of the slides participants will get a sense of where you are in the journey as you move from preparation to planning to implementation to reflection. It is important to note what you have done in orienting us to the original state in District 15 is describe a number of the problems that existed prior to the diversity plan. If it is fair to characterize them in this way to make a distinction, some of the reactive steps you took once you learned of what was happening in terms of how students were finding their way to schools so I went to orient or situate the work going forward that that was the initial step and there was a lot of work being done to address what you were seeing in the field, but the diversity plan itself we previewed on the last slide was more of a comprehensive vision moving forward.

Anita Skop: The diversity plan, the title of which you saw on the last slide came out of work I'm going to describe now. In the summer of 2017, District 15 and the office of enrollment and an urban planning group called WXY met to talk about the middle school application process and what we could do to change it to a more equitable process that reflected the diversity of our district. You were going to see the middle schools did not reflect the diversity of the district and that this was part of the underpinning for this work. WXY was in urban planning group and they met with us and we began to talk about how are we going to hear the voices of everybody in the community. We were hearing a lot of voices but we were hearing it from parents who were affluent and whose kids did not get into what they considered the top three schools. We were not hearing from sunset Park or Redhook or the Bengali families in Kensington.

It was imperative going forward we wanted to make sure all voices were heard so we began to work together as a group to determine how we would do outreach to the community in a way that made sense, in a way that allowed voices to be heard and in a way that ultimately led to a more equitable and less cumbersome process that enabled our schools to reflect the diversity that is District 15 and that is New York City. We came together and decided to create a working group. The working group would be the backbone of the work and what would write

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the diversity plan. We wanted to make sure this was a group composed of every part of the district. Every community within the district, and that was not easy because they were people who felt their voices had not been heard, their voices were not valued so why would they trust us to come on board now? It involved a lot of outreach. So much outreach it took until August until November to form the actual working group. I have to give kudos to my team into members of my community who literally went individually to schools, spoke to the PTA and parents in the morning and ultimately helped us put together a working group that included voices from underrepresented constituencies. By November 2017, we had formed our working group and had our first working group meeting. We had parents, teachers, local CBOs, principals, two representatives from the Department of Education, my deputy and myself and two WXY facilitators. We insured at every meeting there was a translation, there was food and childcare and reimbursement for travel expenses so parents were not put in a position where this was a hardship and so nobody had to feel uncomfortable. In short we were working hard to create an environment where people would be comfortable talking. We came to call that a brave space. One of the ways that we did that is we all went through border crossers training so we were cognizant of the needs of doing this and what it was like for other members of our community. It was super important and one of the highlights. It also served to bring our team together so people were able to talk to each other from their experiences and from their life and that made a huge difference. People were comfortable talking to each other. We had the experience of having to have translation when parts of the meeting were conducted in Spanish so we knew what it felt like not to understand what was going on. It was really eye-opening and I have to say the people who came from Sunset Park and spoke in different languages contributed so much to this and they had the same desires and wishes for their children as the more affluent parents. They were just asking for it in a different language. It was a remarkable experience.

Terry Hofer: I have some questions teed up to keep your story moving along, but I do want to pause and take a peek at the chat if anybody does have questions you would like to add to the chat box, I will keep an eye on it and try to create space for us to address any questions that come up. While I am watching the chat box, on the screen I had the D 15 process guide. You shared much of what has taken place up until this point but I want to make note we are still in the preparation phase. In other words all the work he talked about so far in terms of the painstaking efforts to identify working group that was a cross-section of your school community was all done to inform the process guide which was created during the preparation phase, can you tell us a little bit about what drove your efforts going forward?

Anita Skop: One of the things we developed was this guide that set the norms and the goals for this group so the time would be honored any useful working way and not gets lost in the weeds. Oftentimes as you know when you work in a group it is very easy to chat away the time and not really get to your goals so we clearly defined our goals, what we were expecting to do in the timeframe we were expected to do it. What would be the roles of the group? The working group memorandum of understanding which literally describe the norms of the group and we were reminded of those at almost every meeting to make sure we kept to those norms. We put together the concept of a calendar in terms when meetings were going to be held and went outreach was going to be held and what the agendas were going to look like. The strategy for outreach, public engagement, then ultimately based on this feedback from the community, the plan structure we would put together and how the working group itself was put together in terms of the members to make sure every voice was heard. I should mention at this point every working group member had an alternate so if they could not come to a meeting there was somebody trained and could come in their place so there was never a time

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where there was not enough people to do anything. There was always intense work and planning going on. We clearly defined what was going to happen. I think this is a good point because now we were in the actual planning and we talked about how this was going to happen and we planned for the outreach so we finalized roles and responsibilities. We introduced the planning process. We talked about gathering and prioritizing community concerns and insights and this is important. This was not about us going out and saying this is what we are thinking about. It was telling us what you are thinking about. All of these options until the end when a final plan was created were about gathering information, sharing data, sharing information the gathering from the community, their feedback, their concerns and their thoughts and it was done in a lot of different ways. By setting this up, we talked about how we were doing outreach and get information out to parents. It was a process and a lot of outreach. I have to say that this is the backbone of the work.

Terry Hofer: Anita, you mentioned as you reached out to the community you said tell us what you are thinking about instead of here is what we are thinking about. How successful were you, or how did you, that is something we hear from districts that during the preparation phase they create a vision for what they would like to happen and during that initial outreach to the community it sometimes is received as it sounds like they came to us with a vision and they just want us to go along with it. How did you avoid that and help your plan be received in the community from that tells us what you are thinking about frame?

Anita Skop: First of all there were some things that were given. First of all you are right. The initial outreach was met with 'we don't have time for this or we are not that interested or why are you asking us?' You must have a plan already you are going to bring to us and I am honest enough to say that but I have an incredible team of people in my office. I'm a very small office. The whole office is six people. They went out into the community. Many had come from different parts of the community and they were able to talk to members of the community in their home language which was a tremendous help. Second, we reached out to schools individually. Brenda from my office went to schools and talked at PTA meetings and talked in the mornings to parents and other people from other areas in the district did the same. Principals were very supportive of this and suggested people we should be talking to. We made sure at every one of our meetings, and we did these large forms initially we made sure again there was translation, that there was a brief introductory presentation and most of the time was letting people tell us what they were interested in with translation and with no takers so they did not have to feel they were getting up in front of an auditorium of people. He was sitting in small groups and it tables sharing ideas. Initially we got the loud voices in the room, initially we got the parents coming from Park slope and cobble Hill but as it began to go on, we got more and more parents. The other thing we did was make it easy for parents. We held these forms in their neighborhood so they did not have to travel far. We made it like I said there was childcare. We were very cognizant that there were groups of people who might not come out in the evening so some of our sessions were in the morning. You're going to hear more about that as we go on but we work very hard. It wasn't perfect, but reached people who said to us this is the first time anybody has asked us for our opinion and it was an incredible experience.

Terry Hofer: I think what you have been describing as it appears on the screen is this framing phase. The next part under options, slow data analyze can offer feedback how different options could affect District 15 and gather feedback. I know you share data in a number of ways with their constituents. Maybe you could talk us to the next three sides and how you shared data.

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Anita Skop: One of the things I thought was amazing with the work with the urban planners is they were able to put together these graphics for data in ways that were easily explainable. One of the things educators often find problematic is explaining things without using jargon. Putting together data in a way that is difficult for people who are not in the industry or not college-educated to understand. If you look at these slides they are very clear. Take a look at these doughnuts as we call them. You can see the percentage of kids that get free and reduced lunch, it is half pink so that means half the kids in our district, the district think where people are the rich is free and reduced lunch. Lower socioeconomic. Look at the racial makeup of our district. I literally had simply stated me I thought your district was much more white than this. Window in our district, the largest population is Latino. This is not what people's perceptions were on both sides of the fence so I think these clear graphics made a difference. That enabled people to transition to a graphic that looked at how our schools were filled. This is a very important graphic in that they literally look at individual schools, we have 11 middle schools in our district and you can see by the colors who went to what schools and see the geographic segregation. This made people understand the schools themselves did not represent the district. They did represent the immediate neighborhood but not the district in a district where the process was supposed to send kids all over the district. This was a helpful slide. If you look at it you can see they compared the data to District 15 and some schools were very reflect the of the data but most schools, especially the popular ones were not. Would draw your

attention to William Alexander MS51 on the bottom and to Charles Dewey MS136, if you look at the population, it is Latino Hispanic children and yet our district which is the slide on the right side, it does not have nearly as many children percent wise as do we is getting. The reverse is true in William Alexander MS51, they are getting a larger proportion of white kids as is 447 then the district has so it is a very interesting piece to look at. If you move onto the next when you can zero in on those schools. It really shows you the racial disparity that neither of these two schools adequately reflected the population of our district.

Terry Hofer: Once you became aware of the data, once the school community became aware of the data, there is still the decision to do something about it or not. I know you said earlier at different points of the process there were people that were very vocal and outspoken against change. The next slide shows a graphic of the process. As you look at the process can you speak to us both about sort of the comprehensive nature of the planning effort but also give us a sense of where and when you heard folks speaking out against the process that potentially threatened what you were trying to do if it happened at all.

Anita Skop: It happened. As we went to the forms, we had a number of forms and you were going to see the pink line with lots of meetings is stakeholder engagement. The greenest parent outreach and it is ongoing at the same time. There were surveys. There was additional outreach. There was lots of community conversations. We did a huge meeting on a Saturday, during the week and the evening. We did a meeting in the afternoon. All of these meetings, there were stakeholders who came and said I don't think this is a good idea that this is going to ruin District 15. They said those things because they were frightened. We have a profound believe system that all of our children are blessed with potential and we as educators are responsible for ensuring they reach their potential and their potential is not defined by a pocketbook or a bank account or geographic location. It is defined by the opportunities that children get and we were committed to that but there were people in these forms that would get up and say something. Oftentimes people would say things in coded language. It is too far for my child to travel or I am concerned about the programs at this school or this school may be under

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resourced. New York City funding works on a per capita basis so every school gets the same funding based on the number of kids they have. Having said that, there was a believe system in Sunset Park that these schools in Park slope got more money from the Department of Education because they were better rich white schools. They did not realize the funding formula was the same and when we talked about it initially they didn't believe us. The same thing was true in reverse in that parents in Park slope would say those schools are under resourced. What they really meant unfortunately was there PTAs did not fund raise in the same ways richer schools would fund raise. Yes, there is a discrepancy in the funding but not the funding given to schools. Sad thing was there were wonderful programs in the schools that parents that were under resourced. You saw the donut for MS 136. That school every year pays to take children on a world trip. This past year they went to Tanzania. The year before they went to Italy and before Peru and before to Iceland. This is a school where people are saying they don't have resources and there are no programs. It is just different and it is the perception. Some of it is implicit bias in some of it is just fear fact your. We worked with all of this and gathered this information. We had three very large public workshops. We took into consideration things oftentimes I don't think are considered. When things we took into consideration was when you are dealing with populations, oftentimes the range of education is very different. If you ask people to write out a card with a comment you may be dealing with people who don't write, at least in a comfortable way so we had no takers. We had people who could translate and give information. You have to be cognizant of the range of people. We were very careful to make sure when something was presented it was not presented with jargon. It was presented in clear English that parents and children and everybody could understand and we as educators have to work really hard on that. There was a lot of outreach and ultimately by the end of the year we knew we had to present a plan to the Chancellor for his approval. That piece came to be the District 15 diversity plan which transformed not only from just changing the middle school application process, but talking about integration and inclusion in a very profound way, a way that had significant numbers of recommendations over five years. We are looking at equitable admissions and integration, but also things like access to information. Who controls the information? Who is getting the information out there transportation became a huge issue. We didn't think about it initially but it was a huge issue and that was one of the things we are excited about because people were saying how I my getting a sixth-grader halfway across Brooklyn so to speak? The reality was it is difficult for young children and parents who are working so we wanted to make sure that was a possibility. I have to say also we want to diverse integrated school communities and even on both sides of the district, people talked about wanting diversity in terms of equity. People talked about integration. We changed from talking about diversity to talking about integration. We changed from talking about equity and inclusion. It was about how we look at things, not just getting numbers of children into schools because that is just a step. I am very fond of saying we will not have true integration until kids are going to each other's birthday parties, mothers I haven't copied together, people having dinner together and they are just hanging out. Until we see that, when we see that we will have integration. It is more than just numbers and this plan evolved to be about much more than just numbers. It also evolved to look at different lenses in terms of including physical access for example for students with disabilities. Many of our schools are older buildings. I know outside of New York City schools are often on one level which provides better accessibility but in New York City were land is limited and valuable, we built storage buildings so consequently in the old days kids were expected to climb up four flights of stairs to get to a classroom. If you are a child with a physical disability that's problematic. The city itself right now is in an accessibility protocol they are working on but that became something that was talked about. We talked about students with special needs. The LGBTQ community and how children are viewed. This wasn't

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just about racial equity, it was about all children, all people, everybody getting the same opportunities and support. We talked very much and still working on it about continuing community engagement. Not just for the middle school process but as an ongoing peace. Had we make sure the voices that came to the table continue to stay at the table. The other thing is the social emotional piece. How do we support kids coming into schools that are different than the schools they came from? Are they ready? That was a big question the parents asked because they were fearful about how their child was going to be supported. We talked about professional development and individualization and differentiation but we also talked about restorative practices. We lived as a district at our suspension rates and who gets suspended and not a surprise based on information, a lot of times to do special needs kids and kids of color. These are all parts of this plan.

Terry Hofer Anita, I just want to make note as you are sharing the many parts of the plan, we are still in the planning phase. In other words the plan is essentially you are describing is a well-articulated on paper on the computer vision for what you wanted to happen. The good news for us on the call today is the plan as you said was submitted in July 2018, just about a year ago. You said the plan was to take place over a five-year period to using that timeline you have just really completed or on the precipice of completing the first year so we are anxious to hear about how the implementation has gone and then your thoughts as you reflect on the implementation so let me start by giving you an opportunity to describe how the school choice process itself work during the implementation, did it go as you had hoped?

Anita Skop: First of all I want to say we submitted the plan in July 2018. On September 18, 2018 the Chancellor and the mayor formally approved and accepted our plan which enabled us to change the middle school application process and then begin the outreach to explain the changes in support parents with the changes. Basically what the change was in fact we went to a computerized lottery system. It has two buckets. The buckets were designed to reflect the percentages of our district so every school has two buckets. One of the buckets is a 52% preference for students who fall into the free and reduced lunch category, students and temporary housing and what we now call multiple language learners and what was called English language learners. The other buckets were children who did not fall into that category and each child in the city who applied was assigned a random number. They were assigned by computer and the students were placed without any involvement of humans. The computer would spit out a list of who was going where. It is a lot more complicated than I making it because parents still had the opportunity to rank schools and they would select more schools. One of the positives that came out of this is if you remember early on I told you they would pick one or two schools even though they had the opportunity to pick 12. This he we found the average number of schools parents picked was six so they started to look at the schools in a different way. They looked at large versus small. They looked at programs and other things and also our schools have evolved over the course of the superintendency in the work we have done over the past 10 years, where they are in a place where there are wonderful programs in every school. Art programs and lots of opportunities so the choices seemed a little more acceptable as well. As a result of this, we did an incredible amount of outreach and excited about the outreach and we did lots of things that again I have to credit my principles. The principles went on tours and brought parents with them to show them schools that were far away. Schools were kids had not gone before. Principles literally send people and instead of just doing one large middle school fair, we did three. In addition to the large one we did one in Sunset Park, one in Redhook and Kensington. We came to where parents lived and we did that with them at different times of the day. One was it 3 o'clock in the afternoon so parents could come when they picked their children up. One was at 8:30 in the morning so

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they could talk in the morning to parents as they were dropping kids off. The other thing that was done that to me was unbelievable is the office of enrollment literally called every fifth grade family to tell them about the change in their language and remind them to fill out an application. Then they made the application process accessible as well. They did this thing call pop-ups where in certain schools where parents had difficulty of planning or they hadn't gotten a sufficient application they would send a crew to the school to support parents and parents would have the ability to come in in the morning when they drop kids off. They would sit with a counselor and the counselor would speak their language and go on to the computer and talk about the schools. They were not coerced to pick a school, they were allowed to pick a school because it was a neutral person and they would fill out the application right there. This was an incredible amount of support. Those of you coming from smaller district obviously New York City has to understand the scale in New York City but even a district 15 it is extraordinary. I have to credit my principles and my office staff and the people at the office of enrollment who went above and beyond to make this happen in a way that was accessible for children. We are excited about this. The application process closed at the end of the application process and finally April we got what are called the matches. The slide you are looking at is the difference in the matches based on what the offers were two students. This is a very profound difference. We looked at MS 51 earlier and we saw most of the students there reflected their neighborhood community. In 2018, 33% of the kids were free and reduced lunch and students and temporary housing. This year the offers with 257% of the kids that fell into that bucket. It is a huge opportunity. I can tell you personally on a more and it total level the principle that one of the schools in Sunset Park was so excited because she said we occasionally would get one child into MS 51 and now we have a whole cadre going there. There was a real change in the parents' excitement and the kids' excitement. The reverse was true also. Schools that were heavy with students who were free and reduced lunch and students and temporary housing such as MS 88 would from 81% to 53% in their offers with more offers being made to kids who are not in that bucket and more in line with the actual demographics. If you look down the list, it is not perfect and certain schools still have some issues in terms of balance but this was the big change across the board. Please bear in mind these are not the final numbers. What I mean by that, as you all know these were the offers and that in and of itself, early on Terry you said there were parents, we don't want this. When they got their match, some of them were not pleased, but I have to say every single one of these middle schools reached out individually to parents to talk to the students and welcome them. I'm going to call out Charles Dewey because this gentleman literally called every single parent of his incoming children and welcomed them and told them the great things and offered to meet with them and met with over 45 parents to welcome them to the school individually because they had concerns.

These are my principles you are looking at and they are the ones that did the work and they are the ones who carried this. It is my pleasure to talk about it, but it is on the backs of these amazing people so we are waiting to see what happened. I started by saying we are waiting to see what happened and now I say we are still waiting. We are excited and ready for the school year to start. As of all things education, the process will begin again in October so we are so grateful this has happened and we are excited to share the good things that are happening in our district with you.

Terry Hofer: Thank you, Anita. I'm going to turn things over to Nyla. While we are waiting, if you have questions for Anita, type them in the chat box and we will keep an eye out for those. You may have questions about the preparation phase and the planning phase and implementation phase or the reflection phase of the journey Anita shared with you today. Again I encourage

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you to type your questions in the chat box and I will turn things over to Nyla.

Nyla Bell:

Hi everyone. We would take a moment to take questions if you have them. We will wait a couple of seconds for participants to type in questions. It looks like there are no questions. Since there are no questions we can conclude today's webinar but before we close I need to apologize for the delay at the beginning of this webinar. That delay was due to technical issues. Thank you for bearing with this and thank you to our wonderful presenters. This concludes today's webinar. Please take a moment to complete the webinar survey once the window closes. A survey will come up in a separate browser tab. Thank you.

[Event Concluded]