



DISTRICT OFFICE
563 COLUMBUS AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10024
(212) 873-0282

CITY HALL OFFICE
250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1744
NEW YORK, NY 10007
(212) 788-6975
FAX: (212) 513-7717

HRosenthal@council.nyc.gov
www.council.nyc.gov

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August 28, 2016

Chancellor Carmen Fariña
NYC Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Fariña:

I write out of deep concern by the decision of the Department of Education to not vigorously oppose the designation of PS/MS 191 to the New York State's persistently dangerous schools list. This, despite the fact that several DOE officials, and you yourself, have stated to me and others, that they do not believe the school belongs on this list.

The DOE has given specific examples at public meetings and in a letter to the PA Executive Board of the school outlining why their characterization of several incidents labeled as 'dangerous' would differ.

DOE officials also stated at the August 2015 CEC 3 meeting that the training of officials at the school filling out these forms was not adequate and the forms were not filled out correctly nor with full information.

There is uniform acknowledgement by the DOE, District 3 Administrators, the Principal of PS 191, the school community, myself, and the D3 CEC that PS 191 is inaccurately designated. I am therefore worried by current DOE policy to place PS 199 wait list families at other D3 schools—aside from PS 191--and the lack of timely communication to PS 191 parents about this designation.

With creeping overcrowding at many schools within my district, alternate placements will have a ripple effect that may be felt for years to come. I would like to request a list of each alternate placement of any student from PS 191 and PS 199 (zoned wait list) so that we can assess what the impact will be moving forward.

I would also like to request clear communication with 191 families as a priority moving forward. Parents of children at PS 191 have a right to know and understand exactly what the 'incidences' were and how the designation occurred. They should be fully informed of the fact that the DOE has a very different definition of what constitutes a 'dangerous' incident than what the state does and they should be fully informed of DOE's intentions to appeal once it has the ability to do so legally.



Both the process that brought about this designation and the actions by the DOE since have been woefully lacking in transparency and extremely disappointing. I have full faith that PS 191 is a school that anyone in our community can feel confident in sending their children. I have allocated \$100,000 in expense programming alone, not because the school is in poor condition, but because the school, with new leadership and a reinvigorated school culture, is in a place to fully capitalize on the opportunity of funding and program enrichment.

I look forward to a timely response to my requests so that the parents of PS 191 students can start the school year informed and reassured about their school community.

Sincerely,

Helen Rosenthal

Cc:

Ilene Altschul, District Superintendent, School District 3
Lauren Keville, Principal PS/MS 191
DJ Sheppard, Family Leadership Coordinator School District 3
Joe Fiordaliso, President, Community Education Council District 3
Kerry Keiger, President, President's Council District 3
Kajsa Reaves, President, PS 191 Parent Association
Elizabeth Caputo, Chair, Community Board 7