



Community Education Council for District 4
 240 E 109 Street, Room 104, New York, NY 10029



Phone: 212-360- 4777 Email: cec4@schools.nyc.gov

President Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez	1st Vice President Sophie Oulai	2nd Vice President Lacey Jordan– D75 Rep	Recording Secretary Vacant	Treasurer Johanna Dominguez– ELL
Council Members: Elizabeth Soto-Cardona Adriana Tlacomulco Lawanda Joyner– MBPA Vandana Bonilla– MBPA				District 4 Superintendent: Dr. Kristy De La Cruz

Date: Wednesday, October 8th, 2025

Meeting Start Time: 6:07 pm

Introduction of Spanish and French Interpreters: 6:07 pm

Attendees: 65

Calendar Meeting Minutes

October 8th, 2025

- **D4 CEC President welcomed everyone for joining the meeting.** 6:07 pm

1. Roll call and call to order by Farah Khan- (6:09 pm – 6:10 pm)

Members Present: Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, Sophie Oulai (Zoom), Johanna Dominguez, Elizabeth Soto-Cardona, and Adriana Tlacomulco (Zoom), Lawanda Joyner and Vandana Bonilla.

Members Absent: Lacey Jordan.

2. Office of Language Access (OLA)- External Outreach Specialist: Robert Williams: (6:11 pm – 6:23 pm)

He greeted all and introduced himself as the External Outreach Specialist at the Office of Language Access, and he is the point person for all the parent engagements.

He spoke about New York City Public Schools background, their commitment to New York City Public Schools families, raising awareness in our communities, the schools.nyc.gov, hello webpage.

He said there are over 1 million students in over 1,600 plus schools that speak over 180 languages.

Approximately 40% of New York City public school households speak a language other than English at home and non-English covered languages are Albanian, Arabic, Bangalore, Chinese, French, Haitian, Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Uzbek. They provide free language assistance services to ensure all families can access important information and communicate effectively with school staff, these services include interpretation for all types of meetings and interactions with New York City Public Schools staff, whether it is in person, virtual, or over the phone.

Translation of critical communications to ensure parents remain informed in their preferred language and their office is dedicated to supporting both staff and families with the resources necessary to effectively communicate in languages other than English.

They have ads on MTA subways, the buses, done print and digital community ads in supermarkets, laundromats, salons, barbershops, pharmacies, advertised over the radio, direct parent outreach through robocalls, emails, text messages, and mailers.

He explained how to request language services, and sign language interpreting services.

- **D4 CEC President:** (6:24 pm – 6:24 pm)
She asked him that does this include support for PAs and PTAs that also need things translated or is this just specifically support for documents that the school is producing to provide to parents.
- **Robert Williams:** (6:24 pm – 6:24 pm)
He replied no, your direct support would be the parent coordinator or the admin. If you need any interpreter for your PTA meetings, you just go request it through them, and then they will request.
- **D4 CEC Treasurer:** (6:25 pm – 6:28 pm)
She said she is PA President in one of the district 4 schools. She discussed about the experience she had while requesting the language services and asked about if a parent comes to the school and the staff does not understand the language.
- **Robert Williams:** (6:29 pm – 6:30 pm)
He said they do not ask for an invoice, the contracted vendor does. He said Christian Barros is the director of interpretations, they can contact him, he is the in charge of the contracted vendor, and he is the liaison between the contracted vendor and the schools.
He replied for her second question that there is an over-the-phone service, which is 24 hours, 7 days a week, and is free of charge. There is scheduling needed. The staff will pick up the phone, they will provide their school's DBN number, they will ask them what language is needed, and then they will connect them with an interpreter over the phone to speak with the parent. Only staff can access the over-the-phone interpretation line.
- **D4 CEC Council Member:** (6:31 pm – 6:31 pm)
She asked how do you design outreach initiatives that are not only linguistically accessible, but also culturally resonant and measurable in impact. Her second question was, describe a data-driven approach you have used to evaluate the success and inclusivity of a community engagement effort.
- **Robert Williams:** (6:32 pm – 6:33 pm)
He asked her to email that question so he can ask his superior.

He replied for her second question; he shared his experience as when he was a PC in school and how he helped the parents.

3. NYC Public Schools Office of District Planning: Caitlin Whittemore & Eric Herman: (6:34 pm – 6:50 pm)

Caitlin Whittemore introduced herself as a Senior Associate Director of Planning for Manhattan Schools, and a brief presentation about who they are, as an office and the way that they support, CECs. The Office of District Planning is part of the First Deputy Chancellor's Division within New York City Public Schools. They work with school communities, CECs, Superintendents, DOE partner offices and other important stakeholders to assess district needs and priorities through something called annual district planning process. It includes creating annual strategic plans to identify and address local needs. They support under Chancellor's Regulation A190, which is major school changes, as well as Chancellor's Regulation A185 which is rezonings.

They work with superintendents closely to help meet the constantly evolving, district and citywide needs and operate under borough-based planning and analytics teams.

She discussed:

- Office of District Planning Overview
- Community engagement is a key part of the District Planning Process
- 2026- 2027 District Planning Process

- Chancellor’s Regulation A-190 governs the public review process for any proposal resulting in a significant change in school utilization
 - What is a School Rezoning? (A-185)
 - What can Recognize Accomplish?
 - **D4 CEC President:** (6:51 pm – 6:54 pm)
She said sometimes school communities do not get enough time to process and think about the implications of these diverse changes. She said sometimes there are rumors that schools are going to be merged, and we have schools that are under-enrolled, what does that mean? Who makes that decision? Now in school communities there are also conversations about class size. Needing more space as in East Harlem, we do have several schools that may have low enrollment. She said these conversations are since last 10 years, that we need another high school here in East Harlem and our middle schoolers need.
 - **D4 CEC Treasurer:** (6:54 pm – 6:55 pm)
She said the enrollments in the whole district public schools is reducing, and the charter schools are growing. Even the charter schools are part of the chancellor’s regulations, they have a lot of privilege regarding money, and it is a concern for the public schools and the newcomers are not able to figure out when, families leave and come into the system.
 - **Caitlin Whittemore:** (6:56 pm – 6:58 pm)
She mentioned that the Office of Student Enrollment is trying to work with some of that data, they have had some conversations, Project Open Arms, where they are trying to figure out not only families coming in who are newcomers, but also leaving. There is no office that tracks that information, student enrollment, some of the data is hard to gather, because it is self-reported, and then how do they aggregate it based on the data systems they have.
 - **D4 CEC President:** (6:58 pm – 7:02 pm)
She informed that the Charter situation is difficult, particularly in Harlem. Unfortunately, we do not fall into the zone where the law said we are at 55% of Charter schools and cannot get any new ones. We also have significant issues with matching funds, those schools that are co-located with charter schools that do capital improvements, those matching funds are not coming into our schools.
 - **Caitlin Whittemore:** (7:02 pm – 7:02 pm)
She said she will follow up regarding student’s enrollment.
 - **D4 Superintendent- Dr. Kristy De La Cruz:** (7:02 pm – 7:08 pm)
She said they never send the information to them and one of the common obstacles is how to aggregate it. We cannot go based on temporary housing and cannot go based on L status solely. Our school leaders and teams are trying to do it internally to add as a process to have our own internal data about why families are leaving. A lot of families left for work, for safety, and for the community. The inflation in New York City is causing a lot of people to want to relocate.
 - **Asher Rodriguez:** (7:08 pm – 7:09 pm)
Asher said he want to bring up the 3K and the Pre-K after schools, because that is something they have been constantly talking about, the community board, and they put in that request every year. The problem is that there are very specific requirements for Pre-K and 3K. That is why a lot of those programs do not have after-school, because of the licensing for the providers, that is why we cannot take younger kids.
 - **D4 CEC Council Member:** (7:09 pm – 7:10 pm)
She asked that are there any specific areas within the district development plan that could benefit from technological solutions or innovations developed by our students, engineering students or other students.
- The second question she asked was, to what extent do residents feel involved in the district planning decisions that affect their communities?
- **Caitlin Whittemore:** (7:10 pm – 7:13 pm)
She replied to the first question that unfortunately she is not the right person to ask this question to.

She replied to her second question that they try to make sure, as early as possible, that they are having conversations far before there is any sort of potential proposal. For example, they can come to in small group meeting with some members of a community and ask about their needs, that this is a school that has space to add a program that is a need in this district there is available space. Are they open to moving something here that would help your school.

- **Eric Herman:** (7:13 pm – 7:14 pm)
He said if anyone has an ideas, or goals, or things that they want to achieve, they can come up with an idea or a plan together. To formulate these ideas that will be supportive for the community, whether it is another standalone middle school or how do we get to a consortium high school.
 - **D4 CEC President:** (7:14 pm – 7:18 pm)
She said, we were supposed to get a new building that was supposed to be done years ago, and unfortunately, the residents on 96th Street, were not very happy about it. Two of our current high schools that were living in the district, were supposed to move to that new building, that could have potentially created space for new schools to be within the geographic district. By law, public schools are supposed to have classrooms that are particular in sizes, charter schools do not have to adhere to that.
 - **D4 Superintendent- Dr. Kristy De La Cruz:** (7:18 pm – 7:19 pm)
She informed that, Isaac Newton is a part of the school-based virtual learning. That was something that they are leveraging to be another marketing, branding tool, and Esperanza is a part of that as well. This is the second year for the high school, and the, first year for the middle schools to be allowed to be a part of this virtual learning opportunity.
 - **D4 CEC President:** (7:19 pm – 7:19 pm)
She informed that unfortunately, we do not have quorum today to vote on resolutions.
4. **Report of District 4 Superintendent- Dr. Kristy De La Cruz:** (7:20 pm – 7:43 pm)
She started with gratitude and thanked everyone for joining. She introduced the audience in the meeting who joined in person and virtually.

She discussed:

- District 4 Community Norms
- Mission
- District 4 East Harlem Mission
- District Priorities
- Important Updated & Celebrations
- Upcoming D4 Events
- Enrollment Updates
- Upcoming Fairs
- Meeting the Moment (NYCPS) Stands Against Hate

She said the main goal is that we do not want anyone to feel alone. When it comes to food, housing, please reach out to your parent coordinator, your school leader. We have family connectors, ambassadors, we must stay connected.

- **Jessica Roach: UFT:** (7:43 pm – 7:44 pm)
She introduced herself as the District 4 Rep for the United Federation of Teachers, and she appreciated being able to be in person in the meeting wanted to remind everybody to make sure that you are registered to vote. Last day to register to vote is October 25th, can do it, online, or through the mail.
She said she is excited working together at the district office, they are celebrating almost 80 teachers and school administrators getting tenure this year, it will be a large celebration and the legislative breakfast.
- **D4 CEC President:** (7:44 pm – 7:44 pm)
She said that there has been a lot of conversations with educators about how to engage in our community, our students in civics, and in this process as we are heading, elections, what is our role? How do we collaborate?

How do we engage more people, teachers, parents, and students alike? And what kind of information can be provided in schools?

- **Jessica Roach: UFT:** (7:44 pm – 7:45 pm)
She said is definitely a fine line about what we do in schools. The educators are not allowed to deal with, even though the UFT endorses political, candidates, they are not allowed to do that work during the school hours.
- **D4 Superintendent- Dr. Kristy De La Cruz:** (7:45 pm – 7:47 pm)
She said we are a Civics for all districts. All 23 of our schools are registered. What this means is that each school has a Civics for All point. Our schools will get, \$2,500. The students must go through the process of the participatory budget and then, this year, they are going to do something new, the soapbox, and last year they did their first ever Civics for All community forum.
- **D4 Deputy Superintendent- Dr. Lisa Reiter:** (7:47 pm – 7:47pm)
She informed that the soapbox is where students and we have five schools that will participate, that have, the opportunity for students to investigate areas of concern in their neighborhood, and present another box of speech, and it is not a competition, because every voice matters, but the issue for the community was that the online students and then they will get to present their speech at Tweed. Also, the students follow our lessons that we are working with our schools to implement in the classroom as well.

5. Report of D4 CEC President –Kaliris Salas: (7:47 pm – 7:57 pm)

She said there is a lot of stuff happening with our schools, we do our best to provide everyone with accurate and up-to-date information. She thanked the Chancellor for inviting all CEC members, to her State of school. Two students from East Harlem were very much centered, and families were given voices in that space. The Department of Education is under mayoral control, which means that the mayor has a lot of power, sole power, on what is happening in our schools. And whoever is leading the city is leading our system. Gets to appoint a chancellor, and make diverse appointments, gets to appoint the folks that are on the panel for educational policy, which is legally our New York City School Board, and so it is super important that we have the right person with that charge. It is also the person that dictates where those \$41 billion that are meant for our New York City public schools, how those funds are determined, where they go. New York City public schools have lost several federal grants, focused on integrating our schools, focused on our magnet school, so as mentioned, we have a magnet school in the district that may be in jeopardy of losing funding. And these are millions of dollars that the federal government is looking to take away from specific cities, that have policies that support and protect marginalized communities. our trans students are under attack in our schools. Policies that are inclusive of their gender identity, in addition to our immigrant families being in danger. It has been committed to replace the money for Head Start and Early Childhood, so our mayor is going to provide that funding, for early childhood education and childcare.

She added that our school safety agent's division has been moved from Community Affairs to under Deputy Commissioner Kinsella. unfortunately, she does not have a lot of information about that either. CEC4 is going to request a town hall, so that we can have more proactive conversations.

High school applications have been open. There was a forum on Monday about the SHSAT, which has currently been digitized. there are hundreds of qualities and amazing high schools across the city that meet the needs of our diverse learners. middle schoolers also can apply to middle schools, outside of their district as well.

That was a policy change from last year, and that will continue moving forward. October 17th, we have a President's Council meeting.

- **Asher Rodriguez:** (7:57 pm – 7:59 pm)
He introduced himself as the chair of the Youth and Education Committee of Community Board 11. He said he has some updates on what they are going to be talking about in their meeting. It will be a very big budget meeting; they will submit it to the different agencies about the needs within our schools. He will be announcing in their meeting about the Children's Aid, He invited everyone for New East Harlem Center on October 20th at 9.30 a.m. for any questions, can go to CB11M.org,

- **D4 CEC President:** (7:59 pm – 8:00 pm)
She said unfortunately, we cannot vote because we do not have 7 members in person. But we do have 7 people in total, 2 of them are online, and 5 of us are here in person. We will interview the new candidates for council member seats and then we will call a special meeting just to vote and get the expedited process. It is important that community members listen and get to know the candidates.
- 6. CEC4 new Council Member’s Interview:** (7:59 pm – 8:22 pm)
CEC4 council vacancy applicants Tia Jackson in-person and Brennan Lowery virtually via Zoom, provided an introduction, and responded to council questions.
- **Mari Moss:** (8:22 pm – 8:24 pm)
She introduced herself and informed about the event on October the 24th from 6 pm to 8 pm, they will be having a funding meeting at the State Office Building in Harlem Action Board that represents Region 9, which covers East Harlem and Central Harlem. These are funds that are given to the community for after-school programs, and community for programs that are needed to support their various needs. They do a community need assessment every two years, which is in the interim of the census.
 - **Motion to adjourn the Calendar meeting by Lawanda Joyner seconded by Elizabeth Soto-Cardona** (8:24 pm)
- 7. Calendar meeting adjourned:** 8:24 pm

Business Meeting Minutes

October 8th, 2025

Date: Wednesday, October 8th, 2025

Meeting Start Time: 8:41 pm

1. Roll call and call to order by Farah Khan 8:41 pm

Members Present: Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, Sophie Oulai (Zoom), Johanna Dominguez, Elizabeth Soto-Cardona, and Adriana Tlacomulco (Zoom), Lawanda Joyner and Vandana Bonilla.

Members Absent: Lacey Jordan.

Attendees: 27

2. Treasury Report by D4 CEC Treasurer- Johanna Dominguez: (8:42 pm – 8:45pm)

She spoke about the CEC4’s contribution for district 4 events for the educational games for the Christmas event, and medals and trophies for the Spelling Bee, and Science Fair.

She asked members for the reimbursement forms to fill and submit so it can be timely processed.

- **CEC4 President:** (8:45 pm –8:54 pm)

She informed that CEC4’s old business will move on to next month’s business meeting, along with the last three months meeting minutes and discussion on bylaws.

She discussed the D4 schools' liaisons assignment with the members.

She informed about the upcoming District 4 Legislative Breakfast that will be on October 23rd, 2025 and the 10 year celebration on October 30th, 2025.

She informed that she and CEC4 council member Vandana were invited to a leadership meeting that is going to be on the October 28th, in Long Island City, and they will report back on that.

She informed that she has received an email, about Chancellor's Regulation D210, which was, for anti-discriminate policy that was developed and approved during the Carranza and the Misha Ross Porter administration, to hold parent leaders accountable for racist actions. There have been a lot of legal issues, surrounding that, and a lot of people can use the law to invoke white supremacy and harm people of color, but we, as presidents, have been called to a meeting next week.

She said it is important for us to be able to have at least 7 people in person, because if we do not have 7 people in person, we cannot vote. And if we cannot vote, then we cannot send resolutions, we cannot be vocal in our advocacy.

3. Motion to adjourn the business meeting by Elizabeth Soto-Cardona seconded by Vandana Bonilla. (8:54 pm)

4. Business meeting adjourned: 8:54 pm

**Prepared & submitted by:
Farah Khan
Administrative Assistant**

Next D4 CEC Calendar and Business Meeting will be on November 12th, 2025.