



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– IEP

1st Vice President

Sophie Oulai

2nd Vice President

Lacey Jordan– D75 Rep– IEP

Recording Secretary

April Autry

Treasurer

Johanna Domínguez– IEP– ELL

Council Members:

Elizabeth Soto-Cardona
Adriana Tlacomulco– IEP
Ivy Soto– IEP
Lawanda Joyner– MBPA
Vandana Bonilla– MBPA

District 4 Superintendent:

Dr. Kristy De La Cruz

Date: Wednesday, September 10th, 2025

Meeting Start Time: 6:05 pm

Introduction of Spanish interpreters: 6:06 pm - 6:08 pm

Attendees: 48

Calendar Meeting Minutes

September 10th, 2025

- **D4 CEC President:** (6:05 pm - 6:05 pm)

She welcomed everyone for joining the meeting and introduced herself.

1. **Roll call and call to order by Farah Khan-** (6:05 pm – 6:06 pm)

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

Members Absent: Sophie Oulai (Excused), April Autry (Excused) and Ivy Soto (Unexcused).

2. **How they work with caregivers, and updates on upcoming free events for families- Literacy in Community- MD, MPH-a pediatrician Public Program Director of Upper Manhattan Early Childhood Connect– Sejal Kothari:** (6:08 pm – 6:50 pm)

- **Sejal Kothari:** She introduced herself; she works as the program director of Upper Manhattan. Early Childhood Connect. She informed that she has worked in the schools for several years, in Brooklyn and Queens.
- **Kiara Santos:** She introduced herself. She said they are aligning and committing to students, families, and communities in East Harlem. Empower families to understand that OPI. Literacy is a value and a right for all children, and their mission is to equip their caregivers, community members, anyone who is available to support a young child in their early literacy journey with the skills help them feel like masterful readers.
She said: * 6 out of 10 children in NYC are not reading on grade level * Their Vision * Their Mission * Their approach- play-based learning & family engagement - powered by the science of- Breaking it down * Their programming- reading everywhere- family engagement- reading discoveries- very involved parent (VIP) program * Strategic initiatives & advocacy *State level advocacy

* City's first readers- an interactive of the NYC Council * How UMECC works * Community events. She shared their call center contact number- 347-530-7220.Mon - Fri- 8 am till 3 pm

- **Asher Rodriguez:** Asher introduced himself as the chair of the Youth and Education Committee on Community Board 11. He said there are different committees on community boards. The one that he chairs, they work in collaboration with schools to put in certain budget requests to the city. He shared his email youth_education@CB11M.org.

3. Families Shifting from Participation to Power- CEC4 Providing Parent Associations Meaningful Options to Utilize Their Title 1 Funds to Truly Enhance Parent Engagement- Performance-Renew (W/MBE) DOE Vendor- Former Vice President of CEC10, Former PA President and former public educator- Educational Leadership and Development- Kent Bowman: (6:51 pm – 7:07 pm)

He introduced himself as former Vice President of CEC10, former PA president and former public educator, for 15 years. He had the opportunity to teach in 3 different states, English language learners and general ed, especially, students with IEP.

He talked about: * Engagement V Involvement * Know yourself - Grow yourself * Redefining parent engagement * The LSG profile * Our child, their style, their growth profile.

- **CEC4 Council Member:** She asked how many sessions the workshop is?
- **Kent Bowman:** He answered that it is two-sessions workshop.
- **CEC4 Council Member:** She asked what role does personalized learning strategies play in improving literacy, especially for students who struggle with traditional methods?
- **Kent Bowman:** He said if they are struggling in literacy, before you have them read about it, you want to let them have a real-life experience with it.

4. American Debate League- Executive Director- Richard Connelly: (7:07 pm – 7:13 pm)

Mr. Richard introduced himself as the executive director of the American Debate League. They work with schools throughout New York City. Their mission is to help children become better thinkers, speakers, and leaders. Their tagline phrase is the hashtag debate changes lives. They started in 2015, and this is their 10th year anniversary.

They work with schools throughout the city, help them start debate teams. He mentioned that one of the number one schools in New York City, of the debate world, is Tag Young Scholars. They took them to Harvard for 3 years in a row, they have done well in the playoffs, and even in regular tournaments. He said they will be receiving funding to help work with District 4 schools from Assembly member Gibbs, they will use that to help with Harvard, with TAG, and to host the Manhattan Borough Championships.

5. Report of District 4 Superintendent- Dr. Kristy De La Cruz: (7:13 pm – 7:54 pm)

She started with gratitude and thanked everyone for joining. She said there are so many places that each person here could be, and they choose to be here.

She discussed:

- District 4 Community Norms

- New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) Mission
- District 4 Mission
- District Priorities
- **CEC4 2nd Vice President:** She said the parents cannot track their children unless the bus driver signs up and the way it is mandatory to have their license, it should be mandatory for them so it should log into the app so that the parents can feel safe. And they can log on and can keep track of their kids.
- **Dr. Kristy:** She said she is writing this down, and asked to inform her about that, too. so that she can escalate.
- **She discussed:**
- Important Updates
- Upcoming District Four Event.
- **Parent:** She asked about the teacher's conference in person.
- **Dr. Kristy:** Kristy said parents should ask parent coordinator to request for in person PTA.
- **Jessica Roach- UFT:** She introduced herself as the United Federation of Teachers District 4 rep. She represents all 27 schools in East Harlem, under Dr. Kristy De La Cruz and some of the high schools too. She informed that they are partnering with District 4 Back to School event on September 27th and on October 25th, at 52 Broadway, downtown at the UFT headquarters, there will be a Manhattan Parent Conference. She added that every single teacher in New York City, including paraprofessionals, are required to do 55 minutes of parent engagement a week. It is done remotely. Parents can ask for an alternative time, an alternative date to meet with teachers and go over the report card.
- **Dr. Kristy:** She shared that District 4 was in the ABC News on Monday. The Anchorman did a read-aloud and gave out books to Patrick Henry Prep. Raul Alejandro, a very famous singer visited PS 96, with celebrity substitutes, this was approved by the press. They donated a lot of money for different schools. Celebrity Substitutes have been to PS 007, PS 96, PS 83, and also PS 182. They asked them to come visit our schools, because they give, wish lists for the arts, the supplies.

6. Report of D4 CEC President –Kaliris Salas-Ramirez: (7:54 pm – 8:03 pm)

She thanked the community and the council.

She talked about two reports that have come out from Comptroller Brad Lander, unfortunately, the Department of Education has not provided the services needed for all our students that are English language learners. 40% of students that are English language learners are not receiving the support. It is of concern, particularly as we have received over 50,000 students as newcomers to our system in the last couple of years and we exist in a multilingual community.

There is a report from Brad Lander, Comptroller Brad Lander as well, there was a report released on the program that Mayor Adams put out after school for all, unfortunately, Manhattan only received funding for two schools to receive the afterschool for all funding. Both were charter schools. None of our public schools were chosen for that and we do understand that federal funding has decreased for a lot of our programming in our schools, these are things that we need to talk about and advocate.

She added today, we also got news that we lost federal funding to our Head Start programs. In this case, we were fortunate that the City Hall will be supplementing that funding, but that means that funding has been supplemented right now during this current administration for the next year.

She informed that there will be a rally on September 18th hosted by Success Academy, Eva Moskowitz, she has canceled her schools, in her middle schools and high schools, and is marching across Brooklyn Bridge. They are still using yellow buses and resources that will be taken away from some of public-school students.

The Panel for Educational Policy meeting is on September 25th in Queens at Francis Lewis, they promised to create a commission that will study transportation services across the city.

She said that this council is fully committed in providing support to have student members, we see ourselves as adult allies, and we want to make sure that we engage with young people in a meaningful and respectful way.

She mentioned that some of us participated in a hearing on August 26th about Public Safety with Chief Mark Rampersand, talking about a district-wide plan for safety. Our school safety agents are being moved from the Division of Community Affairs to under Deputy Commissioner Kinsella. Now, we still have a lot of questions in terms of what does that mean? If you do not have school safety agents that are trained, in particular ways to support the community, to support students, what does it mean when it is under a division of NYPD that is not necessarily working with students all the time?

For questions email us at cec4@schools.nyc.gov or attend the Panel for Educational Policy meetings.

She expressed gratitude to the Manhattan Borough President for, appointing, Lawanda Joyner and Vandana Bonilla to our council, two new CEC4 Borough President appointees.

- **CEC4 2nd Vice President:** (8:03 pm – 8:05 pm) She updated about D75, there was a Back-to-School event on Sunday at the Jacob Jabra Center. The CEC for Special Education's meeting is on Tuesday, September 16th at 6:30 pm and there will be an event, to teach parents, on how to navigate the IEPs, the link is in the chat, she mentioned.
 - **CEC4 Treasurer:** (8:05 pm – 8:07 pm) She said she was surprised with the comments, as English as a second language meeting. Parents are not being informed, and they do not have the options to choose. They cut off the videos, so they just skip the whole video, so parents are not being informed about what happened. They have a statistic about DOE is not getting all the data together, uninformed parents, they do not have a proof to show to the parents that they have been given information. They have evidence of test review, but all the information that we have, they have a policy before for the Department of Education.
 - **CEC4 Council Member:** (8:07 pm – 8:08 pm) Council member introduced herself as the appointee for Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine. She said she is honored to serve as the Manhattan Borough President's appointee to this Community Education Council. She said she wants to bring passion for advocacy and commitment to ensuring that every family's voice is heard, especially those that often go unheard. She is here to listen, collaborate, and contribute to the important work this Council is doing for our district. She said she is thankful for this opportunity.
 - **CEC4 Council Member:** (8:08 pm – 8:09 pm) She introduced herself as the Borough president appointee for Mark Levine's office. She said she is honored to work with the CEC4 team, she is here to collaborate, bring her expertise, and get what is needed for this district.
 - **D4 CEC President:** (8:09 pm – 8:10 pm) She informed that the next agenda item was the new CEC4 candidate's interview, but the candidate was unable to make it today.
7. **Calendar meeting adjourned:** 8:10 pm

Business Meeting Minutes

September 10th, 2025

Date: Wednesday, September 10th, 2025

Meeting Start Time: 8:18 pm

1. Roll call and call to order by Farah Khan 8:18 pm

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

Members Absent: Sophie Oulai (Excused), April Autry (Excused) and Ivy Soto (Unexcused).

Attendees: 35

- **D4 CEC President:** (8:19 pm – 8:22 pm)

She informed that we have two members that have not been actively participating. One is, recording secretary, April Autry, and she has been told by the ethics department that she cannot engage with council, as they are still clearing her.

She informed about Ivy Soto, who was elected in the runoff for the IEP seat, unfortunately, while we have supported her in understanding her role, this is her third unexcused attendance, unless she submits a letter of resignation, next month we will have a resolution that we will vote on to vacate the seat.

She said we had a candidate for CEC4 who was not able to make it tonight for an interview.

2. Treasury Report by D4 CEC Treasurer- Johanna Dominguez: (8:22 pm – 8: 23 pm)

She said we just spent on members reimbursement this month.

- **D4 CEC President:** (8:23 pm – 8:26 pm)

She informed that CEC4's old business will move on to next month's business meeting, along with the last two months minutes and discussion on bylaws. She discussed the school liaisons assignment with the members.

4. Business meeting adjourned: 8:26 pm

Prepared & submitted by:
Farah Khan
Administrative Assistant

Next D4 CEC Calendar and Business Meeting will be on October 8th, 2025.