



**CEC 31 Hybrid Business Meeting and Calendar
Minutes of the meeting
Monday, March 3rd, 2025**

COMMUNITY
EDUCATION
COUNCIL
DISTRICT 31

Dr. Roderick Palton
A.I. District
Superintendent

OFFICERS

Lucia Curatolo-Boylan
President

James Desiderato
1st Vice President

Frank Marino
2nd Vice President

Andrew Guido
Recording Secretary

Joseph Bird
Treasurer
IEP Representative

Amanda Wolkowitz
D75 Representative

Daniella Caputo
Teresa Circelli
Borough President
Appointees

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Melissa Cosentino

VACANT
ELL Representative
D31 Representative
D31 Representative
Parliamentarian
Student Members
Administrative Assistant

Business meeting

- **Call to order** at 6:43 p.m. and is greeted by President Lucia Curatolo-Boylan.

- **Interpretation services are welcome** in Russian, Chinese and Spanish

- **Roll call of members**

In person: Joseph Bird, Daniella Caputo, Teresa Circelli, Melissa Cosentino, Lucia Curatolo-Boylan, Jordan Dale, James Desiderato, Andrew Guido, Frank Marino, Mia Perez, Amanda Wolkowitz

- **Approval of the draft minutes of the working meeting for February**

A motion to refrain from reading the minutes aloud in order to save time, as they were publicly distributed before the meeting and will be shown on screen.

Move 1: Melissa Cosentino

Movement 2 is: Frank Marino

The minutes of the February meeting were approved by all members of the council.

- **CEC31 Budget Review**

- **Proposed budget adjustments:**

- The reallocation of unused funds from the AA Transportation line and P-Card (currently unused due to a vacant AA position) was discussed.
- The office supplies fund is also considered to be in surplus; only minimal expenses are expected (for example, printer ink).
- A motion to donate funds to the Food & Refreshments Fund to support the Big Apple Teacher Awards Ceremony.
- After adjustments, the total cost of the new food and beverage line will be \$3,900.

- **Request for reimbursement:**

- Melissa Cosentino submitted a request for a refund of \$250 (for October and June 2024) due to an error in pre-submitting the form.
- The Council acknowledged that this was not a standard precedent, but agreed to consider the possibility given the existing surplus (3 vacant positions = budget flexibility)
- Funds are received through the participant reimbursement line.

Motion to amend and submit the revised budget to a vote at the next calendar meeting

Move 1: Melissa Cosentino Movement 2 is: Amanda Volkowitz

Motion to approve Melissa Cosentino's request for reimbursement

Move 1: *Joseph Byrd* **Movement 2 is:**

• Review of CEC31 Resolution Reaffirming the Commitment to the Education of All Children and Making New York City Public Schools a Safe Haven for Students and Families

- The resolution was presented on screen and read publicly.
- Council member comments:
 - Document edited due to typo
- Public discussion
 - Nobody
- Motion to approve the draft resolution
Move 1: *Andrew Guido*
Movement 2 is: *Amanda Volkowitz*
- Motion to move the resolution to the calendar meeting for a vote
Move 1: *Melissa Cosentino*
Movement 2 is: *Teresa Cirelli*

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• Review of CEC31 Resolution Regarding the Use of Cell Phones, Smartwatches, and Other Electronic Devices in District 31

- The resolution was presented on screen and read publicly.
- Comments from board members:
 - **Current practice and implementation:**
 - **Jimmy Desiderato** And **Joseph Byrd** noted that some schools already use carts or transparent safes to store phones, often at the request of school administration.
 - **Jimmy** emphasized the need for a consistent disciplinary policy across the district, rather than leaving it to the discretion of individual principals.
 - Several schools are testing pilot programs using locked boxes or carts, but results are mixed.
 - **Concerns about emergencies:**
 - **Jimmy Desiderato** expressed serious concerns about restricting phone access during emergencies such as school shootings, saying students should be able to contact parents and stressing that student safety must remain a top concern.
 - **Mental Health and Phone Addiction:**
 - **Lucia Curatolo-Boylan** highlighted the rise in suicidal thoughts among students, which directly links excessive mobile phone use to worsening mental health.
 - It has been recognized that while safety in emergency situations is important, chronic overuse of devices is detrimental to students' educational and emotional well-being.
- **Student Prospects:**
 - **Mia and Jordan**, Student representatives explained that phones take up a lot of time and interfere with work. They also emphasized the need for communication to meet academic and personal obligations.
 - They reported student concerns about upcoming phone bans and the lack of clear and consistent rules in their schools.
- Public discussion

- **Venus Sr.** opposed a complete ban, noting that phones are necessary for students to travel and use educational tools like Google Classroom.
- She and others agreed that stricter discipline, rather than an outright ban, was needed for improper use.
- Participants and the council agreed that DOE Central has not yet provided consistent citywide leadership and should not make unilateral decisions without community input.

- Motion to approve the draft resolution
Move 1: Andrew Guido
Movement 2 is: Joseph Byrd
- Motion to move the resolution to the calendar meeting for a vote
Move 1: Frank Marino
Movement 2 is: Daniella Caputo

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• Review of CEC31 Resolution on Strengthening Gifted and Talented Programs by Establishing a Policy to Maintain Qualification Requirements

- The resolution was presented on screen and read publicly.
- Comments from board members:
 - G&T Committee Structure
 - Joseph Bird asked, why the G&T committee? *district* and not for *district*?
 - Lucia agreed that a county-by-county approach might be overkill given the number of counties.
 - A consensus was reached on continuing the work of the committees **district** level, despite concerns.
- Public discussion
 - Parents asked questions about Proposal of a resolution to establish a Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Committee in each district.
 - The Council explained that the committee would oversee the implementation of laws relating to G&T programs.
 - Address identification, academic and behavioral criteria, and programming issues.
 - Recommend mandatory annual assessment of G&T students.
 - Currently there is **no official policy** for removing a student from G&T programs, even if behavioral or academic problems arise.
 - The removal process must be **transparent**, involving parents, standardized tests, teacher evaluations, and an appeals process.
 - Specific family issues related to anxiety, behavioral incidents, and lack of timely intervention in P.S. 8 were noted.
 - Expressed concern about the AI Superintendent's treatment of G&T students at P.S. 8, the stress this issue is causing on students, and expressed frustration with the slow response and dangerous environment in the schools.
 - While the council supports the resolution, it cannot dictate citywide policy – final decisions rest with the chancellor and the Ministry of Education.
 - A parent forum with AI Superintendent Dr. Palton has been requested.
 - Dr. Roderick Palton confirmed he plans to visit the affected school.
- Motion to approve the draft resolution
Move 1: Joseph Byrd

Movement 2 is: Frank Marino

- Motion to move the resolution to the calendar meeting for a vote

Move 1: Jimmy Desiderato

Movement 2 is: Melissa Cosentino

- **The President's report has been moved to the Calendar Meeting.**
- **Council Members' Report - Moved to Calendar Meeting**
- **Old business**
 - The Flag Football League is still looking for a site to host its district-wide program for schools on September 11th.
- **New business - no**
- **The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.**

Calendar Meeting:

- **Call to order at 7:46 p.m.** and welcomed by President Lucia Curatolo-Boylan.

- **Interpretation services are welcome in Russian, Chinese and Spanish**

- **Roll call of members**

In person: Joseph Bird, Daniella Caputo, Teresa Cirelli, Melissa Cosentino, Lucia Curatolo-Boylan, Jordan Dale, James Desiderato, Andrew Guido, Frank Marino, Mia Perez, Amanda Wolkowitz

- **Approval of the draft minutes of the meeting for February.**

A motion to refrain from reading the minutes aloud in order to save time, as they were publicly distributed before the meeting and will be shown on screen.

Move 1: Frank Marino

Movement 2 is: Melissa Cosentino

The minutes of the February meeting were approved by all members of the council.

- **CEC31 Budget Vote**

- The proposal to vote on the amended budget was approved at a business meeting.

Move 1: Jimmy Desiderato

Movement 2 is: Andrew Guido

- Roll call vote on amended CEC31 budget

- **[Review of CEC31 Resolution Reaffirming the Commitment to the Education of All Children and Making New York City Public Schools a Safe Haven for Students and Families](#)**

- The resolution was presented on screen and read publicly.
- Motion to vote on the resolution

Move 1: Daniella Caputo

Movement 2 is: Amanda Volkowitz

- Roll call vote

The vote was unanimous in favor

- **[Review of CEC31 Resolution Regarding the Use of Cell Phones, Smartwatches, and Other Electronic Devices in District 31](#)**

- The resolution was presented on screen and read publicly.

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- Motion to vote on the resolution
Move 1: Daniella Caputo
Movement 2 is: Amanda Volkowitz
- Roll call vote
The vote was unanimous in favor

• [Review of CEC31 Resolution on Strengthening Gifted and Talented Programs by Establishing a Policy to Maintain Qualification Requirements](#)

- The resolution was presented on screen and read publicly.
- Motion to vote on the resolution
Move 1: Daniella Caputo
Movement 2 is: Amanda Volkowitz
- Roll call vote
The vote was unanimous in favor

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• Presentations

Independent Budget Office

Hosts: Julie Conrad and Mai Nhuyen

Key points of the presentation

- The Independent Budget Office of New York (IBO) provided an overview:
 - **School Construction Department** processes.
 - The role of NVB in the proposal testimony **at city, state, and other public hearings**.
 - Budget related issues including **financing mechanisms** and territories where **changes in state-level policy** may impact urban schools (e.g. **regional spending adjustments**).
- Data access and support
 - Yulia Konrad noted that IBO can help find publicly **available but difficult to access information**.
 - The IBO welcomed direct requests for support in understanding or accessing detailed data.
- **Request from a Council Member** requested that future presentations include district-level **data** (e.g., on student enrolment or fair funding), as such detail is often missing from the Department of Education's financial presentations.
 - NPA can Restore adapted data if questions are sent in advance.
 - Return to the present or simply exchange data directly via email.

Language Access Management

Host: Robot Williams

- **Overview and Purpose**
 - The presentation demonstrated how families can access translation and interpretation services through the New York City Public Schools website.
 - Particular attention was paid to equitable language access and support for non-English speaking families.
- **Language access in New York City schools**
 - New York City public schools serve more than 1 million students in more than 1,600 schools where more than 180 languages are spoken.
 - More than 13,000 families prefer oral or written communication in a language other than English.
 - The Ministry of Education prioritizes the 10 most widely spoken languages, in addition to English, and also supports languages such as Albanian and Ukrainian.

- **Language Access Groups and Services**
 - Team of translators: translates general and individual documents.
 - Team of translators: provides real-time interpretation (in person, virtually and by phone).
 - Communications and Data Integration Team: Raises awareness, ensures quality, and engages with families and advocates.
- **Free language services available**
 - Translation at meetings/interactions with school staff.
 - Translation of general documents (e.g. newsletters, leaflets).
 - Translation of individual documents (e.g., IEPs, 504 plans, transcripts).
 - Sign language services are coordinated by a separate office (OSLIS).

- **Access to online language services**
 - Website: school.nyc.gov/hello.
 - Contains a multilingual introductory video and helpful resources, including printable "I Speak" cards.
 - Parents can request translation/interpretation services through the online form or by calling 311.
 - You can also leave a review of our services online.
- **Process and response**
 - Completed request forms are sent directly to Robert Williams, who ensures timely communication with the appropriate school personnel.
 - Anonymous applications are allowed.
- **Raising awareness**
 - Information and propaganda work is carried out through schools, public places (e.g. grocery stores, beauty salons) and advertising on public transport.
 - Families are encouraged to update their contact information with schools to receive communications (robocalls, text messages, and emails).
- **Complaint process**
 - **If families have difficulty receiving services, they can file a complaint.**online, which are forwarded to district offices for further review.

- **President's report**

- **Vacancies and elections to the Central Election Commission Council**
 - There are currently three open positions: two District 31 Parent Representative positions and one ELL Parent Representative position.
 - Applications are available on www.cec31.org.
 - Virtual candidate forums will begin on March 3, 2025.
 - District 31 Forum is scheduled for Thursday, March 27, 2025.
 - All current members stand for re-election.
- **Summer Rise 2025**
 - Open to New York City students currently in grades K-8.
 - Application deadline: March 4–28, 2025
 - Families can apply through the NYC MySchools portal, at their local school, or at school.nyc.gov/fwc.
 - DOE toolkits and flyers are available online.
- **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**
 - The application deadline has been extended until March 14, 2025.
 - Open to youth ages 14-24 who live in New York City.
 - Offers paid employment or scholarships depending on age group.
 - Works in two groups, starting in early and mid-July.

- Applications can be made through the city website or local community organizations (e.g. UAU, NYSID).
- **ARAS Summer Program for Teens**
 - A free two-week program exploring art, symbolism, psychology, and cultural studies.
 - Includes excursions to museums, galleries and studios.
 - Located at 28 E 39th St, New York.
 - Applications are opening now; the link is posted in the meeting chat.
- **Overview of Chancellor's Resolution A-663**
 - The regulation ensures access to the language for parents with limited English proficiency.
 - Lucia will participate in a virtual conversation about the proposed changes.
 - Council members are encouraged to submit proposals via email.
- **UFT Lobby Day 2025**
 - Scheduled for Monday, March 10, 2025
 - Buses depart at 6:30 a.m. from city offices.
 - Dedicated to advocating for legislative priorities with the UFT in Albany.

- **Superintendent Report**

- **General updates**
 - We apologize for not being able to appear in person due to unforeseen circumstances.
 - Key events of February:
 - Attended a youth summit at Wagner College.
 - Participated in the St. Patrick's Day parade, which included local school students and school orchestras.
 - A joint meeting of school principals and the NAACP was held to discuss school issues and needs, organized with the support of Cheryl McMillan. Further meetings are planned.
- **Admission and applications**
 - 8th-grade students (high school offers): Decisions were released on March 6. Families must accept or decline offers immediately to manage waitlists.
 - 5th Grade Students (Middle School Proposals): Solutions posted April 9.
- **Pilot program for teaching mathematics in secondary schools**
 - Three math programs are under review: Illustrative Math (IM), Amplify Math, and i-Ready Math.
 - A virtual stakeholder meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 5, to review programs and gather feedback.
 - The decision will be made within a month based on feedback from families, teachers and students.
- **Financial Literacy Seminars**
 - **Ongoing workshops in collaboration with My Brother's Keeper and Janelle Rock, CEO of Financial the Island.**
- **DCEEP (District Comprehensive Educational Equity Plan) Goal Progress**
 - Priority: College and Career Readiness
 - There has been a 50% increase in the number of students enrolled in accelerated/honors classes, including ENL and students with disabilities.
 - AFSA completion is currently at 41.3%; the target is 72%. Outreach efforts are ongoing.
 - Priority: Interaction with family
 - 3,200 family event participants—7% below the mid-year target, but already exceeding last year's figure.
 - The panoramic survey aims to receive over 27,000 applications next month.
 - Priority: attendance

- The level of chronic absenteeism has decreased to 26.2%, which is lower than last year's level and lower than the city average (30%+).
- The number of absenteeism among students at risk has decreased by 3.5%.

- **Committee reports**

Lucia Curatolo-Boylan announced the important news of the relocation of TWILLS (Young Women's Leadership School). A new proposed location on South Avenue has been selected, and a visit plan has been developed for parents and teachers. There are concerns about the increased distance from the current location, as many students currently walk to school. A town hall meeting was recently held with TWILLS families, school administrators, Principal Natalie Shepherd, and stakeholders from the Young Women's Leadership School. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with enthusiasm for the opportunities the new location offers, including fundraising and internships through a partnership with the Nicotra Group. A joint public hearing on the relocation will be held next month. A final decision on the relocation is expected to be made at a PEP (Public Education Policy Panel) meeting. Updates will be posted on the 31 CEC website.

- **Public speaking**

Cheryl McMillan We express our gratitude to Dr. Palton for facilitating interaction with the principal and for emphasizing the need for community collaboration. Tours with parents and teachers are planned. The support of all interested parties is welcome.

- **Old Business - no**

- **New business - no**

- **Motion to defer consideration of the case**

Move 1: *Andrew Guido*

Movement 2-e: *Amanda Volkowitz*

- **The meeting was adjourned at 21:12.**