



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 16

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April 14, 2016

Dear Chancellor Farina,

The Community Education Council for District 16 wishes to express its support for the creation of a new Gifted and Talented program with an entry point in the third grade. We believe that this program will begin to rectify the lack of educational opportunities and resources in District 16 that have persisted for far too long. The use of multiple criteria for admission will allow students to be more thoroughly assessed and will lead to a more racially and socioeconomically diverse group of students.

We are disappointed that we were not given the opportunity to offer a K-2 program, as many members of our community were anticipating this option. We are committed to working with our elected officials and other community leaders to continue to raise awareness of the Gifted and Talented test for K-2 and to provide test preparation services so that more students in District 16 gain access to advanced learning opportunities in their own community. We understand that we do not currently have the number of students to sustain such a program, but we hope to rectify that soon.

There are a few other concerns that were raised by the community regarding the program starting in third grade:

- *Parents were not receptive to the location of the program at P.S. 26 because of its geographic location and other factors. It has been suggested that the DOE consider P.S. 309 or The Brooklyn Brownstone School. Brighter Choice was also suggested, but they are already slated to begin a dual language program in the Fall of 2016 and we want to spread new educational opportunities throughout the district.*

- *Parents were concerned that immediate attention be given to school-wide enrichment programs in grades K-2 at the site of the proposed grade three Gifted and Talented site. We want to develop a strong school overall, not just a strong Gifted and Talented program.*
- *Additionally, parents want to see the gradual implementation of enrichment programs in grades K-2 at all schools in District 16 so that every student is better prepared to compete for the third grade seats.*
- *Finally, we are calling on the DOE and the district office to develop a comprehensive strategy outlining how second grade students will be identified, recruited, assessed by their teachers and transitioned into the program. While we applaud the idea of reviewing report cards to find candidates and reaching out to parents, we are concerned that parents may not be responsive without a strong outreach plan. We also would like to see a plan for motivating teachers to complete assessments and accountability measures for principals.*

We are proud of the progress we have made this year in advocating for a more equitable education system for students in Central Brooklyn. While the new third grade Gifted and Talented program is a victory for our students, we have so much more to do to ensure that our children are given the same opportunities afforded to more affluent districts throughout the city. We look forward to working with you to advance this cause.

*Sincerely,
The Members of the Community Education Council for District 16*