

June 11, 2019

The Honorable Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Handicapped Graduates, District 75 and District 31

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

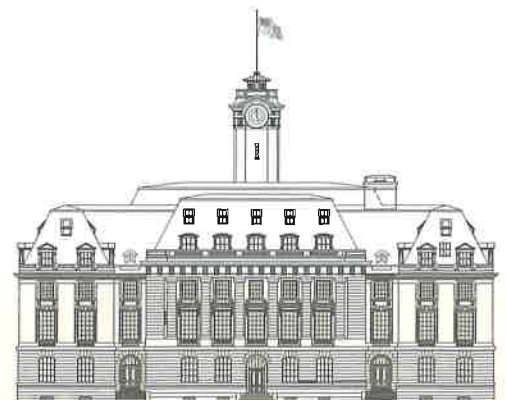
I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing to express my strong concern about the transition services being provided (or in this case, apparently, not being provided) to students with special needs aging out of District 75 and District 31. We recently met with a group of families whose children are non-ambulatory and have a range of additional challenges. They informed us that they were completely unprepared for what happened to their offspring after graduation, which for most of them was a total lack of training and services.

For the parents of those adult children who require 24-hour support, quitting their jobs was the only option, given that they are unable to get them into any adult day jobs or programs.

In 2011, the New York State Education Department sent out a memo to all school districts, concluding that a majority of these districts were failing to provide all of the required and necessary Individualized Education Program (IEP) transition requirements. My concern is as follows: despite this memo, and despite the free training and technical assistance available to districts (along with a host of publications on transition requirements), the NYCDOE is still not providing what is required to insure a successful post-graduation transition. Of even greater concern is that this failure to provide these services and supports disproportionately affects those students with the most severe special needs.

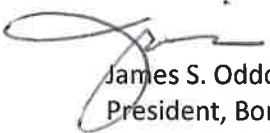
It is critical that students with severe special needs are connected to those agencies that may provide them with services after high school. It is the obligation of the DOE to invite these agencies (e.g., ACCESS-VR, OPWDD, DOH) to the first transition IEP, when the student turns age fifteen. Furthermore, if these agencies do NOT attend this IEP meeting, it remains the obligation of the school to include them in the planning of any transition services. It is clear from our conversation with the families mentioned above that this, among other things, simply never happened.



I am requesting that we meet to discuss our concerns, as well as to develop a plan that insures we address these issues going forward. I cannot continue to see families in my borough "falling off the cliff" when their special needs sons or daughters age out of our public schools. It seems clear to me that if planning begins simply when it is supposed to, and all of the transition IEP obligations are adhered to, both families and students will have much better post-graduation outcomes.

Thank you for your kind understanding, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,



James S. Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island

*P.S. Let's break some bread over the
summer at some point. Feel me
on The Rock.*