



**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**SPEAKER QUINN TOURS MS 287 AND
DISCUSSES COUNCIL'S MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE**

New York City – Speaker Christine C. Quinn took a tour of PS/MS 187/287 Hudson Cliffs today in order to view a K-8 middle school model and learn about its successes and challenges from teachers, students and administrators. She also discussed details of the Council's recently appointed Middle School Task Force, which has been charged with developing a set of recommendations to improve academic achievement in New York City's middle schools.

The Speaker was joined by Council Education Chair Robert Jackson and Dr. Charlotte Frank, co-chair of the Task Force. The Task Force will be working to develop a blueprint to reform and restructure the City's middle school system. It will also consider issues outside of the classroom, such as parental involvement and connecting students to support services and enrichment programs.

"Too many of our middle schools are failing," Speaker Quinn said. "We're losing too many kids between elementary and high school. And if we lose them there – it's a short road to high school drop out and a lifetime of limited opportunity. We need to be looking at best practices at schools like MS 287 as we work to develop policies to provide a quality education for all of our students."

In 2006, less than 50 percent of middle school children in grades 6 through 8 met or exceeded the English language grade standard and only 38.9% of 8th graders met or exceeded the math standards. Nearly half of all middle schools are not meeting their federal requirements, compared to only 19% of elementary schools and 26% of high schools. In addition, research suggests that high school dropouts can be identified as early as sixth grade based on four variables: low attendance, poor behavior, and failing grades in math and/or English.

"The facts are clear – our City's middle schools are in a crisis," said Council Member Robert Jackson. "We cannot expect kids to have the skills they need to graduate from high school if we abandon them at such a crucial time in their lives. We need to work with the members of the Council's Middle School Task Force and with parents, teachers, and students to find new ideas that can bring about real reform."

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The Middle School Task Force will begin meeting in March and complete its work by this summer. Test scores, best practices, and previous recommendations will all be reviewed, and a series of public meetings will be held in all five boroughs to gather information from parents, students, teachers and school administrators.

The Task Force will be chaired by two leading experts in the education field - Dr. Pedro Noguera, Professor at New York University, and Dr. Charlotte Frank, VP of Research & Development at McGraw-Hill Companies.

Other Task Force members will include:

- Patrick Montesano - VP and Director, Middle Start National Center - AED
- Michelle Yanche - Director, Neighborhood Family Services Coalition
- Vanessa Leung - Education Policy & Program Coordinator, Coalition for Asian American Children & Families
- Michele Cahill - VP, National Program Coordination and Director of Urban Education, Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Gail Gaines - Principal, Essence Middle School
- Sonia Ortiz Gulardo - Director of the Alumni Program, Beginning with Children Foundation
- Robert Jackson - Council Member, New York City Council
- Dr. Mary Jane Krebbs - Associate Secretary for Education, Archdiocese of New York
- Seymour Fliegel, President - Center for Education Innovation - Public Education Association
- Carol Boyd - Parent Leader, Coalition for Educational Justice
- Zakiyah Ansari - Parent Leader, Coalition for Educational Justice
- Sheila Evans-Tranumn - Associate Commissioner, State Education Department
- Manuel Rivera - Deputy Secretary for Education, Governor's Office
- Richard Farkas - VP for Middle Schools, UFT
- Ernest Logan - President, CSA/Principal's Union

For more information about the task force or to find out about public forums on strengthening middle schools, go to <http://www.nycmiddleschools.org>.

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