



**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**SPEAKER QUINN KICKS OFF FIRST MEETING OF
MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE**

City Hall – Speaker Christine C. Quinn today kicked off the first meeting 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. Today’s meeting provided an opportunity to outline some of the broad goals of the Task Force and review the timeline for the issuance of recommendations.

Members were briefed by the Department of Education on demographic information and DOE’s vision for middle schools. The task force also reviewed the Coalition for Educational Justice’s recent middle school report, as well as past efforts to improve middle grade education.

“Too many of our middle schools are failing, allowing kids to fall through the cracks between elementary and high school,” Speaker Quinn said. “And if we lose them there, it’s a short road to high school drop out and a lifetime of limited opportunity. This task force will act quickly to provide us with a plan that can help us improve our Middle Schools and provide a quality education for all of our students.”

In 2006, less than 50 percent of middle school students 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.”

The Task Force is 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

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McGraw-Hill Companies. Members will be working to develop a blueprint to reform and restructure the City's middle school system. They will also consider issues outside of the classroom, such as parental involvement and connecting students to support services and enrichment programs.

The Middle School Task Force will continue to meet throughout the spring and is scheduled to complete its work by the end of June. 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, school administrators and advocates.

Other Task Force members include:

- Patrick Montessano - Academy for Educational Development
- Michelle Yanche - Neighborhood Family Services Coalition
- Michele Cahill - Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Sonia Ortiz Gulardo - Beginning with Children Foundation
- Robert Jackson – New York City Council
- Sy Fliegel - Center for Education Innovation
- Carol Boyd – Coalition for Educational Justice
- Zakiyah Ansari – Coalition for Educational Justice
- Ernest Logan, Council for School Supervisors and Administrators
- Vanessa Leung - Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
- Mary Jane Krebbs – Archdiocese of New York
- Manual Rivera – Governor's Office
- Richard Farkas – United Federation of Teachers
- Sheila Evans Trnumn – State Education Department
- Gail Gaines – Essence Middle School
- Kathryn Wylde – Partnership for NYC
- Jackie Bennett – Michael J. Petrides High School
- Jon Snyder – Bank Street College
- Diane Hughes – New York University
- Tim Johnson – Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council

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

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