



CITY OF NEW YORK
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD
FOUR**

424 West 33rd Street, Suite
#580 New York, NY 10001
tel: 212-736-4536
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

March 9th, 2023

David C. Banks
Chancellor
Department of Education
52 Chambers St., New York NY, 10007

Elaine Lindsey, Ph. D.
Chief of School Support Lindsey
52 Chambers St., New York NY, 10007

Gary Beidleman
High School Superintendent
District 2
333 7th Avenue, New York NY 10001

Re: Letter to DOE Requesting the Appointment of an On-Site, Permanent Principal at the High School for Environmental Studies

Dear Chancellor Banks, Ms. Lindsey, and Superintendent Beidleman,

On the recommendation of its Arts, Culture, Education and Street Life (ACES) committee, Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Full Board at its regularly scheduled meeting on March 1, 2023, voted 36 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to request the appointment by June 1, 2023, of an on-site, permanent Principal at the High School for Environmental Studies (HSES), located at 444 West 56th Street in Manhattan.

On February 13, 2023, at the ACES monthly committee meeting, we received a presentation from two HSES parents who serve on the PTA and the School Leadership Team (SLT), Ms. Lehmann and Mr. Van der Meer. They explained that the appointed HSES Principal has not worked at the school or been on-site in more than 18 months (since June 2021). The PTA and SLT are under the impression that the DOE has launched an internal investigation related to the appointed Principal. For the last 18 months, HSES has been led by an Interim Acting Principal, Ms. DeFlorio.

In early February 2023, the HSES PTA reached out to the DOE to request the commencement of the C-30 process, which is part of the DOE-mandated process whereby principals are permanently appointed to a school. Ms. Lehmann said that the HSES parents were told by the DOE that the C-

30 process can't be started at HSES as the position of Principal is not open. Given that the appointed Principal hasn't been seen or heard from by anyone at HSES in more than 18 months, this is a confounding position. To make matters worse, the HSES PTA representatives were told that no timeline is available by which the HSES school community will know if or when the appointed Principal will return to the school. In other words, HSES has been without an on-site permanently appointed Principal for more than 18 months, and there is zero certainty about how many more months/years this situation will continue. This is untenable.

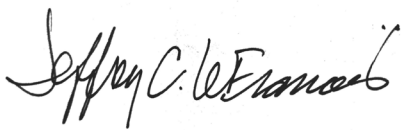
Unlike a permanently appointed principal, any person in an "interim acting" role does not have the incentive or the authority (at least in the eyes of the staff, students and parents) to engage in long-term planning, negotiate partnerships for the school community or advocate aggressively for future funds/grants for the school. The staff and students deserve to have on site a permanently appointed school leader who is ready and available to advocate and lead them; not a person who could be reassigned at any time.

HSES is a promising high school in our District. It has 1,200 students who come from homes in all 5 boroughs, and 70% of HSES parents speak English as a second language or not at all. HSES receives Title 1 funds as almost 80% of the students come from homes considered economically disadvantaged. The school has a strong Honors Program, and is the first unscreened public school in NYC dedicated to environmental justice and sustainability. The staff and students at this school deserve a permanently appointed, on-site strong Principal.

It may be that the DOE has obligations to the appointed Principal. But it cannot be the case that the employment rights of the appointed Principal should be prioritized by the DOE at the expense of the students and staff at HSES.

We would like to commend Ms. Lehmann and Mr. Van der Meer for informing us about the lack of an on-site, permanently appointed Principal at HSES for more than 18 months, and advocate for the appointment this school year (by June 1, 2023) of an on-site permanently appointed Principal who is ready to hire for next year and to lead the students and staff into a strong future. They deserve no less.

Sincerely,



Jeffery LeFrancois
Chair
Community Board 4



Allen Oster
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Kit Tollerson
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

CC: Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough Presidents office
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
PTA for High School for Environmental Studies

