

City of New York

The Special Commissioner of Investigation
for the New York City School District

BROKEN PROMISE:
**An Investigation into the Admission Process for the
Michael J. Petrides School**

"I know political clout seems to have the greatest pull of all. My daughter is the unlucky one because she only has me. I have no problem following the rules except [that] the people who make them [must] follow them also."

- a Staten Island parent whose child was not accepted to the Michael J. Petrides School

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APPENDIX

I. INTRODUCTION

In January 1994, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani announced the transfer of the former campus of the College of Staten Island (“CSI”) to the New York City Board of Education (“BOE”). Officials from the BOE, Staten Island’s Community School District 31, and many Staten Island community representatives spent hundreds of hours developing ambitious plans for the site, named the Michael J. Petrides Complex in honor of the late Staten Island member of the central BOE. The focus of those plans was the Michael J. Petrides School (the “Petrides School”), the BOE’s first experiment with “seamless education,” where students from across Staten Island would attend kindergarten through high school. Unlike other schools, the Petrides School would be free to accept students from throughout Staten Island and set limits on class size. Teachers, staff, and parents would work together on matters from hiring to curriculum.

Correctly anticipating that the school would be unable to offer a seat to every child who sought admission, a lottery system was devised that was supposed to result in the selection of a student body that was representative of Staten Island. A random process that provided for an ethnic, gender and academic balance would be employed to select students based on the number of applicants from each Staten Island zip code, thereby ensuring a cross-section of the community. Advertised at Community School Board meetings, in the media and other outlets, the school’s student admission policy was promoted by district and Staten Island officials as being random and fair.

However, our investigation found that the Petrides School’s admission process was neither random nor fair. From the records we found and interviews we conducted, we have determined that school officials created at least five admission channels unrelated to geographic, gender, ethnic, or academic diversity. These channels bore little

or no relation to the random lottery method, and were not revealed to the public.

Additionally, critical records disappeared: there are no random number lists and hundreds of student applications are missing. This prevented us from discovering the full extent of the enrollment irregularities. But to varying degrees, the admission channels are clearly discernible from the evidence.

To begin with, given the stated policy that only students chosen in a lottery may attend the school, siblings of Petrides School students were admitted in disproportionate numbers. One of every six children in the current student body had a sibling already enrolled when they received their offers. Fourteen families have three children attending the school. In addition, the word “sibling” was written and highlighted on many of the applications. The implication, of course, is that to obtain multiple admissions against the odds, these families must have had special influence. Further, the Petrides School staff and other BOE employees were more likely than typical parents to have their children admitted to the school, often through a practice known as “professional courtesy.” The policy was designed to attract quality teachers who would want to bring their own children to the school. Unfortunately, school and district officials never informed the public of this preferential treatment. At the same time, they also stretched professional courtesy well beyond its original purpose. In addition to the children of teachers, the school admitted many extended relatives of Petrides school staff and other BOE employees, such as nephews, nieces, and grandchildren. Some of these students are related to high-level district staff or prominent Staten Island officials. Most of these people claim that their relatives were admitted legitimately through the lottery, which we

cannot prove or disprove because of the missing records. Given the other problems with the admission process, however, we view these claims with skepticism.

Prominent Staten Island officials attempted to gain entry for certain students outside the lottery. There is direct and circumstantial evidence to support the hypothesis that they were successful. Both principals who have served at Petrides, as well as several high-level district officials, acknowledged that a large number of written recommendations were made by prominent people each year. Virtually all of these documents have disappeared. Additionally, teachers who screened applicants were offended to find “Post-its” with names of prominent public officials attached to many student applications. Recommendations make little sense if all students are chosen in a random lottery. Forwarding the recommendations to the principal, which district officials did, seems equally foolish unless a deviation from the lottery is expected. Incredibly, these officials could give no reason why recommendations would be attached to an application for a random lottery. Though the letters and Post-its are missing, we did find four applications with names of influential people written on them; all four applicants were admitted to the school. Taken together, this evidence supports the conclusion that such recommendations played a significant role in the admission process.

There were other ways for parents to bypass the lottery as well. Some were told to keep calling the school as a way of pushing their children ahead of others on the waiting list, while in other instances, school and district officials enrolled vague and undocumented “hardship cases.” All the selection methods we discuss were done behind closed doors without community or parent involvement. Not surprisingly, for the year we could obtain records, we found that certain zip codes were significantly over-

represented while others were under-represented. For the current 1997-1998 classes, the problems are so severe that we have no confidence that the school and its principal used *any* lottery in selecting students for the Petrides School. Of course, it is the ordinary parents who expected a fair lottery to be conducted by the rules who lost out as the process became more and more tainted.

We are careful not to overstate our conclusions. Viewing one of these enrollment channels alone, without the other four, would not be as convincing. But taking all the channels together, and factoring in both the missing documents and the lack of credible explanations by school and district officials, it is clear that the selection process used was neither random nor fair.

The vision of the Petrides School as a unique collaborative venture has not been realized. Problems are not limited to the admission process, and as time passes, the reality of the school moves farther from the original vision. The current principal has refused to utilize the hiring method that allowed the school to bypass seniority rules to appoint teachers who most fit the original goals for the Petrides School. At the same time, that principal was installed by the superintendent through a rarely used provision that bypasses parent and teacher input altogether.

It is important to note that we are unable to substantiate that any laws or Chancellor's regulations were broken. The essence of our findings is that a promise was broken: the unique, fair, and collaborative school that was promised to the people of Staten Island does not exist at this time. If that vision is to be restored, significant changes must be made. Our findings and recommendations are described in detail in the pages that follow.

II. THE COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND'S SUNNYSIDE CAMPUS BECOMES THE MICHAEL J. PETRIDES EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX

A. Background

In the fall of 1993, CSI vacated its campus in the Sunnyside community of Staten Island, leaving a facility of approximately 42 acres that included seven classroom and office buildings, a 1,000 seat theater, conference center, gymnasium, two-story library, tennis courts, athletic fields, and on-site parking for more than 500 cars. In January 1994, Mayor Giuliani announced that the property would be transferred to the BOE. After the death of Staten Island central BOE member Michael Petrides, who had spearheaded the BOE's efforts to obtain the property, Mayor Guiliani announced in June 1994 that the campus would be named the "Michael J. Petrides Educational Complex" (the "Petrides Complex") in his honor.

An advisory committee whose members represented a broad range of Staten Island constituencies, including district and CSI officials, teacher and principal representatives, parent groups, officials from the Staten Island Borough President's office, the Urban League, and others ("the advisory committee") put an extraordinary amount of effort into the planning of the Petrides Complex. Their ambitious ideas included the relocation of all District 31 and central BOE support offices, including the Brooklyn and Staten Island High Schools, Food Services, Division of School Safety and the Committee on Special Education, to new offices in the complex. In addition, they planned that the Petrides Complex would maintain facilities for continuing adult education and that its two-story library would be converted into a teacher development center where educators from across the city could obtain the most current materials in math and science.

B. The Petrides School: The “One-Room Schoolhouse” Approach

The focal point of the complex was the Petrides School, the BOE’s first experiment with so-called “seamless education,” where children would attend school from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. With an emphasis on math, science, computers, and languages, plans for the school also emphasized strong parental involvement and shared decision-making among teachers, parents and administrators. Another unique aspect of the school was its governance structure. Although high schools are ordinarily within the province of the central BOE, Community School District 31 (“District 31”) oversees the Petrides School, an arrangement approved by then-Chancellor Ramon Cortines and Community School Board 31 in June 1995.¹

Rather than opening at full capacity, it was planned that the school would expand its grade offerings over a five-year period, with student selection by a lottery system occurring before the start of each school year. For the opening 1995-1996 year, the school offered only kindergarten, first and second grade classes. For the 1996-1997 year, the school expanded to include kindergarten through the fourth grade, as well as sixth and seventh grades. For the 1997-1998 year, the school offered kindergarten through ninth grade classes. By the 1998-1999 school year, kindergarten students would be the only new entering classes and, by the year 2001, the Petrides School would graduate its first class of high school students.²

¹ On June 12, 1995, CSB 31 approved a resolution assuming the district’s governance of the entire Petrides Complex. On November 13, 1995, it approved another resolution establishing the Petrides School as a kindergarten through twelfth grade “district-wide magnet school.” According to district officials, the central BOE has never passed a resolution regarding governance of the school. See also “School Complex to be in Local Hands,” *Staten Island Advance*, June 2, 1995, p. A-1.

² Because the school planned to offer three eighth grade classes and four ninth grade classes, a new ninth grade class would also have to be selected and added each year, beginning with the 1998-1999 school year.

C. Selection of the Teaching Staff

The school's planners determined that special criteria should be used to select the most appropriate teachers to fulfill its unique mission. For this reason, the BOE and the United Federation of Teachers ("UFT") agreed that the standard contractual seniority-based hiring procedures would be waived to select the school's first group of teachers. Instead, its first eleven teachers were chosen by a committee comprised of officials from District 31, the UFT, CSI, parent groups, and other Staten Island community organizations, using such criteria as dedication to creative teaching, willingness to collaborate and participate fully in its laboratory environment, and a demonstrated ability to implement innovative curricular approaches.

The seniority requirement was again waived in January 1996, in favor of an alternative method outlined in the UFT contract known as the School-Based Option Staffing and Transfer Plan ("SBO Transfer Plan"). This move required the approval of 75% of the school's teachers, the principal, the UFT chapter leader and district representative, the district superintendent, the UFT President and the Chancellor. For the second time, a personnel committee comprised of Petrides teachers, parents and staff interviewed and selected teachers using the above-mentioned criteria.³

In February 1997, Petrides Principal Gregory Gallo chose not to approve the SBO Transfer Plan. By doing so, Gallo gained the power to select many of the school's new teachers. While the central BOE filled approximately 50% of the teaching vacancies based on seniority, District 31 Superintendent Christy Cugini and Gallo filled the other

³ See, Memorandum from Howard S. Tames, Executive Director, BOE Division of Human Resources, "Application, Instructions and Vacancy Listings for the 1996-1997 School Based Option Transfer and Staffing Plan," May 23, 1996.

50% in a variety of ways, including transferring teachers from other schools as well as making new appointments. In addition, Gallo's decision not to sign the SBO Transfer Plan gave him the power to fill all of the school's "growth" teaching positions, created by the expansion of its grade offerings, without reference to seniority or the mission of the school, subject to the district's approval.⁴

D. Selection of a Principal to Run the Petrides School

As was the case with the selection of teachers at the Petrides School, its principal also had to be chosen with great care. Because the Petrides School would ultimately expand to include kindergarten through the twelfth grade, the challenge was to find a principal with prior administrative experience at the elementary, middle and high school levels. In May 1995, District 31 Superintendent Christy Cugini selected Dolores Ferragano, an early childhood specialist and an assistant principal at P.S. 4, as "Supervisor/Administrator," to run the school during its first year when only kindergarten through the second grade would be enrolled. In July 1996, Cugini selected Gregory Gallo, then in charge of I.S. 27, as principal. To do so, Cugini chose not to utilize the standard principal selection process, which is designed to ensure input from the community, parents and school staff, and instead relied upon a rarely-used provision in the Chancellor's C-30 Regulation that permits district superintendents to transfer tenured principals between district schools.⁵

⁴ Agreement Between the BOE and the UFT, October 16, 1995 to November 15, 2000, Arts. 18A, pages 116-118.

⁵ Agreement Between the BOE and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators, Art. IX-C; Chancellor's Regulation C-30, Article VIII, sec. B (March 17, 1997) (incorporating regulations in Chancellor's Regulation C-30 [5/1/90] & Special Circular 30-R [1977-1978]). With the exception of positions under the Chancellor's jurisdiction, the C-30 process consists of two steps, with the final selection to be made by the district superintendent subject to the Chancellor's authority to reject a selected principal for cause. The first step requires the formation of a screening committee composed of parent, teacher and supervisor representatives to establish selection criteria, screen, interview, and recommend candidates from the pool of eligible applicants. Under the second step, the screening committee forwards a minimum of five principal

III. STUDENT ADMISSION POLICY & PROCEDURES

A. Preparing for the Selection Process

Rejecting strong community pressure to use the school for gifted students or to relieve overcrowding in Staten Island’s public schools, Chancellor Cortines stated at an April 1995 Staten Island town hall meeting that the school’s student body would include children of all abilities: “[the school] will be represented by slow and reluctant learners, by average children, by gifted and talented, by special education children, by limited English students. It will represent every aspect of this Island.”⁶ Following Chancellor Cortines’s edict, CSB 31 publicly stated in a resolution formally establishing the district’s governance of the school that its “admission procedures will assure that the student population is representative of the Staten Island community as a whole.”⁷

It was correctly predicted that due to its unique environment, and because it would be open to all Staten Island students, the Petrides School would not be able to accept every student who wished to attend. In fact, though the numbers of applicants varied from grade-to-grade and year-to-year, an applicant’s chance of admission to the school during its first three years was generally quite slim.⁸ Indeed, Dolores Ferragano told investigators that “everyone and anyone wanted to be in the school,” and that it was widely considered the “place to be.” Thus, District 31 Deputy Superintendent Anthony Polomene – who had been named the school’s project director by Chancellor Cortines – with assistance from the school’s admission committee, created an admission policy

candidates to the superintendent for review and selection.

⁶ “‘Elite School’ Plan Dropped,” *Staten Island Advance*, April 28, 1995, p. A-1.

⁷ Agenda of CSB 31 Public Meeting, November 13, 1995, p. 3.

⁸ See appendix for statistical information regarding admissions for the 1997-1998 school year.

whereby students were selected through a computer-generated lottery.⁹ This lottery was widely promoted to the Staten Island public as “fair” and based upon “random” selection.¹⁰ Yet, at the same time, it was also publicly represented that the admission policy would ensure that the student body reflected a cross-section of Staten Island’s student population based on geography, academic ability, gender and ethnicity.¹¹ School and district officials stated that they used the 1990 United States census to determine the proper ethnic composition of the student body.

According to Polomene, the admission committee approved the school’s student selection policy and lottery procedures before the first admission process began in the spring of 1995. However, Polomene could not recall the exact time frame during which he recorded these procedures in a document, “Selection Procedures for Admission.” In fact, Polomene was unsure if he created this record before the first year’s classes were selected, and Ferragano told investigators that it was not produced until some time in late June or early July 1995, after the lottery was completed and acceptance offers had been sent. Polomene stated that the school’s admission policy was “not at all scientific but it was intended to be fair” and that it was designed to “sell the product to the public as being objective.”

In addition to Polomene’s document, “Selection Procedures for Admission,” investigators retrieved a second record, “Application Process for the 1995-1996 School

⁹ Polomene also told investigators that Chancellor Cortines had input into the creation of the school’s student lottery. The school’s admission committee was a subcommittee of its advisory committee.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Letters to parents of Petrides School applicants from Petrides School officials (June 1995 & June 1997) and Flier Regarding 1996-1997 Petrides School Student Admission Policy, included in Appendix; see also Agenda of CSB 31 Public Meeting, November 13, 1995, p. 3; “School Officials: Petrides Students Chosen by Lottery,” *Staten Island Advance*, December 11, 1996, p. A-12; “A Real Vision for the Petrides School,” Staten Island Borough President Guy V. Molinari, *Staten Island Advance*, June 16, 1995, p. A-27; “Prep School Planned on ex-C.S.I. Site,” *Staten Island Advance*, March 9, 1995, p. A-1.

¹¹ Id.

Year” that also described the school’s admission procedures.¹² Dolores Ferragano, who ran the school during its first year of operation and conducted the first two lotteries, stated that she followed these written procedures for student selection under Polomene’s supervision. Both Polomene and Ferragano gave investigators similar accounts of how the lottery was run during the first two years and provided investigators with a number of records in support of their accounts. However, the most important documents demonstrating which students Ferragano randomly selected during the lottery were missing from school files. Without these records, we could not completely analyze the conduct of these lotteries and cannot substantiate their integrity or fairness.

B. Selection Process for the 1995-1996 & 1996-1997 Classes

1. How Students Were Selected Through the Lottery

Ferragano initially described a selection process for the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 lotteries that appeared to be consistent with the school’s documented admission policies.¹³ She stated that as each application was received at the school, a Petrides School office employee entered the biographical data into a computer and assigned it a sequential “registry number” for use during the random selection process. After the deadline for submission of applications elapsed, school officials employed a “screening” process to ascertain each applicant’s ethnicity and academic background. Because it was determined that the school could not require applicants to disclose their ethnicity on the school’s application form, each applicant and a parent or guardian was required to be

¹² “Selection Procedures For Admission [to the Petrides School]” (June-July 1995); “Application Process for the 1995-1996 School Year” (undated). None of the district and school officials interviewed by investigators acknowledged authorship of “Application Process for the 1995-1996 School Year.”

¹³ For the 1995-1996 lottery, Ferragano filled the kindergarten, first and second grade classes. For the 1996-1997 lottery, Ferragano filled the kindergarten, fourth, sixth and seventh grades.

interviewed by school or district officials. The interviewer visually assessed each applicant's ethnicity, as well as his or her academic ability and maturity.¹⁴

Once the screenings were completed, Ferragano calculated the number of seats to be allotted to each zip code, in proportion to the percentage of children applying to the school from that zip code on Staten Island. For example, if in a given year 200 (or 20%) of the 1000 children applying for one of the 100 available seats in the school lived in zip code 10314, applicants from that zip code would be allotted 20% of the 100 seats, or a total of twenty seats.¹⁵ Ferragano then distributed those allotted seats among the grades that she was filling each year. For example, the twenty seats allotted to zip code 10314 could be distributed by placing seven students in kindergarten, seven students in first grade and six students in second grade, or any other combination as Ferragano saw fit. Although we did not find inherent unfairness in her distribution process, using this method of selection opened the procedure to manipulation.

Ferragano then used a computer-generated list of randomly ordered registry numbers to determine which applicants would be offered admission.¹⁶ The location of an applicant's registry number on this list determined whether he or she would be selected. After Ferragano documented the registry numbers of all those applicants chosen for admission as well as the official waiting list, she examined each of the applications assigned to those registry numbers. She did so in order to determine whether the group

¹⁴ Since kindergarten students must be interviewed by district officials during a process known as Chapter 53 screening, during that interview, the ethnicity of that child's parent or guardian was noted.

¹⁵ During the first two years of the selection process, seats were allotted to each zip code based on the total number of applicants for all of the school's available seats. For the 1997-1998 school year, the number of seats allotted to each zip code was based on the total number of applicants applying to each grade.

¹⁶ District 31 administrator Patrick Cammerlengo ran the computer program used to create the random number list for the 1995-1996 classes. Ferragano did not know who created the random number list for the 1996-1997 classes but stated that Polomene provided it to her. Neither Polomene nor any other school employee knew who created the random number list for the 1996-1997 classes.

she selected reflected Staten Island's ethnic population – pursuant to its most recent 1990 U.S. census – and to ensure that there were equal numbers of boys and girls, as well as an approximate “bell curve” distribution of students of all academic abilities.¹⁷

If the group of students initially selected by Ferragano had not met the school's requirements for diversity, she would have had to replace selected applicants with those on the waiting list based on a “last to be accepted, first to be replaced from the prioritized waiting lists” procedure.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Ferragano told investigators that, for both years she conducted a lottery, it simply worked out that the students she initially selected met the school's diversity criteria and she did not have to make any adjustments. Although Ferragano initially asserted that each ethnic community (i.e., Asian, African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian) was properly represented within her selections, she later admitted that she did not know what the census figures were for each community and was satisfied that a “nice mix” of students of all ethnic backgrounds was selected. However, because school officials did not maintain all of the records used by Ferragano to conduct admissions, we could not verify her claim.

Pursuant to the school's selection procedures, Ferragano and Polomene both stated that waiting lists were created for the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 classes. Ferragano told investigators that she did so because she recognized the need to refer to the waiting list when a parent called the school to inquire as to his child's status or when a child declined an offer of admission. Ferragano stated that she also created a separate

¹⁷ The bell curve distribution meant that the student population would be comprised of approximately 50% - 60% average students, 20% -25% above average students and 20% -25% below average students.

¹⁸ “Selection Procedures For Admission,” p. 2. This document further states that applicants who later declined an offer of admission would also be replaced by students on the waiting list.

waiting list for each zip code, organized by grade and gender, using the random number lists.¹⁹

After Ferragano made her selections, letters were sent to the parents of the chosen applicants offering them admission to the school.²⁰ In addition, the parents of applicants who were placed on the waiting list were also sent letters informing them of their status. These letters stated that “a computerized random process was employed” and that students were chosen “on the basis of a blind lottery.”²¹

When a student declined an offer of admission or transferred out of the school during the 1995-1996 school year, Ferragano was responsible for filling that vacancy. She stated that she did so by reviewing the waiting list from that student’s grade and zip code and replacing the student with the first applicant on the list with the same gender, academic ability and ethnicity. Ferragano told investigators, however, that there were instances when she could not identify an appropriate student from the declining student’s zip code to fill the opening. Her solution to this problem was to review the waiting list for another zip code, one with a large number of students to choose from, and find an appropriate replacement.

Ferragano explained to investigators that at a certain point in December 1995, she decided that the waiting list for the 1995-1996 school year had “died” because she believed that it was too late for a child to successfully make the transition to a new school. She further asserted that, after November 1995, no children were admitted to the

¹⁹ We found several of these lists in school files. We also found an alphabetical list of students, labeled “waiting list” for the 1995-1996 classes. However, because school officials could not provide us with the random number lists, we could not verify whether these students were selected through a random lottery.

²⁰ The school’s admission committee reviewed and approved the roster of applicants selected by Ferragano for the 1995-1996 classes. This committee was no longer in existence when Ferragano conducted the selection process for the 1996-1997 classes.

²¹ One of these letters is included in the Appendix.

school for the rest of the school year. Nevertheless, Ferragano’s decision to invalidate the waiting list was never made public, and the residents of Staten Island were never informed that they needed to submit a new application for the following school year if they were not selected in the lottery and were still interested in attending the school.

According to Ferragano, after she left the school in June 1996 to become principal of P.S. 23 in Staten Island, all of the records she used in conjunction with the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 student lotteries, including the crucial random number lists, remained in files at the Petrides School. She stated that she left the documents at the school because she knew that school officials would need to refer to them in order to fill vacancies that occurred during the school year and to support the integrity of the process if they were questioned about student admissions. However, we later discovered that many of the records Ferragano claimed she left behind, including all of the applications for the 1995-1996 school year, many of the 1996-1997 applications, and the random number lists she used for both years’ lotteries, were missing. Ferragano, Polomene and Gallo could not explain the disappearance of these records. With these documents, investigators would have been able to verify the accuracy and integrity of these lotteries.

2. Applicants Given Special Consideration: Admission Irregularities

Although Ferragano and Polomene described a lottery system that appeared to adhere to the school’s original goals, we found evidence to suggest that certain applicants were given special consideration and were later offered a seat in the school in violation of its admission policy. In particular, investigators found a hand-written note addressed to Ferragano from Polomene in which he asked whether, “the numbers permit,” the admission of a particular child who was then on the waiting list. When shown this note,

Ferragano acknowledged that on more than one occasion during the 1995-1996 school year she gave seats in the school to students identified by Polomene in this manner, even though other applicants were ahead of them on the official waiting list. Ferragano further conceded that Polomene made similar requests verbally and that, whenever he did so, she admitted the child.

While Polomene acknowledged making such requests of Ferragano “to a limited extent,” he told investigators that he could only recall the name of one particular student for whom he had done so. Nevertheless, he claimed that he only considered such requests when “unusual family circumstances” existed, such as when a parent with cancer contacted him or when a child who had been physically assaulted at another school asked for a transfer. Polomene also admitted that he had given a seat in the school to the child of a parent who met personally with him to describe his own troubled childhood and who indicated that he desperately wanted a better experience for his child. Superintendent Cugini also acknowledged that he had offered admission to a child on the waiting list whose parent made an “impassioned plea” to him.

Ferragano and Polomene also acknowledged violating the school’s admission policy by giving a seat to a particular child who had neither submitted an application nor participated in the lottery. Ferragano only made this disclosure to investigators after they showed her a letter addressed to Polomene that asked if the child could attend the school based on her mother’s serious medical condition as well as the child’s special talents; the letter also acknowledged that the child had never submitted an application. Once confronted with the letter, Ferragano explained that she gave the child a seat at Polomene’s request. Polomene explained this admission as a rare exception to the

school's enrollment policy that he made for "compassionate" reasons. He also acknowledged that, under similar circumstances, he gave a seat in the school to a physically disabled child.²²

Ferragano also admitted that parents who repeatedly inquired as to their child's status on the waiting list were often able to obtain a seat for their child in violation of the school's admission policy. She stated that she advised parents who made such frequent inquiries to "be persistent" and to keep calling the school. Indeed, Ferragano eventually offered admission to certain parents who made repeated calls and visits to the school, without regard to their child's placement on the waiting list.

C. Selection of Students for the 1997-1998 Classes

We found that the third year of the student admission process at the Petrides School, when kindergarten, sixth, and ninth grade classes were selected, was plagued by some of the same irregularities that we found during the first two years of admission. However, determining the exact scope of these irregularities is difficult because Petrides teachers and Principal Gregory Gallo offered conflicting and seemingly irreconcilable accounts regarding their roles in the selection process for the 1997-1998 classes.²³ Both the teachers and Gallo claim to have conducted a definitive lottery selection for that year and also claim that they selected students in a random fashion. In fact, both diverged in significant ways from the selection procedures approved by the admission committee in the spring of 1995. Although only those students chosen by Gallo were offered admission to the school, he failed to maintain *any* records that reflect how these children

²² However, we did find instances in which other applicants who presented "compassionate" reasons for admission were not offered a seat in the school.

²³ These teachers all spoke with us on the condition of confidentiality. We therefore do not disclose their identities in this report.

were selected. For this reason, we could not verify the authenticity or integrity of the selection process used by Gallo to choose students.²⁴

Unlike the previous two years, when Petrides teachers did not participate in the student admission process, a number of teachers were involved in the admission process for the 1997-1998 classes. Eleven teachers stated that they were members of an informal “screening committee” that interviewed sixth and ninth grade applicants. In addition to screening, two of these teachers stated that they also selected sixth grade students, and three teachers stated that they also chose ninth grade students.²⁵ One teacher initially asserted that Gallo directed the screening committee to choose ninety sixth grade students out of a total of ninety-nine that would be enrolled. She added that the committee members “assumed” that he wanted to fill the additional nine seats himself without regard to the lottery’s results. However, upon further inquiry, this teacher stated that the instructions to choose ninety students came from one of Gallo’s secretaries. None of the other teachers involved in screening or selecting sixth and ninth grade students stated that they received directions from Gallo to select any students. Most asserted that they received these instructions from one of the teachers on the screening committee.

Three Petrides teachers told investigators that they screened and made preliminary selections for this year’s ninth grade students based on their ability to take a high-level “Sequential II” math course. According to these teachers, after screening interviews were conducted, they identified thirty-five students who could be offered admission based solely on their eligibility to take this class. The teachers stated that they did so because it

²⁴ As we will subsequently discuss, the teachers who claimed to have selected students did provide investigators with some records to support their statements.

²⁵ None of these teachers was involved in selecting kindergarten classes for the 1997-1998 school year. Due to missing records, we could not verify the integrity of the procedures used to select these students.

was important for the school to offer such a course in order to attract students of high academic achievement. It was only after these students were selected that they randomly chose the rest of the ninth grade class, based on the number of applicants applying from each zip code. Once these selections were made, the teachers stated, they sent their choices to Gallo. Unlike the teachers who performed the sixth grade selection, they believed that Gallo would make the final decisions on who would be offered admission.

The two teachers who told investigators that they were involved in selecting sixth grade students stated that, following the screening process, the applications were separated by zip code, and each group was placed on an empty chair. They then counted the applications received within each group, calculated the percentage of the total applicant pool for each, and determined the number of seats that would be given to each zip code. In fact, in school files, investigators found a hand-written document created by these teachers, in which seats in this year's sixth grade class were distributed in proportion to the number of applicants applying from each zip code.

After determining the number of seats to be allotted to each zip code, one teacher chose the students who would be offered admission as well as those for the waiting list by shielding her eyes and selecting applications from each zip code group. When the teachers reviewed each of these applications to determine whether the students they selected reflected the required minority representation, they stated that they found that the group they had chosen was comprised of 26% minority students.²⁶ Finding the results of

²⁶ While these teachers stated that they reviewed their selections to ensure that they reflected proper overall minority representation, they did not analyze whether each individual minority group was adequately represented. In addition, although they contended that they selected equal numbers of children of all academic abilities, the hand-written document referred to previously indicates that 70% of the students they selected were eligible for accelerated programs. This document also indicated that minority students comprised a total of 26% of all the applicants they selected.

their process acceptable, one of the teachers drafted a typewritten list of the students they had selected, separated by zip code. This list, along with each of the sixth grade applications separated into zip code groups, was provided to a school office employee.²⁷ That employee confirmed receipt of these documents and stated that she placed the teachers' list and all of the applications in Gallo's office.

When investigators compared the teachers' list with Gallo's sixth grade selections, forty-three children who had been selected for admission by the teachers had been replaced by different applicants, indicating that Gallo either ignored nearly half of the teachers' choices or conducted his own process to choose the entire class. Our analysis further revealed that the teachers' selections were much closer to matching the correct zip code allocations than were Gallo's.²⁸

Gallo was adamant that he alone conducted a random lottery to select this year's kindergarten, sixth, and ninth grade classes. He stated that he received instructions on conducting the selection process at a principals conference as well as from Ferragano, Polomene, Cugini, and a district administrator with knowledge of computers. Gallo stated that he may have drafted a document detailing his selection process, but he could not produce one when requested by investigators.

Gallo stated that, as applications arrived at the school, various school office personnel used a computer program to process each application and assign it a registry number. After calculating the number of seats to be allocated to each zip code, Gallo asserted that he selected applications for each grade by referring to computerized random

²⁷ Because this employee spoke with us on the condition of confidentiality, we are not revealing her identity.

²⁸ However, we found that the applicant pool from which the teachers selected sixth grade students consisted of only 546 applicants, while Gallo's pool consisted of 653 applicants. Gallo could not provide us with an explanation for this discrepancy, nor could any of the teachers.

number lists, one for each of the three grades to be filled. However, Gallo gave several conflicting accounts about the production of these lists. When initially interviewed by investigators, he claimed that an employee in his office, whose identity he could not recall, generated the random number lists from a computer and gave them to him. However, after investigators were unable to locate the individual who created the random number list, Gallo stated that he “probably” created it himself.²⁹ In addition, after investigators brought a computer consultant to the school in an effort to retrieve information from the machine used to generate the random number lists, Gallo could not identify which computer had been used. In fact, Gallo admitted that his computer expertise was “poor” and that he was “ill trained” in their use.

After making his random selections, Gallo stated that he reviewed each application he had chosen to determine gender, academic ability, and ethnicity, and thereafter made “fine tuning” adjustments when those he selected did not meet the school’s stated diversity criteria. According to Gallo, he made such adjustments by reviewing the applications of the students whose registry numbers were next on the random number list “until we got . . . a good representative breakdown of Staten Island.”

Gallo left a group of sixth grade applications on the desk of an office employee, with a note stating that these were the students to whom she should send letters of admission. This was the same office employee to whom the teachers had given their list of sixth grade selections and applications, which she had placed in Gallo’s office. The office employee stated that she then compared the teachers’ list, which had also been left on her desk, with the applicants Gallo selected, and crossed out the names of students

²⁹ Investigators interviewed each employee who worked in the Petrides School office in the spring of 1997 when Gallo selected students, and each asserted that he or she did not create the random number list.

from the teachers' list who were not selected by Gallo, replacing them with those who were. The office employee then sent letters to the parents of each applicant, stating that a "computerized random selection process was employed" and that "in effect, the students were selected on the basis of a blind lottery."³⁰

Once Gallo made a final determination as to which students would be offered admission to the school, he never created a waiting list based on the random number lists that he used for the lottery. Instead, when a student declined an offer of admission, Gallo reviewed all of the applications of the students who had not been selected in the lottery from the declining student's grade and tried to identify an applicant from the same zip code who also had the same gender and ethnic background. If he failed to find such a student in that zip code, Gallo reviewed all of the applications until he identified a student from another zip code who had the same gender and ethnicity as the student who declined admission. He asserted that whenever he had to fill such a vacancy, he attempted to do so by staying "as close to the census report as possible."³¹

Gallo stated that he made decisions regarding the filling of vacancies solely on his own and that no one ever witnessed this process. He acknowledged, however, that on "three [or] four" occasions either Cugini or Polomene brought the names of several students to his attention.³² Even though these students were not selected in the lottery, Gallo stated that he gave them a seat in the school, insisting that he only did so because there was enough room in each student's class to permit his or her enrollment.

³⁰ See Appendix.

³¹ As we discuss in a later section, because school officials could not provide us with all applications to the school, we could not independently assess whether its student body reflects the 1990 U.S. census. However, district officials gave us computerized records indicating that its current student body is 79.4% white, 6.2% African-American, 7.2% Hispanic, 6.8% Asian/Pacific Islands, and .3% American Indian.

³² Gallo could not identify these students.

Moreover, Gallo readily admitted that he discarded the random number lists after completing the 1997-1998 student lottery. He explained that he did so because he was “naïve” and failed to anticipate that he would be questioned about the selection process. However, his claim of naïveté is dubious since the local press had already raised questions about the integrity of the school’s selection procedures by December 1996.³³

In addition to his admission that he failed to maintain essential records, Gallo had no explanation for many of the irregularities we uncovered with respect to the selection process itself. First, he could not explain the addition of twelve students to the 1997-1998 roster for whom no application could be located.³⁴ He had no explanation for why the teachers’ choices were closer than his to matching the correct zip code allocations. Moreover, he gave no credible reason for his failure to maintain a waiting list. Finally, Gallo claimed that he never saw the list of sixth grade students selected by the teachers and could not explain why the Petrides teachers would have chosen students if, as he claims, he had never directed them to do so. He merely stated that “I hope that what I communicated to them was that [their role] was just screening.” We cannot disprove the fact that there was a miscommunication between Gallo and the teachers regarding their respective roles in the process. It is possible that Gallo believed he was directing them to screen students while the teachers thought that he was giving them a role in the selection process. However, Gallo’s failure to offer plausible explanations for his lack of documentation and his deviations from the agreed upon procedures raises serious doubts as to his version of events.

³³ See, “School Officials: Petrides Students Chosen By Lottery,” *Staten Island Advance*, December 11, 1996, p. A-12. In this article, Gallo stated that he had not yet been involved in the admission process and knew nothing about whether there had been past irregularities.

³⁴ The parents of these students who were interviewed by investigators stated that they had submitted an application.

D. Letters of Recommendation: Did They Play Any Role in Student Admission?

Questions have been raised in the media as to whether students for whom public officials wrote letters of recommendation were improperly admitted to the school in contravention of its student selection policy.³⁵ Cugini, Polomene, Ferragano, and Gallo all acknowledged that they received letters of recommendation on behalf of applicants from many Staten Island public officials.

Again, investigators were hampered by the curious disappearance of records. Ferragano told us that she regularly received reference letters and kept them all in a file. However, when she identified the file, it contained only one such letter. Gallo, too, acknowledged that reference letters were often forwarded to him from Cugini or Polomene, but stated that he routinely discarded them. In fact, three Staten Island public officials were quoted in the *Staten Island Advance* as acknowledging that they sent reference letters to school officials.³⁶ In addition, certain teachers and a Petrides office employee told investigators that they were offended when they discovered a number of the applications they reviewed for the 1997-1998 classes contained hand-written notations or Post-its, some with the names of prominent Staten Island figures.³⁷ Gallo also acknowledged that he “probably” had seen such notations and Post-its. Again, these Post-its were removed from the applications before we obtained them. However, four of the applications we reviewed contained visible hand-written notations with the names of a Petrides School teacher, a district official and others. Not surprisingly, these four students were admitted to the school.

³⁵ “More Prominent Names on Petrides School Roster,” *Staten Island Advance*, October 1, 1997, p. A-1; “Officials Deny Favoritism at Petrides School,” *Staten Island Advance*, September 30, 1997, p. A-1.

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ One teacher told investigators that she and other teachers removed the Post-its from the applications.

Cugini, Polomene, Gallo, and Ferragano insisted that reference letters from public officials played no role in the selection process, describing them as a routine courtesy performed for a constituent. During numerous interviews with parents of Petrides students, none would acknowledge using political connections to obtain admission to the school. However, the reference letters were not saved, Post-it notes were removed, and the random number lists purportedly used by Ferragano and Gallo to select students were not available to us. We cannot say conclusively whether any specific child was admitted through a channel outside the lottery process. The evidence, however, supports the inference that recommendations by influential people played a significant role in determining which children were selected.

IV. PROFESSIONAL COURTESY: CHILDREN & RELATIVES OF PETRIDES COMPLEX STAFF GAIN ADMISSION TO THE SCHOOL

The promised random selection process was deviated from further when certain children currently enrolled in the school were admitted through an unofficial policy known as “professional courtesy.” According to UFT, district and school officials, under the professional courtesy policy, teachers at elementary and middle schools on Staten Island may request that their children attend school with them. The underlying rationale for the policy is as a means to attract good teachers, particularly those with young children.

Our investigation revealed that twenty-three employees who worked at the Petrides School or in the district office located within the Petrides Complex, have a total of thirty-four relatives currently enrolled in the school. Of that number, only thirteen are the children of Petrides School employees while the remaining twenty-one are extended

family members, including nieces, nephews, and grandchildren. Teachers, assistant principals, school aides, secretaries, the school nurse, a custodial helper, as well as an employee working in the district office, all have relatives attending the school. In addition, Superintendent Cugini's two grandchildren and Ferragano's niece are also Petrides students.³⁸ Certain Petrides School employees have as many as three or four relatives in attendance. In fact, the professional courtesy policy became so entrenched that one teacher informed us that, prior to his employment at the school, he asked another teacher if he could use her unused professional courtesy "slot" to obtain a seat for his child, who had not been chosen in the lottery.³⁹

In spite of the widespread enrollment of relatives of Petrides Complex employees, only three teachers admitted that their children gained admission to the Petrides School as a result of the professional courtesy policy. All three stated, however, that their children were offered a seat as an inducement for them to work at the school. Three other teachers acknowledged using the professional courtesy policy to obtain admission for extended family members.⁴⁰ According to Ferragano, she used the policy to obtain admission for her niece after asking Polomene for his approval. Other Petrides Complex employees requested a professional courtesy admission for a relative from Ferragano, Gallo, Cugini or Polomene, but claimed that they did not know whether these children were admitted through this request or by their participation in the lottery. Many other staff members insisted that their relatives obtained a seat through the lottery. These employees included

³⁸ Ferragano acknowledged that her niece obtained a seat in the 1996-1997 sixth grade class as a result of the professional courtesy policy. Cugini emphatically denied that he interceded on his grandchildren's behalf, even insisting that if he had his way, he "wouldn't let them go in the first place." Gallo and Polomene both stated that they have no relatives currently attending the school.

³⁹ This teacher claimed that he did not know if his child was admitted as a result of this request or if he was admitted through the waiting list.

⁴⁰ These relatives were a niece, a nephew, and a grandson.

the school's nurse whose twin daughters were admitted at the same time, a teacher whose daughter, niece, and nephew are Petrides students, and an assistant principal whose two nephews and a niece attend the school.⁴¹

Despite the presence of so many children related to Petrides Complex staff, Cugini, Polomene, Gallo and Ferragano all attempted to distance themselves from the professional courtesy policy. In addition to her niece, Ferragano stated that she granted professional courtesy to only one teacher's child after he was not selected in the lottery.⁴² After initially contending that he had no involvement with professional courtesy matters, Gallo later acknowledged that he gave seats to staff members' relatives on just "one or two occasions." He claimed, however, that he never set aside seats before the lottery took place, and that he always waited until a vacancy occurred before admitting these children. Polomene and Cugini both stated that all professional courtesy decisions took place at the school level. In fact, Cugini claimed to be completely opposed to the policy in all schools.

While the professional courtesy policy may make sense under certain circumstances, its use at the Petrides School is clearly at odds with representations made to the Staten Island public that all of its students would be selected in a random lottery.

⁴¹ Once again, without the random number lists, we are unable to verify whether or not these children were selected in a lottery.

⁴² Ferragano stated that she even received calls from teachers working in other school districts asking if they could use the professional courtesy policy to obtain a seat for their children. She contended that she always rejected those requests.

V. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENT BODY AT THE PETRIDES SCHOOL

Given the previously described irregularities that we uncovered with respect to the Petrides School's student admission procedures, it should come as no surprise that an analysis of the applicant pool for the 1997-1998 classes and its current student body illustrates that all of its students could not have been selected in a random fashion. In sum, we found that students were not selected in correlation to the percentage applying from their zip codes, that disproportionate numbers of children related to BOE employees obtained admission to the school, and that disproportionate numbers of siblings currently attend the school.

During our investigation, we analyzed all the student applications provided to this office by school officials. As mentioned previously, however, we found that record retention at the Petrides School was haphazard at best. When investigators arrived at the school to retrieve student applications, they found that these and other lottery-related documents were not uniformly organized and were indiscriminately maintained in easily accessible, unlocked file cabinets in the school office. In fact, school officials acknowledged that the 1997-1998 school year was the only one for which they could provide us with every application submitted to the school; even then, we later discovered that the applications of twelve students admitted for the current year were missing.⁴³ For these reasons, the 1997-1998 year is the only one for which we could perform a complete analysis. However, wherever possible and when such records were available, we reviewed and analyzed certain aspects of the first two years of admissions.

⁴³ School officials failed to retain any applications for the 1995-1996 school year. For the 1996-1997 school year, they failed to locate every application for the fourth and seventh grades, but did locate all the applications of students enrolled in those grades for that year. They did locate all the applications for the kindergarten and sixth grade for the 1996-1997 school year.

First, we found that, despite the contentions of district and school officials that the selection of students for the 1997-1998 sixth grade class was based on the percentage of applicants from each zip code, the class that is actually enrolled does not reflect those percentages. Certain zip codes were over-represented while others were under-represented. For example, eight applicants from zip code 10301 should have a seat in this year's sixth grade class even though school records reveal that fifteen children from that zip code are currently enrolled in that grade. In other words, twice as many children from that zip code are attending the school than should be the case. Regarding this year's sixth grade applicants from zip code 10314, twenty-three children should currently be in attendance while records indicate that thirty-one are enrolled.⁴⁴

Similar irregularities were revealed within this year's kindergarten class, although they were not quite as great as the discrepancies found in this year's sixth grade class. For example, eight children living in zip code 10301 should have been admitted to the kindergarten class while twelve are actually in attendance. With respect to zip code 10310, seven students should have been admitted when eleven are currently attending the school. As was the case with many aspects of the selection process he conducted, Gallo had no explanation for any of the discrepancies we found with respect to this year's kindergarten and sixth grade classes.

⁴⁴ See Appendix.

Second, our analysis of the Petrides School's student body found numerous families with more than one child enrolled. On many of the applications we reviewed, "sibling" is prominently noted and highlighted. In fact, school records indicate that there are at least 143 families with more than one child enrolled and that many of these siblings were admitted at the same time.⁴⁵ Moreover, we found that there were thirteen families with three children enrolled and one family with four children at the school.⁴⁶

Members of the Staten Island public have also raised questions about the school's sibling policy. One resident whose grandson attends the school asserted in the *Staten Island Advance* that, "no family can have three or four children picked in a lottery, and if they did they should go to Atlantic City."⁴⁷ The large number of siblings attending the school is indeed suspicious, given the school's stated policy that all students, including siblings of its students, must be selected in a lottery. However, without the random number lists and applications, we cannot rule out the possibility that they were all selected in a lottery.

When investigators interviewed parents with more than one child attending the Petrides School, all but one asserted that their children were chosen in the lottery. The one exception, a parent with three children in the school, acknowledged that only two of her children were selected in a lottery. She stated that her third child, who was not selected in the first two years' lotteries, was able to obtain a seat in the school after she

⁴⁵ This total was reached through an analysis of the most current student roster and includes only those students with the same last name and address. According to this roster, the school has a current enrollment of 898 students. We used this methodology because school officials did not maintain any records of families enrolled at the school.

⁴⁶ The parent with four children at the school was interviewed by investigators and asserted that all four were admitted through the lottery.

⁴⁷ "Petrides School Admissions Probed," *Staten Island Advance*, September 29, 1997, p. A-1.

repeatedly called district and school officials, including Polomene and Gallo, and after she donated twelve computer printers to the school.⁴⁸

Third, we found that, in addition to those children related to Petrides staff members, children of other BOE employees were also offered admission to the school in numbers much greater than should have been possible if a random lottery had been employed.⁴⁹ For example, children of other BOE employees comprised 10% of the applicant pool for the 1997-1998 sixth grade class, yet they comprised 31% of the applicants who were offered admission. Furthermore, these irregularities were not confined to the current school year. Children of other BOE employees comprised 12% of the applicants to the 1996-1997 sixth grade class, yet they represented 20% of those offered admission.

Cugini, Polomene, Gallo and Ferragano could not provide an explanation for the irregularities revealed by our analysis of student applications. Cugini and Polomene did state, however, that there were a few Petrides School students to whom they offered admission through what they referred to as a “variance,” based on unusual circumstances, such as the physical or mental health of the students or their parents. However, the district official responsible for processing such requests told investigators that no variance has ever been granted to attend the Petrides School, and he therefore had none of the necessary records that would have been created when such variances are granted.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ This parent claimed that her donation played no role in her child’s admission.

⁴⁹ See Appendix.

⁵⁰ This official spoke with us on the condition of confidentiality. We therefore do not disclose his name in this report.

VI. CONCLUSION

An appearance of impropriety clouds the Petrides School's student admission process. This appearance is due to the irregularities acknowledged by school and district officials, as well as the disappearance of critical lottery-related records, without which we could not verify the integrity of the school's selection process. Doubts about the fairness of this process have already eroded public confidence. In a September 1997 letter to this office, a parent whose child was not chosen in a lottery wrote that the reason for her rejection was her lack of political connections: "I know political clout seems to have the greatest pull of all. My daughter is the unlucky one because she only has me. I have no problem following the rules except [that] the people who make them [must] follow them also."

We found that many of the adjustments that were made to the lottery selection were accomplished for purposes that had nothing to do with diversity. The statements of district and school officials as well as our analysis of the school's applicant pool and student population make clear that a back door existed for certain select students to obtain admission to the school irrespective of the lottery's results. We discovered that there were a number of children who were not chosen in the lottery but were nonetheless admitted to the school, whether it was through the school's "professional courtesy" policy, persistent communications by their parents to district and school officials, or the stated "compassion" of district officials. Taken together with the appearance of a "behind closed doors" admission process, without any real oversight or supervision,

public confidence in the fairness of the school's selection procedures is rightly diminished.

Finally, school officials failed to maintain vital records to support the fairness and integrity of the selection process. The random number lists purportedly used by Dolores Ferragano to select students during the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 lotteries, along with all of the 1995-1996 applications and many of the 1996-1997 applications, could not be found in the school files where she insisted she had left them. Gregory Gallo failed to maintain *any* records substantiating the validity of his selection process. He admitted that he threw away the random number lists he purportedly used to select students and did not create an official waiting list based on the lottery's results. The absence of these records casts doubt upon the integrity of the school's admissions practices, and without them, we have no confidence that a fair, random lottery was employed to select any of the classes currently enrolled in the school.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Recommendations Relating to the Petrides School's Admission Process

Our investigation makes clear that the Petrides School must revamp its admission procedures if District 31 and the BOE wish to restore community confidence in the original vision of a random selection process. We note that with a large applicant pool such as that found at the Petrides School, a pure random lottery should produce results that reflect the geographic, ethnic, gender, and academic goals of the school.

Adjustments may be required, but these should be minor. Nevertheless, any adjustment to the random lottery results should be done in a fair and open manner. Therefore, we recommend that the BOE ensure that these changes are not made behind closed doors.

There are many ways to achieve this objective, including oversight by an independent monitor or by someone who is respected by everyone involved, or by a committee representing all of the parties affected. At a minimum, it is crucial that all documents supporting the selection process be preserved. For example, for anyone to effectively audit the lotteries reviewed in this report, it would be critical to maintain the random number lists, the applications for each student with its corresponding registry number, and the waiting lists.

Under certain circumstances, the idea of a “professional courtesy” policy makes sense. Nevertheless, whether such a policy should exist at the Petrides School, and to what degree it should be utilized, are matters for the BOE to decide. It is our recommendation, however, that to the extent that the professional courtesy policy is practiced, that information must be openly shared with the Staten Island community.

B. Individual Recommendations

We are troubled by Petrides Principal Gregory Gallo's lack of candor in his response to our investigation. Our simple request for the name of the individual who generated the random number lists resulted in conflicting answers, until Gallo finally admitted that he "probably" did it himself. Furthermore, Gallo could not explain why the Petrides teachers would have selected students if he had never directed them to do so. He also could not explain why the teachers' selections were closer than his to matching the proper zip code allocations or why irregularities existed with respect to the allocation of seats in this year's kindergarten and sixth grade classes. Lastly, Gallo had no explanation for the addition of twelve students to the 1997-1998 roster for whom no application could be found.

Although we acknowledge that the most important documents used by Dolores Ferragano were also missing, Gallo failed to properly maintain *any* records to validate the student admission process that he purportedly conducted. Documents needed to verify the fairness and integrity of his selections were either missing or discarded, while those that remained at the school were kept in a haphazard, disorganized fashion in unlocked and easily accessible file cabinets. Finally, although the advisory committee envisioned the creation of a waiting list from which applicants would be selected for vacancies, Gallo never generated one. Instead, he alone perused the applications and chose replacement students. We therefore recommend that disciplinary action be taken against Gregory Gallo.

District 31 Superintendent Christy Cugini and Deputy Superintendent Anthony Polomene requested that Principal Gregory Gallo and Supervisor/Administrator

Ferragano adjust the random lottery to admit children for reasons other than the stated goals of the school. In addition, Cugini and Polomene must ultimately be held accountable for the failures we identified in this report, including a lack of supervision over the admission process, as well as a failure to assure that records were properly maintained and secured. These actions eroded the community's trust in the fairness of the process and should be taken into account in evaluating their overall performance.