

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There's plenty of room at NEST+m, why not welcome the Charter?

The DOE's math is very suspect. The numbers have swung wildly each year and seem arbitrary at best. Just recently they figured we could accommodate 860, this year it's up to 1,407! The original architect of the building says our building was designed for 1,100 students in *one* school. Next year – without the addition of the Charter – we are going to grow to 1,050 – in *three* schools (Lower, Middle and Upper.) We are already overcrowded! Students start eating *lunch* at 9:30 a.m. Having three schools in one building is a daily challenge. How on earth could another school fit in there?

The Ross Charter is only planning to incubate in your school for two years, why get so upset?

In order to accommodate the charter school's needs as "calculated" by the DOE, NEST+m's high school will have to eliminate all honors, Regents, language and advanced Placement classes, as well as electives and SAT prep, while seriously overloading its remaining classrooms. Students of NEST+m, which is NYC's first and only K-12 *College Preparatory* Public School, will be left with a skeletal program of core classes, and one that lacks the very courses *required* for admissions to the colleges for which NEST+m is preparing them. Within two very short years, this will most certainly destroy our school.

Is it true that the DOE is harassing incoming NEST+m students?

Yes, and the NEST+m Administration has requested Speaker Sheldon Silver's assistance with this problem. Speaker Silver directed Chancellor Klein to stop Region 9's harassment of parents of incoming NEST+m's students. Parents have been receiving phone calls suggesting that NEST+m is having problems, is unstable and that they and their children have chosen a school that may soon be closed. Not only have they disregarded Speaker Silver's request, they have ratcheted up their harassment. On April 27, 2006, Jimmy Bueshen, Region 9 Placement Officer, directed the Lab School to call students who were accepted at NEST+m and to tell them they must decide between NEST+m and Lab by tomorrow, April 28th. The official parent response deadline for TAG schools is May 11th. No other TAG schools are being called.

Garth Harries, CEO of New Schools for the DOE, insists that the sharing of the two schools "will not undermine the excellent program at NEST+m." Then why is Region 9 suggesting to incoming parents that NEST+m is having problems? NEST+m has achieved perfect or near perfect scores on every standardized test at every grade level* and a 100% graduation rate in its high school. NEST+m's only problems have been created by the DOE. Our excellent program is being affected by these harassing phone calls to incoming parents which is causing uncertainty, fear and anxiety within our school community.

Why are NEST+m parents so committed?

Unlike other public schools that are structured K-5, 6-8 or 9-12, NEST+m is K-12 and spans 13 school years. Some NEST+m parents who have more than one child will be members of the NEST+m PTA parents for over twenty years. The commitment of our parents is a long-term commitment. The majority of their family lives will be spent at NEST+m.

Garth Harries, said that "only 32% of the schools (NEST+m) population lives in District 1, and there remains a compelling need for high quality options for the students of the Lower East Side who cannot qualify for citywide gifted and talented programs." What is your reaction to this statement?

We see a serious contradiction in this statement.

Just like the Ross charter school, NEST+m accepts applicants from all five boroughs. And just like the Ross charter school, NEST+m is not required to give priority to District 1 students. The Ross charter school cannot legally screen students and unfortunately there is no way District 1 students can turn to Ross for guaranteed "high quality options". District 1 students are put in the same random lottery as students from everywhere else in New York City, the Ross charter school is not a school designed for them.

NEST+m screens every applicant and gives a priority to qualified D1 applicants. Mr. Harries 32% District 1 figure is incorrect; NEST+m has approximately 50% District 1 students.

Is NEST+m against charter schools?

This argument is not about opposing or supporting charter schools, it is about the impossibility of sharing this space.

In fact, it is the DOE that has, by distorting the source and meaning of NEST+m's enrollment numbers, engaged in deceptive and misleading practices. For example, the DOE has conflated and confused NEST+m's projected and adjusted enrollments, a peculiar error given that the DOE itself defines what each are and how it should be determined.

While NEST+m's February 2006 projected enrollment reflect the school's best estimates of the number of students who will attend in the coming school year, the April 2006 adjusted enrollment is based on actual acceptances of its offers.

Why the disparity between projected and adjusted enrollments? Not all students accept a school's offer of admittance. So, to fill their classes, school must develop, and over time improve, a formula called a yield rate, that is, the percentage of students who will tend to accept the school's offer of admittance. But yield rates are not an exact science. Sometimes more students than the formula suggests accept the school's offer. In such cases, the school cannot rescind its invitation, but must instead accommodate more than its projected population. The need for at least some flexibility vis-à-vis available space for such unanticipated enrollment is, of course, yet another reason why it is unreasonable – perhaps unconscionable – of the DOE to insert another school into the NEST+m building.