

October 26, 2006

Dear NEST+*m* Families,

Tonight we respectfully submit our resignations, effective November 1, 2006, from the NEST+*m* PTA Executive Committee. We will continue to be active parents and continue to work on individual projects to benefit NEST+*m*, but under the present circumstances we find it impossible to continue in our jobs as Executive Committee parent leaders.

Parents and teachers elected us to be parent leaders at NEST+*m*, a school that had a clear mission and vision, and one that rejected the mediocre status quo of the Department of Education (DOE). As the elected parent leaders of NEST+*m* it pains us to look around our school and see broken light fixtures, broken security cameras, chaotic and dangerous drop off and pick up, graffiti on our building, no Crossing Guard, no School Nurse, Lower School gym periods of fifty students, classrooms without textbooks, disorderly lunch periods, sparse "directives" instead of many electives, students with three free periods in a row, no Senior Class faculty advisor, no College Guidance Counselor, no gender split Upper School classes and most importantly, the elimination of Middle and Upper School Advisory and the reduction of Lower School Morning Meeting. The founding documents that established NEST+*m* describe Advisory and Morning Meeting as "the heart of NEST+*m*". Our hearts have been ripped out.

NEST+*m* was designed to be a school where Upper and Middle School students could not leave the building whenever they felt like it and would not smoke pot in the bathrooms or cigarettes on the NEST+*m* campus. They respected the school Dress Code and their behavior conformed and adhered to the NEST+*m* Code of Conduct. "That's just teenage behavior", was never accepted at NEST+*m*--until now. Our children, K-12, are getting the message that rules are arbitrary. An administration that tells the School Leadership Team (SLT) that "enforcement" is not part of their job is an administration that needs different parent leaders than us.

NEST+*m* was able to offer its rich curriculum because it maintained bare-bones administrative costs and put its money into the classrooms. Although the budget was prepared in June 2006, it was revised by the new administration on October 18, 2006. The new budget has an 80% increase in administrative salaries from \$202,000 to \$362,000. Per-session money paid to our teachers to conduct clubs and after school classes, before and after school tutoring, professional development, and other enrichment has been reduced from \$216,000 to \$73,000. The NEST+*m* book budget was cut from \$140,000 to \$73,000 so it's no surprise that teachers have been complaining that they are missing books. The educational consultant budget that paid for staff development and guest lecturers was cut from \$37,000 to \$5,000.

NEST+*m* teachers have been marginalized and demoralized and held to DOE bureaucratic standards that other teachers in other public school are not held to. Over half of our fifty teachers have filed grievances against the new administration, with more pending. NEST+*m* teachers are now not trusted to collect small sums of money from parents for trips and classroom projects and supplies. Teachers have requested that the PTA submit a request for an ethics waiver so they can return to handling small sums of money to efficiently support the extras that enrich their curriculum. They were told they were not allowed to babysit at PTA meetings and in response the PTA had to spend over a month of valuable time obtaining an ethics waiver from the DOE Legal Ethics Department and the New York City Conflict of Interests Board. As one lawyer there said, "I've never seen anything like this."

The new administration refuses to meet with the PTA Executive Committee and does not respond to any of our emails or phone calls. It is our sincere hope that a new PTA Executive Committee will have a better working relationship with the NEST+*m* administration. We hope our resignations will encourage parents to run for the Executive Committee positions and that they will be parents with whom the new administration will meet, communicate, and work with on a regular basis to repair the damage that has been done to the students and the culture of our school.

The new administration was placed at NEST+*m* without any transition plan in place. No provisions were made for the transfer of critical information on NEST+*m* culture that would ensure a seamless transition. We hold Region 9 and the Department of Education responsible for this gross misconduct in the transfer of leadership.

We are committed to an orderly transition of PTA Executive Committee leadership. We will submit our resignations to Joan Makris, Region Nine Parent Support Director and Marcy Rios, NEST+*m* Parent Coordinator and follow their lead on the transition process.

Last Spring, NEST+*m* students, staff and parents fought against the insertion of a charter school into our building to prevent the reduction of AP classes and foreign languages, the elimination of split gender math and science classes, the end of Advisory, and the overcrowding of NEST+*m* with 1,400 students. All the NEST+*m* distinctive attributes we fought to protect have been lost or are at risk.

We won our lawsuit, and in retaliation the DOE is dismantling NEST+*m* before our very eyes. Chancellor Joel Klein has made it his personal mission to destroy one of New York City's most successful schools. Evidently, there is no role for this kind of educational success or our level of parent involvement in Chancellor Klein's agenda.

Don't let NEST+*m* lose its last and final battle. There is no room for 1,400 students at our school. Don't let "Students are Not Sardines!" become a prophecy instead of a battle cry. The new PTA Executive Committee must immediately continue our work to get the NEST+*m* building capacity number lowered to its former figure of 1,100, based on the three schools in one building formula.

We urge parents to never accept the mediocre DOE status quo and let NEST+*m* become just another "regular" public school. We implore you from the bottom of our hearts to never buy into the DOE's culture of mediocrity and to never, ever accept what we were always told and refused to believe: "That's just the way things are in the DOE. You can't fight City Hall."

But we have proof you can fight City Hall and win. And you can do it day after day, for six years.

It's called NEST+*m*.

Sincerely,

Michelle Buffington, Co- President  
Abby Horowitz, Co-President  
Lou Gasco, Executive Vice-President  
Susan Hitier, Treasurer  
Emily Armstrong, Co-VP Corporate Outreach  
Genevieve Marlin-Fernandez, Co-VP Corporate Outreach  
Elaine Hin, Co-VP Fundraising  
Joe Sears, Co-VP Fundraising  
Sybil Graziano, Co Corresponding Secretary

Attached: What has been lost or compromised at NEST+*m*