



PRESS RELEASE

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TOP NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL ENDANGERED BY PLANNED CHARTER SCHOOL

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NEW YORK CITY, April 10, 2006 – What happens when New York City’s first and only K-12 public school achieves perfect or near perfect scores on every test* at every grade level? The NYC Department of Education (DOE) caps its enrollment, makes it turn away students already accepted for September 2006 and violates the agreement under which the school, NEST+m (New Explorations into Science, Technology and Math), was originally founded.

Until NEST+m’s 2001 opening, the Lower East Side had lacked a gifted school for 16 years. Now despite NEST+m’s extraordinary success, the DOE has decided to imperil the school by inserting in its building the Ross Global Academy, a new charter school which plans to also span grades K-12. The DOE’s plan, which it had apparently intended to present as a *fait accompli* as the 2006-2007 school year began, only came to light last week as a result of a leak to a NEST+m PTA member. The information set in motion the PTA’s attempt to quash the DOE’s ill-considered arrangement, which will result in severe overcrowding and destabilization for both schools.

The partnership creating the charter school – **New York University, the Ross Institute of East Hampton and the DOE** – received about 1,000 letters from NEST+m students, parents, teachers and administrators pleading with them to find another location for their school. “We are three schools in one building – NEST+m Lower School, NEST+m Middle School, and NEST+m High School – and we are already overcrowded,” Principal Celenia Chevere said. “Students start eating lunch at 9:30 AM! Only 30 percent of our student body can fit into our auditorium at any one time. Having three schools in one building is a daily challenge. How on earth could another K-12 school fit in here?”

The DOE has recently recalculated NEST+m’s official capacity of 868 and arrived at a new capacity of 1,407, a spike of 62 percent. Even taking as a given the massive increase in what the school’s building can allegedly accommodate, the DOE argues that NEST+m’s enrollment of 1,050 for 2006-2007 school year – when the school will finish its K-12 complement by for the first time adding a fifth and a full-size 12th grade – still leaves room for another K-12 school.

Garth Harries, CEO of New Schools for the DOE, last week explained how the building’s new capacity was determined. The DOE, he explained, took every room in the building not assigned to a homeroom class – from the high school chemistry lab to next year’s fifth-grade classrooms – and declared it unused and available. They then assigned 30 students to every room in the building, without regard to its current use, size or function, and produced numbers guaranteed to turn NEST+m from the triumph and prototype it is into yet another overstuffed, under-performing New York City public school. “Why anyone would damage a proven success story to take a chance on an unknown school makes no sense,” NEST+m parent Lana Parker said.

* ECLAS, NYS Standardized Tests, 8th Grade ELA and Math Tests, Regents and AP’s

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