



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

**Mid-Manhattan Branch**

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**ON THE PROPOSED CLOSING OF WADLEIGH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING VISUAL ARTS' MIDDLE SCHOOL BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE)**

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**GOOD EVENING, MY NAME IS GEOFFREY EATON AND I AM PRESIDENT OF THE NAACP MID-MANHATTAN BRANCH. I STAND FOR FREEDOM HERE TODAY TO VOICE AND PEN MY OUTRAGE AND DISSATISFACTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S (DOE) PROPOSED PLAN TO CLOSE AND ELIMINATE WADLEIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL.**

**IN 2005, THE NAACP MID-MANHATTAN BRANCH, THROUGH OUR EDUCATION COMMITTEE, ADOPTED WADLEIGH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING VISUAL ARTS TO ASSIST, SUPPORT AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF THIS 111 YEAR OLD HARLEM INSTITUTION, WHICH HAS BEEN AN EDUCATIONAL ICON FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GRADUATED AND THE**

**MANY MORE WHO WILL GRADUATE IN THE YEARS AHEAD. OUR PRIMARY GOAL AS ESTABLISHED BY NAACP NATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IS TO ENSURE THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO AN EQUAL AND HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION BY ELIMINATING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THROUGH OUR ADVOCACY TRAINING, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, GUIDANCE AND DIRECT ACTION, THE MID-MANHATTAN BRANCH'S EDUCATION COMMITTEE HAS FOSTERED AND STRENGTHENED PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL AND HAS BUILT COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS IN THE COMMUNITY SURROUNDING AREAS. TANTAMOUNT TO 1951, WHEN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE TOPEKA, KANSAS NAACP RECRUITED PLAINTIFFS IN THE CLASS ACTION SUIT, "BROWN V THE BOARD OF EDUCATION," THE NAACP MID-MANHATTAN BRANCH STANDS WITH THE PARENTS OF WADLEIGH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING VISUAL ARTS AND HAVE NO INTEREST IN SEEING THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE YEAR 2012, CLOSE OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL!**

**THE NAACP FILED TWO LAWSUITS ON BEHALF OF NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLCHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS TO REDUCE AND CREATE SMALLER CLASS-SIZES AND FOR FAIR AND EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL. WHERE WILL OUR CHILDREN GO IF WADLEIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL IS CLOSED? FURTHERMORE, WHY DO SCHOOLS, LIKE WADLEIGH, SERVING PREDOMINANTLY BLACK AND LATINO STUDENTS CONTINUE TO FACE CONDITIONS, SUCH AS THE THREAT OF BEING CLOSED, THAT NON-MINORITY SCHOOLS SELDOMLY FACE? WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS AND IMPACT ON ANOTHER MIDDLE SCHOOL'S CLASS-SIZE?**

**WADLEIGH IS THE ONLY PERFORMING ARTS SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HARLEM WITH PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES FOR STUDENTS IN GRADE 6 THROUGH 12, WHERE THE CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMS INCLUDES, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO: A CULINARY**

**ARTS KITCHEN, A DIGITAL ARTS AND PRODUCTION STUDIO, DRAMA, VOCAL, STUDIO ART, DANCE, CONCERT BAND, PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE WADLEIGH PROSE AND POETRY GROUP. THE CLOSING OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL WOULD LEAD TO THE END OR LIMITED USE OF THESE ROOMS AND DESTROY WADLEIGH'S ARTS CLASS PROGRAM. LOSING THE FIRST FLOOR, WHERE THE MIDDLE SCHOOL IS, WOULD DECREASE ART CLASS ROOMS BY 25 PERCENT OR MORE.**

**THIS IS NOT WHAT CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS, OLIVER BROWN, ROBERT CARTER AND THURGOOD MARSHALL ARGUED IN 1951 TO ACHIEVE IN FRONT OF THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT, IN A 9-0 DECISION THAT LED TO THE ERADICATION OF EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS AND DISCRIMINATION IN EVERY SCHOOL IN THE NATION. THE TRAGIC BOMBING DEATHS OF THE FOUR LITTLE GIRLS AT THE 16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, AND THE MURDER OF MEDGAR WILEY EVERS AND REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. REMINDS US ALL OF THE LONG ROAD STRUGGLE WHICH WAS TIRELESSLY FOUGHT TO ACHIEVE FAIR AND EQUAL EDUCATION. NOTWITHSTANDING THE GREAT STRIDES MADE DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, RACIAL DISPARITIES PERSIST IN AMERICAN EDUCATION. RIGHT HERE IN NEW YORK CITY, BLACK AND LATINO CHILDREN ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY THAN THEIR WHITE COUNTERPARTS TO DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL; HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES ON AVERAGE; AND ARE INCREASINGLY SEGREGATED WITHIN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS. TODAY, THE EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND FUNDING RESOURCES ARE MORE UNEVENLY DIVIDED THAN THEY WERE OVER 40 YEARS AGO. DECISIONS CANNOT BE MADE THAT SUPPORTS ONE SCHOOL AT A VERY HIGH LEVEL, AND ALLOWS THE OTHER TO ATROPHY. IT IS WRONG, UN-AMERICAN AND UNACCEPTABLE BY ANY STANDARD OF FAIRNESS, AND EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW. THE NAACP AND THE MID-MANHATTAN BRANCH STANDS FOR FREEDOM**

**WITH WADLEIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL TO APPEAL FOR A MORAL, JUST AND RIGHT DECISION THAT WILL ALLOW WADLEIGH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR VISUAL ARTS TO REMAIN IN ITS CURRENT CONFIGURATION AND NOT BE BROKEN UP TO ACCOMMODATE AN INSTITUTION THAT ONLY SERVES 4 PERCENT OF THE ENTIRE 1.1 MILLION SCHOOLCHILDREN WHO REPRESENTS THE 96 PERCENT OF OUR HARLEM AND CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**IN CLOSING, THE NAACP MID-MANHATTAN BRANCH WELCOMES THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK HAND IN HAND WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ASSIST YOUR STAFF, AND ALL OF THE STAFF, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OF THE WADLEIGH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR VISUAL ARTS COMPLEX IN CREATING A MODEL OF HIGH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE FOR ALL SCHOOLS TO FOLLOW.**

# WHY SAVING WADLEIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS



## ***HARLEM WILL LOSE... DISTRICT 3 WILL LOSE....***

...its pre-eminent 6th-8th grade middle school **at a time when school overcrowding is a huge problem in the district!**

## ***HARLEM WILL LOSE... DISTRICT 3 WILL LOSE....***

...a significant part of its 111 year-old history in a landmark building that works to provide a rich curriculum especially in the arts (and even culinary arts) to **ALL** neighborhood children!

## ***HARLEM WILL LOSE... DISTRICT 3 WILL LOSE....***

...a public education institution that **supports a substantial number of students with special needs.**

## ***HARLEM WILL LOSE... DISTRICT 3 WILL LOSE....***

...a middle school that prepares neighborhood children for college scholarships and Advanced Placement courses—**vehicles that work to prepare our kids for success in institutions of higher education!**

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The DOE claims to have given Wadleigh "intensive supports and interventions" yet the school has suffered through three years of budget, staff and program cuts.

**For the past two years, the entire Wadleigh Community has voiced opposition to the proposed co-location of Harlem Success Academy charter school into the Wadleigh building.** The DOE says there is space in the Wadleigh building for a third school. However since the co-location was approved Wadleigh is now facing the closing of its middle school.

***Help fight the closing of Wadleigh Middle School and support the continued success of the Wadleigh High School by attending the public hearing on January 26th at 6pm at Wadleigh! (215 W. 114<sup>th</sup> St)***



**SAVE WADLEIGH'S MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**The Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing Visual Arts is the only 6-12 secondary school in Harlem. The DOE's proposed closure of the Middle School threatens Wadleigh's 111 year history and ability to offer a rich curriculum in the arts and academics.**

- Wadleigh is the only performing arts secondary school in Harlem with programs and facilities for 6-12 students including: Drama, Vocal, Studio Art, Dance, Concert Band, Photography, Culinary Arts Kitchen, Wadleigh Prose and Poetry Group and Digital Arts and Production Studio. The closing of the Middle School would lead to the end or limited use of these rooms and destroy Wadleigh's arts program. Losing the first floor, where the middle school is, would decrease arts rooms by 25%.
- Wadleigh offers five (5) Advanced Placement courses and multiple students have passed AP exams earning college credit. Traditionally, Middle School students who continue to the high school have been the most successful. Middle School curriculum covers ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies and Spanish. High School students work with, and mentor Middle School Students. The closing of Wadleigh's Middle School will destroy these programs.
- Wadleigh caters to a diverse student body with disparate needs and abilities: 87% of Wadleigh students are eligible for free/reduced price lunch, (with a large percentage of that student coming from the middle school) compared to 74% average citywide; 17% of students are in special education, compared to 10% average citywide. Approx 12% of students in middle school are in self-contained classes this is higher than almost any other middle school in the district.
- Wadleigh's high and middle schools received the following grades during the last five years, respectively: B, B A, C and D. . There was an administration change during this time and four years of budget cuts. Numerous schools with worse progress report grades were not considered for closure. This fall, Wadleigh provided a clear and comprehensive plan for improvement. This plan and the recommendation of the community were ignored. Wadleigh received a "Developing" grade on its 360 Quality Review, which according to former D3 Superintendent, this indicates that the school is on the "right track to improvement" rather than is "failing"
- The DOE claims to have given Wadleigh "intensive supports and interventions" in the following areas: 1) leadership support to the administration; 2) instructional support to teachers; and 3) Operational support on budget management, increasing attendance, and

utilization academic interventions. Yet, at the pre- engagement hearing the DOE and the Network were unable to demonstrate any substantive support that was given to Wadleigh. (Wadleigh had not even demonstrated a need for assistance before this year, so how could there have been years of intervention) On the contrary, last year numerous dedicated Middle School staff was taken away. The Middle School Guidance Counselor and Middle School Dean were taken away leaving no dedicated personnel to mediate with and assist students with emotional, behavioral and academic issues (leaving Wadleigh's entire student body with only two guidance counselors). The Middle School math coach was taken away. In addition, last year Wadleigh was left without numerous staff that serves both schools. A gym teacher was taken away leaving Wadleigh Middle School students without any physical education classes and the band teacher that left was replaced by a substitute teacher. Furthermore, both schools lost an additional Dean, two special education teachers and a social studies teacher—staff that serve Wadleigh's entire student body. All the while, Wadleigh's school with 500 plus students had five Assistant Principals and one Principal, salaries which constitute more than 15% of Wadleigh's schools budget. The majority of these administrators had no previous experience and could be helping to provide academic supports to students who need intervention.

- In 2007, a conscious decision was made to shrink Wadleigh's middle school despite protests from the schools chapter, the SLT and the greater community. This decision was protested because the middle school feeds the high school and is an integral part of Wadleigh's learning community. Wadleigh's Middle School was more successful before the decision was made to decrease its size.
- In addition, the children in the Wadleigh Middle School, unlike other Middle Schools in District 3, did not benefit from extracurricular, athletic or after school activities such as basketball, track and after school arts taught by Wadleigh staff..
- With assistance, Wadleigh will continue to improve. The EIS states that Wadleigh suffers from low enrollment and demand. This year's entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade class was the biggest in recent history. If the DOE helped to publicize the school by mailing district parents and informing them of Wadleigh programs, the same way charter schools do, the school could be more competitive.
- This year, Wadleigh re-established its culinary arts program this year after a five (5) year absence. Middle school students are due to have culinary arts next year.
- There is a growing need for middle school seats in District 3. With the closing of Wadleigh's middle school, classrooms that may already be overcrowded will be forced to absorb additional students.

- The DOE began a series of conversations with the Wadleigh community to co-locate Harlem Success Academy (HSA) in Wadleigh's building during the 2009-2020 and 2010-2011 school year. The Wadleigh community unanimously protested the proposal as the Wadleigh campus and its arts programs have no room for a third school. Yet it was approved anyway. Is the DOE listening to the community?

In summary, Wadleigh is the only performing arts high school in Harlem, and is an integral resource for our children. Wadleigh has made improvements despite approximately \$650,000 in budget cuts over the past 3 years. The truncation of Wadleigh's middle school along with the changes made last year to the middle school will hurt and not help Wadleigh and its surrounding community.

**SUPPORT OUR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS, DON'T COSE THEM!**

**CLOSING HARLEM SCHOOLS HURTS THE HARLEM COMMUNITY.**

**WHY SAVING WADLEIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS**



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