



## The Public Advocate for the City of New York

*Improving Access to City Services*

**Betsy Gotbaum**  
Public Advocate

May 28, 2008

Joel I. Klein  
Chancellor  
NYC Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear <sup>JOEL</sup>Chancellor Klein:

**By Fax and U.S. Mail**

I have heard from parents of pre-kindergarten children that the newly revised enrollment process has created chaos and confusion and parents remain in the dark about what school their children will attend this coming fall.

I'm calling on you and the Department of Education to immediately address the complaints and concerns of every parent who did not have their child placed in a school of their choice, a school in their zone, or a school that a sibling attends. I would also like you to provide me with details on your process for addressing these complaints and concerns.

This problem arose over the past weekend when parents across the city received letters alerting them to the pre-k program that their child would begin in September. Unfortunately, it seems, many parents received letters telling them that none of their choice programs were available. Parents who have called my office and others are concerned that determinations for enrollment are not being made according to the guidelines the DOE set out.

For example, it appears that pre-k children were rejected from the programs attended by their siblings, even though they are supposed to be given first priority in the new process. Furthermore, it's a well-known fact that when parents rent or buy apartments they consider the quality of neighborhood schools to which they will send their children. If zoned schools are no longer a given in New York real estate, it is your job to adequately inform parents.

Furthermore, according to parents, the rejection letter they received was unclear and did not give information about next steps. The failure to properly communicate changes to pre-k has plagued the new program since the very start.

I am troubled by these early indications of problems in the new enrollment system, as I am sure you are too. In fact, the current situation seems reminiscent of the glitches that occurred in the first year of the new high school enrollment process, which sent parents scrambling and left thousands of kids anxious. We can't afford to let the same happen to four-year-olds.

I have instructed my office to work with the DOE to help resolve complaints for the parents who contact my office. But, you must go a step further and reach out to all the parents who did not receive a placement and work with them to find a proper school for their children. For many



parents this may be their first contact with the schools and they may not know where to turn.  
You need to guide them.

I look forward to your prompt resolution to this problem and response to my inquiry.

Sincerely,



Betsy Gotbaum