

## Community Education Council – District 30

### Candidates

**Candidate: Anastasia Cunningham**

**DBN:** 30Q122

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

#### **Applicant Background**

I serve on the PS 122 PTA as Vice President, and have done so since October of this year. I was the organizer for a local moms' group in Astoria for three years. We had about 150 members, and we were involved in activities ranging from simple play dates and museum visits, to larger parties and events. We held a very successful annual Halloween party and an annual clothing swap, among other things. We held a fundraising bake sale for three years, proceeds of which went to Food Bank for NYC. We also held a food drive for a local charity called Hour Children, and held a school supply drive for them on year. I was a co-leader for the Queens Chapter of the Holistic Moms Network for one year, and through that organization I reached out to parents who were interested in living a holistic and natural lifestyle, and wanted to raise their families in that type of environment, as well. We held monthly meetings where we invited all types of speakers to appeal to our members, everything from holistic care providers to school representatives.

#### **Personal Statement**

To Whom it May Concern, I would be honored and elated to serve on the Education Council for District 30. I have lived in Astoria for over 20 years, and have seen it blossom into the diverse and fantastic neighborhood it is today. I consider myself an asset to my community, and my community is very important to me. Part of that community is the school my children attend. I greatly enjoy serving on the PTA, as it affords me an opportunity to be involved first hand in the amazing things our school does for the children. I am an advocate for public education and I would love to be able to have a chance to make it the best it can be for all children, not just in my district, but the city, as well. I feel that my prior experience serving the community gives me a unique perspective, as I know what it takes to get volunteers and get people to band together for a good cause--and there is no greater cause than our children. I am detail oriented, diligent, and would work at my fullest capacity as a member of the Education Council. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely,  
Anastasia Cunningham

**Candidate: Leni Calas**

**DBN: 30Q141**

**IEP/ELL: N/A**

### **Applicant Background**

I am the owner and founder of Queensmamas.com and The Mamas Network. I have been a parent in this community for 14 years and my second daughter will enter pre k in September through the public school system in Queens. I am an advocate for public school education as well as a local resource that parents share their opinions to other mothers in the Queens community.

### **Personal Statement**

Leni is a New York native currently living in Astoria with an unconditional love for the larger city. She started The Mamas Network, a blog-turned-smash-hit of a website and hyper-local guide for parents navigating New York City's larger boroughs. Frustrated with the lack of a regional one-stop guide when she was raising her older daughter, Leni saw a gaping hole in the community that she could fill. Leni pushes her websites and events as a vehicle for long-term investment in all NYC neighborhoods. The social responsibility element to what you do as a media company is encouraging growth through local business, schools, and community centers. We're trying to encourage people to keep their families and their money close to home, so that economically, ultimately, the neighborhoods will be better. Leni has two children in the public school system and has been a long time advocate of quality in our local schools.

**Candidate: Michelle Noris**

**DBN: 30Q085**

**IEP/ELL: IEP**

### **Applicant Background**

I am the mother of three children all of whom have attended New York City public schools. I have served as a PTA officer, on the School Leadership team and I have served on CDEC 30 for the last 3 years. One of my children has disabilities and medical conditions. He has an IEP and I am extremely knowledgeable of the IEP process and how it relates to the Special Education reform, related services, bussing and appropriate classroom placement.

### **Personal Statement**

I have served on CEC 30 for 3 years. During that time I have advocated for children and families throughout our district. I worked with parents at PS 17 when they had difficulty with their Principal. I am working with parents of Gifted and Talented students at PS/IS122, PS150, PS166 and PS85 on an equitable path to middle school. I advocate for families of students with IEPs as they struggle to get services and look for appropriate placements. I organized a Special Education Forum in August of 2012, to bring assistance to families of students with IEPs. On our council, I serve as a researcher and

statistician. I write many of our positions when we negotiate with the DoE to get our kids what they need, deserve and are entitled to. As a professional engineer, I also advise the council on matters relating to capital improvements and maintenance issues. I have worked on rewriting several of the Chancellor's Regulations. These include 755, which recommends that students who are suicidal now be considered for 504 plans, and 600 requiring that PTA meetings, when possible, be held in accessible locations. I would like to continue to serve the community that I grew up in, by advocating for all of our children and families.

**Candidate: Deborah Alexander**

**DBN:** 30Q150

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

### **Applicant Background**

I am a member of our school's SLT, and a parent leader in the Gifted and Talented community.

### **Personal Statement**

I started attending CDEC meetings last October because of the G&T crisis in District 30. My son just started Kindergarten, yet I was the one getting the education. It was fascinating and inspiring to see a part of the educational system I had no idea existed in full-swing. Listening to the passion and eloquence of council members who had no personal stake in the outcome of the issues on the floor has changed me for the better. I see that we may individually be small cogs in the wheel, but without cogs, the wheel won't spin. I've learned the importance of organization and of persistence, even in the very large shadow of the powers-that-be. Members of the council have listened, they have responded, they have advocated, and I would like to do the same. I started out with a very myopic view of the educational system, but I've learned so much this year about the trials so many kids, parents, schools, and communities are facing. If I can listen, respond, and advocate for someone else, it would be an extreme privilege.

**Candidate: Helena Akhtar**

**DBN:** 30Q122

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

### **Applicant Background**

District 30 Council Member (3 years)

### **Personal Statement**

District 30 Council Member (3 years)

**Candidate: Ka-Trina C. Harris**

**DBN: 30Q111**

**IEP/ELL: N/A**

**Applicant Background**

I AM THE P.T.A. PRESIDENT AT P.S.111 AND THIS MY SECOND TERM. I AM ALSO ON THE S.L.T.BORAD AND I ALWAYS VOLUNTEERED AT MY CHILDREN SCHOOL FOR THE LAST 7 YEARS.

**Personal Statement**

I HAVE THE BEST INTEREST IN MY KIDS EDUCATION AND I ENJOY BEN INVOLVED AT MY KIDS SCHOOLS.

**Candidate: Rachel Zwiebach Paster**

**DBN: 30Q122**

**IEP/ELL: N/A**

**Applicant Background**

I trained to be a teacher at the University of Michigan School of Education. I was certified in MI and in NY to teach Social Studies in secondary school up until 2005. During my time at the School of Education I also worked with researcher Elizabeth Sulzby on emergent literacy in lower elementary grades. I have not taught, however, because I went to law school after college.

**Personal Statement**

I am the parent of two elementary-age boys at PS 122 in Queens. Although now a practicing attorney, I was certified to teach social studies at the middle and high school level in New York and Michigan after attending the University of Michigan School of Education. At the UM School of Education, I worked with researchers studying emergent literacy in the early elementary grades. I am the proud product of the public schools in Michigan, and both of my parents went to the public schools in New York City. I'm part of a family of lifelong learners. I firmly believe that the most important thing we can do for our children is instill a love of learning so that they, too, will be lifelong learners and enjoy success in whatever fields they may choose. I'd be proud to do my part for public schools.

**Candidate: Valarie LaMour**

**DBN: 30Q166**

**IEP/ELL: IEP**

### **Applicant Background**

I have been a member of the Community District 30 Education Council for three years. I have been on the School Leadership Team for PS 166 for four years. As an elected member of both bodies I have advocated for equality and fairness for the students of Queens. Examples of these are getting yellow bus service restored and implemented for after school tutoring and Demanding that a local Charter school accept in their lottery the same age parameters for kindergarten as NYC public schools. I also help make sure that applications to schools in our area are available as hardcopies at school locations, not only by internet, as many parents in our district and Queens don't have access to a computer at home. Last, I take the job of zoning seriously and with my CEC colleagues have done due diligence and reached out to our local communities to assure parents that their voices are being heard when zoning and co-location applications arise in our district and advocate for the community's voice.

### **Personal Statement**

I have been a member of the Community District 30 Education Council for three years. I have advocated for equality and fairness for the students of Queens. Examples of these are getting yellow bus service restored and implemented for after school tutoring and a successful bid in changing a local charter school's lottery parameters; that they accept in their lottery the same age children for kindergarten as NYC public schools. I helped make sure that paper applications to schools in our area are available at school locations, not only by internet, as many parents in Queens don't have access to a computer at home or otherwise. With my CEC colleagues we have reached out to our local communities to assure parents that their voices are being heard when zoning and co-location applications arise in our district and advocate for the community's voice. I also encourage and remind parents that the DOE has the obligation to translate all information in your native language. Working as a parent advocate on the Community Education Council for District 30 has been an honor and very full filing. I'm here to help parents navigate the bureaucracy of the DOE, advocate for parents rights and work to better our public education system.

**Candidate: John Peter Kuhl**

**DBN: 30Q085**

**IEP/ELL: N/A**

### **Applicant Background**

I have completed training as a Learning Leader, and also received NYS teaching certifications in Biology 7-12 and Gifted Education. I have taught general education, special education, and English language learning students in NYC public schools as both a teacher and substitute teacher, and have served as Assistant Secretary and then Vice President of the PTA at PS 122. My elder daughter attended the

Academy at PS 122 before attending Hunter College High School, and my younger daughter will migrate from PS 85 to the Academy next year.

### **Personal Statement**

I am interested in maximizing opportunities for all students throughout the district, and in maintaining open respectful channels of communication between the DOE and families whose children are impacted by DOE policies. As a scientist, a science teacher, and one who believes in the importance of math and science literacy, I am particularly interested in the adequacy of curricula in those disciplines to prepare our students for their futures.

**Candidate: Ellen Niz**

**DBN:** 30Q212

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

### **Applicant Background**

I was a volunteer with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of NYC for several years, marched with the community in support of the Travers Park Play Street, led a children's theater workshop on the Play Street, volunteered in my daughter's kindergarten classroom for Cookshop for Kids, and attend as many school-related activities and workshops as I can.

### **Personal Statement**

I would like to be a part of the Education Council to help our local schools: (1) provide the best education for our children; (2) meet the needs of the families in our community; and (3) better connect with parents about their questions and concerns. As the parent of a first grader in District 30, I am interested in becoming more involved in our local schools.

**Candidate: Shabi Eleftheriou**

**DBN:** 30Q141

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

### **Applicant Background**

I have voted in elections for PTA members and attend all Parent Teacher Confernces for my children. I also attend many of the PTA meetings at our school.

### **Personal Statement**

I feel that I would be a great asset in helping to shape the curriculum and programs for our schools in our District. As a mother of twin girls, making sure my girls and all kids are well rounded and prepared for college is paramount to meet and shape the future of this country.

**Candidate: Linda Marie Clark**

**DBN:** 30Q148; 30Q227

**IEP/ELL:** IEP

### **Applicant Background**

I was a co-president in the PTA for a year and after that I volunteered in the PTA without holding any office positions. I also have worked for 5 years in a private school. I also have a son who has had an IEP and has received special education services since he has been in elementary school. I have also volunteered a lot on school trips.

### **Personal Statement**

I would strongly like to be a part of the education council. Since I have three children in the public school system. I would like to also be part of the special education council since I have a child who receives special education services since the 90's and it has been a long time battle for my child to receive these services. I think I have more of understanding coming from a parents perspective and also working as an assistant teacher in a school so I have experienced both sides.

**Candidate: Aziz Elmrini**

**DBN:** 30Q141

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

### **Applicant Background**

### **Personal Statement**

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn" Benjamin Franklin. "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever" Mahatma Gandhi These quote reflects the way my life is lived and the personality developed by living this lifestyle. Education is priority number one in my live. I think that these two quotes can tell you so much about me and how essential is education for our children. We should all get involve in our children education because they are the future of our country. And don't forget that better education leads to better future. Aziz Elmrini

**Candidate: Maria E. LeBron**

**DBN: 30Q227**

**IEP/ELL: N/A**

**Applicant Background**

I have participated in a community activity in registering children that need tutoring for the ELA and Math city wide test.

**Personal Statement**

**Candidate: Robert Rodriguez**

**DBN: 30Q122**

**IEP/ELL: IEP**

**Applicant Background**

OUR FAMILY, FOR THE PAST 18 MOS., HAVE MOVED INTO THE COMMUNITY IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH NON-PROFIT ORGS. THAT WILL EVOLVE INTO LOCAL CHURCHES. WE CURRENTLY HAVE PLANTED THE CITYVIEW CHURCH IN ASTORIA.

**Personal Statement**

Born and raised in NYC, I have a passion for the City and its many ethnic peoples. I come with a solid professional & ministry background, maturity, and entrepreneurial gifting from the Lord. A second generation Hispanic American, I am well equipped to lead a multi-ethnic urban church plant. I grew up in the largest independent Baptist Spanish-speaking church in NYC. As a young adult at the First Spanish Baptist Church (Brooklyn, NY), I oversaw their bilingual Bible institute. My undergraduate studies at Pensacola Christian College and Northeast Baptist Bible College focused on pastoral studies. I continued his education with online classes and is now pursuing a Master of Divinity through Baptist Bible Seminary.

**Candidate: Jennifer Christine Harper**

**DBN: 30Q150**

**IEP/ELL: N/A**

**Applicant Background**

I have been the Queensborough President Appointee to CDEC 30 for three years. During those three years I was the chair of the zoning committee during the first rezoning that the council had done in



many years and I believe I helped to successfully lead the council through this rezoning. I have helped to bring arts workshops to the parents of District 30 and have also worked with several schools as liaison. I have also been active in helping the PTA of my daughters' school.

### **Personal Statement**

I have served as Queensborough President Appointee of the CDEC 30 for the past three years and would like to continue to serve on the council as an elected member. I was chair of the zoning committee during the first rezoning that the CDEC 30 had done together and would like to continue to help with future rezonings. I also helped to bring arts workshops to parents in the district and would like to continue that as well. I have a Masters in Public Education in Education Policy from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and also worked for several years in the Education Unit of the Wallace Foundation. I have been able to apply my background in education policy to help district 30 as a member of the CDEC and would like to continue to do so.

**Candidate: Paola C. Andrade**

**DBN:** 30Q152

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

### **Applicant Background**

I have not participated in any school activities.

### **Personal Statement**

I am a full time working mother - who lives and strives for her children. Their education is one of the most important things, we as parents, can make sure they have. We push them to do their best and then some. I was brought up believing I can do anything I want. So long as I work hard, and be honest about it. That is something I will pass on to my children and hope they pass it on to theirs.

**Candidate: Mounia Mourchid**

**DBN:** 30Q141

**IEP/ELL:** N/A

### **Applicant Background**

I have been working with AHRC NY for almost nine years. I work as a Child Development Associate in integrated classroom.

### **Personal Statement**

**Candidate: Bertha Lucia Dutan**

**DBN: 30Q149**

**IEP/ELL: N/A**

**Applicant Background**

**Personal Statement**

**Candidate: Heather Ibrahim**

**DBN: 30Q076**

**IEP/ELL: IEP**

**Applicant Background**

I have a great desire to help parents in my community. I have served as a CCELL (2012-2013- I was nominated to be a part of SPED committee I am an advisory council member in the "Intrepid" I am an advisory parent council in PS76 Volunteering in the public library in Queens ESL teacher & p. time translator Volunteering in the activities & help families in both catholic charities & head start programs Sharing in campaigns & traveling to Albany for the social issues

**Personal Statement**

I want to get used of my great experience in the CCELL/CCSP to serve my community for the parents of ESL and to let them aware - well informed about their rights and the services can be offered to them through the city council - make them involved in their kids education and help to get the educational reform.