

Build NYC Resource Corporation  
Public Hearing Testimony Submissions  
November 17, 2022

## Letter of Support for KIPP Canal West Project

To Whom It May Concern:

I am Jane Martinez Dowling, Chief of External Affairs for KIPP NYC. KIPP NYC is a network of public charter schools currently serving approximately 7,300 students primarily in the Bronx and growing to over 10,000 students over the next 5 years. At KIPP NYC, 99% of our students identify as people of color and ~90% of our students qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

We are excited to share information about the project. The project is located at 75 Canal Street West in the Bronx; where we are building a transformative 155,000 square foot facility to serve not only KIPP NYC high school students but also the broader Bronx Community

The facility will have a number of exciting features, including community accessibility and state of the art safety and security

- High performance HVAC to ensure healthy air quality for students
- The Commercial kitchen – which will allow us to expand our healthy meals program to the students at this facility and other KIPP NYC facilities
- Full gymnasium with 2 high school regulation size courts – to expand our strong offering of athletic programs
- 10,000 SF rooftop play space with additional outdoor play and learning space – with an environmentally supportive design to do our part in climate and water issues
- Dance studio and music room – to continue our support of student participation in the arts
- Auditorium and performance stage – for student and community events
- Specialty science labs to continue our STEM educational opportunities – and so much more

Last year, KIPP NYC received 1,200 applications for high school lottery seats and because of space constraints were only able to accept less than 100 of those students. This facility will allow us to serve a total of 2,800 high school students, offering us the opportunity to increase our lottery acceptance.

We want to thank Build NYC and Mayor Adams for support in New York City and bringing this transformative project to 1,400 students in the Bronx

Sincerely,  
Jane Martinez Dowling

**Mariela Meza-Armenta**  
**2860 Buhre Avenue, 5X**  
**Bronx, NY 10461**

**November 17, 2022**

To whom it may concern:

My name is Mariela Meza-Armenta and I am the Advocacy Director at KIPP NYC Schools. I have been a part of this organization for seven years and today I'd like to speak to you as a Bronx native and current community member in support of the KIPP NYC Public School expansion on 75 Canal Street. My family first found KIPP when they were looking for education options that would meet my needs English language learner. Since then, KIPP Schools have been a part of my family's trajectory to attaining a college education and the organization has been an immense resource throughout the 20+ years that my family has worked with them. To paint a clearer picture, KIPP has played a role in fulfilling my parents' wildest dreams of having all of their five children attend and secure degrees from higher ed. institutions like Hamilton College, Davidson and Brown University. Three of us currently work in the education sector to support the next generation of learners.

As an active member of the youth and education committee of Bronx Community Board One, I know that several education districts in the Bronx do not have the high quality education options that our families want and deserve. With Bronx CB1 currently having an 11.3% of its residents earning a bachelor's degree or higher in comparison to the 37% NYC average, it is evident that we need more educational institutions that support our youth in academic achievement and in exploring their passions. The current KIPP NYC high school goes beyond academics and works to offer a wide variety of programs like Robotics, 14 varsity sports teams, 24 arts electives and robust college & career counseling that sends hundreds of students to summer and experiential summer programs each year. By having access to strong programs, KIPP prepares students to persevere in college and in career. I ask for your support in expanding and replicating this model by having an additional facility for KIPP in the Bronx.

Sincerely,

*Mariela Meza-Armenta*

Mariela Meza-Armenta

Yeshiva Har Torah's mission statement states: "Our goal is to provide a challenging and innovative academic program and to foster a love of learning in each child". Since its inception in 1989, Yeshiva Har Torah has been committed to a rigorous academic program which prepares its students for admission into competitive high schools and beyond. At Yeshiva Har Torah, General Studies are not merely seen as an obligation, but rather as an essential and fundamental element in our educational experience. The core curriculum of the school includes English Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. Each of these courses meets five times a week for 45 minutes each day. In addition, students take classes in Physical Education, Art, Music, Library and Computers. More recently, there has been an increased emphasis on STEAM education. An example of this commitment and the standards maintained in our program is evidenced by the number of teachers approved by New York State for its STEM Teacher Reimbursement Program. Yeshiva Har Torah also received accreditation from Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools in 2012, attesting to the rigorous academic and curricular standards maintained by the school.

Yeshiva Har Torah is committed to exclusively hiring general studies teachers who have a Master's Degree in education or in their specialized field. Yeshiva Har Torah is committed to the ongoing professional growth of its faculty. We offer workshops monthly and encourage teachers to attend seminars and workshops appropriate to their needs. In addition, members of our Leadership Team were accepted to participate in "Leadership: and Evolving Vision" at the Harvard Principals Center.

We aim to meet the unique educational needs of each of our close to 800 students. We therefore have a very robust program of support for those students who require it, as well as enrichment for those students who would benefit from such a program. In fact, we invested significant time and resources to become a SETSS agency, which allows us to hire our own Learning Specialists to work with groups of students. We have found this to be a more effective model, as we are able to group students homogeneously who need support, as opposed to the DoE model which groups students across 3 grade levels, irrespective of their learning profiles. We therefore have groups which support those students who need phonics instruction, even when they are beyond the early elementary grades, as well as those who are fluent readers but need help with comprehension. We follow a similar model in Math as well. All of these Learning Specialists are vetted through the Department of Education.

Exceptional students are given the opportunity to be placed in a special Math Enrichment program, which replaces their standard math program beginning in 2nd grade. These students are taught through a Project Based Learning (PBL) model and work collaboratively in small groups. Beginning in 6th grade, strong math students are

given the opportunity to accelerate in mathematics in order to take Algebra 1, typically a 9th grade course, in 8th grade. Typically, over 30% of the grade takes this accelerated track, which results in their taking the 9th grade NYS Algebra Regents in 8th grade. Our average score on the 9th grade Algebra Regents in 8th grade over the past 4 years is 87%. In addition, a select group of exceptional math students have accelerated and taken the 10th grade NYS Geometry Regents in 8th grade, with our average score being 96%. There is also a group of 30-35% of our 8th grade that takes a 9th grade NYS Foreign Language Regents in 8th grade, averaging 88% over the past three years.

To further ensure that each child's academic needs are supported, we have invested in two Special Education coordinators, one for preschool-5th grades and one for our middle school. They provide supervision to our SETTS providers, as well as ensure that each group is working on the appropriate goals. We regularly assess each student, and change around the groups' compositions on an on-going basis. In fact, every student in our school is assessed three times a year using MAP Growth, the most trusted and innovative standardized assessment for measuring achievement and growth in K-12 math, reading, language usage, and science. It provides teachers with accurate, actionable evidence to help inform instructional strategies regardless of how far students are above or below grade level. It also connects to the largest set of instructional content providers, giving educators flexibility in curriculum choices.

While the overwhelming majority of our graduates go on to Yeshiva High Schools, and are accepted to the top tier High Schools within the Day School System, there is a smaller number that apply to NYC DoE High Schools and are accepted to specialized High Schools within NYC. Our graduates continue in various fields beyond High School and are disproportionately represented in law, medicine, education, finance, accounting, psychology etc. after completing their graduate degrees at schools such as NYU, Harvard, Penn, CUNY, and the list goes on..

On a personal note, my wife and I are strong believers in, and value education. I have a Master's degree in Social Work Administration and my wife has a nursing degree and has been a cardiac nurse at Northwell for the past 7 years. When we were choosing a school for our children, we were looking for an institution that both challenges and enables children to grow and thrive. We specifically choose to send our kids to Yeshiva Har Torah, which is not the local day school in our community, because of how impressed we are with the academic programming, educators, and graduates.

Yeshiva Har Torah is committed to academic excellence and will not compromise on the time and resources necessary to accomplish that.