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April 22, 2015

Chancellor Carmen Farina  
New York City Department of Education  
Tweed Courthouse  
52 Chamber Street  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chancellor Farina:

The School of the Future (“SOF”) is a vibrant, highly regarded public middle school and high school serving a diverse student body, with 40% Black and Latino students, one-fifth of students with special needs, and class diversity which includes 40% of families eligible for free or reduced lunch. SOF is consistently recognized as one of the best public high schools in New York City based on rankings by the *NY Post*, *NY Observer*, and Inside Schools, and is among the few public schools in New York to receive a distinguished Great Schools Rating of 8 out of 10. Over 700 students attend SOF, which is housed in a ten-story, neo-gothic building constructed early in the Twentieth Century to house the Manhattan Trade School for Girls on the northwest corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue.

The school was informed in January that a developer, Toll Brothers, has acquired the property that surrounds the building and will soon commence a three-year residential construction project. Specifically their plan is to build a 12 story building on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and an 18 story building on the Lexington Avenue (Block 878 Lots 15 and 59). We are deeply disturbed by the safety and educational issues raised by this construction, and request that you take all necessary measures to protect the students. We understand that the school has requested assistance in moving to a different building for the school year starting in September 2015, and consider moving the school’s location away from the construction an imperative.

Among the safety and educational concerns are:

1. **Structural Collapse**—The construction site would require about 20 feet of excavation along half of the perimeter of the school building, which is fully occupied during normal business hours by 730 students plus teachers and administrators. The school’s 10 story building was originally the Manhattan Trade School for Girls which was built in 1905. The school’s foundation has not been exposed in some time. Also, the foundation will require

underpinning. With the number of building collapses in the recent past, the safety and integrity of the building during the demolition and excavation process simply cannot be assured.

2. **Access Dangers**--Construction will occur on both sides of our school building. The staff, students and parents will not be able to access the school entrance without walking by active construction activity. Cranes, material delivery, demolition debris removal and construction trailers may impede access on both sides of school entrances. The increased traffic, materials overhead and general confusion of a construction raises concerns about safety, especially considering that the construction will be ongoing for three years. The most commonly used accesses to the school, from Park Avenue on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and from Lexington Avenue from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> Streets, will be danger zones.
3. **Toxic Air Quality**—Demolition and construction are inherently risky to health. Asbestos and lead paint may very well be removed in the demolition process and air quality may be toxic due to dust and other substances being released. The health of the school community cannot be guaranteed (even with monitoring), since demolition and construction will inevitably have a negative impact on air quality.
4. **Noise Disruption**— The demolition and construction will be noisy, regardless of remediation measures taken by the developer. Students and staff will have to struggle with this ongoing clamor in an environment that is disruptive to the school's educational mission. This disruption provokes even more concern because special needs students compose 18 percent of the student body.

The NYCSCA wisely does not allow for work on or around school grounds during school hours. Construction of this magnitude will have a far more severe and disruptive impact than many of the projects the NYCSA currently bans. We urge the Department of Education to act swiftly and effectively in the face of the crisis facing School of the Future.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours,

John A, Coleman  
Chairman – School of the Future SLT