

Emily Hellstrom
Personal Candidate Statement:
CEC D2

I am running for CECD2 to help ensure our public schools remain vibrant, thriving institutions, welcoming and educating every student who enters their doors as we reopen after this crisis. If elected, I will continue advocating for schools to be fully funded, not saddled with undeserved debt; push for broader use of structured literacy to ensure all children can learn to read on grade level; and support families as founder and chair of the Students with Disabilities (SwD) Committee.

Since its inception two years ago, I have held monthly SwD meetings, bringing parents together in a supportive environment to foster a sense of community, share advice, and advocate, as they navigate the complex IEP process. I try to have DOE staff and other experts attend to give useful information and open a dialogue for change. I write newsletters with resources and tips and also organize panel discussions such as, "Supporting Your Middle-School Child with ADHD", "Dyslexia Legislation", and "ASD Nest in District 2", among others. I have spent the last 2 years advocating for early reading and writing instruction based in science, called "structured literacy", proven to be the most effective way to teach all children to become skilled readers.

Over the past four years on the council, I have gained a nuanced understanding of how it functions, working with fellow members to champion underrepresented voices and raise awareness of critical issues, and this year was elected Vice President. In my previous term, I created the Community Engagement Committee, organizing council-wide programming such as a budget primer, a "Panel on Special Education" and a "How to Build Resilience in Children" workshop.

I have a long proud history of public school education, attending NJ public schools myself. I have three kids: twin boys in 7th grade, one at Clinton, the other at Windward, a special education school for children with dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities and my daughter attends 4th grade at PS 343, the Peck Slip School. This past year, my child, usually a very strong student, struggled deeply with remote learning; a humbling experience which taught me how challenging the years ahead will be for so many children.

I served as the co-president of the Peck Slip PTA for three years, former PTA vice president for one year, and SLT member for two years. In addition, I was

deeply involved in the second phase of the 75 Morton Community Alliance, a group of parents helping to set the school on a path to success. As Co-Chair of the 75MCA, I led outreach and communications for numerous community envisioning meetings for the school. I fostered relationships with a wide range of schools across the district helping to create an open forum for dialogue about the future of the school.

Outside the CEC, I am part of a school team creating the first DOE public school for children with dyslexia and struggling readers. I recently helped found Children First, a grassroots organization created to protect children at two schools in the Historic Seaport located next to a development site in the New York State Brownfield Program which could expose children to lead, mercury and other harmful toxins present in the soil.

I have lived in District 2 for 25 years and my ties to my community go beyond education. I serve as the vice president of the Soho Broadway Initiative, on the board of Friends of Elizabeth Street Garden, and a member of Friends of De Salvo, successfully securing funding for the redesign and revitalization of that playground.

It is this kind of civic engagement that has prepared me to join the Council for another term. I know that I would serve with the energy and passion that I bring to everything I do. I humbly ask for your vote.