



Eighty Years of Struggling for Wadleigh

1897: Wadleigh High School for Girls opened downtown.

1902: Wadleigh High School for Girls moved to 114th Street.

1946: Board of Education officials and some Harlem leaders sought to close Wadleigh High School, but administrators and teachers convinced them to keep the school open.

1954: Citing low enrollment, the Board of Education closed Wadleigh High School.

1956: Wadleigh Junior High School opened, for both boys and girls.

2005: The Dept. of Education gave space at the Wadleigh building to Frederick Douglass Academy II, a new small school built on a model created by a former Wadleigh teacher.

2017: Department of Education officials announced in December a proposal for the "truncation" or closure of Wadleigh Secondary School's middle school grades.

Mid-1930s: Black Harlem leaders voiced concern about discrimination and lack of resources at Wadleigh.

1937: White leaders at the Board of Education, criticizing the Harlem area, expressed concerns regarding safety and discussed moving Wadleigh out of Harlem.

1980s: The Board of Education discussed closure because of low enrollment. Alumni and local elected officials pushed to improve but not to close Wadleigh. After an extensive renovation and redesign, Wadleigh Secondary School opened in 1993.

2011: The Department of Education proposed to close the middle school grades at Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing and Visual Arts. Local political leaders, alumni, and teachers rallied against the closure. In February 2012, the DOE decided to continue the middle grades. That fall, charter school Success Academy Harlem West opened on the fifth floor at Wadleigh.

Over the last eighty years there have been multiple school closures, reconfigurations, and openings at the Wadleigh building on 114th Street.

At many points, the school community has fought against these closures, seeking to recognize the school's accomplishments and further advance education there. This struggle continued in the face of city and state officials' repeated denial of equitable resources for Harlem schools.

Who will protect Wadleigh's legacy as a community school in Harlem? Will the school and its students continue to be targeted, or supported? Who decides?

This timeline was compiled by the Wadleigh history project, a collaboration between scholars and school community members. See a more detailed online exhibit in development at <http://educatingharlem.cdrcs.columbia.edu/omeka/clo>. Contact: educatingharlem@tc.columbia.edu