Department of Education
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

Public Comment Analysis

Date: January 17, 2012

Topic: The Proposed Re-siting, Grade Expansion, and Co-Location of Academy for Young Writers (14K404) with a New Secondary School (19K422) and a District 75 Program (75KTBD) at Building K422 Beginning in the 2012-2013 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: January 18, 2012

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education ("DOE") is proposing to re-site and expand Academy for Young Writers (14K404, "Academy for Young Writers"), an existing DOE high school that serves 405 students in grades nine through twelve, and to open a new secondary school (19K422) serving students in grades six through twelve, at school building K422 ("K422") beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

Academy for Young Writers is currently co-located with J.H.S. 050 John D. Wells (14K050, "J.H.S. 50") in building K050 ("K050") at 183 South 3rd Street, Brooklyn, NY 11211, in Brooklyn's Community School District 14. If this proposal is approved, Academy for Young Writers will be re-sited to K422 located at 1065 Elton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11208 in Brooklyn's Community School District 19, beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

This proposal also includes a planned grade expansion at the Academy for Young Writers, which will be submitted to DOE's Office of New Schools for approval. The proposal provides that in the 2013-2014 school year, Academy for Young Writers will enroll sixth grade students for the first time. The school will then add one grade each year until reaching full scale as a secondary school serving students in grades six through twelve in 2015-2016.

This proposal will provide students in Brooklyn with an additional middle school option beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. It will also provide high school students in District 19, who make up the largest percentage of enrollment at Academy for Young Writers, with a high quality option closer to their own homes beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

Building K422 is a new building, designed to serve two secondary schools serving students in grades six through twelve and a District 75 program, that is expected to become available for use by September 2012. If this proposal is approved, a new secondary school, 19K422, will enroll

its founding cohort of sixth grade students in September of 2012. The school will then add one grade each year until reaching full scale as a secondary school serving students in grades six through twelve in 2018-2019. While the exact name of the school intended to be co-located with Academy for Young Writers has yet to be determined, all pertinent information regarding enrollment, grade span, admission policies, building utilization, and impact on students, schools and communities is known and is presented in this proposal's EIS. This new secondary school will provide students and families in Brooklyn and District 19 with an additional middle and high school option. A "co-location" means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building, and may share large, common spaces like the auditoriums, gymnasiums and cafeterias.

The DOE anticipates that a District 75 program will also be co-located at building K422. At the time the EIS for this proposal was posted, this District 75 program had not been identified and it had not yet been determined whether the District 75 program will be a new program or a re-siting of an existing District 75 program. If the DOE decides to relocate an existing District 75 school to Building K422, this proposal will be described in an additional future Educational Impact Statement ("EIS").

Because it is a newly constructed facility, no school organization currently uses space at building K422. The building is projected to have the capacity to serve 1,202 students. If this proposal is approved, Academy for Young Writers' students will be sited in K422 in 2012-2013 with both the founding sixth grade cohort of 19K422 and a District 75 school. These three school organizations would serve a total of up to 585 students in 2012-2013, yielding a projected building utilization rate of 49%.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at K050 on January 9, 2012. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 44 members of the public attended the hearing, and approximately 11 members of the public spoke. Present at the meeting were District 14 Community Education Council ("CEC") President Tesa Wilson; District 19 CEC President Doreen Black; District 19 CEC member Erica Perez; Academy for Young Writers ("Academy for Young Writers") Principal Courtney Winkfield; Academy for Young Writers School Leadership Team ("SLT") member Audrey Graves; and J.H.S. 50 Principal Denise Jamison. Paymon Rouhanifard, the Executive Director of the Department of Education's Office of Portfolio Management served as the Chancellor's Designee. Juan Rosales, Jessica O'Brien, Carrie Marlin, and Toby Shepherd from the Department of Education were also present.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing:

1. Academy for Young Writers Principal Courtney Winkfield stated that:
    a. Currently, over 60% of students at Academy for Young Writers reside in the neighborhoods of East New York or Brownsville and travel over an hour to and from school. Approximately one quarter of Academy for Young Writers students

reside in the neighborhoods of Crown Heights or Bedford-Stuyvesant. Fewer than 10% reside in District 14.

b. Being located in a school facility closer to students' homes will provide more opportunities for student participation in after school activities.
c. The new facilities being constructed in Spring Creek are something principals dream about. Relocating will allow Academy for Young Writers to continue enriching the lives of the Academy for Young Writers students and community in a rich way.
d. Academy for Young Writers is excited about the opportunity to expand down to serve students in sixth through eighth grades. It can be difficult to recruit ninth grade students and four years is not enough time to sufficiently prepare students for entrance to and success in college.

2. Audrey Graves, an SLT member at Academy for Young Writers, stated that:
    a. Students are succeeding in K050, but this is a great opportunity to expand into new facility.
    b. It has been challenging for parents to come to Parent Teacher Association or SLT meetings and that locating Academy for Young Writers closer to where students reside will allow for more frequent parental involvement.
    c. Academy for Young Writers is looking forward to the opportunity to expand and serve students in sixth through eighth grade.

3. Tesa Wilson, the District 14 CEC President stated that:
    a. The relocation of Academy for Young Writers to District 19 represents a gain for District 19 but a loss for District 14.
    b. District 14 has a need for additional high quality middle and high school options.
    c. District 14 needs great schools like Academy for Young Writers to stay and expand in District 14, not relocate out of the District.

4. Doreen Black, the District 19 CEC President stated that:
    a. District 19 was never informed of or invited to participate in the decision to relocate Academy for Young Writers to District 19. Community feedback that has been collected on this proposal has been disregarded. The commenter predicted that the District 19 community will find out prior to September 2013 that DOE will renege on its commitment to expand Academy for Young Writers to serve middle school students.
    b. Although District 19 is pleased that the DOE has proposed to relocate a high performing high school, the new facility being constructed in District 19 is intended for "up and coming" programs like engineering, science, technology and medical studies. Students in District 19 need more than just writing.

c. District 19 needs more high quality middle school seats and Academy for Young Writers will not begin enrolling sixth grade students until 2013-2014.

5. Erica Perez, a District 19 CEC member, stated that:
    a. She does not agree that ninth grade students need a year to acclimate to a new school setting.
    b. She is upset about the lack of respect District 19 has received. She has heard that Academy for Young Writers is already packing boxes before the proposal has been voted on and that is disrespectful. The DOE called District 19's CEC president at 9:30 PM the night before Thanksgiving with the news regarding Academy for Young Writers and that is also disrespectful.
    c. There was no transparency in the process of selecting a high school for K422. CEC 19 filled out surveys, gave specifics, and attended several meetings over the years, but this feedback was disregarded.
    d. District 19 adopted middle school choice in part because District 19 expected two new middle school options to open in K422 in the 2012-2013 school year.
    e. Academy for Young Writers has presented information about its schools and plans to expand to serve sixth through twelfth grade students at some local churches, but not all churches. By presenting at some churches and not others, Academy for Young Writers is engaging in segregation.

6. A representative of the Institute for Student Achievement, an organization that partners with Academy for Young Writers stated that his organization supports this proposal and will remain committed to supporting Academy for Young Writers.

7. A student at Academy for Young Writers stated that:
    a. The curriculum at Academy for Young Writers includes more than just writing.
    b. Students at Academy for Young Writers are not a part of the District 14 community. Having a school where your home is affects how you learn and how you feel about where you live and that the move could only have a positive effect on Academy for Young Writers and District 19 communities.

8. Another student at Academy for Young Writers stated that students at Academy for Young Writers engage in subjects other than writing including science and math.

9. A resident of District 19 stated that:
    a. District 19 did not ask for Academy for Young Writers to move into K422.
    b. District 19 is asking for the best high schools in New York City to be relocated to K422 such as New Explorations into Science, Technology and Math ("NEST+m") and the New York City Lab School.

10. A representative of East Brooklyn Congregations ("EBC") stated that:
    a. The organization supports the proposal to relocate Academy for Young Writers to District 19.
    b. Principal Winkfield of Academy for Young Writers has been extremely well received by the church community in District 19.
    c. He sees the need for a high school of this caliber in District 19 every day.
    d. EBC looks forward to partnering with Academy for Young Writers students if this proposal is approved.

11. A hearing attendee asked the following questions and made the following comments:
    a. Why does the student body at Academy for Young Writers consist of an increasingly smaller percentage of students who reside in District 14?
    b. If Academy for Young Writers moves to District 19, will Academy for Young Writers recruit students from the churches of District 14?
    c. Academy for Young Writers enrolls fewer District 14 students in order to receive higher Progress Report scores.
    d. Academy for Young Writers is not recruiting students from homeless shelters.
    e. The DOE wants to give K050 to Eva Moskowitz.

12. A student from Academy for Young Writers stated that:
    a. She lives in Brownsville and chose not to attend a high school in that community because the schools "suck."
    b. She receives a good education at Academy for Young Writers and cannot understand why District 19 is not interested in a new, high performing high school option.
    c. The school's program includes more than just writing, despite the school's name.

13. A resident of District 19 made the following comments and asked the following questions:
    a. If 70% of the student body at Academy for Young Writers is female, she is concerned that the location of K422 presents safety problems.
    b. Will Academy for Young Writers hire from District 19 so that District 19 is a part of the Academy for Young Writers team?
    c. Academy for Young Writers needs to be educated about the neighborhood.

14. Another resident of District 19 made the following comments and asked the following questions:
    a. She has waited for a brand new school facility like K422 in District 19 for almost 20 years and now the DOE is going to "rob" her.

b. There is nothing wrong with K050.
c. Mayor Bloomberg wants to take everything from people of color.
d. Why would the DOE have a meeting in Williamsburg for a school that is being proposed for District 19?
e. The reason why the DOE did not hold the hearing in District 19 is because they did not want Black people at the hearing because they would "rip you apart and you know it."

15. A District 19 resident stated that District 19 does not need a school that focuses on writing.

16. A representative of the Saint Paul Community Baptist Church in East New York stated that his organization supports this proposal because Academy for Young Writers is a high performing school.

In addition to collecting feedback at the Joint Public Hearing referenced above, the DOE solicited feedback on this proposal via email, telephone and an internet feedback form.

Summary of Issues Raised in Written and/or Oral Comments Submitted to the DOE[1]

17. What will be the plan for K050 if Academy for Young Writers is approved to relocate to K422?
18. A District 19 resident stated that she is not in agreement with the proposal because the school opening in K422 in September 2012 should offer sixth grade and Academy for Young Writers will only offer ninth through twelfth grades. The caller stated that District 19 already has high schools and needs additional middle school options.
19. A District 19 CEC member emailed the following questions and comments:
    a. Given that the principal of Academy for Young Writers is pregnant, who will serve as her replacement when she is on maternity leave?
    b. The DOE offered Academy for Young Writers space at K422 in order to make room for a charter school at the K050 building.
    c. The District 19 community opposes this proposed re-siting because District 19 desires two new sixth grade options in the 2012-2013 school year.
20. A District 19 parent and teacher left a voicemail stating that:
    a. The District 19 community is against this proposal because District 19 was promised a new school for District 19 students and families, and because this is a school for students in Williamsburg.
    b. Academy for Young Writers can and should expand in its current location.

[1] The DOE notes that it has been made aware that a petition opposing this proposal has been circulated. However, because a copy of this petition was not received by the DOE during the comment period for this proposal, the DOE cannot specifically respond to issues raised therein that are not otherwise covered in this document.

Analysis of Issues Raised, Significant Alternatives Proposed and Changes Made to the Proposal

Comments 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 16 are in favor of the proposal and therefore do not require a response.

Comments 11(e), 14(b), 17, 19(b) and 20(b) refer to K050, including the space at K050 that would be vacated by Academy for Young Writers as a result of this proposal.

In a separate EIS posted on December 12, 2011, the DOE has proposed to co-locate a new school, Brooklyn Success Academy Charter School 4 (84KTBD) at K050. As noted in that EIS, if the proposal to re-site Academy for Young Writers from K050 to K422 beginning in the 2012-2013 school year is approved, Academy for Young Writers will not be impacted by this proposal. If the proposal to re-site Academy for Young Writers is not approved, then the DOE will reevaluate space availability at K050 and, if necessary, issue a revised EIS regarding Brooklyn Success Academy Charter School 4.

Comments 5(e), 11(a-d), 9(a), 13(b, c) refer to the process by which Academy for Young Writers has engaged with the District 19 community, including but not limited to student recruitment at Academy for Young Writers.

After learning of this proposed re-siting, staff at Academy for Young Writers proactively contacted a number of community based organizations in District 19, including church organizations, in an effort to better inform community members and prospective families about the programs and services offered by Academy for Young Writers. Students at Academy for Young Writers enroll through the high school admission process, a description of which is included in the EIS for this proposal. Once Academy for Young Writers expands to serve middle school students beginning in 2013, middle school students will enroll through the District 19 middle school choice process.

Comments 4(a), 5(b, c), 14 (d, e) refer to the process by which the DOE engaged the District 19 community, including the District 19 CEC, regarding this proposal and the scheduling of the Joint Public Hearing.

The DOE believes it has satisfactorily engaged the District 19 community, including but not limited to the requirements outlined in Chancellor's Regulation A-190. The DOE discussed potential utilization of K422 with CEC 19 on at least five separate occasions between March and November of 2011. Additionally, as noted, the DOE collected community input through a survey that was distributed in the spring of 2011.

The Joint Public Hearing for this proposal was held in District 14 because K422, the building in District 19 where the DOE is proposing to re-site Academy for Young Writers, is currently under construction. Representatives from both the District 14 and District 19 CECs, in addition to

representatives from the impacted school communities, attended and participated in this Joint Public Hearing.

Comments 9(b) and 14 (a, c) assert that Academy for Young Writers is not a school of the same caliber as other high performing high schools in New York City.

While every school offers its own unique program and services, the DOE firmly believes that Academy for Young Writers is a high performing school. The school has received two consecutive overall Progress Report scores of "A" as well as Quality Review ratings of "Proficient" and "Well Developed". Further, the school's 86% four-year graduation rate in 2010-2011 placed it in the top 78% of all high schools in New York City. The DOE is confident that this proposal, if approved, will add a high quality high school option to District 19.

Comments 4(c), 5(a, d), 18, 19(c) and 20(a) refer to the year in which Academy for Young Writers will begin enrolling sixth grade students.

K422 is designed to house two secondary schools serving students in grades six through twelve. As noted in the EIS describing this proposal, the DOE anticipates that Academy for Young Writers will expand to serve students in grades six through eight in addition to their current high school grades. Academy for Young Writers has elected to pursue this expansion in 2013-2014 rather than in the 2012-2013 school year in order to give teachers, students and staff time to adjust to the school's new setting. The DOE defers to the leadership of Academy for Young Writers in deciding the appropriate time to pursue this grade expansion. The DOE notes, however, that District 19 will have a new middle school option in 2012-2013 if this proposal is approved because 19K422 is expected to enroll sixth grade students beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. In addition, as stated previously, Academy for Young Writers will also enroll sixth grade students in the 2013-2014 school year, pending approval of a grade expansion.

Comment 3 refers to the impact of this proposal on District 14 high school students.

The DOE notes that if this proposal is approved, District 14 will have one less high quality high school option beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. However, the DOE also notes that relatively few District 14 students currently avail themselves of this high school option despite its location in District 14. Moreover, the DOE notes that District 14 students may continue to apply to Academy for Young Writers in the future. Finally, the DOE notes that this proposal in no way precludes the DOE from supporting existing District 14 high schools as they continue to improve and expand their offerings, and also does not preclude the DOE from proposing new, high potential high school options for residents of District 14 and beyond.

Comments 4(b) and 15 refer to programming at Academy for Young Writers.

Academy for Young Writers offers a full college preparatory curriculum including courses in English, Math, Science, History, foreign languages, fine and performing arts and physical

education. The DOE is confident that the program offered by Academy for Young Writers will meet the needs and varied student interests of its students, including those who reside in District 19.

Comment 13(a) refer to the K422 location, including the location's appropriateness for female students at Academy for Young Writers.

The Office of School Safety works closely with school communities to foster safe and positive environments for students. The DOE expects that similar to high schools throughout the city, school safety officers at K422 will work with the Academy for Young Writers school community to ensure a safe environment for all its students.

Comment 13(b) refer to hiring practices of Academy for Young Writers.

Like all New York City high schools, Academy for Young Writers will comply with all relevant laws and statutes, including the City's collective bargaining agreement, in regards to hiring practices.

Comment 19(a) refers to the principal of Academy for Young Writers.

If the principal or any other staff member of Academy for Young Writers elects to take an extended leave, the school community will work to find an appropriate temporary replacement.

Changes Made to the Proposal

In response to public feedback, the following changes to the proposal were made:

- No changes have been made.