Department of Education
Cathleen P. Black, Chancellor

Second Amended Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 28, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Co-location of I.S. 355 (29Q355) and I.S. 356 (29Q356) with I.S. 231 Magnetech 2000 (29Q231) in School Building Q231

Date of Panel Vote: March 1, 2011

This amended Public Comment Analysis is being further amended to advise that an additional hearing is taking place on February 28 at 6:00 p.m. This Analysis of Public Comment will be amended to include comments received at that hearing before the Panel for Educational Policy votes on the proposal on March 1.

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education ("DOE") proposes to site two new zoned middle schools, I.S. 355 (29Q355, "I.S. 355") and I.S. 356 (29Q356, "I.S. 356") in school building Q231 ("Q231"), located at 145-00 Springfield Boulevard, Springfield Gardens, NY 11413 in Community School District 29. If this proposal is approved, these two schools would be co-located with an existing middle school, I.S. 231 Magnetech 2000 (29Q231, "I.S. 231"). Q231 also houses an Alternative Learning Center (Q987, "ALC") that would remain in the building and be co-located with the new schools.

In a separate Educational Impact Statement ("EIS") also published on December 17, 2010 and amended on January 25, 2011, the DOE has proposed that I.S. 231 gradually phase out because of its low performance. I.S. 231 is currently a zoned middle school serving grades six through eight. If that proposal is approved, I.S. 231 would no longer admit sixth-grade students after the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school year. One grade would then be phased out at I.S. 231 each year. Students currently in grades six and seven would complete middle school at I.S. 231 while the phase-out plan is implemented. During the 2011-2012 school year, I.S. 231 would only serve students in grades seven and eight. In 2012-2013, I.S. 231 would serve only students in grade eight.

These two new zoned schools, I.S. 355 and I.S. 356, would admit students based on a campus choice model. This means that zoned students would be guaranteed a seat in at least one of the two schools, but would be able to use a modified middle school choice process in order to rank the two schools in order of preference. I.S. 355, I.S. 356 and the ALC would be "co-located" with I.S. 231 as I.S. 231 phases out and would continue to be co-located with each other after the I.S. 231 phase-out is complete. A "co-location" means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums and cafeterias. Once I.S. 355

and I.S. 356 have completed their expansions and I.S. 231 has completed its phase-out, there would be approximately 840-960students served in the building.

In 2009-2010, Q231 had a target capacity to serve 1,226 students. I.S. 231 had a target organizational capacity to serve 1,134 students and enrolled 931 students, yielding a target organizational utilization rate for I.S. 231 of 82%, excluding the ALC. This means that the building was "underutilized" and had extra space to accommodate additional students.

Copies of the original and amended EIS for both the phase-out and co-location proposals are available in the main office of I.S. 231 and at http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/Mar12011Proposals.htm.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at I.S. 231 Magnetech 2000 on January 26, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 195 members of the public attended the hearing, 25 people spoke and 16 questions were submitted. Present at the meeting were I.S. 231 School Leadership Team members Desmond Poyser and Joanne Bouillion Middleton; CEC 29 members Herman Bagley and Bill Perkins; Deputy Chancellor Shael Suransky; District 29 Superintendent Lenon Murray; Anthony Conelli of the Division of School Support and Instruction; CCHS representative Monica Ayuso; Donovan Richards representing Councilman Sanders and Ernest Flowers representing Assemblyman Scarborough.

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

1. Herman Bagley, member of CEC 29, read a statement on behalf of the CEC expressing support for I.S. 231 and disappointment that I.S. 231 had been proposed for phase-out. He cited the New York State Education Department's reconfiguration of scores and said that all schools should be given another year to prove themselves. He expressed support for the two new schools proposed to replace I.S. 231 as well as the students, teachers and staff at I.S. 231. He noted that the CEC tried to dissuade the DOE from having the hearing because of the weather.
2. Desmond Poyser, Academic Coordinator for the Carson Academy and SLT Chairman, made a statement in support in support of I.S. 231. He said that I.S. 231 is a school on the rise and spoke to the administration's efforts over the summer to improve the school. He asked for time for the changes made at I.S. 231 to mature. Mr. Poyser asked what will happen to the neighborhood children with the arrival of the two replacement schools and cited the cost of replacing a school.
3. One commenter voiced his opposition to the phase-out of I.S. 231 and questioned the strategy of replacing large schools with multiple, smaller schools.
4. One commenter questioned whether the replacement schools showed more promise of success than I.S. 231.
5. Multiple commenters advocated providing I.S. 231 with more funding rather than replacing it with new schools.

6. One commenter said the DOE ought to open two new schools alongside I.S. 231 rather than in place of it.
7. One commenter critiqued the format of the hearing, saying that the DOE is doing only what is legally mandated as a result of the lawsuits that prevented phase-outs in 2010. He said the DOE has no plans for the schools and is trying to incite divisions among communities. He asked who would hold accountable the administrators at the DOE who allowed schools decline to the point where phasing out was the last remaining option.

The DOE received a comment at the Joint Public Hearing which did not directly relate to the proposal.

8. Multiple questions were submitted regarding the decision to move forward with the hearing despite weather conditions:
    a. How much community input was expected as a result;
    b. If the mayor appoints the Chancellor and her deputies, how come they cannot postpone the meeting;
    c. How can the DOE show such disregard for the safety of the community;
9. One question was submitted asking how DOE staff can sleep at night.

<u>Summary of Issues Raised in Written and/or Oral Comments Submitted to the DOE</u>

10. The PTA of PS/MS 156, which is a feeder school for I.S. 231, suggested that the parents and community of PS/MS 156 would like to see a Math and Science School or a Drama and Art School in the building.
11. One commenter stated that they had been a part of a meeting in January 2009 regarding a different issue at the DOE and had submitted a proposal for a high quality middle school. The commenter cited the need for a school where some of the City's most disadvantaged students can receive a good education including a Gifted & Talented program. The commenter suggested:
    a. An Early College Initiate program for District 29 residents;
    b. A school for District 29 residents with an application process that includes a letter from the child; the school would admit 50% of applicants below grade level and 50% at or above grade level;
    c. A school for District 29 residents with an application process requiring a portfolio of work, on-site writing and math exams, student and parent interviews; or
    d. A selective, competitive school, but with the additional requirements of on-site math, reading and writing assessements, recommendations and an interview.
12. The DOE received a document from the Tri-Community JHS 231 Parents Association regarding the phase-out and replacement of I.S. 231 but sharing suggestions in the spirit of collaboration. The community would like to be involved in all decision-making. Regarding the proposed replacements, it stated that the community supports the phase-in of two specialized schools as part of the Middle School Choice process, with one having a possible audition component. They stated their priorities as:
    a. Productive use of existing facilities, resources and partnerships;
    b. Desirable course curriculum making the school attractive to students and staff;

c. Transformation of I.S. 231 campus into "beacon of excellence."

The suggested names and descriptions for the replacement schools were:

a. "Katherine Dunham School of the Arts," which will leverage existing facilities and partnerships in the arts;

b. "David Harold Blackwell School of Mathematics, Science and Technology," which will leverage established relationships and forge new ones and prepare students for the range of high school with a math and science focus.

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

Comment 1 mentioned support for the proposed new schools.

With respect to comment 2, neighborhood children will continued to be educated in the Q231 building as in the past. I.S. 231 is a zoned school, which means it does not screen its students, but instead admits them based on a system which gives priority to students residing within the catchment zone. The two replacement schools will admit students based on a Campus Choice model, which will give students the choice between the two schools, but which also guarantees all students living within the same zone a guaranteed seat at one of of the two schools. The additional cost of replacing the school is minimal and is described in section five of the Educational Impact Statement.

With respect to comment 3 and 4, the DOE believes that small schools are structurally better able to provide students a high quality education. Small schools allow more personalized learning environments and invidivudalized instruction for students and professional development for teachers. Additionally, the DOE compares schools to peer schools according to their student populations; specifically, there are schools with similar populations of high needs students as I.S. 231 that are achieving significantly better results. Only those schools consistently showing low performance have been proposed for phase-out.

With respect to comment 5, new schools funds are minimal—the annual support of $30,000 is less than a first-year teacher's salary. The DOE does not believe this sum, if provided over the 3 years new schools receive it, would be a significant means of turning I.S. 231 around.

With respect to comment 6, there is not sufficient space in Q231 to support the two new schools at scale along with I.S. 231 at scale. Additionally, the DOE does not believe I.S. 231 is capable of turning around quickly, and creating two new schools alongside it would not change this.

With respect to comment 7, Joint Public Hearings are part of the legally mandated process for the DOE to implement significant changes to school utilization. The process is set forth in Chancellor's Regulation A-190. Joint Public Hearings were also held in 2010, prior to the lawsuit the commenter mentioned. This year. in addition to conducting Joint Public Hearings, the DOE has held several additional meetings with communities with schools proposed for phase-out. The DOE has carefully prepared plans for the replacement of I.S. 231. These include two

schools that will meet the needs of the community, including the relatively high special education population and the large numbers of students living in the zone who are in foster care.

With respect to comment 10, the DOE is proposing two new school leaders who are creating schools that are academically strong in all subjects. Specifically, one of these schools is proposed to have an arts theme.

With respect to comment 11, the DOE accepts applicants for new schools on a yearly basis and evaluates the proposals and leaders during a rigorous, multi-stage process described here: http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/newschools. With respect to both comments 11 and 12, because I.S. 231 is a zoned, unscreened school, the DOE intends to replace it with unscreened options. However, the DOE is open to adding screened schools to the district.

With respect to comment 12, the DOE takes community feedback into account when developing new school proposals. Currently, one of the proposed schools is slated to have an arts theme. Both schools are unscreened. The DOE also selects and works with new school leaders, who ultimately choose the name for the school, as per Chancellor's Regulation A-860: http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/381F4607-7841-4D28-B7D5-0F30DDB77DFA/97059/A8601202011FINAL.pdf.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes were made to this proposal.