



Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 28, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Co-Location of 32K168 with the Academy for Environmental Leadership (32K403), the Bushwick School for Social Justice (32K549), and the Academy of Urban Planning (32K552) in School Building K480

Date of Panel Vote: March 1, 2011

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to co-locate 32K168 (“32K168”), a new high school, in school building K480 (“K480”), located at 400 Irving Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11237, within the geographical confines of District 32 (“District 32”). If this proposal is approved, 32K168 would be co-located at the Bushwick Educational Campus with three existing high schools: the Academy for Environmental Leadership (32K403), the Bushwick School for Social Justice (32K549), and the Academy of Urban Planning (32K552). In addition, K480 houses a Living for the Young Family through Education (“LYFE”) program. 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.

In the 2009-2010 school year, building K480 had a target capacity to serve 1,843 students, and the building enrolled 1,616 students, yielding a target building utilization rate of 88%. During the 2009-2010 school year, the Bushwick Educational Campus housed four schools: the Academy for Environment Leadership, the Bushwick School for Social Justice, Academy of Urban Planning, and the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School (02M551, “Harbor School”), a DOE school serving students in grades nine through twelve. At the end of the 2009-2010 school year, the Harbor School was re-sited to Governors Island in Manhattan. In 2010-2011, building K480 has a projected enrollment of 1,260 students, yielding a utilization rate of just 68% of target capacity. The decrease in building enrollment is predominantly attributed to the move of the Harbor School to Governors Island. This means that the building is currently “underutilized” and has extra space to accommodate additional students.

If this co-location proposal is approved, 32K168 would gradually phase in to K480 to replace the seats lost as a result of the re-location of the Harbor School. 32K168 would serve students in grade 9 in 2011-2012 and would add one grade level every year until the school reaches its full grade span of 9-12 in the 2014-2015 school year. The new school would offer a rigorous academic program open to students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process, and

would have a Limited Unscreened selection method giving priority to students and residents of Brooklyn. Limited Unscreened schools give admissions priority to students who demonstrate interest in the school by attending an Information Session, Open House events, or visiting the school's exhibit at any one of the High School Fairs.

The K480 building has adequate capacity to accommodate the new high school, the LYFE program, and the existing schools in the building at full operational capacity. Once 32K168 completes its expansion, the building would serve approximately 1575-1775 students in 2014-2015, yielding an approximate utilization rate of 96%.

The details of this proposal have been released in an Educational Impact Statement which can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/Mar12011Proposals.htm>. Hard copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of each of the schools in K480.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at Bushwick Educational Campus on February 16, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 38 members of the public attended the hearing and 6 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Bushwick School for Social Justice School Leadership Team (“SLT”) representative Lucas Cooke, Academy for Urban Planning SLT representative Janet Rose, Academy for Environmental Leadership SLT representative Jacqueline Silva, Community Education Council (“CEC”) 32 President Victorina Lugo; Brooklyn High School Superintendent Karen Watts; UFT District Representative Anthony Sclafani, and Michael Olmeda, representing the office of State Senator Martin Dilan.

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

1. The SLT representative for Academy for Environmental Leadership stated that she had just learned about the meeting at the concurrently scheduled PTA meeting and felt it was not fair to schedule both meetings at the same time. She stated that most parents speak Spanish and some would like to voice their opinion about more students in the building. It is a very tight space and the existing schools in K480 need all of the available space.
2. The SLT representative for Academy of Urban Planning stated that last year, when the DOE proposed to move Frances Perkins High School into the building, the target capacity was cited as 1,212 and the utilization rate was 90%. She felt it was confusing that this year a capacity of 1,212 is listed as 68% utilization. Much of the space in the building is taken up by the library, gym, entry, security and the dean’s office, so it is unclear how more space could be converted to classroom use for more students. The representative expressed a preference for a new school over an existing school, but also expressed concern that the DOE is only considering quantity of space, not quality of space and education of kids.
3. The CEC representative observed that there are many students in the building, but few parents have put in the effort to attend the hearing. The DOE created a survey about what

kind of school the community wanted to have sited in K480, but only 26 surveys were returned, despite efforts on the part of the DOE and CEC to promote it. The representative expressed concern about how notification about the hearing was carried out, and stated that there may be a lack of communication at the school. She felt that there should be many staff, parents, leaders, elected officials here tonight.

4. UFT District Representative Anthony Sclafani stated that there is space in the building since the Harbor School left, which is a good thing for the schools currently housed there. However, to be realistic, he believes that there will likely be a new school put into that space. He expressed his view that the DOE is not a rational organization, it can site anything in the building, the PEP only provides a rubber stamp from the Mayor and that this process is a sham. Given the alternatives, he felt that the best thing for parents to do is to accept the brand new school, otherwise a charter school could be sited in the building and take away all of the existing schools' resources. He also stated that Article 18-D must be followed throughout the process.
5. The representative from Senator Dilan's office said his office did not hear about this proposal except at a DOE briefing. He contended that the DOE has not communicated effectively with elected officials about this proposal. Bushwick High School was one of the worst on this side of Brooklyn, and though it has turned around, overcrowding could threaten its success. He also stated that church groups would have attended the hearing if they had known of it. He believed that there was a lack of communication about the proposal because the DOE wants to push it through.
6. A commenter expressed opposition to the proposal to site another school in the building because space is limited; the school only has one and a half floors, not two. He contended that co-locating a new school in K480 would entail the attendance of students unknown to the current student body, resulting in more gangs, more problems for parents, and less security for the school.
7. A commenter stated that there is not enough room in the building for another school; students bump into each other constantly in the hallways.
8. A commenter stated that he understands the math behind space allocation and it is possible for the building to house more students. However, the DOE needs to take account of the students that are already here and study the issue closely. The building needs better security to take care of all the students that will attend school in the building.

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

The DOE received one comment at the Joint Public Hearing that did not directly relate to the proposal and therefore will not be addressed.

1. A commenter stated that the text of the Fact Sheet is too small.

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

In response to comments 1 and 3, a letter and notice informing parents and students of the proposed co-location and joint public hearing was sent to each of the impacted schools on the

campus on January 15, 2011. All of principals in the building were responsible for distributing them to their respective school community and confirmed that they had done so. In addition, Spanish versions of the letter were provided to principals on February 10, 2011 and two Spanish interpreters were present at the joint public hearing. Moreover, the joint public hearing was scheduled in January 2011 only after coordination with the SLT, among other groups, and no mention was made of a conflicting meeting.

In response to comments 2, 7 and 8: The building capacity of 1,212 has not changed between 2009-2010 and 2011-2012, but because of the decrease in total building enrollment, the utilization rate decreased from 88% to 68%.

Detailed information about the capacity, enrollment and utilization of every building is available in the Enrollment, Capacity, Utilization Report (the “Blue Book”), which is available at http://source.nycsca.org/pdf/capitalplan/2009-10/BB_2009_2010.pdf, and guides decision-making about proposed co-location. In addition, the Office of Space planning conducts a building walk through and space survey to confirm that there is sufficient capacity and they layout supports the proposed co-location.

As described in the EIS, a building’s target utilization rate is calculated by dividing the aggregated enrollment of all the school organizations in the building by the aggregated “target capacities” of those organizations. Each school organization’s “target capacity” is calculated based upon the scheduled use of individual rooms as reported by principals during an annual facilities survey, the DOE’s goal classroom capacities (which are lower than the UFT contractual class sizes and differ depending on grade level), and the efficiency with which classrooms are programmed (i.e., the frequency with which classes are scheduled in a given classroom).

The most recent year for which target capacity has been calculated for buildings is 2009-2010. As described earlier in this EIS, the DOE’s projected utilization rates for the 2010-2011 school year and beyond are based on the 2009-2010 target capacity, which assumes that the components underlying that target capacity (scheduled use of classrooms, goal classroom capacity, etc.) remain constant. Thus, projected utilization rates for 2010-2011 and beyond provide only an approximation of a building’s usage because each of the factors underlying target capacity may be adjusted by principals from year to year to better accommodate students’ needs. For example, changing the use of a room from an administrative room to a homeroom at the high school level will increase a building’s overall target capacity because for high schools administrative rooms are not assigned a capacity. Holding enrollment constant, this change would result in a lower utilization rate. Similarly, if a room previously used as a kindergarten classroom is subsequently used as fifth grade classroom, the building’s target capacity would increase because we expect that a fifth grade class will have more students than a kindergarten class. This is reflected in the fact that the DOE’s goal classroom capacity is higher for fifth grade classrooms than for kindergarten classrooms. In this example, as well, assuming enrollment is constant, the utilization rate would decrease.

The DOE will continue its commitment to supporting all of the existing schools in K480. The co-location of 32K168 is not expected to jeopardize student learning outcomes or undermine the successes of the existing schools in the building. There is sufficient space in K480 to

accommodate all three existing schools as well as the new school. As described in Section II of the EIS, each school will continue to receive its baseline allocation of rooms pursuant to the Citywide Instructional Footprint.

The DOE supports parent and student choice and strives to ensure that all families have access to high-quality schools that meet their children's needs. The proposed co-location of 32K168 at K480 is intended to replace the seats lost by the re-location of the Harbor School to Manhattan and increase the number of educational options available to high school students in District 32, Brooklyn, and throughout the City. Again, the DOE does not anticipate that this co-location will compromise the educational outcomes of the students currently enrolled in the existing schools.

In response to comment 4, the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) consists of 13 appointed members and the Chancellor. Each borough president appoints one member and the mayor appoints the remaining eight. The Chancellor serves as an ex-officio non-voting member. The PEP carefully reviews each proposal before making a decision regarding a significant change in the utilization of a building. Furthermore, this Analysis of Public Comment, which includes all comments received at the joint public hearing and via the dedicated e-mail and phone line, will be submitted to panel members prior to each vote to inform their final decision.

New schools follow the hiring process consistent with the procedures set forth in the collective bargaining agreement between the DOE and UFT. A new school that is phasing in to replace a school that is closing or phasing out, shall be required to hire up to 50% of the most senior qualified staff from the closing or phasing out school if sufficient number of staff apply, until the impacted school is closed. Since 32K168 is phasing into underutilized space and is not replacing a school that is slated for closure, the above-described 18-D process does not apply.

Lastly, there is no current plan to site a charter school in the K480 building.

In response to comment 5, in August 2010, a briefing was held at Brooklyn Borough Hall to share planning priorities and potential proposals with the Brooklyn Borough President and local elected officials. Information regarding the proposal to site a new school on the Bushwick campus was shared at that time. On January 14, 2011, the DOE published an EIS describing the proposed co-location of 32K168 in Building K480. This proposal was made available on the DOE's website: <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/brooklyn/bushwick>, hard copies were made available at the impacted schools and mailed to PEP, the impacted CEC, impacted community boards, community superintendent, SLTs of the impacted schools, the Citywide Council on English Language Learners, the Citywide Council on Special Education, as well as the Citywide Council on High Schools. Notice of the proposal was, in fact, sent via e-mail to the Senator Dilan on January 14, 2011, as well as the following elected officials: Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, Council Members: Barron; Eugene; Fidler; Gentile; Gonzalez; Greenfield; James; Lander; Levin; Mealy; Nelson; Recchia; Reyna; Vann; Williams; Assembly Members: Lentol; Lopez; Maisel; Millman; Ortiz; Perry; Robinson; Towns; Weinstein. Senators: Adams; Golden; Kruger; Montgomery; Parker; Sampson; Squadron. Congress members: Clarke, Towns, Velazquez. Furthermore, as discussed in the response to comment 1, notice of the proposal and joint public hearing was backpacked home with students.

In response to comments 6 and 8 concerning safety and security in the building: school safety agents are allocated to schools based on each building's projected enrollment. As the campus grows, it is likely that there will be a commensurate increase in safety agents. The NYPD/and the School Safety Division (SSD) looks at a set of variables to determines the number of safety agents to deploy to a particular school building, including the crime rate, size and design of the building, enrollment, and grade span.

In addition, the Office of Youth Development (OSYD) supports schools in maintaining a safe, orderly and supportive school environment. OSYD works with CFN Clusters and Networks and directly with schools to establish and implement integrated safety, discipline and intervention policies and procedures, to promote respect for diversity, and to nurture students' pro-social behavior by providing them with meaningful opportunities for social emotional learning. We encourage all schools to seek support from OSYD to address any issues involving safety and security, including gang related issues.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.