



Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 28, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Re-siting and Co-location of West Prep Academy with P.S. 145 The Bloomingdale School in Building M145

Date of Panel Vote: March 1, 2011

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to re-site West Prep Academy (03M421, “West Prep”), an existing Community School District 3 (“District 3”) choice middle school that was opened in 2009-2010 in the M044 building at 100 West 77th Street, New York, NY 10024, to building M145, where it would co-locate with The Bloomingdale School (03M145, “P.S. 145”) an existing zoned elementary school located at 150 West 105th Street, New York, NY, 10025 in District 3.

The growth of zoned elementary school demand in the area immediately surrounding the M044 building led to the opening of a new elementary school, P.S. 452 (03M452, “P.S. 452”), in the M044 building in 2010-2011. The M044 building does not have the capacity for P.S. 452 to grow to scale if West Prep remains in the building. When the DOE proposed opening and co-locating P.S. 452, the Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) describing that proposal noted that West Prep would need to relocate for either the 2011-2012 or 2012-2013 school year. At scale, West Prep will enroll 250-300 students in grades 6-8.

P.S. 145 is an existing zoned elementary school located in M145. It currently serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and also offers a pre-kindergarten program. M145 has been identified as an “underutilized building” because the building has available space to serve at least 300 more students than the actual student enrollment in the building during the 2009-2010 school year.

M145 has the capacity to serve 793 students in its current usage as an elementary school. In 2009-2010, the most recent year for which audited enrollment data is available – the building only served 473 students, yielding a utilization rate of just 60% of target capacity. Enrollment as of November 1, 2010 was 430 students in grades K-5 and 54 students in pre-kindergarten, for a total of 484 students, yielding a utilization rate of 61%.

P.S. 145 and West Prep are each participants in a federal magnet grant program that seeks voluntary desegregation of schools in District 3. Each school in the magnet grant program has proposed to develop new curriculum around a specific theme, with all students in the school

participating in the new curriculum. The themes proposed by P.S. 145 and West Prep are similar, and suggest the potential for collaboration between the schools. The theme for P.S. 145 is Technology and Multi-Media Communication and the theme for West Prep is Youth Voice through Youth Media. Through the strengthened curriculum and focused recruiting, each school is expected to reduce the concentration of specific ethnic groups in their respective schools by 2 percentage points per year.

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>. Copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of P.S. 145 and West Prep.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

Two joint public hearings regarding this proposal were held, one at M044 on February 15 and one at M145 on February 17. At the hearings, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. On February 15, approximately 27 members of the public attended the hearing and 1 person spoke. Present at the hearing were: District 5 Superintendent Sara Carvajal; Interim Acting West Prep Principal Roberto Padilla and School Leadership Team (“SLT”) Chair Camille Goodridge and SLT members Susannah Jacobi, Kaza Razat, and Terri Watson; District 3 Community Education Council (“CEC 3”) Vice President Christine Annechino, and representatives Olaiya Deen, Terry Gray, Marija Stroke, Jimmie Brown and Robin Klueber; UFT representative Mike McCourt; and the DOE’s Division of Portfolio Planning representative Elizabeth Rose.

On February 17, approximately 30 members of the public attended the hearing and 4 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: P.S. 145 Principal Ivelisse Alvarez and SLT members Tina Crockett, Barbara M. White, Leyda Cruz, and Linda Townes; Interim Acting West Prep Principal Roberto Padilla and SLT Chair Camille Goodridge; CEC 3 President Noah Gotbaum and representatives Jimmie Brown and Olaiya Deen; Citywide Council on English Language Leaders (“CCELL”) representative Teresa Arboleda; and the DOE’s Division of Portfolio Planning representative Elizabeth Rose.

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

1. CEC 3 President Noah Gotbaum expressed his support for the proposal, noting that there is capacity in the building for both West Prep and P.S. 145 to grow. He stated, however, that in his opinion the DOE has consistently failed to plan ahead. He also said that there is a shortage of elementary school seats in District 3, and asserted that the DOE has not addressed that demand or proposed a plan. He also expressed the opinion that once the EIS comes out, further community input is effectively “meaningless.”
2. CEC 3 Vice President Christine Annechino expressed her support for the proposal, but noted her concern that the community is not involved enough in the DOE’s decision-making process. She also expressed the opinion that the current

- DOE process is “broken” and forces last minute decisions on the community. She also expressed her excitement regarding the new Interim Acting Principal Roberto Padilla and stated that she looks forward to working with him.
3. CEC 3 representative Jimmie Brown read CEC 3’s Resolution, which was passed on January 19 by a unanimous vote.
 - a. CEC 3 resolved to:
 - i. Recommend and fully support the proposal.
 - ii. Support the collaboration of West Prep and P.S. 145 in facilitating smooth transition.
 - iii. Call upon the DOE to support these two schools.
 4. CEC 3 representative Marija Stroke noted her support for the proposal and also suggested that West Prep screen their applicants to ensure diversity.
 5. CEC 3 representative Olaiya Deen agreed that West Prep should screen applicants. She added that, last year, some students who didn’t choose West Prep as their first choice and some who had borderline behavioral issues were placed in the school, which caused problems.
 6. CEC 3 representative Jimmie Brown also expressed her support for the co-location proposal as a better option than the alternative of Harlem Success Charter School moving into M145.
 7. West Prep SLT Chair, Camille Goodridge, expressed her support for the re-siting. She also called upon the DOE to notify West Prep parents about the re-siting in order to avoid confusion in September about where West Prep would be located. She also stated that co-location with a District 3 school like West Prep is better than a co-location with a charter school.
 8. Interim Acting Principal Roberto Padilla expressed his excitement about the proposal and working with a caring community. He noted his experience running a co-located school and stated that the move will bring about many potential possibilities.
 9. West Prep SLT member Teri Watson asked if it would be possible for the West Prep SLT to visit M145 before the move.
 10. CCELL representative Teresa Arboleda mentioned that she is concerned about the children who need services for other languages. She urged the DOE to send out relevant information to the parents in their own languages regarding all school options. She also asked that the DOE support P.S. 145’s new dual-language program.
 11. P.S. 145 Principal Ivelisse Alvarez expressed her excitement about working with Principal Padilla who shares a common vision and high expectations for ensuring a successful co-location. She mentioned that the co-location would help reduce minority isolation and help increase the number applicants to P.S. 145 from across the District, which would open up possibilities. However, she noted some concern about counting M145’s new media center and library as four rooms, which will impact classroom availability for P.S. 145. She also asked for:
 - a. Additional time, a year at least, for planning the co-location
 - b. Additional funding for both schools for the physical re-siting of West Prep and the re-allocation of classrooms within M145. She stated that M145 also needs immediate funds to renovate and prepare it for the additional

school (i.e. furniture, shelves for storage and supplies, intercom system for safety, etc).

12. P.S. 145 SLT member, Tina Crockett, asked the DOE to delay the co-location until 2012-2013, noting that both schools just recently became recipients of the magnet grants and need more time to grow. She expressed her belief that successful co-locations take ample time and planning especially if they involve different age groups. She cited Julia Richman Educational Complex, which currently houses P.S. 459 Manhattan International High School, P.S. 519 Talent Unlimited High School and P.S. 449 Vanguard High School, as a successful example of co-location and discussed how those schools were given time to plan. She also stated that both West Prep and P.S. 145 serve students of color from low-income families and therefore, need a year of planning to meet the needs of those students.
13. Several commenters urged the DOE to delay the co-location by a year and asked when the space planning would actually occur.
14. A representative from the Center for Immigrant Families expressed the opinion that the lack of community participation at the joint public hearing reflects the community's general opinion that their voices will not be heard. She also expressed the opinion that people made decisions based on the fear of charter schools moving into M145.
15. A commenter noted that M145 is an elementary school building not suitable for middle school students. She also asked how the co-location would affect the after school programs at P.S. 145.
16. A commenter inquired whether the P.S. 145 students would be guaranteed seats in West Prep if the co-location is approved.
17. A commenter suggested arranging a meeting for both schools to familiarize with each other.
18. CEC3 representative Olaiya Deen expressed her concern that students' choices are not taken into consideration by the Office of Enrollment in matching them to middle schools.

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

19. CEC 3's Resolution discussed Harlem Success Charter School and its co-location in the Brandeis Educational Complex.

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

20. One commenter expressed her support of the move and suggested that the DOE keep an eye on enrollment numbers for both schools to prevent overcrowding. She also asked that the DOE help publicize West Prep once the PEP approves the co-location proposal.

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

The portions of comments 1-8 and 20 which are in support of the proposal do not require a response.

Comments 1, 2, and 14 relate to the DOE planning and decision-making process, and the role of community input. The DOE has taken several steps to increase dialogue with communities in advance of making formal proposals, including meeting with the SLT and parent communities of schools that would be affected by potential proposals. The DOE had initially considered co-locating Harlem Success Academy Charter School with P.S. 145 in M145, but after receiving input from the P.S. 145 community in opposition to such a proposal, changed its plans. With respect to the instant proposal, the DOE met with the SLTs and parent communities of both West Prep and P.S. 145 in advance of publishing the EIS describing the proposed co-location.

Comment 1 also raised the issue of elementary grade capacity planning and expressed the opinion that there is a shortage of elementary seats in District 3. However, enrollment at P.S. 452 (a new District 3 elementary school) is well below capacity, and P.S. 75 (another District 3 elementary school) reduced its number of Kindergarten sections in 2010-2011 as compared to the prior year due to lack of demand. Moreover, several District 3 schools continue to enroll out of district students in order to fill their classes.

Comments 4 and 5 suggest allowing West Prep to screen its applicants. Increasing the number of screened schools means students with lower academic performance or with profiles that prevent them from meeting the screened schools' criteria will be even more concentrated in the small number of schools with minimal or no screens. District 3 needs to expand the number of schools willing to serve these students in order to reduce this concentration, rather than increase the number of screened schools.

Comments 7 and 20 concern the notification of West Prep's relocation to current and future parents, and the manner in which West Prep will be publicized. Principals are responsible for communicating the relocation to current parents. The new address will also be included on offer letters for incoming West Prep students. The DOE will update its website and publications to include the new address. Middle Schools are promoted through the annual Middle School Directory and Middle School Fairs held for students in the District. In addition, schools may hold open houses or visit elementary schools to promote the school to potential applicants.

Comments 9 and 17 request and/or suggest arranging opportunities for West Prep families to visit M145, and for the schools and their communities to meet before September. Visits or community events may be organized by the Principals of P.S. 145 and West Prep at their mutual convenience. This does not require permission from the DOE. The DOE and Community Superintendent would support this initiative.

Comment 10 concerns communicating school options in parents' home language. The District 3 middle school directory is available in French and Spanish, in addition to English. System-wide documents are proactively translated into the DOE's nine official non-English languages.

Documents specifically created for a particular school are translated into the languages relevant to that school. A school's relevant languages are identified based on Home Language data and school-based input. Typically, we direct families to the DOE website or their parent coordinator to access translated documents.

Furthermore, with regard to the dual-language program at P.S. 145, which will become available in September 2011, the DOE has included this program on the District 3 Dual-Language program application and the Office of English Language Learners is working with the administration to help develop the program.

Comments 11(a), 12 and 13 propose delaying the implementation of the proposal for one year to allow for a year of planning. While there may be sufficient space in M044 for West Prep to remain for an additional year, the DOE believes delaying this relocation would make the adjustments for both schools more difficult rather than less difficult. For West Prep, which has just changed its leadership, the school would undergo two transitions over a prolonged period of time—the transition to a new Principal, followed by the transition to a new location—which would extend West Prep's adjustment period. In addition, because West Prep is still in the process of phasing-in, if that school relocates to M145 in 2012-2013, it would be a larger school than in 2011-2012. This means that a greater number of rooms would be transferred from P.S. 145 to West Prep at once, rather than gradually over the course of two years. Finally, it is worth noting that there are several examples in District 3 of elementary school and middle school co-locations that can help guide the Principals in developing shared space schedules and other aspects of co-location, including Center School at P.S. 9, M.S. 250 at P.S. 75, M.S. 247 at P.S. 84, and Mott Hall II at P.S./I.S. 165. Drawing upon this community experience should help West Prep and P.S. 145 successfully plan for co-location 2011-2012. School leaders are also encouraged to refer to the Campus Policy Memo for guidance on how to govern multi-school campuses (available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/campusgov>).

With regard to the timing of space planning, if the proposal is approved, space planning would occur during this Spring. The DOE will support the two principals in determining how to allocate space equitably and develop shared space schedules.

Comment 11(b) concerns the availability of additional funding related to the move. The DOE will support the internal reorganization of the M145 Campus supporting connection with the co-location (i.e., moving boxed materials from one room to another), as well as the re-location of West Prep from M044 to M145. As indicated on p. 12 of the EIS, \$23,849 has been allocated for the re-siting. Grade appropriate furniture will be provided as needed for West Prep, and the DOE will issue a project request to the School Construction Authority for the construction of a middle school science demo lab. The DOE will not be able to fund an intercom system for M145 at this time.

Comment 11 concerns how the library and computer room were counted by the Office of Space Planning. The Office of Space Planning conducted a building survey of M145 on October 14, 2010, after the construction of the library and computer room was completed. The library was counted as a library. The computer room is room 329. In constructing this space, a doorway was added to connect this room to adjacent room 331, which is currently being used as a conference

room. These two rooms were counted as two classrooms. The commenter appears to be under the mistaken impression that the library and media rooms were counted as four rooms because she knows that the library was created by combining two rooms previously used as classrooms, and the computer room has a connecting door between two classrooms.

Comment 15 expressed concern that elementary school buildings are not suitable for middle school students. There are 10 elementary school buildings in District 3 that also serve middle school students, either due to expansion to K-8, co-location of a middle school or both (schools and building codes are the same unless otherwise noted): P.S. 9, P.S. 75, P.S. 76, P.S. 84, P.S. 149 (tandem building M149/M207), P.S. 165, P.S. 180, P.S. 191, P.S. 241 (Building M113), P.S. 242 (Building M144). P.S. 199 previously also served middle school students. The DOE believes that the successful operations of these schools demonstrate that both elementary and middle school students can succeed when co-located together.

Furthermore, with regard to the after school programs at P.S. 145, as indicated on pp. 4-5 of the EIS, P.S. 145 offers after school programs from OASIS, Liberty, Brienza, NYCLA, and READ Alliance. The co-location of West Prep would not impact P.S. 145's ability to provide these programs. West Prep would be able to provide after-school programs for its students, and could potentially work with these same organizations if there is mutual interest and capacity. SBHC - Presbyterian Hospital will continue in its current space. Both West Prep and P.S. 145 students would have access to SBHC -Presbyterian Hospital's services.

Comment 16 asked whether graduating fifth grade students at P.S. 145 would be guaranteed seats in West Prep. There would be no such guarantee. However, West Prep is a limited unscreened school, meaning any District 3 student who attends an information session for the school would have an equal chance to attend. If P.S. 145 students rank West Prep high on their applications and attend an information session, they would likely receive an offer.

Comment 18 questions how students are matched to middle schools in general, and why students are matched to a school they may not have included on their application. Students are matched to the highest school they rank on their application for which the Principal has also ranked the student for admission. West Prep has been assigned students who did not rank West Prep on their application because those students did not match to any of the schools to which they applied. When a student does not receive a match (which may happen if a student only applied to a small number of schools or only applied to schools for which the student was not a strong candidate), the Office of Student Enrollment will try to offer the student a seat at a school located close to their home that has available seats; several current West Prep students have been offered seats in this manner.

Comment 20 requested the DOE to keep an eye on enrollment at both schools to prevent overcrowding. The DOE reviews and approves register projections for each entry grade annually (i.e., Kindergarten for elementary schools and 6th grade for middle schools) in order to ensure there is sufficient room in the building to serve the proposed number of students. If a building becomes overcrowded, the number of class sections at the entry grade may be limited.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.