



Analysis of Public Comment

Date: May 17, 2010

Topic: Proposed Re-Siting of Hamilton Heights School (06M366) to School Building M153 and Co-location with P.S. 153M in M153

Date of Panel Vote: May 18, 2010

Summary of Proposal

In the 2010-2011 school year, Hamilton Heights School (06M368, “Hamilton Heights”), an existing school that serves students in grades K-5, will move from its current location in school buildings M028 and M380 in Community School District 6 (“District 6”) to school building M153 (hereinafter referred to as “M153”), located at 1750 Amsterdam Avenue, also in District 6. M153 currently houses P.S. 153 Adam Clayton Powell (06M153, “P.S. 153”), an existing school that serves grades Pre-Kindergarten to 5. Hamilton Heights will co-locate with P.S. 153 in M153.

Hamilton Heights is currently split-sited across two locations in District 6. Grades Kindergarten through 3 are housed in a leased facility, M380, located at 508 West 153 Street, and grades 4 and 5 are housed in school building M028, located at 475 West 155 Street. No other schools are currently co-located with Hamilton Heights in M380. In M028, Hamilton Heights is co-located with P.S. 28 Wright Brothers (06M028, “P.S. 28”), an existing elementary school serving grades Pre-Kindergarten to 5. No plan is in place for the space made available once Hamilton Heights moves out of M380. After Hamilton Heights moves out of M028, the space will be used to serve the zoned students at P.S. 28. In 2010-2011, Hamilton Heights will move its entire school, grades K-5, to M153. Hamilton Heights currently serves 2 sections per grade in M028 and M380 and will continue to serve two sections per grade in M153. Hamilton Heights will be co-located with P.S. 153 in M153. P.S. 153 is a zoned elementary school that currently offers three sections of district-wide Pre-Kindergarten students, one section per grade of district-wide Gifted and Talented (“G&T”) students, approximately five sections per grade of zoned students, and approximately one section of students per grade who reside outside the zone.

To ensure that there continues to be sufficient space in M153 for both Hamilton Heights and P.S. 153, beginning in 2010-2011, P.S. 153 will need to monitor its Kindergarten enrollment to ensure that it only enrolls students residing in the zone. By doing so, P.S. 153 will gradually reduce in size by approximately one section per grade, which will allow Hamilton Heights to be fully housed in M153. M153 has sufficient space to house Hamilton Heights in the long term;

however, in 2010-2011, as P.S. 153 reduces its enrollment to only zoned students, Hamilton Heights will likely not have access to dedicated cluster rooms. Once P.S. 153's enrollment is gradually reduced to only zoned students, Hamilton Heights and P.S. 153 will be able to operate at full organizational capacity in M153 and Hamilton Heights will have access to dedicated cluster rooms in 2011-2012. The 2008-09 target capacity for M153 was 1,267 students. The 2009-10 combined current enrollment of P.S. 153 and Hamilton Heights is 1,227 students. The projected enrollment of both schools after P.S. 153's enrollment has been reduced to only zoned students is approximately 1,140-1,215 students.

No students will be displaced at P.S. 153 as a result of this proposal. Students currently attending P.S. 153 from outside of the zone may remain enrolled until graduation. P.S. 153 will maintain its district-wide Pre-Kindergarten and G&T programs.

The move of Hamilton Heights to M153 will allow Hamilton Heights, which is currently split-sited across two buildings, to be fully housed in one building. This move will allow Hamilton Heights to build a cohesive school culture and community that will better serve its students, and will continue to offer high-quality elementary school options in District 6.

An educational impact statement on this proposal was originally published on March 5, 2010. On April 12, 2010, the DOE amended the educational impact statement to add certain information about potential impacts of the co-location.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

Four joint public hearings were held regarding this proposal. The first hearing was held at M153 on April 8, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Seventy-one members of the public attended the hearing, and thirteen members of the public, a representative of City Council Member Robert Jackson, a member of the District 6 CEC, members of the P.S. 153 School Leadership Team, and members of the Hamilton Heights School Leadership Team spoke. All speakers opposed the proposal, expressing concerns about: (1) whether P.S. 153 will be able to maintain its Arts Intensive Institute, dual language program, and Pre-Kindergarten program; (2) the scheduling and use of shared spaces, such as the cafeteria and gymnasium; (3) how the principals will cooperate on deciding how to use shared spaces; (4) the matriculation of Pre-Kindergarten students currently attending P.S. 153 who are not zoned to the school; and (5) why Community Health Academy of the Heights ("Community Health") will be occupying a building currently under construction that had been intended for Hamilton Heights.

One speaker proposed that the DOE consider housing Hamilton Heights in an unspecified abandoned building near the intersection of West 143 Street and Broadway.

The second hearing was held at M028 on April 9, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. One hundred and two members of the public attended the hearing, and twenty-one members of the public, a representative of City Council Member Robert Jackson, members of the P.S. 153 School Leadership Team, and members of the Hamilton Heights School Leadership Team spoke. Twelve speakers opposed the proposal,

stating concerns similar to those raised at the first hearing. Ten speakers supported the proposal to house Hamilton Heights in one location, noting that Hamilton Heights' staff and teachers have faced tremendous obstacles being split-sited and should be sited in one location. These speakers, however, also stated that the co-location of Hamilton Heights in M153 should only be temporary and that Hamilton Heights should be housed in their own building in the long-term. These speakers further expressed concern over the fact that Hamilton Heights may not gain dedicated cluster rooms until the 2011-2012 school year.

The third hearing was held at M153 on April 29, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Ten members of the public attended the hearing, and four members of the public spoke. Three speakers opposed the proposal, noting that P.S. 153 would jeopardize the district-wide G&T, the Pre-Kindergarten program, and the dual language program at P.S. 153. One speaker supported the proposal and stated that Hamilton Heights should be sited in one location.

The fourth hearing was held at M028 on May 10, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Twelve members of the public attended the hearing, but no one signed up to provide comment.

Summary of Issues Raised in Written and Oral Comments and Significant Alternatives Suggested

Seven written comments have been received from parents and the Dance Theatre of Harlem in opposition to the proposal. No oral comments have been received. The written comments stated that (1) the co-location would negatively affect P.S. 153's Arts Intensive Institute, dual language program, and Pre-Kindergarten program; (2) the co-location would negatively affect P.S. 153's partnership with the Dance Theatre of Harlem; (3) the educational impact statement does not take into account the space needed to house P.S. 153's Pre-Kindergarten program

No significant alternatives were proposed in the written comments.

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

The DOE received several comments expressing concern about P.S. 153's ability to maintain certain programs if Hamilton Heights co-locates in M153, specifically, the Arts Intensive Initiative, the dual language program, Pre-Kindergarten, the district gifted and talented program, and its partnership with the Dance Theatre of Harlem. P.S. 153 is expected to maintain its district-wide G&T and Pre-Kindergarten programs under this proposal. Similarly, P.S. 153's Arts Intensive Initiative should also be able to continue under the proposal. Current enrollment and class configuration data shows that the majority of the children enrolled in the Arts Intensive Initiative are zoned to P.S. 153. From an enrollment and demand perspective, there is no reason for the Arts Intensive Initiative to not continue, provided sufficient interest continues to exist within the zone for this program. P.S. 153's dual Spanish/English language program should also continue under the proposal. As with the Arts Intensive Initiative, current enrollment and class configuration data shows that the majority of the children enrolled in the dual language program

are zoned to P.S. 153. Given this fact, there is no reason the dual language program should not continue, provided sufficient interest continues to exist within the zone for this program.

As for P.S. 153's partnership with the Dance Theatre of Harlem and any other additional programming that it offers to students, the DOE does not anticipate that the co-location of P.S. 153 and Hamilton Heights will impact P.S. 153's ability to continue offering its current programs and activities for its students. As indicated in the amended educational impact statement, P.S. 153 is currently using 13 more full size classrooms than the minimum number allocated to the school by the Instructional Footprint. To the extent that P.S. 153 is currently using extra space to provide additional programming for students, such as using extra rooms as dedicated cluster rooms for multiple art, dance, and music rooms, the co-location may impact how and where the school provides and accommodates such programs; however, it should be able to maintain its current programming.

With respect to those comments concerning P.S. 153's Pre-Kindergarten program, the co-location is not expected to impact P.S. 153's Pre-Kindergarten program. There will continue to be sufficient space in the building for this program. Contrary to some comments, the educational impact statement did, in fact, take into account the space needed to serve Pre-Kindergarten students as calculated by the Blue Book.

Regarding concerns about how the principals will cooperate on deciding how to use shared spaces, the DOE now has over 800 schools and programs co-located with at least one other district or charter school in multi-school campus buildings. Sharing space is central to New York City's strategy for school improvement. Should the proposal be approved by the Panel for Educational Policy, all school leaders will meet with DOE space planners to work out a shared space plan and to finalize the allocation of specific rooms. School leaders of co-located schools and programs must create and actively participate in a Building Council, which is a structure for administrative decision-making for issues impacting all schools in the building. Building Councils are responsible for resolving issues related to the smooth daily operation of all schools in the building and the safety of the students they serve, including internal and external communications practices.

Some comments expressed concern about whether students enrolled in P.S. 153's Pre-Kindergarten who do not reside in the P.S. 153 zone would be able to stay in P.S. 153 for grades K-5. Consistent with standard policy throughout the district, students who attend pre-Kindergarten at P.S. 153 do not have guaranteed seats at P.S. 153 for grades K-5 unless they are zoned to P.S. 153. Students enrolled in pre-Kindergarten programs are expected to attend their zoned elementary school or apply to a choice elementary school for grades K-5. Furthermore, commenters had concerns about whether P.S. 153 will maintain its district-wide G&T and Pre-Kindergarten programs under this proposal. These programs would be unaffected by the proposal to re-site Hamilton Heights, provided sufficient interest and funding continue to exist for these programs.

Regarding concerns that Hamilton Heights may not gain access to dedicated cluster rooms until the 2011-2012 school year, Hamilton Heights currently does not have access to dedicated cluster rooms in M028. The re-siting of Hamilton Heights to M153 will allow the

school to gain access to this important space by 2011-2012, once P.S. 153 is no longer enrolling students residing outside of the zone. By 2014-2015 at the latest, P.S. 153 will be allocated two additional cluster rooms above the minimum of four rooms required under the Instructional Footprint, although it is likely that P.S. 153 will be allocated at least one additional cluster room by 2012-2013.

M153 also has the following rooms, which will be shared by Hamilton Heights and P.S. 153: an auditorium, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, and a library.

Finally, the DOE rejects the proposed alternative to house Hamilton Heights in its own building, such as the suggested building located near the intersection of West 143 Street and Broadway. Housing Hamilton Heights there would require extensive time and funding to both acquire and renovate the building. Moreover, audited register data for the previous three school years shows a consistent decline in District 6 enrollment:

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	Change
Grades K-5	13,671	13,049	12,796	-875
Grades 6-8	7,617	7,064	6,831	-786
Total	21,288	20,113	19,627	-1,661

Given this decline, and no projected increase in enrollment, capacity dollars are not allocated to District 6 in the current Capital Plan.

With respect to the new building under construction for Community Health, a current District 6 DOE phasing-in school that currently serves grade 6-10 and will serve grades 6-12 at scale, the school formed a partnership with the Community League of the Heights to support the construction of the new building for the school. Funds from the last Capital Plan (FY 2005-2009) are being used to construct this new building. The building is expected to be complete in 2012-2013, and has always been designated for Community Health. There were never any plans for Hamilton Heights School to occupy this new facility.

The proposal will be presented to the Panel for Educational Policy as it is currently posted. A copy of the amended educational impact statement for this proposal can be obtained at http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/EF8A55D5-A741-4613-A075-5F694D1C7B25/0/M153_HamiltonHeightsAmendedEIS_Final_41210.pdf.