

Public Comment Analysis

Date: April 28, 2015

Topic: The Proposed Opening and Co-location of a New Pre-Kindergarten Program Operated by DREAM Charter School (84M382) with Existing Schools P.S. 50 Vito Marcantonio (04M050) and New York Center for Autism Charter School (84M337) in Building M050 Beginning in the 2015-2016 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: April 29, 2015

Summary of Proposal

On March 6, 2015, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) and Building Utilization Plan (“BUP”) describing a proposal to open and co-locate a new, full-day pre-kindergarten program operated by DREAM Charter school (84M382, “DREAM”), in Building M050 (“M050”), located at 433 East 100th Street, New York, NY 10029, in Community School District 4 (“District 4”) beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. DREAM’s pre-kindergarten program (“DREAM’s Pre-K”) would be co-located in M050 with P.S. 50 Vito Marcantonio (“P.S. 50”), an existing district school that serves students in kindergarten through eighth grades, and New York Center for Autism Charter School (84M337, “NYCACs”), an existing charter school that serves students with disabilities aged five to nineteen. M050 also contains a community-based organization (“CBO”), Children’s Aid Society (“CAS”).

DREAM currently serves students in kindergarten through seventh grade across two sites. DREAM’s kindergarten through second grade students are currently served in M050, while DREAMS’s third through seventh grade students are served in building M121 (“M121”), located at 232 East 103rd Street, New York, NY 10029 also in District 4. DREAM’s third through seventh grades are co-located with P.S. 38 Roberto Clemente (04M038) in M121. Construction is underway on a new, non-DOE-operated facility for DREAM that is slated for student occupancy by August 2015. As set forth in previously posted proposals, beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, DREAM will begin serving its kindergarten through eighth grade in its new private space, and will vacate the space it currently occupies in buildings M121 and M050.

This proposal stems from the City of New York’s initiative to expand the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (“Pre-K”) program to ensure that every four-year-old has access to high-quality, full-day Pre-K. DREAM Charter School became eligible to offer the Pre-K for All program to four-year-olds as part of the 2014 Education Law §3602-ee(3)(a), which provides that, “The universal full-day pre-kindergarten program shall make awards to (i) consolidated applications submitted by school districts which include pre-kindergarten programs offered by schools, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, charter schools, libraries and/or museums, which shall demonstrate geographic diversity within the area to be served as well as diversity of providers...” The DOE released a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for charter schools interested in partnering with the DOE to offer Pre-K. DREAM submitted a proposal to offer Pre-K through this procurement process; however, the school lacks space to serve Pre-K in its new building. The DOE is now proposing to site DREAM’s Pre-K in M050 beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

DOE offered the following public engagement opportunities regarding this proposal:

- An optional community meeting prior to the joint public hearing for this proposal, where representatives from the DOE met with the school communities to discuss the proposal and take questions, comments, and feedback.

- A presentation at a District 4 Community Education Council (“CEC 4”) meeting where DOE representatives discussed the proposal and solicited questions and comments from the public.
- A walkthrough of building M050 with DOE Senior Leadership. On that day, DOE personnel met with the principals and School Leadership Team (“SLT”) members of P.S. 50 and NYCACS and representatives from CEC 4 to further discuss the proposal, take questions and concerns from the school communities, and determine whether significant logistical or other concerns would prevent the implementation of this proposal if approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”).
- A joint public hearing held at building M050. This meeting was open to the public and attendees were encouraged to provide comment on this proposal as part of the public comment portion of the hearing.
- Dedicated phone and email lines to accept public comment at any time following the posting of this proposal until 6:00 p.m. on the day before the PEP meeting. Comments could be submitted in any language by calling 212-374-3466 or emailed in any language to D04Proposals@schools.nyc.gov. All comments received at the above noted hearing or through phone or email lines are addressed by the DOE in this analysis of public comment, which is made available to the public after 6:00 p.m. on the day before the PEP meeting.
- The PEP meeting at which PEP members will vote on several proposals, including this one, prior to implementation of the proposal. This meeting is also open to the public and attendees are welcomed to provide comment on this proposal.
- Information on the joint public hearing and PEP meeting can be found on the DOE website at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2014-2015/April2015SchoolProposals>.

P.S. 50 has been designated a Community School under the School Renewal Program. This proposal will not impact the school’s participation in the School Renewal Program. While the DOE does not expect this proposal to impact any tailored ancillary services, extended instruction time, or other additional resources P.S. 50 may receive as a result of the School Renewal Program and the school’s designations as a Community School, the DOE will re-evaluate the space allocations outlined in the BUP after the school’s particular Community School model is developed. If this proposal is approved by the PEP, the DOE will continue to work closely with the P.S. 50 community to ensure all students receive the individualized support they need.

During the current 2014-2015 school year, M050 serves 517 students, yielding a building utilization rate of 81%. If this proposal is approved and pending budget negotiations, when DREAM’s kindergarten through second grade students have moved out of M050 and when DREAM’s Pre-K opens in the building in 2015-2016, DREAM will serve approximately 36 students in a full-day Pre-K program. At that time, the building will serve approximately 326-426 students enrolled in P.S. 50, NYCACS, and DREAM’s Pre-K, resulting in a projected utilization rate of 51%-66%. Thus, the DOE believes that there is sufficient space to accommodate P.S. 50, NYCACS and DREAM’s Pre-K in building M050, if this proposal is approved.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS and BUP which can both be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2014-2015/April2015SchoolProposals>.

Copies of the EIS and BUP are also available in P.S. 50, NYCACS, and DREAM’s main offices.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at the M050 building on April 15, 2015. Approximately 35 members of the public attended the hearing and 16 people spoke. Present at the meeting were District 4 Community Superintendent Alexandra Estrella and Deputy Superintendent Thomas McBryde; CEC 4 member Elender Foxe; Principal of P.S. 50 Ester Quinones; P.S. 50 SLT representatives Paul Clarke and Jane Rosen; Principal of DREAM

Eve Colavito; DREAM's SLT representative Emily Parkey; and Albery Melo, Jyoti Folch, and Drew Patterson from the DOE.

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

1. Elender Foxe, member of the CEC, expressed opposition to the proposal for the following reasons:
 - a. This proposal hampering P.S. 50's ability to offer art programs.
 - b. Other District 4 schools being denied additional Pre-K seats.
2. Paul Clarke, representative from P.S. 50's SLT, expressed concerns about the following:
 - a. The DOE perceiving M050 as temporary space for other proposals;
 - b. The potential impact of this proposal on the CBO currently using space in the building; and
 - c. The potential impact on P.S. 50's future programming.
3. Jane Rosen, representative from P.S. 50 SLT, made the following comments in opposition to the proposal:
 - a. P.S. 50 is a Renewal school.
 - b. Resources would be diverted from P.S. 50, whose community is growing and has diverse needs.
 - c. P.S. 50 would not have enough space to serve its students.
4. Glada Alvarez, member of the CEC, expressed support for the use of space within P.S. 50 for DREAM charter's Pre-K program.
5. Multiple commenters expressed support for the use of space at P.S. 50 for DREAM charter's Pre-K program.
6. Multiple commenters expressed support for DREAM charter school and the quality of instruction that the students received.
7. Multiple commenters expressed satisfaction with the caliber of teachers at DREAM.
8. Multiple commenters expressed satisfaction with the school culture at DREAM.
9. Multiple commenters expressed support for this proposal because of DREAM's excellence in communicating with parents and caregivers.
10. Multiple commenters expressed support for this proposal because it minimizes the number of transitions students would have to go through when they receive Pre-K programming in a facility other than their elementary school.
11. Multiple commenters mentioned the need for Pre-K programming in the community and expressed support for this proposal.
12. Multiple commenters support this proposal because of the quality of instruction DREAM offers students with special needs.
13. Multiple commenters expressed frustration over the community being divided on whether the Pre-K program will be operated by a charter or district run school, instead of focusing on student needs.
14. A commenter expressed the need for parents and community members to fully understand how the DOE works and what it means to be a co-located school building.

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

Four written comments were submitted via email:

15. A commenter expressed support for this proposal because of DREAM's excellence in communicating with parents and caregivers, their satisfaction with the school culture at DREAM, and their satisfaction with the caliber of teachers at DREAM.
16. A commenter expressed support of this proposal because of their satisfaction with the school culture at DREAM.
17. A commenter expressed support for this proposal because it minimizes the number of transitions students would have to go through when they receive Pre-K programming in a facility other than their elementary school. They also stated that the student would be better prepared for kindergarten when receiving Pre-K programming from the same school.
18. A commenter expressed opposition to DREAM's Pre-K program occupying space in M050. The commenter stated that District 4 was rejected for additional Pre-K and that DREAM was approved instead.

No oral comments were received via phone.

Analysis of Issues Raised and Significant Alternatives Proposed

Comments 1(a), 2(c), and 3(b) are in regard to the impact the DREAM's Pre-K program would have on P.S. 50's programming and resources.

The DOE does not anticipate that this proposal will impact the existing programs or partnerships of P.S. 50 or NYCACS. All school organizations in the building could continue to offer extra-curricular programs based on student interests, available resources, and staff support for those programs. However, the proposal may change the way those programs are configured. For example, some activities may need to share classroom space or the scheduling of these activities may change as a result of greater demands on the available space during or after school hours. Students would continue to have the opportunity to participate in a variety of extra-curricular programs, though the specific programs offered at a given school are always subject to change. That is true for any City student as all schools modify extra-curricular offerings annually based on student demand and available resources.

Comments 1(b) and 18 are in regard to the availability of Pre-K programming and award decision in district and charter schools in District 4.

Many District 4 elementary schools currently offer Pre-K programming. In addition, New York City Early Education Centers (formally known as CBOs) across the district also offer Pre-K seats. Through their RFP application to offer Pre-K, DREAM has indicated that there is a demand for their Pre-K program. Schools in District 4 that applied to offer Pre-K or expand their sections were notified of their ability to do so by the Division of Early Childhood Education ("DECE"). DECE takes into consideration quality, community demand, available space, and a multitude of other variables prior to making a final determination. The DOE is proposing to site two sections of Pre-K operated by DREAM to provide families with another option in the District. There are currently no Pre-K programs operated by charter schools in District 4.

Comment 2(a) is in regard to the future use of space within M050.

There are currently no other proposed changes to the use of space within M050. If the DOE proposes any significant changes in the school's utilization, it must do so in accordance with the Chancellor's A-190 Regulation.

Comment 2(b) is in regard to the impact on the CBO within M050.

CAS provides regular school day and after-school instruction for pre-school children. This proposal is not anticipated to impact CAS's services or continued siting in M050.

Comment 3(a) relates to P.S. 50's participation in the School Renewal Program.

The DOE does not expect this proposal to impact P.S. 50's participation in the School Renewal Program. The DOE supports P.S. 50's participation in this program. As part of the School Renewal Program, P.S. 50 will adopt a Community School model. The DOE does not expect this potential co-location to impact any tailored ancillary services, extended instruction time, or other additional resources P.S. 50 may receive as a result of the School Renewal Program. Should this proposal be approved by the PEP, the DOE will continue to work closely with the entire school community to ensure all students received the individualized support they need.

Comments 3(c) and 18 concern the utilization of space within P.S. 50.

Per the Citywide Instructional Footprint, which is used to allocate space to all schools based on the number of class sections they program and grade levels of the school, M050 has sufficient space to accommodate P.S. 50, NYCACS, and DREAM's Pre-K program. Furthermore, as seen in the BUP, both P.S. 50 and NYCACS will receive space in excess of their baseline allocation.

If DREAM's Pre-K opens in the 2015-2016 school year in M050, following the departure of their kindergarten through second grade students, the school will serve approximately 36 students in two sections of full-day programming. P.S. 50 will serve 265-355 students and NYCACS will serve 25-35 students. At that time, the building will serve approximately 326-426 students. This results in a projected building utilization rate of 51% - 66%. This means that the building will be "underutilized" and will have sufficient space to could accommodate DREAM's Pre-K program.

Comments 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, and 17 are in support of the proposal and thus do not require a response.

Comment 13 concerns the frustration commenters felt over the community division on the proposed Pre-K provider.

The commenters asserted that instead of the students' needs, the focus was on who was providing the programming, either the charter operator or the district school.

The DOE recognizes that some people in the community may have differences of opinions about proposals. The DOE supports this proposal and believes that, if this proposal is approved, the school communities at P.S. 50, NYCACS, and DREAM will be able to create productive and collaborative partnerships.

Comment 14 is not relevant to the proposal and does not require a response.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes were made to the proposal.