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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION--DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Grade Expansion of MS 223
from 6-8 to 6-12--12/1/11**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening.

3 MS. YOLANDA TORRES: Okay, this is - - of
4 the Department of Education - - education
5 council - - for the proposed grade expansion at
6 223, the - - school of finance and technology -
7 - school in 2013, 2014. I am Yolanda Torres,
8 your community superintendent. Thank you for
9 being here. We have - - CEC and - - 223 - - SOT
10 participate in this - - hearing. I - - . This
11 is Ramon Gonzalez, principal at 223; Dr. Ellen
12 Flanagan, principal of South Bronx Preparatory.

13 [Crosstalk]

14 MS. TORRES: CEC 7 president Almeta Trammel.
15 CEC 7 - - vice president Tanya Jones. And we
16 have Robert Powell, okay, from the Citywide
17 Council on - - . The - - , the purpose of this
18 hearing is - - comments about the proposal - -
19 three - - grades six through 12, - - 49. Before
20 I - - proposal, I want to make sure we'll all -
21 - . All - - must sign up in the speaker sign-up
22 that's located here. The sign-up list will be -
23 - minutes. And speakers will be given the floor
24 in the order in which they have signed up.
25 Comments are limited to two minutes. Do you

1 want to sign up?

2 MALE VOICE: No, I just have a question. I
3 still have to sign up?

4 MS. TORRES: Yes.

5 MALE VOICE: Even to ask questions?

6 MS. TORRES: Yes, - - . Thank you. There
7 may be - - . If they wish to speak, we will do
8 our best to accommodate them as - - . And those
9 who are here as far as - - speakers. In
10 addition, we also welcome any comments and
11 feedback you may have - - before the Council for
12 Educational Policy - - on this proposal on
13 7/14/2011. - - number - - D07 proposals at
14 schools - - .gov, and the phone number is 212-
15 374-5159. - - phone number, - - proposal will
16 be - - public comments on the Department of
17 Education - - .

18 So - - proceed with the - - summary. MS 223
19 is an existing - - middle school. - - grades
20 through 8. The Department of Education - - MS
21 223 - - finance and serve students grades 6
22 through 12 by school year 2016-17. MS 223 is
23 also - - in the - - . With South Bronx
24 Preparatory - - schools, South Bronx Prep. is a
25 - - preparatory school serving students in

1 grades 6 through 12. Building 129 - - is
 2 located at 360 East 145th Street in the Bronx,
 3 New York, 10454 - - District 7. Co-location
 4 means that there are two or more organizations
 5 or schools located in the same building, and
 6 that they share common spaces. So - - .

7 The proposal to expand MS 223 - - and its
 8 community. In response to requests from - -
 9 teachers and administrators - - back in July
 10 2011. After - - application process, Department
 11 of Education officials - - September of 2011. -
 12 - , concluding that the school is well
 13 positioned - - . The Department of Education -
 14 - all students in New York City have access to
 15 high-quality education or high-quality schools
 16 at every stage of their education.

17 The Department of Education also believes -
 18 - grade expansion at MS 223 will increase access
 19 to the much-needed - - and high school science
 20 in the Bronx - - . So the expansion will build
 21 also upon - - MS 223, which has demonstrated a
 22 strong, very strong - - . If the proposal is
 23 approved, MS 223 will be - - students in ninth
 24 grade in 2013-2014 school year. MS 223 will
 25 then rapidly increase and - - end of the year

1 there'll be an additional break at--over a
2 four-year period - - grade - - is 6-12, and in
3 the year 2016-17. If this proposal is approved,
4 then MS 223 will begin to reduce its incoming
5 middle school enrollment in 2012-2013 school
6 year - - . So secondary schools - - typically
7 serve three sections of students per grade.

8 MS 223 currently has five - - sections for
9 each of its three - - middle school - - .
10 Therefore the incoming sixth grade enrollment -
11 - will decrease from five to three sections
12 beginning in 2012-13 school year. This
13 enrollment change will ensure that MS 223 can -
14 - the traditional secondary school enrollment
15 for the - - school grades. It will also ensure
16 that there is adequate space in Building X149,
17 the home of South Bronx Prep, MS 223, - - .

18 If the proposal is approved, students will
19 apply for enrollment in the high school grades
20 of MS 223 through the citywide high school
21 admissions process. For the 2013-14 school
22 year, continuing - - , will we see that - -
23 priority? If they wish to stay in the 12th
24 grade. The current eighth-grade students at MS
25 223 will not have the option to remain at MS 223

1 through the eighth--the twelfth grade, since
 2 the expansion will not - - 2013-14 school year.
 3 Eighth-grade students in 2012-13 and beyond will
 4 have the option to remain in the school till the
 5 twelfth grade.

6 In 2013-14 as well as 2014-15, the first - -
 7 grade expansion, MS 223 - - eighth-grade
 8 students to the ninth-grader. This will help so
 9 that both MS 223 and South Bronx Prep can
 10 continue to fit in Building X149 through each
 11 year of the expansion.

12 In 2014 through 2015 and beyond, when the
 13 eighth grade will have three sections of - - ,
 14 and it seems to be available, - - will be open -
 15 - actual - - process. The Department of
 16 Education does not anticipate that this proposal
 17 will impact current - - student enrollment - -
 18 South Bronx Prep. South Bronx Prep will
 19 continue to - - students in a trade as - - .
 20 And that this proposal will not impact South
 21 Bronx Prep's - - policies - - .

22 So now - - I'm going to present to you - -
 23 listening, presenting the participants, and I
 24 would like to first present to you - - Gonzalez,
 25 - - .

1 [Applause]

2 MR. RAMON GONZALEZ: I want to - - numbers -
3 - said yes. So what I think is probably one of
4 the most exciting moments of my life, to be able
5 to do something you dream about, which is to set
6 up a school that really addresses the needs of
7 our student - - . We thought that we - -
8 changes, made some change in this community. We
9 had to - - graduate from - - . It is the most
10 basic thing now in our economy, - - from house.
11 And so with that said, - - configuration may
12 seem new to some people in the audience that we
13 wanted to do this. But - - for a couple of
14 years.

15 So you have this belief that - - . And the
16 idea is that the longer you have children, the
17 more you get to know those students, the more
18 you get to know their strengths, the more you
19 get to know their weaknesses. It makes sense,
20 all right? And that's something - - in this
21 model. The other - - over - - school was that
22 we had--this year we had two kids or three kids
23 - - high school, really young kids to see these
24 great colleges. - - majority of our kids, they
25 were in a great high school. But a majority of

1 our kids, they weren't. They weren't satisfied
2 with their high school choices. And they will
3 come to us and tell us that. - - and say, this
4 is about cause, and how do we--how can we change
5 our schools? And as you know, this is very
6 difficult - - changes that.

7 And so we decided that, based on those ideas
8 and needs, we really wanted to change what our
9 school is like. And this - - this isn't the
10 goal, so - - despite the army of students - - .
11 And the other issue is we also have the benefit
12 of time - - . From 6-8, we've got three years
13 to make the incredible change in your children.
14 And that's a lot to - - . So we felt by having
15 more time to go swimming, we could make the
16 change that is necessary. And so we're
17 fortunate, also, to be - - enough to stay in
18 that building that has - - . That is an
19 opportunity in our city, has one of the highest
20 graduation rates, has one of the highest
21 attendance rates. - - is that what you are? -
22 - relationship, a strong relationship - - South
23 Bronx Prep.

24 So if you believe in this model, yeah, we
25 could really do the outreach. Our relationship

1 with South Bronx Prep is not only essentially -
2 - program because how could these resources
3 supply most students with more opportunities,
4 with more - - without - - is being asked once -
5 - . We're also still working on our hardships,
6 and working on college. NYU, the - -
7 universities provide a school that - - isn't
8 aware - - now. And we both - - organized
9 setting on - - .

10 Most of our kids 8:00-5:30. And our - - we
11 don't even have - - during summer - - for a high
12 school, and especially if they're looking for a
13 college. So the idea of the structure change is
14 just 8-12 - - more - - discussion. More
15 opportunities for acceleration and - - allow us
16 to change our focus. We focus a lot on - - high
17 school - - and give our kids an opportunity to
18 see things more - - force. And what we believe
19 - - .

20 And finally, while - - anxiety. I know
21 that's, let's say, do not agree always with high
22 school process. It's a very good process. We
23 take - - process. Behind - - that becomes a
24 lesson and gets to focus on - - should have - -
25 . So that said, finally, I think - - spread -

1 - . And we believe that this model is great
2 idea. It's a great idea for our kids - -
3 District 7 and - - . And so we know that it was
4 the - - change that face to our kids in District
5 7 - - quality option to make this pass. So with
6 that I - - audience.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Mr. Gonzalez. And
9 now we will have the principal of South Bronx
10 Prep, Dr. Flanagan.

11 [Applause]

12 DR. ELLEN FLANAGAN: Thank you so much - - .
13 So, one, I just want to say as - - South Bronx
14 Preparatory Committee - - space action for - - .
15 And you have - - process and - - for us. We
16 believe that a change cannot become an issue.
17 Grade stands of three years that it needs to
18 look at, at least - - process. In your - - you
19 wouldn't take our students - - power - - . So
20 - - speakers we have at - - .

21 But enrollment in college last year, you
22 know, we had 98 percent accepted, but - - . So
23 the reality is that our students - - is
24 troublesome, if you're not used to teaching
25 about what has happened - - . And beyond the

1 high school is - - , so the ability to
2 leverage two communities - - who we are and what
3 we want - - . The same amount of time that I -
4 - to come down to a school which nine years ago
5 was shut down by - - and now is creating two
6 very special schools. And - - coming across - -
7 letters - - , that is very successful. It's
8 pretty amazing - - . And we really like to - -
9 right here.

10 The problem is that I want to - - paid for -
11 - involving how was all that - - . Lots of
12 times it becomes a foundation that is just
13 simply to get into a community. And I think our
14 part, Mr. Gonzalez, at 223 - - and 221 South
15 Bronx - - . And soon as - - on what happens
16 when we make - - and how principals can come up
17 with their own solutions, and said solutions may
18 be given by the outside. And some very - -
19 process - - us in regards to what happens when
20 new schools need to be opened up in communities
21 that have their own space.

22 So - - idea that, when you empower
23 principals to create solutions and smart models,
24 they absolutely can become great benefits - - .
25 And so then - - your associate - - . We know it

1 is going to be successful, and - - multiple
2 lives. And - -.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. TORRES: Well said. Thank you so much,
5 Dr. Flanagan. And now we will have the
6 president of CEC 7, Ms. Almeta Trammel.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. ALMETA TRAMMEL: This was a great - - we
9 endorse and we support - - concept of creating a
10 - - and we saw that's what the communities need
11 because this is what we - - all of our students
12 will do in District 7. As you know, we have a
13 high - - from the shortest - - . But we support
14 both of our schools as - - , not as - - 31 is to
15 that. And we know this school growing at a
16 speed - - other school systems, same thing.
17 It's very important that we as - - , we are
18 seeing the same thing that the school will - - .
19 And that is now what the community needs, and
20 that has just reinforced that we are brought
21 home in our cities - - .

22 And we as parents want to help our children
23 - - . And we see problems in many of our high
24 schools, as said earlier. - - leadership team
25 and working with our students - - , we are

1 addressing many of the foregone issues right
2 now in District 7. But I am just very pleased,
3 very happy to go down there, to go to other
4 meetings and say that really it's a - - . And
5 if you Google MS 223, all the body of
6 information that is there to tell you why it's
7 important to support. Many of them say that
8 parental - - school.

9 But this school has a lot of parents that
10 come out and - - . And every time they - - and
11 have to - - , they make - - . They help - - for
12 us. They come to parent association meetings.
13 And I wanted to say that - - . I'm saying in
14 previous years that my children, my child has
15 been in this school - - my child was in this
16 school, always visit this school to see the
17 growth.

18 So I'm saying that, as a council member,
19 I've seen the growth of MS 223, and I'm very
20 happy to know that it's safe. I've seen the - -
21 South Bronx Prep. I've seen the - - schools - -
22 this used to be - - . We used to come here all
23 the time - - our homes in - - . - - you see
24 that - - we've seen that there are - - teaching
25 the parents to be - - , we know that our

1 children now will have the opportunity to be
2 taught to be very - - seeing those jobs, are
3 creating those jobs.

4 So I think this is a great movement. I'm
5 happy to - - my school - - that are here. And -
6 - my community educational counseling - - . And
7 with that being said, I was just very happy to
8 see - - . And I know that for some, District 7
9 was the other - - . Thank you.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. TORRES: Thank you so much, Ms. Trammel.
12 We have now concluded the - - , and we would now
13 like to open the floor for public comments.
14 I'll cede this - - the floor for a few minutes.
15 And they are going to be holding the - - at the
16 assembly. So our first speaker is Bill Walker
17 [phonetic].

18 [Applause]

19 MR. BILL WALKER: Hi, everyone. I'd just
20 like to say that it's been very frustrating - -
21 over the past five or six years to have some of
22 our kids - - schools. And it's - - you work
23 with a student for three years, you give your
24 heart and soul to helping that kid get a better
25 chance in life, - - . And say my high school is

1 terrible, - - teachers don't care about us. I
2 feel like nobody knows I'm - - this school.
3 It's very disheartening. And for a long time we
4 wanted to have an opportunity for kids to - -
5 we've tried - - get all the kids into great high
6 schools, but the reality is there's just not
7 enough great high schools out there anymore. So
8 this - - hopefully will give at least some more
9 kids an opportunity to be at a great school.

10 And I think the teachers at this school - -
11 because, you know, - - kids come back every year
12 and say, I mean, we have kids come back almost
13 every day. And some of them are happy, and some
14 of them are not. The ones that are not, you
15 want them to have a chance, too. So we - - I
16 heartily endorse the expansion. Thank you.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Mr. Walker. Now we
19 will have Mr. Eric Lincoln [phonetic].

20 [Applause]

21 MR. ERIC LINCOLN: Thank you very much.
22 Good evening, everyone. It is my pleasure to
23 speak in favor of this grade expansion proposal.
24 We've had a opportunity to--whoop. Are we out
25 of battery?

1 MALE VOICE: Battery.

2 FEMALE VOICE: - - .

3 MALE VOICE: It's a good thing I brought
4 another.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

6 FEMALE VOICE: - - .

7 MALE VOICE: There is another one - - .

8 FEMALE VOICE: - - .

9 MALE VOICE: This is not going to count on
10 my time; right?

11 [Crosstalk]

12 FEMALE VOICE: - - , Eric.

13 MR. LINCOLN: - - . Where was I? Just - -
14 my idea that has been thought about quite a bit,
15 a lot of research, a lot of thought, a lot of
16 conversations have gone into this idea - -
17 proposal in collaboration with a lot of great
18 people who have helped us with suggestions,
19 recommendations, and a lot of support from the
20 Department of Education, our sister schools,
21 South Bronx Preparatory - - schools - - also
22 giving us a chance to really be the best we can
23 be and giving us an opportunity to - - over an
24 extended period to make sure that we have the
25 right space or the right amount of students - -

1 successful.

2 So we're very thankful for that opportunity.
3 And I am so excited for the chance to - - June
4 2017 is already circled on my calendar, when our
5 current seventh-graders walk across the space,
6 and we have the honor of shaking their hand as
7 high school graduates of MS HS 223. So I'm very
8 thankful for that opportunity and very much in
9 favor of this proposal. Thank you.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Mr. Lincoln. And we
12 have Nellie Perez [phonetic] from - - .

13 [Applause]

14 MS. NELLIE PEREZ: Hi. I'm a parent - - .
15 - - . My - - was actually one of the first high
16 school graduates. So I've been through the
17 transition. And as a - - we were - - in the
18 last - - to have to travel - - which made it
19 very easy - - my son saying all about it. But
20 my question was actually answered, which was - -
21 place. You answered that. Was there enough
22 space in the building for two high schools? You
23 answered that. So I really don't have any more
24 issues.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. PEREZ: - - .

2 DR. FLANAGAN: - - .

3 [Laughter, applause]

4 MS. TORRES: So the speaker list has now
5 been adjusted. And I would like to, first of
6 all, also say that as the Community
7 Superintendent of District 7, I am also very,
8 very excited about this expansion. And it is a
9 pleasure to come to this building and see the
10 camaraderie, as well as the collaboration
11 amongst--between the two school and the students
12 - - . This is something that we hope that we
13 can continue to build in our community. So I
14 want to thank you for that.

15 So we welcome any comments. And we - - at
16 any time before the - - for Educational Policy
17 rules on this proposal at the December 14th
18 meeting. The December 14th meeting, - - meeting
19 will take place at Newtown High School, which is
20 located at 48-01 90th Street in Queens, New
21 York. The email address and phone number where
22 comments may be made are
23 Z07proposals@schools.nyc.gov, and the phone
24 number is 212-374-5159.

25 Thank you for your participation. This

1 joint opportunity is now closed and - - .

2 Thank you so much.

3 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

1
2 The prior proceedings were transcribed from
3 audio files and have been transcribed to the
4 best of my ability.

5
6 Signature *Claine B. Samis*

7 Date December 3, 2011
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