



Public Comment Analysis

Date: October 11, 2011
Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 224
Date of Panel Vote: October 12, 2011

Summary of Proposal

P.S. 224 Hale A. Woodruff (“P.S. 224”) is an existing zoned elementary school located in building K224, at 757 Wortman Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11208, in Community School District 19. It currently serves students in kindergarten through sixth grade and offers a full-day pre-kindergarten program. P.S. 224 is currently the only school located in building K224.

This is a proposal to implement a “grade truncation,” meaning that the school would no longer enroll sixth graders after the current 2011-2012 school year. If this proposal is approved, at the close of the 2011-2012 school year, all fifth and sixth grade students who meet promotional standards would graduate from P.S. 224 and participate in the Middle School Choice Process. During the 2011-2012 school year, P.S. 224 fifth grade students would participate in the Middle School Choice Process during fifth grade and would move on to middle school to enter sixth grade in the 2012-2013 school year. In September 2012, P.S. 224 fifth and sixth grade students would enter middle school as sixth and seventh graders, respectively. Beginning in September 2012, P.S. 224 would only serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade and would continue to offer a pre-kindergarten program (subject to funding and demand).

The DOE wants to make sure that all P.S. 224 students have the opportunity to enroll in a middle school matched to their interests and needs.

Prior to May 2011, students in District 19 could attend their zoned middle school, or they could apply to middle schools that managed their own admissions processes on a school-by-school basis (i.e., a “choice school¹”). On May 17, 2011, the District 19 Community Education Council voted to adopt “Middle School Choice.” Under Middle School Choice students may use a single application to rank and apply to middle schools throughout the District, including zoned middle schools outside the zone in which they reside. Zoned students still have priority for admission to zoned schools. Other District 19 students will also be eligible to attend those schools by the choice process.

¹ A choice school is a school that admits students living in a defined catchment area, which can be district, borough, or citywide depending on the nature of the school, and does not offer priority to students living in a particular zone.

Middle schools typically enroll students beginning in sixth grade. Since most P.S. 224 students enter middle school as seventh graders, they are limited to those schools that still have available seventh-grade seats. As a result, students who remain at P.S. 224 through sixth grade may be shut out of their preferred middle school. P.S. 224 graduates also may face challenges when they transition to middle school a year later than their peers, and spend only two years in middle school before again transitioning to high school.

Creating a single entry grade helps schools build and foster stronger school communities. Taken collectively, District 19's adoption of Middle School Choice and the proposed truncation would enable schools to better support students throughout District 19. The DOE believes that families would benefit if all P.S. 224 students move on to middle school after completing fifth grade. That way, all P.S. 224 students will have access to the same range of options as their peers throughout District 19.

The details of this proposal have been released in an Educational Impact Statement which can be accessed here: http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/1DA89B48-A59E-4A65-83A9-0C7A2F3B900F/109374/EIS_PS224.pdf

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at P.S. 224 on September 27, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 12 members of the public attended the hearing and 4 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Principal of P.S. 224, George Andrews; P.S. 224 School Leadership Team ("SLT") representative Tameeka Singleton; District 19 Community Education Council ("CEC") President, Doreen Black; District 19 Community Superintendent Rose Marie Mills.

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

1. The CEC 19 representative expressed support for the proposed truncation because it will allow students to graduate from fifth grade and enter the Middle School choice process. The representative also stated that this proposal will allow P.S. 224 to focus on all grades.
2. The P.S. 224 SLT representative expressed support for the proposed expansion as it will provide a great opportunity for P.S. 224 students to move on to middle school after completing fifth grade, thereby providing students with the same access to a range of middle school options as their peers across District 19.
3. A commenter spoke in opposition of the proposed truncation. Commenter praises the staff at P.S. 224, who have prepared her students to move onto Middle School. The commenter felt that fact that P.S. 224 served 6th grade gave students a sense of independence; sixth grade provides a period of time after the elementary school years when a child can get a head start on what to expect next in life.. However, the commenter does understand that for some students, moving to Middle School in 6th grade would be a good thing. For another child, there wasn't an urgency in moving

her student into MS. Do appreciate 6th grade being here – gives students an idea of what to expect for MS.

4. A commenter spoke in opposition of the proposal to truncate P.S. 224 because it means that current fifth graders will have to leave the school to attend another school for sixth grade and this is not beneficial for students who already feel comfortable in the school he/she already knows. Commenter inquired whether there were plans to site a charter school in K224. Additionally, should the truncation be approved, there would be an issue with childcare as the commenter would have one child at P.S. 224 and another child at Middle School.

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

No written or oral comments were submitted to the DOE.

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

- Comments 1 and 2 support the proposal and therefore will not be addressed.
- Comments 3 and 4 express concern about the proposal and the effect that this truncation may have on students' education. The DOE has proposed to truncate P.S. 224 for several reasons. First, in the 2010-2011 school year, approximately 21 percent of fifth grade students chose to attend sixth grade elsewhere. This creates a smaller class at the sixth-grade level with limited resources to provide the types of extracurricular activities and enrichment opportunities for sixth grade students at P.S. 224 that are available to sixth grade students (and other students) in a full-size middle school. Thus, the DOE believes that P.S. 224 students would benefit by attending sixth grade at a full-size middle school rather than staying at P.S. 224 for sixth grade.

Second, by truncating the school all P.S. 224 students will have access to the same range of middle school options as their peers throughout the District. Since most P.S. 224 students enter middle school as seventh graders, they are limited to those schools that still have available seventh-grade seats. Consequently, students who remain at P.S. 224 through sixth grade may be shut out of their preferred middle school. These students may also face challenges when they transition to middle school a year later than their peers, and spend only two years in middle school before again transitioning to high school.

Therefore, the DOE believes that families would benefit if all P.S. 224 students move on to middle school after completing fifth grade. That way, all P.S. 224 students will have access to the same range of options as their peers throughout District 19.

- Comment 4 raises the issue of future plans for the K224 space; more specifically, whether the DOE plans to site a charter school in building K224. At this time, the DOE has no proposed additional uses for the building after the grade truncation takes place. If

this proposal is approved, the additional space made available by truncating the school's sixth grade could be used to provide additional classroom seats to kindergarten through fifth grade students or to meet other needs (e.g., art room, resource center, new or expanded programs for P.S. 224 students, etc.). Any future proposals for use of the space that involve a significant change in school utilization would begin with community engagement to discuss the community's needs and would be addressed in a separate proposal and Educational Impact Statement.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.