

Public Comment Analysis

Date: May 28, 2014

Topic: The Proposed Extension and Expansion of the Temporary Co-location of the Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade Students of DREAM Charter School (84M382) with P.S. 50 Vito Marcantonio (04M050) and New York Center for Autism Charter School (84M337) in Building M050 Through the 2014-2015 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: May 29, 2014

Summary of Proposal

On February 28, 2014, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) and Building Utilization Plan (“BUP”) describing a proposal to extend and expand the temporary co-location of the kindergarten, first, and second grade students of DREAM Charter School (84M382, “DREAM”) with P.S. 50 Vito Marcantonio (04M050, “P.S. 50”) and New York Center for Autism Charter School (84M337, “NYCACs”) in building M050 (“M050”) through the 2014-2015 school year.

DREAM is an existing charter elementary school that currently serves students in kindergarten through sixth grade. DREAM serves its students in kindergarten and first grade in M050 located at 433 East 100th Street, New York, NY 10029, in Community School District 4 (“District 4”). DREAM is co-located in M050 with P.S. 50, an existing district school that serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade, and NYCACS, a charter school that serves students with disabilities aged five to nineteen. DREAM currently serves its students in second through sixth grade in building M121, located at 232 East 103rd Street, New York, NY 10029 in District 4.

On October 15, 2013, the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) approved a proposal to temporarily co-locate the kindergarten and first grade students of DREAM in M050 through the 2013-2014 school year. Under that proposal, DREAM expected to move from M050 into non-DOE-operated space in August 2014. However, as a result of a delay in construction, DREAM will not be able to occupy that space in time for the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year.

DREAM worked with Harlem RBI, a community-based organization (“CBO”) that is affiliated with DREAM, to try to identify alternate space and also sought assistance from other East Harlem community organizations and Manhattan Commercial Realty Corp. to find suitable space. However, this search did not yield any viable options.

Therefore, the DOE now proposes to extend and expand the co-location of DREAM in M050 until the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year. This proposal allows DREAM to continue to serve students and families in District 4.

If this proposal is approved, DREAM will continue serving kindergarten and first grade students and will begin serving second grade students in M050 in the 2014-2015 school year.

As described in a separate EIS and BUP, the DOE proposes that DREAM's third through seventh grades will be co-located in the M121 building with P.S. 38 Roberto Clemente (04M038) for the 2014-2015 school year. Both proposal documents can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2013-2014/SchoolProposalsMay62014PEP>.

The M050 building is located 0.4 miles from M121.

If these proposals are approved by the PEP, DREAM's students in kindergarten through second grade will be served at M050 through the 2014-2015 school year and DREAM's third through seventh grade students will be served in M121 through the 2014-2015 school year. All students at DREAM are expected to move to their long-term non-DOE-operated facility before the 2015-2016 school year.

Construction is underway on the new facility for DREAM, also located in District 4. Civic Builders, Inc., the entity responsible for the construction of DREAM's permanent facility, has advised the Department of Education that the facility will be completed for student occupancy by August 2015. The School Construction Authority ("SCA") will continue to visit the construction site periodically to observe and confirm the progress on the facility's construction.

M050 also houses a CBO, Children's Aid Society. This proposal is not expected to impact the continued siting of that CBO in M050.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS and BUP. Both proposal documents can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2013-2014/SchoolProposalsMay62014PEP>.

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

Summary of Comments Received

A walkthrough of the M050 building was conducted by Juan Rosales, Senior Advisor with the DOE's Division of Family and Community Engagement on March 27, 2014. Cynthia Rochez, principal of P.S. 50, Julie Fisher, principal of NYCACS, and Rich Berlin, executive director of Harlem RBI, attended the walkthrough. Following the walkthrough, a community meeting regarding this proposal was held at the M050 building on March 27, 2014. At that meeting, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on and ask questions about the proposal. Present at the community meeting were District 4 Superintendent Alexandra Estrella; Principal Rochez; Principal Fisher; Mr. Berlin; and Jennifer Peng and Ashley Renick of the Office of District Planning ("District Planning").

A joint public hearing regarding the proposal was held on March 31, 2014. At the joint public hearing, interested parties also had the opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 3 members of the public attended the hearing and 3 people spoke. Present at the joint public hearing were District 4 Superintendent Estrella; P.S. 50 School Leadership Team ("SLT") representatives Principal Rochez and Paul Clarke; Moira Cray, Assistant Principal of NYCACS; Traci Douglas, head of operations for

DREAM; and Jennifer Peng of District Planning. District 4 Community Education Council (“CEC 4”) confirmed attendance, but a representative was ultimately unable to attend.

The following comments and remarks were made at the March 27, 2014 community meeting and/or the March 31, 2014 joint public hearing:

1. Rich Berlin, executive director of Harlem RBI, the community organization affiliated with DREAM, stated the following:
 - a. On behalf of DREAM, he would like to express his gratitude to his fellow M050 school leaders for their partnership and their continued hosting of the Harlem RBI middle school after-school program.
 - b. Each M050 leader has been generous with logistics and support.
 - c. Harlem RBI has been in the neighborhood for 20 years and we recognize that co-located space and running a school both take a lot of work.
 - d. The space DREAM will move to in 2015 has had its scaffolding removed and the site is making progress.
2. Principal Cynthia Rochez stated the following:
 - a. The building council of M050 is very strategic. Each school leader leverages what works best for all students in the building.
 - b. This co-location is not a situation that cannot be handled, and each school leader will continue to make the best possible strategic decisions for all children.
 - c. P.S. 50 is a struggling school but we are doing the best we can. People are welcome to come visit the schools during the school day in order to understand each school’s identity and to see the collaboration of a good co-location.
3. P.S. 50 SLT member Paul Clarke asserted the following:
 - a. These are the best co-located partners we can imagine.
 - b. He would like to suggest that the classroom space near the egress of the rooftop be preserved for P.S. 50’s use long-term. The rooftop garden construction was not mentioned in the proposal documents and he would like to suggest that it be added to the Shared Space Schedule of the Building Utilization Plan.

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

The DOE did not receive any written or oral comments on this proposal.

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

Comment 3(b) suggests that certain rooms be allocated to P.S. 50 and that the proposed shared space plan include a rooftop garden currently being constructed for the M050 building.

The proposed shared space plan included in the BUP only concerns the 2014-2015 school year. The rooftop garden has not been included in the proposed shared space plan because the garden is currently under construction, which is expected to continue through the 2014-2015 school year. The SCA is working with the contractor overseeing this project to determine an expected date of completion. However, the M050 Building Council will be responsible for collaboratively developing the final shared space plan, and may include the rooftop garden if it deems appropriate.

With respect to the assignment of specific classrooms to the schools in the building, if this proposal is approved, the school leadership of each school in M050 will hold an implementation meeting and will participate in subsequent allocation conversations with the Manhattan borough space director regarding the location of each schools' rooms. The commenter's suggestion will be shared with the relevant parties.

Comments 1(a-d), 2(a-c), and 3a express support for the proposal and do not require response.

The DOE commends the M050 schools' cooperation and collaboration.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.