



Withdrawal Notice
December 6, 2010

Joel I. Klein
Chancellor

The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 126 (09X126) to a K-5 School

I. Description of the subject and purpose of the proposed item under consideration.

P.S. 126 Dr. Marjorie H. Dunbar (09X126, “P.S. 126”) is an existing elementary school, located at 175 West 166th Street, Bronx, NY 10452, in Community School District 9. It currently serves students in Kindergarten through sixth grade and offers a Pre-Kindergarten program.

On October 15, 2010, the Department of Education (DOE) published an Educational Impact Statement (EIS) describing a proposal for a “grade truncation” of P.S. 126, which would mean that the school would no longer enroll sixth graders after the 2010-2011 school year.

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a high-quality school at every stage of their education. Having elementary schools that terminate in different grades (i.e., K-5 versus K-6) creates unequal levels of access for students based simply on the year they exit elementary school. Middle schools typically enroll students beginning in sixth grade, and P.S. 126 students have the option to apply to start middle school as sixth graders. Currently, however, most P.S. 126 students transition to middle school for seventh grade, at which point they are limited to the few middle schools which still have available seventh grade seats.

P.S. 126 is the last elementary school in District 9 to serve grades K-6. The proposed grade truncation would have helped standardize middle school application and entry grades in District 9, giving all P.S. 126 students access to the same range of middle school options as their peers throughout District 9.

On December 1, 2010, after receiving community feedback, the DOE decided to re-examine the proposal. After further consideration, which included consultation with the principal of P.S. 126, the DOE hereby withdraws the proposal from consideration by the Panel for Educational Policy during the 2010-2011 school year.

As a result of this withdrawal, the joint public hearing originally scheduled for November 22, 2010 was cancelled, and the proposal will not be considered by the PEP at its meeting on December 14, 2010. P.S. 126 will continue to enroll sixth graders after the 2010-2011 school year.

The DOE will continue to listen to community feedback as they consider how best to serve the students and families of P.S. 126.

II. Summary of all public comment received to date.

Feedback was received leading up to the formal proposal, both for and against the grade truncation. The DOE has received four written comments. In addition, members of the public expressed opinions about the proposal at a PTA meeting at P.S. 126 on October 27, 2010.

- After consultations with her School Leadership Team and members of the Parent Association, Principal Nadine Kee-Foster of P.S. 126 felt that she could effectively continue to accommodate grades K-6 sufficiently without compromising the quality of instruction and provide age- and grade-appropriate activities to support the sixth graders. Without truncating, she would also be able to continue to offer the C.H.A.M.P.S. program, an intramural sports program specifically designed for middle school students.
- The principal of P.S. 126 also cited assessment data that shows that P.S. 126 sixth-grade students outperformed 17 of the 22 schools that serve grade six in District 9. Moreover, continuing to serve sixth grade would address parent concerns regarding student safety and travel, increase parental involvement, and help to maintain integrity of the Highbridge Community by keeping the adolescents in the community longer. The principal felt that by grade seven, P.S. 126 students would be emotionally, socially and especially academically prepared for the middle school experience.
- When the DOE initially introduced this proposal during the 2009-2010 school year, some community members suggested the alternative of adding a seventh and eighth grade class to expand P.S. 126 into a K-8 school.
- During the PTA meeting in October, some parents shared concerns that sixth-grade students would have to travel during rush hour, and that one of the surrounding middle schools is unsafe.
- During the PTA meeting in October, some parents expressed concern that this proposed grade truncation was part of a larger plan by the DOE to place a charter school in the building.
- New York State Senator Jose M. Serrano expressed concern that a new middle school in Highbridge would not be ready to accept students until the fall of 2013, thus creating a two-year gap in the availability of sixth-grade seats in the Highbridge neighborhood. This concern was heightened by the academic success of P.S. 126 students and the geographic isolation of the Highbridge area, which would negatively impact parental involvement and academic performance if P.S. 126 sixth graders had to commute to area middle schools.

- New York State Assemblywoman Vanessa L. Gibson expressed her opposition to the current proposal and recommended the reconfiguration be delayed until new middle school seats open in Highbridge in September 2013 become available. The Assemblywoman pointed to data that shows a high level of parental satisfaction and engagement at P.S. 126. Postponing the change in utilization until the opening of the new Highbridge middle school in 2013 would encourage greater parental involvement and build upon the current success at P.S. 126.

III. Information regarding where the full text of the proposed item may be obtained.

The EIS can be found on the Department of Education's Web site:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/Dec2010PEP.htm>.

IV. The name, office, address, email and telephone number of the city district representative, knowledgeable on the item under consideration, from whom information may be obtained concerning the item.

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