



## **Public Comment Analysis**

Date: December 13, 2010

Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 050 Talfourd Lawn Elementary School (28Q050) to a K-5 School

Date of Panel Vote: December 14, 2010

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## **Summary of Proposal**

P.S. 050 Talfourd Lawn Elementary School (28Q050, “P.S. 50”) is an existing elementary school located at 143-26 101st Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11435, in Community School District 28. It currently serves students in Kindergarten through sixth grade and offers a Pre-Kindergarten program. This is a proposal to implement a “grade truncation,” meaning that the school would no longer enroll sixth graders after the current 2010-2011 school year.

At the close of the 2010-2011 school year, all fifth and sixth graders who meet promotional standards would graduate from P.S. 50. In September 2011, these students would enter middle school as sixth and seventh graders, respectively. Beginning in 2011-2012, P.S. 50 would serve students only in Kindergarten through fifth grade and continue to offer a Pre-Kindergarten program. From that time forward, P.S. 50 students would participate in the middle school choice process during fifth grade and move on to middle school for sixth grade.

Prior to June 2010, students in District 28 could attend their zoned middle school, or they could apply to choice middle schools on a school-by-school basis. In June 2010, the District 28 Community Education Council voted to adopt “Middle School Choice.” Now, students may apply to and rank middle schools throughout the District on a single application. They also have the opportunity to rank zoned middle schools outside the zone in which they reside. While zoned students still have priority for admission to those schools, other District 28 students are now eligible to attend those schools if there are remaining seats once zoned children are accommodated.

Middle schools typically enroll students beginning in sixth grade, and P.S. 50 students have the option to apply to start middle school as sixth graders. With the adoption of district-wide middle school choice, P.S. 50 students who wait until sixth grade to apply to middle school are limited to those schools that still have available seventh-grade seats. In particular, there are several unzoned, choice middle schools in District 28, and those schools rarely have open seventh-grade

seats, which become available only if sixth graders leave the school. As a result, students who remain at P.S. 50 through sixth grade will have fewer options than their peers who start middle school a year earlier.

Additionally, when students enter middle school at multiple entry grades (sixth and seventh), this creates challenges for both the students and the middle school as a whole. P.S. 50 students who start middle school in seventh grade may face transitional challenges related to entering middle school a year later than most of their classmates, and they remain in their new middle school for only two years before again transitioning to high school. Similarly, having students enter in multiple years creates an instructional challenge for middle school teachers and leadership who are responsible for preparing all students for high school. Those students who enter the middle school at seventh grade will not have the benefit of a sustained educational experience in the middle years; this has the effect of depersonalizing the school experience when adolescents tend to need the most personal and supportive environments

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.

This proposed grade truncation will help standardize middle school application and entry grades in District 28, giving all P.S. 50 students access to the same range of middle school options as their peers throughout the District.

At the same time, this proposal will alleviate overcrowding pressures at P.S. 50 and create additional K-5 seats in an area where demand for elementary school seats is high:

- P.S. 50 students attend school in two buildings:<sup>1</sup>

Type of Facility	Building	Target Capacity	Target Utilization
Main Building	Q050	588	112%
Transportable	Q850	124	196%
Total		722	

- Despite having a total capacity of 722 students, P.S. 50 served 919 students in the 2009-2010 school year, and they are projected to serve 920 students during the 2010-2011 school year.<sup>2</sup>
- Taken together, these utilization rates, enrollment numbers, and capacities show that P.S. 50 is quite overcrowded.

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<sup>1</sup> The official target capacity and utilization rates for the 2010-11 school year are not yet available. All references to building utilization rates in this document are based on data from the 2009-10 Enrollment Capacity Utilization Report (the “Blue Book”).

<sup>2</sup> These enrollment figures, including those for the 2010-11 school year, are projected and unaudited at this time. Audited enrollment figures for the current school year will not be available until February 2011.

- Phasing out the sixth grade will free up approximately 144 seats in the school. Those seats could be used by lower-grade students or to meet other needs of the school (e.g., art room, resource center).
- Approximately 144 additional K-5 seats will be created in an area that has high demand for elementary seats. This will help address the increasing enrollment P.S. 50 has seen over the past three years.

There are currently 25 schools serving elementary students in District 28, including 14 that terminate in sixth-grade. Of these 14 schools, nine are candidates for grade truncation this year, and one proposal has already been approved. If all the remaining eight potential truncations move forward and win approval, the vast majority of District 28 elementary school students will apply to middle school during fifth grade and enter middle school in sixth grade, giving those students equal access to the choice process.

### **Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing**

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at P.S. 050 Talfourd Lawn Elementary School on November 16, 2010. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 9 members of the public attended the hearing, and 4 people spoke. Present at the meeting were District 28 Superintendent Jeannette Reed; School Leadership Team members Nakicha Beard and Edith Stevens; PTA President Sean Edwin; District 28 CEC members Joe Trody and Kathryn Thome; and P.S. 050 Principal Rina Manjarrez.

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

1. SLT member Edith Stevens commented that the truncation will reduce their overcrowding issues.
2. Principal Rina Manjarrez commented that the truncation will relieve overcrowding, allow for the establishment of a science and art room and an additional kindergarten class, and give their fifth grade students the opportunity to participate in the Middle School Choice process.
3. CEC President Joseph Trotti stated he is in support of the truncation.
4. PTA President Sean Edwin expressed concerns from parents regarding the safety of middle school children traveling to schools much farther from their homes.

**The DOE received a comment at the Joint Public Hearing which did not directly relate to the proposal.**

5. A commenter asked what was being done for non-english speakers in the community. Superintendent Reed replied that translation and other support services are available in the schools.

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

There were no written or oral comments regarding the grade truncation of P.S. 050 submitted to the DOE.

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

Comments 1, 2, and 3 express support of the proposal and do not require a response.

With regard to comment 4, Superintendent Reed addressed this concern, stating that the truncation will result in greater middle school options for the students, free Metrocards are provided students who live more than a mile from their middle schools, and workshops for parents will be provided by the district's family advocate regarding the transition to middle school.

**Changes Made to the Proposal**

No changes in the proposal were made in response to public feedback.