



Public Comment Analysis

Date: December 13, 2010

Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 140 Edward K. Ellington (28Q140) to a K-5 School

Date of Panel Vote: December 14, 2010

Summary of Proposal

P.S. 140 Edward K Ellington (28Q140, “P.S. 140”) is an existing elementary school located at 166-01 116th Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11434, 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. 140. In September 2011, these students would enter middle school as sixth and seventh graders, respectively. Beginning in 2011-2012, P.S. 140 would serve students only in Kindergarten through fifth grade and continue to offer a Pre-Kindergarten program. From that time forward, P.S. 140 students would participate in the middle school choice process during fifth grade and move on to middle school for sixth grade.

Middle schools typically enroll students beginning in sixth grade, and P.S. 140 students have the option to apply to start middle school as sixth graders. With the adoption of district-wide Middle School Choice, P.S. 140 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. 140 through sixth grade will have fewer options than their peers who start middle school a year earlier.

Additionally, P.S. 140 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. This proposed grade truncation will help standardize middle school application and entry grades in District 28, giving all P.S. 140 students access to the same range of middle school options as their peers throughout the District.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at P.S. 140 Edward K. Ellington on November 17, 2010. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 30 members of the public attended the hearing, and 3 people spoke. Present at the hearing were District 28 Community Superintendent Jeannette Reed, SLT member Juanita Mellion and CEC 28 member Denise Nelom.

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

1. Denise Nelom of CEC 28 stated that they are in favor of middle school choice and students' equal access to it.
2. One commenter suggested that transitioning to middle school after fifth grade instead of sixth grade may be fine for some students, but difficult for others.
3. One commenter wanted to know what the advantages of the proposal are, and what the advantages would be to stay at the school for sixth grade.
4. One commenter had a concern that for special education students, the transition to middle school would be preferable after sixth grade. The commenter felt that the program at P.S. 140 was helpful for the special education children and that peer pressure at the middle school level would be different.

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

No written or oral comments regarding the grade truncation of P.S. 140 were submitted to the DOE.

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

Comment 1 is in support of the proposal and does not require a response.

With respect to comment 2, students will respond to transitions differently. The DOE believes that 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. 140 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. A large number of students throughout the City go through this transition each year; middle schools are familiar with the challenges and prepared to help all students.

With respect to comment 3, the advantages of the proposal are that students will have equal access to choice middle school options in District 28, and that the sixth grade students may be better served in a dedicated middle school. Some students may experience difficulties during the transition year; staying in the same school for sixth grade puts off that transition for a year. The transition must happen at some point, and after eighth grade, students will transition to high school. The DOE believes that transitioning with peers after fifth grade and having a full three years in middle school before transitioning again better serves students.

With respect to comment 4, students with individualized education programs (“IEPs”) will participate in the middle school admissions processes in the same manner as their non-disabled peers. Middle schools will be supported by the DOE in reviewing students’ IEPs to address the needs of students with disabilities by providing individualized service models that ensure students have access to the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible. It is expected that the middle school to which a student is matched will develop a program to meet the students’ needs. This process will apply to students with IEPs currently in fifth and sixth grades at P.S. 140 in the same manner as it applies to all other students. Participating in the middle school choice process during the fifth grade instead of during sixth grade will provide these students with increased access to desired middle school options.

Changes Made to the Proposal

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