



**Public Comment Analysis<sup>1</sup>**

Date: June 24, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Co-location of Democracy Prep 3 Charter School with Existing School P.S. 154 (05M154) Harriet Tubman in Building M154 in 2012-2013

Date of Panel Vote: June 27, 2011

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**Summary of Proposal**

In an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) posted on February 18, 2011 and amended on March 17, 2011, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) proposed to open a new public charter middle school, Democracy Prep 3 Charter School (“Democracy Prep 3”), and site it in Building M154, located at 250 West 127 Street, New York, NY 10027 in Community School District 5. Democracy Prep 3 would be co-located in M154 with P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman (05M154, “P.S. 154”), an existing DOE zoned elementary school that serves grades kindergarten through five, and also offers a pre-kindergarten program. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.

The revised EIS changed the proposal to open and site Democracy Prep 3 beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, not the 2011-2012 school year. No other substantive changes were made to the proposal. Since the initial posting of the proposal, Democracy Prep Public Schools – the charter management organization that manages Democracy Prep schools -- has taken on a school turnaround project – Harlem Prep Charter School – in Community District 4. Postponing the opening of Democracy Prep 3 until 2012-2013 will allow Democracy Prep to focus more on the management of Harlem Prep beginning next year. It will also provide additional planning time for P.S. 154 and Democracy Prep 3 to collaborate in developing plans for this proposed co-location.

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<sup>1</sup> This Analysis of Public Comments reflects those public comments received to date. The DOE will continue to accept public comments until Sunday, June 26 at 6 p.m. If any additional comments are received, they will be addressed in an amended analysis.

In addition, the revised BUP made the following changes:

- As discussed in more detail in the attached EIS, the proposal to open and site Democracy Prep 3 in building M154 has been postponed by one year, to the 2012-2013 school year instead of the 2011-2012 school year; and
- The proposed shared space schedule on page 11 has been adjusted and the DOE has clarified the rationale for the amount of time that each co-located school is allocated in the shared spaces under this proposal.

P.S. 154 is a zoned district elementary school that serves 360 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and also offers a pre-kindergarten program that enrolls 36 students.

The New York State Education Department (“SED”) has authorized the creation of Democracy Prep 3, a new public charter school that would open with sixth grade, and then expand one grade per year until it serves sixth through eighth grades. Democracy Prep 3 would admit students at all grade levels through a lottery, and give preference to students residing in District 5. If this proposal were approved, Democracy Prep 3 would serve 100-110 students in sixth grade in 2012-2013. In 2013-2014, Democracy Prep 3 would serve 200-220 students in sixth and seventh grades. At full scale, in 2014-2015, Democracy Prep 3 would serve 300-330 students in sixth through eighth grades in M154.

The opening of Democracy Prep 3 would create 300-330 high-quality middle school seats in District 5. Democracy Prep 3 would be operated by Democracy Prep Public Schools, a charter management organization (“CMO”) that currently operates two public charter schools in District 5, Democracy Prep Charter School (84M350, “Democracy Prep”) and Democracy Prep Harlem (84M481, “Democracy Prep Harlem”), which opened in 2010-2011. In 2009-2010, Democracy Prep (84M350) was the highest rated middle school in the City on the Progress Report.

The M154 building has the capacity to serve 790 students. In 2010, the building only served 396 students, yielding a utilization rate of 50%. Once Democracy Prep 3 has completed its expansion to eighth grade in building M154, there would be approximately 670-760 students served in the building by both P.S. 154 and Democracy Prep 3, yielding a building utilization rate of 85-96%.

The details of this proposal have been released in a revised Educational Impact Statement which can be accessed here along with the revised Building Utilization Plan (“BUP”): <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/June2011Proposals>. Copies of the revised EIS and BUP are also available in the main office of P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman.

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

A joint public hearing regarding the original proposal was held at P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman on March 22, 2011. At the hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the original proposal. Approximately 218 members of the public attended the hearing and 38 people

spoke. Present at the meeting were: Community District 5 Superintendent Gale Reeves; P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman Principal Elizabeth Jarrett and School Leadership Team (“SLT”) representatives Almeish Hobson, Leslie McDonald, Annie Jones, Corina Johnson, Catrice Davis, and Margaret Diakite (Chair); Democracy Prep Campus Director Bill Cook; Community Education Council (CEC) 5 representative Ramik Williams; and Safiyah Raheem, the Community Liaison for New York City Council member Inez E. Dickens.

An additional joint public hearing regarding the revised proposal was held at P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman on May 26, 2011. At the hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the revised proposal. Approximately, 157 members of the public attended the hearing and about 31 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Community District 5 Superintendent Gale Reeves; P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman Principal Elizabeth Jarrett and School Leadership Team (“SLT”) representative Margaret Diakite (Chairperson), Leslie McDonald (Vice President) and June Nelson; Democracy Prep Campus Director Linda Jones Easton and; Community Education Council (CEC 5) Vice President Ta-Tanisha Rice.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on March 22, 2011 on the **original** proposal:

1. CEC 5 representative Ramik Williams stated his disappointment in the way Charter Schools operate in Harlem, particularly in that there is lack of information regarding the application process. He also challenged the DOE to put forth more efforts and allocate more resources towards public schools and asked community members to attend the CEC meetings.
2. P.S. 154 SLT representative Leslie McDonald expressed her opposition to the proposal, stating that it does not make sense to put pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students in the same building as the junior high school students. She noted that younger kids will mimic the older ones. In addition, she asserted that the building capacity stated in the EIS is incorrect.
3. P.S. 154 SLT representative Margaret Diakite expressed her opposition to the proposal. She asserted that the building was designed to serve elementary school and that co-locating a junior high school would change the dynamic of the school. She also noted that the DOE’s enrollment projection only allots 34 more slots for P.S. 154 and that does not allow for growth. She also suggested that Democracy Prep find its own building to site the school.
4. Democracy Prep Campus Director Bill Cook thanked P.S. 154 for allowing Democracy Prep families to come to the school for the hearing. He also reminded everyone that the topic for discussion is sharing of a public space. He added that Democracy Prep has a strong record of success in the schools they’re currently co-located with (P.S. 92 and P.S. 197) and noted that the schools should work together to ensure excellent education for all students in the building.
5. Safiyah Raheem, representing Council Member Inez E. Dickens, read a statement in opposition to the proposal which said that:
  - a. Though the Council Member supports the work of Democracy Prep and believes in the vision, she thinks the co-location would undermine P.S. 154’s ability to obtain resources.

- b. She is against the prevalence of school co-locations in Harlem, which cause large class sizes and safety issues.
  - c. Democracy Prep should revisit their original concept of moving to a private building or consider a closed Catholic school as a possible location.
  - d. DOE should listen to the concerns of all families and abandon the proposal.
6. Multiple commenters spoke about their positive experience at Democracy Prep and praised the school for incorporating parents' feedback and suggestions and helping students succeed. They noted that everyone deserves the same opportunity for high-quality education and asked the parents to be supportive of the proposal.
7. A commenter expressed the opinion that the charter schools are intruders that take over public school spaces. He also criticized charter schools for using their resources to advertise their school and suggested that they use their budget to get their own building.
8. A commenter stated that Democracy Prep will not embrace every student in the building since their application process is a lottery system, which selects students, compared to P.S. 154, which is a zoned school that has to take all students in the zone.
9. A commenter suggested that Democracy Prep look at Harlem Day Charter School's current location as a potential site.
10. A commenter expressed her concern that the co-location will create divisions in the building.
11. Multiple commenters asserted that co-locating pre-kindergarten with junior high school students does make sense.
12. A commenter pointed out that charter schools are also public schools and so they deserve public building space as well.
13. Multiple commenters said that the co-location will cripple the operational functions at P.S. 154.
14. A commenter pointed out an empty lot on 125<sup>th</sup> street, which he suggested be used by Democracy Prep to build its own school.
15. A commenter noted that charter schools, which are private entities, do not have to go to the Department of Education to get clearance for renovations and alterations.
16. A commenter asserted that when co-locations occur, charter schools always get better resources.
17. A commenter expressed her concern that charter school co-location will prevent special education children from receiving what they need, including mandatory gym time.
18. Ernest Bryant, PA President from Choir Academy of Harlem stated that co-location creates division among communities and should not be supported. He pointed out that there's more charter schools in Harlem than in any other place
19. A commenter noted that they had the same situation two years ago and the community rejected the proposal then and noted that the DOE should stop trying to co-locate schools in Building M154.
20. A commenter asserted that people should be blaming the DOE not Democracy Prep.
21. Multiple commenters expressed concern that children with IEPs will not get the services they need with the co-location proposal.
22. A representative from the District Family Advocate asked the parents to respect each other as they speak.
23. President's Council representative expressed his concern regarding safety issues and asked if other sites, if at all, were considered before the proposed co-location.

24. A staff member at P.S. 154 noted that P.S. 154 is a great school and has improved over the years. She also pointed out that the Democracy Prep came to the hearing to take over the space and not to share.

**The DOE received a comment at the Joint Public Hearing that did not directly relate to the original proposal and therefore will not be addressed.**

25. Several commenters discussed other charter school co-location proposals, including P.S. 123/ Harlem Success Charter 5, and Choir Academy / Harlem Children's Zone.
26. A commenter noted that the proposal is part of a larger plan to kick residents out of the neighborhood.
27. A commenter expressed her opposition against the Mayor who has taken over the education system, which he lacks knowledge about.

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

No comments were received

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on May 26, 2011 on the revised proposal:

28. CEC 5 Vice President Ta-Tanisha Rice made a statement on behalf of the CEC, noting that the CEC has been elected to represent the entire community on Educational issues and that the members of the community should feel free to contact the office and share their opinions.
29. P.S. 154 SLT member Leslie McDonald expressed her opposition to the proposal, asserting that the building is fully utilized and that there is no space in the building for another school. She suggested that Democracy Prep find its own building.
30. A commenter expressed the opinion that it was great for so many parents to come out in support of the proposal.
31. Approximately 22 speakers expressed their support for the proposal. The reasons given included:
  - a. Democracy Prep provides great education for the students and has great faculty and students;
  - b. It is common for public schools to share a building and there are successful examples of co-locations.
  - c. Several commenters spoke about P.S. 197 and how the co-location is working well in that building.
  - d. Charter schools are also public schools and deserve public space.
  - e. P.S. 154 and Democracy Prep staff would benefit and learn from each other as a result of the co-location.
  - f. Democracy Prep serves all students with special needs. About 25% of the Democracy Prep's population has special needs.

- g. Charter schools do not come in and take over the space, but instead the schools in the building come together to divide up and share the space.
  - h. Democracy Prep shares the same goals as P.S. 154 of educating children.
  - i. District 5 has the lowest proficiency rates in both reading and math in the entire city and is not doing well as an educational district. Democracy Prep can provide better option.
  - j. Democracy Prep dismissal time is at 5:00 p.m. while that of P.S. 154 is 2:45 p.m. so there should be no conflict during dismissal time.
  - k. Democracy Prep will be good neighbors to P.S. 154.
  - l. Democracy Prep is a safe environment.
    - i. Democracy Prep students walk inside the line to avoid running into each other.
    - ii. There are no issues of violence or fighting at Democracy Prep.
  - m. Democracy Prep takes students on college trips and provides other opportunities for students to learn.
32. A commenter stated that it's important for the audience to consider how the students at P.S. 154 feel about the proposed co-location.
33. Multiple commenters noted their concern that P.S. 154 is overcrowded.
34. A commenter noted her concern that the proposed co-location would cause safety concerns, especially since the proposal would bring two age groups together in one building.
35. A commenter expressed her opposition to the proposal, reasoning that there would be resources taken away from P.S. 154 such as gym, recess and playground time.
36. A commenter said that the proposed co-location would undercut the special education services at P.S. 154 and asked that Democracy Prep find its own space in another building.
37. A commenter inquired how the proposed co-location would benefit P.S. 154. She asked if Democracy Prep would share their resources and bring programs to benefit the students at P.S. 154.
38. A commenter urged that the audience fight against the proposal.

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

39. A commenter inquired why the PEP meeting was being held in Queens for June when the proposal is in Manhattan. She also asked if she could make comments at the PEP.

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

Comments 4, 6, 12, 30 and 31 are in favor of the co-location and do not require a response.

Comment 1 states that there is a lack of information about the charter school application process.

Detailed information about the charter lottery application process can be found at [http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/A768CA23-9B29-450F-BFA6-CD0902A86216/0/CompiledBook\\_v4\\_TobayEdits\\_020411\\_FINALFORWEBSITE.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/A768CA23-9B29-450F-BFA6-CD0902A86216/0/CompiledBook_v4_TobayEdits_020411_FINALFORWEBSITE.pdf).

Application rules, procedures, and deadlines for charter schools vary, but most charter schools accept applications for the following school year until April 1 and conduct admissions lotteries during the second week of April. Interested parents should contact each charter school individually to obtain an application. Many schools also post applications on their websites.

Comments 2, 3, 11, 23 and 34 state that serving kindergarten students in the same building as junior high school students does not make sense and/or that this co-location could cause safety issues.

Many DOE campuses serve students in grades K-8 in the same building. Other district five elementary schools that are co-located with middle schools include P.S. 92, P.S. 30, P.S. 197 and P.S. 194. P.S. 197 is an elementary school that has been co-located with Democracy Prep Charter School (“Democracy Prep”) since 2009. The number of suspensions at P.S. 197 has fallen from 5 Principal Suspensions and 6 Superintendent Suspensions in 2006 to 1 Principal Suspension and 4 Superintendent Suspensions in 2010. Moreover, in the 2009-2010 NYC School Survey Report, 99% of P.S. 197 parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “my child is safe at school.” Because of this history of successful K-8 campuses, The DOE does not anticipate that this co-location will cause significant additional safety concerns.

Comment 2 states that the building capacity for M154 is incorrect.

Building capacity is calculated based upon the scheduled use of individual rooms as reported by principals during an annual facilities survey, the DOE’s standards for maximum classroom capacities (which are lower than the UFT contractual class sizes and differ depending on grade level), and the efficiency with which classrooms are programmed (i.e., the frequency with which classes are scheduled in a given classroom). Pursuant to this formula, the M154 building has the capacity to serve 790 students. Moreover, in determining the space allocation for co-located schools, the Office of Space Planning conducts a detailed site survey and space analysis of the building to assess the amount of space available in the building.

Comment 3 states that this proposal does not allow P.S. 154 to grow.

Over the past five years, enrollment at P.S. 154 has shrunk from 488 in 2006-2007, to 428 in 2007-2008, to 413 in 2008-2009, to 398 in 2009-2010, to 396 in 2010-2011. The DOE projects that P.S. 154’s enrollment will remain constant at approximately 370-430 students. However, this proposal does allow P.S. 154’s enrollment to grow. The M154 building has the capacity to serve 790 students. Once Democracy Prep 3 has completed its expansion to eighth grade, there will be approximately 670-760 students served in the building by P.S. 154 and Democracy Prep 3. That leaves room for P.S. 154’s enrollment to increase by 30-120 students while still maintaining a building utilization rate of 100% or less.

Comments 3, 5(c), 7, 9, 14, and 29 suggest that Democracy Prep should find its own building to site the school, possibly a closed Catholic school, Harlem Day Charter School's facility, or an empty lot on 125<sup>th</sup> street.

The DOE seeks to provide space to high quality education options for all students, regardless of whether they are served in DOE or public charter schools. We welcome public charter schools to lease or provide their own space, but will offer space where there is space available to do so.

Comment 5(b) asserts that co-locations cause large class sizes.

The size of a class at each school is determined by the Principal based on enrollment, budget, and student needs; there is a standard guideline of target class size (i.e., number of students per class section) for each grade level. The DOE's target class size is 20 students per class in Kindergarten through third grade and 28 students per class in fourth and fifth grades. P.S. 154 currently serves 360 students in grades Kindergarten through five in 20 class sections, including five Self-Contained special education sections. P.S. 154 also serves 36 students in two sections of pre-Kindergarten, for a total of 22 sections. This proposal projects that P.S. 154's enrollment will remain steady and it will continue to serve students in 22 total sections. Therefore, the proposal is not expected to cause any increase in class sizes at P.S. 154.

Comment 5(a) states that the co-location would undermine P.S. 154's ability to obtain resources.

The basic operating budget for P.S. 154 is determined by the same Fair Student Funding ("FSF") formula used at all other New York City District public schools. Under FSF, schools receive City tax levy funding on a per pupil basis. Each student receives a per-pupil allocation based on the grade level of the student. FSF allocations are subject to annual variation, but for 2010-2011, the base per-pupil allocation for elementary schools was \$4,059.71. In addition, FSF awards supplemental allocations on a per-pupil basis for students who have additional needs and therefore cost more to educate. At the elementary level, supplemental funds are awarded for each student who is an English Language Learner, who requires special education services, or who is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. For example, during the 2010-2011 school year, elementary schools received an additional \$1,623.00 per pupil for each English Language Learner they enrolled. In the case of students who fall into more than one of these categories, schools are awarded supplemental funding to meet all of those needs.

FSF covers basic instructional expenses and FSF funds may, at the school's discretion, be used to hire staff, purchase supplies and materials, or implement instructional programs. As the total number of students enrolled grows, the overall budget will increase accordingly, allowing the school to meet the instructional needs of its larger student population. Similarly, if the total number of students enrolled falls, the budget shrinks accordingly, as the school will need fewer supplies and potentially a smaller staff.

P.S. 154 also receives federal Title I funding based on the proportion of low-income students it enrolls. P.S. 154 is also budgeted to meet the needs of its special education students as defined by their Individualized Education Plans ("IEPs").

None of these funds will be affected by this proposal. Moreover, P.S. 154's ability to obtain additional funds from the sources explained above would not be impacted; neither would its ability to obtain funds from private sources.

Comments 7 and 24 argue that charter schools "take over" public school spaces.

As discussed above, charter schools are public schools, and the DOE seeks to provide space to high quality education options for all students, regardless of whether they are served in DOE or public charter schools. We welcome public charter schools to lease or provide their own space, but will offer space where there is space available to do so.

Comment 8 objects to the fact that Democracy Prep 3 will run a lottery and not accept all students who apply.

Charter schools run a lottery in order to admit students fairly if the number of students who apply for admission to a class is greater than the number of seats available in that class. Therefore, if Democracy Prep 3 received only 110 applications for its sixth grade in 2012-2013, it would not need to run a lottery and would accept all students who applied. Only if more than 110 students apply to the sixth grade class would Democracy Prep 3 need to run a lottery to determine which 110 applicants would be admitted.

Similarly, zoned schools also run a lottery if they have more available kindergarten seats than zoned kindergarten students and are able to accept out-of-zone students. If the number of out-of-zone students who apply to the zoned school is greater than the number of seats available, the zoned school runs a lottery to determine which out-of-zone students are admitted.

Comments 10 and 18 express concern that the co-location would create divisions in M154 and in the community at large.

Given the finite number of buildings available in New York City, the DOE attempts to use all of its school buildings as efficiently as possible. Co-location is therefore very common in New York City schools, as there are not sufficient school buildings to allow each school organization to operate its own building. A co-location means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building. While they share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias, each school is allocated particular classrooms and spaces for its own students' use. This proposal is not intended to pit the schools in the M154 building against each other or to create divisions in the community at large.

Comment 13 alleges that the co-location will cripple operations at P.S. 154; comments 29 and 33 assert that M154 is overcrowded, and there is no room for Democracy Prep 3.

Space in DOE school buildings is allocated pursuant to the Citywide Instructional Footprint. The Footprint sets forth the baseline number of rooms that should be allocated to a school based on the grade levels served by the school, the school's enrollment, and the number of classes per

grade. In 2010-2011, P.S. 154's adjusted baseline allocation is 25 full size classrooms, but P.S. 154 uses 41 full size classrooms.

In 2014-2015 and beyond, P.S. 154 will be allocated 26 full size classrooms. The DOE believes that P.S. 154 will be able to provide all of its current programming in fewer classrooms. According to the Footprint, P.S. 154 is allocated three full-size administrative rooms. However, the school is currently using six full-size rooms for administrative purposes, including three non-designated "other offices." Moreover, the school is currently using 10 rooms for other uses, including: two non-designated "multipurpose classrooms," one non-designated "regular classroom," one room for "general building support," two rooms for Academic Intervention Services, one room for Occupational Therapy, one resource room, one room for ESL, and one SAVE/suspension room. The DOE believes that if this proposal is approved, P.S. 154 will be able to combine, repurpose, or more efficiently use its allocated space in M154, and that the proposal should not affect the programmatic offerings at P.S. 154. There are many schools in District 5 and in P.S. 154's support network which can be models to help P.S. 154 adjust its scheduling to deliver its programming in fewer class spaces.

Comment 15 alleges that charter schools do not need DOE clearance for renovations and alterations.

In accordance with Chancellor's Regulation A-190, if a charter school seeks to make any capital expenditure or facility upgrade on its dedicated space in excess of \$5,000, it must be approved in advance by the DOE, and the DOE must then ensure that an equal amount of capital expenditures or facilities upgrade expenditures are made on each co-located DOE school.

Comment 16 argues that, in co-locations, charter schools get better resources than district schools.

The DOE strives to provide strong educational opportunities for all students. The DOE uses the same space guidelines for charter schools and DOE schools, and makes every effort to apply its guidelines equally to all schools.

Space in building M154 has been allocated to Democracy Prep 3 and P.S. 154 pursuant to the Citywide Instructional Footprint. The Footprint sets forth the baseline number of rooms that should be allocated to a school based on the grade levels served by the school, the school's enrollment, and the number of classes per grade. In 2014-2015, and beyond, the DOE projects that P.S. 154 will serve between 370-430 students in 22 sections (including two sections of pre-kindergarten), and will receive an adjusted baseline allocation of 26 full size rooms. Democracy Prep 3 will serve between 300-330 students in grades six through eight in 12 sections, and will receive a baseline allocation of 13 full size rooms.

Democracy Prep 3 will occupy the third floor of M154. P.S. 154 would occupy the first and second floors. Since the Community Based Organizations ("CBOs") in the building provide learning resources to P.S. 154 during the school day, the rooms they occupy are effectively additional rooms allocated to P.S. 154. The Change for Kids room functions as a music cluster room, and the RSVP room functions as a pull-out small group instruction room. Thus, P.S. 154

will effectively have two additional full-size rooms above their baseline allocation in which to serve its students.

With regard to funding, charter schools receive public funding pursuant to a formula created by the state legislature, and overseen by the New York State Education Department. The DOE does not control this formula.

Comments 17, 21, and 36 allege that the co-location will prevent special education children at P.S. 154 from receiving what they need, including mandatory gym time.

P.S. 154 currently offers Self-Contained classes (“SC”), and Special Education Teacher Support Services (“SETSS”). The existing SC classes and SETSS services would continue to be provided, and students with disabilities will continue to receive mandated services in accordance with their IEPs. Similarly, current and future students with IEPs will continue to receive mandated services at P.S. 154.

P.S. 154 currently serves special education students in five self-contained classes. This proposal anticipates that P.S. 154 will continue to offer five self-contained special education classes in the future, and allocates one full size classroom for each self-contained section.

In terms of funding, at the elementary school level, supplemental funds are awarded for each student who requires special education services, and P.S. 154 will continue to receive these supplemental funds. P.S. 154 will also continue to receive funds to meet the needs of all special education students in accordance with their IEPs.

In response to feedback on this and other proposals, the revised proposed shared space plan increases P.S.154’s proposed allotment of gymnasium time from four hours to five and a half hours.

Comment 19 states that the community rejected a prior proposal to co-locate a school in Building M154 and the DOE should stop trying to co-locate schools in M154.

Two years ago, a proposal to site an elementary charter school in Building M154 faced community opposition and the school was not sited in the building. However, given the finite number of buildings available in New York City, the DOE attempts to use all of its school buildings as efficiently as possible. Co-location is therefore very common in New York City schools, as there are not sufficient school buildings to allow each school organization to operate its own building.

Comments 20, 22 and 28 are not related to the substance of this proposal and do not require a response.

Comments 5(c), 9, 23, and 29 ask if other sites were considered for Democracy Prep 3.

There are no other buildings in District 5 that have a sufficient number of classrooms to house Democracy Prep 3.

Comment 24 states that P.S. 154 is a great school and has improved over the years.

The proposal to site Democracy Prep 3 in M154 is based on the availability of space in the building, not on the performance of P.S. 154.

Comments 32 and 38 express general opposition to the proposal.

The DOE believes that the revised EIS, revised BUP and this public comment analysis set forth a number of reasons why the proposal should go forward.

Comment 35 asserts that students at P.S. 154 will lose gym, recess, and playground time as a result of this proposal.

The revised proposed shared space plan for 2012-2013 allocates P.S. 154 five and half hours each day in both the gymnasium and the playground. Democracy Prep 3 is allocated only one and a half hours each day in both spaces. Moreover, although the DOE has proposed how the shared spaces in the building may be utilized, the Building Council is free to deviate from the proposed Shared Space Plan provided that the Building Council comes to an agreement on the final Shared Space Plan collaboratively.

Comment 37 asks how the co-location will benefit students at P.S. 154.

Democracy Prep 3 plans to apply for Federal “E-Rate” funds to provide wireless Internet access throughout building M154, including spaces used by P.S. 154 students.

Comment 39 asks about the location of the PEP vote.

The initial location of the vote was to be held in Queens; however, the venue was changed to a high school in Brooklyn in order to allow for maximum participation from the parents and the community. The June 27 PEP will be held, as published on the amended notice of Public Hearing, at the Prospects Heights Campus, located at 883 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11225. Speakers will be given 2 minutes and will be called in the order that they signed up.

### **Changes Made to the Proposal**

The revised EIS changed the proposal to open and site Democracy Prep 3 beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, not the 2011-2012 school year. No other substantive changes were made to the proposal. Since the initial posting of the proposal, Democracy Prep Public Schools – the charter management organization that manages Democracy Prep schools -- has taken on a school turnaround project – Harlem Prep Charter School – in Community District 4. Postponing the opening of Democracy Prep 3 until 2012-2013 will allow Democracy Prep to focus more on the management of Harlem Prep beginning next year. It will also provide additional planning time for P.S. 154 and Democracy Prep 3 to collaborate in developing plans for this proposed co-location.

In addition, the revised BUP made the following changes:

- As discussed in more detail in the attached EIS, the proposal to open and site Democracy Prep 3 in building M154 has been postponed by one year, to the 2012-2013 school year instead of the 2011-2012 school year; and
- The proposed shared space schedule on page 11 has been adjusted and the DOE has clarified the rationale for the amount of time that each co-located school is allocated in the shared spaces under this proposal.