



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

Date: June 24, 2011  
Topic: The Proposed Grade Reconfiguration of Khalil Gibran International Academy (13K592)  
Date of Panel Vote: June 27, 2011

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**Summary of Proposal**

Khalil Gibran International Academy (13K592, “Khalil Gibran”) is an existing middle school located in building K287 at 50 Navy Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, in Community School District 13. Khalil Gibran currently enrolls 111 students in sixth through eighth grade in building K287, where it is co-located with P.S. 287 Bailey K. Ashford (13K287, “P.S. 287”). P.S. 287 is an existing zoned elementary school that currently serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade and 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 New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to implement a “grade reconfiguration.” This proposal is not expected to impact current middle school students enrolled at Khalil Gibran, with the possible exception of students who do not meet promotion requirements at the end of the proposed truncation. If this proposal is approved, Khalil Gibran would gradually stop serving middle school students in grades 6-8, and would instead serve high school students in grades 9-12 in K806. Under this proposal, at the end of the 2010-2011 school year, Khalil Gibran would no longer enroll sixth grade students. All eighth graders who meet promotional standards would apply to high school through the Citywide High School Admissions Process, and students in the sixth and seventh grades who meet promotion requirements would remain at the school until the completion of the eighth grade. During the 2011-2012 school year, Khalil Gibran would serve seventh and eighth grade students. At the end of the 2011-2012 school year, Khalil Gibran would be resited to another building. During the 2012-2013 school year, Khalil Gibran would serve eighth and ninth grade students. After the last class of eighth grade students graduates in June 2013, Khalil Gibran would no longer serve any middle school grades.

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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, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. If any additional comments are received, they will be addressed in an amended analysis

In a separate Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) published on March 4, 2011, the DOE is proposing to re-site and co-locate Khalil Gibran’s eighth grade in building K806, which is located at 362 Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217, after the end of the 2011-2012 school year. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, Khalil Gibran will be co-located with Metropolitan Corporate Academy High School (15K530, “MCA”) and the Brooklyn School for Career Development (75K753, “SCD”). In the 2012-2013, Khalil Gibran will also enroll ninth grade students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process. Khalil Gibran will expand to serve one additional grade each year until it reaches full scale in 2014-2015 and serves ninth through twelfth grade. Khalil Gibran would only be co-located with MCA for two years because on February 1, 2011, the Panel for Educational Policy approved the proposal to phase-out MCA based on its poor performance and the DOE’s assessment that the school lacks capacity to turn around quickly to better support student needs. MCA will be phased out and will eventually close in June 2014.

On March 31, 2011, the DOE published an amended EIS correcting a typographical error that incorrectly referenced a phase-out. The amendment clarified DOE had not proposed to phase-out any school organization in building K287, and any references to a phase-out of any school organization in building K287 were removed from the amended EIS.

The details of this proposal have been released in an Educational Impact Statement which can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/June2011Proposals>. Copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of Khalil Gibran and P.S. 287.

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

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at Khalil Gibran / P.S. 287 on April 4, 2011. At the hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 35 members of the public attended the hearing and 4 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: District 13 Superintendent James Machen; P.S. 287 Principal Michele Rawlings; Khalil Gibran Principal Beshir Abdellatif; P.S. 287 School Leadership Team representative Edgardo Rivera; and Khalil Gibran School Leadership Team representatives Gloria Rico and Winsome Smith-Ranger. Community Education Council (CEC) 13 representative Renee Holmes was invited to attend the hearing and confirmed that she would attend, but she was ultimately unable to attend.

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

1. A representative of Khalil Gibran’s School Leadership Team opposed the proposal to re-site Khalil Gibran for the following reasons:
  - a. Building K806 is an old building that lacks an auditorium and a cafeteria.
  - b. There is a shopping mall near K806; that and other factors negatively affect student focus in K806.
  - c. K806 lacks accessible water fountains in some parts of the building, such as the cafeteria.

- d. While K806 is easily accessible by subway, the traffic on surrounding streets is heavy, which presents safety concerns.
2. A second representative of Khalil Gibran's School Leadership Team opposed the proposal to re-site Khalil Gibran for the following reasons:
  - a. He stated that there is a lack of accessible water fountains in the new building and that there are foot traffic flow problems in the cafeteria.
  - b. Khalil Gibran students may not be comfortable at K806, and as a result they will be unsuccessful.
  - c. Building K806 does not provide a positive learning environment for students; what other locations were considered?
3. The representative of P.S. 287's School Leadership Team supported the reconfiguration proposal and expressed support for P.S. 287 and Khalil Gibran.
4. A commenter expressed support for P.S. 287 and Khalil Gibran.

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

- A representative of Khalil Gibran's School Leadership Team asked whether the decision to phase-out MCA is related to issues with its location or its student make-up.
- A commenter stated that the DOE should state in writing that P.S. 287 will not be phased out and that any grade reconfiguration proposals submitted by the school will be considered seriously.
- A commenter stated that P.S. 287 should receive more support because it has outperformed other District 13 elementary schools.

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

5. A commenter wrote to oppose the reconfiguration proposal for the following reasons:
  - a. The DOE has not supported Khalil Gibran in the past, as exemplified by the controversy surrounding Debbie Almontaser early in Khalil Gibran's existence;
  - b. The principals selected to replace Debbie Almontaser did not speak Arabic, had no community ties, demonstrated no commitment to Khalil Gibran's initial vision, and did not help Khalil Gibran stabilize or improve.
  - c. The DOE and New Visions have not provided Khalil Gibran with needed staff and resources for Khalil Gibran to succeed or implement its vision of providing an Arabic dual language program and integrated study of Arabic culture.
  - d. The DOE did not consult Khalil Gibran's parent community before re-siting it from its original location to K287, which is not accessible by public transportation and is nowhere near the Arab-American community.

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

- Comments 1(a), 1(c), and 2(a) are related to the facilities in building K806. While building K806 is not equipped with a traditional cafeteria or auditorium, a double classroom space on the first floor serves as a cafeteria and an auditorium. It should also

be noted that, over the last ten years, the DOE has made several facilities upgrades to the building, which have included: window and boiler plant replacements; construction of a high school science laboratory; upgrades to bathrooms; and construction of a fitness center. The DOE is not aware of any environmental violations at building K806.

- Comments 1(b) and 1(d) relate to the neighborhood surrounding building K806. Comment 2(b) states that Khalil Gibran students may be uncomfortable in Building K806. Building K806 is accessible by the 2, 3, 4, and 5 trains, and it is approximately 0.2 mile away from the nearest subway station. In contrast, building K287 is approximately 0.5 mile away from the nearest F train station and approximately 0.8 mile away from the nearest A and C train station. School administrators and staff are responsible for creating and maintaining productive learning environments in their school buildings, regardless of whether a school is near a shopping complex. It should also be noted that only Khalil Gibran's eighth grade class in 2012-2013 will be re-sited to building K806. In the future, only high school students at Khalil Gibran would be sited in K806.
- Comment 2(c) questions what alternative locations were considered for this proposal. The Preliminary 2010-2011 Under-Utilized Space Memorandum and List was published on the DOE's website on October 8, 2010, and an updated list was published on February 17, 2011. The Under-Utilized Space Memorandum and List denoted the under-utilized buildings in District 13 and other districts throughout the City. The DOE considered all buildings that were included in that list and the addendum list that was published on the DOE's website on January 11, 2011. Specifically, the DOE considered, amongst other buildings, building K458, which currently houses Brooklyn Academy High School and Bedford Stuyvesant Preparatory High School, and building K460, which currently houses the Secondary School for Law, the Secondary School for Journalism, and the Secondary School for Research. Building K458 was not a viable location because the DOE has proposed to site Brooklyn City Prep Charter School there, while building K460 was not a viable location because the DOE has proposed to site Millennium Brooklyn High School there. Building K806 was considered an appropriate building where Khalil Gibran could be re-sited because it is conveniently accessible via public transportation and because it would be under-utilized after MCA phased out.
- Comments 3 and 4 expressed support for Khalil Gibran and P.S. 287, and, therefore, they do not need to be addressed.
- Comment 5(a-d) relate to the supports that the DOE has provided to Khalil Gibran in the past.

Regarding comment 5(a), in August 2007, Ms. Almontaser stated that she resigned as principal from Khalil Gibran International Academy to protect the stability of the school and to give it "the full opportunity to flourish." Former Chancellor Klein agreed with her decision, accepted her resignation, and considered the matter closed. Neither the Mayor's office nor the DOE threatened to close the school unless Ms. Almontaser agreed to resign. Preserving Khalil Gibran has been the DOE's priority throughout.

Comment 5(b) stated that the principals who were selected to replace Debbie Almontaser did not speak Arabic, lacked community ties, demonstrated no commitment to Khalil Gibran's mission, and did not help Khalil Gibran stabilize or improve. The first interim acting principal, Danielle Salzberg, was intimately involved with Khalil Gibran's design when she was a member of New Visions for Public Schools' new schools team. The first appointed principal, Holly Reichart, was fluent in Arabic, and she headed New Visions for Public Schools' English Language Arts teacher training network before she was appointed principal of Khalil Gibran. The current principal, Beshir Abdellatif, is also fluent in Arabic, and he is committed to implementing Khalil Gibran's Arabic dual language program.

Comment 5(c) stated that the DOE and New Visions for Public Schools have not provided Khalil Gibran with support. On the contrary, New Visions for Public Schools has made direct financial grants to Khalil Gibran totaling \$400,000 to support all aspects of the school's program. In addition, New Visions for Public Schools provided weekly leadership development support and monthly leadership coaching to assist the principals in trying to implement the original vision for the school. Other supports include:

**Coaching:**

- Offering leadership mentoring, training, and coaching for the principal on implementing Arabic dual language instruction.
- Operational management, including budgeting, procurement, programming, ATS training, and recruitment.
- Working with the principal, assistant principal, and a network of data specialists to develop a data system to project and monitor student progress.
- Annual teacher mentoring through The New Teacher Project.
- Offering professional development to teachers in curriculum planning and student engagement.

**Student Support:**

- Specialized Coordinated Early Intervening Services, special education and reading intervention programs, speech therapy,
- Supporting the principal in creating individual teacher goals, developing a plan-of-action for each teacher, and creating individualized training plans.
- Working with teachers and staff to monitor student behavior issues.

Comment 5(d) stated that the DOE did not consult Khalil Gibran's parent community before re-siting it to building K287. The decision to re-site Khalil Gibran in building K287 was made after consultation with New Visions for Public Schools and the Arab-American Family Support Center. Since siting Khalil Gibran in building K287, New Visions for Public Schools has provided weekly re-siting and advocacy meetings to support to Khalil Gibran through its Leadership Development Facilitators.

**Changes Made to the Proposal**

No changes have been made to this proposal.