

Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 24, 2015

Topic: The Proposed Grade Expansion of the Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology (24Q560) from a 7-12 to a 6-12 School in Building Q891, Beginning in the 2015-2016 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: February 25, 2015

Summary of Proposal

On January 8, 2015, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) describing a proposal to expand Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Secondary School for Arts and Technology (24Q560, “Wagner”) to serve students in grades six through twelve beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. Wagner is an existing secondary school that currently serves students in grades seven through twelve. Wagner serves students in building Q891 (“Q891”) located at 47-07 30th Place, Queens, New York 11101 within the geographical confines of Community School District 24 (“District 24”). Building Q891 also houses an Alternate Learning Center (88Q988, “ALC”) which provides an educational setting for students in grades nine through twelve who are on a Superintendent’s suspension for up to 90 days. Additionally, Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College (24Q520, “Middle College”), which predominantly serves students in building Q520 located at 45-35 Van Dam Street, Queens, New York 11101 within the geographical confines of District 24, uses a specialty music room in building Q891. Middle College does not use any other facilities in building Q891.

- The DOE believes that this principal-initiated proposal will benefit the District 24 and Queens community. By aligning Wagner’s entry grade with the majority of middle schools and secondary schools in the City, this proposal increases access and creates a more stable environment for students by allowing them to stay at Wagner for their full middle and high school experience.
- Given Wagner’s record of high academic performance, the DOE supports the expansion of Wagner to a 6-12 school.
 - In the 2013-2014 school year, 82% of students graduated high school within 4 years, as compared to the Citywide average of 67% of students graduating within 4 years.
 - Furthermore, in the 2013-2014 school year, Wagner’s middle school grades ranked in the 100th percentile for District-wide and 96th percentile for Citywide English Language Arts (“ELA”) and Math proficiency scores.
- The DOE engaged with the school principal, high school superintendent, District 24 superintendent and District 24 Community Education Council (“CEC”) President throughout the course of the creation of this proposal.
- The DOE has offered the following public engagement opportunities:
 - A joint public hearing held at the Q891 building. This meeting was open to the public and attendees were encouraged to provide comment on this proposal as part of the public comment portion of the hearing.

- Dedicated phone and email lines to accept public comment at any time following the posting of this proposal until 6 p.m. on the day before the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) meeting. Comments can be submitted in any language by calling 212-374-7621 or emailed in any language to D24Proposals@schools.nyc.gov. All comments received at the above noted hearing or through phone or email lines will be addressed by the DOE in an analysis of public comment, which is made available to the public after 6 p.m. on the day before the PEP meeting.
- PEP meeting at which PEP members will vote on several proposals, including this one, prior to implementation of the proposal. This meeting is also open to the public and attendees are welcomed to provide comment on this proposal.
- Information on the joint public hearing and PEP meetings can be found on the DOE website at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2014-2015/February2015SchoolProposals>.

Wagner is a secondary school that currently admits middle school students in seventh grade using a school-based admissions method that gives priority to students or residents of Districts 24, 25, 26, and 30. Students are admitted to high school using screened and Educational Option admissions methods that give priority to continuing students and students or residents of Districts 24, 30, and 32. If this proposal is approved, Wagner will admit middle school students in sixth grade and will be included in the middle school application process. For the 2015-2016 school year, Wagner will be included in the New Schools Round of the middle school application process for sixth grade and will continue to admit seventh-grade students using a school-based application. In the 2016-2017 school year and beyond, Wagner will enroll sixth-grade students through the middle school application process, and will no longer admit students in seventh grade through its school-based application.

If this proposal is approved, Wagner will begin serving approximately 50-60 sixth-grade students in building Q891 in the 2015-2016 school year, at which point Wagner will serve approximately 620–690 students in its full grade span of grades six through twelve.

According to the 2013-2014 Enrollment, Capacity, Utilization Report (“Blue Book”), Q891 has a target capacity to serve 655 students. Currently, in the 2014-2015 school year, the building serves approximately 662 students, yielding a building utilization rate of 101%. Once Wagner has completed its grade expansion, a total of 656-774 students will be served collectively by Wagner, the ALC, and Middle College, yielding a projected target utilization rate of 100% - 118%. Although a utilization rate in excess of 100% may suggest that a building will be over-utilized or over-crowded in a given year, this rate does not account for the fact that rooms may be programmed for more efficient or different uses than the standard assumptions in the utilization calculation. Additionally, this utilization rate includes the maximum number of students the ALC can serve and the students from Middle College who are only in the building at certain times. Thus, the actual building utilization rate at a given time is likely lower than the maximum utilization rate projected above. Building Q891 has sufficient space to accommodate the expansion of Wagner under this proposal.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS which can be accessed here:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2014-2015/February2015SchoolProposals>.

Copies of the EIS are also available in Wagner’s main office.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at the Q891 building on February 10, 2015. Approximately 10 members of the public attended the hearing and 5 people spoke. Present at the meeting were Queens High School Superintendent Juan Mendez; Community Education Council 24 (“CEC 24”) member Carl Chiaramonte; Principal of Wagner Stephania Vu; Wagner Assistant Principal David Riesenfeld; Wagner School Leadership Team

("SLT") representatives Tammy Rose, Jean Dropp, and Maria Galligrano; ALC Site Supervisor Trevor Mallay; and Sarah Turchin and Annabelle Eliashiv from the DOE.

A community meeting was held on February 3, 2015. Approximately 15 members of the public attended the meeting and 8 people spoke. At that meeting, interested parties had an additional opportunity to provide input on and ask questions about the proposal. Present at the meeting were Wagner Principal Stephania Vu; Wagner Network Leader Derek Jones; Wagner Assistant Principal David Riesenfeld; Wagner SLT representative Jean Dropp; and Estelle Acquah and Annabelle Eliashiv of the DOE.

The following comments and remarks were made at the February 3, 2015 community meeting and/or February 10, 2015 joint public hearing on the proposal:

1. CEC 24 member Carl Chiamonte shared that the CEC supports the expansion of Wagner to a six to twelve school.
2. Principal Stephania Vu supports this proposal for the following reasons:
 - a. This proposal would allow Wagner to serve the full middle and high school continua.
 - b. There is a need to provide high quality options to students in District 24.
 - c. Wagner has a record of high performance in both middle and high school.
3. Multiple commenters expressed general support for the proposal.
4. Multiple commenters support this proposal because it will allow Wagner to provide the full middle and high school continua.
5. Multiple commenters support this proposal because it will create additional middle school seats in District 24 and reduce overcrowding in the district.
6. Multiple commenters support this proposal because it will reduce the number of transitions students have to make.
7. One commenter supports the expansion on the basis that students in sixth grade are mature enough to start middle school.
8. Multiple commenters asked why the DOE would pursue construction to create additional capacity instead of re-siting the ALC and Middle College.
9. One commenter asked what criteria the PEP uses to evaluate the proposal.
10. One commenter asked whether parents can attend the PEP meeting.
11. One commenter asked about the interaction between Wagner students, the ALC students, and Middle College students.
12. One commenter asked if Wagner can also use Middle College's specialty room in building Q891.
13. One commenter asked how much the student population has grown at Wagner.
14. One commenter asked if the DOE provides busing for sixth grade students.
15. One commenter asked if there is a contingency plan in case construction is not complete in time.
16. One commenter asked which rooms would be impacted by construction.

17. One commenter asked whether the new rooms would have fire alarms.
18. One commenter asked if construction materials would be up to code.
19. One commenter asked what the building was used for before it became a school.
20. One commenter expressed a concern that the DOE would uncover asbestos during construction.
21. One commenter asked if the new rooms would have ventilation.
22. One commenter asked if any programs would be added or removed as a result of this proposal.
23. One commenter asked where students would attend sixth grade if this proposal is not approved.
24. One commenter asked if there are charter schools in District 24.
25. One commenter asked whether or not schools get additional funding when a new grade level is added.
26. One commenter asked how students will be admitted for sixth grade and seventh grade for the 2015-2016 school year.
27. One commenter asked what percentage of eighth grade students stay at Wagner for ninth grade.
28. One commenter asked what programs are offered in middle school.
29. One commenter expressed that Wagner needs facilities upgrades, such as additional bathrooms, to accommodate additional students.
30. One commenter expressed that Wagner will need to schedule multiple lunch times to accommodate additional students.
31. One commenter expressed a concern that construction will not be complete in time.

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

No written or oral comments have been received via email or voicemail.

Analysis of Issues Raised and Significant Alternatives Proposed

Comments 1, 2(a, b, c), 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 are in support of the proposal and thus do not require a response.

Comments 8, 11, and 12 pertain to the ALC and Middle College, the other school organizations in building Q891.

This proposal will not impact the continued siting of the ALC or Middle College in building Q891. The DOE strives to ensure all students have options to meet their educational needs. When the DOE assessed the feasibility of this proposal, the Office of Space Planning identified a plan to create additional capacity in building Q891. Adding capacity to building Q891 will allow Wagner to expand its grade levels without disrupting the other schools in the building.

Comment 11 asks specifically about the interaction between Wagner, Middle College, and the ALC's students. At the community meeting on February 3, 2015, Principal Vu shared that the interaction between students is minimal.

In response to comment 12, principals who share space in a building are encouraged to work together and share resources. The principals of Wagner and Middle College have the autonomy to decide whether or not to share the specialty room Middle College uses in building Q891.

Comments 9 and 10 refer to the PEP meeting and evaluation of proposals.

This proposal will be voted on at the February 25, 2015 PEP meeting which will be held at the High School of Fashion Industries located at 225 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011. All PEP meetings are open to the public. Community members may attend the meeting and provide public comment for the PEP, as well.

The PEP evaluates proposals based on their ability to meet the needs of students in New York City. The PEP takes into consideration a number of factors, including community feedback.

Comment 13 asks about Wagner's growth in enrollment.

Wagner's enrollment increased by approximately 13%, or approximately 72 students, since the 2009-2010 school year.

Comment 14 concerns transportation services for impacted students.

Transportation for Wagner will be provided according to Chancellor's Regulation A-801. More details on the DOE transportation policy can be found at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/21A1B11A-886B-4F74-9546-E875EE82A14C/40303/A801.pdf>. The Office of Pupil Transportation will determine all necessary bus routes once the proposal is approved.

Comments 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 29, and 31 pertain to the additional capacity that will be created in building Q891.

The Office of Space Planning and School Construction Authority are working with Principal Vu to identify a plan to create additional capacity in building Q891. All newly constructed rooms will follow proper building and safety codes.

The DOE is working to ensure construction is complete by September 2015. If construction is not complete, the DOE will reassess its plans for Wagner's grade expansion.

Comments 22 and 28 refer to programming available at Wagner.

This proposal is not anticipated to impact Wagner's instructional or extra-curricular programming. Extra-curricular programs are based on student interests, available resources, and staff support for those programs. Currently, Wagner offers the following extra-curricular activities, sports, special programs, and partnerships:

- Extra-curricular Activities and Clubs: After-school tutoring in all subject areas, Arista/National Honor Society, United Student Organization, Table Toppers (Board Game Club), Yoga, Robotics, Chess Club, Art, Computer Club, Gardening Club, Gaming Club, Student Government, Yearbook, SAT Preparation, Chinese Calligraphy
- Sports: Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Girls Volleyball, Girls Golf, Co-Ed Wrestling, Girls Basketball, Boys Basketball, Boys Volleyball, Boys Golf, Girls Tennis, Girls Softball, Boys Baseball, CHAMPS
- Special Programs: Earth Science Regents and Integrated Algebra Regents in 8th grade, Accelerated Programs, Theater, Music
- Partnerships: Liberty Partnership, Carnegie Hall

Comment 23 and 26 pertain to Wagner’s middle school admissions process.

Fifth grade students interested in attending a DOE middle school for sixth grade in September 2015 were invited to participate in the centralized middle school application process in the fall of 2014. Through the middle school application process, students are offered the opportunity to apply to a range of middle schools within their district, and/or schools with borough-wide or Citywide eligibility. The Citywide deadline for fifth graders to submit middle school applications for the 2015-2016 school year was in December.

Additionally, new middle schools designated to open throughout the City for the 2015-2016 school year, along with the option of attending Wagner for sixth grade, will be available for students to consider. Pending PEP approval to open new schools, eligible students will have the opportunity to submit a “new schools” application. Information about middle school application deadlines will be available at the following link: <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Calendar>.

If this proposal is approved, for the 2015-2016 school year, Wagner will be included in the New Schools Round of the middle school application process for sixth grade and will continue to admit seventh-grade students using a school-based application. In the 2016-2017 school year and beyond, Wagner will enroll sixth-grade students through the middle school application process, and will no longer admit students in seventh grade through its school-based application.

Please see the table below for additional context on where current seventh grade Wagner students attended sixth grade in the 2013-2014 school year.

DBN	School Name	Grade Span ¹ 2014-2015	Number of 2014-2015 Wagner 7 th Graders Served in 6 th Grade in 2013-2014 ²	Total Number of 6 th Graders Served in 2013-2014 ³
30Q011	P.S. 11 Kathryn Phelan	K-6	15	169
30Q150	P.S. 150 Queens	K-6	11	107
24Q229	P.S. 229 Emanuel Kaplan	K-5 ⁴	<10 ⁵	164
24Q153	P.S. 153 Maspeth Elem	K-6	<10	136
30Q230	I.S. 230	6-8	<10	332
24Q058	P.S. 58 - School of Heroes	K-6	<10	134

¹ 2014-2015 grade span does not include Pre-Kindergarten.

² Based on the 2014-2015 Unaudited Register and the 2013-2014 Audited Register, respectively.

³ 2013-2014 Audited Register

⁴ P.S. 229 truncated from a K-6 school to a K-5 school in the 2014-2015 school year. For additional information, please visit; http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/D5369995-5FC0-41F8-BF1A-6E8BAC200A23/144082/EIS_24Q229_vFinal1.pdf.

⁵ Consistent with and pursuant to the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, totals below 10 have been suppressed in this document.

24Q005	I.S. 5 - The Walter Crowley Intermediate School	6-8	<10	500
24Q125	I.S. 125 Thom J. McCann Woodside	6-8	<10	351
29Q059	I.S. 59 Springfield Gardens	6-8	<10	177

Comment 25 pertains to funding for additional students at Wagner.

If this proposal is approved, Wagner will receive funding to cover any additional textbooks and supplies that may be required. The per capita allocation to offset these costs has historically been \$80 per student.⁶ Since Wagner's grade expansion is expected to result in approximately 50-60 additional students per year for one year, the DOE estimates that Wagner would receive awards of approximately \$4,000 - \$4,800 in 2015-2016 based on projected registers.

If grade appropriate furniture is not available on-site, Wagner may receive additional furniture packages. In FY 2015, the cost of a furniture package for each class section will be approximately \$6,500-\$7,500.⁷ Should this proposal create a need for additional administrative space or functions, the cost of voice and data lines will be fully covered by the DOE. This allocation is subject to approval by the Office of Space Planning.

The proposal should not otherwise affect the cost of instruction, although the operating budget will increase with the increase in enrollment. Most funding in schools' budgets is allocated on a per pupil basis, based on Fair Student Funding ("FSF") per capita allocation levels. Schools receive additional funds for students with disabilities, English language Learners (ELLs), and those with other supplemental academic needs.

Please refer to the FSF Guide⁸ and FY15 School Allocation Memoranda⁹ for additional information on cost of instruction and how the changes to FSF funding and other school allocations will be impacted as a result of register changes at Wagner. Staffing changes are at the discretion of the school within the limits of contractual and mandated obligations.

Comment 27 pertains to student retention from Wagner's middle school to high school grades.

Approximately 64% of students who attended Wagner for eighth grade during the 2013-2014 school year remained at Wagner for ninth grade.

Comment 30 pertains to scheduling multiple lunch periods as a result of a larger student body.

Principals have discretion over school programming, including lunch schedules, and should program their schools as they see fit. If this proposal is approved and Wagner begins to serve sixth grade students, the principal will determine how many lunch periods are appropriate for Wagner's larger student enrollment. Additionally, principals may turn to central staff for support in programming and scheduling.

Comments 19 and 24 do not pertain to this proposal, and thus do not require a response.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes were made to the proposal.

⁶ FY15 School Allocation Memorandum 21: Other Than Personal Services "OTPS" for New Schools.

⁷ Based on the Office of Space Planning Memorandum.

⁸ http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy14_15/FY15_PDF/sam01_1b.pdf

⁹ http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy14_15/FY15_PDF/sam33.pdf