

Fact Sheet: Proposed Phase-out and Replacement of Choir Academy of Harlem (05M469)

Overview

We want every community to have high quality school options for families. Every fall, the Department of Education (DOE) reviews the performance of all schools Citywide. Over the past several years, despite the best efforts of the community and the DOE to support Choir Academy of Harlem (“Choir Academy”), the school has struggled to meet basic requirements for student success.

On November 28 and December 5, 2012, Community District 5 Superintendent Gale Reeves held meetings at the school with the School Leadership Team, staff, and parents to discuss what is working at Choir Academy, what needs to be improved, and how the community can work together to better serve students.

Based on an extensive review of qualitative and quantitative data and community feedback, the DOE has determined that Choir Academy does not have the capacity to quickly improve and is proposing that the school be phased out. The DOE is also proposing that the school would be replaced by a new high school.

Proposing to phase out a school is the most difficult decision we make. We are proposing to phase out Choir Academy because it is the right action for current and future students in this community. If the proposal to phase out Choir Academy is approved, the school would phase out gradually over the next several years. The phase-out of Choir Academy’s middle school grades would be complete in June 2015, and the phase-out of Choir Academy’s high school grades would be complete in June 2016.

We hope you share our view that we can—and must—do better for students. The DOE will continue to work closely with Choir Academy staff and families to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

Performance Summary – Middle School Grades

Proficiency: % of Students on Grade Level		Progress Report Grades			Quality Review Rating
English	Mathematics	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2010-2011
11%	18%	C	B	F	Proficient

- The overwhelming majority of Choir Academy middle school students remain below grade level in English and math. Only 11% of students were performing on grade level in English—putting the school in the bottom 4% of middle schools Citywide. Only 18% of students were performing on grade level in math—putting the school in the bottom 3% of middle schools Citywide.
- The Progress Report measures the progress and performance of students in a school, as well as the school environment, compared to other schools serving similar student populations. Choir Academy’s middle school program earned an F grade on its 2011-2012 annual Progress Report, including an F grade for Student Progress, a D grade for Student Performance, and a C grade for School Environment. This year’s Progress Report marks a sharp decline in Choir Academy’s performance as compared with earlier years.
- Safety issues have been a concern at the school. On the 2012 New York City School Survey, only 70% of middle student respondents reported feeling safe in the hallways, bathrooms, and locker rooms at the school—putting Choir Academy in the bottom 17% of middle schools Citywide. Furthermore, only 77% of middle school parent respondents reported that their child was safe at Choir Academy, putting the school in the bottom 4% of middle schools Citywide.

Performance Summary – High School Grades

Graduation Rates		Progress Report Grades			Quality Review Rating
2011-2012 (4 year rate)	2011-2012 (6 year rate)	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2010-2011
61%	73%	B	C	F	Proficient

- Graduation rates have declined over the past two years. Choir Academy’s four-year graduation rate for high school students (including August graduates) was 61% in 2012, which is below the most recent Citywide average of 65.5% (Citywide average is based on the 2011 New York State reported graduation results for NYCDOE students.)
- First year credit accumulation is a key predictor of student success in high school because students who fall behind early often have trouble getting back on track to graduate. In 2011-2012, only 54% of first-year ninth-grade students at Choir Academy earned at least 10 credits with at least 6 of those credits earned across 3 of the 4 core subject areas. This rate of credit accumulation puts Choir Academy in the lowest 5% of schools Citywide.
- The Progress Report measures the progress and performance of students in a school, as well as the school environment, compared to other schools serving similar student populations. Choir Academy’s high school program earned an F grade on its 2011-2012 annual Progress Report, including F grades for Student Progress, Student Performance, School Environment, and College and Career Readiness. This year’s Progress Report marks a further decline in Choir Academy’s performance after the school dropped to an overall C grade on the 2010-2011 Progress Report.
- Only 36% of students in the Class of 2011 (all students who entered high school four years earlier) enrolled in a two- or four-year college, vocational school, or public service program by December 31, 2011. This is significantly lower than the Citywide average of 46%.
- As mentioned above, safety issues have been a concern at Choir Academy. With only 70% of student respondents on the 2012 New York City School Survey having reported feeling safe in the hallways, bathrooms, and locker rooms at Choir Academy, the school is in the bottom 9% of high schools Citywide. With only 77% of parent respondents having reported that their child is safe at school, Choir Academy is in the bottom 6% of high schools Citywide.
- Demand for Choir Academy is low. Though all eighth graders have the right to remain at the school for high school, only 51% of 2011-2012 eighth-grade students who were promoted chose to enroll in the ninth grade at the school for the 2012-2013 school year.

Despite our best efforts, the school has struggled

Staff members have worked hard to improve Choir Academy, but even with support the school has not produced adequate outcomes for students. To help the school’s efforts to improve performance, the DOE offered numerous supports, including:

Leadership Support:

- Assisting the principal and assistant principals in the development of instructional plans and goals for the school year, in support of the school’s Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Supporting school leadership in aligning curriculum to citywide instructional expectations to raise standards for teacher practice and student learning.
- Coaching the principal and assistant principals in the use of classroom observations and feedback to enhance teacher effectiveness.

Instructional Support:

- Providing support and guidance to the school in tracking credit accumulation to identify students who are falling behind and target support to keep struggling students on track to graduation.
- Providing professional development for teachers in analyzing student performance data to identify learning trends, set goals and differentiate instruction to increase student achievement.
- Facilitating training and coaching for teachers in aligning instructional practices and curriculum to citywide instructional expectations in the subject areas of English language arts, science and social studies.

Operational Support:

- Supporting school staff in meeting compliance requirements for students with disabilities and English Language Learners in order to ensure that are receiving mandated services.
- Advising school staff on budgeting, human resources, staff recruitment and building management. (various throughout SOS)
- Advising the school on grant opportunities, supporting grant implementation, and working with the principal to align the budget with the school-wide instructional goals.

Student Support:

- Providing professional development for school staff on topics in youth development, including conflict resolution, student mediation, gang awareness and violence prevention, in order to build school-level capacity to provide social and emotional support to students.
- Assisting the school administration in the development of a school safety plan to reduce safety incidents and suspension rates, and promoting best practices for dealing with difficult behavior patterns to improve the school's culture and learning environment.

What would the proposal mean for current students?

If this proposal is approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), Choir Academy would gradually phase out over the next several years. Our top priority is ensuring that current Choir Academy students are supported through eighth-grade and high school graduation. Below are enrollment plans for current Choir Academy students if the school were to be phased out.

- **Current sixth- and seventh-grade students** will continue on to the next grade level at Choir Academy in September 2013; these students can remain at Choir Academy through their eighth-grade graduation.
- **Current eighth-grade students** will have the opportunity to graduate eighth grade at the end of this school year and attend another school for high school.
- **Current middle school students** who are held over in a grade still offered by Choir Academy will continue to be served by the school. The Office of Student Enrollment will work with the families of Choir Academy middle school students who are held over in a grade which is no longer offered by Choir Academy to determine an appropriate placement in another District 5 middle school or a school in the district in which the students resides.
- **Current, first-time ninth grade students** would have the option of completing high school at Choir Academy if they continue to earn credits on schedule and pass the required Regents exams. They may also apply to attend a different high school as a 10th grader in September 2013 by participating in the second round of the High School Admissions Process.
- **Current, repeating ninth grade students** would complete high school at Choir Academy as long as they earn credits on schedule and pass the required Regents exams. As the school becomes smaller, these students would receive more individualized attention to support them toward graduation and to help them prepare for post-secondary education and/or career plans. Students would also be encouraged to meet with their guidance counselor to review progress toward graduation.
- **Current tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students who are on track to graduate** would complete high school at Choir Academy if they continue to earn credits on schedule and pass the required Regents exams. As the school becomes smaller, these students would receive more individualized attention to support them toward graduation and to help them prepare for post-secondary education and/or career plans. Students would also be encouraged to meet with their guidance counselor to review progress toward graduation.
- **Current tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade students who are not on track to graduate** should meet with their guidance counselors to review their progress toward graduation and to discuss their options. Students could complete high school at Choir Academy or consider applying to a transfer high school.

If the proposal to phase out Choir Academy is approved, the school would not admit new sixth- or ninth-grade students after the end of this school year. Next school year, Choir Academy would serve students in grades seven and eight and ten through twelve. In the 2014-2015 school year, Choir Academy would serve students in grades eight and eleven and twelve. In the 2015-2016 school year, Choir Academy would serve students in grade twelve. The school would close in June 2016 after its phase-out is complete.

Supporting Current Students

The DOE remains focused on helping Choir Academy students succeed. If this proposal is approved, Choir Academy would be provided targeted, customized and intensive supports aimed at the unique needs of the school and its students. This support would be in the areas of budget, staffing, programming, community engagement, guidance and enrollment including, but not limited to:

- Helping the school provide students with options that support their advancement and fully prepare students for their next transition point,
- Working with school staff to foster a positive culture, and
- Supporting school leadership in efficiently and strategically allocating resources to ensure a consistent and coherent school environment focused on student outcomes.

Plans for New Schools for the Choir Academy Community

The DOE has proposed to open and co-locate a new district high school in the same building as Choir Academy. If that co-location proposal is approved, the new school will begin serving grade 9 in the 2013-2014 school year and will add one more grade each year until it serves grades 9-12 in the 2016-2017 school year.

More information about this replacement school will be available shortly. We will work with the community to retain partnerships with community-based organizations that are offering valuable services to the school community.

Next Steps and What You Can Expect

In the next two months, the DOE will invite the Choir Academy community to participate in a joint public hearing co-hosted by the DOE, the District 5 Community Education Council and Choir Academy' school leadership team. As soon as the hearing has been scheduled, we will notify you of the date and also share with you the formal phase-out proposal. During the joint public hearing, community members, including parents and students, will be able to share their thoughts on the phase-out proposal.

The proposals to phase out and replace Choir Academy will be voted on by the Panel for Educational Policy ("PEP"), which is composed of members appointed by Mayor Bloomberg and the five Borough Presidents, during a public meeting scheduled for **March 11, 2013**. During this meeting, the public will have another opportunity to comment on the proposals. If the PEP approves the phase-out proposal, Choir Academy would not accept new sixth-grade or ninth-grade students next school year.

Sharing Your Concerns and Questions

The DOE is seeking your feedback on the proposals. We will record your comments and include them in our Analysis of Public Comments, which is presented to the PEP prior to the vote on the proposal. Please submit your comments to:

Phone: 212-374-3466

Email: D05Proposals@schools.nyc.gov

Online: <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/manhattan/feedback?id=342>