



Notice
December 22, 2011

Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor

The Proposed Phase-out of Manhattan Theatre Lab High School (03M283) in Building M490 Beginning in 2012-2013

I. Description of the subject and purpose of the proposed item under consideration.

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to phase out Manhattan Theatre Lab High School (03M283, “Manhattan Theatre Lab”), an existing high school in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Campus (“MLK”), also known as building M490, located at 122 Amsterdam Avenue, within the geographical confines of Community School District 3. It currently serves students in grades nine through twelve. The DOE is proposing to phase out Manhattan Theatre Lab based on its poor performance and the DOE’s assessment that the school lacks the capacity to turn around quickly to better support student needs.

If this proposal is approved, Manhattan Theatre Lab will no longer admit new ninth-grade students after the conclusion of the 2011-2012 school year. The school will continue to phase out one grade level at a time until the school closes at the end of the 2014-2015 school year, and current students will be supported as they progress towards graduation while remaining enrolled at Manhattan Theatre Lab. In cases where students do not complete graduation requirements by June 2015, the DOE will help students and families identify alternative programs or schools that meet students’ needs so that they may continue their education after Manhattan Theatre Lab completes phasing out.

Manhattan Theatre Lab is co-located with Manhattan/Hunter Science High School (03M541, “Manhattan/Hunter”), High School for Law, Advocacy and Community Justice (03M492, “Law”), High School of Arts and Technology (03M494, “Arts and Technology”), Urban Assembly School for Media Studies (03M307, “Urban Assembly Media”), and High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry (03M299, “Imagination and Inquiry”). All co-located schools serve students in grades nine through twelve. 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.

All high schools on the MLK campus, including Manhattan Theatre Lab, participate in the Citywide High School Admission Process.

If this proposal is approved, Manhattan Theatre Lab will begin phasing out one grade at a time beginning in September 2012 and complete its phase-out after the 2014-2015 school year. In another Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) posted in December 2011, the DOE is proposing to expand an existing school, Special Music School (03M859, “Special Music”), to serve high school grades in the MLK campus beginning in September 2013. The proposal can be found at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2011-2012/Feb2012Proposals>. If that proposal is approved, Special Music will grow to full-scale as Manhattan Theatre Lab phases out. Special Music currently serves kindergarten through eighth grade in building M932 and will add one grade annually until it reaches full scale in the 2016-2017 school year with a grade span of kindergarten through twelve, with grades nine through twelve housed in the MLK campus.

Background on the DOE Decision-Making Process

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a high-quality school at every stage of their education. Continuing to allocate space and resources to schools that are unable to significantly improve student performance is neither efficient nor equitable. The DOE has concluded that phasing out Manhattan Theatre Lab is appropriate due to the school's history of poor performance.

Schools are identified for possible phase-out for at least one of the following three reasons: (1) they received poor grades on their annual Progress Report; (2) they received a poor score on their most recent Quality Review; or (3) they have been identified by the New York State Education Department ("SED") as Persistently Low Achieving ("PLA"). Specifically, under the DOE's accountability framework, all schools that receive a grade of D, F, or a third consecutive C grade or lower on their annual Progress Report and all schools that receive a rating of Underdeveloped on the Quality Review are evaluated for intensive support or intervention, including the possibility of phase-out. Progress Reports are released by the DOE each fall, and evaluate schools on a scale of A through F based on Student Progress, Student Performance, and School Environment (which includes attendance and survey feedback from parents, teachers, and sixth-through twelfth-grade students, where applicable). During Quality Reviews, experienced educators visit a school over several days, observing classrooms and talking with students, staff, and families. Schools are rated on a four-point scale, with "Underdeveloped" as the lowest-possible rating and "Well Developed" as the highest.

A school's Progress Report and its Quality Review may initially suggest a school should be considered for intervention, but no single criterion leads to a phase-out decision. To identify the appropriate action that will best serve the student community, the DOE reviews school data, consults with superintendents and other experienced educators who have worked closely with the school, and gathers community feedback.

Manhattan Theatre Lab received an overall F grade on its Progress Report in 2010-2011, with F grades on the Student Performance, Student Progress, and School Environment sub-sections.

As a result, the DOE initiated a comprehensive review of Manhattan Theatre Lab, with the goal of determining what intensive supports and interventions would best benefit its students and the Manhattan Theatre Lab community. During that review, the DOE looked at recent historical performance and demand data from the school, consulted with superintendents and other experienced educators who have worked closely with the school, and gathered community feedback.

After completing that review, the DOE believes that only the most serious intervention—the gradual phase-out and eventual closure of Manhattan Theatre Lab—will best serve students and the community. Phasing out and closing Manhattan Theatre Lab will allow for new school options to develop in the MLK campus that will provide better options for families.

II. Information regarding where the full text of the proposed item may be obtained.

The EIS can be found on the DOE's Web site:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2011-2012/Feb2012Proposals>.

Copies of the EIS are also available in Manhattan Theatre Lab's main office, as well as the main offices of Imagination and Inquiry, Law, Arts and Technology, Manhattan/Hunter, Urban Assembly Media, and Special Music.

III. Submission of public comment.

Written comments can be sent to D03Proposals@schools.nyc.gov

Oral comments can be left at 212-374-3466.

IV. The name, office, address, email and telephone number of the city district representative, knowledgeable on the item under consideration, from whom information may be obtained concerning the item.

Name: Elizabeth Rose
Office: Division of Portfolio Planning
Address: 52 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007
Email: D03Proposals@schools.nyc.gov
Phone: 212-374-3466

V. Date, time and place of joint public hearings for this proposal.

January 24, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.
Manhattan Theatre Lab High School – Building M490
122 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10023

Questions about the proposal should be directed as indicated in section IV above.

Speaker sign-up will begin 30 minutes before the hearing and will close 15 minutes after the start.

VI. Date, time and place of the Panel for Educational Policy meeting at which the Panel will vote on the proposed item.

February 9, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.

Brooklyn Technical High School
29 Fort Greene Place
Brooklyn, NY 11217