



Notice  
December 22, 2011

Dennis M. Walcott  
Chancellor

**The Proposed Grade Expansion of Special Music School (03M859) to a K-12 School and Co-Location of the High School Grades with Existing Schools High School for Arts, Imagination, and Inquiry (03M299), High School for Law, Advocacy, and Community Justice (03M492), High School of Arts and Technology (03M494), Manhattan/Hunter Science High School (03M541), Urban Assembly School for Media Studies (03M307), and Manhattan Theatre Lab High School (03M283) in Building M490 Beginning in 2013-2014**

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

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to expand Special Music School (03M859, “Special Music”) to serve kindergarten through twelfth grade. Special Music is an existing Citywide choice school serving students in kindergarten through eighth grade in building M932 at 129 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10023, in Community School District 3. The DOE leases building M932 from the Kaufman Center, a music-focused cultural organization that also provides music programming services to the school. The proposed high school grades would be co-located in building M490, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Campus (“MLK”), located at 122 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10023, also in Community School District 3, with six existing high schools: High School for Arts, Imagination, and Inquiry (03M299, “Imagination and Inquiry”), High School for Law, Advocacy, and Community Justice (03M492, “Law”), High School of Arts and Technology (03M494, “Arts and Technology”), Manhattan/Hunter Science High School (03M541, “Manhattan/Hunter”), Urban Assembly School for Media Studies (03M307, “Urban Assembly Media”), and Manhattan Theatre Lab High School (03M283, “Manhattan Theatre Lab”). 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.

If this proposal is approved, Special Music would begin enrolling ninth-grade students in MLK for the 2013-2014 school year, and continue to add one grade each year until 2016-2017, when it would reach full-scale and serve kindergarten through twelfth grade, with kindergarten through eighth grade in building M932 and grades nine through twelve in MLK.

In a separate Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) posted on December 22, 2011, the DOE proposed to phase out and eventually close Manhattan Theatre Lab. This EIS can be accessed on the DOE’s Website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2011-2012/Feb2012Proposals>.

In the event that the phase-out of Manhattan Theatre Lab is not approved, the DOE would re-examine the availability of space in the building, and may, as appropriate, revise its proposal to co-locate Special Music in MLK. Such a revised proposal would be described in a revised EIS.

Manhattan Theatre Lab currently serves a total of 412 students in ninth through twelfth grades in the MLK campus. The DOE has proposed to phase out Manhattan Theatre Lab after an extensive review of data and community feedback indicating that the school is unable to turn around despite numerous efforts to improve instruction and school organization. As noted in the EIS posted on December 22, 2011, Manhattan Theatre Lab students continue to struggle academically.

If the Panel for Educational Policy approves the proposal to phase out Manhattan Theatre Lab, the school will no longer admit new ninth-grade students after the end of this school year. However, Manhattan Theatre Lab will continue to serve students currently enrolled in the school. Manhattan Theatre Lab's enrollment will decrease gradually over the next three years, and the school will complete phasing out in June 2015. The space in MLK that would be vacated by Manhattan Theatre Lab can be used to serve Special Music's proposed high school grades.

The proposed expansion and co-location of Special Music's high school grades in MLK is part of the DOE's central goal to create new school options that will better serve future students and the community at large. Special Music currently admits kindergarten through eighth-grade students through a school-based admissions process that is open to all New York City residents. If this proposal is approved, Special Music would admit ninth-grade students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process. Priority for the new Special Music high school seats would be given to Special Music's current eighth-grade students, but because the school's ninth grade would be larger than its current eighth grade, a portion of the seats would need to be filled by students coming from other middle schools through the Citywide High School Admission Process. Special Music would use an audition admissions process. The existing schools in MLK all admit students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process. Imagination and Inquiry, Urban Assembly Media, and Manhattan Theatre Lab all use a limited unscreened admissions process. Law and Arts and Technology use an educational option admissions process and Manhattan/Hunter is academically screened.

The MLK campus is located just one-and-a-half blocks (about 0.1 miles) away from Special Music's current building, where it will continue to serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The close proximity of the two sites will enable the school to easily share faculty across grade levels, as well as allow the high school students to easily access additional extracurricular programs offered by the Kaufman Center at the lower school site.

The MLK building has the capacity to serve 3,230 students. It served 2,621 students in 2010-2011, yielding a utilization rate of 81%. In 2011-2012, the building is serving 2,826 total students, yielding a utilization rate of 87%. If this proposal is approved, the building would serve approximately 2,515-2,775 students and have a projected utilization rate of 78-85% in 2016-2017 when Manhattan Theatre Lab is phased out and Special Music has reached full scale. As discussed in the EIS, MLK has sufficient space to provide all schools with at least their baseline room allocations. Therefore, the MLK building has the capacity to accommodate all existing

schools along with the proposed addition of the high school grades of Special Music.

### *Background on the DOE's 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. As detailed in the EIS posted on December 22, 2011, the DOE has concluded that phasing out Manhattan Theatre Lab is appropriate due to the school's history of poor performance.

As part of the replacement strategy for Manhattan Theatre Lab, the DOE is proposing to expand Special Music to serve high school grades in the MLK campus. Special Music would offer a rigorous, college-preparatory program designed to equip students with the skills necessary to achieve post-secondary success. The DOE believes that co-locating Special Music's high school in the MLK campus would create an additional high-quality educational option in the community. Special Music will also provide students with a rigorous musical education, including music composition, analysis, and performance. If the proposal to phase out Manhattan Theatre Lab is approved, the expansion and co-location of Special Music will also ensure that performing arts programming continues to be offered at the MLK campus.

The proposal to expand Special Music initially came from the school community. In May 2011, a grade expansion team composed of Special Music teachers and administrators submitted a formal application to expand the grades served by the school. That application was supported by Special Music's parents and the broader community surrounding the school, including City Councilmember Gale Brewer and music-focused institutions including the Julliard School and the New York chapter of the Recording Academy. This suggests a high level of satisfaction with the school and parent confidence that an expanded Special Music would better suit the needs of their children than existing high school options in the City. The grade expansion application was approved by the DOE in December 2011. This grade expansion would allow Special Music to serve elementary, middle, and high school grades at full scale.

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

## **III. Submission of public comment.**

Written comments can be sent to [D03Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto: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](mailto: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<sup>th</sup> 2012 at 6:00 p.m.  
Brooklyn Technical High School  
29 Fort Greene Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11217