



Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 8, 2012

Topic: The Proposed Truncation of Middle School Grades at Brooklyn Collegiate: A College Board School (23K493) Beginning in 2012-2013

Date of Panel Vote: February 9, 2012

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to truncate the middle school grades of Brooklyn Collegiate: A College Board School (23K493, “Brooklyn Collegiate”), a secondary school in building K055 (“K055”), located at 2021 Bergen Street, Brooklyn NY 11233, in Community School District 23, because of the middle school grades’ low performance and inability to turn around quickly to better meet student needs. Brooklyn Collegiate currently serves students in sixth through twelfth grade and is a Brooklyn borough-wide choice school with a school-based application for entry into the middle school. Brooklyn Collegiate’s high school admits ninth grade students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process. If this truncation proposal is approved, Brooklyn Collegiate would no longer admit sixth grade students after the conclusion of the 2011-2012 school year. The middle school grades will then be phased out in each subsequent year until Brooklyn Collegiate only serves ninth through twelfth grade in 2014-2015. Current middle school students at Brooklyn Collegiate will continue to be served and supported by Brooklyn Collegiate as they progress toward completion of middle school. Any middle school students remaining who have not met promotional requirements by the end of the 2013-2014 school year would be provided with an alternate placement in a District 23 middle school, or a middle school in the district where the student resides. Current eighth grade students will be supported through the Citywide High School Admissions Process as they select a high school, and may apply to remain at Brooklyn Collegiate for high school.

Brooklyn Collegiate is currently “co-located” in K055 with Achievement First Brownsville Charter School (84K626, “Achievement First Brownsville”), a charter school currently serving students in kindergarten through fourth grade and phasing in to serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade in K055. Achievement First Brownsville will reach full scale in K055 in 2015-2016, as planned when the school was sited in May 2008.

At this time, there are no plans to co-locate any other organizations in K055. The DOE will continue to assess seat capacity and the needs in District 23 and across the borough to determine the most optimal use of the space that will be vacated by the proposed truncation of Brooklyn Collegiate. Proposals for significant changes in building utilization will follow the process

outlined in Chancellor's Regulation A-190.

The details of this proposal have been released in an Educational Impact Statement ("EIS") which can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2011-2012/Feb2012Proposals>.

Copies of the EIS are also available in Brooklyn Collegiate's main office.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building K055 on January 26, 2012. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal.

Approximately 56 members of the public attended the hearing and 11 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: the Chancellor's Designee, Deputy Chancellor David Weiner; Brooklyn High School Superintendent Aimee Horowitz; District 23 Community Education Council ("CEC") representative Robin Sims; Brooklyn Collegiate Principal Amote Sias; Brooklyn Collegiate School Leadership Team ("SLT") representative Mia Pollard; and Citywide Council on High Schools ("CCHS") representative Monique Lindsay.

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

1. The CEC representative opposed the proposal and stated that District 23 needs more middle schools. She also stated that Brooklyn Collegiate should have a chance to turn its performance around.
2. The SLT representative opposed the proposal and stated that Brooklyn Collegiate presents extracurricular activities such as drum line and chess club that are beneficial to students, and the school has teachers who motivate students.
3. Brooklyn Collegiate's principal stated that while Brooklyn Collegiate's most recent Progress Report grade represents a lack of student progress, Brooklyn Collegiate is a well-rounded school that is performing better than the New York State average in English Language Arts ("ELA") and math assessments.
4. Multiple commenters stated that Brooklyn Collegiate should receive more resources so that it can turn its middle school grades' performance around.
5. Multiple commenters opposed the proposed truncation and stated that Brooklyn Collegiate is a nurturing academic environment.
6. One commenter stated that Brooklyn Collegiate should have an Innovation Zone ("iZone") program.¹
7. One commenter expressed opposition to the proposal and stated that phasing out schools and replacing them with new schools is not an effective strategy because the DOE has proposed this year to phase out schools that it recently opened. Also, the commenter stated that the schools that are targeted for phase-out generally have disproportionate numbers of poor and minority students.

¹ The iZone is a community of schools seeking to increase student achievement in kindergarten through twelfth grade, college, and career readiness by supporting innovating educational strategies and school models that personalize learning around the needs, motivations, and strengths of each student.

The following question was asked as part of the question and answer section of the Joint Public Hearing on January 19, 2012. It does not directly relate to the proposal and, therefore, will not be addressed.

- How many students entered Achievement First's high school in its first ninth grade? How many are in that cohort now? How successful is Achievement First's high school?

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

8. A commenter asked whether there would be two organizations that serve sixth through eighth grade in the building if Brooklyn Collegiate did not implement a grade truncation.

Class Size Matters ("CSM"), submitted written comments objecting to all of the proposed phase-outs and truncations proposed by the DOE. In opposing the DOE's proposal to phase-out and eventually close these schools, the CSM comments cited the following reasons: (1) none of the Educational Impact Statements for the proposals include discussion of how the proposed phase-outs or, where applicable, the co-locations would affect class size; (2) the Citywide Instructional Footprint does not include class size standards; (3) the Educational Impact Statements use utilization figures from the DOE's Enrollment Capacity Utilization Report ("Blue Book"), which does not take into account the need to reduce class sizes in schools Citywide; (4) the community members, faculty, and families of schools that have been proposed for phase-out have opposed the proposed phase-outs and truncations; (5) the schools that have been proposed for phase-out and/or truncation have high concentrations of "at-risk" students, as defined as English Language Learner students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.

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

- Comment 1 stated that District 23 needs more middle schools. Excluding Brooklyn Collegiate and the District 23 schools that serve kindergarten through eighth grade, there are currently seven schools in District 23 that serve middle school grades: I.S. 392 (23K392); Mott Hall IV (23K522); Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy (23K518); General D. Chappie James Middle School of Science (23K634); Eagle Academy for Young Men II (23K644); Teachers Preparatory Secondary School (23K697); and Mott Hall Bridges Middle School (23K671). In addition, the DOE has proposed in a separate EIS to open and co-locate a new middle school, 23K423, with P.S. 298 Dr. Betty Shabazz in building K298 beginning in 2012-2013. Also, there are currently two charter schools located in District 23 that serve middle school grades: Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School (84K777) and Brownsville Collegiate Charter School (84K710).

If the proposal to truncate Brooklyn Collegiate's middle school grades is approved, Brooklyn Collegiate would no longer admit sixth grade students after the conclusion of the 2011-2012 school year, and the middle school grades would be phased out in each subsequent year until Brooklyn Collegiate serves only ninth through twelfth grade students in 2014-2015. Brooklyn Collegiate's middle school grades have experienced a

steady decline in performance, as detailed in the EIS. Thus, the DOE concluded that Brooklyn Collegiate should focus on its high school grades to ensure that the school is better able to serve current and future students and the broader community. The DOE will continue to evaluate how to provide additional middle school options to the District 23 community.

- Comments 2 and 5 opposed the proposal, praised Brooklyn Collegiate and expressed appreciation for its nurturing and motivating environment. As stated in the EIS, current middle school students at Brooklyn Collegiate will continue to be served and supported by the school as they progress toward completion of middle school and transition to high school, either at Brooklyn Collegiate or another high school through the Citywide High School Admissions process. Furthermore, any students not meeting promotional requirements during the phase-out will continue to be enrolled at Brooklyn Collegiate, and have access to appropriate courses to support their progress towards promotion. Current eighth grade students may apply to remain at Brooklyn Collegiate for high school.

If this proposal is approved, Brooklyn Collegiate will not be required to make any immediate changes to available academic or extracurricular programs that it currently offers. However, the availability of certain offerings would inevitably be impacted as the middle school grades are phased out and the student population decreases.

- Comments 1 and 4 stated that Brooklyn Collegiate should be allowed to improve its middle school grades' performance. As was described in the EIS, Brooklyn Collegiate's middle school has struggled to improve, and its performance during the last few years confirms the DOE's assessment that the school's sixth through eighth grades lack the capacity to turn around quickly to better support student needs. Brooklyn Collegiate students remain below grade level in English and math. In 2010-2011, only 29% of students performed on grade level English, and only 29% of students performed on grade level in math. Furthermore, Brooklyn Collegiate is in the bottom 16% of middle schools Citywide in terms of learning growth in English and the bottom 2% in terms of learning growth in math. If these outcomes persist, Brooklyn Collegiate students will fall further behind their peers in other schools.

The DOE has offered specific supports to help the school's efforts to improve the middle school's performance, as detailed in the EIS, but even with support the school has not produced adequate outcomes for the students. Therefore, the DOE concluded that the truncation of Brooklyn Collegiate's middle school grades is warranted because Brooklyn Collegiate lacks the proper infrastructure to meet the needs of its sixth through eighth grade students and families.

- Comment 3 stated that Brooklyn Collegiate is performing better than the New York State average in ELA and math assessments. According to the New York State Education Department, 43.6% of sixth grade students, 36.6% of seventh grade students, and 35.0% of eighth grade students across New York met or exceeded the ELA proficiency standard, and 56.0% of sixth grade students, 55.5% of seventh grade students, and 52.5% of eighth

grade students met or exceeded the standard in math on the May 2011 state tests. In 2010-2011, only 52.4% of Brooklyn Collegiate's sixth grade students, 25.9% of its seventh grade students, and 15.9% of its eighth grade students met or exceed the ELA proficiency standard, while only 33.3% of Brooklyn Collegiate's sixth grade students, 29.6% of its seventh grade students, and 24.4% of its eighth grade students met or exceeded the math proficiency standard on the 2011 state tests. Thus, the commenter was not accurate in stating that Brooklyn Collegiate is performing better than the New York State average in ELA and math assessments. Furthermore, Brooklyn Collegiate was in the bottom 52% of middle schools Citywide in terms of English proficiency and in the bottom 17% in terms of math proficiency.

Brooklyn Collegiate's middle school received F grades for Student Progress and Student Performance on its 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Progress Reports. Furthermore, while Brooklyn Collegiate received an A grade for Student Performance, it received a C grade for Student Progress in its 2008-2009 Progress Report. The Progress Report measures the progress and performance of students in a school compared to other schools serving similar student populations, and Brooklyn Collegiate's Progress Report grades indicate that Brooklyn Collegiate students have not sufficiently improved on state tests in English and math compared to other students who started at the same level.

- Comment 6 states that Brooklyn Collegiate should have an iZone program. According to the iZone, Brooklyn Collegiate is an iZone school in the 2011-2012 school year. The iZone application process for the 2012-2013 school year has ended and all schools were notified of selection decision by January 30, 2012. Brooklyn Collegiate was approved for participation in the iZone program in 2012-2013, subject to its payment of the participation fee. The decision of whether or not to participate lies with the principal.
- Comment 7 contends that phasing out schools and replacing them with new schools is not an effective strategy. The DOE believes that closing a struggling school and opening a new school with new leaders and staff is a successful strategy to provide all students with an excellent education. In June 2010, MDRC, an independent research group, issued a report on New York City's new small schools strategy. MDRC concluded: "it is possible, in a relatively short span of time, to replace a large number of underperforming public high schools in a poor urban community and, in the process, achieve significant gains in students' academic achievement and attainment. And those gains are seen among a large and diverse group of students — including students who entered the ninth grade far below grade level and male students of color, for whom such gains have been stubbornly elusive." (MDRC, "Transforming the High School Experience," June 2010.)

The DOE counts on each of its schools to provide a high-quality education to its students—and it holds all schools to the same high standard. If a school is not getting the job done for students – whether it was opened recently or not – the DOE is compelled to take serious action to ensure that its students do not fall even further behind.

Comment 7 also contends that schools that have been targeted for phase-out generally have disproportionate numbers of poor and minority students. When the student

demographics of the high schools that the DOE has phased out to the small schools that have been opened in their place, it becomes apparent that they are very similar in terms of the percentages of black and Latino students, English Language Learner students, and students with disabilities. While high schools that the DOE has phased out had 83% black or Latino students, 18% English Language Learner students, and 13% students with disabilities, the new replacement schools have 92% black or Latino students, 14% English Language Learner students, and 14% students with disabilities.

Specifically regarding Brooklyn Collegiate's middle school grades, in 2010-2011, 75% of Brooklyn Collegiate's students qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 46% of its students were black or Hispanic. Across District 23, the average percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch was 83%, and the average percentage of black or Hispanic students was 98%. Thus, it is inaccurate to state that Brooklyn Collegiate has a disproportionate percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch or were black or Hispanic.

- Comment 8 asked whether there would be two organizations that would serve students in sixth through eighth grade in K055 if Brooklyn Collegiate's proposed truncation is not approved. Brooklyn Collegiate currently serves sixth through twelfth grade, and it is currently co-located in K055 with Achievement First Brownsville, a charter school that currently serves students in kindergarten through fourth grade and is phasing in to serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade in K055. Achievement First Brownsville will reach full scale in K055 in 2015-2016, as planned when the school was sited in May 2008. Thus, it is possible that both Brooklyn Collegiate and Achievement First Brownsville would serve students in sixth through eighth grades in the future if Brooklyn Collegiate's proposed truncation is not approved.

Class size is primarily determined by how principals choose to program students at their school within their budget. Thus, no particular proposal, in and of itself, necessarily impacts class size. The Citywide Instructional Footprint relies upon the current programming at a school (number of sections) to determine the baseline footprint allocation. Decisions to co-locate schools are not based solely on the utilization figures in the Blue Book. The DOE also considers the total number of classrooms in the building and the number of sections currently programmed at all schools in the building or projected to be programmed to determine the availability of excess space and the baseline footprint for each school.

The DOE acknowledges that there some members of the schools' communities that are opposed to the proposal, and/or prioritize smaller class sizes. However, given the schools' longstanding performance struggles, we believe that phasing out certain schools and/or creating new educational options by co-locating new schools will best serve the families in these communities.

With respect to CSM's comments regarding the particular types of students who attend phase-out schools, it should be noted that schools progress report grades are based in part on a comparison of the school with peer schools serving similar populations of students. Poor performance report grades thus indicate that a school is not serving its students well, both objectively and by

comparison to other schools serving similar students. Moreover, the new schools proposed to open are anticipated to serve student populations similar to the phasing out school.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.