



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**Notice**  
February 1, 2017

## **The Proposed Closure of Essence School (19K311) in Building K190 at the End of the 2016-2017 School Year**

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

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing the closure of Essence School (19K311, “Essence”), an existing district middle school serving students in sixth through eighth grades in building K190 (“K190”), located at 590 Sheffield Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11207 in Community School District 19 (“District 19”). Essence is currently co-located in K190 with P.S. 190 Sheffield (19K190, “P.S. 190”), a district elementary school serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade and offering a full-day pre-kindergarten program. K190 also houses the Community Based Organization (“CBO”) Good Shepherd.

The DOE is proposing to close Essence based on its persistently low enrollment, low performance, and lack of demand from students and families. If this proposal is approved, Essence will close at the end of the 2016-2017 school year and will no longer exist as a middle school option beginning in the 2017-2018 school year. DOE staff will work individually with current sixth- and seventh-grade students, as well as eighth-grade students who do not meet promotional criteria, to ensure that those students are offered seats in other higher-performing district middle schools. Current eighth grade students who meet promotional criteria will complete middle school at Essence at the end of the 2016-2017 school year and may continue on to the high school to which they are matched in the high school admissions process, described in greater detail in Appendix C of the Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”).

There is sufficient capacity in middle schools throughout District 19 to accommodate current Essence students, as well as future students who might have attended Essence if it remained open as a middle school option. If the proposed closure of Essence is approved, all current sixth- and seventh-grade students and eighth-grade students who do not meet graduation requirements will receive individualized enrollment support from the superintendent’s staff and Family Welcome Center counselors, focusing on each student’s interests, to find a seat that is aligned to his or her needs. All students will receive alternative options for enrollment in District 19 or their zoned middle school district (if different) before being discharged from Essence. Please see Appendix A of the Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) for a list of schools serving middle school grades in District 19.

Concurrently with this closure proposal, the DOE is also issuing another proposal affecting a District 19 middle school option. In a separate EIS, the DOE is proposing to truncate the middle school grades served by P.S. 306 Ethan Allen (19K306, “P.S. 306”) beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, also in District 19. If that proposal is approved, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, P.S. 306 will no longer enroll or serve students in sixth through eighth grades after the conclusion of the 2016-2017 school year, and will only serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade and offer a pre-kindergarten program. The proposal to close Essence School and the proposal to truncate the middle school grades served by P.S. 306 are not contingent upon one another and will be voted on separately by the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”). If both proposals are approved, there is still sufficient capacity in middle schools

throughout District 19 to accommodate current Essence and P.S. 306 middle school students, as well as future students who might have attended Essence or P.S. 306 for middle school if they remained open as middle school options. Please see Appendix A of the EIS for a list of schools serving middle school grades in District 19.

Essence is one of a cohort of 86 schools that have been designated by the DOE as Renewal Schools. Schools selected to be Renewal Schools were assigned a “Priority” or “Focus” accountability status by the New York State Department of Education (SED), demonstrated low academic achievement (in 2012, 2013, and 2014), and scored “Proficient” or below on their most recent Quality Reviews. (In four instances, which did not include Essence, schools were selected to be Renewal Schools per the Chancellor’s discretion).

Through the Renewal School program, long-struggling schools are receiving clear guidance on the progress they need to make, as well as intensive resources and supports to make sustainable improvements and to ensure that every student in New York City receives a high-quality education and is on track to graduate ready for college and career. Many Renewal Schools are improving as a result of these supports. However, for schools that aren’t showing progress, additional strategies, such as closure, may be considered.

The DOE is proposing to close Essence because it has struggled with persistently low enrollment, poor performance, and lack of demand from students and families, despite multiple prior interventions such as changes in programming and leadership. During the 2013-2014 school year, Essence served 149 students in sixth through eighth grades. In the current 2016-2017 school year, Essence is serving a total of just 109 students, which represents a 27% decline in enrollment in the past three years. In 2015-2016, only 4.8% of students at Essence were proficient in ELA, compared to 20.5% districtwide and 37.1% citywide, and 4.8% of students were proficient in Math, compared to 13.6% districtwide and 32.4% citywide.

As mentioned above, if the proposed closure of Essence is approved, all current sixth- and seventh-grade students will receive individualized enrollment support from the Superintendent’s staff and Borough Family Welcome Center counselors, which will help students and families in thinking through the options presented in order to ensure students choose the right school to continue their education for the 2017-2018 school year. This will involve an application process by which students will be offered options including higher-performing district middle schools. Eighth-grade students who do not meet promotional requirements will also receive individualized support and be offered a seat at a higher-performing school. All students will receive alternative options for enrollment in District 19 and their district of residence (if different) before being discharged from Essence. Students who applied to Essence for sixth grade through the middle school application process will have that choice removed from their applications and be matched to another school ranked on their application where possible. Most students are matched to one of the programs ranked on their application, but it is not guaranteed. If a student does not match to one of the programs ranked on their application, they will receive a placement in a school where they are eligible to attend middle school. Please see Appendix A of the EIS for a list of schools serving middle school grades in District 19.

According to the Enrollment, Capacity, and Utilization Report (the “Blue Book”), K190 has the target capacity to serve a total of 639 students and currently serves a total of 269 students across Essence and P.S. 190 in the 2016-2017 school year, yielding a building utilization rate of approximately 42%. The concept of “target capacity” and the related concept of “utilization rate” are explained in Appendix B of the EIS.

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

The EIS can be found on the Department of Education's website at:  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2016-2017/March222017SchoolProposals>

Copies of the EIS are also available in the main office of P.S. 190 and Essence.

**III. Submission of public comment.**

Members of the public who wish to provide comments are encouraged to attend the Joint Public Hearing for this proposal and share their feedback in person. Members of the public that do not provide comments at the hearing may also provide oral or written comments as described below. All comments must be submitted at least 24 hours in advance of the PEP meeting at which this proposal is subject to a vote in order to be mentioned in the Public Comment Analysis to be published and provided to the PEP the evening before the PEP votes.

Written comments can be sent to [D19Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:D19Proposals@schools.nyc.gov). Oral comments can be left at 212-374-0208.

**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: Max Familian  
Office: Office of District Planning  
Address: 100 Gold Street, Suite 3200, New York, NY 10038  
Email: [D19Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:D19Proposals@schools.nyc.gov)  
Phone: 212-374-0208

**V. Date, time and place of the Joint Public Hearing for this proposal.**

March 8, 2017 at 6:00 PM  
Building K190  
590 Sheffield  
Brooklyn, NY 11207

Questions about the proposal should be directed as indicated in Section IV above. Speaker sign-up will begin 30 minutes before the hearing, at 5:30 PM, and will close 15 minutes after the start of the hearing.

**VI. Date, time and place of the PEP meeting at which the PEP will vote on the proposed item.**

March 22, 2017 at 6:00 PM  
High School for Fashion Industries  
225 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10011