



Revised Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 24, 2010

Topic: Proposed Re-siting of Leadership Prep Brownsville Charter School (84K711) and Co-Location with P.S. 284 in School Building K284

Date of Panel Vote: February 24, 2010

The analysis of public comment regarding the proposed re-siting of Leadership Prep Brownsville Charter School (“Leadership Prep”) was revised on February 24, 2010, to reflect additional comments that had not been captured in the analysis that was posted on the New York City Department of Education’s (“DOE”) Web site on February 23, 2010.

One advocacy organization submitted general comments objecting to all proposed co-locations of charter schools with existing district schools. Although the comments did not address any one co-location proposal in particular, the DOE has appended these comments to the public comment analysis for each of the proposed charter co-locations.

Summary of Proposal

Prior to the start of the 2010-2011 school year, Leadership Preparatory Brownsville Charter School (“Leadership Prep”), an existing school currently serving students in grades Kindergarten-1, will move from its current location in Community School District 23 to another site a few blocks away. Specifically, Leadership Prep will relocate to school building K284, located at 213 Osborn Street in Brooklyn, and will serve grades K-8 at full scale. At that site, Leadership Prep will be co-located with P.S. 284 Lew Wallace, an existing school serving students in pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade. No P.S. 284 students will be displaced by this proposal.

Leadership Prep Brownsville is currently housed in school building K150 with P.S. 150 Christopher, a K-8 school in the process of phasing-out its middle school grades, and Brownsville Collegiate Charter School, a middle school currently serving grades 5 and 6 and in the process of phasing in to serve grades 5-8 at scale. The move of Leadership Prep Brownsville will relieve overcrowding in the K150 building, enabling both Leadership Prep Brownsville and Brownsville Collegiate to phase in until they achieve full scale. The available space created by relocating Leadership Prep Brownsville will enable Brownsville Collegiate to complete its full phase-in.

At the same time, Leadership Prep cannot continue to grow in its current location. Building K284 has available capacity to accommodate Leadership Prep at least to the point when the school expands to serve a K-4 grade span. K284 has a target capacity of 967 students, and its 2008-2009 target utilization was 61 percent. This year, PS 284 enrolled 540 students. The current enrollment of Leadership Prep is 123 students, and the school is expected to enroll 240-260 students in 2012-13 when Leadership Prep enrolls its first fourth-grade class. At that point, the Department will re-assess available space in the K284 building to determine whether additional rooms in the building can be allocated to Leadership Prep. If sufficient space exists, Leadership Prep will continue to add one grade per year in K284 until it reaches its full scale of grades K-8 in the 2016-17 school year. If sufficient space is not available in K284 at that time, the Department will identify another location to house the school's fifth- through eighth-grade students.

The choice of K284 as the new site for the school will ensure the continued availability of high-quality elementary and middle schools for District 23 families. While admission to Leadership Prep will remain via lottery, District 23 students will continue to receive preference in that lottery. In addition, K284 is located just a few blocks from Leadership Prep's current site, minimizing transportation challenges for families after the school moves to its new location.

Leadership Prep Brownsville is operated by the Uncommon Schools network of charter schools. There are currently nine Uncommon Schools operating in Brooklyn, five of which have available 2008-09 State test data. Last year, 84.9 percent of students in those schools achieved a Level 3 or Level 4 on State ELA exams (16 points higher than the citywide average); 97.6 percent of students in those schools achieved a Level 3 or Level for on State math exams (16 points higher than the citywide average). Four of the Uncommon Schools received City Progress Report grades last year, and all of those schools earned A grades.

An Educational Impact Statement on this proposal was posted on the Department of Education's Web site on January 8, 2010.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing was held at K284 on February 22, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Eleven members of the public spoke in opposition to the proposal, citing concerns that a school of the same grade span opening in the building would reduce enrollment at P.S. 284 and that money allocated to charter schools should be allocated to existing struggling schools in the district instead. Members of the public also cited concerns that P.S. 284 is already overcrowded and will not have the space to accommodate Leadership Prep Brownsville in the K284 building.

Five members of the public spoke in favor of the proposal, stating that they value the opportunity to choose to send their children to a charter school in District 23 and cherish the education their children receive at Leadership Prep Brownsville. Faculty members and the Leadership Prep Brownsville administration stated that they would like to continue to serve the Brownsville community and work to ensure that all of their scholars graduate from college.

Summary of Issues Raised in Written and Oral Comments and Significant Alternatives Suggested

In the original version of this analysis, a total of seven written comments and six oral comments were submitted. Six written comments were submitted by parents of students at existing charter schools managed by Uncommon Schools; all of these written comments were in support of the proposal. Those in support of the proposal noted that Uncommon Schools' charter schools have had a history of student academic success. The six oral comments received were opposed to the proposal as was the seventh written comment. Opposition to the proposal asserted that the hearing on February 22nd had very few attendees because the hearing was held the first day back after the winter break, precluding the possibility of sending reminders to interested parties; the winter break meant that parents did not have 10 days of notice in order to adjust their schedules to attend the meeting; many parents did not know that the meeting was happening. The comments in opposition to the proposal also suggested that the community was not given adequate opportunity to participate and noted that the Community Education Council (CEC) was not represented at the joint public hearing. Additionally, the comments in opposition stated that questions were not allowed and that staff at P.S. 284 were informed that only parents could sign up to give comments. It was suggested that the proposal not be voted on at the February 24th Panel for Educational Policy meeting. No significant alternatives were originally proposed.

This analysis has been revised to reflect five additional oral comments that had been submitted. They raise the total number of oral comments to eleven. All five comments were in opposition to the proposal, and they reiterated complaints that the community was not given adequate opportunity at the joint public hearing to participate. The additional comments did not propose any significant alternatives.

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

The Department of Education strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a high quality school or program that meets their individual needs. The creation of new schools – district and charter - is one strategy the DOE uses to meet specific community needs. Leadership Prep Brownsville charter school will give priority in its charter school lottery process to all District 23 students. Students from the P.S. 284 zone will have to apply and be accepted to Leadership Prep Brownsville via lottery. Some families within the P.S. 284 zone might choose to apply to Leadership Prep Brownsville. The Department of Education supports parent choice. There are currently 3,370 students on the waitlist for the 9 Uncommon Schools located in Brooklyn. The re-location of Leadership Prep Brownsville to K284 will enable Leadership Prep Brownsville to continue to add one grade per year until the 2012-2013 school year and continue to expand access to high quality options to the District 23 community.

K284 has a target capacity of 967 students. The 10.31.2009 Audited Register of P.S. 284 was 540, indicating that the K284 building has the capacity to accommodate approximately 450 additional students. The projected enrollment of Leadership Prep Brownsville grades K-4 is

approximately 250 students. Therefore there is sufficient space to accommodate Leadership Prep Brownsville grades K-4 and P.S. 284 in K284 with a projected building utilization of 82%.

With regards to issues raised about the timing of the joint public hearing, it is important to note that the hearing originally scheduled for February 10, 2010 had to be rescheduled due to inclement weather and few scheduling options were available. State Education Law requires joint public hearings be held between thirty and forty-five days of the filing of an educational impact statement, and scheduling was complicated by the February 15-19 Midwinter Recess. The DOE took all possible steps to notify the community of the new hearing date.

The purpose of the joint public hearings is to allow all interested parties the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal. Although there was no formal question and answer period during the hearing, no one was precluded from posing questions during the time allotted for public comment. Moreover, public comment was not limited to only parents. P.S. 284 staff members were also free to sign up to speak at the hearing.

Finally, the DOE scheduled the joint public hearing with the CEC and invited all members of the CEC to participate. The DOE had anticipated that CEC members would be in attendance as at least two members confirmed their intent to participate prior to February 22.

No changes to the proposal have been made. The proposal will be presented to the Panel for Educational Policy at the February 24, 2010, meeting as currently posted.

A copy of the educational impact statement for this proposal can be obtained at <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/585A6F4E-316F-45AF-A1C4-0F38AC7260E8/75219/K284LeadershipPrepBrownsvilleEISFinal1811.pdf>.

Summary of Issues Raised and Significant Alternatives Suggested

One advocacy organization submitted general comments objecting to all proposed co-locations of charter schools with existing district schools. In opposing the DOE's proposed co-locations, the comments cited the following reasons: (1) the DOE did not use accurate data in analyzing the utilization and capacity of school buildings; (2) the utilization formula used by the DOE is inadequate and assumes inappropriate target class sizes; (3) charter schools enroll fewer high needs students than district and citywide averages, leading to higher concentrations of high needs students in district schools; and (4) the expansion of charter schools has eliminated critical space from district schools.

The comments suggest a moratorium on any new charter co-locations, or expansions of existing charter schools within shared public school space, until an independent review is conducted to assess the capacity in existing public school buildings and make determinations about the amount of space required to reduce class size to mandated levels.

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

The comments assert that the DOE did not use accurate data in analyzing utilization and capacity of school buildings. The data used in analyzing the utilization and capacity of school buildings comes from "The Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization Report" (also known as the "Blue Book"), which is the standard by which the DOE measures the maximum capacity of a school building compared to the enrollment. These calculations are based on information provided by principals in the Annual Facilities Survey conducted by the School Construction Authority. In addition to considering the Blue Book information, the DOE conducts a physical survey of school buildings and takes into consideration current programming prior to proposing a change in utilization.

With regard to the comment regarding the use of inappropriate target class sizes, the DOE does use aspirational targets for school buildings but feels that these goals are appropriate for ensuring a quality education for all students. The DOE understands that building usage varies by schools and leaves programming decisions to school leaders. However, it is important to have a standard means of assessing the use of our limited physical plant resources consistently across the city. The class size targets used for the 2008-2009 Blue Book calculations of target capacity and utilization are lower than those used for determining historical capacity and utilization.

The comments assert that charter schools enroll fewer high needs students than the citywide and district averages, thereby leading to higher concentrations of high needs students in district schools. It is important to note that charter school admissions are done by lottery as

required by State Education Law. Charter schools do in fact serve the full range of public school students.

**Prepared by
Department of Education**