

## Fact Sheet: Proposed Truncation of P.S. 161 The Crown’s Middle School Grades (17K161)

### Overview

In a concerted effort to ensure that all students have high-quality educational programs, the Department of Education (DOE) annually reviews the performance of all schools Citywide. Over the past several years, despite the best efforts of the community and the DOE to support P.S. 161 The Crown (“P.S. 161”), the school has struggled to meet basic requirements for student success in grades 6-8.

On October 13, 2011, Community District 17 Superintendent Rhonda Hurdle Taylor held a School Leadership Team and parent meeting at the school to discuss what is working in grades 6-8 at P.S. 161, what needs to be improved, and how the community can work together to serve students better.

Based on an extensive review of qualitative and quantitative data and community feedback, the DOE has determined that P.S. 161 does not have the capacity to improve its work quickly on behalf of students in grades 6-8, and is proposing that the school’s middle school grades (6-8) be truncated.

**Proposing to truncate a school is a difficult decision. We are proposing to truncate P.S. 161 because it is the right action for current and future students in this community.** If the proposal to truncate P.S. 161 is approved, the school would remain open, but the middle school grades would phase out gradually over the next several years. The truncation of the middle school grades would be complete in June 2014, at which point the school would only serve students in Kindergarten through fifth grade.

We hope you share our view that we can—and must—do better for students. The DOE will continue to work closely with P.S. 161 staff and families to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

### Performance Summary

Proficiency: % of Students on Grade Level		Progress Report Grade			Quality Review
English	Math	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2010-2011
38%	41%	A	C	D	Developing

- The majority of P.S. 161 students remain below grade level in English and Math. Last year, only 38% of students were performing on grade level in English and only 41% of students were performing on grade level in Math – putting the school in the bottom 45% of K-8 schools Citywide in terms of English proficiency and in the bottom quarter of K-8 schools Citywide in terms of Math proficiency.
- P.S. 161 is not adequately helping students to make progress. P.S. 161 is in the bottom 18% of K-8 schools Citywide in terms of learning growth in English and the bottom 5% in terms of learning growth in Math. Learning growth measures annual student growth on New York State ELA and Math tests relative to similar students. If these outcomes persist, P.S. 161 students will fall further behind their peers in other schools.
- The Progress Report measures the progress and performance of students in a school as well as the school environment, compared to other schools serving similar student populations. P.S. 161 earned an overall D grade on its 2010-11 annual Progress Report, including D grades for Student Progress and Student Performance and a C grade on School Environment.
- The Quality Review uses a four-tiered rubric (well-developed, proficient, developing, and underdeveloped) to measure how well a school is organized to support student achievement. P.S. 161 was rated “Developing” on its most recent Quality Review in 2010-2011, indicating deficiencies in the way that the school is organized to

support student learning.

- Enrollment in the sixth grade classes at P.S. 161 has been low compared to enrollment in its fifth grade classes. In 2009-2010, there were 127 fifth-grade students enrolled at P.S. 161, while there were only 34 sixth grade students in 2010-2011. In the 2006-2007 school year, P.S. 161 served 139 fifth grade students, but in the 2007-2008 school year, P.S. 161 served only 54 sixth grade students.

## Overview of Past Strategic Improvement Efforts at P.S. 161

Staff members have worked hard to improve P.S. 161 The Crown, but even with support the school has not produced adequate outcomes for students. To help the school's efforts to improve performance, the DOE offered numerous supports including:

### Leadership Support:

- Provided ongoing leadership training and mentoring for the principal and assistant principals to help them set clear goals for the school in developing the school's Comprehensive Education Plan, the Principal Performance Review, and Language Allocation Plan.
- Coached and trained leadership on strengthening instructional quality through standards-based instruction, differentiated learning techniques, and improving the school culture and learning environment through targeted development.
- Coached and trained leadership on implementing plans in support of Citywide instructional initiatives and teacher effectiveness.

### Instructional Support:

- Supported and trained teachers in creating curriculum maps, developing strategies aimed at addressing various students' entry points into content, and other instructional tools to enhance teacher practice and improve student achievement.
- Coached English Language Arts teachers in the development of literacy focused tasks, assessments, and curriculum.
- Provided professional development opportunities in supporting high- and low-level students through the implementation of differentiated instruction.
- Trained teacher teams in various data driven tools, supports, and measures aimed at improving student achievement through developing data-driven instruction and the analysis of best teaching practices.

### Operational Support:

- Advised school staff on budgeting, human resources issues, teacher recruitment, and building management.
- Offered leadership support and training in monitoring progress and meeting compliance regulations for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

### Student Support:

- Trained the School Based Support Team in comprehensive guidance programs and evidence-based counseling strategies targeted at developing and improving the capacity for social and emotional supports at the school level.
- Developed extensive professional development opportunities for staff in an effort to improve school environment and school safety.

## What would the proposal mean for current students?

If this proposal is approved, P.S. 161's middle school grades would be phased out gradually over the next several years and the school would not admit new sixth-grade students after the end of this school year. Below are the enrollment plans for current P.S. 161 students, if the school were to phase out.

### Grades K-5

- Current fifth-grade students would participate in the Middle School Choice process this year and enroll in sixth grade at a choice middle school or zoned middle school for September 2012. These students would also have an opportunity to submit a new school application in March to apply to new schools that may open in September 2012.
- Current second, third, and fourth-grade students will remain at P.S. 161 until the end of the school year and then would continue on to the next grade level at P.S. 161 in September 2012; these students can remain at P.S. 161 through fifth grade.

### Grades 6-8

- Current eighth-grade students will have the opportunity to graduate at the end of this school year.
- Current sixth and seventh-grade students will move on to the next grade at P.S. 161 in September 2012.
- P.S. 161 will not take in a new sixth-grade class in September 2012.

In school year 2012-13, P.S. 161 would serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade, seventh grade, and eighth grade. Then, during the following school year, it would serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade and eighth grade. The school will no longer serve middle school grades after June 2014; however, P.S. 161 would continue to serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

## Supporting Current Students

The DOE remains focused on helping P.S. 161 students to succeed. If this proposal is approved, P.S. 161 would be provided targeted, customized, and intensive supports aimed at the unique needs of the school and its students. This support would be in the areas of budget, staffing, programming, community engagement, guidance, and enrollment including, but not limited to:

- Helping the school provide students with options that support their advancement, and fully prepare students for their next transition point;
- Working with school staff to foster a positive culture; and
- Supporting school leadership in efficiently and strategically allocating resources to ensure a consistent and coherent school environment focused on student outcomes.

## Next Steps and What You Can Expect

In January, the DOE will invite the P.S. 161 community to participate in a joint public hearing co-hosted by the DOE, the District 17 Community Education Council, and P.S. 161's School Leadership Team. As soon as the hearing has been scheduled, we will notify you of the date and also share with you the formal proposal to truncate P.S. 161's middle school grades. During the joint public hearing, community members, including parents and students, will be able to share their thoughts on the proposal.

The proposal to truncate P.S. 161's middle school grades will be voted on by the Panel for Educational Policy, which is composed of members appointed by Mayor Bloomberg and the five Borough Presidents, during a public meeting scheduled for **February 9, 2012**. During this meeting, the public will have another opportunity to comment on the proposal. If the PEP approves the proposal, P.S. 161 would not accept new sixth-grade students next school year.

## Sharing Your Concerns and Questions

The DOE is seeking your feedback on the proposal. We will record your comments and include them in our Analysis of Public Comment, which is presented to the PEP prior to the vote on the proposal. Please submit your comments at:

Phone: 212-374-0208

Online: <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/brooklyn/proposal?id=66>