

Fact Sheet: Proposed Grade Truncation and Replacement of P.S. 156 Laurelton Middle School Grades (29Q156)

Overview

We want every community to have high quality school options for families. Every fall, the Department of Education (DOE) reviews the performance of all schools Citywide. Over the past several years, despite best efforts of the community and the DOE to support P.S. 156 Laurelton (“P.S. 156”), the school has struggled to meet basic requirements for student success.

On October 9 and 16, 2012, District 29 Superintendent Lennon Murray held meetings at the school with the School Leadership Team, staff, and parents to discuss what is working at P.S. 156, what needs to be improved, and how the community can work together to better serve students.

Based on an extensive review of qualitative and quantitative data and community feedback, the DOE has determined that P.S. 156’s middle school grades do not have the capacity to quickly improve and is proposing that the school’s middle school grades be truncated. The DOE is also proposing that the middle school grades be replaced by a new middle school.

Proposing to truncate a school is a difficult decision. We are proposing to truncate P.S. 156 because it is the right action for current and future students in this community. If the proposal to truncate P.S. 156 is approved, 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 2015.

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. 156 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			Most Recent Quality Review Rating
English	Mathematics	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2009-2010
37%	36%	C	C	D	“Proficient”

- The overwhelming majority of P.S. 156 students remain below grade level in English Language Arts and Math. Only 37% of students were performing on grade level in English—putting the school in the bottom 35% of K-8 schools Citywide. Only 36% of students were performing on grade level in math—putting the school, and the bottom 11% of K-8 schools Citywide. In both ELA and Math proficiency, P.S. 156 ranks at the bottom of all District 9 K-8 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. 156 earned a D grade on its 2011-2012 annual Progress Report, including D grades for Student Progress and for Student Performance and an F grade for School Environment. P.S. 156 has a history of low performance, including a D grade in 2011-2012 on the Progress Report and C grades in both 2010-2011 and 2009-2010.
- Safety issues have been a concern at the school. On the 2011-2012 New York City School Survey, only 26% of teachers believed that discipline and order were maintained at P.S. 156.
- Demand for P.S. 156 has fallen steadily over the past several years: between 2006-2007 and 2011-2012, the number of students fell by 153 students, or 19%. P.S. 156 is a zoned school, but only 47% of students residing in the P.S. 156 zone chose to attend the school, suggesting that families are seeking better options.

Despite our best efforts, the school has struggled

Staff members have worked hard to improve P.S. 156 Laurelton, 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:

- Assisting school leadership in the development of instructional plans and goals for the school year, in support of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Supporting school leadership in aligning curriculum to citywide instructional expectations to raise standards for teacher practice and student learning.
- Participating in instructional visits with school leadership teams to provide targeted feedback on ways to raise academic rigor and increase student achievement.

Instructional Support:

- Facilitating training for teachers in research-based instructional strategies to increase the academic achievement of students with disabilities.
- Providing professional development and coaching for teachers on the development of rigorous literacy and math curriculum that aligns with citywide instructional expectations.

Operational Support:

- Training school staff in student data tracking systems to ensure efficient and effective monitoring of student attendance and academic programming.
- Advising school staff on budgeting, human resources, staff recruitment and building management.

Student Support:

- Facilitating a town hall meeting and a workshop on safety issues for parents, aimed at fostering support for a positive learning environment among the entire school community.
- Assisting the school in the development of a school safety plan and discipline code, and coaching school staff in best practices for reducing the number of safety incidents and suspensions.

What would the proposal mean for current students?

If this proposal is approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), P.S. 156'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. All currently enrolled students would have the opportunity to continue their education at P.S. 156 and would be supported through graduation.

Kindergarten – Grade 4

- P.S. 156 will continue to serve kindergarten through fifth grades next year and beyond.
- Current kindergarten through fourth-grade students will remain at P.S. 156 until the end of the school year and then will continue on to the next grade level at P.S. 156 in September 2013; these students can remain at P.S. 156 through their fifth-grade graduation.

Grade 5

- Current fifth-grade students will have the opportunity to graduate from P.S. 156 at the end of this school year. These students may have applied to a District 29, borough-wide, or Citywide choice middle school. Whether or not they have submitted an application, these students will receive priority for a seat in their zoned middle school. Most students at P.S. 156 are zoned to I.S. 59, M.S. 355 or M.S. 356 for sixth grade.
- The new school will serve sixth grade next year and will add one grade per year over the next two years. As an additional option, current P.S. 156 fifth-grade students may apply to the new school during the new schools round of applications this spring. In its first year only, the new middle school will give priority to students currently attending P.S. 156 for fifth grade.

Grades 6 – 7

- P.S. 156 will also serve seventh and eighth grades next year and will serve one grade fewer each year over the next two years.
- Current sixth- and seventh-grade students will move on to the next grade at P.S. 156 in September 2013; these students can remain at P.S. 156 through their eighth-grade graduation.

Grade 8

- Current eighth-grade students will have the opportunity to graduate from P.S. 156 at the end of this school year. These students should have applied to high school through the High School Admissions Process.

P.S. 156 middle school students who are held over in a grade still offered by P.S. 156 will continue to be served by that school. P.S. 156 middle school students who are held over in a grade which is no longer offered by P.S. 156 will be served by the new middle school.

Next school year, P.S. 156 would serve students in grades kindergarten through five and grades seven and eight. In the 2014-2015 school year, P.S. 156 would serve students in grades kindergarten through five and grade eight. In June 2015, the truncation of P.S. 156's middle school grades would be complete. In the 2015-2016 school year, P.S. 156 would only serve students in kindergarten through five.

Supporting Current Students

The DOE remains focused on helping P.S. 156 students to succeed. If this proposal is approved, P.S. 156 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 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.
- Supporting school leadership in efficiently and strategically allocating resources to ensure a consistent and coherent school environment focused on student outcomes

Plans for a New School for the P.S. 156 Community

The DOE has proposed to open and co-locate a new district middle school in the same building as P.S. 156. If that co-location proposal is approved, the new school will begin serving grade 6 in the 2013-2014 school year and add one more grade each year until it serves grades 6-8 in the 2015-2016 school year. In its first year only, the new middle school will give priority to students currently attending P.S. 156 for fifth grade.

More information about this replacement school will be available shortly. We will work with the community to retain partnerships with community-based organizations that are offering valuable services to the school community.

Next Steps and What You Can Expect

In the next two months, the DOE will invite the P.S. 156 community to participate in a joint public hearing co-hosted by the DOE, the District 29 Community Education Council, and P.S. 156'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. 156's middle school grades. During the joint public hearing, community members, including parents and students, will be able to share their thoughts on the truncation proposal.

The proposals to truncate and replace P.S. 156 will be voted on by the PEP, which is composed of members appointed by Mayor Bloomberg and the five Borough Presidents, during a public meeting scheduled for **March 11, 2013**. During this meeting, the public will have another opportunity to comment on the proposals. If the PEP approves the proposals, P.S. 156 would not accept new sixth-grade students next school year.

Sharing Your Concerns and Questions

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

Phone: 212-374-7621

Email: D29Proposals@schools.nyc.gov

Online: <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/queens/feedback?id=372>