



Revised Notice  
April 15, 2011

## **The Proposed Extension of the Co-location of VOICE Charter School of New York (84Q304) with Existing School P.S. 111 Jacob Blackwell (30Q111) in Building Q111**

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

VOICE Charter School of New York (84Q304, "VOICE") is an existing public charter school that currently serves 214 students in kindergarten through third grade in Building Q111, at 37-15 13th Street, Long Island City, NY 11101 in Community School District 30, where it is co-located with an existing zoned elementary school, P.S. 111 Jacob Blackwell (30Q111, "P.S. 111"), which serves 423 students in grades kindergarten through eight and offers two sections of a full-day pre-kindergarten program. A "co-location" means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.

VOICE has been co-located with P.S. 111 on a temporary basis since September 2008. On February 28, 2011, the New York City Department of Education ("DOE") published an Educational Impact Statement ("EIS") describing a proposal to permanently site grades K-4 of VOICE in Q111 beginning in the 2011-2012 school year. The DOE has now published a revised EIS and revised Building Utilization Plan ("BUP"), which is described in detail in Section II below.

The DOE is now proposing to permanently site only grades K-2 of VOICE in Q111, with grades 3, 4 and eventually 5 to be sited one block away in private space at 36-14 to 36-28 12th Street, Long Island City, NY 11101 (owned by the St. Rita School), also in Community School District 30. The DOE is also proposing to increase the number of sections of grades K-2 that VOICE will serve, though overall there will still be a decrease in the number of VOICE sections in the Q111 building under this revised plan. As a result of this overall decrease in enrollment at Q111, construction to increase the building's capacity is no longer necessary.

**This revised notice provides information about a joint public hearing that will take place regarding this proposal. The revised proposal will be subject to a vote by the Panel for Educational Policy ("PEP"). This revised notice also provides a new date and location for the PEP vote.**

Consistent with its charter, VOICE will continue to expand in 2011-2012 to serve approximately 50 students in fourth grade for a total of 311 VOICE students. VOICE will expand to serve another 50 students in fifth grade in 2012-2013, the final year of its expansion. In addition, VOICE will expand enrollment in grades K-2 to serve 75 students per grade instead of the current 50, in accordance with a charter revision which was authorized in 2009. At "full-scale," it will serve approximately 425 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. In 2011-2012, 200 of these students, representing grades kindergarten through two, will attend school in Q111. In 2012-2013

and beyond, 225 of these students, representing grades kindergarten through two, will attend school in Q111. VOICE enrolls kindergarten students through a charter lottery application process which gives preference to students residing in District 30.

Q111 has the capacity to serve 796 students. Grades K-2 of VOICE would continue to be co-located with P.S. 111, while the older grades will attend school in the private facility. In 2011-2012, there will be approximately 690-695 students served in the building by both P.S. 111 and VOICE, yielding a projected building utilization rate of 87%.

## **II. Identification of all revisions, including substantial revisions to the item.**

This revised EIS and revised BUP includes the following changes:

- The number of grades and sections in each grade that VOICE will serve within Building Q111 in 2011-2012 and beyond has been adjusted, and each schools' room allocation in the Q111 building has been adjusted accordingly;
- Some of P.S. 111's Baseline Footprint allocations have been corrected;
- The proposed shared space schedule has been adjusted and the DOE has clarified the rationale for the amount of time that the two co-located schools are allocated in the shared spaces under this proposal;
- The Chancellor's right to re-site VOICE should zoned demand for P.S. 111 increase has been explained;
- Additional school-based programs offered by P.S. 111 have been included;
- Clarifies information regarding the over-the-counter process; and
- Information about anticipated construction has been removed because the revised plan does not require additional building capacity.

## **III. Summary of all public comment received to date.**

A joint public hearing regarding the original proposal was held at Voice Charter School of New York / P.S. 111 on March 31, 2011. At the hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 200 members of the public attended the hearing and 19 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: District 30 Community Superintendent Phil Composto; Community Education Council 30 members Isaac Carmignani, Jeffrey Guyton, Mavis Hall, Marius Titus, and Valarie Lamour; P.S. 111 Principal Randy Seabrook and SLT members Nannette Blaize and Liam Cleary; VOICE Principal Franklin Headley and Board President Richard Bayles; and Citywide Council on Special Education member Maria Uruchima. In addition, Claudia Chan from Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan's office and Asher Jacobs from Council Member Jimmy Van Bremer's office were also present.

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

1. Jeffrey Guyton of CEC 30 stated the following:
  - a. Students and parents from P.S. 111 feel that the expansion of VOICE is unfair. VOICE can use more rooms, temporarily, without destabilizing P.S. 111 if parent concerns about unfairness are addressed.
  - b. P.S. 111 needs "extraordinary" support from the DOE to address challenges at P.S. 111.

- c. It would not be acceptable to close P.S. 111 to allow VOICE to expand K-8.
2. Valarie Lamour read a statement on behalf of CEC 30 opposing the co-location. Ms. Lamour stated the following:
  - a. While the CEC understands that current VOICE third graders need classrooms for September 2011, the DOE's own proposal admits that both schools will not fit unless a major renovation is completed in a timely manner.
  - b. It does not make sense to establish the co-location of grades K-4 without a guarantee that there is space available for both schools. The DOE must guarantee that renovations will be made to the building to ensure that there is space in the building.
  - c. The EIS should state that if modifications are not made, the DOE "will limit" the scope of VOICE's co-location, instead of "may limit," which is currently written.
  - d. Using the enrollment numbers provided by the DOE, P.S. 111 will reach capacity next year and over-capacity each year following. This is due to the fact that the magnet grant is bringing more students into P.S. 111.
  - e. The DOE expects an increase of 100 students to P.S. 111's enrollment, but this number is conservative, given residential housing that is being constructed.
  - f. The proposal could impact the availability of pre-kindergarten classes in Q111. These pre-kindergarten programs are vital to the surrounding community and should not be removed if there is a need for space in the building.
  - g. CEC 30 wants all District students to succeed and the establishment of VOICE may help alleviate overcrowding in some District 30 schools.
  - h. There are inconsistencies in the EIS and BUP, including the way students are counted.
  - i. Past experience with the DOE has led the CEC to believe that the opinions of parents do not matter.
  - j. Making Q111 the permanent home of VOICE's fourth-grade students puts P.S. 111 students in jeopardy because the proposal does not include definite parameters.
  - k. Increasing class sizes at P.S. 111 to accommodate the expansion of VOICE is wrong and unjust to the students of P.S. 111, which has a significant population of ELLs and students with disabilities.
  - l. VOICE and the DOE should work together to find a location for VOICE's 4th-through-8th grades, separate from Building Q111.
3. The statement on behalf of CEC 30 also offered the following alternative: The permanent co-location of VOICE for grades K-3 and the temporary co-location for the 4th-grade students of VOICE for the year 2011-2012. This alternative would allow for the annual review of enrollment trends and utilization, should VOICE not find permanent space for its 4th-through-8th grades for 2012 and beyond.
4. Representatives for Council Member Jimmy Van Bremer and Council Member Cathy Nolan read a statement signed by the Council members as well as other elected officials. The representatives expressed opposition to the proposal and stated that P.S. 111 needs more space to grow as a result of the federal magnet grant it has received. The representatives suggested siting VOICE's fourth and fifth grade classes at the St. Rita's school. The representatives requested a meeting on behalf of their Council members, Congresswoman Maloney, Council Member Von Bremer, and Queens Borough President Marshall with former Chancellor Cathie Black to discuss the issue.

5. Wayne Cleary, a member of P.S. 111's school leadership team, stated his opposition to the proposal. He detailed his concerns about P.S. 111's lack of space and questioned how the DOE could justify putting students in the building's basement. He stated that while the EIS notes P.S. 111's need for more space as it adds additional sections in the seventh and eighth grades, the proposal would take away space from P.S. 111. He referred to VOICE as a parasite and said that the only way to eliminate a parasite is to completely remove it from the host.
6. P.S. 111's PTA president Nannette Blaize spoke in opposition to the proposal. She stated that the PTA's opposition to the proposal is not directed at VOICE's students or families, but that the proposal is unfair to both schools. She expressed frustration at the way she feels the DOE pits parents and communities against one another.
7. Richard Bayles, the president of VOICE's board, gave a statement in support of the proposal. He said that VOICE has no interest in taking over or replacing P.S. 111 and has no plans to site fifth grade classes in the building. He described the role of charter schools in New York City's public school system, including the accountability measures to which VOICE is subject. He provided an overview of VOICE's history and described the school's instructional model. He described how much VOICE had enjoyed its partnership with P.S. 111 in Building Q111.
8. One speaker read a statement on behalf of Isabel Zoauka, VOICE's parent leader coordinator, in support of the proposal. She emphasized that charter schools are public schools and described her daughter's success at VOICE.
9. Isaac Carmignani, co-president of the District 30 Community Education Council, expressed his agreement with the statement read by Valarie Lamour. He went on to state the importance of listening to both opponents and proponents of the proposal have to say.
10. Yolanda Idarraga, the co-chair of VOICE's parents' association, stated her support for the proposal. She emphasized that VOICE's students come from the surrounding community just like P.S. 111's students. She described how VOICE's partnership with P.S. 111 has grown and become very positive and she encouraged the P.S. 111 community to look at the facts and disregard the rumors around the proposal.
11. Frank Headley, the principal at VOICE, thanked everyone in the audience for coming to the hearing and for their generous work in the creation of VOICE. He said that P.S. 111 has been a wonderful host and that VOICE has had a wonderful relationship with P.S. 111.
12. One commenter spoke of the positive experience his children have had at VOICE and expressed support for the proposal. He stated his confidence in VOICE's intent to maintain a positive and respectful working relationship with P.S. 111.
13. One commenter saluted the teaching professionals at P.S. 111 and VOICE and stated that, as a teacher of children with disabilities, her argument is with the priorities in District 30. She questioned why VOICE doesn't have a self-contained class and stated that children with learning disabilities should be able to attend any public school of their choice.

14. One commenter stated her opposition to the proposal based on the fact that P.S. 111, after struggling for many years, is on the upswing and cannot afford to have its space trimmed. She cited P.S. 111's recently awarded magnet grant as evidence of the school's progress and stated that, since the school is already overcrowded, it can't afford to lose any space. She said that the children of P.S. 111 are suffering as a result of the school's co-location with VOICE. She said that she has nothing against VOICE but that the school was intended to be co-located with P.S. 111 temporarily and it's time for VOICE to find its own space. She made a request for former Chancellor Cathie Black to visit the school before the PEP votes on the proposal.
15. One commenter, a former president of the District 30 CEC, stated that Principal Headley and Mr. Bayles had invited her to visit VOICE and she had been very impressed with the school. She said she was happy to learn that VOICE did not have smaller class sizes like some other charter schools and she wrote an e-mail to former Schools Chancellor Klein to praise VOICE as a model school. She said the problem is not with VOICE, but rather with the DOE's policy of co-locating charter schools with district schools. She stated that this policy has made parents very resentful. She also expressed concern about asbestos in the building. She expressed opposition to the proposal and recommended taking a little more time to review the proposals and find a better solution.
16. One commenter said her daughter had attended P.S. 111 for pre-k and is now a student at VOICE. She said it was unfair for VOICE to be likened to a parasite and that she fully supports P.S. 111. She stated that it was wrong of the DOE to pit parents against each other and that the conversation should be around providing adequate space for both schools. She voiced her support for all public schools, whether they are charter schools or district schools.
17. One speaker who has taught at both VOICE and P.S. 111 stated her support for VOICE but said that the school should not be allowed to flourish at the expense of other children. She detailed some of the challenges of working with limited space and stated that giving up more rooms would be detrimental to the children of P.S. 111. The speaker voiced opposition to the proposal stating that both schools deserve space, but one should not have it at the expense of the other.
18. One speaker emphasized that VOICE and P.S. 111 are part of the same school community in Building Q111.
19. One speaker stated that parents should be demanding that the DOE meet their needs and he described the quality of the education his children are receiving at VOICE.

The DOE also received comments through its established written and oral mechanisms.

The DOE received three written comments via e-mail:

20. Valarie Lamour, CEC 30 member, submitted the written statement that was read aloud at the hearing (the comments are reflected in comment number 2 above).
21. Valarie Lamour submitted two additional written comments that stated the following:

- a. Although the joint public hearing is for the community to provide feedback, the Office of Portfolio Planning has already made plans. The VOICE charter school application for 2011-2012 states that they are a K-4 school, which assumes that the proposal has already been approved. In addition, the proposed co-location will not work because both schools will not fit in the Q111 building.
- b. No construction would have to be done at Q111 if VOICE found a space that could accommodate 4th-8th grades of VOICE. The comment also inquired about the costs of the proposed construction at Q111.

The DOE also received 9 oral comments via telephone:

22. Multiple commenters voiced support for the proposal, citing the success of their students at VOICE, the positive relationship between the two schools, the excellence of the faculty at VOICE, and the music program at the school

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

The revised EIS and revised BUP can be found on the Department of Education's web site:  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/May182011Proposals>.

Copies of the revised EIS and revised BUP are also available in the main offices of VOICE and P.S. 111.

#### **V. Submission of public comment.**

Written comments can be sent to [D30Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:D30Proposals@schools.nyc.gov).  
Oral comments can be left at 212-374-7621.

#### **VI. 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: Izaak Orlansky  
Office: Division of Portfolio Planning  
Address: 52 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007  
Email: [D30Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:D30Proposals@schools.nyc.gov)  
Phone: 212-374-7621

#### **VII. Date, time and place of joint public hearing for this proposal.**

May 12, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.  
VOICE Charter School of New York/ P.S. 111 Jacob Blackwell  
37-15 13 Street  
Long Island City, NY 11101

Questions about the proposal can be directed as indicated in section VI above.

Speaker sign-up will begin 30 minutes before the hearing and will close 15 minutes after the start. Interpretation services will be provided in Spanish. To request interpretation services in another language, please contact Mr. Orlansky at the e-mail address or telephone number above.

**VIII. Date, time and place of the Panel for Educational Policy meeting at which the Panel will vote on the proposed item.**

May 18, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.  
Long Island City High School  
14-30 Broadway  
Queens, NY 11106