



Public Comment Analysis

Date: March 22, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Co-location of New High School, Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology (02M507) with the High School of Graphic Communication Arts (02M625) and the Business of Sports School (02M393) in School Building M625

Date of Panel Vote: March 23, 2011

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to co-locate a new DOE high school, Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology, (02M507 or “Urban Assembly”), in school building M625 (“M625”), located at 439 West 49th Street, New York, NY 10019, within the geographical confines of District 2 (“District 2”). If this proposal is approved, Urban Assembly would be co-located in building M625 with two existing high schools: the High School of Graphic Communication Arts (02M625) and the Business of Sports School (02M393), a school currently serving students in grades 9 and 10, which will reach full scale in 2012-2013 serving students in grades 9-12. In addition, M625 houses an Alternative Learning Center (“ALC”, 88M992). 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.

In the 2009-2010 school year, building M625 had a target capacity to serve 1,939 students, and the building enrolled 1,957 students, yielding a target building utilization rate of 101%. In 2010-2011, building M625 has an enrollment of 1948 students, yielding a utilization rate of 100% of target capacity. The slight decrease in building enrollment is attributed to the recent downsizing of the High School of Graphic Communication Arts. Over the last two years, the DOE has worked closely with the principal to reduce the number of incoming ninth-graders at that school by eliminating the Printing program, which struggled to attract and enroll new students. As a result, the High School of Graphic Communication Arts enrolled 1,660 students in 2010-2011, compared to 1,774 students in 2009-2010. The DOE will continue to downsize the High School of Graphic Communication Arts over the course of 4 years by shrinking its enrollment by approximately 660-760 students, so that the school eventually serves 900-1,000 students in grades 9-12.

If this co-location proposal is approved, Urban Assembly would gradually phase into M625 while the High School of Graphic Communication Arts simultaneously scales back its enrollment, and the Business of Sports School continues its phase in. The new school, Urban

Assembly, would serve students in grade 9 in 2011-2012 and would add one grade level every year until the school reaches its full grade span of 9-12 in the 2014-2015 school year, serving approximately 400-450 students. The new school would be open to students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process, and would have a Limited Unscreened selection method. Limited Unscreened schools give admissions priority to students who demonstrate interest in the school by attending an Information Session, Open House events, or visiting the school's exhibit at any one of the High School Fairs. In addition, the school plans to offer Career and Technical Education programs in Information Technology.

The M625 building will have adequate capacity to accommodate the new high school, the ALC, and the existing schools in the building at full operational capacity. Once Urban Assembly completes its phase in, the building would serve approximately 1,780-1980 students in 2014-2015, yielding an approximate utilization rate of 102%.

The details of this proposal have been released in an Educational Impact Statement which can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/Mar232011Proposals.htm>. Copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of High School of Graphic Communication Arts and the Business of Sports School.

Summary of Comments Received Prior to the Official Public Comment Period

A comment was received prior to the comment period on this proposal. Although this comment was not received during the comment period, as a courtesy, the DOE wishes to acknowledge that one written comment was received. The comment discussed safety issues at the High School of Graphic Communication Arts, particular the amount of violence at the school and expressed concern about the low graduation rate and the D grade the school received during recent review.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at High School of Graphic Communication Arts / Business of Sports School on March 2, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 32 members of the public attended the hearing, and 1 member of the public spoke. Present at the meeting were: Manhattan High School Superintendent Elaine Gorman; Community Educational Council (“CEC”) 2 representative Shino Tanikawa; High School of Graphic Communication Arts School Leadership Team (“SLT”) representatives Richard Rocco, Matt Guttman and Patricia Crispino; Business of Sports School Principal Joshua Solomon and SLT representatives Jane Marcinkiewicz and Elizabeth Corredor.

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

1. CEC 2 representative Shino Tanikawa expressed her opposition to the proposal, which she noted was not the official stance of CEC 2. In particular, she was concerned about multiple schools sharing a building that was originally designed to hold one school. She asserted that the EIS fails to accurately assess the impact of the co-location on the schools since it only discusses shared spaces in terms of numbers and fitting students into

classrooms; when sharing a space involves not just placing kids inside classrooms, but also ensuring safety as they move around the halls, eat lunch in the cafeteria and using the gymnasium.

2. Business of Sports School SLT representative Jane Marcinkiewicz stated that there is nothing wrong with sharing a building with other schools, but expressed her concern that there would need to be renovations to the building and additional changes to make it work (i.e. buying more sports equipment, hiring extra tutors and extra people for safety measures, and making sure there is enough space in the locker room). She also asserted that these changes cannot be made with the current budget cuts.
3. A teacher from High School of Graphic Communication Arts noted her concern that the co-location would cut classrooms in half and fit more students in each room, which she believed would cause health-related issues. She also expressed the opinion that the school facilities (such as the library, gymnasium and cafeteria) are often overused and cannot be shared.

Summary of Issues Raised in Written and/or Oral Comments Submitted to the DOE

4. A commenter asked when the decision regarding the proposal would be made.

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

In response to comment 1, many high schools in New York City are co-located in buildings with several schools. While M625 previously housed only one school, the DOE has determined that there is sufficient capacity in the building to accommodate all three organizations at scale.

With regard to the statement that the EIS does not adequately address the proposal's impact on other schools: the impact of the proposal on affected students, schools, and the community is, in fact, outlined in section three of the EIS. This section describes both the anticipated impact on current and future students with respect to partnerships, extracurricular activities, enrollment, and academic offerings. In addition, specific decisions regarding the scheduling of lunch periods and usage of common areas such as the gym and auditorium will be made by the Building Council, consisting of the principals from all co-located schools, in conjunction with the DOE Office of Space Planning.

In response to comment 2, the purchasing of equipment and hiring of additional tutors/staff is a school-based decision and will not be decided upon centrally. In addition, school safety agents are allocated to schools based on the building's projected enrollment. Because the total enrollment of the building is expected to remain consistent, it is unlikely that additional safety agents will be deployed to the campus.

In response to comment 3, the DOE does not anticipate that there will be a substantial increase in the total number of students attending school in building M625. The High School of Graphic

Communication Arts will downsize its enrollment over the next four years by approximately 660-760 students while the Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology phases in with 100-125 students per year. At scale Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology will serve 400-450 students in grades 9-12. Therefore, the seats lost at the High School of Graphic Communication Arts will be absorbed by the new school phasing in. The DOE does not believe this will trigger any health-related issues in the building as the total number of students enrolled will remain fairly consistent.

With regard to the concern about dividing rooms, some of the large spaces in M625 have been divided into multiple classrooms to create additional capacity. However, as stated above the DOE does not intend to enroll a higher number of students in the building.

With regard to shared spaces, as in other situations where schools are co-located, the schools would need to share certain large common and specialty rooms in the building, such as the gymnasium, auditorium, and cafeteria. Specific decisions regarding the allocation of the shared spaces would be made by the Building Council, consisting of the principals from all co-located schools, in conjunction with the DOE Office of Space Planning.

In response to comment 4, as described in the notice which accompanied this proposal, the Panel for Educational Policy will vote on the proposal on March 23, 2011.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.