

Public Comment Analysis

Date: May 21, 2013

Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 111 Adolph S. Ochs (02M111) from K-8 to K-5 Beginning in the 2014-2015 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: May 22, 2013

Summary of Proposal

P.S. 111 Adolph S. Ochs (02M111, “P.S. 111”) is an existing district school located in school building M111 (“M111”) located at 440 West 53rd Street, Manhattan, NY 10019 in Community School District 2 (“District 2”). P.S. 111 currently serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade and offers two sections of full-day pre-kindergarten.

P.S. 111 admits kindergarten through fifth grade students through a zoned admissions process. P.S. 111 admits sixth through eighth grade students into two middle school programs: a zoned program, open to students who reside within the P.S. 111 middle school zone, and a screened program, open to students who reside inside or outside of the P.S. 111 zone. Students zoned to P.S. 111 for middle school, as well as students who are zoned to District 2 for middle school or attended a District 2 elementary school, may apply to both P.S. 111 middle school programs through the District 2 Middle School Choice process. P.S. 111 is the only school organization housed in M111.

In collaboration with the school’s leadership, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to implement a gradual “grade truncation” of P.S. 111’s middle school grades. If this proposal is approved, P.S. 111 will begin its grade truncation in the 2014-2015 school year, when P.S. 111 will no longer enroll new sixth grade students. Students in sixth and seventh grade at P.S. 111 in the 2013-2014 school year will continue at the school for seventh and eighth grade in 2014-2015, provided they meet promotional requirements. All eighth grade students at P.S. 111 in the 2013-2014 school year who meet promotional standards will apply to high school through the Citywide High School Admissions Process and enter ninth grade, as planned, in September of 2014.

During the 2014-2015 school year, P.S. 111 will serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade and students in seventh and eighth grade, and operate two sections of a full day pre-kindergarten program. During the 2015-2016 school year, P.S. 111 will serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade and students in eighth grade, as well as two sections of full day pre-kindergarten. During the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, eighth-grade students at P.S. 111 who meet promotional standards will apply to high school through the High School Admissions Process.

After the last class of eighth grade students graduates in June 2016, P.S. 111 will no longer serve students in middle school grades. In each year of implementation of this proposal, there may be students who do not meet promotional standards and are required to repeat a grade that the school will no longer serve. The Office of Student Enrollment will work with those families to determine appropriate placements in the students' districts of residence. As per Chancellor's Regulation A-101, these students may be placed in another school in their district of residence, including new middle schools proposed for the 2014-2015 school year.

P.S. 111's school leadership team initiated this proposal to truncate the school's middle school grades in January 2012 through the submission of a Letter of Intent ("LOI") to the Division of Portfolio Planning ("Portfolio"). Truncating P.S. 111's middle school grades will allow the school to more fully focus on serving its elementary school students.

The DOE anticipates that building M111 will have excess space once P.S. 111 has completed its grade truncation. The DOE does not currently have plans for the use of this space. Any significant changes to school utilization would be proposed in a separate Educational Impact Statement ("EIS") in accordance with Chancellor's Regulation A-190 and would be subject to approval by the Panel for Educational Policy ("PEP").

The DOE does not anticipate that the proposed truncation of P.S. 111 will impact its existing pre-kindergarten program. However, like all pre-kindergarten programs, its availability will depend on continued demand and funding.

Summary of Comments Received

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building M111 on May 8, 2013. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 15 members of the public attended the hearing, and 5 people spoke. Present at the meeting were Superintendent Mariano Guzman, community superintendent of District 2; Elizabeth Weiss and Demetri Ganiaris of the Community Education Council for District 2 ("CEC 2"); Principal Irma Medina of the School Leadership Team of P.S. 111; and Jennifer Peng of the Office of Portfolio Management.

Below is a summary of the comments received:

1. CEC member Elizabeth Weiss asked how the information about the proposed new middle schools would be distributed to families who wish to apply.
2. CEC member Demetri Ganiaris asked what was being planned for the excess space available at P.S. 111 after its proposed truncation.
3. One public commenter asserted that she would like to have her child stay at P.S. 111 for the middle school grades because it was easier for her as a parent to travel to P.S. 111.
4. One public commenter who is the parent of a child at P.S. 111 asked if their child, who is currently in fourth grade, would be able to attend middle school at P.S. 111.

5. One public commenter asserted that she is in support of the proposed truncation because the mix of elementary and middle school students is difficult at P.S. 111, and that this proposed truncation would benefit staff, teachers and students.
6. One commenter who is the P.S. 111 PTA vice-president asked if the new middle school proposed to open in the 2014-2015 school year in building M338 would serve students who would have attended middle school at P.S. 111.
7. One commenter who was a middle school teacher at P.S. 111 asked for more information on how current staffers could potentially be hired at a new middle school.

The DOE did not receive any comments through its feedback phone number or email address.

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

Comment 5 is in support of this proposal and does not require a response.

Comment 1 concerns the process by which the DOE notifies families and students of new school programs in future school years.

New middle schools proposed or designated to open in the 2014-2015 school year in District 2 would be listed in the 2014-2015 District 2 Middle School Directory. Fifth graders applying to middle school for the 2014-2015 school year would receive information about and be able to apply to new schools during the 2013-2014 school year.

Comment 2 concerns the use of the M111 building in future years.

With respect to the plans for the excess space in building M111, P.S. 111 is currently planning a new Gifted and Talented program as well as a new Spanish language program. Both programs would begin in the 2013-2014 school year and would utilize excess space anticipated in building M111.

Comment 3 concerns the convenient proximity of P.S. 111 as a school for some of its current and future middle school students.

Concurrent with the truncation of P.S. 111, the Department of Education is proposing to open a new middle school located 1.1 miles away from P.S. 111 at its long-term site. This middle school will be accessible by multiple public transportation routes that also serve P.S. 111. The proposal for that middle school can be found at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/May2013Proposals.htm>.

Any students who are currently in fifth grade and meet promotional criteria may choose to apply to and enter P.S. 111 as sixth graders in the 2013-2014 school year. These students would have the right to graduate from P.S. 111 as eighth graders, providing they continue to meet promotional criteria.

With respect to all students who are currently enrolled in middle school grades at P.S. 111, they have the right to continue to attend and graduate from middle school at P.S. 111, assuming they continue to meet annual promotional criteria.

Comment 4 concerns the impact that this proposed truncation would have on students currently enrolled in P.S. 111 in specific grades.

For any students currently enrolled in fifth through eighth grade at P.S. 111 in the current school year, please refer to the response to comment 3.

Any students currently in kindergarten through fourth grade will no longer be able to apply to P.S. 111 for the middle school grades. They will have the option of applying to other middle school in District 2, and additional middle schools approved or proposed to open in the 2013-2014 school year and in the 2014-2015 school year.

Comment 6 concerns the new middle school proposed to open in M338 in the 2014-2015 school year.

The proposed new middle school has sufficient seat capacity to compensate for the loss of middle school seats at P.S. 111. In the year that P.S. 111's middle school stops enrolling new sixth graders, the new middle school will open with an anticipated 3 sections of 6th grade students.

Comment 7 asks after the hiring practices of the proposed new middle school.

The hiring practices of the new middle school will be conducted in accordance with existing labor contracts. Some current P.S. 111 staff positions will be excessed due to the declining enrollment associated with the truncation of the sixth through eighth grade classes at P.S. 111. It is difficult to precisely predict the number of affected positions. Barring system-wide layoffs, excessed teachers would be eligible to apply for other City positions, and any teacher who did not find a permanent position would be placed in the Absent Teacher Reserve pool, meaning that they would continue to earn their salary while serving in the capacity of a substitute teacher in other City schools. Should there be a vacancy in the school in a teacher's license area within one year of the teacher being excessed, the teacher would have a right of return to the school, consistent with applicable contractual provisions regarding teachers' seniority.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.