

## Fact Sheet: Proposed Closure of Freedom Academy High School (13K509)

### 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 the best efforts of the community and the DOE to support Freedom Academy High School (“Freedom Academy”), the school has struggled to meet basic requirements for student success.

On December 3, 2012, Brooklyn High School Superintendent Karen Watts held meetings at the school with the School Leadership Team, staff, and parents to discuss what is working at Freedom Academy, 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 Freedom Academy does not have the capacity to quickly improve and is proposing that the school be closed.

**Proposing to close a school is the most difficult decision we make. We are proposing to close Freedom Academy because it is the right action for current and future students in this community. If the proposal to close Freedom Academy is approved, the school would close in June 2013.**

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

### Performance Summary

| Graduation Rates        |                         | Progress Report Grades |           |           | Quality Review Rating |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 2011-2012 (4 year rate) | 2011-2012 (6 year rate) | 2009-2010              | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 | 2011-2012             |
| 50%                     | 85%                     | B                      | F         | F         | Developing            |

- Graduation rates have been below 57% for three of the last four years. Freedom Academy’s four-year graduation rate (including August graduates) was 50% in 2012—well below the most recent Citywide average of 65.5% (Citywide average is based on the 2011 New York State reported graduation results for NYCDOE students.)
- First year credit accumulation is a key predictor of student success because students who fall behind early in high school often have trouble getting back on track to graduate. In 2011-2012, only 44% of first-year students at Freedom Academy earned at least 10 credits with at least 6 of those credits earned across 3 of the 4 core subject areas. This rate of credit accumulation puts Freedom Academy in the lowest 1% of schools Citywide.
- Freedom Academy was identified by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) as a Focus School, defined by NYSED as among the lowest-performing schools in the state based on its results with certain high-needs student groups.
- 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. Freedom Academy earned an F grade on its 2011-2012 annual Progress Report, including an F grade for Student Progress, a C grade for Student Performance, an F grade for School Environment, and a B grade for College and Career Readiness.
- On the 2012 New York City School Survey, only 23% of teacher respondents reported that discipline and order were maintained at Freedom Academy, putting the school in the bottom 3% of all high schools Citywide. In addition, only 76% of parents reported that their child was safe at school, putting the school in the bottom 5% of all high schools Citywide.

## Despite our best efforts, the school has struggled

Staff members have worked hard to improve Freedom Academy, 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:

- Coaching the principal and assistant principals in analyzing student performance data to develop a data-driven action plan for school improvement and target additional resources to struggling students.
- Supporting school leadership in aligning curriculum to citywide instructional expectations to raise standards for teacher practice and student learning.
- Coaching the principal and assistant principals in the use of classroom observations and feedback to enhance teacher effectiveness.
- Assisting the principal in the development of instructional plans and goals for the school year, in support of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan.

### Instructional Support:

- Participating in classroom walkthroughs to provide targeted feedback to teachers on ways to improve classroom instruction and increase student engagement.
- Supporting the development of teacher teams and collaboration among school staff to assess student progress, share best instructional practices and plan ways to increase school-wide professional growth and student achievement.
- Offering professional development opportunities for staff and facilitating inter-visitations with other schools to foster the development of rigorous instruction and improve student outcomes.

### Operational Support:

- 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.
- Advising the school on grant implementation and working with the principal to align the budget with school-wide instructional goals.
- Advising school staff on budgeting, enrollment, staff recruitment and building management.

### Student Support:

- Providing support on youth development issues and facilitating monthly meetings for guidance counselors to build the school's capacity to offer social and emotional support to students.
- Supporting the school in monitoring student attendance and developing strategies to increase attendance rates.

## What would the proposal mean for current students?

If this proposal is approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), Freedom Academy would close in June 2013. Our top priority is ensuring that current Freedom Academy students are supported through graduation. Below are enrollment plans for current Freedom Academy students if the school were to be closed.

- **Current, first-time ninth-grade students** may apply to attend a different high school as a tenth-grade student in September 2013 by participating in the second round of the High School Admissions Process.
- **Current twelfth-grade students** who meet promotional standards at the end of the school year will graduate from Freedom Academy in June 2013.
- **Students who will not graduate in June 2013**, including current repeat ninth-grade students, tenth- and eleventh-grade students, and current twelfth-grade students who do not meet promotional standards at the end of the school year, should meet with a guidance counselor to review progress toward graduation and discuss options. Students who are not on track to graduate should consider applying to a Transfer High School. For information about Transfer High Schools, students can speak with their guidance counselor or visit [www.goingforme.org](http://www.goingforme.org). The Office of Student Enrollment will inform parents about high school transfer options in Spring 2013.

If the proposal to close Freedom Academy is approved, the school would close at the end of the 2012-2013 school year. Current twelfth-grade students who meet promotional standards at the end of the school year will graduate in June 2013. All other students will be offered seats in another high school.

## Supporting Current Students

The DOE remains focused on helping Freedom Academy students succeed. If this proposal is approved, Freedom Academy would be provided supports 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, and
- Working with school staff to foster a positive culture.

## Next Steps and What You Can Expect

In the next two months, the DOE will invite the Freedom Academy community to participate in a joint public hearing co-hosted by the DOE, the District 13 Community Education Council, and Freedom Academy'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 closure proposal. During the joint public hearing, community members, including parents and students, will be able to share their thoughts on the closure proposal.

The proposal to close Freedom Academy will be voted on by the Panel for Educational Policy ("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 proposal. If the PEP approves the proposal, Freedom Academy would close in June 2013.

## 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 Comments, which is presented to the PEP prior to the vote on the proposal. Please submit your comments to:

Phone: 212-374-0208

Email: [D13Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:D13Proposals@schools.nyc.gov)

Online: <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/brooklyn/feedback?id=359>