



Public Comment Analysis¹

Date: October 1, 2013
Topic: The Proposed Grade Expansion of The Lexington Academy (04M072) from K-5 to K-8 Beginning in the 2014-2015 School Year
Date of Panel Vote: October 15, 2013

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to expand The Lexington Academy (04M072, “P.S. 72”) to serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade. P.S. 72 is an existing, zoned district elementary school serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade in building M072 (“M072”) located at 131 East 104th Street, New York, NY 10029, in Community School District 4 (“District 4”). P.S. 72 also offers a pre-kindergarten program, with three sections of full-day pre-kindergarten.

P.S. 72 will serve approximately 538 students in kindergarten through fifth grade and pre-kindergarten in the 2013-2014 school year. If this proposal is approved, students enrolled in P.S. 72 will have first priority to remain at the school through eighth grade. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, P.S. 72 will add one grade each year until 2016-2017, when it will reach full scale and serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade and pre-kindergarten. The DOE does not anticipate that the proposed grade expansion of P.S. 72 will affect the pre-kindergarten program at the school.

The DOE strives to increase quality options for students. As part of the provisional approval process, the DOE evaluates each school’s instructional capacity to serve the expanded school level by reviewing school expansion applications, conducting site visits, and facilitating panel interviews. Schools interested in expanding must have received at least a "C" on their most recent Progress Report to be eligible to apply to the grade reconfiguration process. Schools provisionally approved for expansion must receive at least a "C" in the Progress Report released prior to their expansion in order to remain eligible. In the event that the school does not receive a C or better on the Progress Report prior to its expansion, this proposed expansion will not be

¹ The DOE will continue to accept comments concerning this proposal up to 24 hours prior to the Panel for Educational Policy’s (“PEP”) vote on October 15, 2013. Any additional comments will be addressed in an amended Public Comment Analysis which will be made available to the PEP before it votes on this proposal.

implemented.

The proposal to expand P.S. 72 initially came from the school community. In May 2013, a grade expansion team composed of P.S. 72 teachers, staff and administrators submitted a formal application to expand the grades served by the school. That application was supported by parents and the broader school community. This suggests a high level of satisfaction within the school and its parent body and strongly implies that an expanded P.S. 72 will suit the needs of children in District 4. This grade expansion will allow P.S. 72 to serve students in elementary and middle school grades, as well as pre-kindergarten. P.S. 72 currently offers an elementary dual-language program in Spanish. This proposed expansion will allow P.S. 72 to continue providing its students with dual language services through middle school.

The M072 building has the capacity to serve 644 students and will serve approximately 538 students in kindergarten through fifth grade and pre-kindergarten, yielding a utilization rate of 84% in the 2013-2014 school year. This means that the building is “underutilized.” If this proposal is approved, the building would serve approximately 769 – 859 students and have a utilization rate of 119% - 133% in 2016-2017 when P.S. 72 reaches full scale.

However, this standard utilization rate is likely overstated because the current capacity of the building does not assume any rooms for use by middle school students, who rotate among classrooms during the school day, thus increasing the efficiency of the space. Furthermore, the school leadership of P.S. 72 intends to change the programming of M072’s spaces in order to create middle school instructional spaces, likely increasing the target capacity of the building in future years.

Despite a utilization rate above 100%, the building has sufficient space to provide P.S. 72 with at least its baseline room allocation. Therefore, the M072 building has the capacity to accommodate the proposed grade expansion of P.S. 72. The expansion proposal will result in more students being served within M072 and thus more efficient use of building space within District 4, while simultaneously providing parents and students with an additional middle school choice.

If this proposal is approved, fifth grade students will be able to apply to attend middle school at P.S. 72 through the District 4 Middle School Choice Process for the 2014-2015 school year. Students enrolled at P.S. 72 will have admissions priority if they wish to remain for sixth grade. Other eligible fifth grade students in District 4 will have the opportunity to apply to attend middle school at P.S. 72.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

A joint public hearing regarding the original proposal was held at building M072 on October 1, 2013. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the original proposal. Approximately 125 members of the public attended the hearing, and 19 people spoke. Present at the meeting were District 4 Superintendent Alexandra Estrella; District 4 Community Education Council (“CEC 4”) Member Elender Foxe; Antonio Hernandez, principal of P.S. 72, representing the P.S. 72 School Leadership Team (“SLT”); Amanda Cahn and Jennifer Peng from the Division of Portfolio Planning.

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

1. Antonio Hernandez, principal of P.S. 72, asserted the following:
 - a. Parents have come out in high numbers to be informed about and support the proposed middle school expansion. Community support is evident tonight.
 - b. P.S. 72 is a high quality option and will continue to be a high quality option in middle school.
 - c. P.S. 72 offers a safe environment.
 - d. P.S. 72 academically challenges its students.
2. Elender Foxe, member of CEC 4, asserted the following:
 - a. P.S. 72 has created a strong foundation in elementary school and is likely to continue this strong foundation in middle school.
 - b. CEC 4 is in support of this proposal.
3. Ms. Cantor, PTA president of P.S. 72, asserted that allowing students to continue at the middle school in P.S. 72 is a better option and for many parents, the preferred option.
4. Multiple commenters who were parents of students at P.S. 72 asserted the following:
 - a. Their children have had positive experiences at P.S. 72 in the elementary grades.
 - b. They are in support of the proposed expansion so that their students can continue on at P.S. 72 for middle school.
 - c. Their children have built up positive relationships with peers and teachers and hope to have their kids
5. Multiple commenters who work with organizations affiliated with P.S. 72 asserted the following:
 - a. P.S. 72 offers a positive and safe environment for its elementary students.
 - b. Working with P.S. 72 students has been an extremely rewarding experience.
 - c. They are in support of the proposed middle school expansion.
6. Multiple commenters who are teachers or service providers at P.S. 72 asserted that allowing P.S. 72 students to continue at the school for middle school will ensure a continuum of services and stability of teacher-student relationships.

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

7. A commenter who is a parent at P.S. 72 asserted her support for this proposal and her child's love for P.S. 72.

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

Comments 1a-d, 2a-b, 3, 4a-c, 5a-c, 6, and 7 are all in favor of the proposal and do not require a response.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.