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Public Comment Analysis

Date: April 25, 2012

Topic: The Proposed Closure of J.H.S. 166 George Gershwin (19K166) and Opening and Co-Location of New School (19K338) with The UFT Charter School (84K359) in Building K166 Beginning in 2012-2013

Date of Panel Vote: April 26, 2012

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to close J.H.S. 166 George Gershwin (19K166, “J.H.S. 166”), an existing middle school in building K166 (“K166”) located at 800 Van Siclen Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11207, in Community School District 19. It currently serves students in grades six through eight. The DOE is proposing to immediately replace J.H.S. 166 with a new school (19K338, “New School”), a district middle school which will serve students in grades six through eight in K166.

If this proposal is approved, J.H.S. 166 will close at the conclusion of the 2011-2012 school year. All current students who have not been promoted to high school before the start of the 2012-2013 school year will be guaranteed a seat and automatically enrolled in New School.

J.H.S. 166 is co-located with The UFT Charter School (84K359, “UFT Charter”), an existing public charter school that currently serves students in kindergarten through eleventh grade in two separate sites. In one location, building K292 (“K292”), located at 301 Vermont Street, Brooklyn, NY, 11207, in Community School District 19, UFT Charter serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade. In another location, K166, UFT Charter serves students in grades six through eleven, and is phasing in to serve students in grades six through twelve in the building for the 2012-2013 school year. Only the second location of UFT Charter, K166, is impacted by the proposed closure of J.H.S. 166 and the proposed opening of New School. K166 also houses two community-based organizations (“CBOs”), Beacon CAMBA and the East New York Campus Satellite (“ENY”), which is an extension of Medgar Evers College. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and cafeterias.

J.H.S. 166 is a zoned middle school and currently admits students from the zone. UFT Charter admits students through a charter lottery application process with preference to District 19 residents. New School will admit students through an unscreened choice method, with a priority to students residing in its zone, through the District 19 Middle School Choice Process, which was recently adopted by District 19 and will be implemented for the first time for admission for the 2012-2013 school year.

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a high-quality school at every stage of their education. By closing J.H.S. 166 and replacing it with New School, the DOE is seeking to expeditiously improve educational quality in K166. If this proposal is approved, New School will develop rigorous, school-specific competencies to measure and screen prospective staff – including J.H.S. 166 staff who apply to work at New School. Based on these criteria, and in accordance with the staffing requirements in Article 18-D of the DOE’s existing contract with the United Federation of Teachers (“UFT”), New School will put in place a process aimed at hiring the best possible staff, thus immediately improving teacher quality and, by extension, improving the quality of learning. New School plans to develop new programs and school supports that are intended to improve student outcomes. Doing this important work to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school, the DOE also will maximize New School’s chance of receiving up to \$850,000 in supplemental federal funding under the federal School Improvement Grant (“SIG”) program. New School will build on the strongest elements of J.H.S. 166 and incorporate new elements, including new talent designed to better meet student needs. Thus, the immediate closure and replacement of J.H.S. 166 with New School should give students access to a higher-quality educational option while they continue to attend school in the same building.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS which can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2011-2012/April2012Proposals.htm>.

Copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of J.H.S. 166 George Gershwin and the UFT Charter School.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at K166 on April 4, 2012. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 150 members of the public attended the hearing, and 13 people spoke. Present at the meeting were Deputy Chancellor Laura Rodriguez; J.H.S. 166 School Leadership Team (“SLT”) representatives Linda King and Chantelle Lucien; UFT Charter SLT representative Justin Davis; District 19 Community Superintendent Rose Marie Mills; Community Education Council (“CEC”) 19 Representative Erica Perez; New York State Assemblywoman Inez D. Barron; New York City Council Member Charles Barron; Staff Representative Brandon Bloomfield from New York State Senator John L. Sampson’s office; and Community Planning Board 5 representative Queenie Woonton.

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

1. CEC 19 representative Erica Perez stated that the CEC does not support the proposal for the following reasons:
 - a. The community is being left out of the entire process because decisions are being made without parent or student input.
 - b. The community will not have a say in the new leadership of the new school, nor will it be able to help decide who the new teachers will be.
 - c. The student population at J.H.S. 166, with many students currently living in shelters, is very needy and this is not being taken into consideration when looking at student performance.
2. UFT Charter SLT Representative Justin Davis spoke of UFT Charter’s work on the Building Council, and pledged to work collectively with the leaders in K166, regardless of what happens during this transition period.
3. Assemblywoman Barron stated her opposition to the proposal for the following reasons:

- a. J.H.S. 166 has been forced to admit students through the over-the-counter process and through safety transfers.
 - b. Many students live far away from the J.H.S. 166 campus, and the DOE does not provide transportation to the building. Therefore, without a viable means of getting to school, many students are absent or late.
 - c. J.H.S. 166 was granted SIG funding, but due to politics the grant was taken away and the school was not allowed to continue with the planning to turn the school around.
 - d. There is discrepancy between the language in the EIS and what was communicated during the hearing. For example, the description in the EIS says that 50% of the staff will be able to return to the school.
 - e. Renaming the school does not change the student population that will be served and the same problems will continue.
 - f. Why would the DOE close a school that it just gave money to for the purpose of turning it around. The DOE needs to allow J.H.S. 166 to proceed with the SIG funding that would allow the school to be more successful in serving its students. Students, when given the proper resources and motivation, will be successful.
 - g. The DOE is playing games with the community's children.
4. City Council Member Barron stated his opposition to the proposal for the following reasons:
 - a. The school and the community want the current principal to stay.
 - b. This is an attempt by the mayor to get rid of teachers. This is an attempt for him to fire half the staff, as the mayor just wants dictatorial control.
 - c. What supports were given to J.H.S. 166 in an effort to help the school succeed?
 - d. Money has been cut from schools, so that there are no funds to create and sustain athletic programs, the arts, the sciences, or technology initiatives.
 - e. The opening and co-location of new charter schools in DOE buildings, the phasing out of schools, the sharing of common and shared spaces are failed practices by the Mayor and do not help children.
 5. Queenie Woonton, from Community Planning Board 5, stated that Community Planning Board 5 opposes this proposal.
 6. Brandon Bloomfield, from Senator Sampson's office, stated his opposition to the proposal for the following reasons:
 - a. Parents do not feel empowered by this process.
 - b. J.H.S. 166's budget has been cut meaning that the school cannot provide as many resources which then leads the DOE to deem the school as failing. How are schools expected to do more with less?
 7. Joyce Simmons, Chief of Staff to City Council Member Barron, expressed her support for the students of J.H.S. 166 and praised the band in particular. She asked the people in the audience to join Charles Barron's education council and help work to stop the passing of this proposal.
 8. Numerous commenters praised Principal Ortega's leadership and the positive changes the school has undergone since she came to J.H.S. 166. These commenters also expressed their concern as to what will become of J.H.S. 166's current programs, including band, public service credits, Regents classes on Saturday, etc.
 9. Two commenter asked that J.H.S. 166 be given the opportunity to compose a report to show the shortcomings that the school has had to suffer, and bring to light the lack of supports that the school has been offered.
 10. One commenter opposed the proposal on the grounds that:
 - a. The DOE controls student enrollment and thus cannot penalize J.H.S. 166 for low enrollment/demand.

- b. The DOE limits bus/train passes and does not provide adequate transportation services to students resulting in a low attendance rate.
 - c. If the DOE intends to close and reopen this school, then there should be a parent on the board who helps decide who the new teachers will be.
 - d. Changing the name of the school does not change the student population served at J.H.S. 166.
11. One commenter stated that J.H.S. 166's school band helps to keep students at school, engaged in the curriculum, and working hard to meet the grade point average necessary to participate in the band.
 12. One commenter spoke in support of Principal Ortega and how she has continually supported her child who has special needs.
 13. One commenter opposed the proposal on the grounds that:
 - a. J.H.S. 166 has had ten principals over the course of the past fourteen years.
 - b. J.H.S. 166 is treated as a dumping ground for over-age and undercredited students thereby leading the DOE to claim that the school is failing.
 - c. Attendance is low based on a lack of transportation services offered to children in surrounding housing projects.
 14. One commenter stated that the new teachers hired will not be as familiar with the students as the old teachers who have worked with J.H.S. 166 students over the course of the past years.
 15. One commenter stated that J.H.S. 166's band is a positive support network and the members of the band are like family.
 16. A commenter asserted that the closure of 26 schools through Turnaround is not an educational strategy, but a ploy to avoid negotiations with the unions.

The following questions, comments, and remarks were made at the Joint Public Hearing and are not related to the proposal:

17. Assemblywoman Barron stated generally that:
 - a. The State, City, and Bloomberg administration have not given schools the resources that they need to succeed which is why only 13% of the City's students are college ready. Resources need to be redirected to education.
18. City Council Member Barron stated generally that:
 - a. DOE schools are only teaching to the test in an effort to demonstrate that the mayor's educational policies have been effective. Instead, the DOE should be teaching students to be college and career ready.
 - b. This mayor has a budget of 24.1 billion dollars for education, yet only 13% of graduates are ready for college and only 10% of charter school graduates are ready for college.
 - c. The DOE claims that it is having budget problems, so it had to fire over 600 school aid workers. All that was accomplished by that was saving 32 million dollars. In contrast, the budget allocation for contracts was raised by 700 million dollars to 4.7 billion dollars, and professional services received 64 million dollars. Given that, how can the DOE claim to not have 32 million dollars for school aid workers, the individuals who know our students best and help provide integral social and emotional services?
19. Brandon Bloomfield, from Senator Sampson's Office, stated generally that:
 - a. No statistics show that charter schools are better than DOE schools.
 - b. Control over the schools never should have been ceded to the mayor because New York City is now under a dictatorship.

Summary of Comments Received at other public meetings

An information session was hosted by the Brooklyn Borough President at Borough Hall on March 12, 2012. The DOE attended that meeting to provide information to community members and answer questions.

The following questions, comments, and remarks were made at the Borough President’s meeting:

20. Children aren't being served well by J.H.S. 166. They deserve greater consistency.

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

The DOE received no written or oral comments through the dedicated Web site and phone line for this proposal.

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

Comments 1a and 6a concern engagement with the J.H.S. 166 school community.

Last spring, the Department held meetings to begin or continue conversations with Persistently Lowest Achieving (“PLA”) schools and their communities about the schools’ performance and possible improvement strategies. In January 2012, after taking into account a number of factors, the DOE decided to implement an action plan for some PLA schools that was different than the plan previously in place. At that time, Superintendents and Children First Network staff met with school communities to talk about the DOE’s proposal to close and replace the school. Between January and now, the DOE has been collecting feedback from school communities regarding these proposals.

Further, the community has been encouraged to submit feedback on this proposal via phone at 212-374-0208, or via email at D19Proposals@schools.nyc.gov.

Comments 1b, 3c, 3d, 3f, 4b, 10c, and 14 concern how this proposal is connected to the Turnaround model application submitted for J.H.S. 166 and the new teacher hiring process.

The DOE believes that closing J.H.S. 166 and replacing it with New School could satisfy the requirements of the Turnaround model and make the school eligible to receive SIG funding. If this proposal is approved, New School will go through a process – in accordance with the DOE’s existing contract with the United Federation of Teachers – to hire the best possible staff including some members of the current staff and new teachers.

All teachers who apply to work at New School will be reviewed by a school-based Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee will consider each candidate’s teaching abilities and qualifications to contribute to a rigorous new school culture where every child is expected to succeed..

The DOE will encourage the most effective teachers at J.H.S. 166 to join New School to anchor the school with their commitment to effective teaching and focus on student achievement. In addition, New School may have the opportunity to hire highly-qualified new teachers who will infuse new talent into the community.

If the State approves the application to place New School into the Turnaround model, New School will be eligible for up to 2 million dollars per year as part the SIG program.

While implementation of the Turnaround model does require that 50% of a school's staff to be replaced, the DOE's proposal as outlined in the EIS to close and replace J.H.S. 166 does not require the new school to turnover any set percentage of staff. The DOE's primary objective is to make the structural and staffing changes necessary to ensure the best possible student outcomes in New School. However, pursuant to Article 18-D of the DOE's existing contract with the UFT, the teachers in J.H.S. 166 have the right to apply and be considered for positions at New School. If sufficient numbers of displaced staff apply, at least 50% of New School's pedagogical positions shall be selected by the Personnel Committee from among the appropriately licensed, most senior applicants from the closing school, who meet the new school's qualifications.

The guiding principle will be to effectively match teacher capacity to the needs of the students in a specific school along with structural changes to the new school that will enhance its ability to best serve our students. This means that the new replacement schools will only hire those teachers they believe will be effective and well-matched to their new missions.

The schools will accomplish this through the staffing process set forth in Article 18-D, which will allow a Personnel Committee to determine the best staff for New School. The Personnel Committee consists of, at minimum, the following five representatives: the school principal, two designees of the UFT President, and two designees of the Chancellor. The school-based Personnel Committee will evaluate applicants' qualifications. The Personnel Committee should strive to seek consensus in its hiring decisions; however, if consensus cannot be reached, decisions are made by majority vote.

In this way, the DOE believes that only those teachers who will be most effective will be hired by the new schools. As stated in the EIS, current teachers from J.H.S. 166 who are not hired at New School will remain in excess. Barring system-wide layoffs, excess teachers will be eligible to apply for other City positions, and any teachers who do not find a permanent position will be placed in the Absent Teacher Reserve ("ATR") pool, meaning that they will continue to earn their salary while serving as substitute teachers in other City schools. This will not count as a cost or savings to New School, but could increase overall ATR costs to the DOE.

Comment 1c contends that the DOE does not take into consideration the neediest students when rating school performance.

While it is true that the school's percentage of students served in a self-contained ("SC") special education setting has increased over the last three years, the school's percentage of ELL students has declined over the same period. J.H.S. 166 has demonstrated a strength in serving its students with disabilities. While J.H.S. 166 is in the 8th percentile in the City for ELA proficiency, the school is in the 54th percentile in regards to the percentage of SC students who are proficient. Further, J.H.S. 166 is in the 8th percentile in the City for Math proficiency, yet J.H.S. 166 is in the top 25th percentile as it pertains to the percentage of SC students who are proficient in Math. This suggests that the school is doing relatively better at students with disabilities than it does for the general population of students in the school, when compared with other schools in the borough. Regardless, all schools are expected to meet all students' needs, and the instructional outcomes of J.H.S. 166 in recent years have not been adequate for general education, ELL students, or students with disabilities.

Comments 2 and 5 merely stated opposition to the proposal without further explanation and therefore do not require further analysis.

Comment 3a and 13b concerns over-the-counter (“OTC”) enrollment.

Like many other schools Citywide, J.H.S. 166 admits students through the OTC placement process. OTC placement is a term that refers to the method of enrolling students who need a school assignment because they were not part of any admissions process for entry grades and/or were not enrolled in a New York City school at the time school started. These students fall into one of four categories:

- New to the New York City school system;
- Left the New York City school system and have returned;
- Are seeking transfers (based on the guidelines outlined in Chancellor’s Regulation A-101); or
- Students who did not participate in the admissions process for some other reason.

When a middle school eligible student arrives for an OTC placement, his or her school assignment is determined by his or her interest, his or her home address, which schools have available seats, and where applicable, transfer guidelines. Students are eligible to attend middle school based on the district of elementary school attendance or the district to which the student’s address is zoned for middle school. In un-zoned districts, the student visits a Borough Enrollment Office where he or she meets with a counselor who reviews options that will meet the student’s needs. However, in many districts, students may simply report to their zoned middle school at the start of the year.

In the 2011-2012 school year, sixteen schools in District 19 accepted 769 OTC students in grades six through eight, for an average of 48 OTC students per school. J.H.S. 166 accepted 25 OTC students in sixth grade, which places it below the District 19 average.

Comments 3b, 10b, and 13c concern transportation to school and contend that a lack of transportation leads the school to suffer from a low attendance rate.

Busing and train pass distribution is not within the discretion of a particular school, rather it is provided in accordance with Chancellor’s Regulation A-801. The DOE provides transportation to students at J.H.S. 166 in accordance with that regulation. Specifically, the DOE provides busing services for 42 special education students and provides MetroCards to 101 students across grades six through eight. Additionally, the DOE provides 82 MetroCards to special education students and 211 students receive half fare. For further information on student eligibility for MetroCards see below, please visit:

<http://10.2.54.42/Offices/Transportation/ServicesandEligibility/BusTransportation/default.htm>

Comments 3e, 3f, and 10d concern the rationale behind the proposed closure and replacement of J.H.S. 166.

In a concerted effort to ensure that all students have access to high-quality schools, the DOE annually reviews the performance of all schools Citywide. Schools designated as PLA by the State Education Department receive special attention during this review. Specifically, for PLA schools, the Department looks at whether one of the federally-approved intervention models can adequately address the school’s needs or whether another intervention is more appropriate.

The Department is proposing to close and replace J.H.S. 166 because it believes that doing so will provide a better educational option to current students more rapidly and with more certainty than current interventions, which were simply not adequate in order to make the school an acceptable choice for current and future students.

This strategy will preserve the elements of J.H.S. 166 that have led to improvement, while giving the new school the wherewithal to build upon it and accelerate the pace of change. By closing J.H.S. 166 and replacing it with a new school, the DOE is seeking to quickly create a high-quality school environment that children need to prepare for success in college, work, and life. Further, schools that have historically undergone this process have track records of shifting the culture of the school further toward one that sets high expectations that support student learning and achievement.

Comments 4a, 7, 8, and 12 voices general support for the students and staff at J.H.S. 166.

The DOE commends and acknowledges the students and staff at J.H.S. 166 for their hard work and successes. However, the DOE believes that the students in this community would be better served by the new school.

Comments 4c, 4d, 6b, and 9 concern supports offered to J.H.S. 166.

For the past several years, the DOE has supported J.H.S. 166 in order to ensure that it was equipped to provide a quality education for its students. These supports included:

Leadership Support:

- Coached and trained leadership on implementing plans in support of Citywide instructional initiative.
- Provided Special Education Student Information System training.
- Provided leadership training, coaching, and mentoring for the principal and leadership staff to help them set clear goals for the school and improve student performance, including around addressing targeted areas in need of improvement identified in the school's Quality Reviews.
- Supported through the process of utilizing the Danielson framework.
- Discussed strategies with school leadership to utilize data analysis to address areas in need of improvement via observations

Instructional Support:

- Trained leadership on implementing plans in support of Citywide instructional initiatives, including implementing Common Core Learning Standards.
- Supported the school in assessment design, curriculum mapping, and student feedback as tools aimed at meeting the necessary standards and expected student outcomes.
- Trained staff on implementing Response to Intervention plans.

Operational Support:

- Advised school staff on budgeting and human resources.
- Provided grant development support.
- Provided guidance to school administration with teacher licensure and staff removals.

Student Support:

- Provided training for school staff regarding the discipline code, attendance protocols, and anti-bullying strategies.

Even with these supports, however, the DOE has determined that J.H.S. 166 does not have the capacity to quickly improve student achievement. Rather, the DOE believe that the most expeditious way to improve the educational program for the students currently attending J.H.S. 166 is to close the school

and replace it with New School next year. This will allow the DOE to put in place a process to screen and hire the best possible staff for New School, giving all students currently attending J.H.S. 166 who are not promoted to high school before the start of the 2012-2013 school year access to an improved faculty.

Comments 4d and 6b concern budget cuts.

In New York City, schools are funded through a per pupil allocation. That is, funding “follows” the students and is weighted based on students’ grade level and need (incoming proficiency level and special education/English Language Learner/Title I status). For example, if a school’s population declines from 2,500 to 2,100 students, the school’s budget decreases proportionally—just as a school with an increase in students receives more money. Even if the DOE had a budget surplus, a school with declining student enrollment would still receive less per pupil funding each year enrollment falls. Therefore, J.H.S. 166 is funded in the same manner as other schools which are achieving better outcomes for students. J.H.S. 166 has seen a 34% decline in its overall enrollment from 2006-2007, when it served 663 students, to 2011-2012, when it currently serves 436 students. Further, J.H.S. 166 served 507 students in 2010-2011, representing a 14% overall enrollment decline from last year.

Comments 4e and 16 state that the closure and replacement strategy is a political strategy, rather than one aimed at improving student achievement, and Comment 3g contends that the DOE is playing games with the community’s children.

The DOE believes that the strategy of closing and replacing PLA schools will provide a better educational option to current students more rapidly and with more certainty than current interventions, which were simply not adequate in order to make the school an acceptable choice for current and future students. The closure/replacement strategy will preserve the elements of former school that have led to improvement, while giving the new school the wherewithal to build upon it and accelerate the pace of change.

By closing J.H.S. 166 and replacing it with New School, the DOE is seeking to quickly create a high-quality school environment that children need to prepare for success in college, work, and life. Schools that have historically undergone this process have track records of shifting the culture of the school further toward one that sets high expectations that support student learning and achievement.

Further, to the extent that this proposal may help secure SIG funding for DOE students, this is an educational aim, as these resources are crucial to helping students succeed. However, even if J.H.S. 166 does not receive SIG funding as a result of this proposal, the DOE believes that New School will be better positioned to promote student achievement than is J.H.S. 166, in light of J.H.S. 166’s inability to quickly improve.

Comments 8, 11, and 15 relate to whether the academic, emotional, and social supports, in addition to after-school programs currently provided at J.H.S. 166, will be offered by New School.

According to the Middle School Directory, J.H.S. 166 currently offers the following sports, extracurricular activities, and clubs:

Clubs	Boys Sports	Girls Sports	Co-ed Sports
Band, Dance, Drama, Recording Studio	Baseball, Basketball, Flag Football, Rugby, Swimming	Dance, Double Dutch, Step, Swimming	Baseball, Swimming

If this proposal is approved, New School is expected to offer at least the same student athletics as J.H.S. 166 offers. The availability of the PSAL program for the schools in K166 is expected to remain the same despite the closure of J.H.S. 166 and opening of New School. New School is also expected to offer at least the same extra-curricular activities and clubs as J.H.S. 166.

As with all schools Citywide, it is difficult to predict precisely how changes might be implemented as decisions will rest with school administrators and will be made based on student interests and available resources. That is true for any City students as all schools modify extracurricular offerings annually based on student demand and available resources.

In summer 2011, as a condition of implementing the federal Restart model, J.H.S. 166 began a partnership CEI-PEA, a New York City based nonprofit EPO. CEI-PEA's staff of experienced leaders in public education provide hands-on support to improve the skills of teachers and school leaders, increase parent involvement, and channel cultural and academic intervention programs into schools. Under the Restart model, CEI-PEA was working closely with J.H.S. 166 leadership to make recommendations for specific interventions to raise student achievement at the school and to provide support service including hands-on support to improve the skills of teachers and school leaders, strategies to increase parent involvement, and cultural and academic intervention programs. If this proposal is approved, the DOE will work with New School to ensure the smooth transition of this partnership from J.H.S. 166 to New School.

New School also has plans to create partnerships with artists, musicians, community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and music and performing arts-based themed elementary and high schools to nurture and develop life-long learners who appreciate and value the performing arts.

UFT Charter, currently located in K166, already has established relationships with several partners. The DOE anticipates that those partnerships will be unaffected by closure of J.H.S. 166 and co-location of New School. For complete information on New School's planned programmatic and extracurricular offerings, please refer to the EIS, which can be found here:

http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/811AB883-1E56-49E7-A515-C9BD36AA5C2F/121069/EIS_19K166_vFINAL1.pdf.

Comment 10a falsely contends that the DOE controls J.H.S. 166's enrollment and therefore cannot penalize the school for low enrollment.

A zoned school is determined by a student's home address. J.H.S. 166 is a zoned middle school, meaning that any student who resides within J.H.S. 166's zone is entitled to a middle school seat. All students in District 19, Brooklyn, and Citywide have the option to apply to J.H.S. 166, but the students who reside in the zone are given first preference. J.H.S. 166's low enrollment is therefore attributable to low demand and not to any control exerted by the DOE.

Comment 13a contends that JHS 166 has had 10 principals over the past 14 years.

This statement is inaccurate. In fact, there have only been four principals since 1982. The current principal, Maria Ortega, has been there since August 2004. Prior to Ms. Ortega, Mr. Gordon was the Interim Acting Principal from September 2003 through August 2004. Dr. Barnes preceded Mr. Gordon and was Principal from August 2000 through August 2003. Milton Strong was the Principal from August 1982 through July 2000.

For further information on the supports offered to JHS 166 over the course of the past three years, please refer to the response to Comments 4c, 4d, 6b, and 9.

Comments 17, 18, and 19 are not directly related to this proposal and therefore do not require further analysis.

Comment 20 expresses support for the proposal, and therefore does not require further analysis.

As stated earlier, the DOE has provided several supports to the schools in question, but believes only their closure and replacement will accelerate the pace of change needed to achieve the desired improvement for current students in these schools.

The DOE does not have a policy of concentrating high needs students at specific schools. However, the DOE works to support schools which have above average percentages of students with high needs, including ELLs, students with disabilities, overage and under-credited students, students who come into schools “over-the-counter,” and others.

The DOE sites charter schools based on the availability of space, and these co-locations are not based on the quality of the schools already located within the buildings. The DOE believes that students should be provided with as many high quality options as possible.

The DOE currently supports struggling schools through the Children First Network selected by each school. In some cases, these schools work with the network to create an action plan for improvement. Also in some cases, such as for some of the schools approved for phase-out during the 2010-2011 school year, struggling schools are supported through a designated Transition Support Network. Additionally, schools are supported by the Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, as well as the Office of Postsecondary Readiness.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.