



Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 2, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Co-location of 28Q350 with Jamaica High School (28Q470), Queens Collegiate: A College Board School (28Q310), Hillside Arts & Letters Academy (28Q325), and the High School for Community Leadership (28Q328) in School Building Q470

Date of Panel Vote: February 3, 2011

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to co-locate a new school, 28Q350, in school building Q470 (“Q470” or the “Jamaica Campus”) located at 167-01 Gothic Drive, Jamaica, NY 11432, within the geographical confines of Community School District 28 (“District 28”). As described in more detail in the Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) posted on December 20, 2010 and amended on January 19, 2011, the proposed new school, which is modeled after the current Gateway program at Jamaica, would offer a rigorous academic program and prepare students for post-secondary work in the sciences and medicine. This amended EIS can be accessed on the DOE’s website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/queens/Jamaica>.¹

If the proposed co-location of 28Q350 is approved, 28Q350 would be co-located with the following four schools in 2011-2012: Jamaica High School (28Q470, “Jamaica”), an existing 9-12 school; Queens Collegiate: A College Board School (28Q310, “Queens Collegiate”), an existing 6-12 school; Hillside Arts & Letters Academy (28Q325, “Hillside Academy”), an existing 9-12 school; and the High School for Community Leadership (28Q328, “Community Leadership”), an existing 9-12 school. 28Q350 would open in September 2011 serving students in grades 9-12.

In a separate EIS posted on December 20, 2010 and amended on January 19, 2011, the DOE has also proposed to phase out and eventually close Jamaica. This EIS can be accessed on the DOE’s website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/queens/Jamaica>. In the event that the phase-out of Jamaica is not approved, the DOE would re-examine the

¹ Copies of the amended EIS are also available in the main offices of Jamaica High School, Queens Collegiate, Hillside Academy, and Community Leadership.

availability of space in the building, and may, as appropriate, revise its proposal to co-locate 28Q350 in Q470. Such a revised proposal would be described in a revised EIS.

If the proposals to phase out Jamaica and co-locate 28Q350 are approved, the current Gateway program at Jamaica would close at the end of this school year. Students currently enrolled in Jamaica's Gateway program would have the option to transfer to 28Q350 or request a transfer to another program within Jamaica where they would continue to work towards graduation.

The proposed co-location of 28Q350 in building Q470 is part of the DOE's central goal to create new high-quality school options that will better serve future students and the community at large. The DOE has already opened three new schools in the building in an effort to create schools with high academic standards in this traditionally underserved community. 28Q350 would strive to set high standards and create a positive learning environment for its students.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at Q470 on January 20, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 240 members of the public attended the hearing, and 48 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Queens High School Superintendent Juan Mendez; Jamaica's School Leadership Team ("SLT") representatives Danesa Thompson, Charm Rhoomes, Shelley Harrington, and Kevin Gonzalez; United Federation of Teachers ("UFT") Chapter Leaders for Jamaica Debbie Saal and James Eterno; Community Leadership's SLC representative Shelley Harrington; Queens Collegiate's SLT representative Charlene Wingate; Hillside Academy's SLT representative Bethany Trust; Community Education Council ("CEC") President for District 28 Joseph Trotti; Citywide Council on High Schools ("CCHS") members Monica Ayuso and Sandra Kryshundayal; New York State Assembly member David Weprin; New York State Senator Tony Avella; and Deputy Chancellor John White.

The proposal to phase out Jamaica was also addressed at this hearing. The analysis of comments concerning that proposal can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/queens/Jamaica>.

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

1. Kevin Gonzalez, Jamaica's SLT member, stated that new schools are given better resources, with which Jamaica cannot compete.
2. Monica Ayuso, CCHS member, referenced the loss of the Gateway program, which she stated is a Jamaica program.
3. A commenter said that siting a new school is not the same as the Gateway program.
4. A commenter said that phase-outs and opening new schools in their place are a waste of taxpayer money.
5. Multiple commenters asked why money is spent on new schools when it could be spent on fixing existing schools.

6. Multiple commenters asked if there would be fights among schools with multiple schools in the building.

The DOE received two comments at the Joint Public Hearing which did not directly relate to the proposal.

7. A commenter said that the appointment of a Chancellor without any experience is an insult to the students, and the Chancellor doesn't know a student from a condom.
8. An attendee submitted a written question which was illegible.

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

9. A commenter wrote that Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Former Chancellor Joel Klein, and UFT President Michael Mulgrew have engaged in treachery and trickery by making an agreement using the code word “co-location,” which really means that students and parents of color will be subjected to an unequal educational environment.
10. A commenter wrote that the co-locations of the existing schools in the building violate last year's court decision concerning Jamaica, as future co-locations would as well. Also, all the schools in the building, along with the Gateway and Finance programs, should be brought under Jamaica's current principal as one school, though separate learning communities.
11. A commenter requested a no vote on the co-location proposal and stated that students who do not get into the new smaller schools in the building would have to travel far just to go to school. The schools recommended as alternatives for students in the special-interest programs are also overcrowded and on the State's Persistently Low Achieving list. Community members have not asked for a school modeled after the Gateway program, rather they have asked that Gateway be expanded as a means of helping Jamaica. There is a school just down the street already based on the Gateway program.
12. A commenter suggested the new smaller schools would not replace the large number of seats lost by the phase-out of Jamaica.

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

Comment 1 suggests that new schools are given better resources: The DOE funds schools through a per pupil allocation. That is, funding follows individual students and is weighted based on students' grade level and need (incoming proficiency level, special education, English Language Learner, Title I status, etc.). If a school's population declines from 2,500 to 2,100 students over the course of a year, the school's budget decreases proportionally—just as a school with an increase in students receives more funds. Even if the Department had a budget surplus, a school with declining student enrollment would still receive less per pupil funding each year enrollment falls. In any case, funding will be provided in accordance with enrollment levels, allowing schools to meet the instructional needs of its student population. This is how funding is awarded to all schools throughout the City, with budgets increasing or decreasing as enrollment fluctuates from year to year.

In addition, with regard to schools' budgets, principals have discretion over their budget and make choices about how to prioritize their resources to meet the needs of their students with the right staffing, programs, and instructional priorities.

With regard to comments 2 and 3: The proposed new school for the Jamaica Campus is modeled after the current Gateway program at Jamaica which is run through a partnership with the Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education.² That is, if the phase-out of Jamaica is approved, the current Gateway program would close, effective June 2011, and re-open as a stand-alone school serving grades 9-12 in September 2011. The proposed new school would operate independently of Jamaica. However, the new school is a continuation of the Gateway program and is intended to provide similar educational opportunities as it currently does for Jamaica students. This also means that students in the Jamaica community would have the option of attending a school focused on pre-medical studies in the same location as students have historically attended. The Gateway program at Jamaica currently has a Screened admissions method, meaning that students are ranked based on their final seventh-grade report card grades and reading and math standardized scores. However, the new school modeled after the Gateway program would enroll students through the Educational Option admissions method in order to be an option for a broader group of students.

As described on page 7 in the EIS, the new school would prepare students academically, socially, and emotionally for rigorous college coursework and the pursuit of health and science related careers. This will be accomplished by the replication and customization of Jamaica's Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education. Jamaica's current Gateway program has a legacy of success, providing a strong community foundation for the success of the new school.

If approved, the new school would open serving ninth through twelfth grade students beginning in the 2011-2012 school year. Current 9th-11th grade students in Jamaica's Gateway program would have the option to receive an administrative transfer to the new school. Any current student in the Gateway program at Jamaica who does not wish to transfer to the new school would be offered a seat in the remaining programs at Jamaica. Students who are interested in applying for a ninth-grade seat in September 2011 at the new school would have the opportunity to submit a new admission application with revised school rankings in February 2011. This application would replace the previously submitted application and would be included as the student's application for the Main Round of the High School Admissions Process. Other new high schools designated to open throughout the City for the 2011-2012 school year will also be available for these students to consider. For detailed information on City high schools and additional information on the High School Admissions Process, please refer to the Directory of New York City Public High Schools, available in print at DOE middle schools and Borough Enrollment Centers or on the DOE's website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Directory/default.htm>.

With regard to comment 4 related to the strategy of opening new schools and its related costs: The DOE believes that replacing failing schools with new small schools is the most effective way to quickly turn around student achievement. In June 2010, MDRC, an independent social

² For more information about the Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education, please visit the organization's website at http://www.gateway.cuny.edu/Gateway_Site/home.html.

research nonprofit organization, issued a report on NYC's new small schools strategy. MDRC concluded that "it is possible, in a relatively short span of time to replace a large number of underperforming public high schools [and] in the process achieve significant gains in students' academic achievement and attainment. And these gains are seen among a large and diverse group of students, including students who entered the ninth grade far below grade level and students of color, for whom such gains have been stubbornly elusive." For additional information on MDRC's report, please refer to the following website <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/560/overview.html>.

With regard to comment 5 questioning the use of funding to establish a new school instead of using it to improve existing schools: New schools are funded in the same manner as other schools. Funding follows the students and is based on need (incoming proficiency level, special education, English Language Learner, Title I status, etc.). While it is true that new schools receive start-up funding, the start-up funding they receive is an average of \$30,000 per year over the first five years for an elementary or middle school and \$34,000 for a high school. These annual amounts are not even large enough to cover the salary of a first year teacher. The DOE is proposing to phase out Jamaica based on the fact that we believe the school is simply not structured to provide the necessary supports to drastically improve student performance. This is not a question of simply funding. Nevertheless, the DOE does not believe that this amount of money would be enough to support the significant interventions that would be needed to rapidly turn around Jamaica under its current structure.

With regard to comments 6 and 9 related to multiple schools sharing space in a building: For any building in which the DOE proposes a co-location where two or more schools share space, the Office of Space Planning does a comprehensive site survey and space assessment to determine that there is sufficient space for all schools to be co-located.

Space is allocated based on the Citywide Instructional Footprint (the "Footprint"). The Footprint sets forth the baseline number of rooms that should be allocated to a school based on the grade levels served by the school and number of classes per grade. For additional information on space allocation and use in City schools, please refer to the Footprint on the DOE's website: http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/8CF30F41-DE25-4C30-92DE-731949919FC3/87633/NYCDOE_Instructional_Footprint_Final9210TNT.pdf.

While the Footprint sets forth a baseline space allocation, school leaders are empowered to make decisions about how to utilize the space allocated to the school. The assignment of individual spaces to a particular school will be determined by the Director of Space Planning in consultation with the Building Council. As in other situations where schools are co-located, the schools will need to share certain large common and specialty rooms in the building, such as the gymnasium, auditorium, library, and cafeteria. Specific decisions regarding the allocation of the shared spaces as well as the scheduling of those spaces (e.g. when students will have lunch, etc.) will be made by the Building Council, consisting of the principals from all co-located schools, in conjunction with the Office of Space Planning.

More than half of schools in New York City share space and manage to build collaborative, shared learning environments. At Jamaica there will be sufficient space to accommodate the

phase-out of Jamaica while phasing in the new school. In 2009-2010, building Q470 had a target capacity of 2,116 students, and in 2010-2011 the Q470 building is projected to enroll 1,802 students, which would yield a building target utilization rate of 85% of target capacity. If this co-location proposal is approved, 28Q350 would open in September 2011, and would serve approximately 250-275 students in grades 9-12. 28Q350 would operate at full capacity in the 2013-2014 school year, serving approximately 400-450 students. 28Q350 would be temporarily co-located with Jamaica as the school phases out. Beginning in September 2014, 28Q350 would share space only with Queens Collegiate, Hillside Academy, and Community Leadership. At that point, the building would have an approximate utilization rate of 92% of target capacity. To date, there are four schools co-located on the Jamaica Campus. Jamaica has been successfully sharing space with Queens Collegiate, Hillside Academy, and Community Leadership. Building Councils are encouraged to work together to create a sustainable shared space plan for the building.

Comments 7 and 8 are not related to this proposal and do not require a response.

With regard to comments 9 and 11 concerning community feedback on school replacement options for the Jamaica Campus during the engagement process: The DOE listens and considers any community feedback it receives. Among the feedback the DOE received regarding the proposed phase-out of Jamaica was support for the Gateway program at the school. The DOE has worked closely with the Gateway program and its key community partners so that the new school being proposed for this building would be modeled after the Gateway program.

With regard to comment 10, which questions the legality of siting a new school on the Jamaica Campus given that last year a court ruled against the DOE's phase-out/replacement plans for Jamaica: The court's decision in *Mulgrew v. The Board of Education of the City of New York* does not preclude the proposed co-location of 28Q350 in building Q470. If the Panel for Educational Policy ("PEP") approves the proposed co-location of 28Q350, the school will be lawfully sited in Q470 beginning in September 2011.

With regard to comment 12: The DOE assesses the impact of school utilization changes on high school admissions from a borough-wide perspective, rather than a District or individual building basis. In Queens, there are 67,785 high school seats and 75,024 students enrolled in high schools. This implies that the borough is overcrowded; however, utilization can vary by community and building.

This year the DOE is proposing to phase out two high schools in Queens: Jamaica and Beach Channel High School (27Q410, "Beach Channel"). Despite the overcrowding experienced in the borough as a whole, if both of the proposals to phase out Jamaica and Beach Channel are approved, the DOE believes it has effective plans prepared to replace the lost seats.

Based on the November 1st, 2010 enrollment register, Jamaica and Beach Channel are serving a total of 218 new ninth-grade students. This figure represents the current and future combined demand for seats at these two schools. The DOE is proposing to co-locate new schools on the Jamaica and Beach Channel Campuses in 2011-2012. The DOE anticipates that this would create approximately 220 new ninth-grade high school seats as Jamaica and Beach Channel phase out.

In addition, on January 8th, 2011, the DOE proposed to add one additional new school at Q686 with an additional enrollment of approximately 200 new ninth-grade high school seats. These new schools would more than offset the 218 ninth-grade seats anticipated to be lost by these two proposed phase-outs.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal as a result of public comment.