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Chancellor

Public Comment Analysis

Date: December 13, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Grade Expansion of M.S. 223 The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology (07X223)

Date of Panel Vote: December 14, 2011

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to expand M.S. 223 The Laboratory School of Finance and Technology (07X223, “M.S. 223”) to serve students in sixth through twelfth grades by 2016-2017. M.S. 223 is an existing choice middle school in Community School District 7 (“District 7”). It serves approximately 494 students in sixth through eighth grades.¹ The school is located in building X149 at 360 East 145th Street, Bronx, New York 10454, where it is co-located with South Bronx Preparatory: A College Board School (07X221, “South Bronx Prep”), an existing secondary school serving approximately 622 students in sixth through twelfth grades.² A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and cafeterias.

If this proposal is approved by the Panel for Educational Policy, M.S. 223 will begin its grade expansion in 2013-2014, when it will begin enrolling ninth-grade students. M.S. 223 will expand gradually, adding one grade level each year over a four-year period. The school will reach its full grade-span of grades six through twelve in 2016-2017. Students will apply for enrollment in the high school grades of M.S. 223 through the Citywide High School Admissions Process.

In anticipation of the grade expansion, if this proposal is approved, M.S. 223 will begin to reduce its incoming middle school enrollment in 2012-2013. Secondary schools (offering grades six through twelve) typically serve three sections of students per grade. M.S. 223 currently has five or more sections in each of its three existing grades. Therefore, the incoming sixth-grade enrollment at M.S. 223 will decrease from five to three sections beginning in 2012-2013. This will ensure that M.S. 223 can more closely approximate the traditional secondary school enrollment model before it begins to add high school grades. It will also ensure that there is adequate space in building X149 for both South Bronx Prep and M.S. 223 during and after the expansion period.

¹ 2011-2012 Unaudited Register.

² 2011-2012 Unaudited Register.

Currently, students residing in District 7 have the opportunity to select from a variety of middle schools within their district through the Middle School Choice Process. They may also apply to charter schools in District 7 and throughout the Bronx through the charter lottery application process. Under this proposal, middle school students in District 7 will retain all of those options.

The proposal to expand M.S. 223 was initiated by the school community. In July 2011, with support from parents and the broader school community, a team composed of teachers and administrators submitted a grade reconfiguration application to the Division of Portfolio Planning. In September 2011, DOE officials visited M.S. 223 and conducted interviews with the applicant team, concluding that the school is well positioned to successfully begin a grade expansion.

The DOE believes that the grade expansion of M.S. 223 will increase access to much-needed high-quality high school seats in the Bronx. Such an expansion will build upon the growing success of M.S. 223, which has demonstrated a strong record of student performance in District 7.

This proposal is not anticipated to impact South Bronx Prep's student enrollment, admissions policies, partnerships, or instructional programming.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A Joint Public Hearing regarding this proposal was held at building X149 on December 1st, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 12 members of the public attended the hearing, and two people spoke. Also present at the meeting were: Yolanda Torres, District 7 Community Superintendent; Almeta Trammel, President of the District 7 Community Education Council ("CEC"); Tanya Jones, First Vice-President of the District 7 CEC; District 7 CEC representatives Tracy Woodall and Naida Franco; Ramón González, Principal of M.S. 223; Eric Lincoln, Assistant Principal at M.S. 223; M.S. 223 School Leadership Team ("SLT") representatives Puja Rao, Mary Hallinan, and Maybelline Suarez; Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Principal of South Bronx Prep; South Bronx Prep SLT representatives Ana Andino, Elda Ortiz, and Nelly Perez; Maria Cristina Jiménez, Children's First Network 406 Leader; Robert Powell from the Citywide Council on High Schools; Ronald Caccioppoli, Bronx Director of Space Planning; Helen Tsang from the DOE Office of Public Affairs; and Amanda Cahn and Rosa Fernández from the DOE Office of Portfolio Management.

The following comments and remarks were made at the Joint Public Hearing:

1. Ramón González, Principal of M.S. 223, spoke in favor of the proposal. He stated that expanding the school to serve high school grades has been a goal for several years. He has received continuous feedback from parents, former students, and staff about creating a secondary school, where students would stay for a seamless middle and high school experience. Principal González strongly believes in the secondary school model because it allows students to remain in the same school for seven years (sixth through twelfth grades), and therefore continue to build on their strengths in a learning community that cares and knows students well. He also stated that expanding the school would benefit the community as a whole because it would provide an additional high school option. Finally, Principal González said that he looks forward to collaborating with South Bronx Prep to offer joint programs (e.g., sports, extracurricular activities) in order to offer a wide range of opportunities for all students in the building.

2. Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Principal of South Bronx Prep, spoke in support of the proposal. She endorses the proposal because it would benefit all students in the building, as both schools continue to work together to share best practices and offer joint programs. She also spoke of the fact that nine years ago, the building housed a struggling school that was shut down due to low performance, and that in the present-day, the building houses two successful schools that serve students from the community.
3. Almeta Trammel, President of CEC 7, spoke in favor of the proposal to expand M.S. 223. She stated that her child, who currently attends M.S. 223, has always had a positive experience at M.S. 223. She supports the proposal because the District 7 community desperately needs better high school options for their children and this proposal is a step in that direction.
4. Eric Lincoln, Assistant Principal at M.S. 223, expressed support for the proposed expansion. He already looks forward to M.S. 223's first high school graduating class in June 2017. He also thanked the DOE Division of Portfolio Planning for this great opportunity.
5. A commenter expressed support for the proposed expansion based on the fact that the school provides a nurturing environment and a rigorous academic program, and that it would continue to build on that foundation as it grows to serve high school grades.
6. A commenter asked if the building had enough space for two secondary schools. The commenter also asked when the expansion would begin.

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

The DOE received one written comment via e-mail.

7. CEC 7 representative Neyda Franco stated that she is against the proposal to expand M.S. 223 because the school has not made Adequate Yearly Progress per the New York State Department of Education's accountability framework.

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

Comments 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are all in favor of the proposal and do not require a response.

Comment 6 asks whether there is enough space in the building for two secondary schools and when the expansion of M.S. 223 would begin. There is sufficient space in building X149 to accommodate both schools during and after the proposed expansion of M.S. 223, pursuant to the Citywide Instructional Footprint (the "Footprint"), which guides space allocation and use in City schools. The Footprint is available at http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/78D715EA-EC50-4AD1-82D1-1CAC544F5D30/0/DOEFOOTPRINTSConsolidatedVersion2011_FINAL.pdf.

If this proposal is approved, M.S. 223 will begin its expansion in 2013-2014. In order to ensure that there is adequate space for South Bronx Prep and M.S. 223's new high school grades, as well as to more closely approximate the traditional secondary school model of three sections of students per grade, beginning in 2012-2013 the incoming sixth-grade enrollment at M.S. 223 will decrease from five to three sections. In all subsequent years, M.S. 223 will continue to accept three sections of sixth grade students.

M.S. 223's enrollment will become stable in 2018-2019, at which time it will serve three sections of students per grade in grades six through twelve. At that point, M.S. 223 and South Bronx Prep are projected to serve a combined total of 1,050-1,190 students, yielding an estimated building utilization rate between 81% and 92% of target capacity.

In 2018-2019 and beyond, when M.S. 223's enrollment stabilizes and the school serves three sections per grade across the board, it will have an allocation of 24 full-size rooms for instructional use and 6 half-size rooms for administrative use per the Footprint. South Bronx Prep is allocated 23 full-size rooms for instructional use and 8 half-size rooms for administrative use per the Footprint. Even after each school has received its respective allocation of rooms per the Footprint, there would still be 7 full-size rooms and 3 quarter-size rooms left in the building. Therefore, each school will continue to receive at minimum its respective baseline Footprint allocation, and any excess space above the space allocated by the Footprint will be divided equitably among the schools as decided by the Building Council in conjunction with the DOE Office of Space Planning.

Comment 7 concerns M.S. 223's New York State Report Card. Each year, the New York State Education Department issues Report Cards to schools across the State. The New York State School Report Card indicates whether a school made Adequate Yearly Progress ("AYP") and identifies the school's accountability status under State and federal accountability systems. AYP indicates whether a school has met satisfactory progress toward the goal of proficiency for all students and student sub-groups. The State requires that students who are not making appropriate progress in English Language Arts ("ELA"), Mathematics, and Science examinations receive academic intervention services.

According to the 2010-2011 New York State School Report Card for M.S. 223, the school made AYP for the "All Students" group in Mathematics and Science. Nevertheless, the school did not meet AYP in ELA for the "All Students" group. This means that the school may be eligible for a State intervention, which may consist of providing additional supports to the school in order to raise ELA proficiency.

According to the metrics utilized by the DOE to assess school performance, M.S. 223 has performed well and is one of the highest performing schools in District 7. For example, schools are held accountable at the City level through Progress Reports which are released each fall for all schools Citywide. Progress Reports evaluate schools based on how their students' performance compares to that of students in their peer schools or schools that serve similar populations in terms of grade span, demographic composition, and/or average incoming State exam scores. The DOE places greater importance (and weight in the Overall Progress Report grade) on the progress a school makes with its students, regardless of whether they make sufficient academic gains to achieve proficiency.

M.S. 223 has made very strong progress with its students based on their improvements year after year. With specific regard to the percentage of students achieving proficiency, which determines the State's target for AYP, the DOE notes that within District 7, M.S. 223 is one of the highest performing middle schools as measured by the percentage of students scoring at proficiency levels on ELA and Mathematics State examinations. The percent of students at M.S. 223 scoring at Levels 3 and 4 on ELA and Mathematics tests in 2010-2011 were the highest amongst middle schools in District 7 and above the Bronx borough average scores.

The DOE used multiple measures, including interviews, to assess M.S. 223's overall standing in

terms of performance and school structure before proposing to expand the school. Based on both quantitative and qualitative data, the DOE is confident that M.S. 223 will be a good option for students and families in District 7 seeking high school seats. As with all other schools Citywide, M.S. 223 will continue to receive supports from its network as it works to raise the bar on ELA proficiency among all students.

Changes Made to this Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.