



## **Public Comment Analysis**

Date: January 18, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of M.S. 390 (10X390) to a 6-8 School

Date of Panel Vote: January 19, 2011

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### **Summary of Proposal**

M.S. 390 (10X390, “M.S. 390”) is an existing zoned middle school located in building X026, at 1930 Andrews Avenue, Bronx, NY 10453, in Community School District 10. It currently serves students in grades five through eight. M.S. 390 is co-located with P.S. 396, an elementary school that currently serves students in kindergarten through fourth grade and offers a pre-kindergarten program.

On December 3, 2010, the Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) describing a proposal to implement a “grade truncation” of M.S. 390, meaning that the school would no longer enroll fifth graders after the current 2010-2011 school year. Beginning in September 2011, M.S. 390 would serve students only in sixth through eighth grade.

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to high-quality schools at every stage of their education. Having middle schools that begin in different grades (i.e., 5-8 versus 6-8) creates unequal levels of access for students based simply on the year they exit elementary school. Elementary schools typically terminate in grade five. Middle schools typically enroll students beginning in sixth grade.

M.S. 390 is one of two remaining 5-8 middle schools in District 10. The proposed grade truncation will help standardize middle school entry grades in District 10. Furthermore, M.S. 390 will become a Middle School Choice option for District 9 and 10 fifth graders applying to sixth grade for the 2011-2012 school year. All rising sixth graders who live in the M.S. 390 zone will still be guaranteed a seat at this school.

Under this proposal, at the close of the 2010-2011 school year, all M.S. 390 fifth graders who meet promotional standards will continue at the school for sixth grade. As described in two separate EISs, the DOE is also proposing the expansion of P.S. 226 and P.S. 396, the two elementary schools serving students in the same zone as M.S. 390 whose students typically matriculate to M.S. 390, from K-4 to K-5 schools. If these expansion proposals are approved, starting in September 2011, fourth graders attending P.S. 396 and P.S. 226 will be able to remain at their elementary school for fifth grade, and will no longer need to attend M.S. 390 in fifth grade as they do now.

The truncation of M.S. 390 and the expansion of P.S. 226 and P.S. 396 will achieve the following: it will allow P.S. 226 and P.S. 396 students to spend the typical six years in elementary school, and it will allow M.S. 390 students to spend the typical three years in middle school. In addition, M.S. 390 plans to offer a limited unscreened Language and Leadership Development program called Excel Academy for English Language Learners that would be available to students through the Middle School Choice Process in the 2011-2012 school year. Students from Districts 9 and 10 interested in applying to this program can do so during the 2010-2011 school year. If the P.S. 226 and P.S. 396 expansion proposals are approved, beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, P.S. 226 and P.S. 396 graduates will be able to attend M.S. 390, their zoned middle school as sixth graders, or apply to all schools in Districts 9 and 10 that participate in the Middle School Choice Process.

If the two grade expansion proposals are not approved, but M.S. 390's grade truncation proposal is approved, the DOE would not implement the grade truncation to ensure that students would retain a zoned fifth grade option.

As a result of this proposal, approximately 120-140 students who would have attended M.S. 390 for fifth grade in 2011-2012 will attend their zoned school instead. There are enough seats to accommodate those students at their zoned schools.

### **Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing**

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal and the proposal to expand P.S. 396 was held at M.S. 390/ P.S. 396 on January 4, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 120 members of the public attended the hearing, and 13 people spoke. Present at the meeting were District 10 Superintendent Sonia Menendez; Community Educational Council ("CEC") 10 President Marvin Shelton and CEC representative Valerie Greaves; M.S. 390 Principal Robert Mercedes; M.S. 390 School Leadership Team representatives Belky Fermin, Elba Vasquez Ley, Elsie Cesario, Herminda Ortiz, George Swander, Marcus Escobar, Olga Torry, Madeline Echevarez, and Lynn Murray; P.S. 396 Principal Nicole Tine; School Leadership Team representatives Douglas Manzella, Elaine Ellison, Toni Rodriguez, Linet Gomez, Hilary Wolf, Carmen Ace; and Marilyn Morales.

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

1. A commenter voiced her desire for her son to matriculate from P.S. 226 to M.S. 390 to join his brother and asked if M.S. 390 could offer a chess club.
2. A commenter asked what would occur if an M.S. 390 fifth-grade student had to repeat the grade.
3. A commenter expressed concern that the grade truncation would result in a loss of funds for one of the schools and her desire for the two schools to share the funding. The commenter

also expressed concern about the instability that might be created from the grade reconfiguration.

**The DOE also received several comments at the Joint Public Hearing which related to the proposed grade expansion of P.S. 396. Those comments will be addressed in the separate Analysis of Public Comment concerning the P.S. 396 proposal.**

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

No written or oral comments were received by the DOE in regards to the proposal.

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

In response to Comment 1 regarding how soon the parent's child will be able to attend M.S. 390 and the existence of a chess club, the proposal would delay such entry for a year if the student is currently in fourth grade at P.S. 226. As for the existence of a chess club at M.S. 390, the school does not currently offer a chess club. However, middle schools may eliminate or add extracurricular activities based on demand and available resources.

In response to Comment 2 concerning current M.S. 390 fifth graders who do not meet promotional standards to progress to sixth grade, the DOE will seek to place that student in the fifth grade of the zoned elementary school the student attended. If such placement is not feasible, then the DOE will find an alternative District 10 placement for the student.

In response to Comment 3 regarding P.S. 396 and M.S. 390's funding if the grade reconfiguration takes place, most funding in school budgets is allocated on a per-pupil basis. For each student no longer on the M.S. 390 roster after the truncation is completed, the school is expected to receive approximately \$4,384.81 less annual base funding. These estimates are based on current Fair Student Funding (FSF) per capita allocation levels and are subject to annual variation.

FSF covers basic instructional expenses and FSF funds may, at the school's discretion, be used to hire staff, purchase supplies and materials, or implement instructional programs. As a result of the truncation, the total number of students enrolled at M.S. 390 is expected to decline, meaning that the school will need fewer teachers and fewer supplies to meet the needs of its smaller student population. If for some reason the overall school enrollment grows again, the overall budget will increase accordingly. In any case, funding will be provided in accordance with enrollment levels, allowing the school to meet the instructional needs of its student population. This is how funding is awarded to all schools throughout the City, with budgets naturally increasing or decreasing as enrollment fluctuates from year to year.

More information about funding can be found in the "Costs of Instruction" section in the EIS regarding this proposal.

As for the concern regarding instability as a result of the grade reconfiguration, the proposal to truncate M.S. 390 and expand P.S. 396 will allow P.S. 226 and P.S. 396 students to

spend the typical six years in elementary school, and allow M.S. 390 students to spend the typical three years in middle school, therefore providing more stability to its students.

### **Changes Made to the Proposal**

No changes in the proposal were made in response to public feedback.