



Public Comment Analysis

Date: January 18, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Re-Siting and Grade Expansion of P.S. 78 to a K-8 School To Be Implemented No Later than the 2014-2015 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: January 19, 2011

Summary of Proposal

P.S. 78 (30Q078 or “P.S. 78”) is an existing elementary school located at 48-09 Center Boulevard, Long Island City, NY 11109, in school building Q868, in Community School District 30. It currently serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade and offers a pre-kindergarten program.

On December 3, 2010, the Department of Education (“DOE”) issued a proposal to implement a “grade expansion” so that P.S. 78 would serve grades K-8 and continue to offer a pre-kindergarten program. This means that P.S. 78 would begin enrolling sixth graders in the first year of expansion, upon relocation to a larger building, and then grow to serve an additional grade in each subsequent year. When P.S./I.S. 78 completes its grade expansion, it will enroll students in Kindergarten through eighth grade. The projected enrollment for the first year of expansion is 234-284 students. At full scale, the projected enrollment is 354-404 students.

The DOE is also proposing to “re-site” P.S./I.S. 78, which means the school would be located in a different building. The School Construction Authority (“SCA”) is currently pursuing a site located at 46-08 5th Street, Long Island City, NY 11101 (“Q312”), which is also located in District 30.

The DOE is proposing to re-site P.S. 78 into this new building upon its completion in either August 2013 or 2014. The DOE is proposing to re-site P.S. 78 because the school’s current facility does not have room for the additional three grades. Thus, the school’s grade expansion is contingent on the school first moving to a large enough building, at which point the school would have sufficient space to accommodate the additional grades and would begin phasing in its middle school grades.

The idea to expand P.S. 78 into a K-8 school came from the school community. In the spring of 2009, the principal of P.S. 78 submitted a letter of intent to apply for a grade expansion, and in the summer of 2009 a team of P.S. 78 teachers and administrators submitted an application to

expand the school. That application was supported by P.S. 78 parents and the broader community surrounding the school, including elected officials representing the community. A grade expansion panel then interviewed the P.S. 78 applicant team and concluded that the school was positioned to successfully begin a middle school expansion.

Such an expansion would build upon the growing success of the P.S. 78 school community in recent years. The school's proficiency levels (Level 3 and 4s) in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics have been above both citywide and District 30 averages for the past three years. P.S. 78 has also achieved an A or a B grade on each of its last four report cards. These positive steps indicate a record of success that can continue with a grade expansion.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at P.S. 78 on January 5, 2011. At the hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 30 members of the public attended the hearing and four members of the public offered comments about the proposal. Also present at the meeting were District 30 Superintendent Dr. Philip Composto; Community Education Council members Sal Cohen, Jeff Guyton and Mavis Hall; P.S. 78 Principal Lou Pavone; and P.S. 78 School Leadership Team representatives Courtney Jimenez, Bares Sal Amed, Carmen Gibson, Gerry Gianates, Erin Yegusti, Victoria Mulligan, and Jimmy DeMorse.

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

1. CEC representative Jeff Guyton praised the school staff, especially Principal Pavone, for their commitment of time to the school. He also praised the parent community for contributing to making P.S. 78 successful. Finally, Mr. Guyton expressed his excitement for the proposal and expressed his hope to see it through to implementation.
2. Several commenters expressed support for the proposal, reasoning that the expansion of the school will benefit the growing community.
3. A commenter noted that the current P.S. 78 facility limits the school but that the expansion and re-siting will enable the school to reach its full potential.
4. A commenter stated her satisfaction with the school and its staff, particularly with the principal, and expressed her support for the expansion.
5. A commenter asked how the expansion would affect students from the district who want to attend P.S. 78. Specifically, the commenter questioned whether there would be enough seats for all students who want to attend. In addition, the commenter inquired about how the Special Education Department would be implemented into the new school building.

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

No written or oral comments were submitted to the DOE regarding this proposal.

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

1. Comments 1, 2, 3 and 4 express support of the proposal and do not require a response.
2. With regards to comment 5 about seating capacity for students from District 30, P.S. 78 is a zoned school, meaning that the residents from the zoned address area will be given priority for seats. If this proposal is approved, the new middle school grades will also be zoned. According to the Educational Impact Statement concerning this proposal, “if there are available sixth-grade seats in P.S./I.S. once all P.S. 78 elementary students who want to continue at the school have been guaranteed a seat, other students from District 30 may apply and be randomly selected through the District 30 Middle School Choice process.”
3. With regards to comment 5 about implementation of special education, P.S. 78 will continue to offer special programs and services with the expansion. In addition, consistent with citywide policy, 10% of the new school building will be allocated to a District 75 special education school.

Changes Made to the Proposal

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