

Public Comment Analysis

Date: December 19, 2012
Topic: The Proposed Re-siting and Co-location of the Young Women’s Leadership School of Brooklyn (14K614) in Building K147 with Existing School P.S. 147 Isaac Remsen (14K147) Beginning in the 2013-2014 School Year
Date of Panel Vote: December 20, 2012

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to re-site the Young Women’s Leadership School of Brooklyn (14K614, “YWLS”), an existing all-girls secondary school that currently serves students in sixth through tenth grades, to building K147 (“K147”), which is located at 325 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206, in Community School District 14 beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. YWLS opened in 2008 and was approved by the DOE to be a secondary school. YWLS will continue adding one grade per year in K147 until it serves grades six through twelve in the 2014-2015 school year. YWLS would be co-located in K147 with P.S. 147 Isaac Remsen (14K147, “P.S. 147”), an existing DOE school that currently serves students in kindergarten through fifth grades (“K-5”) and offers a full-day pre-kindergarten program. If this proposal is approved, YWLS would be re-sited and co-located with P.S. 147 in K147 beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. A re-siting means students will attend classes in a different building than in previous years, and 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.

YWLS is designed to serve female students only. The school is part of the Young Women’s Leadership Network, an organization that helps create single-gender public schools and college access programs across the country, and whose mission is to raise expectations, improve performance, and inspire leadership for young girls.

YWLS is currently co-located in building K049 (“K049”) with the Green School: An Academy for Environmental Careers (14K454, “Green School”) and Lyons Community School (14K586, “Lyons Community”), at 223 Graham Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206, in Brooklyn’s Community School District 14. YWLS currently enrolls sixth- through eighth-grade students through the District 14 Middle School Choice Process and ninth- through tenth-grade students through the Citywide High School Admissions Process (“HSAP”) and will continue to do so when it reaches full scale in 2014-2015.

P.S. 147 serves zoned elementary school students and is currently co-located with the Brooklyn Latin School (14K449, “Brooklyn Latin”), an existing high school that serves students in ninth through twelfth grades in K147. In a separate Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) posted on October 26, 2012, the DOE has proposed to re-site and co-locate Brooklyn Latin with the Green School and Lyons Community to K049 beginning in 2013-2014.¹ If that proposal is approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”), Brooklyn Latin will no longer serve ninth- through twelfth-grade students in building K147 at conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year. In the 2013-2014 school year, Brooklyn Latin will serve

¹ The EIS can be found here:<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Dec2012Proposals.htm>.

students in ninth- through twelfth-grades in K049.

For the purposes of describing the proposal to re-site and co-locate YWLS, it is assumed that the proposal to re-site and co-locate Brooklyn Latin in K049 will be approved by the PEP. However, if the proposal to re-site and co-locate Brooklyn Latin in K049 is not approved, there is sufficient space in K147 for the co-location of YWLS with P.S. 147 and Brooklyn Latin, though this EIS would be revised as necessary.

According to the 2011-2012 Enrollment Capacity Utilization Report (the “Blue Book”), building K147 has the capacity to serve a total of 1,147 students. In 2012-2013, P.S. 147 is projected to serve 202 kindergarten through fifth-grade students and 36 pre-kindergarten students, and Brooklyn Latin is projected to serve 523 students in building K147.² This yields a projected utilization rate of approximately 66%.³ This means that the building is “underutilized” and has space to accommodate additional students. If this proposal and the proposal to re-site and co-locate Brooklyn Latin to K049 are both approved, in 2013-2014, once YWLS is re-sited to K147, YWLS is projected to serve 360-420 sixth- through eleventh-grade students, and P.S. 147 is projected to serve 190-250 kindergarten through fifth-grade students and 36 pre-kindergarten students, for a total of 586-706 students, yielding a projected building utilization rate of approximately 51%-62%. The DOE does not anticipate that the proposed co-location will affect the pre-kindergarten program at P.S. 147.

Copies of the EIS describing the proposed re-siting and co-location of YWLS are available in the main offices of YWLS and P.S. 147. It is also available on the DOE’s Web site at:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Dec2012Proposals>.

Summary of Comments Received

Two joint public hearings regarding this proposal were held. The first was held on November 26, 2012 at K147 and the second was held on November 30, 2012 at K049.⁴ Participants had the opportunity to provide input on the proposal.

Approximately 45 members of the public attended the hearing on November 26, 2012, and eight people spoke. Present at the meeting were Principal Sandra Noyola of P.S. 147; Principal Talana Bradley of YWLS; P.S. 147 School Leadership Team (“SLT”) members Jessica Lloyd, Shamiah Squires, and Princess Davis; YWLS SLT members Maggie Bacon and Mayra Santiago; Sara Kaufman from the Division of Portfolio Planning who served as the Chancellor’s designee; and Gabrielle Wyatt from the Division of Portfolio Planning. The District 14 Community Education Council (“CEC 14”) was invited to attend and confirmed that a representative would be in attendance; however, no representative attended the hearing.

² Based on the 2012-2013 Budget Register Projections.

³ All references to building utilization rates in this document are based on capacity data from the 2011-2012 Blue Book and enrollment data from the 2012-2013 budgeted enrollment projections. This methodology is consistent with the manner in which the DOE conducts planning and calculates space allocations and funding for all schools. In determining the space allocation for co-located schools, the Office of Space Planning will conduct a detailed site survey and space analysis of the building to assess the amount of space available in the building.

⁴ These joint public hearings were also held to solicit public comments regarding the proposal to re-site Brooklyn Latin. The Analysis of Public Comments related to that proposal is available here:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Dec2012Proposals>

Approximately 70 members of the public attended the hearing on November 30, 2012, and 25 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Alicja Winnicki, Interim Acting Superintendent of District 14 and Chancellor's Designee; Tesa Wilson, President of CEC 14; Principal Talana Bradley of YWLS; Maria Baptista, representative from New York City Councilmember Diana Reyna's office; and Stephen Demers and Gabrielle Wyatt from the Division of Portfolio Planning.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on November 26, 2012:

1. Sandra Noyola, Principal of P.S. 147 stated the following:
 - a. She expressed enthusiasm for the proposed re-siting and co-location of YWLS with P.S. 147, noting that opportunities for P.S. 147's female students would be enhanced.
 - b. She also discussed the possibility of P.S. 147 expanding to serve middle school grades and her excitement about upcoming changes.
2. Talana Bradley, Principal of YWLS, expressed her excitement for the proposed re-siting and co-location of YWLS with P.S. 147, noting the change will be a great opportunity for YWLS students to demonstrate leadership. She stated that if YWLS is to be co-located, it is better for her students to be with younger co-ed students or high school girls, rather than co-ed high school students.
3. Jessica Lloyd, a member of the P.S. 147 SLT, expressed her excitement about the transition and also noted concern about school safety at P.S. 147.
4. Princess Davis, a member of the P.S. 147 SLT, expressed support for the YWLS re-siting, stating:
 - a. This is great opportunity for female students to be served in the same building for elementary, middle, and high school.
 - b. She is excited about the possibility of P.S. 147's expansion.
5. A parent of a P.S. 147 student stated support for the re-siting of YWLS to K147, as this would provide a safer option for P.S. 147 students.
6. Ben Talbot, a member of the P.S. 147 SLT, welcomed YWLS and stated that the P.S. 147 faculty is fully supportive of the re-siting and co-location of YWLS with P.S. 147. He noted the P.S. 147 SLT would continue to advocate for P.S. 147.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on November 30, 2012:

7. Tesa Wilson, CEC 14 President, raised the following concerns about the co-location and re-siting:
 - a. There has been a lack of information given to parents and some parents feel the process was rushed.
 - b. Parents are concerned about safety.
8. Principal Bradley stated that when YWLS was first opened in 2008, they wished to be housed with an elementary school if not in a standalone building because they are an all girls school. YWLS is excited about the new partnership and the possibility of P.S. 147 serving as a feeder school to YWLS.
9. Maria Baptista, representative from Councilmember Diana Reyna's office expressed support for the proposal, stating the office firmly believes YWLS should be co-located with an elementary school.
10. One commenter expressed support but raised the following concerns:
 - a. Outside safety is of concern, as there is currently one School Safety Agent at K147. The commenter requested that at least three School Safety Agents be assigned.
 - b. Is P.S. 147 going to serve kindergarten through eighth grades? The DOE says it will only serve up to the fifth grade.

- c. YWLS would like to request time in the auditorium.

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

11. One commenter asked what can parents do to make the move a successful one?
12. One commenter asked how can parents affect the approval of the move?
13. One commenter asked how can we ensure the safety of students at K147?
14. One commenter stated the students of YWLS are accustomed to attending a school co-located with other high school students, giving the campus and school the sense of a high school community. The commenter asserted that the re-siting would strip YWLS of this identity.

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

Comments 1 (a), 2, 4 (a), 5, 6, 8, and 9 are in support of the proposal and do not require a response.

Comments 3, 7 (b), 9, 10 (a), and 13 relate to concerns about safety in K147 and the surrounding community.

Pursuant to Chancellor’s Regulation A-414, every school/campus is mandated to form a School Safety Committee (“the Committee”), which is responsible for developing a comprehensive School Safety Plan that defines the normal operations of the site and what procedures are in place in the event of an emergency. The School Safety Plan is updated annually by the Committee to meet changing security needs, changes in organization and building conditions, and any other factors. Updates to the School Safety Plan could also be made at any other time when it is necessary to address security concerns. The Committee will also address safety matters on an ongoing basis and make appropriate recommendations to the principals when it identifies the need for additional security measures.

The Office of Safety and Youth Development (“OSYD”) will conduct an initial Safety Task Force meeting with the principals of the schools located in K147 and various units of the NYPD including personnel from the relevant precinct, Transit, Housing, and Gangs, in order to meet the principals, share arrival and dismissal schedules of the schools, and discuss any safety concerns the principals may have. OSYD will also work with the local precinct and recommend the establishment of a safe corridor for students during dismissals, if necessary. The deployment of safety agents will be monitored closely and adjustments will be made as necessary.

Additionally, the Borough Safety Director will assist the building’s principals with any safety concerns, internally and externally, and will provide additional support when available.

OSYD will regularly monitor the building’s schools’ DOE incident data and the NYPD building crime data for spiking trends. When there is evidence of spikes in incidents and crime, OSYD will schedule a review of the data with representatives from all the co-located schools and follow up with a safety walk or a full comprehensive safety assessment to identify areas of concern and re-establish safety and security systems for the campus, as appropriate.

Comments 1 (b), 4 (b), and 10 (b) suggest P.S. 147 will be expanding to serve sixth through eighth grade students.

Any possible grade reconfiguration of P.S. 147 is not a part of the proposed re-siting and co-location of YWLS to building K147. In addition, the DOE has not received a request for the grade reconfiguration of P.S. 147 to date.

Schools interested in expanding to serve additional grades must apply through the Division of Portfolio Planning (“DPP”). Interested schools undergo a rigorous evaluation process that includes submitting a School Expansion Application to be reviewed by DPP for the quality of the new program and the strength of the school’s current instructional program; school visits by and on-site panel interview with DPP; and approval through the PEP for the changes in utilization in the building.

Comment 11 inquired about the role of parents in ensuring a successful re-siting of YWLS.

The DOE expects and anticipates that the school communities of YWLS and P.S. 147 will work collaboratively throughout the re-siting and co-location of YWLS. Through the Parent/Parent-Teacher Association (PA-PTA) and the SLT, parents can work with school administrators to enhance their involvement in planning for the re-siting and eventual co-location. These bodies can also assist in the outreach the larger parent communities of their respective schools with regular updates regarding the re-siting and co-location.

Paramount to any successful collaboration is the development of patience, understanding, and respect for all parties involved. The DOE is confident YWLS and P.S. 147’s principals will be able to create a collaborative and mutually respectful environment for all students, parents, staff, and faculty members in K147.

Comment 12 inquired about the role of parents and the community in the approval of the proposal.

The DOE appreciates all feedback from the community regarding a proposal. When the EIS was issued, it was made available to the staff, faculty and parents at P.S. 147 and YWLS, on the DOE’s Web site, and in each school’s respective main office. In addition, the DOE dedicates a proposal-specific Web site and voicemail to collect feedback on this proposal. Furthermore, all schools’ staff, faculty and parent communities were invited to the Joint Public Hearings to solicit further feedback. Finally, each school’s staff, faculty, and parent communities can make comments at the December 20, 2012 PEP meeting before the PEP votes on the proposal.

Comment 7 (a) states there has been a lack of communication to parents about the proposal.

As previously stated, when the EIS was issued, it was made available to the staff, faculty and parents at P.S. 147 and YWLS, on the DOE’s Web site, and in each school’s respective main office. Parents and guardians of P.S. 147 and YWLS students received letters detailing the proposed re-siting and co-location, detailing how current students will be impacted if the proposal is approved. In addition, DPP met with the SLTs of each school to answer questions and receive feedback about the proposal.

In addition, the DOE has dedicated a proposal-specific Web site and voicemail to collect feedback on this proposal. Furthermore, all schools’ staff, faculty and parent communities were invited to the Joint Public Hearings to solicit further feedback.

Comment 10 (c) requested time for YWLS in the auditorium.

YWLS and P.S. 147 will both receive time in the auditorium, as it is a shared space. If this proposal is approved, the shared space schedule for areas such as the auditorium will be decided upon by the Building Council. The Building Council is an administrative structure composed of a team of principals that come together to make cohesive space, safety, schedule, program, and campus culture decisions. A Building Council exists at any building that houses co-located schools.

If the principals are unable to agree upon a schedule for shared spaces, there is a mediation process outlined in the Campus Policy Memo, which is available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/campusgov>.

Comment 14 asserts that the proposed co-location of YWLS with an elementary school will negatively impact YWLS' high school identity.

The DOE believes that, if this proposal is approved, the school communities at YWLS and P.S. 147 will not be negatively impacted. In addition, the proposed re-siting of YWLS will provide the school with a new permanent location while keeping it within a mile of its current location. Furthermore, both principals are supportive of the re-siting, as reflective in comments 1 (a) and 2.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.