

## **Public Comment Analysis**

Date: December 19, 2012

Topic: The Proposed Grade Expansion of Professor Juan Bosch Public School (06M178) from a K-2 School to a K-5 School Beginning in 2013-2014

Date of Panel Vote: December 20, 2012

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### **Summary of Proposal**

On September 20, 2012 the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) proposed to implement a “grade expansion” at Professor Juan Bosch Public School (06M178, “P.S. 178”). That proposal was scheduled to be considered by the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) on November 8, 2012, but was withdrawn in the wake of disruptions caused by Hurricane Sandy.

On November 5, 2012, the DOE reissued the proposal. The reissued proposal included updated information on P.S. 178’s admissions method. P.S. 178 is an existing zoned district elementary school serving students in kindergarten through second grades in building M178 (“M178”) at 12-18 Ellwood Street, New York, NY 10040, in Community School District 6. P.S. 178 is an early childhood center (“ECC”). ECCs are small elementary schools that focus on early childhood education, typically kindergarten through second grade.

P.S. 178 currently serves 224 students in kindergarten through second grade. It currently offers a Spanish dual-language program and an ASD Nest program, in addition to a monolingual program. If this proposal is approved, second-grade students currently enrolled in P.S. 178 would be able to stay at P.S. 178 for third through fifth grades. P.S. 178 would add one grade each year until 2015-2016, when it would reach full scale and serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

M178 has a capacity of 292 students and currently serves 224 students in kindergarten through second grades, yielding a utilization rate of 77%. If this proposal is approved, the building would serve approximately 320-380 students and have a utilization rate of 110-130% in 2015-2016 when P.S. 178 reaches full scale. This utilization rate is expected to decrease in later years after 2015-2016, as larger cohorts graduate. As discussed in section III.B. of the Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”), the building has sufficient space to provide P.S. 178 with at least its baseline room allocations. Therefore, M178 has the capacity to accommodate the proposed grade expansion of P.S. 178.

The proposal to expand P.S. 178 initially came from the school community. In February 2012, the P.S. 178 School Leadership Team submitted a letter of intent to the Office of New Schools to expand the grades served by the school. That application was supported by parents and the broader school community. This suggests a high level of satisfaction within the school and its parent body and the expectation that an expanded P.S. 178 will suit the needs of the children in District 6.

In addition to this proposal for the grade expansion of P.S. 178, the DOE approved a change in P.S. 178’s admissions policy such that P.S. 178 will be a choice elementary school, rather than a zoned elementary school. P.S. 178 currently shares a zone with P.S. 152 Dyckman Valley (06M152, “P.S. 152”), which serves kindergarten through fifth grade and offers a pre-kindergarten program at 93 Nagle Avenue, New York, NY 10040, less than one-tenth of a mile from M178. Students who live within this zone currently

receive priority for admission at either P.S. 178 or P.S. 152. Beginning in September 2013, P.S. 178 will become a choice school. As a choice school, P.S. 178 would be open for admission to all students in District 6, without giving priority to students who live in the school's current zone. However, the zone itself will not change, and all students in the zone will continue to be zoned to P.S. 152. This change in admissions at P.S. 178 will occur regardless of whether this grade expansion proposal is approved.

The EIS can be found on the Department of Education's Web site:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Dec2012Proposals.htm>

Copies of the EIS are also available in the main office of P.S. 178.

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

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building M178 on December 6, 2012. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 136 members of the public attended the hearing, and 36 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Community School District 6 Superintendent Elsa Nunez; District 6 Community Education Council ("CEC 6") Representatives Maggie Velez and Bryan Davis; P.S. 178 Principal Deirdre Budd; P.S. 178 School Leadership Team ("SLT") Representatives Susan Coots, Matt Stern, Kenia Lee-Sam, Dalia Gonzalez, Eileen Pierce, and Jennifer Hoppa; and Yael Kalban and Meera Jain from the DOE's Division of Portfolio Planning.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on December 6, 2012:

1. Principal Deirdre Budd, asserted that:
  - a. The staff present at the hearing is a testament to their dedication and commitment to the students, families, and community.
  - b. She hopes that P.S. 178 is a given the opportunity to expand.
2. Bryan Davis, CEC 6 member, stated that:
  - a. The CEC 6 has taken no official stand on the expansion.
  - b. Many CEC 6 members support this expansion as it represents an important concept of choice.
3. Jennifer Hoppa, P.S. 178 SLT member, expressed that:
  - a. She supports the expansion to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - b. She considers it a privilege to be a part of the P.S. 178 environment and community.
  - c. She wants to see the continued growth of the dual-language program.
4. Susan Coots, P.S. 178 SLT member, expressed that:
  - a. She has noticed that the Parents Association has had new parents every year, but if P.S. 178 grew to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the Parents Association would have more momentum.
  - b. She is fully confident that P.S. 178 will be wonderful K-5 school under Principal Budd's leadership.
5. Dalia Gonzalez, P.S. 178 SLT member and UFT chapter leader, asserted that:
  - a. She supports the expansion because it gives families the opportunity to continue in a school where the staff are dedicated and will provide a successful academic experience.
6. Eileen Pierce, P.S. 178 SLT member, stated that:

- a. The good early childhood teaching practices will only be enhanced as the school expands to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
7. Kenia Lee-Sam, P.S. 178 SLT member, expressed that:
  - a. Her son has improved at P.S. 178 and she is more than happy to see the school expand to fifth grade.
8. Several commenters expressed their support for the expansion of P.S. 178 to fifth grade.
9. Several commenters described how successful their children have been as a result of P.S. 178's dual-language and ASD Nest programs.
10. Several commenters noted that because P.S. 178 only offered kindergarten through second grades, they had to find another school for third through fifth grades, and don't want other parents to have to go through this process.
11. Several commenters asserted that P.S. 178 is a good school because of Principal Budd's leadership and dedicated staff.
12. Several commenters noted that different children need different types of educational programs, and P.S. 178 should expand because of its historical success in offering different types of educational programs.
13. Several commenters expressed their support for Principal Deirdre Budd.
14. Several commenters expressed that they are desperate for P.S. 178 to grow to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
15. Several commenters asserted that P.S. 178 is a high-quality school that provides a warm and nurturing environment for students and serves the community well.
16. Several commenters expressed that they would like to see the continuity of an elementary school education at P.S. 178.
17. One commenter expressed that his son didn't accept an offer to attend a gifted and talented program because of the strength of P.S. 178 and leadership of Principal Budd.
18. One commenter expressed that an expanded P.S. 178 will be the envy of all public schools.
19. One commenter expressed that P.S. 178 is the jewel of Washington Heights.
20. Multiple commenters expressed that their children feel loved, secure and happy at P.S. 178 and express that they love their school.
21. Several commenters expressed that it takes up to five years to really understand another language and the additional years at P.S. 178 will ensure that students will be bilingual before leaving for middle school.
22. Multiple commenters expressed that attending a dual-language program was important to their family and cultural values and that P.S. 178 serves these needs and values.
23. Several commenters stated that transitioning their students to another school for third grade was difficult, especially because of the introduction of standardized testing in third grade, but if P.S. 178 expands, this transition will be seamless.
24. Several commenters stated that P.S. 178 teachers are highly qualified and that staff communicate with the parents in a very satisfactory way.
25. Two commenters stated that if P.S. 178 expands to fifth grade, this will help inform and drive the teaching practices of the future students.
26. Multiple commenters stated that P.S. 178 will continue to be a rigorous school and offer a high standard of learning to their students.

27. Multiple commenters stated that P.S. 178 is like a family, and that expanding will strengthen the community.
28. Several commenters stated that if P.S. 178 offered third through fifth grade before, they would have stayed at the school, rather than enrolling their children elsewhere.
29. Several commenters expressed that their children love the school culture and have a love for learning.
30. One commenter expressed that over 90% of the teachers have a master's degree and that the teachers are well trained and developed in collaboration with Teacher's College at Columbia University.
31. One commenter expressed that P.S. 178 should be given the opportunity to expand to fifth grade so that they can serve more students in District 6 and level the playing field.

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

32. A petition with 205 signatures was submitted that supports the expansion to fifth grade and believes the school should be given the opportunity to grow and continue the work that P.S. 178 has started with their children.
33. One comment was submitted at the hearing which asserted that P.S. 178 is one of the few and rare schools in District 6 that is willing to inspire children and should be given the opportunity to expand.
34. One comment was received via phone which expressed that P.S. 178 should not be unzoned, because:
  - a. Unzoning P.S. 178 will lead to an increase in demand for the popular schools and decrease in demand for the unpopular schools.
  - b. Students that require Individualized Education Programs will be left in the unpopular schools and students that don't require Individualized Education Programs will go to the popular school; resulting in a disparity between the students that are served in each school.
  - c. Families purchase homes in the zones of popular schools; unzoning these schools is unfair.

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

Comments 1-33 are supportive of the proposal, and thus do not require a response.

#### **Choice Admissions**

Comment 34 raises concern about P.S. 178 becoming a choice elementary school.

Beginning in September 2013, P.S. 178 will be a choice elementary school and open for admission to all students in District 6, without giving priority to students who live in the school's zone. The proposed grade expansion will result in a slight decrease in the number of kindergarten seats available at P.S. 178 each year by approximately 22-42 seats beginning in 2013-2014. P.S. 178 currently shares a zone with P.S. 152. All students currently zoned to both schools will continue to be zoned to P.S. 152, which has sufficient capacity to accommodate additional zoned students due to both the proposed reduction in

cohort size at P.S. 178 and the change in P.S. 178's admissions policy to make it a choice elementary school.

The DOE does not anticipate that unzoning a school will make it more or less popular, nor does it impact the admissions processes at other District 6 elementary schools.

As a district-wide choice school, P.S. 178's admissions priorities will be as follows:

1. In-district siblings of current students
2. Out-of-district siblings of current students
3. In-district students without siblings in the school
4. Students residing in other districts without siblings in the school

Students with IEPs will participate in the choice process in the same manner as their non-disabled peers, as would ELL students.

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

No changes have been made to the proposal in response to public feedback.