

Public Comment Analysis

Date: December 19, 2012

Topic: The Proposed Expansion of the Co-Location of Girls Preparatory Charter School of the Bronx (84X487) with M.S. 302 Luisa Dessus Cruz (08X302) in Building X052, Beginning in 2013-2014

Date of Panel Vote: December 20, 2012

Summary of Proposal

In an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) and Building Utilization Plan (“BUP”) posted on September 20, 2012, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) proposed to expand the grades served in building X052 (“X052”) by Girls Preparatory Charter School of the Bronx (84X487, “Girls Prep Bronx”), from kindergarten through fourth grades to kindergarten through fifth grades. That proposal was scheduled to be considered by the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) on November 8, 2012, but was rescheduled in the wake of disruptions caused by Hurricane Sandy. On November 5, 2012, the DOE reissued the proposal.

Girls Prep Bronx is an existing charter elementary school serving kindergarten through fourth grades in the X052 building, located at 681 Kelly Street, Bronx, NY 10455 in Community School District 8 (“District 8”). Girls Prep Bronx is co-located with M.S. 302 Luisa Dessus Cruz (08X302, “M.S. 302”), a zoned school serving students in sixth through eighth grades. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.

Girls Prep Bronx currently admits students through a charter lottery application. M.S. 302 is zoned. (Admissions procedures are discussed in more detail in Section III of the EIS.)

Girls Prep Bronx has been co-located with M.S. 302 since September 2009 when Girls Prep Bronx opened with kindergarten and first grade. Girls Prep Bronx has expanded one grade per year since then, and as of the 2012-2013 school year, serves students in kindergarten through the fourth grades. If this proposal is approved, Girls Prep Bronx will begin serving fifth grade in X052 in 2013-2014.

According to the 2010-2011 Enrollment, Capacity, Utilization Report (the “Blue Book”), X052 has the capacity to serve 1,137 students.¹ Currently, the building serves 944 students,² yielding a building utilization rate of 83%, meaning the building is not being used as efficiently as it might be.³ If this proposal is approved, Girls Prep Bronx will add a fifth grade in 2013-2014 and will enroll approximately 68-86 additional students. Including those additional Girls Prep Bronx students, in 2013-2014, X052 is projected to serve approximately 1,002-1,144 students in total from Girls Prep Bronx and M.S. 302,

¹ 2010-2011 Enrollment Capacity Utilization Report (the “Blue Book”)

² 2012-2013 budget register projections. This figure represents enrollment at Girls Prep Bronx and M.S. 302.

³ Building utilization rates are based on target capacity data from the 2010-2011 Blue Book and enrollment data from the 2012-2013 budgeted register projections. .

yielding an estimated building utilization rate of 88-101%.

As discussed in Section III.B of the EIS and in the BUP, the building has sufficient space to provide both schools with at least their baseline room allocations, despite the possibility of a utilization rate slightly over 100%. Although a utilization rate in excess of 100% may suggest that a building will be over-utilized or over-crowded in a given year, this rate does not account for the fact that rooms may be programmed for more efficient or different uses than the standard assumptions in the utilization calculation. In addition, charter school enrollment plans are frequently based on larger class sizes than target capacity, contributing to building utilizations above 100% while not impacting the utilization of the space allocated to the traditional public school. Therefore, the X052 building has the capacity to accommodate all the existing schools at full scale.

Public Prep is a charter management organization (“CMO”) that operates two public charter schools in New York City, including Girls Prep Bronx. The State University of New York (“SUNY”) Charter Schools Institute has authorized Girls Prep Bronx to serve kindergarten through fifth grades. Given the available space in Girls Prep Bronx’s current location, building X052, the DOE is proposing to expand the co-location of Girls Prep Bronx in X052 to include fifth grade and to continue at that grade span in X052 thereafter.

If in the future the DOE considers expanding Girls Prep Bronx to serve grades six through eight in DOE space, those grades would be sited in a separate building and would be proposed in a separate EIS and corresponding BUP.

The EIS can be found on the DOE’s Web site:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Dec2012PEP.htm>

Copies of the EIS and BUP are also available in the main offices of M.S. 302 and Girls Prep Bronx.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building X052 on December 13, 2012. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 48 members of the public attended the hearing and 11 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Community School District 8 Superintendent Timothy Behr; District 8 Community Education Council Member (“CEC 8”) Representative Sojo Touray; M.S. 302 Principal Lisa Ortiz; M.S. 302 School Leadership Team (“SLT”) Representatives Ms. Cabrera, Ms. Gonzalez, Ms. Ocasio, Ms. Delgado, Ms. Tecua, Mr. Hinesley; Girls Prep Bronx SLT Representatives Ian Rowe, Alex Steele, Erica Hunt, and Katie Carroll; and Ashley Davies, Stephanie Crane, and Kathryn Matthews from the DOE’s Division of Portfolio Planning.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on December 13, 2012 on the proposal:

1. Several commenters expressed their satisfaction with the current collaboration between Girls Prep Bronx and M.S. 302.

2. One commenter stated that Girls Prep Bronx and M.S. 302 serve as an example to other co-located schools in how schools can work together.
3. Several commenters expressed their support for the expansion of Girls Prep Bronx to serve students in the fifth grade.
4. One commenter raised concern about the lack of space in the X052 building and asked if the DOE would be giving more space to M.S. 302 as well.
5. Two commenters spoke about the positive influence that the M.S. 302 students have on the Girls Prep Bronx students, and that they serve as role models by reinforcing the core values of Girls Prep Bronx students.
6. Several commenters expressed their satisfaction with the quality of Girls Prep Bronx.
7. One commenter spoke about how much her daughter has grown since beginning at Girls Prep Bronx.
8. One commenter expressed her support for the M.S. 302 principal and how she monitors the safety of all students in the building including those of Girls Prep Bronx.
9. One commenter stated that class sizes are at 33 and 34 students per class, implying that class sizes at M.S. 302 are too large. The commenter stated that the co-location limits the space available for zoned students whereas Girls Prep Bronx students come from outside of the community.
10. One commenter expressed that the collaboration between the two schools is only through the sharing of space, and that she would like to see the schools work together in other ways so that M.S. 302 students can benefit as well.

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

The DOE received two written comments supporting this proposal.

11. Two commenters expressed their support for this proposal, stating that the current co-location works well, and that the parents, students, and faculty of Girls Prep foster a respectful and positive environment and the everyone in the building is polite and respectful to one another.

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

Comments 1-3 and 5-8 and 11 are supportive of the proposal, and thus do not require a response.

Comment 4 expressed concern about the proposed expansion's impact on the space available to M.S. 302. If this proposal is approved, the Office of Space Planning will work closely with the Building Council, consisting of both principals of the co-located organizations in X052, to create space configurations within the X052 building to accommodate the expansion of Girls Prep Bronx in order to maintain a positive learning environment for all students, staff, and administration at both Girls Prep Bronx and M.S.

302. The DOE, in consultation with the Building Council, will, where possible, allocate contiguous and dedicated space to schools.

As stated in the EIS and BUP, the X052 building has the capacity to serve additional students. The Bronx Director of Space Planning determined that the X052 building had eight full-size instructional spaces in excess of each of the existing school's baseline allocation under the Instructional Footprint (the "Footprint"). The Footprint is the guide used to allocate space to all schools based on the number of class sections they program and the grade levels of the school. The number of class sections at each school is determined by the Principal based on enrollment, budget, and student needs; there is a standard guideline of target class size (i.e., number of students in a class section) for each grade level. At the middle school level, the Footprint assumes every classroom is programmed during every period of the school day except one lunch period. The full text of the Footprint is available at:

http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/78D715EA-EC50-4AD1-82D1-1CAC544F5D30/DOEFOOTPRINTSConsolidatedVersion2011_FINAL.pdf

The excess space has been allocated between Girls Prep Bronx and M.S. 302 based on their enrollment. For additional details on precisely how many rooms have been allocated to each school, please consult the BUP.

Comment 9 expressed concern about larger class sizes as a result of the co-location and also raised concern about the fact that some Girls Prep students come from outside of the community.

The DOE seeks to fully utilize all its building capacity to serve students. In all cases, the DOE seeks to provide high quality education and allow parents/students to choose where to attend. There are currently hundreds of schools in buildings across the City that are co-located and some of these co-locations involve multiple DOE schools. In all cases, the Footprint is applied to ensure equitable allocation of classroom, resource, and administrative space.

The contractual maximum class size for Title 1 middle schools such as M.S. 302 is 30 students per class. Although a few of M.S. 302's class sections are above 30 students, there are many class sections which are below 30, suggesting that the school could program to serve their students in classes within the contractual limits.

As to the portion of comment 9 concerning whether Girls Prep Bronx serves students from the community, the DOE notes that Girls Prep serves more students from within District 8 than from any other district in the city. This is not surprising given that the school's admission criteria gives preference to applicants residing within District 8, before all other students residing outside of the district. For more information on admissions at Girls Prep Bronx, please see the EIS.

Comment 10 expressed the belief that collaboration between the two schools is not true collaboration and expressed a desire for more meaningful collaboration between the schools to benefit the students of M.S. 302.

As described above, principals from each school organization co-located in a building serve on a Building Council to make decisions about overall use of the shared space and shared space schedules including the use of the cafeteria and scheduling of lunch periods for students in each co-located school organization.



Additionally, the leadership teams of each organization in the X052 buildings are encouraged to collaborate and program academics and activities as they please. Given that much of the feedback at the hearing lauded the relationship between the two schools, the DOE has reason to believe the schools are working cooperatively and will only continue to improve their collaboration.

Changes Made to the Proposal

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