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Chancellor

Public Comment Analysis

Date: March 20, 2012

Topic: The Proposed Co-Location of New Middle School 11X566 with J.H.S. 144 Michelangelo (11X144) in Building X144 Beginning in 2012-2013

Date of Panel Vote: March 21, 2012

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to co-locate a new middle school, 11X566 (“11X566”), in building X144 located at 2345 Gunther Avenue, Bronx, NY 10469 in District 11. If this proposal is approved, 11X566 would be co-located in building X144 with J.H.S. 144 Michelangelo (11X144, “J.H.S. 144”), an existing middle school currently serving students in sixth through eighth grades.

The DOE plans to reduce enrollment at J.H.S. 144 as an academic intervention strategy to help J.H.S. 144 improve student performance, as the school has received poor Progress Report grades in recent years. This planned enrollment reduction of J.H.S. 144 would also permit a new school, proposed to be 11X566, to be co-located in the X144 building. The DOE is planning to reduce the enrollment by approximately 445-480 students at J.H.S. 144 over a period of three years.

If this co-location proposal is approved, 11X566 would gradually phase into the X144 building while J.H.S. 144 would simultaneously scale back its enrollment. 11X566 would serve students in sixth grade in 2012-2013 and would add one grade level every year until the school reaches its full grade span of sixth through eighth grades in the 2014-2015 school year, when it would serve approximately 465-495 students at full scale.

If this proposal is approved, both J.H.S. 144 and 11X566 would be zoned campus choice middle schools that would serve students in sixth through eighth grades. 11X566 and J.H.S. 144 would admit students through the District 11 Middle School Choice process and offer priority to students residing in the X144 zone through a campus choice admissions method, in which all students zoned to the X144 building would have priority for a seat in the building and would have the opportunity to rank the two schools in order of preference. Students would then be matched to one of the two schools through a zoned campus choice matching process operated by the Office of Student Enrollment (“OSE”).

In the 2011-2012 school year, building X144 is serving 942 students, yielding a target building utilization rate of 60%. The X144 building would have adequate capacity to accommodate the new

middle school, 11X566, at full operational capacity and J.H.S. 144 at its reduced size. In the 2014-2015 school year, when 11X566 completes its phase-in and J.H.S. 144 completes its enrollment reduction, the X144 building would serve approximately 930- 990 students, yielding an approximate utilization rate of 60-64%.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS which can be accessed here:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2011-2012/Mar212012Proposals.htm>

Copies of the EIS are also available in J.H.S. 144's main office.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at the X144 building on March 5, 2012. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 100 members of the public attended the hearing, and 23 people spoke. Present at the meeting were District 11 Community Superintendent Elizabeth A. White; Bronx Borough President Panel for Education Policy Representative Monica Major; Council Member James Vacca's Representative Stacy Gardener; Community Education Council 11 member Shakawat Ali; Evelynz Gonzalez from the Citywide Community High School Council ("CCHS"); Community Board 11 Representative Jeremy Warneke; J.H.S. 144 School Leadership Team ("SLT") Representatives Ida Oliver, Mary Barnacle, Karia Weisner, Dan Adlick, Cheryl Nobile, Ellen Barrett-Kelly and Angela Campbell; Helen Tsang from the Office of Public Affairs and Stephanie Crane from the Division of Portfolio Planning.

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

1. Several commenters (including a member of J.H.S. 144's SLT) voiced general support for J.H.S. 144 as well as the staff, teachers and students.
2. Many commenters noted that this school has a lot of history and is an important part of the community. These commenters also voiced the opinion that changing the school is disrespectful to its legacy.
3. Multiple commenters asked the DOE to give J.H.S. 144 more time to continue to improve instead of implementing this proposal.
4. Two commenters asked how the co-location of a new school with J.H.S. 144 will help improve the instructional and academic programming at J.H.S. 144.
5. Several commenters voiced general opposition for the proposal.
6. Multiple commenters also voiced general opposition to the practice of co-locating schools. One commenter stated that he believes co-locations to be dangerous.
7. One commenter stated her belief that the implementation of this proposal will disrupt children's sense of consistency.
8. Several commenters asked that instead of giving resources to the proposed new school, the DOE give those resources to J.H.S. 144.
9. Two commenters noted that a Joint Intervention Team ("JIT") review took place last year in which one result was noting how J.H.S. 144 needed better technology. These commenters asked that the DOE use resources to provide this technology instead of co-locating a new school in the building.
10. One commenter voiced concern that the co-location of a new school would deplete the resources available to J.H.S. 144. Another commenter asked how resources would be shared between the two schools.
11. One commenter noted his concern that the co-location of a new school would mean there would be more support given to the new school and less support given to J.H.S. 144.

12. One commenter asked what services and programming would be provided by the proposed new school.
13. Multiple commenters asserted that the co-location would take various spaces (classrooms and laboratories) away from J.H.S. 144 and that the co-location would impede both co-located organizations from having full use of the shared spaces.
14. Several commenters raised concerns about the way that co-location impacts scheduling within school organizations (e.g., when students will eat lunch, be able to use the school yard, etc.)
15. One commenter expressed that the current floor plan and space allocation is best for J.H.S. 144. She also voiced concern that the new floor plan and space allocations would not be best for the students enrolled at J.H.S. 144.
16. One commenter expressed concern about the availability of special education programming at the proposed new school.
17. One commenter noted that the community did not ask for middle school choice and inquired as to how middle school choice will benefit students in the community.
18. One commenter asked how the DOE will choose the students who will stay in the school and who will go to other schools.
19. Multiple commenters asked what will happen to the students who already opted into J.H.S. 144's sixth-grade class for the 2012-2013 school year.
20. Two commenters noted that the EIS stated the school will be at a 60-64% utilization rate after the phase-in of the new school. These commenters asked what would happen to the building after the phase-in is complete and inquired as to whether the DOE would propose to co-locate another school in this space.
21. Evelyn Gonzalez of the CCHS commented that the parent letters sent out do not properly convey what a co-location is and how it will impact the students and larger school community. She also noted that the use of the word "may" in explaining how multiple organizations utilize shared space is unclear and is improperly used in these letters.
22. Multiple commenters pointed to the following similar changes and/or proposals that were implemented at other schools in the community, which they perceived to be unsuccessful, in questioning the efficacy of enrollment reduction as an improvement strategy:
 - a. One commenter noted DOE-implemented changes that took place at M.S. 142 John Philip Sousa and now that school is proposed for closure.
 - b. One commenter noted DOE-implemented changes that took place at the Christopher Columbus High School and how these changes didn't help improve the school community.
 - c. One commenter noted DOE-implemented changes that took place in building X135 and how they did not help improve the school communities there.

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

23. Several commenters submitted oral comments that voiced general opposition to the proposal.
24. Multiple commenters asked how the utilization rate after the co-location could be approximately 60-64% when it is currently 60%. These commenters also voiced concern that the school is currently overcrowded.
25. Several commenters voiced opposition to the practice of co-location and noted that it could cause problems in overall school and student performance.
26. Multiple commenters noted the scheduling challenges that result from a co-location.
27. One commenter referenced the above-referenced proposal at M.S. 142, how it was similar to this proposal, and argued that it proves that this proposal will also not be effective.
28. Several commenters noted that the funds for the new school should instead be allocated to J.H.S. 144.
29. One commenter asked how adding a new school is a means of helping J.H.S. 144 improve.
30. Multiple commenters voiced support for the principal, staff, and school community at J.H.S. 144.

31. One commenter noted concern regarding the floor plan and how space allocation would change as a result of the proposal.

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

Comments 1 and 30 voice general support for J.H.S. 144 as well as the staff, teachers and students.

The DOE acknowledges and commends the students and staff of J.H.S. 144 for their hard work, dedication, and passion for the school.

While the DOE notes that some J.H.S. 144 students have achieved various positive outcomes, as noted above, J.H.S. 144 has been identified as among the schools having trouble serving all of their students. As noted in the EIS, the enrollment reduction and co-location strategy proposed is intended to help improve the overall performance of J.H.S. 144.

Comment 2 concerns the legacy of J.H.S. 144 and its role in the community

The DOE recognizes the important role that schools play in their communities and knows that schools throughout the city are not just educational institutions, but rich and tight-knit communities. The DOE notes that under this proposal, J.H.S. 144 will continue to serve and be a part of the surrounding community. The DOE expects that the proposed new school will also be fully engaged with its community and responsive to the community's needs, serving a vital role as an anchor for the community.

Comment 3 requests that the DOE give J.H.S. 144 more time to improve in quality before implementing this proposal.

The DOE believes it is important to act now because if the current outcomes persist, J.H.S. 144 students will fall farther behind their peers in other schools. Contrary to the commenter's contention, J.H.S. 144 has not been improving, but in fact, has declined from an overall A grade in the 2008-2009 school year to an overall C grade in 2009-2010. J.H.S. received an overall C grade again in the 2010-2011 year, with its progress grade declining from a B grade to a C grade. However, the DOE believes J.H.S. 144 can improve through the implementation of the proposal and is committed to supporting J.H.S. 144 towards that end. As discussed above, the DOE is working with the J.H.S. 144 community to gradually decrease the school's enrollment by approximately 445-480 students over a period of three years. This targeted focus on a smaller student body is intended to better position the school to improve student achievement, particularly for struggling students and students with disabilities. The DOE believes that this strategy will most effectively help J.H.S. 144 improve to better serve current and future students.

Comments 4 and 29 inquire as to how the co-location of a new school in the X144 building will help to improve the academic programming at J.H.S. 144.

The co-location of new school 11X566 is intended to help improve the academic programming at J.H.S. 144 because it will permit J.H.S. 144 to enroll fewer students without resulting in a loss of middle school seats in District 11. With a smaller population of students, the DOE hopes that J.H.S. 144 will be able to focus on those students and on improving the school's overall academic performance. Moreover, the campus choice model that will be implemented encourages co-located middle schools to develop distinct school models to complement each other and attract students with varying needs and interests.

Comments 5 and 23 voice general opposition to the proposal.

Though some members of the J.H.S. 144 community objected to the idea of reducing enrollment at J.H.S. 144 and co-locating a new school in the building, the DOE believes that the X144 community and District 11 as a whole would benefit from the narrowed focus at J.H.S. 144 and this new middle school option.

Comments 6 and 25 voice general opposition to the practice of co-locating school organizations in one building and express concern about the safety of this practice.

Roughly half of the DOE's schools share space in a building. Because of co-locations, limited facilities can be used more efficiently while simultaneously creating additional high-quality options for New York City families. This is necessary when there are scarce facilities and a demand for more high-performing options.

With respect to safety concerns, pursuant to Chancellor's Regulation A-414, every school/campus is mandated to form a School Safety 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. School Safety Plan is updated annually by the Committee to meet the changing security needs, changes in organization and building conditions and any other factors; these updates 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 Principal(s) when it identifies the need for additional security measures. The DOE is committed to ensuring that all co-locations are safe for students.

Comment 7 concerns disrupting current students' sense of consistency at J.H.S. 144.

As a preliminary matter, it bears noting that all students currently enrolled in J.H.S. 144 will have the opportunity to remain enrolled and to complete their middle school education at the school, if they choose to do so. Thus, all current students can have a consistent middle school experience.

Still, the DOE recognizes that implementing changes in a school community can be a difficult experience for students, staff, and community members. Therefore, if this proposal is approved, the DOE will support all students in the X144 building as the proposal is implemented.

Comments 8 and 28 voice the belief that J.H.S. 144 would be better served if the resources that will be given to the new school were instead given to J.H.S. 144 to help the school improve.

While every school across the city receives funding via the same formula, some schools have been less successful in serving students than their peer schools that serve similar populations.

New schools are funded in the same manner as other schools: funding follows the students and is based on need (incoming proficiency level and special education/ELL/Title I status). While it is true that new schools do receive start-up funding averaging \$30,000 per year over the first five years for an elementary or middle school and \$34,000 for a high school, the difference in funding between a new school and an existing school is marginal – the annual amount of startup funding is not even large enough to cover the salary of a first-year teacher.

Because J.H.S. 144 has struggled to use its funds to successfully serve all of its current student population, the DOE feels that some resources—which are not substantially more for a new school than for an existing school—would be better allocated to a new school option.

Comment 9 references the JIT review that took place last year and the school’s need for more technology within the school.

As a school identified by the New York State Education Department as Restructuring Advanced (“RA”), J.H.S. 144 was subject to a State Joint Intervention Team (“JIT”) review by a collaborative, NYSED/NYCDOE, Quality Review-Joint Intervention Team (“QR-JIT”).

The JIT assessed J.H.S. 144’s educational program, using multiple measures of quantitative performance and progress data and rigorous qualitative information. The JIT review of J.H.S. 144 resulted in several findings of how J.H.S. 144 could improve its overall performance. The school’s review identified challenges regarding the school’s technology and how it is used, and provided suggestions as to how to address these challenges. The DOE presented the review’s finding to the school leadership so that the community could utilize the suggestions offered by the JIT to improve the school’s performance.

Comment 11 raises the concern that the new school will be given more support than J.H.S. 144.

If this proposal is approved, the DOE will support all school organizations in the X144 building during and after implementation of this proposal.

All schools receive support and assistance from their superintendent and Children First Network, a team that delivers operational and instructional support directly to schools. Struggling schools receive supports as part of system-wide efforts to strengthen all schools; and they also receive individualized supports to address their particular challenges. We do everything we can to provide struggling schools with leadership, operational, instructional, and student supports that can help turn a struggling school around.

Comments 12 and 16 inquire as to what programming and services will be provided by the proposed new middle school.

Regarding students with disabilities and English Language Learning students, 11X566 will serve general education students and students requiring special education services, including students currently enrolled in Integrated Co-Teaching (“ICT”) classes and Self-Contained special education (“SC”) classes, as well as students receiving Special Education Teacher Support Services (“SETSS”). Students with disabilities will receive services in accordance with their Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”). Services are tailored to meet the individual needs of the students with disabilities currently enrolled and, as such, may vary from year to year.

The DOE will support the proposed new middle school in reviewing students’ IEPs to focus on addressing the needs of students with disabilities by providing individualized service models that ensure students have access to the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible. If this co-location proposal is approved, both schools in the X144 building would continue to develop individualized programs to meet the needs of their future students with disabilities.

In addition, the proposed new middle school serves students classified as English Language Learners (“ELLs”). All students enrolled in schools in the X144 building would continue to receive their mandated ELL services if this proposal is approved.

The specific programming and extra-curricular activities that will be offered at the school have not yet been determined, but the DOE expects that the school will offer a wide range of opportunities to its students. If this proposal is approved, the leader of the new school will work with community members to select programming, activities, and community partners who will be best positioned to work with the school.

Comments 10, 13, 14, 15, 26, and 31 voice concern about scheduling and space allocation challenges that may be encountered when multiple school organizations are co-located in one building. These comments also voice concern that the new school will receive more resources, space and support than J.H.S. 144.

The DOE seeks to fully utilize all of 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 school. 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 Instructional Footprint is applied to ensure equitable allocation of classroom, resource and administrative space.

The Citywide Instructional 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 and high school levels, the Footprint assumes every classroom is programmed during every period of the school day except one lunch period. The full text of the Instructional Footprint is available at http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/78D715EA-EC50-4AD1-82D1-1CAC544F5D30/0/DOEFOOTPRINTSConsolidatedVersion2011_FINAL.pdf.

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. 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>.

Additionally, it is important to note that under this proposal, there will be no additional students in the X144 building so the DOE anticipates that the students’ access to shared spaces should remain the same even though the students will be spread across two distinct school organizations.

Comments 17, 18, and 19 concern admissions to J.H.S. 144 and how the process will change if the proposal is approved. These comments also voice opposition to the new admissions process and inquire as to how the new admissions process will benefit the community and students.

Currently, J.H.S. 144 is a zoned middle school that also offers the following three unscreened, choice programs: Academy of Law and Journalism, Academy of Performing and Visual Arts, and Academy of Math and Science. The zoned program gives admissions preference to students who are zoned to J.H.S. 144 and then to students and residents of District 11. The school’s choice, unscreened programs are open to all District 11 students, who are randomly selected for admission through the Middle School Choice Process, which is described in greater detail in the following paragraphs. If this proposal is approved, these choice, unscreened programs would continue to be offered at J.H.S. 144 and would admit students from throughout District 11 in the same way as they currently do.

However, the proposed co-location would impact the admissions policy for J.H.S. 144's zoned program. J.H.S. 144 would change from a zoned middle school to a zoned campus choice middle school. If this proposal is approved, 11X566 would also be a zoned campus choice middle school, and both schools would admit students through the District 11 Middle School Choice process. Through this process, fifth-grade students zoned to the X144 campus would have the opportunity to rank their middle school preferences between the two X144 campus schools on a centralized application and would then be matched to either J.H.S. 144 or 11X566 through a computer-based matching process. Students zoned to the X144 building would also have the option to apply to District 11 choice middle schools through the District 11 Middle School Choice process. If this proposal is approved, J.H.S. 144 and 11X566 would admit zoned students through an unscreened method. District 11 already has three campuses whose admissions processes operate similarly, including the X113, X135, and X142 campuses. Any remaining seats at these schools would be filled through the over-the-counter placement process.

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a high-quality school at every stage of their education. The co-location of 11X566 in building X144 is intended to provide an additional option to students and families in District 11 and the Bronx. The campus choice model benefits students in the community because it encourages co-located middle schools to develop distinct school models to complement each other and attract students with varying needs and interests.

It is important to note that all students currently enrolled in J.H.S. 144 will have the opportunity to remain enroll at J.H.S. 144 until they graduate. Additionally, the DOE acknowledges that this proposal will be voted on by the PEP in March 2012, after the deadline to submit middle school choice applications has already passed. However, if this proposal is approved by the PEP, students zoned to the X144 building would have the opportunity the opportunity to submit a "new schools" application, which would permit students to apply to 11X566 for 2012-2013, at which time it would begin enrolling students and fewer students would be admitted to J.H.S. 144.

Comment 20 asks if another school will be proposed to be co-located in the building after the phase-in of new middle school, 11X566, is complete in the 2014-2015 school year.

The DOE does not currently have plans for the underutilized space in the X144 building. If the DOE decides to propose a change in the X144 building, it would be the subject of an additional and separate EIS.

Comment 21 voices concern that the parent letters distributed to the communities regarding co-location proposals do not clearly communicate the process and impact of a co-location.

The parent letter distributed to communities regarding changes in school organizations is intended to provide an overview of the changes that will take place at the school. The letter also serves as notice that the Educational Impact Statement has been posted and is publicly available to all community members who would like to read about the proposal and its impact on all school organizations in the building or buildings impacted by the proposal.

The letter regarding the proposed co-location at J.H.S. 144 utilizes the word "may" in describing the shared space allocations because the X144 building council will ultimately determine how the shared spaces will be allocated and scheduled. The specific use of the shared spaces and time allocations is not noted in the EIS and therefore cannot be noted in the parent letter. The DOE encourages building councils to allocate time in each shared space in a way that will best benefit all involved school organizations but allows the building council to make the ultimate determinations about the use of these spaces.

Comments 22 (a, b, and c) and 27 reference proposals and/or changes that have taken place at other schools in the Bronx community that are similar to the changes proposed at J.H.S. 144, seemingly to question whether or not co-locations and enrollment reductions are effective academic interventions.

The DOE has proposed that this strategy be employed at J.H.S. 144 because the DOE believes that it will be effective in the J.H.S. 144 school community. The DOE acknowledges that some school communities may continue to struggle despite the implementation of similar strategies and, in these cases, the DOE may be compelled to take undertake additional interventions in order to ensure that students don't fall further behind their peers. However, this strategy has proven successful in a number of school communities and the DOE believes it will be similarly effective here. The DOE will support the J.H.S. 144 community during and after the implementation of this proposal.

Comment 24 inquires as to how another school can be placed into the school building and the utilization rate remain the same. These commenters also voiced concern that J.H.S. 144 is already overcrowded and adding a new school will make it the building even more crowded. In the 2011-2012 school year, building X144 is serving 942 students, yielding a target building utilization rate of 60%. This means that, contrary to the commenter's contention, building X144 is not overcrowded and is, in fact, significantly underutilized.

The DOE is working with the J.H.S. 144 community to gradually decrease the school's enrollment by approximately 445-480 students over a period of three years. When the school reaches its planned enrollment level at the end of three years, the school would transition from serving 942 students in 2011-2012 to serving approximately 465-495 students in 2014-2015. In this same year, when 11X566 is at full scale, it would serve approximately 465-495 students in sixth through eighth grades.

By reducing J.H.S. 144's enrollment it is possible to introduce a new school into the building. The total number of students served in building X144 is expected to remain constant; students will be split between two smaller middle schools rather than being served by one larger middle school. This means that the building utilization rate is expected to remain roughly constant, and is projected to be 60-64% in 2014-2015, once 11X566 has completed phasing in to the building. This means that X144 will remain underutilized, despite the implementation of this proposal.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.