



Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor

Public Comment Analysis

Date: March 20, 2012

Topic: The Proposed Opening and Co-Location of The Young Women’s Leadership School of the Bronx (09X568) with M.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade Academies in School Building X117, 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 open and co-locate the Young Women’s Leadership School of the Bronx (09X568, “YWLS Bronx”), a new all-girls middle school, in school building X117 (“X117”), located at 1865 Morris Avenue, Bronx, NY 10453, in Community School District 9 (“District 9”), beginning in 2012-2013. If this proposal is approved, YWLS Bronx’s grades six through eight would be co-located in building X117 with M.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade Academies (09X117, “M.S. 117”), an existing middle school currently serving students in grades six through eight. Building X117 also provides space to two community-based organizations (“CBOs”): Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists (“SAPIS”), a substance abuse prevention program, and the Beacon program, which provides academic supports and recreational activities to students. 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.

This proposal only involves grades six through eight of YWLS Bronx. However, the school has applied with the DOE to be a secondary school and has been internally approved to serve grades six through twelve. The DOE anticipates finding a site for the high school grades (nine through twelve) of YWLS Bronx by September 2015, when the first sixth-grade class would articulate to high school. If the DOE does not identify a site for the high school grades by September 2015, rising ninth-grade students would attend a different high school, and YWLS Bronx would continue to serve only middle school grades until a site for the high school grades is identified. The DOE would publish another Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) to site the school’s grades nine through twelve in future years once a site has been identified.

YWLS Bronx 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 student performance, and inspire leadership for young girls.

If this proposal is approved, YWLS Bronx would begin serving a total of approximately 75-85 sixth-grade students in 2012-2013 in building X117. In the 2013-2014 school year, YWLS Bronx would expand to serve seventh grade and would serve a total of approximately 150-170 students. In the 2014-2015 school year, the third and final year of expansion, YWLS Bronx would expand to serve eighth grade and would serve a total of approximately 225-255 students. At that point and beyond, YWLS Bronx would serve approximately 225-255 students in grades six through eight at this location.

Building X117 has the capacity to serve 1,169 students. Currently, in 2011-2012, X117 serves a total of 706 students in M.S. 117, yielding a target utilization rate of 60%. This means that the building is underutilized and that the space could be used more efficiently to serve more students. Once YWLS Bronx has completed its expansion, there would be a total of 915-975 students served collectively by M.S. 117 and YWLS Bronx, yielding a projected target utilization rate of 78-83%.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A Joint Public Hearing regarding this proposal was held at school building X117 on March 14, 2012. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 47 members of the public attended the hearing, and 12 people spoke. Present at the hearing were: Dolores Esposito, District 9 Community Superintendent; Marilyn Espada, President of Community Education Council ("CEC") 9; Delise Jones, Principal of M.S. 117; School Leadership Team Representatives Heather Frank, Stephanie Branch, Dulce Martinez, Rondell Rodney, Nelvi Vega, Lyndel Bernard, Julia Arroyo, Marva Peterkin, Eileen Beckett, Heather Martinez, Keisha Bailey (President of the Parent-Teacher Association, "PTA"), and Cesar Hernández (United Federation of Teachers, "UFT", Chapter Leader); Kathleen Ponze, LeMaurie Laureano, and Devon Eisenberg from the Young Women's Leadership Network; Rosa Fernández from the Division of Portfolio Planning; and Jamie Kessler from the Chancellor's Office.

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 the main office of M.S. 117.

The following comments and remarks were made at the Joint Public Hearing

1. Several commenters (including PTA President Keisha Bailey and UFT Chapter Leader Cesar Hernández) noted that the proposed co-location would have an impact on M.S. 117's enrollment.

2. One commenter asked whether M.S. 117 would be allowed to grow if it experienced an increase in demand.
3. One commenter asked about the impact of the co-location on M.S. 117's current schedule and programming, and the protocol for sharing common spaces.
4. One commenter asked about how much space the new school would occupy in the building, where the school would be placed, and whether their high school grades would also be co-located with M.S. 117.
5. One commenter asked, if the new school moves into M.S. 117 classrooms with Smartboards, whether the equipment would be moved.
6. Several commenters asked about the new school's admissions process and whether it would admit students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
7. One commenter stated that the Young Women's Leadership schools do not serve high-needs students; that is, students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
8. One commenter stated that the new school has already started recruiting students even though it has not been approved and that this means it is a "done deal."
9. Several representatives from the Young Women's Leadership Network spoke in support of the proposal. They shared information about the new school's admissions criteria and recruitment efforts in the community. They also spoke about their desire to serve students in the Bronx, their commitment to providing a high-quality educational option for students, and their desire to share best practices and resources with M.S. 117.

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

The DOE received no written comments through the dedicated e-mail address for this proposal and no comments were received via telephone.

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

- Comments 1 and 2 inquire about the potential impact of the co-location on M.S. 117's enrollment. Enrollment at M.S. 117 will not be affected by this proposal. Irrespective of this proposal, M.S. 117 currently has no plans to grow. However, if there were to be an increase in demand for zoned seats at M.S. 117 requiring the use of additional space, the DOE would work with the school to assess need and the availability of underutilized space to meet that need.
- Comment 3 inquires about the potential impact of the co-location on M.S. 117's programming and any policies concerning the use of shared spaces between co-located

schools. The DOE does not anticipate that this proposal will significantly impact M.S. 117's current schedule and programs. M.S. 117 will continue to offer extra-curricular programs and partnerships based on student interests, available resources, and staff support for those programs. The DOE notes that the scheduling of some activities may change as a result of greater demands on the available space, including shared spaces, during or after school hours. Specific decisions regarding the use of shared spaces, schedules, etc. will be made by the schools themselves.

With regard to the portion of comment 3 concerning the use of shared spaces, per the Campus Policy Memo 2011, DOE principals and charter school leaders who share a school building must create and actively participate in a Building Council, a structure for administrative decision-making for issues impacting all schools in the building. Only principals and charter leaders serve on the Building Council. The Building Council is responsible for resolving all issues related to the smooth daily operation of all schools in the building and the safety of the students they serve.

Building Council members are equal partners in shaping the educational environment; they share responsibility and accountability for building administration, communication and culture. They must respect each other's unique culture and simultaneously make shared decisions that are good for all students and schools on the campus.

The Department of Education's expectation is that Building Councils should be able to resolve issues within the campus by collaboratively working to make decisions in the best interest of all students. While decisions made at the Building Council level typically best capture the needs and nuances of multiple school communities, the DOE Office of the Supervising Superintendent will help resolve conflicts as needed to keep the work of school improvement and successful cohabitation moving forward.

The Building Council shall meet at least once a month to discuss and resolve issues related to the smooth daily operation of all schools in the building and the safety of the students they serve. The Building Council principals and charter school leaders, where applicable, communicate their decisions campus-wide to staff, students and parents, especially for issues of safety, shared space, campus schedules, split-staff agreements, and extended facility use.

- Comment 4 inquires about decision-making regarding room allocations. Schools are allocated classrooms based on their enrollment and can program their allocated classrooms in whatever way they choose. Specifically, for grades six through twelve, the Instructional Footprint (the "Footprint"), which determines room allocations for schools Citywide, assumes that students move from class to class and that classrooms should be programmed at maximum efficiency. The amount of space allocated to schools is primarily based upon their enrollments and grade levels served, as outlined in the Footprint.

According to the EIS, YWLS Bronx will serve three sections of students per grade and will be allocated a baseline of 10 full-size classrooms for instructional purposes when the school is at full scale in school year 2014-2015. M.S. 117 has a baseline footprint allocation of 26 full-size classrooms for instructional purposes, which is based on its current enrollment and

number of sections served. Therefore, all schools and programs will be able to meet the instructional needs of their students within the spaces provided to each organization per the Footprint.

- With regard to the portion of comment 4 inquiring about the location of the new school within the building, the precise location of YWLS Bronx within building X117 has not yet been determined. This decision will be made by the Office of Space Planning in consultation with the principals if this proposal is approved.
- With regard to the portion of comment 4 asking if YWLS Bronx will grow to serve high school grades in the building, YWLS Bronx has applied with the DOE to be a secondary school and has been internally approved to serve grades six through twelve. However, at this time, the DOE is only proposing to site grades six through eight of YWLS Bronx in building X117.

The DOE anticipates finding a site for the high school grades by September 2015, when the founding class would begin high school. If the DOE does not identify a site for the high school grades by September 2015, rising ninth-grade students would attend a different high school, and YWLS Bronx would continue to serve only middle school grades until a site for the high school grades is identified.

- Comment 5 inquires about the move of furniture and Smartboards of M.S. 117. If this proposal is approved, and any furniture or Smartboards need to be moved to accommodate the new school, the DOE will arrange such a move and assume all related costs. Thus, Smartboards and furniture currently in M.S. 117 classrooms will remain with M.S. 117.
- Comment 6 concerns the new school's admissions policy. YWLS Bronx will be open to prospective sixth-grade students through the Middle School Choice Process. The school will be open to female students borough-wide, not just in District 9. It will also have a screen for academics. Screened schools may rank students based on their academic record, standardized test scores, attendance, and punctuality. Schools may also use other criteria to evaluate applicants such as an interview, essay, additional diagnostic test, or other criteria.

Middle school students with Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") and English Language Learners ("ELLs") are admitted to schools in the same manner as general education students. Schools will create programs that meet the needs of all students, ensuring them access to a general education environment to the greatest extent possible. If admitted to YWLS Bronx, these students will receive mandated services in accordance with DOE policy.

- Comment 7 asserts that the Young Women's Leadership schools do not serve high-needs students. There are four Young Women's Leadership schools located in Manhattan (District 4), Queens (Districts 28 and 30), and Brooklyn (District 14), which all serve students with IEPs, ELLs, and students receiving free or reduced price-lunch. The Manhattan school in District 4 serves 2% ELLs, 6% students with IEPs, and 76% of students receive free or reduced price-lunch. The Queens school in District 28 serves 2% ELLs, 9% students with IEPs, and 20% of students receive free or reduced price-lunch. The Queens school in District

30 serves 7% ELLs, 6% students with IEPs, and 79% of students receive free or reduced price-lunch. Finally, the Brooklyn school in District 14 serves 7% ELLs, 17% students with IEPs, and 71% of students receive free or reduced price-lunch.

- Comment 8 contends that this proposal is a “done deal.” No decisions have been made regarding this proposal. The Panel for Educational Policy (“the Panel”) will vote on this proposal on March 21, 2012. Until then, the DOE will continue to collect community feedback on the proposal and this Analysis of Public Comment will be provided to the Panel prior to their vote.

Given the short turnaround for new schools to participate in the Middle School Choice Process once approved by the Panel, new schools often begin holding information sessions prior to approval. The DOE permits proposed new schools to do this, provided their printed materials say “pending the Panel’s approval.”

- Comment 9 is in support of this proposal and therefore does not require a response.

Changes Made to this Proposal

- No changes have been made to this proposal.