



Public Comment Analysis

Date: January 31, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Phase-out of New Day Academy (12X245)

Date of Panel Vote: February 1, 2011

Summary of Proposal

New Day Academy (12X245, “New Day”) is an existing school serving grades 6-12 located at 800 Home Street, Bronx, NY 10456, located within the geographical confines of Community School District 12. The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to phase-out and eventually close New Day based on its poor performance and the DOE’s assessment that the school lacks the ability to turn around quickly to better support student needs.

If this proposal is approved, New Day would be phased out gradually over the next several years. New Day would no longer admit new sixth-grade or ninth-grade students after the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school year. Current students would be supported as they progress towards graduation while remaining enrolled at New Day. In cases where students do not complete graduation requirements in time for the June 2014 closure date, the DOE will help students and families identify alternative programs or schools that meet students’ needs so that they may continue their education after New Day phases out.

New Day is located in building X158 and is currently co-located with Bronx Latin (12X267, “Bronx Latin”), Bronx Career and College Preparatory High School (12X479, “Bronx Career”), and Dr. Izquierdo Health and Science Charter School (84X482, “Izquierdo Charter School”). Bronx Latin serves students in grades 6-12. Bronx Career is a new school and is still “phasing in” to the building. In 2010-2011, Bronx Career serves grades 9 and 10 and will grow to its full 9-12 grade span in the 2012-2013 school year. Izquierdo Charter School opened in the 2010-2011 school year with grade 6 and is currently in the process of phasing in. It is expected to reach its 6-12 grade span in the 2016-2017 school year.

In 2009-2010, X158 had a target capacity of 1,796 students, and the building enrolled 870 students, with a utilization rate of 49%. In 2010-2011, X158 is projected to enroll 1,027 students, which would yield a utilization rate of 57%. This means that the building is “under-utilized” and has extra space to accommodate additional students. Bronx Latin just finished phasing in its final grades during the 2010-2011 school year. As discussed above, Bronx Career and Izquierdo Charter school are currently in the process of phasing in. If this proposal is approved, the other schools located in X158 would

continue serving their current students and adding additional grades as they continue expanding to full scale.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at New Day Academy on January 13, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 90 members of the public attended the hearing, 15 people spoke and 2 questions were submitted. Present at the meeting were District 12 Community Education Council President Carmen Taveras; District 12 Community Education Council representative Wilfred Coulton; Bronx High School Superintendent Geraldine Taylor-Brown; District 12 Superintendent Myrna Rodriguez; United Federation of Teachers District 12 representative Steven Goldberg; New Day Principal Mara Ganeles; New Day School Leadership Team members William Teran and Robin Walton; Bronx Career and College Preparatory High School Principal Omari Gay; Dr. Izquierdo Health and Science Charter School Principal John Xavier; Bronx Latin Principal Leticia Pineiro; Deputy Chancellor Kathleen Grimm; and Jenny Sobelman from the DOE's Office of Public Affairs.

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

1. The SLT of New Day spoke against the phase out proposal. The SLT members stated that under the new leadership of Principal Ganeles, New Day has undergone significant changes, including the creation of a new arts program, new electives, and individualized academic programs that meet the needs of all students, especially those of English Language Learners and special education students. The school has also made structural changes, including replacing more than 50% of the faculty. These changes have led to positive outcomes. For example, students' attitudes toward learning and communication and social skills have improved drastically since the new principal created the new arts program. School safety and culture have improved significantly and student attendance in grades 10, 11, and 12 has increased. However, attendance in grades 8 and 9 continues to be low. New Day serves an overwhelming high-risk student population with special needs. As such, the school needs more time and support to continue the transformation process.
2. United Federation of Teachers District 12 representative, Mr. Steven Goldberg, spoke against the proposal to phase out New Day. He stated that the DOE has not provided the proper supports for New Day to completely turn around. He thinks that closing the school is not the answer.
3. Multiple student commenters spoke against the proposal to phase out New Day. Those students stated that New Day is a caring community where students feel supported by their teachers. Students noted that New Day should be given more time to completely turn around.
4. One commenter stated that New Day does a great job at differentiating lessons in order to accommodate all students' needs. The school also has weekly curriculum team meetings which allow teachers to discuss students' needs and ways to address them.
5. Multiple commenters stated that principal Ganeles has done an outstanding job at turning around New Day and expressed the opinion that the school should not close.

6. One commenter asked if there was any method for preventing other schools in the building from sharing the same fate as New Day.
7. One commenter asked how students benefit from school closings.

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

8. One commenter described a positive experience working with the students at New Day on a ballet and praised the personal growth and enjoyment the students shared during the effort. The commenter stated that the principal should be given more time to turn the school around.
9. The DOE also received a comment concerning all phase-out proposals calling for a moratorium on school closings, which stated that the DOE is the servant of the people and is not acknowledging the community's opposition to these proposals. The commenter suggested a facilitated discussion process which would work towards consensus.

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

- Comments 1, 5 and 8 discuss the successful leadership that the principal of New Day has shown. Further, the commenters note that the school has made positive changes, including structural changes in recent years that have led to improved outcomes. One commenter asked for more time to allow the school to turn around. The DOE acknowledges that the principal has helped to improve the school. However, the performance at the school remains low and the graduation rate is the second lowest in the city.
 - Last year, New Day's four-year high school graduation rate (including August graduates) was 34%, well below the Citywide average of 63%. New Day has the second lowest four-year graduation rate in the City.
 - At the middle school level, in 2009-2010, New Day received overall C grades on its last three Progress Reports, including last year's report. Last year, the school earned an F grade for the Student Performance sub-section and a D for School Environment.
 - At the high school level, in 2009-2010, New Day earned an overall F grade on its Progress Report, with an F grade on Student Performance, an F grade on Student Progress, and a D grade on School Environment. New Day received the lowest score Citywide on the 2009-2010 Progress Report.
- Comments 1 and 4 discuss the individualized instruction that students receive at New Day. The DOE supports continued individualized programming, including programming for English Language Learners and special education students as the school phases out. The DOE is confident that other schools available to students who would have otherwise attended New Day also provide individualized instruction.

- Comments 1 and 8 note the strong arts programs at New Day. New Day would continue offering these options, but the number and range of programs offered may gradually diminish due to declining student enrollment as the school phases out. Middle and high schools throughout the city offer various arts enrichment programs. Parents and students can learn more about the arts offerings at other schools by reviewing the District 12 Middle School Directory and the Directory of New York City High Schools, available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Middle/Publications> and <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Publications>.
- Comment 1 notes that New Day serves a large population of high-risk students. The DOE recognizes that, like most New York City public schools, New Day serves a high-need population.

At the middle school level, 25% of its students require special education services and 17% are English language learners. Last year, only 13% of New Day middle school students were on grade level for English, and only 8% of middle school students were on grade level for math. But other middle schools serving similar students have achieved better results.

- At Entrada Academy, a Bronx school, nearly 28% of students require special education services and 25% are English language learners. At Entrada Academy, 21% of students are on grade level in English, and 24% are on grade level in math.
- At the School of Performing Arts, a Manhattan school, 27% of students require special education services and 21% of students are English Language Learners.
- At the School of Performing Arts, 22% of students are on grade level in English and 33% are on grade level in math.

At the high school level, 19% of New Day's students require special education services and 14% are English language learners. Last year, New Day's four year-graduation rate (including August graduates) was 34%. But other schools serving similar students have achieved far better results.

- At Unity Center for Urban Technologies, a Manhattan school, 27% of students require special education services and 18% are English language learners. That school achieved a 75% four-year graduation rate in 2009-2010, with 60% earning Regents diplomas.
- At The School for Human Rights, a Brooklyn school, 17% of students require special education services and 3% are English language learners. That school achieved an 88% four-year graduation rate in 2009-2010, with 42% earning Regents diplomas.

While all students are still not where we'd like them to be, these schools are getting better results while serving a similar mix of students to New Day.

- Comment 1 notes that attendance in grades 10, 11, 12 has increased, but attendance in grades 8 and 9 remains low. The DOE acknowledges that increasing attendance is a

positive step for New Day, but the performance of the school remains low. Attendance is not one of the factors the DOE uses when making decisions about which schools to phase-out.

- Comment 2 notes that New Day did not receive sufficient supports. In fact, the DOE offered the following supports to New Day:

Leadership Support:

- Offering extensive mentoring and coaching to the principal.
- Helping the principal to develop New Day’s Comprehensive Education Plan and in setting school goals.
- Connecting administrators with other schools to learn effective practices that could be replicated at New Day.

Instructional Support:

- Supporting New Day to implement new instructional practices, including project-based learning and the use of inquiry and debate in the classroom, and new assessments, including portfolio assessments.
- Providing training to the guidance counselor on how to use scholarship reports and graduation tracking systems. Helping the school modify student schedules to implement an arts curriculum and higher-level math and physics classes.

Operational Support:

- Helping New Day implement a Coordinated Early Intervention Services grant, which allowed the school to add an arts curriculum, identify ways to improve attendance and suspension rates, and create a mentoring program for overage and under-credited students.
- Providing one-on-one support to principal and school staff on budgeting, human resources, recruiting and retaining talented teachers, and compliance issues.

Student Support:

- Supporting partnerships with ENACT, an organization that teaches social and emotional skills through drama and therapy techniques, and SoBRO (South Bronx Overall Economic Development Services).
- Identifying strategies to improve student attendance and reduce suspensions, including the appointment of a designated attendance teacher, the use of early notification to parents, and training to teachers on de-escalation strategies and crisis management.

The DOE makes available the following supports to schools around safety and security:

- “Best Practices Standards for Creating and Sustaining a Safe and Supportive School” as a resource guide
- Reviewing and monitoring of school occurrence data and crime data (in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Coordinator and NYPD)
- Technical assistance via the Borough Safety Directors when incidents occur
- Professional development and support to Children First Network Safety Liaisons

- Professional development and kits for Building Response Teams
 - Monitoring and certifying School Safety Plans annually
- Comment 3 notes that New Day is a caring school community. The DOE believes that the school community will continue to care for students as it phases-out. In addition, the DOE believes that schools that students may choose to attend if they transfer out of New Day will also provide strong communities.
 - Comment 6 questioned whether there was a way to prevent other schools in the building from phasing out. The DOE does not plan to phase out any other schools in the X158 school building at this time.
 - Comment 7 questioned how students benefit from school closings. In New York City, we are striving to create a system of great schools. To accomplish this goal, we've replaced 91 of our lowest-performing schools with better options and opened 474 new schools. Of the 474, 365 are traditional public schools and 109 are public charter schools. As a result, we've created more good choices for families. New Day will continue to serve students as it phases out so all current middle school aged students in grades 6-8 would be able to complete middle school at New Day and all current high school aged students in grades 9-12 would be able graduate from New Day, assuming they continue to meet promotional standards.
 - With regard to comment 9, the central goal of the Children First reforms is to create a system of great schools. Every child in New York City deserves the best possible education. This starts with a great school – led by a dedicated leader with a vision for student success. To ensure that as many students as possible have access to the best possible education, since 2003 New York City has replaced 91 of our lowest-performing schools with better options and opened 474 new schools: 365 district schools and 109 public charter schools. As a result, we've created more high-quality choices for families.

Based on feedback from communities in 2009 and 2010, the DOE made improvements to its timeline and process for communicating with schools and families early and often throughout the investigation and decision making process. This year, we talked to school leadership, parents, SLTs, CECs, elected officials, and local CBOs about our ideas about how to improve struggling schools. We convened these meetings to discuss our proposals and to hear feedback and new ideas.

The Department developed and distributed “Fact Sheets” for each school we talked with. These fact sheets described proposals, the rationale behind them, included relevant data, and provided clear instructions for how to offer feedback. They were posted on our website and distributed at meetings.

When we announced the Department’s recommendation to propose the school for phase out, dedicated teams of educators and engagement specialists spent several days back in these schools meeting with teachers, parents, and students.

In January, Joint Public Hearings were held for all proposals and public feedback was collected at these meetings and through dedicated email and phone numbers. The Department's analysis of public comment will be available on-line prior to the vote.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal as a result of public comment.