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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**

**Bronx Success Academy at building
X183 - 4/17/12**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MS. YOLANDA TORRES: I'm just going to make
3 the announcement about interpretations. Good
4 evening. [foreign audio]

5 Good evening everyone. This is a joint
6 public hearing of the New York City Department
7 of Education, Community Education Council, and
8 School Leadership Teams of MS203, Bronx Academy
9 of Letters, District 75P 168S, and Bronx Success
10 Academy 1.

11 I am your community superintendent,
12 Yolanda Torres. The State University of New
13 York, or SUNY, the charter authorizing for the
14 Bronx Success Academy 1 is required to hold a
15 facilities hearing to receive feedback on the
16 proposed re-siting and colocation of Bronx
17 Success Academy 1 to school building X183.

18 As such, this joint public hearing will also
19 serve as SUNY's facilities hearing. If you have
20 any questions or comments about the charter
21 itself, I have here on my left Maureen Murphy of
22 SUNY, who is present, obviously here today, and
23 will now tell you how to submit your questions
24 and comments.

25 Ms. Murphy.

1 MS. MAUREEN MURPHY: Good evening. The
2 charter school we are discussing today, Success
3 Academy Charter School Bronx 1, is authorized by
4 the student board of trustees. The education
5 law requires that SUNY hold a public hearing to
6 discuss the proposed location of the charter
7 school, and one of the schools it authorized is
8 proposed to go into an existing public school
9 building.

10 The purpose of this hearing is to receive
11 comments related to the proposed location of the
12 charter school. SUNY's conducting its hearing
13 now at the same time as the DOE, as we rely on
14 the DOE to help us notify parents and guardians
15 and to arrange the hearing location. However,
16 SUNY has to make its own determination regarding
17 the school use of this space. SUNY will not
18 make its final determination until after this
19 decision of the PDP [phonetic].

20 Success Academy Charter School Bronx 1 is an
21 existing charter school that will serve in
22 kindergarten through third grades in the 2012-13
23 school year. I will be taking notes on all oral
24 comments made tonight. In addition, anyone who
25 would like to make any written comments this

1 evening, or you can mail them to SUNY Charters
2 Schools Institute, 41 State Street, Suite 700,
3 Albany, New York, 12207. Or by fax to 518-427-
4 6510. Or by email to charters@suny.edu.

5 Written testimony or statements must be received
6 no later than May 1, 2012. Thank you.

7 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Ms. Murphy. We have
8 also asked District 7 Community Education
9 Council and the school leadership teams to
10 participate in this joint public hearing.

11 I am joined tonight on my left by Ms. Rosa
12 Nieves Greene, who is the principal of District
13 75 P168X. Also, Mr. William Hewlett, principal
14 of MS203. Also, Ms. Anna Hall, principal of
15 Bronx Academy of Letters.

16 And we also have Ms. Tracy Woodall, who is
17 the president of the Community Education Council
18 for District 7. We have Ms. Neyda Franco, who
19 is the PA president of School of Letters, SLT
20 member for MS203 and CEC member for District 7.

21 And we also have Ms. Tanya Jones, who is a
22 member of--the vice president, sorry, for the
23 Community Education Council for District 7. And
24 we also have Ms. Lakisha Walker who is the
25 treasurer, right, for the Community Education

1 Council for District 7.

2 Do we have Ms. Jenny Sedlis here? Please -
3 -. Representing Success Charter Network. Thank
4 you.

5 This hearing is being recorded. I'd also
6 like to remind you that we don't have any
7 translation services, right? So everyone.
8 [foreign audio]. Okay. So we're fine with
9 that.

10 The purpose of this hearing tonight is for
11 you to provide comments about the proposal.
12 Before I describe the proposal, I want to make
13 sure that you are all aware of the opportunity
14 to provide your input.

15 All those who wish to speak, must sign up on
16 the speaker signup. I do have here the signup
17 sheet, and it will close if anyone else wants to
18 sign within 15 minutes. And speakers will be
19 given the floor in the order that they have
20 signed up. And all comments are limited to two
21 minutes. If you go beyond the two minutes,
22 we're not going to cut you, but we really want
23 you to maintain within that limit.

24 Also, I need to make you aware that, I know
25 that this is a very emotional event and so on,

1 so we need to hear and listen to each and every
2 one of us, so that all of your comments and
3 concerns and any ideas that you have or you want
4 to provide are recorded.

5 There may be elected officials who arrive at
6 different times throughout the evening. If they
7 wish to speak, we will do our best to
8 accommodate them at the first opportune moment.
9 And those who are here at the start of the
10 public comment segment will be asked to speak
11 first.

12 The panel for educational policy will vote
13 on this proposal on April 26, 2012. The panel
14 meeting will take place at 6:00 at the Prospect
15 Heights campus located at 883 Classon Avenue in
16 Brooklyn.

17 In addition, we welcome any comments and
18 feedback you may have at any time before the
19 panel votes on this proposal. All comments
20 received up until tonight's hearing and after
21 will be included and addressed in the analysis
22 of public comments. The email address and phone
23 number where comments may be made at
24 D07proposals@schools.nyc.gov and the number is
25 212-374-5159.

1 We will now proceed with the proposal
2 summary. Bronx Success Academy 1, or BSA1, is
3 currently located in the school building S30,
4 located at 510 East 141st Street in District 7
5 with, of course, PS30.

6 The Department of Education is proposing to
7 move BSA1 to school building X183 at 339 Morris
8 Avenue, also in District 7, beginning during the
9 school year 2012-13.

10 If the proposal is approved, BSA1 will be
11 co-located here at X183 with MS203, which is a
12 district middle school servicing students from
13 grades 6 through 8. Bronx Academy of Letters,
14 which is a district secondary school, which
15 serves students from 6 through 12. And P168X, a
16 district 75 program serving students who are
17 autistic, intellectually disabled, or have
18 multiple handicaps.

19 The phrase co-location means that two or
20 more school organizations are located in the
21 same building and that they may share common
22 spaces, such as the auditorium, the gymnasium,
23 library, and cafeteria.

24 X30 does not have any remaining space for
25 BSA1 to continue phasing in additional grades or

1 to serve the full number of class sections per
2 grade that the school's charter permits.
3 Therefore, the Department of Education is
4 proposing to move BSA1 for the school year 2012-
5 13 so that BSA1 students can continue at the
6 school through fourth grade.

7 In X30, BSA1 currently serves students in
8 grade kindergarten through second grade. If
9 this proposal is approved and BSA1 is re-sited
10 to X183, the school will be able to grow to
11 third grade during the school year 2012-13, and
12 then fourth grade during the school year 2013-
13 14. And then continue to serve kindergarten
14 through fourth grades in subsequent years.

15 The Department of Education will also
16 consider all available options for siting BSA1's
17 fifth grade for the school year 2014-15 and
18 beyond, and would propose any re-sitings or co-
19 locations in a future educational impact
20 statement, which would be presented to the panel
21 for vote.

22 BSA1 currently admits kindergarten through
23 second grade students via lottery. The school's
24 lottery provides a preference for residents of
25 the district in which the school is located,

1 which is currently District 7. And this
2 lottery preference would remain the same and
3 continue to give preference to students in
4 District 7 if this proposal is approved.

5 Students with disabilities as well as
6 English language learners will be treated the
7 same as any other charter lottery applicant, and
8 if admitted to BSA1 will receive all mandated
9 services according to state law.

10 Building X183 has a target capacity of 1,679
11 students. During the school year 2013-14, BSA2-
12 -BSA1, yes, will serve approximately 430 to 480
13 students in kindergarten through fourth grades.
14 At that time, there would be approximately 1,415
15 through 1,595 students served in building X183,
16 yielding an estimated building utilization rate
17 between 84 and 95%. Thus, X183 has sufficient
18 space to accommodate MS203, Bronx Academy of
19 Letters, P168X, and BSA1.

20 Additionally, upon consultation with various
21 community stakeholders and a general
22 reassessment of this proposal, the Department of
23 Education has been investigating facilities
24 upgrades to building X183. This would include
25 construction to increase the number of available

1 instructional spaces within the existing
2 building. This construction would take place
3 over a few years, and it would be captured in
4 revised building utilization plans to be
5 submitted to the panel for educational policy.
6 More information will be made available once
7 construction plans are finalized.

8 This proposal is not anticipated to impact
9 the current admissions process, enrollment,
10 programming, and partnerships of MS203, Bronx
11 Academy of Letters, or P168X.

12 We are now going to proceed with hearing
13 from our participants. I would like to first
14 give the principal of the District 75 P168, Ms.
15 Nieves Green, the opportunity to speak to you.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. ROSA NIEVES GREENE: Thank you. Good
18 evening, everyone. My name is Rosa Nieves
19 Greene, principal of 168. As said earlier, my
20 school services--we service students with
21 different disabilities, from kindergarten
22 through eighth grade here in this building.

23 My only concern would be issues with
24 scheduling and also issues of safety. And if
25 the proposal is passed, there are a lot of

1 meetings that we'd have to have ahead of time
2 to make sure that we do what's best for children
3 because that is the most important thing. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Ms. Nieves Greene.
6 And now we will have Mr. William Hewlett,
7 principal of MS203.

8 MR. WILLIAM HEWLETT: Good evening. Thank
9 you, Ms. Torres. Good evening, everyone. I'd
10 like to thank my MS203 staff members that are
11 here, - - and other staff members as well.

12 Middle School 203 opened in September of
13 2002. Going into this academic year - - being
14 the first time we would have had four schools in
15 this building. I share Ms. Nieve Greene's
16 concerns about scheduling, spacing.

17 We've had those issues come up when the
18 three of us were here as a school, and they've
19 always been resolved through the method of
20 communication. And that's a very important
21 thing looking ahead. We've established a
22 positive relationship. I'm happy that Middle
23 School 203 students move to Bronx Academy of
24 Letters.

25 Some of those, my former students, are here

1 as Letters students. Even the inclusion
2 students from District 75 are part of the Middle
3 School 203 population. That's just an example
4 of how the schools work together.

5 And I look forward to that same
6 collaboration going into next year, but it can
7 really only work with consistent communication
8 for whichever institution comes in because, as
9 was already said, this is about the success of
10 students.

11 MS203 truly is reflective of its population.
12 We're over 20% English language learners. Over
13 20% students with disabilities as well. And
14 like I've said, we service this community and we
15 look to continue in the future.

16 MS. TORRES: Okay. We'll now have Ms. Anna
17 Hall, principal of the School of Academy and
18 Letters.

19 MS. ANNA HALL: Hi, everyone. Thank you for
20 coming. As many of you know, initially the
21 Bronx Letters community greeted the city's
22 proposal for this co-location with quite a bit
23 of alarm. On most days, our building feels
24 full. Very, very full. And it was initially
25 very difficult to imagine how we would be able

1 to accommodate another organization in our
2 space.

3 We as a school were particularly concerned
4 about how we would be able to maintain our
5 programs, given the constraints of a new co-
6 location. But I will say that our community
7 very actively weighs these concerns with the
8 Office of Portfolio Development and the Office
9 of Space Planning, and I've been very, very
10 encouraged by the willingness of which that team
11 heard out our concerns and worked with us to
12 help think about ways that we can make a co-
13 location work for our school.

14 We, I believe, given these conversations,
15 that the DOE team and our colleagues in the
16 building understands the - - of the four
17 programs that will be here I think very well.

18 I am enormously grateful that the city is
19 looking at ways to make capital investment in
20 the building to create more capacity for
21 everyone. I think that that's going to be
22 really important to this proposal being success,
23 and I'm happy to see that that's on the agenda.

24 And I trust, given the conversations that we
25 have, that both the DOE team and our colleagues

1 here in the building and our colleagues to
2 come are committed to making a fair use of space
3 in the building that recognizes the needs of all
4 of our kids. And I think that that's going to
5 be an important place for this partnership to be
6 established, for a foundation on which the
7 partnership should be established.

8 So I think in general, to sum up, given all
9 the conversations we have, we have much more
10 confidence in the school that the plan for
11 rolling out the co-location has been adequately
12 - - schools in the building.

13 And I think ultimately may greatly
14 contribute to the long-term health and stability
15 of all the schools who are going to be here.
16 We're very hopeful for, as Bill and Rosa both
17 alluded to, the prospect of continuing this
18 collaborative relationship that we have as a
19 building council with our new members because I
20 think that that's going to be critical, and I
21 think that I have confidence that we'll be able
22 to do that.

23 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Ms. Hall. Ms.
24 Woodall, president of the Community Education
25 Council.

1 MS. TRACY WOODALL: Good evening,
2 everyone. I basically am in agreement with
3 concerns with Ms. Greene in regards to safety
4 with the other children coming into the school.
5 The proposal, everything sounds good, but my
6 thing advocating for the parents as CEC
7 president, is my concern that, once its put in
8 place, a lot of times things don't work out the
9 way it seems on paper. So that's my main
10 concern is safety.

11 I know that we have issues with security and
12 we don't have enough. And most of our schools
13 in this district, so with the kindergarten being
14 in with young children being in a school with
15 middle school students. That's a concern of
16 mine, and I know it might be some concern to
17 some of the parents. So like I said, advocating
18 for the parents, that is my main concern, is the
19 safety issue. And also the scheduling in the
20 schools. So that's what I - -.

21 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Ms. Woodall. Now we
22 will have Ms. Neyda Franco. She is a PTA
23 president from Bronx Academy of Letters. She is
24 also the SLT member for MS203, as well as a CEC
25 member for District 7.

1 MS. NEYDA FRANCO: I'm going to speak
2 first as a parent and as a representative of the
3 parents association, Bronx Academy of Letters.
4 We've had a lot of conversations since
5 September. A lot of the parents, as well as
6 students, were not in agreement. And we still
7 are very skeptical about an agreement because
8 despite the fact that there may be all the
9 construction there is going to be here, that
10 still doesn't guarantee the scheduling and the
11 services of our children.

12 If 203 expands their groups, what's going to
13 happen? 'Cause I know they're not at full. And
14 we have to have additional space. Bronx Academy
15 may have already - - folders for - -.

16 Mr. Hewlett told me, which I never see - -
17 for that school. They expand. They come in and
18 they have more students. What are we going to
19 do? Where are we going to place them? Because
20 now we'll have four schools in the building,
21 that's why.

22 Then you have the constructions. We're
23 talking about babies. Kindergarten through
24 fourth grade, so you're readjusting the whole
25 second floor. You're going to put little

1 toilets and little potties for the boys?
2 Because I was looking at construction for
3 babies.

4 Then we also have high school students.
5 High school and middle school students. The
6 scheduling, we're always going to have problems,
7 especially when we have so many programs that
8 have to be met with our high school students
9 'cause they're preparing for college. Their AP
10 programs. Their afternoon programs. And I know
11 charter schools have afternoon programs.

12 And I'm not against charter. I have four
13 grandchildren in different academies, so it's
14 not about I'm a--it's just the safety and the
15 issue of this building to place those children
16 in here. Your children. If it was my children,
17 I would be upset because this is not the
18 location for these children.

19 This building is not set up for little
20 children. It's three schools in here. Yes, I
21 agree with Tracy, that we've had issues with
22 safety because we don't have any safety. What
23 would happen?

24 Are we willing to put those children in a
25 situation they shouldn't be because the adults

1 are making this decision on children that need
2 to be in a safe haven place. Kindergarteners to
3 fourth grade are still babies. They should not
4 be placed in an environment where it's going to
5 be a safety issue, and there's going to be
6 scheduling issues.

7 So is this school going to be so renovated
8 that everybody's going to have their own exit,
9 their own lunchroom, their own bathrooms for the
10 little kids. And what's going to happen to the
11 high schools? Our high schools have a lot of
12 upper programs that need to have rooms. - - The
13 elementary school has a long day. So it's not
14 fair to the kids from K to four. It's not fair
15 to MS203. And it's not fair to our high school.

16 It's not fair. We should not have to be put
17 in a situation that we have all these children
18 in the same location and have to be running
19 around different issues. It's easy said and
20 done, but we're not here. We don't see. But if
21 you're in the building, you'll see.

22 I'm in this building practically every day.
23 And like I said, I don't want MS203 to be short
24 now because right now we don't have our full
25 capacity, but we're entitled to have our kids'

1 sixth year. What's going to happen with those
2 kids? What's going to happen with our kids?
3 I'm sure that PS68 doesn't have full capacity.
4 You're full to the top? But 203 isn't. So what
5 are we - - those. Those children that have
6 choice schools, you're cutting out everybody's
7 school. We won't have the place to place them
8 in this building anymore because we're going to
9 lose space.

10 That's not fair. With so many other schools
11 here. We have other elementary schools that do
12 have space that are able to place them. Look at
13 the list. I have the list from the utilization.

14 A perfect example. 277. They're
15 underutilized. That's an elementary school.
16 That's an environment elementary. Their
17 bathrooms are small bathrooms. Their everything
18 in that building is made for smaller children.

19 This building isn't. So we're going to have
20 construction. What does that mean? We're still
21 going to displace programs. We're going to lose
22 rooms. Is anybody thinking about that?

23 Remember, this is our children, and at the
24 end of the day is our kids. And we are
25 responsible to making sure that are children are

1 safe. Not only in one building. In every
2 building.

3 As school leadership team, again, I have
4 fought them and I continue to fight them because
5 I don't see beyond. I see what I see now. And
6 you can make promises to me now, but tomorrow
7 something else will come up and you'll take it.
8 There's nothing in writing and written in stone.

9 So you can make promises you're going to
10 have improvement. I've been in this community
11 for 55 years. I've seen it come and I've seen
12 it go. And I've seen the ripping of hearts of
13 administrators, of students, and programs being
14 lost. So here's just an extension.

15 I disagree with co-location. There are
16 other buildings that could be renovated that
17 ain't being renovated. That if they can put
18 students of appropriate age in those buildings.
19 It's a middle school. Not an elementary school.
20 That's what the building was built for. Middle
21 schools.

22 So now we're going to change the whole
23 configuration of the building. Again, I'm
24 saying I'm not against - -. Give us a charter
25 school. One of the top ten in New York City,

1 but they're a middle school in a middle
2 school. They're an elementary school in an
3 elementary school. And a high school in a high
4 school.

5 Understand that that is not totally right.
6 Remember the safety of the students. Remember
7 the scheduling. Think about that. Thank you.

8 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Ms. Franco. And now
9 we will have August Sunndale [phonetic]. Are
10 you going to speak? No? And Ms. Lakisha
11 Walker, CEC member.

12 MS. LAKISHA WALKER: Good evening, everyone.
13 I'm a parent first, and as a parent, I agree
14 with my board members. It just seems like with
15 people are making decisions, they don't include
16 the parents. They don't include the students.
17 Did anybody both to ask the students how they
18 feel? Have - -. That's like, to me, it just
19 makes no sense.

20 I'm not against charter. My child is at a
21 charter school. I'm all for charter. And
22 public is about equal education rights to all
23 students. But I just told as a parent, and as a
24 parent advocate, I wouldn't want my child in a
25 middle school with high school students because

1 things happen.

2 We did this to Southern Bronx. Patterson
3 projects are right across the street. I'm quite
4 sure you guys are aware of the shootings and all
5 the things that are current. And this is not an
6 environment for--we don't want any of our kids
7 harmed or in danger - -.

8 But to have little ones, very little ones,
9 to be here. If something was to happen. I'm
10 not saying that the building is chaos. Mr.
11 Hewlett is an excellent principal and he's a
12 dedicated father to this community for a lot of
13 kids.

14 You know, I'm just speaking as a parent, and
15 my main concern is, I'm all for another school,
16 but just not in a high school/middle school
17 building. It doesn't work. It doesn't work.
18 It's not built to little kids.

19 And then you've got to think about, what
20 about the physical education aspect. Can the
21 kids--they have, short time for gym. Short time
22 for recess time. Those kids need that. Sitting
23 in school all day long, they need time. Why
24 should the kids need to be cut?

25 We already have three schools in this

1 building. Let's leave it at that and let them
2 just have their space and their time. You know,
3 it's all about opportunity. - - you can find so
4 many other buildings here.

5 I know it's all about politics to you guys,
6 but we don't see that way. And we love all of
7 our kids, both little kids and big kids. And -
8 - safety issue, in my eyes and - -.

9 They're probably sure, as parents sit here,
10 you would say the same thing. I wouldn't want
11 my five-year-old or seven-year-old going to a
12 school with high school students. Where do we
13 draw the line?

14 And then still want them to be--act as
15 students? As little kids? How do you say that
16 when you push them all to be with middle school
17 and high school students, and they have bigger
18 issues? There's so many other issues - - that
19 they're not looking past the point at the next
20 years to come. Things are changing.

21 Look at technology. These kids are coming
22 out and they're very smart and articulate. And
23 the little ones are smart and articulate too.
24 You know, I adore your charter school and what
25 you're trying to do, but it's just not inside of

1 a middle and high school. It just doesn't
2 look good. It's not fair to these kids.

3 When you've got so many kids with different
4 things going on, it's just not right. And
5 that's just how I feel. Thank you so much
6 everyone. Thank you for coming out.

7 MS. TORRES: Thank you, Ms. Walker. We have
8 now concluded with the formal presentations, and
9 we are going to now open the floor for public
10 comments.

11 And once again, the speakers will be given
12 the floor in the order that they have signed up,
13 and all comments are limited to two minutes.
14 Although I said if you go beyond the two
15 minutes, you will be fine. We're not going to
16 cut you off, but we would like you to maintain
17 it within the timeframe. Our first speaker is
18 John Shoan [phonetic].

19 MR. JOHN SHOAN: Thank you very much for
20 allowing me to speak today. My name is John
21 Shoan. I'm a teacher from District 75, students
22 with special needs.

23 And I was reading this building utilization
24 plan, and a couple of things jumped out at me
25 and I thought I had to say a few things about

1 them.

2 First of all, you know how important it is
3 for students to be with each other. And I'm
4 looking at this plan. I noticed that the
5 students in District 75 are excluded from the
6 cafeteria. They're being sent to another
7 cafeteria.

8 The most important part of the day, I
9 believe, for our students with special needs is
10 the contact with the gen ed students.

11 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

The prior proceedings were transcribed from audio files and have been transcribed to the best of my ability.

Signature Carie Clause

Date 4/22/12