

Public Comment Analysis

Date: January 28, 2015

Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 152 Gwendoline N. Alleyne School (30Q152) from a K-6 School to a K-5 School Beginning in the 2015-2016 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: January 29, 2015

Summary of Proposal

On October 8, 2014, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) describing a proposal to truncate P.S. 152 Gwendoline N. Alleyne School (30Q152, “P.S. 152”) beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. P.S. 152 is an existing elementary school that serves students in kindergarten through sixth grade and offers two sections of a half-day pre-kindergarten program. The DOE is proposing that P.S. 152 only serve kindergarten through fifth grade and offer a pre-kindergarten program, which means that the school will no longer offer sixth grade after the 2014-2015 school year. The DOE believes that P.S. 152 families would benefit if all students move on to middle school after completing fifth grade. Middle schools typically have extremely varied and rich instructional offerings, especially in the sciences and languages, as well as extra-curricular activities. The space and facilities in middle school buildings are typically better aligned to support these programs. By entering middle school in sixth grade rather than seventh grade, students at P.S. 152 will be able to take advantage of these enriching, high-school preparatory experiences one year earlier.

The DOE is proposing to truncate the sixth grade of P.S. 152. P.S. 152 is a zoned elementary school which currently serves students in kindergarten through sixth grade in building Q152, located at 33-52 62nd Street, Queens, NY 11377, in Community School District 30 (“District 30”). If this proposal is approved, P.S. 152 will no longer enroll sixth-grade students after the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year. In 2015-2016 and beyond, P.S. 152 will continue serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade and will continue to offer a pre-kindergarten program. There may be some current sixth-grade students who do not meet promotional requirements and must repeat the sixth grade, which will no longer be offered by P.S. 152 in the 2015-2016 school year. These students will repeat sixth grade at their zoned middle school. Sixth-grade students zoned to P.S. 152 for elementary school are zoned to one of several middle schools: I.S. 125 (24Q125, “I.S. 125”), I.S. 10 (30Q010, “I.S. 10”) or I.S. 230 (30Q230, “I.S. 230”) for middle school.

P.S. 152 is a zoned school that currently enrolls students in kindergarten through sixth-grade. A student’s zoned school is determined by his or her home address. If this proposal is approved and P.S. 152 no longer serves sixth-grade students, P.S. 152 will continue to admit students in kindergarten through fifth grade who reside in its zone.

On October 16, 2014, the District 30 Community Education Council approved a rezoning plan that includes changes to P.S. 152’s zone beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. The rezoning proposal reduces the size of P.S. 152’s zone, meaning the school will serve fewer students and the building utilization rate will decrease over time.

The proposed grade truncation would align the school’s grade span with those of other elementary schools throughout District 30 and the city. If this proposal is approved, the change in P.S. 152’s grade span will reduce the school’s enrollment by approximately 45-65 seats in 2015-2016. Additionally, future incoming kindergarten classes will be smaller than P.S. 152’s current kindergarten class as a result of the rezoning mentioned above. Therefore, P.S. 152 will reach a lower, stable enrollment in 2020-2021. At that point, the school will serve approximately 1,092-1,152 students in kindergarten through fifth grade and pre-kindergarten, and building Q152 will have an estimated building utilization rate of 104% - 109%.

The details of this proposal have been released in an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”), which can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2014-2015/January2015SchoolProposals>.



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Copies of the EIS are also available in the main office of P.S. 152.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at the Q152 building on November 10, 2014. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 4 members of the public attended the hearing. No individuals spoke. Present at the meeting were District 30 Community Superintendent Philip Composto; CEC 30 members Lavern Maison and Victoria Medelius; P.S. 152 School Leadership Team representatives Principal Vincent Vitolo and Lily Foley; and Vicki De Javier and Dean Guzman from the DOE.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on November 10, 2014:

No comments or remarks were made at the joint public hearing related to this proposal.

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

Eight written comments were received via email:

1. The principal of P.S. 152, Vincent Vitolo, submitted a comment supporting the proposed truncation of P.S. 152's sixth grade. In his comment, Principal Vitolo elaborated on his own support for truncation and noted the following:
 - a. Parents at a parent association meeting held on September 17, 2014 supported truncation. The meeting was well-attended with 115 parents.
 - b. The P.S. 152 School Leadership Team ("SLT") expressed their support for truncation at a meeting on September 29th.
 - c. Approximately 47 parents, most of them 5th grade parents, attended a Parent Association meeting dedicated solely to the subject of truncation on October 1st. No parent expressed opposition to the proposed truncation and there was general consensus in favor of having all fifth grade students leave P.S. 152 as a single cohort.
 - d. The SLT reaffirmed their support for truncation at a meeting on October 20th.
2. Ann Kitridge, a CEC member of another district in Queens, District 28, submitted a comment expressing opposition to the proposal and provided the following pros and cons of truncation:
 - a. Students transitioning to middle school in sixth grade as opposed to seventh grade may have more middle school options, more updated secondary facilities such as science labs, and more course selections such as foreign languages.
 - b. Studies show students transitioning to middle school in sixth grade and seventh grade may show a drop in academic achievement and attendance with an increase in disciplinary action.
 - c. Students at elementary schools offering sixth grade remain in smaller sixth grade classes compared to larger sixth grade classes at stand-alone middle schools.
 - d. Sixth grade students perform better at elementary schools offering sixth grade.
 - e. Students at elementary schools offering up to eighth grade have more social emotional support, better attendance rates, and increased graduation rates. This does not apply to students that enroll in K-8 schools at sixth or seventh grade.
3. One commenter submitted the following in opposition of the proposal:
 - a. Not all children are ready to enter a very large middle school at sixth grade
 - b. Parents should have a choice to keep their students in a K-6 or a middle school.
4. One commenter expressed opposition to the proposal and submitted a list of reasons against the proposal:
 - a. Truncating the sixth grade at P.S. 152 would create an unnecessary burden on parents to transport their children to nearby overcrowded middle schools.
 - b. Some children are not ready to enter a middle school at an early age and need further emotional development.
 - c. The commenter believes nearby middle schools are not high quality sixth grade options.



- d. P.S. 152 should not truncate 6th grade until construction at building Q339, located on 39-07 57th street, is complete.
5. Lily Foley, SLT member and President of the Parent Association at P.S. 152, submitted a comment supporting the proposed truncation of P.S. 152's sixth grade. Her comment elaborated on the parent community's support for truncation and noted the following:
 - a. She attended three meetings that were scheduled regarding this proposal and noted many parents have been involved at these meetings.
 - b. Since the seventh grade scores are used for High School Admissions, P.S. 152 parents want their students to do their best at that grade level.
 - c. P.S. 152 is an overcrowded school with close to 1,400 students; this proposal would allow for more space in the building.
6. Wanda Alameda Gonzales, Parent Coordinator at P.S. 152, submitted a comment supporting the proposed truncation of P.S. 152's sixth grade and noted the following:
 - a. She attended three meetings that were scheduled regarding this proposal and representatives from the DOE, Superintendent Compost, and Principal Vitolo answered the parents' questions at these meetings.
 - b. It is difficult for incoming seventh grade students to adjust to a middle school as opposed to incoming sixth grade students.
 - c. Parents at P.S. 152 agree on the need for students to do well on seventh grade test scores for the High School Admissions process.
7. One commenter, the Guidance Counselor at P.S. 152, submitted a comment supporting the proposed truncation and noted the following:
 - a. The developmental and social needs of a child moving up to sixth grade are more appropriately addressed in a middle school setting.
 - b. Middle schools offer creative choices and new academic levels.
 - c. Sixth graders are prepared for challenges when exiting fifth grade.
8. One commenter submitted the following in support of the proposal:
 - a. Sixth grade students in sixth-grade may interact with children of the same age and with the same concerns.
 - b. There are more activities for middle school aged students in a middle school.
 - c. Middle schools offer a space to better develop the social needs of a child.

Analysis of Issues Raised and Significant Alternatives Proposed

Comments 1,2a, 5, 6, 7 and 8 are in support of the proposal and thus do not require a response.

Comment 2e is unrelated to this proposal as it refers to a K-8 school model and thus does not require a response.

Comments 2b and 2d elaborate on the academic, social, and emotional benefit of keeping students at a K-6 school for sixth grade. Comments 3a and 4b state that not all children are ready to enter middle school at sixth grade. Comment 3b advocates for the parents' choice to keep their students in a K-6 school or a middle school.

The DOE believes all students can be successful in a traditional 6-8 middle school setting. As stated in the EIS, the DOE believes that P.S. 152 families would benefit if all students move on to middle school after completing fifth grade. Middle schools typically have extremely varied and rich instructional offerings, especially in the sciences and languages, as well as extra-curricular activities. The space and facilities in middle school buildings are typically better aligned to support these programs. By entering middle school in sixth grade rather than seventh grade, students at P.S. 152 will be able to take advantage of these enriching, high-school preparatory experiences one year earlier.

P.S. 152 students who start middle school in seventh grade may also face transitional challenges related to entering middle school a year later than most of their classmates. Moreover, unless they attend a 6-12 school, students who enter middle school in seventh grade will remain in their new school for only two years before moving on to high



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school, leaving them with very little time to adjust to a new school environment and new academic expectations before facing another transition and adjustment.

In regards to comment 3b, students who wait until sixth grade to apply to middle school are limited to schools that still have available seventh grade seats because most middle schools enroll students beginning in sixth grade. As a result, students who remain at P.S. 152 through sixth grade have fewer opportunities to enter those middle schools than their peers who start middle school a year earlier.

This proposal will align P.S. 152's grade span with other elementary schools across District 30 and citywide. It will also reduce the number of entry points at I.S. 10, I.S. 125 and I.S. 230, resulting in a more predictable enrollment pattern, helping the schools build and foster stronger school communities. These middle schools will have sufficient space for all incoming sixth-grade students previously zoned to P.S. 152 for sixth grade.

Comment 2c states that sixth grade students at K-6 schools learn in smaller classes.

As mentioned above, sixth-grade students zoned to P.S. 152 for elementary school are zoned to one of three middle schools: I.S. 125, I.S. 10 or I.S. 230. In the 2014-2015 school year, the average sixth grade class size at these three middle schools is comparable to the average sixth grade class size of P.S. 152. P.S. 152 currently has an average sixth grade class size of approximately 30 students for general education and integrated co-teaching classes. The average sixth grade class size of general education and integrated co-teaching classes is approximately 26 students at I.S. 10, approximately 27 students at I.S. 125, and approximately 30 students at I.S. 230. These figures are from the 2014-2015 Unaudited Register as of October 31, 2014.

Comment 4c is related to the quality of middle schools near P.S. 152.

The DOE does not anticipate students at P.S. 152 will experience a drop in their quality of education at their zoned middle schools. The DOE believes all students can be successful in a traditional 6-8 middle school setting. I.S. 125, I.S. 10 and I.S. 230, like P.S. 152 and all DOE schools, receive support and assistance from its superintendent and Children First Network, a team that delivers operational and instructional support directly to schools.

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to schools that meet their needs at every stage of their education. Families can choose from a wide range of citywide options to meet the need of their students. As mentioned in the EIS, through the middle school application process, students are offered the opportunity to apply to a range of middle schools in the district where they are zoned for middle school, and, when different, the district where they attend elementary school. Students may also apply to certain schools with borough-wide or Citywide eligibility. Students may also choose to apply to a number of schools that manage their own admission process.

Information about all of these options is printed in each district's Middle School Directories, which can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Middle/Publications/default.htm>. Please note that these directories are updated yearly. General information about the middle school application process can be found on the DOE's Web site at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Middle/default.htm>

Comment 4a relates to the potential burden of transporting sixth grade students to middle schools near P.S. 152.

The zoned middle schools for P.S. 152 are between 0.5 and 1.4 miles away from the P.S. 152 building. Therefore, the DOE believes that the proposal will not create significant travel hardships, since the buildings are located in close proximity to each other and to public transportation. This proposal is not expected to impact eligible full fare transportation students. Transportation will continue to be provided according to Chancellor's Regulation A-801. General information regarding Chancellor's Regulation A-801 can be found on the DOE's Web site at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/ServicesandEligibility/BusTransportation/default.htm>.

Comment 4d states that P.S. 152 should not truncate their sixth grade until building Q339 is opened.



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A new elementary school serving grades kindergarten through fifth grade at scale is slated to open in building Q339, located at 39-07 57th Street, for the 2015-2016 school year. The school is not slated to serve sixth grade and therefore cannot be used to serve sixth grade students from P.S. 152.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.