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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PORTFOLIO
PLANNING
Explore Charter School Hearing #2 @
Explore**

1 [START 110404-001-Explorer]

2 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: If I could have
3 your attention please? Good evening, everyone.
4 This is a proposed resiting and colocation
5 [phonetic] of an existent public charter school,
6 Explore Charter School 84K704, with an existent
7 middle school, MS00317-K02, and a District 75
8 school, 75K141, in building K002. Once again,
9 this is a joint public hearing being held today,
10 April 4, 2011. I would like to point out that
11 with me on the panel this evening is Tracy Rebe,
12 the Explore Charter School Principal, to my
13 right, Claudette Agar, a member of our CEC, and
14 the following SLT members are here, Morty
15 Ballen, Asadullah Mohammad [phonetic], and
16 Yvonne Kilgore. So good evening. This joint
17 public hearing of the Department of Education,
18 Community Education Council, and School
19 Leadership Teams for the proposed resiting and
20 colocation of Explore Charter School of MS2 and
21 PS141 in Building K002 is now official begun. I
22 am Rhonda Herbert-Taylor, the Community
23 Superintendent for District 17. Tonight we are
24 offering interpretation services as follows.

25 MALE VOICE 1: (Foreign language).

1 MALE VOICE 2: (Foreign language).

2 FEMALE VOICE 3: (Foreign language).

3 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: Thank you very
4 much. We have asked the District 17 Community
5 Education Council, the Citywide Council on
6 Special Education, Explore Charter School
7 Leadership Team to participate in this joint
8 public hearing. I am joined tonight by members
9 from our CEC, from Explore Charter School SLT.
10 Is there anyone in attendance from the CCSE? Is
11 there anyone else from any of the SLT, CEC, or
12 CCSE that I did not introduce? This hearing is
13 being recorded. The purpose of this hearing is
14 for you to provide comments about the proposal.
15 Before I describe the proposal, I want to make
16 sure you are all aware of the opportunity to
17 provide your input. All those who wish to speak
18 must sign up in the speaker assignment area
19 located just outside this area. The sign up
20 list will close in 15 minutes. Speakers will be
21 given the floor in the order that they signed
22 up. All comments are limited to two minutes.
23 There may be elected officials who arrive at
24 different times throughout the evening. If they
25 wish to speak, we will do our best to

1 accommodate them at the first opportune moment.
2 Those who are here at the start of the public
3 comment segment will be asked to speak first.
4 All comments will be mentioned in the analysis
5 of public comment to be published and made
6 available to the panel for educational policy
7 but even before the panel votes. That vote is
8 scheduled for Thursday, April 28, 2011. In
9 addition, we welcome any comments and feedback
10 you may have at any time before the panel votes
11 on this proposal. The email address and phone
12 number where your comments made be made are,
13 d17proposals@schools.nyc.gov. Once again,
14 that's d17proposals@schools.nyc.gov, and the
15 phone number is as follows, 212-374-0208. The
16 New York City Department of Education or DOE is
17 proposing to resite and colocate Explore Charter
18 School or Explore to building K002 located at
19 655 Parkside Avenue, Brooklyn in Community
20 School District 17. Explore, a public charter
21 school, located in this building K884 at 15
22 Snyder Avenue, Brooklyn in Community School
23 District 17, currently serves students in
24 kindergarten through eighth grade. If approved,
25 in 2011/2012, the first year of the proposed

1 colocation, all of Explore's kindergarten
2 through eighth grade students would be resited
3 to K002 and would be colocated in the building
4 with MS2, a DOE District Middle School that
5 serves students in sixth through eighth grade
6 and a District 75 school, 75K141, that serves
7 students in sixth through eighth grade. A
8 resiting means a school will be located in a
9 different building than the building in which it
10 is currently located. A colocation means that
11 two or more school organizations are located in
12 the same building and may share common spaces
13 like auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, science
14 demonstration labs, and cafeterias. In 2002,
15 Explore was approved by its authority, the State
16 University of New York or SUNY, to open a new
17 public school -- I'm sorry -- a new public
18 charter school in District 17. Explores current
19 location at K884 is in a DOE leased building but
20 Explore was not intended to remain there
21 permanently. Explore is seeking a permanent
22 location in District 17 in order to continue
23 serving District 17 students as intended and to
24 continue to provide a preference to District 17
25 students through its charter school lottery

1 application process. MS2 offers a zone program
2 and an academic screen program opened to
3 residents and students of District 17. The DOE
4 does not anticipate that MS2's instructional
5 programs, admissions process, or enrollment
6 would be affected as a result of this proposal.
7 75K141 is a District 75 school that serves
8 students who are emotionally disturbed or ED,
9 multiple handicapped or MH, mentally retarded or
10 MR, and autistic and offers an inclusion
11 program. 75K141 is sited at four locations
12 throughout Brooklyn. If this proposal is
13 approved, 74K141 will reorganize the ED and MR
14 services provided at three of its sites.
15 However, this proposal will not reduce or
16 eliminate any seats at 75K141 but instead, some
17 students who may have been served on one site,
18 may now be served at another site and I believe
19 that's a typo and should be -- may have been
20 served at one site, may now be served at another
21 site. All current and future 75K141 students
22 will continue to receive all mandated services.
23 The building to which Explore will be resited,
24 K002, have been identified as an underutilized
25 building, meaning it currently has at least 300

1 seats available. K002 has a target capacity of
2 1,238 students but in 2010/2011 K002 only serves
3 495 students which yields an estimated
4 utilization rate of 40%. In 2011/2012, when
5 Explore is resited from its current location to
6 K002, and when P141 at 002 ED and MR programs
7 are reorganized as noted above, the K002
8 building would serve approximately 917 to 950
9 students which yields an estimated utilization
10 rate of 77%. Thank you for listening. The next
11 presenter will be Claudette Agar of the CEC, if
12 the CEC has elected to make a statement.

13 MS. CLAUDETTE AGAR: Good evening, everyone.
14 The Community Education Council for District 17
15 has officially stated that they have no official
16 comment at this time so we'll just pass on the
17 mic.

18 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: Thank you. The
19 next presenter will be Morty Ballen of the
20 School Leadership Team of Explore Charter
21 School.

22 MR. MORTI BALLEEN: Good evening. Good
23 evening, everybody. My name is Morti Ballen.
24 I'm the CEO of Explore Schools and founder of
25 Explore Charter Schools. Our mission at Explore

1 Charter School -- how about this -- our mission
2 at Explore Charter School is to provide our
3 students with the academic skills and credible
4 thinking abilities they need to succeed and how
5 to preparatory chart the college preparatory
6 high school. I founded Explore Charter School
7 in 2002 with the explicit intention for this to
8 be a kindergarten through eighth grade school.
9 When I was a middle school teacher beyond the
10 lower east side of New York City, I noticed that
11 my seventh and eighth graders were coming to me
12 with low skills in - - awareness and numeracy
13 and they were going to high schools that were
14 characterized by high levels of attrition. I
15 wanted to work in a school where we were working
16 with parents and kids from the time the students
17 were 5-years-old right up until they were 14-
18 years-old to build their relationships to create
19 a pathway right into a college prep high school.
20 It is critical for our community to be a gateway
21 community as we feel that that is what sets us
22 up for success to achieve our mission. We're
23 excited to have the opportunity to colocate with
24 MS2 as we know public schools in New York City -
25 - belong to Explore, they don't belong to MS2,

1 they belong to our students and we're thrilled
2 we're at 475 students that have access to the
3 public space to which they are entitled so that
4 they can continue to have an outstanding public
5 education - -.

6 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: We have now
7 concluded the formal presentations and will now
8 open the floor for public comments. Speakers
9 will be given the floor in the order that they
10 signed up. All comments are limited to two
11 minutes. Our first speaker is Trevon R. Walker.

12 MR. TREVON WALKER: Hi, my name is Trevon
13 Roberts-Walker and I'm in fifth grade. I've
14 been at Explore since kindergarten and I love it
15 here. At school, kids love learning. Recently
16 I learned about three ancient roman gladiators
17 and how entertainment has changed since ancient
18 times. In math, I practice - - operations and
19 my teacher made the time by creating team
20 posters for the football characters. All three
21 teachers compliment me about my critical
22 thinking and questioning skills which make me
23 want to continue learning and doing my best. I
24 am best at the ask and answer question parts of
25 - -. At school, I wouldn't be at Explore if it

1 wasn't K through 8. Our upper school students
2 are role models for the lower school students
3 who look up to them. They also take a few
4 pointers from the lower school students who are
5 always quiet in line and meeting expectations.
6 Many times, many times a year we also do buddy
7 reading with lower school students. I look
8 forward to this time because it is a bonding
9 moment. I get to read with first graders, first
10 graders and children one and all. That shares a
11 program that Explore needs at K through 8 school
12 even if we are in another building. Parents are
13 looking for one community to send their kids to
14 for nine years. I think that this is important
15 that school is based in the same community so
16 that everyone can keep learning at a high level.

17 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: Our next
18 speaker, Ethan Mitnick.

19 MR. ETHAN MITNICK: Good evening, everyone.
20 I am Ethan Mitnick. I'm the Preschool and
21 Residence for Explore's school, which are
22 opening in the fall. In my role, although I do
23 work for the network, I have a chance to spend a
24 lot of time in the schools as a fly on the wall
25 so I've gotten to spend a lot of time here at

1 Explore just watching how the school is run,
2 watching the kind of decisions that the
3 administrative team and the teachers make to
4 support students everyday. So I'd like to think
5 that even though I do work in the network, I can
6 offer a different perspective on this floor and
7 the kind of work that's being done here. The
8 primary word that comes to my mind when I think
9 about Explore is the word support. So I've seen
10 such an incredible level of support for the
11 teachers in the school, the way that teachers
12 are coached and developed and offered resources
13 so that they can offer their students just an
14 incredible amount of, an incredibly high level
15 of education and coach them to really great
16 levels of success. But most importantly, the
17 level of support for students that occurs at
18 Explore is just a truly exceptional thing about
19 this school. I think of one, one case that I
20 observed this fall. There was a student who was
21 struggling in her class. She was struggling to
22 engage with her classmates, to really become
23 part of the learning community in her classroom,
24 and so her -- the administrator decided to call
25 a meeting for teachers to meet with her parent

1 after school. It was about maybe 5:00, 5:30
2 on a Tuesday and teachers were pretty tired and
3 would think maybe one or two or three teachers
4 would come up to that meeting. Actually 12 of
5 the adults that work with that student ended up
6 attending that meeting and spend time in the
7 student's classroom reviewing her work,
8 reviewing her performance with the parent and
9 with the student, and that just made a huge
10 impression on me to see 12 adults staying in the
11 building to meet with that one student and her
12 parents. The idea that the families here
13 tonight are showing their support for Explore is
14 also very impressive. This attendance is
15 incredible and it really demonstrates that the
16 families and the communities here in Flat Bush
17 support Explore and Explore certainly deserves a
18 chance to continue serving this community as one
19 school through its move to MS2. Thank you very
20 much.

21 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: I now call on
22 Tabitha Waldron.

23 MS. TABITHA WALDRON: Good evening,
24 everyone. My name is Tabitha Waldron. I've
25 been with Explore since the beginning. We have

1 been through ups and downs and I just wanted
2 to say it's important for Explore to stay for a
3 K through 8 school because of the bond that it
4 creates. My daughter graduated last year and
5 she still participates with Explore in helping
6 out and coming and doing after school activities
7 and she's passed that bond on down to her
8 sister. So I think that the K through 8
9 opportunity that Explore offers create the
10 significant bond with the students, with the
11 teachers, and also with the staff as well as the
12 parents. So I think it's a great idea for
13 Explore to move to MS2 where we have the
14 opportunity to have the public school
15 auditorium, science laboratories, and I know
16 that Explore will do well as far as our
17 community and how strong we are that we would
18 blend well and, and, blend well with MS2 so that
19 we can have an even stronger bond in the
20 community for all of our students. Thank you.

21 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: Next speaker,
22 Nicole Mekintucker [phonetic].

23 MS. NICOLE MEKINTUCKER: Good evening,
24 everyone. I'm a parent at Explore. I've been
25 with Explore for like seven years now. When my

1 girls start at Explore, they struggled a lot
2 in reading and math and that kind of period.
3 Within, I would say half a year, they were
4 excited. They were doing so good in school.
5 Right now they're in seventh grade and - - the
6 honor roll every single term. Every single term
7 they're doing above and beyond. That's one
8 thing I like about Explore. The fact that
9 Explore, they go above and beyond for your kids.
10 You feel like you're supported. If I have a
11 problem, I call the school. I call the teacher.
12 They stay after school to help them. They work
13 with - -. They put him out of the classroom and
14 they work with them and help them where they
15 need to go. Every time there were a problem, my
16 kids were struggling, they were put out of the
17 classroom and they were able to get the needed
18 help, the help they need - - Explore. Explore
19 does great things like, for instance, last week;
20 the kids went to a college up state. I went to
21 school. I've never went to any colleges, you
22 know, in America. So like these things, the
23 kids at Explore is at colleges that are in
24 middle school, my kids already know what college
25 they want to go to, they know what they want to

1 study. I think everybody doesn't know until
2 high school. So what's really impressive,
3 Explore staff, they stay with your kids. They
4 contact the kids. I have Explore staff that
5 love Explore. They write my kids letters. They
6 call them. They speak with them - - and those
7 teachers, they still, they still in
8 communication with the children. They never
9 leave Explore even though they're not physically
10 here. So I'm a great - - of Explore. I think
11 the only thing I've spoken with families to is
12 nothing but positive things, you know. We are a
13 great community. We are parents that work
14 together. We hang out after school. We go to
15 events together and we have a very special bond
16 here at Explore so I can't see anything negative
17 happening with this MS2. So, thank you very
18 much. - -.

19 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: Next, Ivica
20 Bradswit [phonetic].

21 MS. IVICA BRADSWIT: Hello, good evening.
22 Evening, everyone. Actually, I'm pretty new to
23 the Explore community. This is my first year
24 but from the first week that I came to - -, I
25 was - - the - - but I have to think about that.

1 Even though one of the reason I choose Explore
2 is because I know K to 8 is in the district but
3 I have - - got letters from my daughters for
4 other charter schools but I had to make a choice
5 and I chose Explore. So when I first heard
6 that, I'm like, okay, and I started to like what
7 I was seeing. I sensed some family, you know,
8 everybody was love each other. I'm like - -.
9 She enjoys it. Up to now it's just a moment.
10 It's expressed, you know, what is going on in
11 the school. So when I heard that you were going
12 to get a colocation but it's going to stay in
13 the district, yeah, that's good. It's going to
14 stay K to 8, that's good. But we also need all
15 the other - - special program, which I like at
16 Explore, I think it going to help with a
17 auditorium, a gym, and all these other - - use
18 of that school. All I can say, I'm happy that -
19 - still going to some of the same programs too.

20 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: Mr. Patrick
21 Vassle [phonetic].

22 MR. PATRICK VASSLE: Hi, everybody. I've
23 been a -- have - - teach a lot of different
24 grade levels of Explore and a lot of different
25 subjects and so I think everybody had said

1 wonderful things already and I don't really
2 want to repeat anything so I would just say that
3 from my experience having taught from
4 kindergarten through seventh grade at Explore
5 with a lot of different teachers and a lot of a
6 different teams, I just wanted to say how
7 committed Explore is to teaching all kids and
8 how much the school's about - - in all kids and
9 that all kids can achieve and we believe that
10 that's what MS2 believes too. So I think that
11 we're really excited to stay in the district, to
12 stay in the area, and to teach the same kids and
13 the same families that we've been working with
14 for so long and to join with MS2 in their
15 mission to teach their students as well and I'm
16 really excited to be a part of that process.

17 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: Our next
18 speaker, Efrat Usell [phonetic].

19 MS. EFRAT USELL: Good evening, everyone.
20 I'm going to speak just because I got my start
21 as a teacher at Explore. I taught second grade
22 - - for two years and then I had to move away
23 from New York for a year but I came back to
24 Explore because the families and children that
25 are a part of our community, as well as my

1 colleagues, are exceptionally important to me
2 and I am now teaching in our upper school. One
3 thing that inspired me to teach in upper school
4 was the collaboration that I had experienced
5 between lower school and upper school and that's
6 why I think it's really important for our school
7 to stay together in one building. I definitely
8 learned a lot about teaching older kids through
9 different taskforces and committees that I was
10 on when I taught second grade here, and it's
11 helped a lot that I now teach students who I
12 taught when they were in second grade. And I
13 really hope that we'll really be able to stay
14 together at the school both - - our own school
15 community but also the children in the
16 neighborhood community.

17 MS. RHONDA HERBERT-TAYLOR: And our last
18 speaker who has signed up, M. Wheeler. The
19 speaker list is now exhausted. Again, we
20 welcome any comments and feedback you may have
21 at any time before the panel for educational
22 policy votes on this proposal at its April 28,
23 2011 meeting. The email address and phone
24 number where comments may be made are,
25 d17proposals@schools.nyc.gov and the phone

1 number is 212-374-0208. Thank you this
2 evening for your participation. This joint
3 public hearing is now closed.

4 [END 110404-001-Explorer]

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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 
Date April 19, 2011