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Public Comment Analysis¹

Date: March 8, 2013

Topic: The Proposed Phase-Out of M.S. 142 John Philip Sousa (11X142) Beginning in 2013-2014

Date of Panel Vote: March 11, 2013

Summary of Proposal

On January 11, 2013, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) posted an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) proposing to phase out M.S. 142 John Philip Sousa (11X142, “M.S. 142”), an existing campus choice middle school in building X142 (“X142”) located at 3750 Baychester Avenue, Bronx, NY 10466, in Community School District 11 (“District 11”). It currently serves students in grades six through eight. The DOE is proposing to phase out M.S. 142 based on its poor performance and the DOE’s assessment that the school lacks the capacity to improve quickly to better support student needs.

On February 5, 2013, the EIS describing this proposal was amended to include updated information regarding the availability of School Improvement Grant funding. The updated information, which was provided in a Notice of Amendment, did not substantially revise this proposal.

If this proposal is approved, M.S. 142 will no longer admit new sixth-grade students after the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year. The school will continue to phase out one grade level at a time, until it closes following the 2014-2015 school year. Current students will be served and supported as they progress towards the completion of middle school while remaining enrolled at M.S. 142. Current and future M.S. 142 eighth-grade students will be supported through the Citywide High School Admissions Process as they apply to a high school. In cases where students do not meet promotional requirements by June 2015, they will be served in 11X355, a new district middle school that the DOE is proposing to open in X142.

M.S. 142 is co-located with One World Middle School at Edenwald (11X529, “One World”) and Baychester Middle School (11X532, “Baychester”), two existing middle schools currently serving students in grades six and seven, which are phasing into building X142 to serve grades six through eight at full scale in 2013-2014. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.

¹ The DOE will continue to accept comments concerning this proposal up to 24 hours prior to the Panel for Educational Policy’s (“PEP”) vote on March 11, 2013. Those additional comments will be addressed in an amended Public Comment Analysis which will be provided to the PEP before it votes on this proposal.

M.S. 142, One World, and Baychester admit students through the District 11 Middle School Choice Process and offer priority to students who reside in the X142 zone. All three are part of a campus choice model, which means that schools first admit students who reside in the X142 zone and then admit students through the District 11 Choice Process if space remains after all zoned students have been accommodated.

In a separate proposal described in another EIS on January 11, 2013, the DOE proposed to open a new middle school, 11X355, in building X142 in September 2013. The proposal can be found at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm>. If both proposals are approved, 11X355 will grow to full scale as M.S. 142 phases out. The new school will open with sixth grade, adding one grade annually until it reaches full scale in the 2015-2016 school year, with a grade span of six through eight.

As explained in an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) on February 17, 2011 (posted on the DOE Web site here: http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/50D0EA27-11B7-4F3C-9E53-4ACED95E34C6/0/EIS_NewSchools142_final.pdf), M.S. 142 has been in the process of reducing its overall enrollment as One World and Baychester phase into the X142 building. As such, M.S. 142’s replacement, 11X355, will have an enrollment that more closely aligns with the proposed size of M.S. 142 than its current enrollment.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS which can be accessed here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm>

Copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of M.S. 142, One World, and Baychester.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at the X142 building on February 13, 2013. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 40 members of the public attended the hearing, and 9 people spoke. Present at the meeting were M.S. 142 Principal Lajuan White; One World Principal Patricia Wynne; Baychester Principal Shawn Manger; District 11 Community Superintendent Elizabeth A. White; Community Education Council (“CEC”) 11 President Petra Poleon and CEC Member Pamela Johnson; DOE Deputy Chancellor Corinne Rello-Anselmi; a Representative from Councilmember Andy King’s Office; a representative from Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson’s office; Jesse Collins, a representative of the Council of Negro Women; Stephen Bennett, union representative from the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (“CSA”); DOE External Affairs Representative Jenny Sobelman; and Yael Kalban and Stephanie Crane from the DOE’s Division of Portfolio Planning.

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

1. Several commenters voiced general opposition to the proposal.
2. Several commenters referenced prior interventions implemented at M.S. 142 and asked why these interventions were not implemented in such a way to prevent the necessity of school phase-out.
3. Several commenters expressed support for the school and acknowledged the important history of the school in the community.
4. Several commenters noted M.S. 142’s many student achievements and success stories.

5. Several commenters voiced the preference that the DOE spend more time and resources improving the school, rather than phasing it out.
6. Several commenters asked what would happen to the students who remained at the school during the phase-out and what supports would be provided to them.
7. Several commenters asked what would happen to the teachers and staff of M.S. 142 during and after the phase-out.
8. Several commenters voiced the need for increased parental and community involvement in M.S. 142, as well as in all schools generally, referencing larger education issues in the community.
9. A representative from Councilmember King's office voiced support for the changes taking place at the school and offered support for any community members facing challenges during the transition period. She also emphasized that the school building will remain open and the students will still have a place to attend classes in the X142 building.
10. A representative from Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson's made the following comments:
 - a. She noted the positive performance of the school in previous years and asked what changes took place that impacted the performance so negatively.
 - b. She expressed concern about the school's principal and assistant principal and how the administration has impacted student performance and student resources.
 - c. She expressed concern about the short timeline given to schools to improve student performance.
 - d. She voiced concern about the lack of continuity for students since they may attend multiple schools in the case of a phase-out, in addition to the typical transition points for students between kindergarten and graduating high school. She noted the importance of being surrounded by the same community throughout one's educational process.
11. Stephen Bennett, a representative of the CSA, voiced general opposition to the practice of phasing out schools:
 - a. He noted that more than two dozen schools are currently slated for closure and that these schools have different performance grades, state statuses, and received different quality review scores.
 - b. He voiced concern that struggling students are turned away from new schools and "warehoused" in schools that are failing.
12. Jesse Collins, a representative of the Council of Negro Women, voiced her opposition to the proposal for the phase-out of M.S. 142 and noted the following:
 - a. She expressed concern that M.S. 142 lacks needed resources. In particular, she noted that the X142 library is not functioning and that none of the three schools in the building have access to the library.
 - b. She expressed concern that her organization and the community were not more involved in the decision to propose the phase-out of M.S. 142.
13. Pamela Johnson, a CEC 11 member and a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ("NAACP") School Board, stated the following:
 - a. She commented that her family had a long history in the community and with M.S. 142 in particular.
 - b. She expressed concern about the differences in school performance among the three co-located schools. She noted that the two schools co-located with M.S. 142 have been successful while M.S. 142 has continued to struggle and inquired as to how that can happen on the X142 campus.
 - c. She expressed concern about the network support given to the school.
 - d. She inquired as to how the students in the school during the phase-out will be supported and what the new school will do differently to ensure student success and improved performance overall.

- e. She expressed concern about the lack of community and parental involvement in M.S. 142, with the school's parent association being particularly weak.
 - f. She asked what would happen to the teachers and staff at M.S. 142 and what opportunities they would have after the school completes its phase-out.
14. One commenter voiced concern that all students attending M.S. 142 would not be able to continue attending M.S. 142 and that students would be "knocked out" of the school because of seat limitations.
 15. One commenter expressed concern that the data and statistics referenced in the EIS regarding the school's performance do not reflect the experiences of the students who attend the school.
 16. One commenter asked if the DOE considers the population of students served by the school—for example, students who are over-age and under-credited—in evaluating the overall performance of a school. She further asked if the DOE is aware of the additional economic and social barriers faced by students and families in the community.
 17. One commenter expressed confusion about the strategy of replacing one school with a new school and how that can help improve student outcomes.
 18. One commenter noted the importance of not blaming the students or the community but evaluating what is happening inside of the school community that prevents students from succeeding.
 19. One commenter expressed interest in having more comprehensive after-school programming instead of phasing out M.S. 142.
 20. One commenter asked how the DOE is going to support the parent association and increase parental involvement in the school community and parent association meetings.
 21. One commenter submitted a question asking why the school is proposed for phase-out after all the success stories that came out of M.S. 142.

The following questions, comments, and remarks were made at the Joint Public Hearing and are not related to the proposal

22. One commenter expressed support for President Obama's plan to increase the availability of pre-kindergarten programming throughout the United States.
23. One commenter noted that the conflicts between the unions and Mayor Bloomberg concern adult interests and do not serve the best interest of children.
24. One commenter voiced concern about students attending schools in the community who are not from the community.
25. One commenter inquired as to why her organization was not consulted for input about the new school replacement, particularly in consideration of the new school staff and the name of the new school. She mentioned that she would like the new school to be named after Arthur Thomas.

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

26. One commenter voiced support for M.S. 142, its staff and administration, and acknowledged the successes the school has had over the years.
27. One commenter expressed his belief that the many leadership changes in recent years is the reason for the school's struggling performance.
28. One commenter voiced general opposition to the proposal to phase out M.S. 142.

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

Comments 1, 11, 12, and 28 express general opposition to the proposal.

While many members of the M.S. 142 community object to the possibility of phasing out the school, the DOE believes that drastic action must be taken given the school's performance struggles and recent decline. In a concerted effort to ensure that all students have access to high-quality school programs, the DOE annually reviews the performance of all schools Citywide. During the process that identifies schools that are having the most trouble serving their students, the DOE found M.S. 142 to be among these schools. As noted in the EIS proposing M.S. 142's phase-out:

- The overwhelming majority of M.S. 142 students remain below grade level in English Language Arts ("ELA") and Math. Only 17% of students were performing on grade level in ELA—putting the school in the bottom 13% of middle schools Citywide. Only 28% of students were performing on grade level in Math—putting the school in the bottom 15% of middle schools Citywide. In both ELA and Math proficiency, M.S. 142 ranks last among all District 11 middle schools.
- The Progress Report measures the progress and performance of students in a school, as well as the school environment, compared to other schools serving similar student populations. M.S. 142 earned a C grade on its 2011-2012 annual Progress Report, including a C grade for Student Progress, a D grade for Student Performance and a D grade for School Environment. M.S. 142 has a history of low performance, including a C grade for the past three years: 2011-2012, 2010-2011 and 2009-2010.
- M.S. 142 was identified by the New York State Education Department ("SED") as a Priority school, defined by SED as one of the bottom 5% of schools in the state.
- M.S. 142 was rated "Developing" on its most recent Quality Review in 2011-2012 and also in 2010-2011, indicating continuing deficiencies in the way that the school is organized to support student learning.
- Safety issues have been a concern at the school. On the 2011-2012 New York City School Survey, only 23% of teachers believed that discipline and order were maintained at M.S. 142 and only 56% of students felt safe in the bathrooms and hallways of the school.

As a result, the DOE has determined that the best course of action is to phase out the school and allow for new school options that will better serve the community. The DOE will continue to support current M.S. 142 students working toward promotion and as plans are developed to replace M.S. 142 with another school that will better meet future student and community needs. The DOE believes that this proposal represents the right course of action for the students of New York City.

Comment 2 acknowledges prior interventions implemented at M.S. 142 and asks why these interventions did not prevent this proposed phase-out.

The DOE acknowledges that staff members have worked hard to improve M.S. 142, but even with support and multiple interventions, the school has not produced adequate outcomes for students.

The DOE initiated and completed a comprehensive review of M.S. 142 during the fall of 2011, after M.S. 142 earned an overall C grade on its 2010-2011 Progress Report. Upon completion of the review in the fall of 2011, the DOE believed that, at the time, phase-out was not the appropriate intervention for the school. The DOE decided to reduce the enrollment of M.S. 142 for September 2012 and to provide two new options for middle school students, One World and

Baychester, in the X142 building. The enrollment reduction was also intended to provide an opportunity for M.S. 142 to improve by narrowing its focus to a smaller number of students.

Based on later evidence that the school was not equipped to significantly improve student performance, in April 2012, the PEP voted to implement the closure and replacement of M.S. 142. Last year, 24 Persistently Low Achieving schools, including M.S. 142, were approved for closure and replacement in the spring of 2012. However, due to arbitration with the union, the schools remained open and the DOE provided emergency funds (\$18 million total) to schools to carry out instructional strategies already planned for the new school year.

All of these 24 schools were identified as Priority schools by the State. Of these 24 schools, the DOE had early engagement conversations with nine of these schools. Six of these nine schools, including M.S. 142, are now being proposed for phase-out because they have continued to show declining performance or consistent underperformance. These schools have not demonstrated the ability to dramatically improve student achievement. We believe that the best intervention strategy for these six schools is to phase them out and replace them with new schools that will provide students with higher-quality educational options.

Comments 3, 4, 10 (a), 13(a), 15, 18, 21, and 26 note positive student achievement at M.S. 142 and voice general support for the administration, teachers, and school community at M.S. 142. Some of these comments also acknowledge the long history of M.S. 142 in the community and its legacy.

DOE recognizes the important role that schools play in their communities and knows that schools throughout the City are not just educational institutions, but rich and tight-knit communities. The DOE expects that the replacement school will be fully engaged with its community and responsive to the community's needs, serving a vital role as an anchor for the community.

The DOE commends and acknowledges the students and staff of M.S. 142 for their hard work. While the DOE notes that some M.S. 142 students may have achieved success, and while many members of the community voiced support for the administration, teachers, and overall school community at M.S. 142, the DOE believes that drastic action must be taken given the school's performance struggles and recent decline.

Comments 5, 10(b), and 12(a) pertain to the resources previously given to M.S. 142, voice a need for more resources, and suggest that the resources used to open a new school should instead be given to M.S. 142.

All public schools in the City are funded through a per pupil allocation. That is, funding "follows" the students and is weighted based on student's grade level and need (incoming proficiency level and special education/English Language Learner ("ELL")/Title I status). If a school's population declines from 2,500 to 2,100 students, the school's budget decreases proportionally—just as a school with an increase in students receives more money.

Fair Student Funding ("FSF") dollars – approximately \$5.0 billion in the 2012-2013 school year based on projected registers – are used by all district schools to cover basic instructional needs and are allocated to each school based on the number and need-level of students enrolled at that school. All money allocated through FSF can be used at the principals' discretion, such as hiring staff, purchasing supplies and materials, or implementing instructional programs. As the total number of students enrolled changes, the overall budget will increase or decrease accordingly, allowing the school to meet the instructional needs of its student population. In addition to the FSF student-need based dollars a school

receives, all schools receive a fixed lump sum of \$225,000 in FSF foundation and \$50,000 in Children First Network support to cover administrative costs.

While every school across the City receives funding via the same formula, some schools have been less successful in serving students than their peer schools that serve similar populations. After the comprehensive review of school data and community feedback, the DOE believes that M.S. 142 lacks the capacity to improve quickly enough to provide its students with the best educational options, and only the most serious intervention—the gradual phase-out and eventual closure of M.S. 142—will best serve students and the community. Phasing out and closing M.S. 142 will allow for a new school option to develop in the X142 building that will provide better options for families.

New schools receive Fair Student Funding in the same manner as other schools. As mentioned above, funding follows the students and is based on pupil academic needs (i.e., special education, ELL, poverty, and/or proficiency status).

New district schools are provided with additional funds to cover start-up costs such as supplies and textbooks that may be required. This Other than Personal Services (“OTPS”) for new schools funding allocation is based on a fixed per-school amount, and a per-pupil allocation. A new school in year one of implementation at a newly constructed site will receive \$22,000 and a new school in a newly leased or existing site will receive \$51,000 in OTPS per school. Thereafter, the school will receive \$100 per-student in OTPS based on projected registers for the newly added grade. In the case where there is no new grade phasing-in, the school will not receive an allocation in that year.

Principals have discretion over their budget and make choices about how to prioritize their resources. New schools may choose to hire fewer administrative staff (e.g., only a single assistant principal) freeing up dollars to be directed toward other priorities.

As to comment 12(a) regarding the inability to use the library as a shared space among organizations, the DOE is following up with the Division of School Facilities and Office of Space Planning to explore the issue and will work with the Building Council regarding this issue.

Comments 6, 13(d), and 14 pertain to how students currently enrolled in M.S. 142 would be supported during the course of the proposed phase-out.

As described in the EIS, if this proposal is approved, M.S. 142 will be phased out gradually over the next several years and will no longer admit new sixth-grade students after the end of this school year. Current sixth- and seventh-grade students will be supported at M.S. 142 as they progress towards completion of middle school and transition to high school. Current eighth-grade students who meet promotional requirements will apply for high school through the Citywide High School Admissions process.

If this proposal is approved, in 2013-2014, M.S. 142 will only serve students in seventh and eighth grades, and in 2014-2015 M.S. 142 will only serve students in eighth grade. M.S. 142 will close in June 2015. In each of those years, there may be students who do not meet promotional standards and are required to repeat a grade that the school will no longer serve. These students will be enrolled in 11X355 in the grade which the student is repeating. Contrary to the concerns expressed in comment 14, no students will be “knocked out” of M.S. 142 due to seat limitations; all current students can continue to progress towards graduation.

All students currently attending Title 1 schools that are designated as “Priority” or “Focus” schools under SED’s state accountability system are eligible to apply for a transfer to another school through the DOE’s Public School Choice (“PSC”) Process. More information about this process can be found at the

DOE's Web site at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/choicesenrollment/changingschools/default>.

If this proposal is approved, there will be additional supports provided to students enrolled in M.S. 142 as the school is phasing out. If phase out proposals are approved, schools will receive support in the areas of budget, staffing, programming, community engagement, guidance and enrollment including, but not limited to:

- Helping the school provide students with options that support their advancement, and fully prepare students for their next transition point.
- Working with school staff to foster a positive culture.
- Supporting school leadership in efficiently and strategically allocating resources to ensure a consistent and coherent school environment focused on student outcomes.

Supports for students in phase-out schools have evolved over several years as the DOE has learned what differentiated supports are needed for schools and students.

In September 2011, 26 schools began phasing out. These schools have received additional funding and specialized network support. Middle schools and high schools that began phasing out in September 2011 have been supported by the Transition Support Network.

In September 2012, 17 additional schools began phasing out. All schools undergoing the process of phasing out are now supported by the Transition Support Network. Five schools that were approved for truncation continue to be supported by their networks.

While it is unclear exactly what the supports will look like for the 24 proposed phase-outs and 2 proposed truncations that will be implemented beginning in September 2013 if approved, the DOE will continue to develop and offer differentiated and deliberate support to those schools and students.

These supports should help to continue a positive trend noted in phasing out schools. Historically, for example, as high schools have phased out, their four-year graduation rates have risen.

Comments 7 and 13(f) pertain to the impact that the proposal to phase out M.S. 142 will have on teachers and staff.

If this proposal is approved, all teachers, administrative, and non-pedagogical staff members at M.S. 142 would be excessed over the course of the phase-out.² This process would take place gradually as student enrollment declines with each successive graduating class. With fewer students, the school's staffing needs will naturally be reduced.

All excessing would be conducted in accordance with existing labor contracts. For example, the current United Federation of Teachers ("UFT") contract would require excessing to take place in reverse seniority order within each given teaching license area.

Barring system-wide layoffs, excessed teachers would be eligible to apply for other City positions, and any teachers who did not find a permanent position would be placed in the Absent Teacher Reserve pool, meaning that they would continue to earn their salary while serving in the capacity of a substitute teacher in other City schools. Should there be a vacancy in the school in a teacher's license area within one year of the teacher being excessed, the teacher would have a right of return to the school, consistent with applicable contractual provisions regarding teachers' seniority.

² Excessing of staff occurs when a school requires fewer positions than the number of staff currently in the license area or job title.

It is also important to understand that the students who would otherwise have enrolled in M.S. 142 will now be enrolled in the new school phasing in on the campus or at other new schools opening borough-wide, and those schools might need to hire additional staff. Consequently, the proposal to phase out M.S. 142 would not necessarily result in an overall loss of teaching positions within the Citywide system.

New district schools follow the hiring process consistent with the procedures set forth in the collective bargaining agreement between the DOE and UFT. New schools that have an impact on a school that is closing or phasing out are required to hire no less than 50% of their staff from the most senior qualified staff from the closing or phasing-out school, if a sufficient number of staff applies, until the impacted school is closed.

Comments 8, 13(e), and 20 pertain to parental involvement in the school community and the need to increase this involvement in order to better support the students and the school's overall performance.

The DOE acknowledges the efforts being made by M.S. 142's teachers, staff, and community members to increase parent involvement and encourages parental participation in the school community. The DOE has seen many schools that have active school leadership teams or parent associations and anticipates that the replacement school will involve the parent community through these or other similar models.

Comment 9 voices support for this proposal and requires no response.

Comments 11(a) and 12(b) voice opposition and concern about the early engagement and phase-out process, particularly as it concerns the timeline for the decision to phase-out a school.

In a concerted effort to ensure that all students have access to high-quality school programs, the DOE annually reviews the performance of all schools citywide. This process identifies schools that are having the most trouble serving their students. Using a wide range of data and on-the-ground information, we identify our most struggling schools for intensive support or intervention.

First, we compile a preliminary set of schools that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Received a grade of D, F, or a third consecutive C or worse on the 2011-12 Progress Report; and/or
- Received a rating on the most recent Quality Review of Developing or Underdeveloped; and/or
- Identified as Priority (bottom 5% in the state) by the New York State Education Department; and/or
- Received a recommendation on their 2011-12 Joint Intervention Team review for significant change in organizational structure or phase out/closure.

Next, we apply additional criteria to determine which schools are most in need of support or intervention. We remove from consideration schools that meet any of the following criteria:

- Elementary and middle schools that have a higher English Language Arts and Math average proficiency than their district average or the city average (whichever is lower). The city average for 2011-12 is 53.5% proficient; and/or
- High Schools that have a higher graduation rate than the citywide graduation rate. The citywide rate for 2010-11* is 65.5%; and/or
- Schools that received an A or B on the 2011-12 Progress Report; and/or
- Schools that earned a Well Developed score on a 2010-11 or 2011-12 Quality Review; and/or
- Schools receiving a Progress Report Grade for the first time in 2011-12.

**Note: 2011-12 Citywide graduation rate is not available yet.*

Schools that are removed from consideration for the most intensive support or intervention will receive differentiated support from their network team, but are not considered for phase-out.

We identify the remaining schools as struggling schools. These schools will undergo strategic action planning. These plans will identify concrete action steps, benchmarks, and year-end goals aimed at immediately improving student achievement. This plan will outline the specific support the network will provide to the school to address the most urgent areas of need, including:

- Leadership coaching;
- Professional development on instructional strategies for struggling students;
- Identifying grants aimed at specific needs of the school;
- Introducing new programs;
- Supporting the development of a smaller learning environment; and
- Possible leadership change.

Some of the struggling schools are also further investigated for more serious interventions that may include phase out/truncation and replacement. When considering whether a struggling school should be investigated as a candidate for more serious intervention – phase-out/closure/truncation – we consider a few key data points:

- Student performance trends over time;
- Demand/enrollment trends over time;
- Interventions already underway (e.g. School Improvement Grant model);
- Talent data;
- School culture / environment;
- District needs / priorities; and
- School safety data.

In addition to our investigation, we also have conversations with school staff, parents, students, communities, and networks to get a holistic sense of what is happening at the school and what supports or interventions would most likely improve student outcomes. In our early engagement meetings at these schools, we have conversations with constituents about what is working and what isn't before making a decision about the supports or interventions that can best support student outcomes. These meetings along with the joint public hearing provide opportunity for community members, elected officials, families, students, school staff, and community organizations such as the Council of Negro Women, as referenced in [comment 12\(b\)](#), to provide input and feedback regarding the proposal for phase-out.

At the end of this multi-step process, our analysis and engagement directed us to a set of schools that quantitative and qualitative indicators show do not have the capacity to significantly improve. Deciding what course of action can best support the students and community of a struggling school is not easy, but we are compelled to act based on our commitment to ensuring that every student has access to high-quality schools.

No single factor determines whether a school will phase out or not. Deciding to phase out a school is the toughest decision we make. But when we proceed, it is because we believe it is the right thing to do for the students of New York City.

[Comments 10\(b\) and 27](#) express concerns about M.S. 142's leadership, the leadership changes throughout the school's history, and the structure of the leadership within M.S. 142.

The DOE recognizes that school leadership, while very important, is still only one component of a school. The school culture and conditions have not enabled increased student achievement. The DOE believes that

the school's history of poor student performance indicates that M.S. 142 has failed to develop the proper infrastructure to meet the needs of its students and families.

However, the DOE has provided leadership support to M.S. 142 in the following ways:

- Assisting the principal and assistant principals in the development of instructional plans and goals for the school year, in support of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Providing professional development for school leadership in aligning curriculum to Citywide instructional expectations to raise standards for teacher practice and student learning.
- Providing extensive supervisory support in analyzing student performance data to develop a data-driven action plan for school improvement.

The DOE would also like to note that all principals are evaluated and hired through the DOE's standard C-30 process in the terms articulated in the DOE's collective bargaining agreement with the CSA. The DOE cannot discuss the specifics of hiring decisions made with respect to current or past leaders of M.S. 142.

Comment 10(c) pertains to the amount of time given to M.S. 142 to improve student outcomes and overall school performance.

M.S. 142 has struggled for years and given the schools inability to improve over the many years that the DOE has worked with the school, the DOE believes that only the most serious intervention-the gradual phase-out and eventual closure of M.S. 142-will address the school's declining performance and longstanding struggles and allow for new school options to develop in building X142 that will better serve future students and the broader community.

The DOE initiated and completed a comprehensive review of M.S. 142 during the fall of 2011, after M.S. 142 earned an overall C grade on its 2010-2011 Progress Report. Upon completion of the review in the fall of 2011, the DOE believed that, at the time, phase-out was not the appropriate intervention for the school. The DOE decided to reduce the enrollment of M.S. 142 for September 2012 and to provide two new options for middle school students, One World and Baychester, in the X142 building. The enrollment reduction was also intended to provide an opportunity for M.S. 142 to improve by narrowing its focus to a smaller number of students.

Based on later evidence that the school was not equipped to significantly improve student performance, in April 2012, the Panel for Educational Policy voted to implement the closure and replacement of M.S. 142. A lawsuit prevented the DOE from following through with those plans. However, M.S. 142's performance during the 2011-2012 school year only confirms the DOE's earlier assessment that the school lacks the capacity to turn around quickly to better support student needs.

Some examples of the data upon which these determinations were based are as follows. M.S. 142 received an overall C grade on its Progress Report in 2011-2012 for the third consecutive year. In 2011-2012, M.S. 142 also received a D in the Performance subcategory for the third consecutive year. The school was designated a Priority school by SED in 2011-2012 and was identified as a Persistently Low Achieving ("PLA") school by the state in both 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Citywide, M.S. 142 has ranked in the bottom 25% of schools in ELA proficiency and the bottom 15% of schools in Math proficiency since the 2008-2009 school year.

Accordingly, the DOE believes that M.S. 142 has been aware of its struggling performance for years and has had sufficient time to improve.

Comment 10(d) concerns the lack of continuity for students who may need to attend multiple schools as a result of the phase-out (as well as throughout the course of their elementary, middle, and high school education).

As indicated in the EIS regarding the proposal for the phase-out of M.S. 142, almost all students have the option of continuing their middle school education at M.S. 142, with the exception of students who may have to repeat a grade that M.S. 142 no longer serves as it phases out. In those instances, students will be enrolled in the new school which will be located in the same building. Because the majority of students will complete their education at M.S. 142, this proposal is not anticipated to cause substantially less continuity than is normally expected. In terms of changes that students encounter between the elementary and middle school grades and between the middle and high school grades, the majority of New York City schools operate in the elementary (serves students in kindergarten through fifth grades), middle (serves students in sixth to eighth grades), and high school (serves students in ninth through twelfth grades) models in order to provide choice for New York City families.

Comment 11(b) pertains to struggling students and how they enroll in schools across the City; this comment claims that all struggling students are “warehoused” in failing schools.

New York City’s new schools are serving the same or even higher-needs populations than the schools they replaced and are having an impact on students of every race, ethnicity, gender, and disability status. The two new schools phasing in on the X142 campus, One World and Baychester, are all serving similar populations. Of the students currently served at One World, according to the 2012-2013 audited register, 7% are ELL students, 63% qualify for free or reduced lunch and 18% of students have IEPs. At Baychester, according to the 2012-2013 audited register, 5% are ELL students, 53% qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 29% of students have IEPs. At M.S. 142, according to the 2012-2013 audited register, 5% are ELL students, 58% qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 21% of students have IEPs.

Comments 13(d) and 17 concern the new school replacement strategy, its effectiveness, and community involvement in the new school’s development.

The central goal of the Children First reforms is simple: 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, under this Administration, New York City has replaced 140 of the lowest-performing schools with better options, opening 590 new schools: 427 district schools and 163 public charter schools. As a result, we’ve created more high-quality choices for families. Graduation rates at new schools are higher than the schools they replaced. Here are a few examples:

- *Manhattan:* The new schools located on the Seward Park Campus in lower Manhattan had a graduation rate of 71.1% in 2011, compared to Seward Park High School’s graduation rate in 2002 of 36.4% (Seward Park HS completed its phase-out in 2006).
- *Manhattan:* The new schools located on the Park West Campus in Manhattan had a graduation rate of 72.2% in 2011, compared to Park West High School’s graduation rate in 2002 of 31.0% (Park West HS completed its phase-out in 2006).
- *Brooklyn:* In 2011, the schools on the Van Arsdale campus in Brooklyn had a graduation rate of 86.7%—about 40 points higher than the former Harry Van Arsdale High School’s graduation rate of only 44.9% in 2002 (Van Arsdale HS completed its phase-out in 2007).
- *Brooklyn:* The Erasmus Hall High School graduated only 40.3% of student in 2002. The new schools on the Erasmus campus are getting tremendous results, graduating 71.4% of students in 2011. (Erasmus Hall HS complete its phase-out in 2006.)

- *Queens*: The new schools located on the Springfield Gardens Campus in Queens had a graduation rate of 68.8% in 2011, compared to Springfield Gardens High School's graduation rate in 2002 of 41.3% (Springfield Gardens HS completed its phase-out in 2007).
- *Bronx*: The new schools located on the Evander Childs Campus in the Bronx had a graduation rate of 72.6% in 2011, compared to Evander Childs High School's graduation rate in 2002 of 30.7% (Evander Childs HS completed its phase-out in 2008).

The DOE can dramatically improve student achievement across the City by opening new schools in traditionally underserved communities that need high-quality educational options. There is an extremely detailed and rigorous process for creating new schools. The DOE's top priority is ensuring that the new schools that DOE opens have strong leaders with clear and visionary plans, and that these leaders are supported as they get their new schools up and running.

The DOE's new schools process is based on three core principles:

- A great school starts with a great principal. Over the past ten years, the DOE has learned the powerful role a principal can play as an agent for change. Through the DOE's new schools process, the DOE seeks principals who demonstrate the qualities of visionary and effective leadership and who are poised for the privilege and challenge of opening a new school.
- The DOE needs community partners to help the DOE develop great schools. The DOE has worked with local and national intermediary organizations to help us develop and scale new schools. These partners provide critical start-up support and help push the thinking of the DOE's new school leaders.
- There isn't one "recipe" for what makes a great school. While there are conditions that contribute to an effective school – a mission; leadership; and great teachers devoted to student success, there are different ways of organizing a school to create these conditions, especially given the need to serve diverse student populations. The DOE encourages leaders to be entrepreneurial and to leverage their expertise to develop innovative models.

Comment 13(b) concerns the performance of the co-located schools on the X142 campus and inquires as to how there are such differences in performance outcomes across the schools.

On February 17, 2011, the PEP approved a proposal for the enrollment reduction of M.S. 142 as well as the co-location two new district middle schools in the X142 campus. The addition of the two new middle schools was intended to provide new, high-quality educational options for New York City families. These schools were created through the new schools process described in the response to comments 13(d) and 17 above. In 2011-2012, students at One World scored in the top 42% of all schools citywide in ELA proficiency and the top half of schools citywide in math proficiency. In 2012-2013, Baychester scored in the top half of all schools citywide in ELA proficiency and in the top 31% of all schools citywide in math proficiency. The DOE acknowledges the hard work of the students, staff, and teachers at these schools.

Comment 13(c) concerns the network support offered to M.S. 142.

All schools receive support and assistance from their superintendent and Children First Network (<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/support/default.htm>) a team that delivers operational and instructional support directly to schools. Struggling schools receive supports as part of system-wide efforts to strengthen all schools; and they also receive individualized supports to address their particular challenges. We do everything we can to offer struggling schools leadership, operational, instructional, and student supports that can help turn a struggling school around.

In the case of M.S. 142, in addition to the leadership supports described in the response to comments 10(b) and 26, the following supports were offered to the school community:

Instructional Support:

- Training school staff in research-based instructional strategies to increase the academic achievement of English Language Learners and students with disabilities.
- Facilitating professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance the use of student performance data and instructional technology in the classroom to improve academic outcomes for all students.

Operational Support:

- Advising school staff on budgeting, human resources, staff recruitment and building management.
- Coaching the school on the development of strategies to increase student attendance.
- Advising the school on grant opportunities and working with the principal to align the budget with the school wide instructional goals.

Student Support:

- Coaching the school administration and staff on youth development strategies to build the school's capacity to address students' social and emotional needs.
- Assisting the school administration in the development of a school safety plan to reduce safety incidents and suspension rates, and developing a positive behavior support system to improve the school's culture and learning environment.

Comment 16 relate to the demographics of the school community, and how the different student populations (such as ELL and special education students) are taken into consideration during the evaluation of overall school performance.

Many of the DOE's metrics, including School Progress Reports, use a measure called the "peer index" that takes school demographics into account. The overall Progress Report grade is designed to reflect each school's contribution to student achievement, no matter where each child begins his or her journey to academic achievement. The methods are designed to be demographically neutral so that the final score for each school has as little correlation as possible with incoming student characteristics such as poverty, ethnicity, disabilities, and ELL status. To achieve this, the Progress Report emphasizes year-to-year progress, compares schools mostly to peers which are matched based on incoming student characteristics, and awards additional credit based on exemplary progress with high-needs student groups.

Each school's performance is compared to the performance of schools in its peer group, which is comprised of New York City public schools with a student population most like the school's population, according to the peer index. The peer index is used to sort schools on the basis of students' academic and demographic background, and the formula to calculate a school's peer index includes the percentage of students eligible for free lunch, the percentage of students with disabilities, the percentage of Black/Hispanic students, and the percentage of ELL students at the school. For middle schools, each school has up to 40 peer schools, up to 20 schools with peer index immediately above it and up to 20 with peer index immediately below it. Thus, for accountability purposes, M.S. 142 is grouped in its peer group with other New York City public schools with similar student academic and demographic background.

M.S. 142 performed in the bottom 10% in ELA proficiency and the bottom 13% in math proficiency meaning that the school is performing in the bottom of its peer group. This data informed the decision to phase out M.S. 142.

Comment 19 concerns the availability of after-school programming for students at M.S. 142.

The extra-curricular programming offered at each school is determined by the school staff, student interest along with available funding (funding practices are detailed in the response to Comments 5, 10(b), and 12(a) above). According to the District 11 Middle School Directory, M.S. 142 currently offers the following special programs and initiatives, extra-curricular activities, and partnerships:

- **Special Programs:** Project BOOST, Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS), Music, Inside Broadway, Project Alpha, Beacon Program
- **Boys Sports:** Basketball, Football, Track
- **Girls Sports:** Basketball, Cheerleading, Tracks

This proposal will not prevent M.S. 142 from continuing to offer any of these options, but the number and range of programs offered may gradually diminish due to declining student enrollment as the school phases out. Again, it is difficult to predict precisely how those changes might be implemented as decisions will rest with school administrators and will be made based on student interests and available resources. That is true for any City school as all schools modify extra-curricular offerings annually based on student demand and available resources.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.