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Chancellor

Public Comment Analysis¹

Date: March 8, 2013

Topic: The Proposed Phase-Out of P.S. 050 Clara Barton (12X050)
Beginning in 2013-2014

Date of Panel Vote: March 11, 2013

Summary of Proposal

On January 22, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) describing a proposal to phase out P.S. 050 Clara Barton (12X050, “P.S. 050”), an existing zoned elementary school in building X050 (“X050”) located at 1550 Vyse Avenue, Bronx 10460 in Community School District 12 (“District 12”). P.S. 050 currently serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade and offers a pre-kindergarten program. The DOE is proposing to phase out P.S. 050 based on its poor performance and the DOE’s assessment that the school lacks the capacity to improve quickly to better support student needs. The DOE also issued an EIS describing a proposal to co-locate a new zoned district elementary school in X050, 12X314, (“12X314”) beginning in 2013-2014.

If this phase-out proposal is approved, P.S. 050 will no longer admit new kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students and will no longer offer its pre-kindergarten program after the 2012-2013 school year. Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, after P.S. 050 no longer serves kindergarten, first grade, or second grade, P.S. 050 will serve one less grade in each subsequent year until it completes its phase-out and closes in June 2016.

If the phase-out and co-location proposals are approved, current students in kindergarten and first grade—whether or not they meet promotional standards—will be served by 12X314. Current students in second grade who meet promotional standards will continue to progress at P.S. 050. However, any current second-grade students who do not meet promotional standards will complete second grade at 12X314. Current students in third and fourth grades will continue their education at P.S. 050 in 2013-2014, regardless of whether they meet promotional standards. Current fifth-graders will proceed to apply to middle school via the District 12 Middle School Choice process, unless they do not meet promotional standards, in which case they will continue fifth grade at P.S. 050. Students who do not meet promotional requirements by June 2016 will be served at 12X314.

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. Any additional comments will be addressed in an amended Public Comment Analysis which will be made available to the PEP before it votes on this proposal.

As mentioned above, the DOE is proposing to replace P.S. 050, the only school in building X050, with 12X314, a new zoned district elementary school. 12X314 will admit kindergarten students according to standard zoned admissions priorities as described in Chancellor's Regulation A-101 and offer a pre-kindergarten program pending continued demand and funding. 12X314 will serve as a new elementary school option for District 12 families and replace the majority of seats lost by the proposed phase-out of P.S. 050.

A copy of the EIS pertaining to this phase-out proposal can be found in the main office of P.S. 050 Clara Barton and online here:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm>

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

A joint public hearing regarding the proposals to phase-out P.S. 050 and co-locate 12X314 in X050 was held at the X050 building on February 25, 2013. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 80 members of the public attended the hearing, and 18 people spoke. Present at the meeting were P.S. 050 Principal Kimberly Nohavicka; P.S. 050 School Leadership Team Member Ruth Diaz; District 12 Community Superintendent Myrna Rodriguez; District 12 Community Education Council ("CEC 12") President Winifred Coulton, and additional CEC 12 members Ikla Rios, Catherine Baez, Durpati Budhram, Carmen R. Santos, and Gail Gadsde; a representative from New York State Senator Ruben Diaz's Office, Reverend Joel Bauza; a representative from the Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz's Office, Monica Major; DOE Deputy Chancellor Corinne Rello-Anselmi, DOE External Affairs Representative Jenny Sobelman; DOE Liaison to the PEP, Jamie Kessler; DOE representatives from the Division of Portfolio Planning, Yael Kalban and Ashley Davies.

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

1. The representative from Senator Ruben Diaz's office commented that he understands this is a difficult process for the community and hopes that the community can gain more clarity and come together in agreement after the hearing. He offered his support and encouraged the community to reach out to him or Senator Diaz if they have questions.
2. One student spoke about the positive experiences he has had at P.S. 050.
3. One commenter felt that the phase-out proposal is not fair to students, and asked where the students will go.
4. Many commenters spoke in support of the new principal and how she has turned around the school.
5. Many commenters stated the new principal should be given a chance before the school is phased-out.
6. Many commenters stated that the school has had poor and inconsistent leadership in the past which contributed to its struggles, but has been improving since the new principal started.
7. Several commenters stated that the school is a family and should remain open.
8. Two commenters stated that the new principal has positively invested a lot of money in the school since she started.
9. One teacher stated that he has been teaching at the school for 10 years, his son went to P.S. 050, and he met his wife at the school. He stated that if a child gets a bad grade you do not

phase them out, you give them support, thus the DOE should be giving the school more support.

10. One commenter stated that nine of her children have attended P.S. 050, and have gone on to do many positive things after graduating from the school.
11. One commenter stated that the community needs to realize that the best schools have parental involvement.
12. One commenter stated that P.S. 050 has not failed, but that the DOE has failed P.S. 050.
13. Several alumni of the school spoke in opposition to the proposal.
14. The school's PTA president spoke in favor of the new principal and stated that parents and the teachers work together, and although the children have struggles, they will succeed.
15. Stephen Bennett, a representative of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, voiced general opposition to the practice of phasing out schools and particularly P.S. 050:
 - 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.
 - c. He stated that P.S. 050 has had five principals in six years and questioned how the school could be expected to succeed.
 - d. He voiced support for the new principal and stated that the school should be given more time.
16. James Parker, former principal of P.S. 050, voiced general opposition to the proposal, and made the following comments:
 - a. Parents and community members have felt left out and unheard by former leadership at the school.
 - b. The decision has not been made, and the community must make sure their voices are heard by being involved in this issue as they are now by attending the joint public hearing.
 - c. He has heard positive comments about the current principal, and she should be given more time.

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

17. A letter was submitted on December 19, 2012 from a parent expressing support for the new principal and the new initiatives taking place in the school to improve student learning.

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

Comment 1 does not directly relate to the proposal and does not require a response.

Comments 2, 4, 7, 10, 13, 14, 15(d), 16(c), and 17 note the positive changes taking place within the school, and voice general support for the principal, teachers, and school community at P.S. 050.

The DOE commends the hard work of the principal, staff, and students of P.S. 050.

While the DOE acknowledges the students and families who feel that they are being well served by P.S. 050, there are many students whom the school is not serving well and who have not experienced the same success while attending P.S. 050. Thus, the DOE believes that drastic action must be taken given

the school's performance struggles and recent decline. The DOE will continue to support current P.S. 050 students working toward promotion and during the development of plans to replace P.S. 050 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.

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 students, the DOE found P.S. 050 to be among these schools. As noted in the EIS proposing P.S. 050's phase-out.

- The overwhelming majority of P.S. 050 students remain below grade level in English Language Arts and Math. Only 16% of students were performing on grade level in English—putting the school in the bottom 1% of elementary schools Citywide. Only 33% of students were performing on grade level in Math—putting the school in the bottom 5% of elementary schools Citywide.
- 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. P.S. 050 earned an F grade on its 2011-2012 annual Progress Report, including a D grade for Student Progress, an F grade for Student Performance and an F grade for School Environment. P.S. 050 has a history of low performance, including a C grade in 2010-2011 and a D grade in 2009-2010.
- P.S. 050 was identified by the SED as a Priority school, defined by the New York State Education Department (“SED”) as one of the bottom 5% of schools in the state.
- P.S. 050 was rated “Developing” on its most recent Quality Review in 2011-2012, indicating deficiencies in the way that the school is organized to support student learning.
- Safety issues have been a concern at P.S. 050. On the 2011-2012 New York City School Survey, only 6% of teachers believed that discipline and order were maintained at P.S. 050.
- Although P.S. 050 is a zoned school, only 54% of students residing in the P.S. 050 zone chose to attend the school, suggesting that families are seeking better options.

Comment 3 inquires about where students will attend school if the phase out proposal is approved.

If the phase-out and co-location proposals are approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), current students attending P.S. 050 for kindergarten and first grade will be served by the proposed new school 12X314. Current P.S. 050 students in second grade who meet promotional standards will continue to progress at P.S. 050. However, any current second-grade students who do not meet promotional standards will complete second grade at new school 12X314. Current students in third and fourth grades will continue their education at P.S. 050 in 2013-2014, regardless of whether they meet promotional standards. Current fifth-graders should have already applied to middle school via the District 12 Middle School Choice Process, unless they do meet promotional standards, in which case they will continue fifth grade at P.S. 050. Students who do not meet promotional requirements by June 2016 once P.S. 050 closes, will be served at 12X314.

Comments 4, 5, 6, 8,15(d), 16(c), and 17 express support for the new principal and suggest delaying the phase-out of P.S. 050 to give the principal more time to improve the school.

While the DOE commends the current principal's efforts, it must be recognized that school leadership, while very important, is still only one component of a school. As described in the EIS, the school culture and conditions at P.S. 050 have resulted in poor student achievement. After a comprehensive review of P.S. 050 with the goal of determining what intensive supports and interventions would best benefit the P.S. 050 community, the DOE concluded that P.S. 050 lacks the infrastructure to quickly improve its ability to meet students' needs. Therefore, notwithstanding the efforts of the new principal, the DOE believes that only the most serious intervention—the gradual phase-out and eventual closure of P.S. 050—will address the school's performance struggles and allow for new school options to develop in building X050 that the DOE believes will better serve current and future students and the broader community.

Comments 9 and 12 suggest that the DOE should provide the school with more support rather than phase it out.

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.

As noted in the EIS for this proposal, the DOE has offered the following supports to P.S. 050, including:

Leadership Support:

- Providing on-going support for the principal and assistant principals in the implementation of effective school improvement strategies.
- Training and supporting school leadership in observing teacher practice and providing feedback to enhance teacher effectiveness.
- Coaching principals and assistant principals on using performance and accountability data to inform school-wide improvement goals and plan professional development for staff.
- Supporting school leadership in aligning instructional plans with citywide instructional expectations.

Instructional Support:

- Coaching lead teachers to support the development of rigorous curriculum and strategies for improving instructional practice to raise student achievement.
- Providing training for school staff in research-based instructional practices aimed at increasing the academic achievement of students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
- Supporting the school in deepening understanding of citywide instructional expectations by facilitating meetings among staff members to share best practices and strengthen instructional planning.

Operational Support:

- Advising school staff on student attendance tracking, school budgeting, building management, and the development of safety protocols.
- Training and supporting school staff in meeting compliance requirements for English Language Learners and students with disabilities to ensure students are receiving mandated services.

Student Support:

- Providing support for the principal in applying for partnerships with various community-based organizations that provide extensive after-school support and enrichment for students.
- Supporting the principal in partnering with parents through the Parent Teacher Association to increase parent involvement in the school's plans to raise student achievement.

P.S. 050 has received individualized support plans, as well as centralized services that the DOE provides to all schools—yet despite this extensive assistance, the school has failed to meet the needs of its students and families.

Comment 11 suggests that P.S. 050 cannot succeed without more parental involvement.

The DOE supports parent involvement in all aspects of their students' education. When families are involved in education, schools and students benefit. The DOE acknowledges that parent involvement at P.S. 050 has been low. Prior to the proposal to phase-out P.S. 050, the DOE worked to support the principal in partnering with the Parent Teacher Association to increase parent involvement. Despite those efforts, parent involvement has not improved. The DOE will incorporate these issues into its work to support current P.S. 050 students and families, and the plans for 12X314 going forward.

Comment 15(a) expresses general opposition to the strategy of phasing-out schools and the process for determining whether to phase-out a school.

In a concerted effort to ensure that all students have access to high-quality school programs, the Department of Education 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.

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.

Moreover, the data indicates that new schools replacing phase out schools have on average outperformed the phase out schools in both Math and ELA in grades 3-8 by wide margins. In ELA, new schools had a 14.2 percentage point higher proficiency than the schools they replaced, with 37.7% proficiency in new schools and only 23.5% in schools being phased out in 2012. In math, the difference is even more striking where new school has a 23.2 percentage point high proficiency than schools being phased out, with 50.8% proficient in new schools and only 27.6% proficient in phase out schools in 2012.

Comment 15(b) questions whether the new schools serve the same students that the schools being phased-out serve.

When you compare the student demographics of the elementary schools that the DOE has phased out to the demographics of new schools the DOE has opened in those same buildings, the percentages of black or Hispanic students, English language learners (“ELLs”), and students with disabilities are very similar. In addition, the new schools on the whole serve more black, Hispanic, and students with disabilities than the citywide average.

- Black or Hispanic
 - New Elementary Schools – 91.4%
 - Phase Out Elementary Schools – 93.6%
- ELL
 - New Elementary Schools –15.7%
 - Phase Out Elementary Schools –14.4 %
- Students with Disabilities (with IEP’s)
 - New Elementary Schools – 17.9%
 - Phase Out Elementary Schools –18.1%

Comments 15(c) and 16(a) attribute P.S. 050’s low performance to the poor leadership and high principal turnover that the school has experienced over the years.

The DOE recognizes the struggles that P.S. 050 has experienced over the years. Please refer to the response to comments 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 15(d) and 17 for an explanation of why it is not appropriate to delay the implementation of the phase-out based on leadership issues. The DOE believes that the proposals to gradually phase-out and replace P.S. 050 will provide a better option for the P.S. 050 community.

Comment 16(b) addresses the fact that the proposal has not yet been voted on and commends the community for being involved.

As mentioned in the response to comment 11, the DOE believes that parental and community involvement is an integral part of successful schools. The purpose of the Joint Public Hearing is for the community to express their views on the proposal and ask questions about the proposal. The DOE commends those who were in attendance at the hearing for participating in the public review process for this proposal. Comments from the hearing, as well as comments received via the dedicated email address and phone number will be included in this public comment analysis and provided to the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) prior to its vote on this proposal on March 11, 2013.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.