



Public Comment Analysis¹

Date: March 8, 2013

Topic: The Proposed Co-location of a New Public Charter School Math, Engineering, and Science Academy (84KTBD) with Existing Schools J.H.S. 291 Roland Hayes (32K291) and Bushwick Community High School (32K564) in Building K291 Beginning in 2013-2014

Date of Panel Vote: March 11, 2013

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to open and co-locate Math, Engineering, and Science Academy Charter High School (84KTBD, “MESA”), a new public charter school that will serve students in ninth through twelfth grade in building K291 (“K291”), located at 231 Palmetto Street Brooklyn, NY 11221, in Community School District 32 (“District 32”) beginning in 2013-2014. MESA will be co-located in K291 with J.H.S. 291 Roland Hayes (“J.H.S. 291”), an existing zoned and academic screened middle school that serves students in sixth through eighth grade, and Bushwick Community High School (32K564, “Bushwick Community HS”), an existing transfer school serving students in grades nine through twelve. Transfer schools are small, academically rigorous high schools designed to re-engage students who have dropped out of high school or have fallen behind. These schools are designed to create a personalized learning environment and to provide students with connections to college. In addition, K291 houses a United Federation of Teachers (“UFT”) Training Center, a school safety office, and the District 32 Office of School and Food Nutrition. Three community based organizations (“CBOs”) are also located in building K291: a Beacon program operated by the YMCA (“Beacon”), Brooklyn College Community Partnership (“Brooklyn College”), and The St. Nick’s Alliance (“St. Nick’s Alliance”). A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and cafeterias.

In December 2012, MESA’s charter was authorized by the New York State Education Department (“SED”) to serve students in ninth through twelfth grade. MESA will open with ninth grade in 2013-2014, and will add one grade each year until it serves students in ninth through twelfth grade in 2016-2017 in K291. The school will admit students via the charter lottery application process, with preference given to returning students, the siblings of enrolled students, English Language Learner (“ELL”) students residing in District 32, ELL students outside of District 32, students and residents of District 32, and then residents living outside of District 32.

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.

The DOE has identified building K291 as an under-utilized building. Building K291 has the capacity to serve 1,892 students, but in 2012-2013, J.H.S. 291 is currently enrolling 591 students in sixth through eighth grade and Bushwick Community HS is enrolling 346 students in ninth through twelfth grade.² This yields a building utilization rate of approximately 50%, which demonstrates that the building is “under-utilized” and has space to accommodate additional students. If this proposal is approved, in 2016-2017, building K291 would serve 1,295-1,440 students from MESA, J.H.S. 291, and Bushwick Community HS collectively, which yields a projected utilization rate of 68%-76%. Thus, building K291 has sufficient space to accommodate the proposed co-location.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building K291 on January 23, 2013. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 36 members of the public attended the hearing, and 6 people spoke. Present at the meeting were Brooklyn and Queens High School Superintendent Tamika Matheson; District 32 Superintendent Lillian Druck; District 32 Community Education Council (“CEC 32”) President Victorina Lugo; CEC 32 Councilmember Lewis Tillman; Erin Shovlin, a representative from the State Education Department (“SED”); Jacqueline Rosado, Principal of J.H.S. 291; Llermi Gonzalez, Principal of Bushwick Community High School; J.H.S. 291 SLT member Fazia Rahaman and Lauren Lefty of the DOE from the Division of Portfolio Planning.

The following comments and remarks were made at the joint public hearing on January 23, 2013 on the proposal:

1. Jacqueline Rosado, Principal of J.H.S. 291, expressed that she is not opposed to welcoming additional students into the building, but is concerned about the space allocated to J.H.S. 291 in the proposal. She stated:
 - a. It is unrealistic to expect middle school teachers to share classrooms and travel from class to class.
 - b. Sharing space will become a burden for the middle school. It will be a huge challenge to share space with another high school.
 - c. Although the proposal says otherwise, there will be an impact on programming as a result of the co-location of MESA.
 - d. The school has invested a lot of money in the building.
 - e. If the proposal is approved, she respectfully requests support from the DOE to restore facilities in their part of the building and support the school in the transition.
2. Llermi Gonzalez, Principal of Bushwick Community High School, wanted everyone to understand that Bushwick Community High School is a transfer school serving the neediest students, who come to the school over-aged and under-credited, often with social and emotional needs. He asserted:
 - a. The school is going through a transition period to make sure that Bushwick Community High School offers the best opportunity for achievement. They are therefore in the process of developing programs to meet both the academic and social-emotional needs of students. The Footprint only allocates space for academic classroom spaces and not for programs like a

² All figures are from the 2012-2013 Unaudited Register (as of October 26, 2012).

- LYFE center for students with children of their own. He would like to bring in more programs for his school, and has the funds to do so, but it will be difficult if they do not have the space. A third school will impact their ability to bring in additional programs and initiatives for the school.
- b. It is important for Bushwick Community High School to stay in the community.
3. Fazia Rahaman, representative of the J.H.S. 291 SLT, asserted the SLT strongly opposes the addition of MESA Charter High School in K291, and made the following statements and posed the following questions:
 - a. J.H.S. 291 is already co-located with Bushwick Community High School, and that already has its challenges with sharing space. Adding an additional school will only complicate the situation.
 - b. Will J.H.S. 291 have to alter their lunch periods? They do not want to eat lunch at a breakfast hour.
 - c. Will high schoolers be co-mingling with middle schoolers?
 - d. Will J.H.S. 291 be expected to incur the costs of rewiring the rooms that they invested in?
 - e. Has the DOE met with the School Construction Authority to reduce the co-mingling of the schools?
 4. Diana Delgado, Director of the Beacon program at K291, stated:
 - a. She is in support of the charter school despite the fact that it will complicate space issues in the building.
 - b. The proposal will be beneficial for the entire Bushwick community. There is a lack of high quality high schools in the area. This school will provide students with opportunities they never had.
 - c. She is confident that despite the impact on space, we can build this into a stronger academic community.
 5. Arthur Samuels, the founding director of MESA, stated:
 - a. He understands the concerns of the school and Beacon program and wants them to know that MESA intends to work collaboratively if the proposal is approved.
 - b. He wants to see all of the students in the building succeed.
 - c. There are a lot of opportunities for collaboration, such as some type of big brother/big sister program, community service, and joint work on securing grants for building upgrades.
 - d. His goal is for MESA to be another option for parents in Bushwick wanting to send students to an academically rigorous high school.
 - e. MESA is an independent organization.
 6. One commenter, a Principal of a Catholic school nearby, stated:
 - a. He thinks MESA is a wonderful idea for Bushwick.
 - b. Students cannot afford private schools, like Catholic schools.
 - c. A lot of students have to go to Manhattan or Queens to find a high quality high school.
 - d. The idea of a new, good, rigorous high school is very important and he fully supports it.
 7. One community member posed the following questions:
 - a. What floor of the school will be occupied by MESA?
 - b. What grades and how many students will be enrolled at MESA?
 - c. What safety measures will be in place for the high school and junior high school children? Will they co-mingle?

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

8. One community member, who stated that she has been an advocate for special needs children for 23 years in Bushwick, wrote a statement in favor of MESA. She expressed that after speaking with Arthur Samuels, the founder of MESA, she is confident that MESA will provide a supportive atmosphere for children. She wholeheartedly endorses the proposal.
9. One community member, a mother and active parent in the Bushwick community, wrote in support of MESA, and believes it will be a great addition to the community.
10. One commenter wrote in support of MESA, and stated that MESA will afford many District 32 students the opportunity to remain in the district and acquire an excellent education.
11. One commenter, a parent in District 32, wrote in support of MESA and expressed that she believes it is a great idea for the community and commended Arthur Samuels, MESA's founder, for being proactive in involving the community.

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

Comments 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 are in favor of the proposal and do not require a response.

Comments 1 (a,b) and 3 (a,b) relate to the question of whether or not there is sufficient space in building K291 for MESA to be co-located with J.H.S. 291 and Bushwick Community High School, and comment 7(a) inquires about the location of MESA in the building if the proposal is approved.

The DOE believes that there is sufficient space within K291 to open and co-locate MESA Charter High School with the two existing schools, J.H.S. 291 and Bushwick Community High School.

The DOE has identified building K291 as an under-utilized building. Building K291 has the capacity to serve 1,892 students, but in 2012-2013, J.H.S. 291 is currently enrolling 591 students in sixth through eighth grade and Bushwick Community HS is enrolling 346 students in ninth through twelfth grade. This yields a building utilization rate of approximately 50%, which demonstrates that the building is "under-utilized" and has space to accommodate additional students. If this proposal is approved, in 2016-2017, building K291 would serve 1,295-1,440 students from MESA, J.H.S. 291, and Bushwick Community HS collectively, which yields a projected utilization rate of 68%-76%. Thus, building K291 has sufficient space to accommodate the proposed co-location.

Furthermore, the Citywide Instructional Footprint (the "Footprint") is the guide used to allocate space to all schools based on the number of class sections they program and the grade levels of the school. The number of class sections at each school is determined by the Principal based on enrollment, budget, and student needs; there is a standard guideline of target class size (i.e., number of students in a class section) for each grade level. At the middle school and high school levels, the Footprint assumes every classroom is programmed during every period of the school day except one lunch period. There is also a unique footprint calculation for transfer schools that takes into consideration transfer schools' unique programming needs. The full text of the Instructional Footprint is available at http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/78D715EA-EC50-4AD1-82D1-1CAC544F5D30/0/DOEFOOTPRINTSConsolidatedVersion2011_FINAL.pdf.

The BUP demonstrates that there is sufficient space in the building to accommodate the proposed co-location. If the proposal to site MESA in K291 is approved, all schools will receive their full footprint allocations in accordance with the Instructional Footprint.

In regards to the question relating to teachers moving from classroom to classroom, for grades 6-12 the Footprint assumes that students move from class to class and that classrooms should be programmed at maximum efficiency (and therefore does not require that every teacher have his or her own designated classroom). After MESA is at full-scale in K291, J.H.S. 291 will be allocated 7 full-size, 33 quarter-size and the equivalent of 1.5 rooms designed for administrative use above its baseline footprint. School leaders are empowered to make decisions about how to utilize space allocated to the school.

The BUP also includes a proposed shared space schedule for the co-located schools. The final shared space schedule will be finalized by the Building Council if this proposed co-location is approved by the PEP. Principals of the co-located schools sit on the Building Council and are free to deviate from the proposed plan and create a shared space schedule as long as it is agreed upon by both parties. The proposed shared space schedule in the BUP demonstrates that all schools will receive enough time in the cafeteria and library, as well as the other shared spaces, to serve their students based on the school's enrollment. As the proposed schedule demonstrates, students will not have to eat lunch earlier than 11:12 a.m., which is J.H.S. 291's current start time for lunch.

If the Building Council is unable to agree upon a schedule for shared spaces, there is a mediation process outlined in the Campus Policy Memo, which is available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/campusgov>.

In regards to the question about MESA's potential location in the building, the assignment of specific rooms and location for each organization in the building, including those for use in serving students with IEPs or special education needs, will be made in consultation with the Principals of each school and the Office of Space Planning if this proposal is approved.

Comments 1(d,e) and 3(d) relate to investments that have been made by J.H.S. 291 to the K291 building.

Resources needed for programming and instruction will continue to be accessible and available to J.H.S. 291 if this proposal is approved. This holds true even if rooms previously occupied by J.H.S. 291 are used by MESA as they phase-in. The Office of Space Planning will work with the co-located schools to ensure that materials will be moved and allocated appropriately to minimize disruption.

Comments 3 (c,e) and 7 (c) relate to the co-mingling of high school and middle school students as a result of the proposal and the security measures that will be taken to avoid conflict.

Due to space limitations, it is not unusual for varying grade levels to be co-located together in schools across the city. Furthermore, middle school students and transfer school students are already co-located in K291, and therefore this proposal will not be changing the age range of students served in the building.

The DOE also notes that the Office of Space Planning will work with the Building Council to ensure that the schedules of the co-located schools and the plan for where the organizations are located in the building minimizes the co-mingling of students from different schools to the greatest extent possible, as is currently the case with J.H.S. 291 and Bushwick Community High

School. In many of the buildings where schools are co-located throughout the city, each school is assigned restrooms on the floors where their classrooms are located. Moreover, each school is told or instructed to use specific stairways to limit co-mingling. These measures are taken to cultivate cohesive cultures within each school. Separation between schools is intended to limit any issues that might arise from groups of students who may not know each other well and to nurture school unity.

Furthermore, pursuant to Chancellor's Regulation A-414, every school/campus is mandated to form a School Safety Committee, which is responsible for developing a comprehensive School Safety Plan that defines the normal operations of the site and what procedures are in place in the event of an emergency. The School Safety Plan is updated annually by the Committee to meet the changing security needs, changes in organization and building conditions and any other factors; these updates could also be made at any other time when it is necessary to address security concerns. The Committee will also address safety matters on an ongoing basis and make appropriate recommendations to the Principal(s) when it identifies the need for additional security measures.

Comment 2(b) relates to the ability of Bushwick Community High School to serve the community.

This proposal will not impact the ability of Bushwick Community High School to continue to serve the community. There is no anticipated impact on academic offerings, extracurricular programming or athletics at either existing school in K291.

Comments 1(c) and 2(a) relate to the impact of this proposal on programming at J.H.S. 291 and Bushwick Community High School.

As stated in the EIS and above, the DOE does not anticipate that the proposal to co-locate MESA in K291 will impact instructional programming, extracurricular activities, partnerships, or the admissions process at the schools currently co-located in the building. The Instructional Footprint allocates space in a manner that allows schools to offer a full range of programming to their students when space is programmed efficiently.

Comment 7 (b) inquires as to the grade span and enrollment of MESA Charter High School.

Pursuant to MESA's charter as authorized by the New York State Education Department ("SED"), MESA is approved to serve students in grades nine through twelve at full-scale. If this proposal is approved, MESA will serve approximately 115-140 ninth-grade students in 2013-2014, and 445-520 ninth- through twelfth-grade students in K291 by 2016-2017.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes were made to this proposal.