

Public Comment Analysis¹

Date: March 8, 2013

Topic: The Proposed Phase-out of the High School of Graphic Communication Arts (02M625) 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 phase out the High School of Graphic Communication Arts (02M625, “Graphics”), an existing high school located in school building M625 (“M625”), beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. M625 is located at 439 West 49th Street, New York, NY 10019 within the geographical confines of Community School District 2 (“District 2”). Graphics currently serves students in grades nine through twelve. The DOE is proposing to phase out the school based on its poor performance and the DOE’s assessment that it lacks the capacity to improve quickly to better support student needs. Two separate Educational Impact Statements (“EISs”) also posted on January 18, 2013, describe additional proposals for building M625. In one, the DOE is proposing to co-locate a new district high school (02M135, “New School”) in M625. In the other, the DOE is proposing to co-locate Success Academy Charter School Manhattan Middle School (“SA – Manhattan MS”) in M625. Those proposals can be found here:

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

On February 5, 2013, this proposal was amended to update the eligibility status of High School of Graphic Communication Arts for School Improvement Grant funding. That change did not substantially revise the proposal.

If this phase-out proposal is approved, Graphics will no longer admit new ninth-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 at the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year. Current students at Graphics will be supported as they progress towards graduation while remaining enrolled at the school. In cases where students do not complete graduation requirements by June 2016, the DOE will help students and families identify alternative programs or schools that meet students’ needs so that they may continue their education after Graphics completes phasing out.

In the current 2012-2013 school year, Graphics is co-located with two district high schools: Business of Sports School (02M393, “BOSS”), an existing high school that serves students in grades nine through twelve; and Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology (02M507, “Gateway”), an existing high school that currently serves students in grades nine and ten. Gateway is in the process of phasing in, gradually growing to full scale as it adds a new grade of students each year. Gateway will serve students

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.

in grades nine through twelve when it reaches full scale in 2014-2015.

On December 20, 2012 the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) approved the co-location of SA – Manhattan 2 in M625, which will open in 2013 with kindergarten and first grade. Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, SA – Manhattan 2 will serve students in kindergarten through fourth grade.

Graphics, BOSS and Gateway are Career and Technical Education (“CTE”) schools. Each of these schools admits students in ninth grade through the Citywide High School Admissions process.

M625 also houses two community-based organizations (“CBOs”), SPARK Drug Prevention and the Association of Progressive Dominicans, as well as an Alternative Learning Center (“ALC”), which provides an educational setting for students in grades nine through twelve who are on a Superintendent’s suspension for up to 90 days. This proposal is not expected to impact the continued siting of the CBOs. In the 2013-2014 school year, the ALC will re-locate to building M859 (“M859”), located at 512 West 182nd St, New York, NY 10033 within the geographical confines of Community School District 6.

If this phase-out proposal is approved, Graphics will continue serving students currently enrolled in the school but will begin phasing out one grade at a time beginning in September 2013. The school will complete its phase-out at the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year. In another EIS, the DOE is proposing to open a new high school, 02M135, in building M625 in September 2013. The proposal can be found at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm>

02M135 will grow to full-scale as Graphics phases out. The new school will open with ninth grade, adding one grade annually and reaching full-scale in the 2016-2017 school year with a grade span of nine through twelve.

Additionally, the DOE is proposing to co-locate SA - Manhattan MS in M625 beginning in the 2015-2016 school year and serving its full grade span beginning in the 2018-2019 school year. Meanwhile, Gateway and SA – Manhattan 2 will continue to phase in as planned and BOSS will continue to serve students in grades nine through twelve. That proposal can be found at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm>.

Background on the DOE’s Decision-Making Process

Schools are identified for possible phase-out for any of the following three reasons: (1) they received poor grades on their annual Progress Report; (2) they received a poor score on their most recent Quality Review; or (3) they have been 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. In August 2012, SED identified Priority schools across the State, including 122 in New York City. High schools are identified as Priority based their graduation rates. Specifically, under the DOE’s accountability framework, all schools that receive a grade of D, F, or a third consecutive C grade or lower on their annual Progress Report and all schools that receive a rating of Underdeveloped on the Quality Review are evaluated for intensive support or intervention, including the possibility of phase-out. Progress Reports are released by the DOE each fall and evaluate schools on a scale of A through F based on Student Progress, Student Performance, School Environment, and, new to the Progress Report in 2011-2012, College and Career Readiness. During Quality Reviews, experienced educators visit a school over several days, observing classrooms and talking with students, staff, and families. Schools are rated on the following four-point

scale: “Underdeveloped” (the lowest possible rating), “Developing,” “Proficient,” and “Well Developed” (the highest possible rating).

Graphics received an overall F grade on its Progress Report in 2011-2012, after having received an F in 2010-2011 and a D in 2009-2010. The school also received F grades on each of four subcategories on its 2011-2012 Progress Report. Graphics was rated “Underdeveloped” on its most recent Quality Review in 2010-2011. The school was also designated a Priority school by SED for the 2012-2013 school year.

As a result, the DOE initiated a comprehensive review of Graphics, with the goal of determining what intensive supports and interventions would best benefit its students and the Graphics community. During that review, the DOE looked at recent historical performance and demand data from the school, consulted with superintendents and other experienced educators who have worked closely with the school, and gathered community feedback. As noted above, Graphics has struggled, and the school’s performance during the 2011-2012 school year further demonstrates that the school lacks capacity to improve quickly to better support student needs.

The DOE initiated and completed a similar comprehensive review of Graphics during the fall of 2010, after the school earned an overall D grade on its 2009-2010 Progress Report and had been named by SED as a Persistently Low Achieving (“PLA”) school for the first time in January 2010. Upon completion of the review in the fall of 2010, the DOE believed that, at the time, phase-out was not the appropriate intervention for the school. The DOE decided to reduce the number of CTE pathways that Graphics would offer beginning in September 2012, thereby reducing overall enrollment at the school. The enrollment reduction was intended to provide an opportunity for Graphics to improve by narrowing its focus to fewer academic programs and a smaller number of students.

In light of the fact that performance at Graphics has continued to decline, the DOE no longer believes that the enrollment reduction will be an adequate intervention to assist the school in improving quickly to support student learning. Given the school’s declining performance, the DOE now believes that only the most serious intervention – the gradual phase-out and eventual closure of Graphics – will address the school’s declining performance and longstanding struggles and allow for new school options to develop in building M625 that will better serve future students and the broader community.

Summary of Comments Received

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building M625 on February 26, 2013. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 85 members of the public attended the hearing, and 20 people spoke. Present at the meeting were Brendan Lyons, principal of the High School for Graphic Communication Arts and member of the school’s leadership team (“SLT”); Josh Solomon, Principal of the Business of Sports School and member of the school’s SLT; April McKoy, principal of the Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology and member of the school’s SLT; James Kelleher, SLT member at the Business of Sports School; Marisol Bradbury, Community District 2 High School Superintendent; Shino Tanikawa, president of Community Education Council 2 (“CEC 2”); Eric Goldberg, member of CEC 2; and Paola DeKock, president of the Citywide Council of High Schools.

Below is a summary of the comments received:

1. A representative for Assembly Member Linda Lowenthal asserted the following:
 - a. Charter school co-locations in district 2 are disruptive.

- b. Charter schools do not necessarily provide a high-quality education.
 - c. Charter schools are not using private space even as class sizes are high and Catholic schools are closing.
 - d. The proposal will result in overcrowding.
 - e. More community input is needed.
2. A member of BOSS's SLT asserted the following:
 - a. The schools' enrollment projections will lead to overcrowding.
 - b. The shared space plan does not include adequate time for students in the cafeteria and library, and BOSS and Gateway will not be able to have lunch periods in the cafeteria.
 - c. Success Academy will need more space and more shared spaces.
 - d. The multi-purpose room will not be used by the high schools even though Success Academy will use spaces shared with the high schools.
 - e. The proposals should have been discussed with everyone in the area.
 - f. The proposal to phase out Graphics indicates that the DOE has given up on the school.
 - g. Traffic patterns will be difficult with so many students in the building.
3. Shino Tanikawa, president of the Community Education Council for District 2 ("CEC 2"), asserted the following:
 - a. The closure of schools is an admission of the DOE's failure.
 - b. Space available in this building should have used the space to create a community school or program that could help Graphics.
 - c. She is wary of co-locations since there is no previous agreement before principals have to work together in a shared building.
 - d. Co-locations result resource imbalances between district and charter schools.
 - e. Charter schools should collaborate with district schools, but co-locations have resulted in divisions among parents.
 - f. She is concerned that Success Charter does not exist, and grade expansion for middle schools has not been submitted yet.
 - g. The capacity of the building should be aligned to the capacity of the cafeteria.
4. Eric Goldberg, member of CEC 2, asserted that the proposal reserves space for a school that does not yet exist.
5. Mark Landis, UFT District Leader, asserted the following:
 - a. Co-locations are unnecessary and disruptive.
 - b. The charter co-location proposals take seats away from needy district schools.
 - c. Charter schools should be housed in private space.
 - d. Charter schools do not lead to better outcomes than traditional public schools.
 - e. The DOE should put a moratorium on charter school co-locations until the impact of charter co-locations is addressed.
6. Paola DeKock, member of the Citywide Council on High Schools, asserted the following:
 - a. The DOE is not interested in saving Graphics.
 - b. The DOE made uncoordinated attempts to transform Graphics and stood by during the rough start that Graphics had at the beginning of the school year.
 - c. The EIS does not provide enough information about the new school, 02M135; will the school have equipment? What classes will the school offer? Does the school plan to seek state certification to confer CTE diplomas?
 - d. There is no proof that small themed schools will work better than large schools like Graphics.
7. Jeannie LaContie, a member of Graphics' SLT and UFT leader, asserted the following:
 - a. She is opposed to the phase-out of Graphics.

- b. She is opposed to the co-location of SA – Manhattan MS.
 - c. The co-location proposal will have a negative impact on space in the building.
 - d. There is a need for elementary seats but not middle school seats.
 - e. The DOE should support and embrace students rather than proposing to phase out Graphics.
8. Alice O’Neil, Manhattan High School Representative for the UFT, asserted the following:
 - a. She is concerned that the cafeteria will be overcrowded.
 - b. She opposes charter co-locations.
9. A representative from the Council of Supervising Administrators asserted the following:
 - a. Phasing out schools is incredibly difficult for students.
 - b. Phasing out schools is an untested way of turning schools around.
10. Multiple commenters expressed opposition to the proposal to co-locate SA – Manhattan MS in M625.
11. One commenter noted that a Success Academy school has been named a Blue Ribbon School.
12. One commenter asserted that concerns around co-location are overstated and that the SA – Manhattan MS co-location could work well in the building.
13. Multiple commenters asserted that educational choices are important for the community.
14. One commenter asserted that some schools have been closed even though they served their students well.
15. One commenter asserted that Success Academy encouraged students with special needs to leave the school.
16. One commenter asserted that by proposing Graphics for phase-out, the DOE is telling students that they are failures and they have bad teachers.
17. One commenter asserted that co-locating lower grades with high school grades can provide valuable opportunities for older students to mentor younger students.
18. One commenter expressed concerns about dwindling opportunities for CTE instruction.

The DOE did not receive any comments through its feedback email address.

The DOE received a number of comments which do not directly relate to the proposal. Those comments are summarized below.

19. One commenter asserted that the Brandeis campus has two separate and unequal cafeterias.
20. One commenter asserted that the DOE is sacrificing schools for politics.

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

Comments 1(a)-(c), 2(c), 2(d), 3(b), 3(f), 4, 5(c), 5(d), 7(b)-(d), 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 17 relate, in whole or in part, to the proposed co-location of the middle school grades of Success Academy Charter School – Manhattan 1 (84MTBD), Success Academy Charter School – Manhattan 2 (84MTBD) and Success Academy Charter School – Upper West (84M523), collectively known as Success Academy Charter School – Manhattan Middle School (84MTBD) in building M625 in the 2015-2016 school year. Those comments, or the relevant portion of those comments, are responded to in the Public Comment Analysis for that proposal, available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm>

Comments 6(c) and 6(d) relate to the proposed co-location of a new district high school, 02M135 in building M625 in the 2013-2014 school year and are responded to in the Public Comment Analysis for

that proposal, available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm>

Comments 1(a), 3(c), 3(e), 5(a), 5(b), 5(e), 8(b), and 10 express opposition to the DOE's policy of co-locating multiple school organizations in a single school building. Roughly half of our schools share space in a building. Co-locations allow us to use our limited facilities efficiently while simultaneously creating additional educational options for New York City families. This is necessary because we have scarce resources and demand for more options.

Comments 1(d), 2(a), 2(g), 3(g) and 7(c) express concern that the proposals will result in overcrowding in and around building M625. Although a utilization rate in excess of 100% may suggest that a building will be over-utilized or over-crowded in a given year, this rate does not account for the fact that rooms may be programmed for more efficient or different uses than the standard assumptions in the utilization calculation.

The Building Utilization Plan describes the allocation of space for each of the organizations in M625 for the duration of the proposal. In each year of this proposal, every school in the building is allocated a number of rooms that meets or exceeds their baseline allocation of space.

In addition, charter school enrollment plans are frequently based on larger class sizes than target capacity, contributing to building utilizations above 100% while not impacting the utilization of the space allocated to the traditional public school.

In response to concerns about traffic patterns outside the school building, it should be noted that the DOE is not required to conduct traffic impact studies for the placement of schools in existing DOE buildings. However, based on experience with similar co-locations in other buildings, the DOE does not anticipate issues arising as a result of increased traffic, should this proposal be approved by the Panel for Educational Policy.

Comments 2(b-d) and 8(a) express concerns about the use of shared spaces in the building. The Building Utilization Plan puts forth a proposed shared space schedule for the co-located schools that is feasible and demonstrates that the co-located schools may be treated equitably and comparably in the use of shared spaces. The final shared space schedule will be collaboratively drafted by the Building Council if the proposed co-location is approved by the Panel for Education Policy.

The proposed shared space plan, which allocates time in shared spaces based on projected enrollment in the 2015-2016 school year, does not change the high schools' existing access to many shared spaces. Success Academy is not allocated time in shared spaces such as the exercise room, weight room, science lab, and the existing cafeteria and gymnasium. Success Academy will use a multi-purpose room to replace access to some of those spaces. As described on page 6 of the Building Utilization Plan, the sixth floor of the building will be comprised solely of shared spaces that will serve the high schools in M625.

Comments 1(e) and 2(e) express concerns about opportunities for the community to provide feedback on the proposals. Consistent with our approach last year and our desire to incorporate school and community input in our decision-making process, in October and November we had conversations with 60 struggling schools (58 district schools and 2 public charter schools) that were identified for an intensive support plan or intervention. In these conversations we shared information about school performance and spoke with

the community about their reflections of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This engagement is above and beyond what is mandated by State law.

This is the third year that the DOE has used the early engagement process to learn more about the most struggling schools before proposing interventions, including phase-out.

The goal for these engagement meetings was to begin or renew conversations with schools and their communities about their performance and the resulting actions we may take to improve it. We gathered feedback – to understand what's working, what's not working, and what the community has to say about it – before making a decision about whether the school should be given an intensive support plan or phased out and replaced with a new option that can better support student success.

Superintendents met with the school leadership team, staff and parents to explain the Department of Education's thinking on why the school is considered struggling and what particular factors show this to be the case.

We also distributed reports for each school that summarized school performance, school supports, and potential action steps. These are easy-to-understand summaries that were handed out at early engagement meetings and are posted on our website.

Again, all of this happened prior to a decision about whether a school will be proposed for phase out, closure or truncation.

When the Educational Impact Statements and Building Utilization Plan for M625 were issued, they were made available to the staff, faculty and parents at the impacted schools, on the DOE's Web site, and in each school's respective main office. In addition, the DOE dedicated a proposal-specific website and voicemail to collect feedback on this proposal. Furthermore, all schools' staff, faculty and parent communities were invited to the Joint Public Hearing to provide further feedback.

Although the DOE recognizes that people in the community may have strong feelings against this proposal, the DOE believes that, if this proposal is approved, the school communities at M625 will be able to create productive and collaborative partnerships.

Comment 6(d) expresses concerns about resource imbalances between district and charter schools. With regard to funding and other resources, charter schools receive public funding pursuant to a formula created by the state legislature, and overseen by the New York State Education Department. The DOE does not control this formula. Charter management organizations, just like any other school citywide, may also choose to raise additional funds to purchase various resources they feel would benefit their students (e.g., Smartboards, fieldtrips, etc). However, pursuant to Chancellor's Regulation A-190, the Chancellor or his/her designee must first authorize in writing any proposed capital improvement or facility upgrade in excess of five thousand dollars, regardless of the source of funding, made to accommodate the co-location of a charter school within a public school building. For any such improvements or upgrades that have been approved by the Chancellor, capital improvements or facility upgrades shall be made in an amount equal to the expenditure of the charter school for each non-charter school within the public school building.

Comment 6(b) expresses concerns about the supports the DOE provided to Graphics. All schools receive support and assistance from their superintendent and their Children First Network, 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.

We have had enormous success around the City replacing our lowest-performing schools with new schools that do better. We owe it to our families to give them the best possible options, and in some cases that means replacing low-performing schools with new ones.

Comments 2 (f), 3(a), 6(a), 7(a), 7(e), 8(b), 9(a), 9(b), 14 and 16 express general opposition to the DOE's policy of phasing out underperforming schools and specific opposition to the proposal to phase out Graphics. 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 142 of our lowest-performing schools with better options and opened 576 new schools: 427 district schools and 149 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).

Ten years ago when the Mayor charged us with developing a system of great schools we knew it was a big goal to deliver on and would require bold action on the part of all of us.

We count on each of our schools to provide a high-quality education to its students—and we hold all schools to the same high standard. If a school isn't getting the job done for its students, we are compelled to take serious action to ensure its students don't fall even further behind.

Of course, struggling schools must be given a real shot to improve. But if the school continues to fail after receiving additional support, we must make the incredibly difficult decision to replace the failing school with a new option.

We can't stand by and allow schools to keep failing our kids when we know we can—and we must—do better.

Comment 18 expresses concern about opportunities for Career and Technical Education (“CTE”) instruction. The DOE is committed to providing students across the city with access to CTE instruction. Both of the high schools co-located with Graphics offer CTE instruction and the new high school proposed for M625, The Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management, will offer CTE pathways in emergency management, response and recovery and emergency technology and communications. In addition, the DOE has proposed to open two more CTE high schools in the fall of 2013. Stephen T. Mather Building Arts & Craftsmanship High School will offer CTE pathways in carpentry, masonry, decorative finishes and landscaping in partnership with the National Park Service, and The Urban Assembly School for Global Commerce will offer CTE pathways in global commerce.

Comments 19 and 20 are unrelated to this proposal and do not require a response.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal in response to public comment.