Department of Education
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

Public Comment Analysis[1]

Date: March 8, 2013
Topic: The Proposed Phase-Out of General D. Chappie James Middle School of Science (23K634) 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 General D. Chappie James Middle School of Science (23K634, "Chappie James Middle School"), an existing unscreened choice middle school in building K183 ("K183") located at 76 Riverdale Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11212, in Community School District 23 ("District 23"). Chappie James Middle School currently serves students in grades six through eight. The DOE is proposing to phase out Chappie James Middle School based on its poor performance and the DOE's assessment that the school lacks the capacity to improve quickly to better support student needs. In a separate Educational Impact Statement ("EIS"), also posted on January 11, 2013, the DOE is proposing to co-locate a new district middle school, 23K668, in building K183. That proposal can be found here: http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2012-2013/Mar112013Proposals.htm.

On February 5, 2013, the EIS for the proposed phase out of Chappie James Middle School was amended to update the eligibility status of Chappie James Middle School for School Improvement Grant funding.

If this proposal is approved, Chappie James Middle School will no longer admit new sixth-grade students at the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year. The school will continue to phase out one grade level each year, 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 Chappie James Middle School. Current and future Chappie James Middle School eighth-grade students will be supported through the Citywide High School Admissions Process as they apply to a high school. 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 23K668 in the grade the student is repeating.

Chappie James Middle School currently admits students through the Middle School Choice Process. Chappie James Middle School first admits students who apply to the school and who reside in the Chappie James Elementary School zone, or attend Chappie James Elementary School and then admits students through the Middle School Choice Process using an unscreened selection method if space remains. In unscreened programs, students who apply are randomly selected. If this phase-out proposal is approved, Chappie James Middle School would no longer admit sixth grade students.

Chappie James Middle School is co-located with Riverdale Avenue Community School (23K446, "Riverdale Community") and General D. Chappie James Elementary School of Science (23K631, "Chappie James Elementary School"), two existing zoned elementary schools.

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[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.

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Riverdale Community currently serves kindergarten through second grade students and is in the process of phasing in to serve additional grades. Riverdale Community also offers a full-day pre-kindergarten program. At full scale in the 2015-2016 school year, Riverdale Community will serve students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade and will offer a pre-kindergarten program.

Chappie James Elementary School currently serves third through fifth grade students and is in the process of phasing out. Chappie James Elementary School will close at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year.

In a separate proposal, the DOE is proposing to replace the seats lost by this phase-out by opening and co-locating a new middle school, 23K668, in K183 beginning in September 2013. If both proposals are approved, 23K668 will be at full scale in the 2015-2016 school year, when it serves students in sixth through eighth grade.

Summary of Comments Received

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building K183 on February 20, 2013. Members of the School Leadership Team ("SLT") from every school organization in the K183 building were invited to participate. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. While representatives from the Citywide Council for Special Education and Citywide Council for English Language Learners were invited, not all chose to participate in the hearing. Approximately 27 members of the public attended the hearing and 4 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Deputy Chancellor Dorita Gibson; Senior Superintendent Lauren Feijoo; Community Education Council ("CEC") 23 Member Sherry Ann Farrell; Principal Kierstan Ward, Principal of General D. Chappie James Middle School of Science; Chappie James Middle School SLT Representative Reginald King; Council of School Supervisors and Administrators ("CSA") Representative Mildred Boyce; United Federation of Teachers ("UFT") Representative Ualin Smith.

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

1. SLT Member and Parent Teacher Association President Reginald King expressed his opposition to the proposed phase out of Chappie James Middle School.
    a. Mr. King questioned whether four schools would be able to occupy one building.
2. UFT Representative, Ualin Smith, expressed her opposition to the proposed phase out of Chappie James Middle School:
    a. Ms. Smith stated that the proposed phase-out of Chappie James Middle School would lead to a negative emotional impact for the students who currently attend Chappie James Middle School.
    b. Ms. Smith asked why the DOE waited for three years before proposing to phase-out the school since the school has received D's on its Progress Reports in the past.
3. CSA Representative Mildred Boyce expressed opposition to the proposed phase-out of Chappie James Middle School:
    a. Ms. Boyce stated that the proposed phase-out of Chappie James Middle School would be emotionally difficult for the teachers and staff of Chappie James Middle School.
    b. Ms. Boyce asked that the school be given more time to improve before phasing out the school entirely.
4. Multiple commenters stated that closing schools is an ineffective and failed policy:
    a. One commenter stated that opening a fourth school in the building is costly.

   b. Some of these commenters also stated that the DOE should provide Chappie James Middle School with more funding, instead of closing it.
5. Multiple commenters expressed concern about the negative emotional impact of closure
   a. One commenter stated that it was emotionally exhausting for students and families to have a phase-out school in the building.
6. Multiple commenters stated that Chappie James Middle School should be given time to improve.
   a. One commenter stated that Chappie James Middle School had received a "D" on its Progress Report not an "F."
   b. One commenter suggested that the administration of Chappie James Middle School be given more time to reform the school before proposing to phase-out the school.
7. One commenter expressed confusion about how public space would be shared by four schools.
8. One commenter stated that four schools is too many schools for one building.

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

9. One commenter stated that it was insane to repeatedly do the same thing over and over again, but expect different results. He expressed his belief that the proposal to phase-out Chappie James Middle School was insanity.
10. One commenter stated that the science lab in the building is currently not being used by Chappie James Middle School.

The following were questions received during the Question & Answer period.

11. Is there enough space in the building for all four schools next year?
12. Why is this school proposed for being phased out?

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

Comment 1(a), 7, 8, and 11 question whether there is enough room in the building for all four schools.

There will be sufficient space to serve all school organizations in building K183 pursuant to the Citywide Instructional Footprint (the "Footprint"). There are currently hundreds of schools in buildings across the City that are co-located; some of these co-locations involve multiple DOE schools while others are DOE and public charter schools sharing space. In all cases, the allocation of classroom, resource, and administrative space is guided by the Footprint which is applied to all schools in the building.
The DOE seeks to fully utilize all its building capacity to serve students. The DOE does not distinguish between students attending public charter schools and students attending district schools. In all cases, the DOE seeks to provide high quality education and allow parents/students to choose where to attend school.

The Footprint is the guide used to allocate space to all schools based on the number of class sections the school programs 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. 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.

During and after all schools in the building are fully phased in or have completed phasing out, each school will receive its baseline footprint allocation which indicates that there is enough room in the building to support all four schools. There will also be excess space in the building. The Office of Space Planning will work with the Building Council to ensure an equitable allocation of the excess space. In determining an equitable allocation, the Office of Space Planning may consider factors such as the relative enrollments of the co-located schools, the instructional and programmatic needs of the co-located schools, and the physical location of the excess space within the building.

Furthermore, the utilization of K183 is currently 70%. During the first year of the proposed phase out of Chappie James Middle School, the utilization of the building will be between 69%-80%. Once all schools in the building are fully phased in or have completed phasing out, utilization in the building will be between 75%-87%. This means that K183 has adequate capacity to all of the schools in the building and that there will be sufficient space to accommodate an increase in student enrollment if demand is above the current projections for the new school.

Comments 2(b) and 12 concern the rationale behind why Chappie James Middle School is being proposed for phase-out.

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, DOE identifies the most struggling schools for intensive support or intervention.

First, the DOE compiles 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, the DOE applies additional criteria to determine which schools are most in need of support or intervention. The DOE removes 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.

The DOE identifies 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 were 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 – the DOE considers a few key data points:

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

In addition to the investigation, the DOE also had 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 the early engagement meetings at these schools, the DOE had 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, the analysis and engagement directed the DOE 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 the DOE is compelled to act based on 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 the DOE makes. But it is the right thing to do for the students of New York City.

Chappie James Middle School received an overall D grade on its Progress Report in 2011-2012 for the third consecutive year. The school received a "Developing" on its most recent Quality Review in 2011-2012 indicating deficiencies in the way that the school is organized to support student learning. The school was also designated a Priority School by SED in 2012-2013.

As a result, the DOE initiated a comprehensive review of Chappie James Middle School, with the goal of determining what intensive supports and interventions would best benefit its students and the Chappie James Middle School 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.

After completing that review, the DOE believes that only the most serious intervention—the gradual phase-out and eventual closure of Chappie James Middle School—is appropriate given the school's performance struggles and to allow for new school options to develop in K183 that will better serve future students and the broader community.

Comments 2(a), 3(a) and 5(a) concern the emotional impact on students, teachers, and families at Chappie James Middle School.

While DOE knows that phasing out and replacing schools is difficult for the communities involved, DOE takes seriously the obligation to provide high-quality schools for all students. Toward that end, DOE provides support to students in schools that are 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 are 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.

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 DOE does not know exactly what the supports will look like for the 22 proposed phase-outs and 2 proposed truncations that would be implemented beginning in September 2013 if approved, DOE will continue to establish differentiated and deliberate support to those schools and students.

Comments 3(b), 6(a) and 6(b) suggest that Chappie James Middle School was not given enough time or support to reform or turn the school around.

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. DOE does everything to offer struggling schools leadership, operational, instructional, and student supports that can help turn a struggling school around.

To help Chappie James Middle School's efforts to improve performance, the DOE offered numerous supports, including:

Leadership Support:

- Supporting school leadership in aligning curriculum to Citywide instructional expectations to raise standards for teacher practice and student learning.

- Coaching the principal and assistant principals in the use of classroom observations and feedback to enhance teacher effectiveness.
- 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.

Instructional Support:

- Providing coaching to school staff on the infusion of technology into literacy curriculum to enhance teacher practice and increase student engagement in learning.
- Working with teachers to support the development of rigorous math curriculum aligned to Citywide instructional expectations.
- Facilitating professional development in the use of integrated-co-teaching models aimed at improving academic outcomes for students with disabilities.

Operational Support:

- Advising school staff on budgeting, human resources, staff recruitment and building management.
- Assisting the school in developing strategies to increase student attendance by facilitating the school's participation in a Citywide chronic absenteeism initiative.

Student Support:

- Assisting the school in the development of a school safety plan and discipline code, and coaching school staff in best practices for reducing the number of safety incidents and suspensions.
- Supporting the school community in best practices for dealing with difficult behavior patterns and youth development issues such as gang violence, in order to foster awareness and improve the school's culture and learning environment.

Chappie James Middle School has also 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.

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

Comments 4(a) and 4(b) suggest that Chappie James Middle School did not receive enough funding and opening another school would only result in wasting money.

In New York City, DOE funds schools through a per pupil allocation. That is, funding "follows" the students and is weighted based on students' grade level and need (incoming proficiency level and special education/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. Even if the Department of Education had a budget surplus, a school with declining student enrollment would still receive less per pupil funding each year enrollment falls.

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.

New schools receive Fair Student Funding in the same manner as other schools. 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.

Comments 9 and 10 do not directly relate to the proposal and do not require a response.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.