



Revised Notice  
April 27, 2011

Dennis M. Walcott  
Chancellor

## **The Proposed Expansion of the Co-location of Democracy Prep Charter School (84M350) with Existing School P.S. 197 (05M197) John B. Russwurm in Building M197<sup>1</sup>**

### **I. Description of the subject and purpose of the proposed item under consideration.**

On February 18, 2011, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) proposed to extend and expand the co-location of Democracy Prep Charter School (84M350, “Democracy Prep”), an existing public charter school that serves 495 students in grades six through ten and which is currently split-sited between Building M197, located at 2230 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10037 in Community School District 5 (“M197”), and private space located at 207 West 133rd Street, New York, NY 10030, also in Community School District 5. In M197, Democracy Prep is co-located with P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm (“P.S. 197”), an existing DOE zoned elementary school serving grades kindergarten through five, which also offers a pre-kindergarten program. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. The DOE has now published a revised EIS and revised BUP, which is described in detail in Section II below.

**This revised notice also provides information about a joint public hearing that will take place regarding this proposal. The revised proposal will be subject to a vote by the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”). This revised notice also provides a new date and location for the PEP vote.**

When Democracy Prep began its co-location in M197 in 2009-2010 with sixth grade, the DOE committed to re-evaluate the space available in M197 annually to determine if there was sufficient space to enable Democracy Prep to continue co-locating in M197. Democracy Prep currently serves sixth and seventh grades in M197. Under this proposal Democracy Prep would also serve eighth grade in M197 and its grades 6-8 would remain permanently in M197.

P.S. 197 is a zoned district elementary school that serves 357 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and also offers a pre-kindergarten program that enrolls 18 students.

Democracy Prep is an existing public charter school that currently serves students in the sixth through tenth grades. Democracy Prep will add one grade each year until it serves sixth through twelfth grades. If this proposal is approved, Democracy Prep’s current seventh grade students would remain in M197 as eighth graders in 2011-2012, and in the future all Democracy Prep

---

<sup>1</sup> While the DOE is not legally required to issue an EIS in connection with Democracy Prep serving grades 6-8 at M197, the DOE is issuing this EIS in an effort to better notify and inform the M197 community about the use of the M197 building.

students in grades six through eight would be co-located in M197. Democracy Prep's grades nine through twelve would be located in the private space on West 133<sup>rd</sup> Street. Democracy Prep admits students at all grade levels through a lottery and gives preference to students residing in District 5. In 2009-2010, Democracy Prep was the highest rated middle school in New York City on the annual Progress Report.

The M197 building has the capacity to serve 875 students. In 2010-2011, the building only served 594 students, yielding a utilization rate of 68%. Once Democracy Prep has completed its expansion to eighth grade in M197, there would be approximately 645-735 students served in the building by both P.S. 197 and Democracy Prep, yielding a building utilization rate of 74-84%.

## **II. Identification of all revisions, including substantial revisions to the item.**

The revised BUP, which is annexed to the revised EIS, makes the following changes:

- The proposed shared space schedule on page 8 has been adjusted and the DOE has clarified the rationale for the amount of time that each co-located school is allocated in the shared spaces under this proposal.
- The EIS and BUP reflect the potential for facility upgrades to the basement of M197 in order to provide Democracy Prep with its full baseline allocation of space.

The EIS has been updated to reflect the change to the BUP.

## **III. Summary of all public comments received to date.**

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm on March 30, 2011. At the hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 300 members of the public attended the hearing and 41 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Community District 5 Superintendent Gale Reeves; Community Educational Council (CEC) 5 Representatives Ramik Williams, Dianne Johnson and Helena Richardson; P.S. 197 Principal Renardo Wright and School Leadership Team ("SLT") representatives Helena Clay, Antoine Bogard, Cheryel Blue, Stephanie Williams and Lisa Jones; Democracy Prep Charter School Campus Director Elizabeth Greig; and Safiyah Raheem, the Community Liaison for New York City Councilmember Inez E. Dickens.

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

1. CEC 5 representative Ramik Williams expressed his opposition to the proposal and asked the DOE to reconsider their decision.
2. CEC 5 representative Dianne Johnson noted that everyone in the public was there to ensure that all kids are given access to good education.
3. P.S. 197 SLT representative Helena Clay noted that the School Leadership Team has been discussing the co-location proposal and conveyed that ultimately, it is the parents' choice to decide what school they're going to send their children to. She also expressed her concern over perceived inequity in resource allocation and funding in general. For example, she asserted that Democracy Prep gets full access to the music room since P.S. 197's music program was cut due to budget.

4. Democracy Prep Charter School Campus Director Elizabeth Greig noted that P.S. 197 and Democracy Prep have worked well together and expressed excitement about both schools growing. She also pointed out how polite and respectable the commenters were and noted that such is reflective of the relationship between the two schools in the building. She also noted that Democracy Prep tries hard to be accommodating to P.S. 197. For example, to avoid gym schedule conflict, the students from Democracy Prep walk across the building to do mandatory gym in that space and they teach students in hallways, in front of bathrooms and on stairwells.
5. Marjorie Stamberg from the United Federation of Teachers (“UFT”) expressed her opposition to the proposal. She stated that charter schools are private interests that care about business and not education. She also blamed the DOE and the Bloomberg administration for pitting community members against each other.
6. Helena Richardson, the PTA president at P.S. 197, stated that she was proud to see a large turnout at the hearing since ultimately, it should be the parents that make the choices, not the mayor, or the principals or the schools. She also asserted that there is violence at the school.
7. Principal Emmanuel George from Democracy Prep Harlem addressed the misperceived notions regarding charter schools. He mentioned that students with IEPs account for ¼ of the school’s population. Furthermore, he stressed that Democracy Prep schools also use public funds and sharing of space occurs throughout the City.
8. A commenter expressed her opposition to the proposal, asserting that Democracy Prep came into the building and took resources from P.S. 197. She also mentioned that P.S. 197 accepts all students.
9. A commenter addressed previous comment regarding district schools not having lotteries and pointed out that High School Admissions is also a lottery system. She also emphasized the importance of choice in education.
10. A commenter asserted that the co-location has caused the class size at P.S. 197 to go up, citing that in first grade classes, there are 31 students. He also accused the DOE of cutting P.S. 197’s budget twice to make space for Democracy Prep.
11. A commenter noted that since the building is underutilized, if Democracy Prep is not using the building, then another school would take its place; so the best choice is to work with the school that P.S. 197 already has a good relationship with.
12. A commenter expressed her opposition to the proposal, citing that P.S. 197 is an elementary school and that junior high school kids should not share the building with elementary school students.
13. A commenter asserted that P.S. 197 is overcrowded and noted that Democracy Prep’s parent involvement is much larger than P.S. 197’s.
14. Multiple commenters expressed support for the proposed expansion. Reasons given were:
  - a. Democracy Prep’s parents, faculty and students noted that the school;
    - i. Is a safe environment that provides great education for all students.
    - ii. Is a public school that deserves public space.
    - iii. Provides additional choice for the families in the community.
    - iv. Has been a good neighbor to P.S. 197 for the past two years.
    - v. Shares similar vision and values as P.S. 197.
  - b. There is space in Building M197 for the proposed expansion.

- c. Democracy Prep parents, teachers and students addressed the notion that the school does not accept all students, arguing that the charter school accepts students through a lottery process, which does not have application requirements.

**IV. Information regarding where the full text of the proposed item may be obtained.**

The revised EIS and the revised BUP can be found on the Department of Education's Web site: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/May182011Proposals>.

Copies of the revised EIS and revised BUP are also available in the main offices of both Democracy Prep Charter School and P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm.

**V. Submission of public comment.**

Written comments can be sent to [D05Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:D05Proposals@schools.nyc.gov).  
Oral comments can be left at 212-374-3466.

**VI. The name, office, address, email and telephone number of the city district representative, knowledgeable on the item under consideration, from whom information may be obtained concerning the item.**

Name: Yoo Jin Cheong  
Office: Division of Portfolio Planning  
Address: 52 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007  
Email: [D05Proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:D05Proposals@schools.nyc.gov)  
Phone: 212-374-3466

**VII. Date, time and place of joint public hearing for this proposal.**

A joint public hearing regarding the original proposal was held at P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm on March 30, 2011. A full transcript of this hearing can be found here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/manhattan/M197>

An additional joint public hearing will be held to gather further public comment on the revised proposal:

May 16, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.  
P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm / Democracy Prep Charter School  
2230 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York, NY 10037

Questions about the proposal should be directed as indicated in section VI above.

Speaker sign-up will begin 30 minutes before the hearing and will close 15 minutes after the start. Interpretation services will be provided in Spanish. To request interpretation services in another language, please contact Ms. Cheong at the e-mail address or telephone number above.

**VIII. Date, time and place of the Panel for Educational Policy meeting at which the Panel will vote on the proposed item.**

May 18, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.  
Long Island City High School  
14-30 Broadway, Queens, NY 11106