

## **Public Comment Analysis**

Date: June 18, 2013

Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 84 Steinway (30Q084) from a K-8 School to a K-5 School Beginning in 2014-2015

Date of Panel Vote: June 19, 2013

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### **Summary of Proposal**

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to implement a grade truncation of the middle school grades of P.S. 84 Steinway (30Q084, “P.S. 84”). P.S. 84 currently serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade and offers a pre-kindergarten program in building Q084 located at 22-45 41<sup>st</sup> Street, Queens, NY 11105, in Community School District 30 (“District 30”). P.S. 84 is currently the only school located in building Q084.

If this proposal is approved, P.S. 84 will no longer enroll sixth-grade students after the conclusion of the 2013-2014 school year, will no longer serve seventh-grade students following the 2014-2015 school year, and will no longer serve eighth-grade students following the 2015-2016 school year. In 2016-2017 and beyond, P.S. 84 will continue serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade and will continue to offer a pre-kindergarten program (subject to funding and demand). Current students in grades six through eight will be served and supported by the DOE as they progress towards the completion of middle school while remaining enrolled at P.S. 84. Current and future P.S. 84 eighth-grade students will be supported through the Citywide High School Admissions Process as they apply to a high school. In cases where students do not meet promotional requirements and must repeat a grade no longer offered by P.S. 84, they will be served in an alternate District 30 middle school.

P.S. 84 is a zoned elementary school that currently admits kindergarten through fifth-grade students in its zone. It also serves sixth- through eighth-grade students, and gives priority for admission to continuing fifth-grade students. A student’s zoned school is determined by his or her home address. If this proposal is approved and P.S. 84 no longer serves middle school grades, P.S. 84 will continue to admit kindergarten through fifth-grade students in its zone. All P.S. 84 fifth-grade students will enroll in their zoned middle school in 2014-2015 as sixth-grade students or apply to one of the district, borough-wide, or Citywide middle school options.

Currently, fifth grade students attending P.S. 84 who are zoned to I.S. 141 The Steinway (30Q141, “I.S. 141”) for middle school are given priority to I.S. 141 for sixth grade. Similarly, students attending P.S. 84 who are zoned to other District 30 middle schools

are given priority to their respective zoned middle school. P.S. 84 students may also apply to other middle schools within District 30, or they may apply to the borough or Citywide options that are available to District 30 students through the choice process. This will all continue to be true if this proposal is approved.

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to high-quality schools at every stage of their education. The proposed grade truncation, which was developed in collaboration with the school leadership, offers benefits to the students currently in elementary school grades at P.S. 84. The proposal addresses some disadvantages that students may be experiencing while they remain at P.S. 84 for middle school. For example, middle school enrollment is much reduced due to the number of students who currently exercise the option to enter other middle schools in sixth grade. Also, by enrolling in middle schools with a greater breadth of academic offerings, students at P.S. 84 will have more opportunities to take advantage of the enriching, high-school preparatory experiences offered at middle schools.

Finally, changing P.S. 84’s grade span from K-8 to K-5 would reduce the school’s enrollment by approximately 55-85<sup>1</sup> seats, providing additional space that P.S. 84 could use to accommodate additional lower-grade students or to meet other instructional and programming needs.

### **Summary of Comments Received**

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at building Q084 on June 4, 2013. Members of the School Leadership Team (“SLT”) from P.S. 84 and the Community Education Council of District 30 were in attendance. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 12 members of the public attended the hearing and 2 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Chief Portfolio Officer Sara Kaufman; Community Education Council (“CEC”) 30 Members Isaac Carmignani and Michelle Noris; John Buffa, Principal of P.S. 84; SLT Representatives Dominic Armano, Jennifer Casas, Sarah Helton, Nancy Hilario, Anna Tsikitas, and Denise Supon; and Emily Ades from the Division of Portfolio Planning.

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

1. CEC 30 Member Isaac Carmignani expressed CEC 30’s support for the proposed truncation.
  - a. Mr. Carmignani stated that the CEC is in agreement with the school community and defers to their wishes.
2. P.S. 84 Principal John Buffa expressed his support for the proposed truncation.
  - a. Principal Buffa acknowledged the enrollment struggles of the middle school portion of P.S. 84 and stated that the truncation would allow the school to focus more resources on its K-5 program.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on sixth through eighth grade enrollment from the 2012-2013 Audited Register (as of October 26, 2013).

- b. Principal Buffa noted that the low enrollment has also prevented the school from meeting the Middle School students' needs in terms of college and career readiness.
3. SLT Member Jennifer Casas expressed her support for the proposed truncation.
  - a. Ms. Casas stated that the proposed truncation will allow the school to focus on the elementary school and that the intention of adding grades 6-8 was to serve P.S. 84 families and throughout the years, they have not seen as many families remain as they would have liked.

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

The DOE received no written and/or oral comments through its dedicated phone line and e-mail for the proposal.

**The DOE did not receive any comments which do not directly relate to the proposal.**

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

Comments 1(a), 2(a-b) and 3(a) are in favor of the proposal and do not require a response.

### **Changes Made to the Proposal**

No changes were made to the proposal.