



Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 2, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Phase-out of Performance Conservatory High School (12X262)

Date of Panel Vote: February 3, 2011

Summary of Proposal

Performance Conservatory High School (12X262, “Performance Conservatory”) is located in school building X098 (“X098”) located at 1619 Boston Road, Bronx, NY 10460, within the geographical confines of Community School District 12 (“District 12”). It currently serves students in grades nine through twelve. The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to phase out and eventually close Performance Conservatory based on its poor performance and the DOE’s assessment that the school lacks the capacity to turn around quickly to better support student needs.

If the proposal to phase out Performance Conservatory is approved, the school would no longer admit new ninth-grade students after the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school year. Current students would be supported as they progress towards graduation while remaining enrolled in Performance Conservatory. In cases where students do not complete graduation requirements by the June 2014 closure date, the DOE would help students and families identify alternative programs or schools that meet students’ needs so that they may continue their high school education after Performance Conservatory completes phasing out.

Performance Conservatory is currently co-located with Explorations Academy (12X251, “Explorations”) and J.H.S. 098 Herman Ridder (12X098, “J.H.S. 098”). Explorations, an existing school, serves students in grades 9-12. J.H.S 098, an existing school, serves students in grades 6-8. X098 also offers free childcare and support services for student parents through the Living for the Young Family through Education program (“LYFE”).

In 2009-2010, building X098 had a target capacity of 1,678 students, and the building enrolled a total of 1,225 students, yielding a utilization rate of 74%. In 2010-2011, the schools in X098 are projected to enroll 1,290 students, yielding an estimated building utilization rate of 77% of target capacity. Explorations and J.H.S 098 are fully phased in and they will continue operating at their current enrollment levels regardless of whether this proposal is approved.

In addition, in a separate Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) posted on December 20, 2010 and amended on January 27, 2011, the DOE has proposed to co-locate a new 9-12 school, 12X511, in the building. If this co-location proposal is approved, 12X511 would begin phasing in to X098 with a ninth-grade class during the 2011-2012 school year. 12X511 would continue growing to full scale as Performance Conservatory phases out. The proposed new school would complete its expansion during the 2014-2015 school year, at which point it would serve students in grades 9-12. This EIS can be accessed in the main office of each impacted school and on the DOE’s website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/bronx/performance>.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at X098 on January 28, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 14 members of the public attended the hearing, and 2 people spoke. Present at the meeting were: Performance Conservatory School Leadership Team (“SLT”) representatives Sucy Batista and Patricia Delaney; Explorations SLT representative Raul Garcia; J.H.S. 098 SLT representative Elka Rios; Community Education Council (“CEC”) President for District 12 Carmen Taveras; President of the President’s Council for District 12 Wilfredo Pagan; District 12 Community Superintendent Myrna Rodriguez; Network Leader Maria Giacone; Deputy Chancellor Laura Rodriguez; Olivia Ellis from the DOE’s Office for Family Information and Action (“OFIA”); and Paymon Rouhanifard from the DOE’s Division of Portfolio Planning.

The proposal to co-locate 12X511 in X098 was also addressed at this hearing. The analysis of comments concerning that proposal can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/bronx/performance>.

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

1. Carmen Taveras, CEC District 12 President, spoke in favor of the proposal:
 - a. Schools in District 12 are struggling, especially middle and high schools.
 - b. 13% of students in District 12 are either special education students or English Language Learners (“ELL”).
 - c. Special education students have behavioral problems that make it difficult for teachers to teach.
 - d. At the middle school and high school levels, it’s the children who are responsible for their own learning and behavior.
 - e. Children deserve better school options than what they are currently being offered.

2. Wilfredo Pagan, President of the President’s Council for District 12, raised the following questions:
 - a. What are the DOE’s plans for the proposed phase-out of the school?
 - b. How will students benefit?
 - c. What kind of data or information can the DOE provide to parents about the success of some of the schools that have been transformed?
 - d. What social and cultural resources are going to be available for parents to help change the school environment?

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

3. The DOE received a comment concerning all phase-out proposals calling for a moratorium on school closings, which stated that the DOE is the servant of the people and is not acknowledging the community's opposition to these proposals. The commenter suggested a facilitated discussion process which would work towards consensus.

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

Comments 1(a-e) are in favor of this proposal and do not require a response.

With regard to comment 2(a), which concerns the DOE's plan to phase out Performance Conservatory: As discussed in more detail in the EIS describing the proposal to phase out Performance Conservatory, which was posted on December 20, 2010 and amended on January 27, 2011 (available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/bronx/performance>), if the proposal is approved, the school would no longer admit new ninth graders after the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school year, and would serve one grade less each subsequent year until it completes phasing out in June 2014.

Current first time ninth-grade students would complete high school at Performance Conservatory if they continue to earn credits on schedule. These students also have the option to participate in the High School Admissions Process in February 2011 to apply to a different high school for tenth-grade. Those interested in applying to another school for September 2011 should meet with a guidance counselor and submit a New High Schools Choice Form by February 28, 2011. For detailed information on City high schools, please refer to the Directory of New York City Public High Schools, available in print at DOE middle schools and Borough Enrollment Centers or on the DOE's website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Directory/default.htm>.

Current repeat ninth-grade students would complete high school at Performance Conservatory if they earn credits on schedule and pass, at a minimum, their five Regents exams. As the school becomes smaller, these students would receive more individualized attention through graduation to ensure they are receiving the support they need to succeed. Students would also be encouraged to meet with a guidance counselor to review progress toward graduation and consider applying to one of the City's Transfer High Schools. For more information about Transfer High Schools, please visit the following website: www.goingforme.org.

Current tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students who are on track to graduate would complete high school at Performance Conservatory if they continue to earn credits on schedule. As the school becomes smaller, students would receive more individualized attention through graduation to ensure they are receiving the support they need to succeed. Students would also be encouraged to meet with their guidance counselor to discuss all of their options.

Current tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students who are not on track to graduate would be encouraged to meet with a guidance counselor to review progress toward graduation and discuss all of their options. Depending on their age, academic profile, and credit accumulation, some

students may be better served in one of the City’s Transfer High Schools or Young Adult Borough Centers (“YABC”), which have strong track records for helping over-age, under-credited students get back on track toward graduation. In general, however, it is expected that most current Performance Conservatory students would remain enrolled at the school as they progress toward graduation. For more information about these options, please visit the following website: www.goingforme.org.

English Language Learners at Performance Conservatory would continue to receive mandated services as the school phases out. Students with disabilities would also continue to receive mandated services in accordance with their Individualized Education Plans (“IEPs”).

There are no immediate proposed changes to available instructional or extracurricular programs currently offered at Performance Conservatory. That said, the availability of certain offerings at the school would inevitably be impacted as the school phases out, serves an increasingly smaller student population, and eventually closes. It is difficult to predict precisely how those changes might be implemented as decisions would rest with school administrators and would be made based on student interests and available resources.

With respect to academics, Performance Conservatory would continue offering all necessary classes to support current students as they work to meet graduation requirements and earn their high school diplomas. As total enrollment at the school shrinks, the school would likely need to scale back its elective course offerings. Elective courses in the performing arts may be subject to changes as well as the enrollment at the school shrinks. However, it is difficult to predict how those changes might be implemented as decisions would rest with school administrators and be based on student demand as well as staff and budget conditions at the school. As appropriate, the DOE would work with Performance Conservatory to ensure that students continue to have opportunities to pursue elective academic coursework through collaborative offerings with other schools in the building, online coursework, or in partnership with higher education institutions in the City.

During the proposed phase-out, the DOE will build on our past efforts to help the school by:

- Providing teacher training around issues including curriculum planning, improving teacher practices, and tailoring instruction to individual student needs.
- Fostering opportunities for teachers and administrators to connect with colleagues in other more successful schools, allowing them to learn from one another, improve teaching and better support students.
- Facilitating partnerships with community based organizations to support youth development initiatives at the school.

Performance Conservatory has one limited unscreened admissions program in the Performing Arts Interest Area to which students may apply through the High School Admissions Process. Students currently enrolled in that program would continue to have access to the academic classes they need to complete their program requirements. However, as noted above, some elective classes in the program may be eliminated. Please refer to Appendix A in the EIS for a list of schools in the Bronx with programs in the same Interest Area as the Performing Arts

Program at Performance Conservatory:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/bronx/performance>.

Current Performance Conservatory students would continue to have the opportunity to participate in a variety of extracurricular programs as the school phases out, though the specific programs offered may change. Currently, students at Performance Conservatory may participate in the following extracurricular activities: Student Association, Fashion Club, Service Club, Traveling Troup, Knitting Club, Annual Freshman Talent Show, Drama Club, Dance Teams, Peer Tutoring, and Senior Angel's Program. As a performing arts school, the availability of certain extracurricular activities may be impacted as the student enrollment shrinks during the phase-out and as interests and resources change. That same possibility exists for any City student as all schools modify extracurricular offerings annually based on student demand and available resources.

Performance Conservatory currently has partnerships with several community organizations including: Children's Aid Society, Monroe College Jumpstart, College Now, Peer Health Exchange and American Place Theater. Those partnerships would continue to support current students as Performance Conservatory phases out, though it is possible that the nature and scope of those partnerships would change based on shifting needs and resource availability as the school moves toward closure. The DOE would work with Performance Conservatory staff to enhance existing partnerships or develop new partnerships as the school phases out if specific, new student needs emerge during the phase-out period. In addition, the DOE would work with other school organizations in the building to foster opportunities for them to work with the community organizations that have supported Performance Conservatory students in the past.

With regard to comments 2(b-c) concerning the anticipated benefits of the proposed phase-out of Performance Conservatory for future students: The DOE's central goal is 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, since 2003 the DOE has replaced 91 of New York City's lowest-performing schools with better options and opened 474 new schools: 365 district schools and 109 public charter schools. As a result, we've created more high-quality choices for families.

In the Bronx, Evander Childs High School graduated only 30.7% of students in 2002-2003, its final year before phasing out. The new schools on the Evander Childs Campus are getting tremendous results with the same student population, graduating 80.3% of students in 2009-2010. The DOE anticipates that the co-location of the new high school, 12X511, which will strive to set high standards and create a positive learning environment for its students, will offer a similar high quality option for future students and the broader community.

With regard to comment 2(d) related to parental involvement in changing the school environment: Parents have the opportunity to shape a school's culture, create opportunities for their children, and influence school policies through the School Leadership Team. Every school has a School Leadership Team which is comprised of instructional and non-instructional school personnel as well as parents and members of the community. The School Leadership Team

advises and assists in the development of the educational programs and in preparation and evaluation of any improvement plans for the school. This allows parents to be directly involved in setting priorities and making decisions that will impact their children's future.

Another way parents can actively participate in their children's schools is through the Parent-Teacher Association ("PTA"). Parent-Teacher Associations are school-based organizations open to all parents of children attending New York City public schools. Pursuant to the Chancellor's Regulation A-660 (available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/493A12F9-FC9F-4567-B820-096AB3D55427/81684/A660FINAL.pdf>), the PTA's responsibilities include electing parent members to serve on the School Leadership Team and Community Education Councils. The PTA is an excellent way for parents to be involved in school life and supporting school activities.

With regard to comment 3, the central goal of the Children First reforms is 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, since 2003 New York City has replaced 91 of our lowest-performing schools with better options and opened 474 new schools: 365 district schools and 109 public charter schools. As a result, we've created more high-quality choices for families.

Based on feedback from communities in 2009 and 2010, the DOE made improvements to its timeline and process for communicating with schools and families early and often throughout the investigation and decision making process. This year, we talked to school leadership, parents, SLTs, CECs, elected officials, and local CBOs about our ideas about how to improve struggling schools. We convened these meetings to discuss our proposals and to hear feedback and new ideas.

The Department developed and distributed "Fact Sheets" for each school we talked with. These fact sheets described proposals, the rationale behind them, included relevant data, and provided clear instructions for how to offer feedback. They were posted on our website and distributed at meetings.

When we announced the Department's recommendation to propose the school for phase out, dedicated teams of educators and engagement specialists spent several days back in these schools meeting with teachers, parents, and students.

In January, Joint Public Hearings were held for all proposals and public feedback was collected at these meetings and through dedicated email and phone numbers. The Department's analysis of public comment is contained in this document.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal as a result of public comment.