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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF  
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**  
**Grade reconfiguration of 09X126 (K-6  
to K-5) - 1/3/13**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MS. MEG BARBOZA: Hi, good evening ladies  
3 and gentlemen. I apologize for my tardiness. I  
4 know we're going to get started right here at 6  
5 o'clock. This is the joint public hearing for  
6 the proposed truncation of PS126, Dr. Marjorie  
7 H. Dunbar to a K to 5 school in 2013-2014. I do  
8 have representatives from the CEC here. Am I to  
9 understand that you would like to participate on  
10 the dais or do you prefer not to? Okay,  
11 fantastic. So I will be joined Miss Marilyn  
12 Espada from CEC9, CCHS--anybody? No? How about  
13 my school leadership team members? All right.  
14 Would you also like to provide a statement on  
15 the dais and participate in the hearing in that  
16 manner? Okay. That would be fantastic--so not  
17 a problem. I'm going to go ahead and read the  
18 summary of the proposal. We'll move onto the  
19 SLT introductions and the CEC introductions and  
20 statements, and then we'll move onto the public  
21 comment portion of the hearing.

22 [background noise]

23 MS. BARBOZA: Oh, yes, please. Do you want  
24 to make the--would you be able to make the  
25 announcement? Anybody want to make the

1 announcement? There you go.

2 INTERPRETER: [foreign language]

3 MS. BARBOZA: Thank you so much. I  
4 appreciate that. It's just a little after 6  
5 o'clock. I believe it is 6:02, and I wanted to  
6 note that we will have public comment open until  
7 approximately 6:17, so if you feel that you  
8 would like to give a statement, you haven't  
9 signed up yet, I just wanted to let you know  
10 that that deadline would be 6:17 P.M. Okay.  
11 Good evening. This is a joint public hearing of  
12 the Department of Education, Community Education  
13 Council District 9, and the School Leadership  
14 Team for PS126, regarding the proposed grade  
15 truncation of PS126, Dr. Marjorie H. Dunbar,  
16 09X126, to a K to 5 school in 2013-2014. My  
17 name is Meg Barboza and I am with the Office of  
18 Portfolio Planning. Hi, how are you? We have a  
19 couple of folks additionally joining us. Are  
20 you with the School Leadership Team? You're the  
21 principal? Oh, it's a pleasure to meet you.  
22 How are you? So nice to meet you. My first  
23 time. Hi, how are you?

24 [background noise]

25 MS. BARBOZA: Pleasure. Oh, I saw you

1 today--how are you, sir? How are you? Nice to  
2 see you again.

3 FEMALE VOICE 1: Did we get started already?

4 MS. BARBOZA: Yes, we just actually got  
5 started. Would you also like to join as part of  
6 the SLT and provide a statement? Oh, fantastic.  
7 Okay.

8 [background noise]

9 MS. BARBOZA: We have asked the District 9  
10 Community Education Council and the School  
11 Leadership Team here in building X126 to  
12 participate in this joint public hearing. I am  
13 going to allow our SLT and CEC representatives  
14 to introduce themselves because I happen to be  
15 terrible with names, so here we go.

16 [background noise]

17 MS. ANDREA RANKIN: Good evening everyone  
18 and welcome. Welcome to PS126 this evening. We  
19 are embarking on a new initiative. As you know,  
20 for the past three years we've been working with  
21 our sixth graders. Let me just back up a little  
22 bit. My name is Mrs. Rankin. I'm a third grade  
23 teacher and I'm also the chair of the School  
24 Leadership Team. Welcome. Our sixth graders--  
25 we have for the past three years, again, have

1       been trying to keep them here and hold them  
2       here and now we have realized that it's time to  
3       let them go, so that our staff here tonight will  
4       be informing you of what will take place for the  
5       truncation for the year 2012-2013, and our fifth  
6       and sixth graders will be graduating. You want  
7       to talk about--I will introduce the rest of the  
8       School Leadership Team. Mrs. Felty [phonetic],  
9       Miss Pena--come up. Come up. Come on up. Come  
10      on up. Mr. Brown, our PA president--we're the  
11      School Leadership Team. A few are missing, but  
12      we're the School Leadership Team, and we work as  
13      the umbrella of PS126. So again, we thank you  
14      for coming out and our office of staff will  
15      speak to you in reference to the truncation of  
16      PS126, our sixth graders. Thank you. Mr. Henry  
17      [phonetic], and Mr. Murna [phonetic].

18           MS. NADINE FOSTER: Thank you. Thank you,  
19      Miss Rankin. Thank you, Miss Rankin. Just want  
20      to again take this opportunity to welcome  
21      everyone here tonight to the joint public  
22      hearing for the truncation of PS126 from a pre-K  
23      to 6 school to a pre-K to 5 school, and as Miss  
24      Rankin stated earlier, this has been an  
25      initiative that the Office of Portfolio Planning

1 has been trying to implement for the past four  
2 or five years, and the staff and the community  
3 of PS126 have always felt a sense of reluctance  
4 because there are no middle schools in close  
5 proximity to PS126 and therefore when our boys  
6 and girls had to leave, they had to travel quite  
7 a distance, and so safety was one of our main  
8 concerns. But as you now know, a middle school  
9 is being built right across the street. I'm not  
10 sure the number of the school--it's opening in  
11 September. A percentage of students at PS126  
12 have been guaranteed seats. Those are our fifth  
13 graders going to sixth grade will be guaranteed  
14 a certain number of seats at the new middle  
15 school. Our fifth and sixth graders presently,  
16 under the guidance of our guidance counselors,  
17 have been participating in the middle school  
18 choice application process and so they are  
19 prepared and we are preparing them and their  
20 families for leaving PS126 at the end of this  
21 school year so we welcome all of you again.  
22 Hope everyone had a happy new year and we look  
23 forward to your comments. Thank you for coming.

24 MS. BARBOZA: Thank you, again. I do want  
25 to give a brief overview of the proposal and I

1 did want to note that this hearing is being  
2 recorded tonight and a transcript will be  
3 available. If you'd like to receive one, feel  
4 free to contact my office. The purpose of this  
5 hearing is for you to provide comments about the  
6 proposed truncation of PS126. Before I describe  
7 the proposal, I want to make sure that you are  
8 all aware of the opportunity to provide your  
9 input. All those who wish to speak, again, must  
10 sign up in the speaker signup area located just  
11 outside the auditorium. My colleague, Mira, is  
12 manning that table. Again, we began at 6:02 so  
13 that will be open for approximately another 10  
14 or so minutes--a bit longer than that. The  
15 sign-in list will close shortly thereafter.  
16 Speakers will be given the floor in the order  
17 that they signed up, and all comments are  
18 limited to two minutes. There may be elected  
19 officials who arrive at different times  
20 throughout the evening and if they wish to  
21 speak, we'll do our best to accommodate them at  
22 the first opportune moment. Those who are here  
23 at the start of the public comment segment will  
24 be asked to speak first. All comments will be  
25 mentioned in the analysis of public comment

1 which will be published, posted on the DOE  
2 website and provided to the members of the Panel  
3 for Educational Policy before the panel vote.  
4 That vote is scheduled for January 16th, 2013--I  
5 pulled it up here. It will be at the High  
6 School for Fashion Industries which is located  
7 at 225 West 24th Street in Manhattan, 10011.  
8 Again, that is 225 West 24th Street, New York,  
9 NY, 10011, and that's at the High School for  
10 Fashion Industries. In addition to the comment  
11 at tonight's hearing, we welcome any comments or  
12 feedback you may have at any time before the  
13 panel votes on this proposal. The email address  
14 and phone number where comments may be made, and  
15 I will spell this out for you, is D09proposals,  
16 that's D as in dog, 09, P-R-O-P-O-S-A-L-  
17 S@schools.nyc.gov, and that telephone number is  
18 (212) 374-5159. We'll go through the proposal  
19 summary. PS126, Dr. Marjorie H. Dunbar, is an  
20 existing zoned elementary school located in  
21 building X126 at 175 West 166th Street, Bronx,  
22 New York, 10452 in Community School District 9.  
23 It currently serves students in kindergarten  
24 through sixth grade and offers a full day pre-  
25 kindergarten program. PS126 is currently the

1 only school located in building X126. This is  
2 a proposal to implement a grade truncation,  
3 meaning that the school will no longer enroll  
4 sixth graders after the current 2012-2013 school  
5 year. If the proposal is approved, at the close  
6 of the 2012-2013 school year, all fifth and  
7 sixth grade students who meet promotional  
8 standards will graduate from PS126. During the  
9 2012-2013 school year, PS126 fifth and sixth  
10 grade students will participate in the Districts  
11 9 and 10 middle school process. In September  
12 2013, PS126 current fifth and sixth grade  
13 students will enter middle school elsewhere as  
14 sixth and seventh graders, respectively.  
15 Beginning in September 2013, PS126 will only  
16 serve students in kindergarten through fifth  
17 graders and will continue to offer the pre-  
18 kindergarten program as subject to funding and  
19 demand. If a PS126 grade student does not meet  
20 the promotional standards at the conclusion of  
21 the 2012-2013 school year and is required to  
22 repeat the grade in the 2013-2014 school year,  
23 the DOE will seek to place that student in sixth  
24 grade at the same middle school to which he or  
25 she had been matched for seventh grade through

1 the middle school choice process. If such  
2 placement is not feasible, then the DOE will  
3 find an alternate District 9 or District 10  
4 placement for that student. Middle schools  
5 typically enroll students beginning in sixth  
6 grade and PS126 students have the option to  
7 apply to middle school as fifth graders.  
8 However, PS126 students who wait until sixth  
9 grade to apply to middle school are limited to  
10 those schools that still have available seventh  
11 grade seats. There are several middle schools  
12 in Districts 9 and 10 that rarely have seventh  
13 grade seats open because those seats become  
14 available only if sixth grade students leave the  
15 school. As a result, students who remain at  
16 PS126 through sixth grade have fewer options  
17 than their peers who start middle school a year  
18 earlier. The New York City Department of  
19 Education strives to ensure that all students in  
20 New York City have access to high quality  
21 schools at every stage of their education.  
22 Having elementary schools that end in different  
23 grades creates unequal levels of access to  
24 middle schools for students based simply on the  
25 year that they exit the elementary school. This

1 proposed grade truncation will help  
2 standardize middle school application and entry  
3 grades in District 9, giving all PS126 students  
4 access to the same range of middle school  
5 options as their peers throughout the district.  
6 Additionally, having students start in middle  
7 school through multiple entry grades such as  
8 sixth and seventh creates challenges for  
9 students and the school as a whole. PS126  
10 students who start middle school in seventh  
11 grade may face transitional challenges related  
12 to entering middle school a year later than most  
13 of their classmates. They remain in their new  
14 middle school for only two years before moving  
15 onto a new school, leaving them with less time  
16 to adjust to a new school environment and new  
17 academic expectations before facing another  
18 transition and adjustment. Multiple transitions  
19 in such close succession can have the effect of  
20 depersonalizing the school experience at a time  
21 when adolescents need the most personal and  
22 supportive environments. Having students enter  
23 in multiple years is also challenging for middle  
24 school teachers and leadership from an  
25 instructional perspective. Changing PS126's

1 grade span from K to 6 to K to 5 will reduce  
2 the school's enrollment by approximately 20 to  
3 80 students, freeing up additional space at  
4 PS126 that could be used to accommodate  
5 additional lower grade students or to meet other  
6 needs. In addition to this proposal, the  
7 Department of Education anticipates opening--as  
8 we heard earlier--a new middle school in  
9 District 9's Highbridge neighborhood in  
10 September 2013. This new school would be housed  
11 in building X285, which is new construction  
12 being built at 200 West 176th Street,  
13 approximately 0.3 miles away from PS126. This  
14 new middle school admits students via the  
15 District 9 and 10 middle school choice  
16 processes, giving priority to students from  
17 several Highbridge-area elementary schools  
18 including PS126, thereby providing a new option  
19 for students who would have otherwise attended  
20 sixth grade at PS126. The new middle school  
21 will begin to serve sixth grade students in  
22 2013-2014, and scale up one grade per year until  
23 it serves students in grades six to eight in the  
24 2015-2016 school year. This building, building  
25 X285, has an estimated capacity of 391 students.

1 The Department of Education is confident that  
2 this proposal will help enable students from  
3 PS126 to have a more fulfilling middle school  
4 experience. We already heard a bit from the  
5 SLT, so I will certainly invite them--I'll pass  
6 the mike, and if you would like to give any  
7 additional comments as this time, as well as  
8 Miss Espada, the CEC representative.

9 MS. MARILYN ESPADA: So does anybody have  
10 any questions? Everybody's clear? Hi, I'm  
11 Marilyn Espada. I'm the CEC 9 president. I  
12 want to thank everybody for coming. I actually  
13 have a question. You just stated something  
14 about it accommodating students from District 9  
15 and 10, because I just sat--myself and my first  
16 vice - - we just sat on a Highbridge committee  
17 where we interviewed two principals and there  
18 was nothing mentioned about accommodating  
19 students from District 10. This was supposed to  
20 be a community school.

21 MS. BARBOZA: Thank you so much for your  
22 question. I'm just going to reread the portion  
23 I believe that Marilyn is referring to, and  
24 Henry, who developed this proposal, worked very  
25 closely on this, is going to talk a little bit

1 more in detail. I believe you're referring to  
2 the new middle school admits students via the  
3 Districts 9 and 10 middle school choice process,  
4 giving priority to students from several  
5 Highbridge-area elementary schools including  
6 PS126, so Henry's going to talk about that in a  
7 little more detail here.

8 MR. HENRY SMITH: Sure. So my name's Henry  
9 Smith; I'm here with the Office of Portfolio  
10 Management. To answer your question, the middle  
11 school--the new middle school will accept  
12 students through the choice process, okay? And  
13 in District 9, all that is shared--every choice  
14 school is open to both District 9 and District  
15 10 students, so they have a unified choice  
16 process called the District 9 and 10 choice  
17 process. But within that, the new middle  
18 school, there will be priority given to students  
19 who are attending one of the four nearby  
20 Highbridge elementary schools, so while District  
21 10 students can apply and can rank the new  
22 middle school on their application, unless there  
23 are fewer applicants from within the Highbridge  
24 area, those students would not be admitted to  
25 the new middle school. So to clarify, while

1 it's part of the choice process, as a result  
2 of the priority given to students from PS126,  
3 73, 114 and PS11, our expectation is that there  
4 will be so many applicants from those nearby  
5 elementary schools, that you will see few if any  
6 District 10 students winding up in the new  
7 middle school.

8 MS. BARBOZA: Thank you so much, Henry. So  
9 we had heard from the principal, SLT members, as  
10 well as Miss Espada from the CEC. I am aware  
11 that public comment, signup for public comment  
12 has closed. We did not have any speakers signed  
13 up. If there are any questions, I'm happy--  
14 Henry and I are happy to take any of those,  
15 anything about what we've presented today,  
16 anything about the meeting, the panel meeting,  
17 the vote on this particular proposal. Mr.  
18 Powell, may I bring the mike to you? Thank you.  
19 Nice to see you.

20 MR. ROBERT POWELL: Likewise. I just have  
21 one simple question--I understand that once you  
22 migrate the students over to the new school, the  
23 sixth graders, that you'll have 20 to 80 seats  
24 here, and what happens if you don't fill those  
25 20 to 80 seats? Does this school become an

1 under populated school?

2 MS. BARBOZA: So Mr. Powell had asked if--  
3 sorry, I feel like Oprah here--1987. Mr. Powell  
4 asked--there would be a reduction if the  
5 students were to migrate over, we anticipate the  
6 reduction in the number of seats, approximately  
7 between 20 and 80 students, and he asked would  
8 this now--if I understand you correctly--would  
9 this now, this school be understood to be  
10 underutilized. In terms of the underutilization  
11 rates that are--the Department of Education  
12 every year does a survey of all the schools and  
13 looks at what their enrollment is relative to  
14 the space available in the building, and schools  
15 that have a specific number of seats, and I  
16 believe that is, Henry, if I'm not mistaken, 199  
17 to 350 seats--is that, Mira? 150 to 300--I'm  
18 sorry, got my numbers mixed up. We consider  
19 those buildings to be underutilized buildings in  
20 which there is a potential either for  
21 potentially for the school to expand within  
22 those boundaries or for the space to be used  
23 more efficiently, whether that would be placing  
24 another organization, co-locating it within the  
25 building. However, between 20 and 80 seats is

1 much less, is far below that 150 threshold  
2 that is typically understood as underutilized  
3 space, so although we cannot necessarily say  
4 what happens to the space in the building, what  
5 we do say is that it could potentially be used  
6 to take in more students at the lower grade  
7 levels or find another use for the building, but  
8 it would not qualify as one of the schools on  
9 our underutilized list which again, is 150 to  
10 300 additional available or open seats in the  
11 building. And Henry would like to also clarify.

12 MR. SMITH: Yeah, and so just to piggyback  
13 off that, there were some heads turned when we  
14 noted that there could be as few as 20 fewer  
15 students in the school as a result. One thing  
16 to note is that I think maybe by virtue of  
17 residential trends, the kindergarten and first  
18 grade here is currently bigger than the third  
19 and fourth grades, so as those larger graders  
20 articulate up, and we're expecting that to be  
21 the norm--the incoming kindergarten has been  
22 growing for I think four out of the past five  
23 years now--once those grades articulate up,  
24 you'll wind up seeing pretty much the same  
25 number of students in the building, so in the

1 educational impact statement, it says that  
2 we're right at about 79% right now and that as a  
3 result of this change, the range would be from  
4 71% to 78% utilization in the building, but our  
5 expectation is that as the larger grades  
6 articulate up, you'll see a relatively small  
7 change in the actual number of students who are  
8 in the building.

9 MS. BARBOZA: Sure.

10 MS. RANKIN: In our meetings, in our School  
11 Leadership Team meetings, parents have voiced  
12 their opinion about the men's shelter which is  
13 in that area of the middle school. Two  
14 questions, and the second one is, will the  
15 middle school timeframe of when they let out be  
16 different from the elementary school? Because  
17 we get out at 2:50 or 3:40 opposed to their  
18 time--so those two questions.

19 MS. BARBOZA: Henry, did you want to--

20 MR. SMITH: I can't speak so much to when  
21 the middle school will let out. I know that a  
22 lot of those decisions are made by school  
23 leadership teams and so once a new leader has  
24 been selected for that new middle school, which  
25 is X285, by the way, is the building number,

1 once a new leader is selected they'll have a  
2 better sense of let out times and the schedule.  
3 The men's shelter piece was raised by the School  
4 Leadership Team here at PS126, and that is that  
5 located across the street from the new school  
6 location, there is currently a men's shelter  
7 that houses adult men with mental illnesses.  
8 And so we did some research into how appropriate  
9 it is to have that shelter located so near to  
10 the middle school. There's no legal regulation  
11 that would force the school to move so it is our  
12 expectation in September of 2013 when the new  
13 middle school opens, we expect that the men's  
14 shelter will be there. But we're also very  
15 confident that there are sufficient safety  
16 precautions and with good planning that there  
17 will be no risk and there will be no safety  
18 concern, and so some specifics on that are each  
19 year the school safety division and the heads of  
20 school safety meet with the NYPD and they  
21 identify school sites that have specific  
22 concerns. You know, there's a broad plan that's  
23 taken for all schools but really some sites  
24 warrant individualized attention, and so this  
25 new site, X285, is on their list, and it will be

1 discussed in that meeting which will take  
2 place at the end of this school year and so over  
3 the summer they'll hammer out a specific safety  
4 plan that is likely to include maybe having  
5 extra security agents during pickup and drop-off  
6 times, carving out good lines of sight to  
7 transportation hubs, things like that. They  
8 will sit down with NYPD and they'll iron those  
9 plans out specifically. I think it's also worth  
10 noting that there are other schools in the city  
11 that are in a similar position, located near  
12 men's shelters, so this isn't anything  
13 unprecedented--specifically, in Manhattan you  
14 have PS11 in Chelsea and PS1 in Chinatown are  
15 both located sort of similarly down the block,  
16 around the corner from shelters, and so they  
17 have their own individualized security plans and  
18 there have been no issues reported from those  
19 two schools, so I think it was important that  
20 the School Leadership Team here raised that  
21 issue and we've looked into it--school security,  
22 school safety is well aware of the issue, and as  
23 I say, I think that we don't foresee it being  
24 any issue in terms of security or safety of the  
25 children when the school opens up next year.

1 MS. BARBOZA: Any final questions,  
2 concerns or thoughts before we wrap up? One  
3 more, sure. Absolutely, Mr. Powell. Not a  
4 problem. You have a great projection.

5 [background noise]

6 MS. BARBOZA: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.  
7 I go into my mode, here.

8 MS. ROSALIE PENA: December--in December,  
9 when we were aware of the--for this date, we did  
10 send out a letter to parents; we posted a  
11 poster-sized in the entrances, and as of early  
12 this week we sent out another reminder letter.  
13 We've made announcements over the loudspeakers  
14 in the morning, but as of this week parents were  
15 given a reminder letter of this year.

16 [background noise]

17 MR. WILLIAM BROWN: Actually, in December,  
18 at my December meeting, all the parents were  
19 notified about the meeting verbally and we gave  
20 out the pamphlets. We gave out pamphlets  
21 yesterday. We gave them out before the  
22 vacation. It was on the calendar, so they're  
23 well aware of today's meeting.

24 MS. BARBOZA: I saw the posters coming in  
25 and I appreciate that effort. That's an

1 excellent idea. So we have now concluded the  
2 formal presentations. Any--did you for a follow  
3 up? And then again, I noted that we do not have  
4 any public comments aside from the ones that we  
5 heard, the questions and concerns voiced here,  
6 so I will note that the speaker list is not  
7 really there, but we've certainly come to the  
8 end, and I did want to again remind everybody  
9 that you can and certainly for parents who  
10 weren't able to make it, parents who maybe don't  
11 speak English, certainly feel free to give a  
12 call to our telephone number, (212) 374-5159.  
13 You can leave a comment anytime day or night,  
14 any language--if it happens to be one we don't  
15 speak, we have one of our translators come on in  
16 and listen to it and transcribe it for us. We  
17 also have a dedicated email for this, which  
18 again is D09proposals,  
19 D09proposals@schools.nyc.gov, and one more time,  
20 that telephone number is (212) 374-5159. Again,  
21 you can continue to submit any comments or  
22 feedback you may have any time before the Panel  
23 for Educational Policy votes on this proposal on  
24 January 16th. I'm just going to--D zero 9,  
25 thank you very much, that is correct.

1 D09proposals@schools.nyc.gov--I appreciate  
2 that clarification. We anticipate that the  
3 Panel for Educational Policy will vote on this  
4 and other proposals at the January 16th meeting.  
5 Again, that's being held at the High School for  
6 Fashion Industries which is located at 225 West  
7 24th Street, New York, New York, 10011. Thank  
8 you for your participation, and we're going to  
9 conclude the hearing. Thank you very much.

10 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

The prior proceedings were transcribed from audio files and have been transcribed to the best of my ability.

Signature 

Date January 7, 2013