



Public Comment Analysis

Date: February 2, 2011

Topic: The Proposed Co-Location of New High School 27Q351 with Beach Channel High School (27Q410), Channel View School for Research (27Q262), Rockaway Park High School for Environmental Sustainability (27Q324), and a District 75 School (75Q256) in School Building Q410

Date of Panel Vote: February 3, 2011

Summary of Proposal

The New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) is proposing to co-locate a new high school, 27Q351, in school building Q410 (“Q410”), located at 100-00 Beach Channel Drive, Queens, NY 11694, within the geographical confines of Community School District 27 (“District 27”). The school would have a Limited Unscreened admissions policy and would be open to all New York City residents with priority for Queens residents.

If this proposal is approved, 27Q351 would be co-located with Beach Channel High School (27Q410), Channel View School for Research (27Q262, “Channel View”), Rockaway Park High School for Environmental Sustainability (27Q324, “RPHSES”), and a District 75 Special Education Teacher Support Services (“SETSS”) school (75Q256, “P256”). In addition, a Living for the Young Family through Education (“LYFE”) program is also located in Q410 which provides free childcare and support services for student parents. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and cafeterias.

In a separate Educational Impact Statement (EIS), posted on December 13, 2010 and amended on January 12, 2011, the DOE also proposed to phase-out Beach Channel High School after an extensive review of data and community feedback indicating that the school is unable to turn around despite numerous efforts to improve instruction and school organization. These proposals can be obtained in the main office of the school or found on the DOE website:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2010-2011/Feb32011Proposals>.

In the event that the phase-out of Beach Channel High School is not approved, the DOE would re-examine the availability of space in the building, and may, as appropriate, revise its proposal to co-locate 27Q351 in building Q410. Such a proposal would be described in a separate EIS. However, given the underutilization in Q410, the proposal to site 27Q351 is not contingent on the proposal to phase-out Beach Channel High School.

Last year, the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) voted to phase-out Beach Channel High School based on evidence that the school was unable to improve student performance significantly; however, a lawsuit prevented the DOE from following through with those plans. The DOE recently conducted another comprehensive review of the school and concluded that only the most serious intervention—the gradual phase-out and closure of Beach Channel High School—would address the school’s longstanding performance struggles and allow for the development of new school options in the building.

Over the last few years, the number of students enrolled at Beach Channel High School has declined, suggesting that students and families are seeking options outside of the borough that are better matched to their interests and needs. Using under-utilized space in building Q410 to open a new high school in Queens would expand the range of school options available to students and families, and, in the long-run, would increase the number of students from local neighborhoods who apply to attend school in the Q410 building.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at Beach Channel High School on January 13, 2011. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 80 members of the public attended the hearing, 14 people offered comments on the proposal, and 9 questions were submitted. Present at the meeting were Beach Channel School Leadership Team (“SLT”) members David Pecoraro and April Wallach; Channel View SLT member Craig Dorsi, Community Education Council (“CEC”) 27 representative Charlyene Blunt; Citywide Council on High Schools (“CCHS”) representatives Martin Krongold and Monica Ayuso; High School Superintendent Juan Mendez; Deputy Chancellor Shael Suransky; Anthony Conelli of the Division of School Support and Instruction; Keith Dumanski from Assemblywoman Audrey Pheffer’s office; Assembly District Leader Lew Simon; and Ciara Donley from Council member Eric Ulrich’s office.

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

1. Beach Channel SLT Member David S. Pecorara stated his belief that the hearing was null and void for being in violation of Chancellor’s Regulation A-660, because a public notice for the hearing was sent out in Spanish only two days previously, not ten days in advance.
2. Beach Channel SLT Member David S. Pecorara and several other commenters stated concerns about the make-up of the student population and teaching staff at new schools in the building and in the area to replace phase-outs. Specifically, they said:
 - a. The new schools do not serve the same population as the students currently attending Beach Channel.
 - b. Any additional new schools in the building will not have seats for the types of students that have attended Beach Channel in the past.
 - c. Beach Channel has taken in a number of students with high needs over the past several years and these students will not be served by the new schools.

- d. The new schools in the area do not have staffs that reflect the demographics of their students – they are mostly non-minority and it is important that students have role models.
 - e. Many teachers in new schools are not as experienced and as qualified which can be a detriment to both the ongoing learning of the whole staff as well as being able to relay historical knowledge to students.
3. Citywide Council on High Schools Representative Martin Krongold stated that students left behind due to the phase out should get priority in the admission process for new school options.
 4. Multiple commenters expressed concern that closing down new schools coupled with opening new schools exacerbates segregation in the school system.
 5. One commentator stated that the money being used to bring in the new school should be used to fix Beach Channel High School instead.
 6. An attendee asked why there was no representation from the District Leadership Team (“DLT”) or CEC from District 27.

The DOE received a comment at the Joint Public Hearing which did not directly relate to the proposal.

1. Beach Channel SLT Member David S. Pecoraro questioned the DOE’s progress report and utilization rate methodology. He also expressed his displeasure with the high school superintendent in attendance.
2. One commenter stated that the DOE should be ashamed of itself for destroying schools in New York City and taking away resources.
3. One commenter expressed his disappointment that the Superintendent did not follow up on a meeting to tour the school with the commenter.
4. One commenter mentioned the qualifications for schools Chancellor.

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

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

With regard to comment 1, Chancellor’s Regulation A-660 does not require that translated materials be provided ten days prior to a public meeting. Chancellor’s Regulation A-660 sets forth the basic rights and responsibilities for parent associations and presidents’ counsels. The notice requirements for meetings under Chancellor’s Regulation A-660 apply to parent association meetings and not to Joint Public Hearings concerning significant changes in school utilization, which are governed by Chancellor’s Regulation A-190.

With regard to comments 2(a, b and c), which question the types of students the new schools will serve on the Beach Channel campus. Beach Channel currently serves a high-need population: 20% of students require special education services and 10% are English Language Learners. While it is impossible to predict these percentages for the new schools in the building, the DOE expects that these schools will serve similar high-needs populations and the new school leaders have planned their schools accordingly. New School 27Q351 will have a Limited Unscreened admissions policy. Limited Unscreened programs give priority to students who demonstrate

interest in the school by attending a school's information session or Open House events or by visiting the school's exhibit at any one of the High School Fairs. Students must sign in at these events to be granted priority admission to the school's program. If this proposal is approved, 27Q351 will be listed in the New Schools Directory that will provide additional information about the school.

High school students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are matched to the same school they would have attended if they were not disabled. Schools are expected to create programs that meet the needs of all students, ensuring greater exposure to a general education curriculum. Therefore, placement for students with IEPs is the same process as described above.

Improving services to high-needs students is a key element in the creation of new, small schools. Overall, there is every expectation that over the course of their development and growth, the new schools will become integral parts of the Beach Channel community and respond to the particular academic, social and extra-curricular needs of local students. In addition, there are a number of new schools that opened in 2010 which would continue to serve as options if the proposal to phase out Beach Channel is approved. Schools in Queens that are currently phasing in include, Rockaway Park High School for Environmental Sustainability, Hillside Arts & Letters Academy, High School for Community Leadership, Queens Metropolitan High School, and Cambria Heights Academy.

With regard to comment 2(d and e), new schools are empowered to hire the highest quality staff members whom the principal determines will best meet the academic, social and emotional needs of the school's anticipated incoming students and in accordance with the DOE's equal opportunity policy.

With regard to comment 3, students currently enrolled in Beach Channel will continue as part of the school as it phases out and will have the opportunity to graduate assuming they continue to earn credits on schedule.

Current 9th grade students at Beach Channel will also have the opportunity to apply to a different school for the 10th grade through the High School Admissions Process. High School admissions applications were due December 3, 2010. Current ninth-grade students at Beach Channel High School may have already taken part in this process. If this proposal is approved in February 2011, there is another opportunity for current ninth-grade students to participate in the High School Admissions Process.

Those interested in applying to attend a different school as a tenth grader in September 2011 should meet with a guidance counselor. In early February, a new high school application called the New High Schools Choice Form will be available. These students should submit a New High Schools Choice Form to their guidance counselor by February 28, 2011. Students may receive a match as part of the Main Round of the Admissions process.

If approved, the new school proposed to replace the seats lost at Beach Channel will accept incoming 9th graders in September 2011. While entry to 27Q351 would not be limited to District 27 students, 27Q351 would provide another option to students and families who live in the community. The new school would serve students from throughout the City, giving priority to those students who live in Queens.

With regard to comment 4, questioning the racial composition of new, small schools: the DOE strives to create a system of great schools. To accomplish this goal, the DOE has replaced 91 of the lowest-performing schools with better options and opened 474 new schools. Of the 474, 365 are traditional public schools and 109 are public charter schools. Overall, the vast majority of new high schools have unscreened admissions policies and are serving students with disabilities and English Language Learners at higher rates than schools citywide.

Again, Limited Unscreened programs give priority to students who demonstrate interest in the school by attending a school's information session or Open House events or by visiting the school's exhibit at any one of the High School Fairs. Students must sign in at these events to be granted priority admission to the school's program. Students are admitted to schools without regard to race.

The new schools at Beach Channel will be "limited unscreened" admissions, meaning that all students are eligible to apply, but priority is given to those who attend an Information Session or Open House event. Across the city, students are assigned to schools through the high school admissions process without regard to race.

With regard to comment 5, questioning the use of funding to establish a new school instead of using it to improve Beach Channel: Small schools are funded in the same manner as our other schools – funding follows a student and is based on student need (ELL, Special Education, below standards, etc). While it is true that new schools receive start up funding, the start-up funding they receive is an average of \$30,000 per year over the first five years for an elementary or middle school and \$34,000 for a high school. These amounts are smaller than the salary of a first year teacher and the DOE does not believe that this amount of funding would be sufficient to support the type of significant turn-around required at Beach Channel.

With regard to comment 6, about the participation of D27 CEC and DLT, Paymon Rouhanifard clarified at the hearing that the CEC agreed to this meeting date and was invited to participated. It came to the DOE's attention after the meeting had started that the CEC 27 representative, Charlyene Blunt, had arrived at the joint public hearing. Although she arrived late, she was in attendance. DLTs are not required to be part of the scheduling of the public hearing, but they were invited to attend.

Changes Made to the Proposal

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