

## Fact Sheet: Proposed Phase-out and Replacement of Aspire Preparatory Middle School (11X322)

### Overview

In a concerted effort to ensure that all students have high-quality educational programs, the Department of Education (DOE) annually reviews the performance of all schools Citywide. Over the past several years, despite the best efforts of the community and the DOE to support Aspire Preparatory Middle School (“Aspire”), the school has struggled to meet basic requirements for student success.

On October 12, 2011, District 11 Community Superintendent Elizabeth White held a School Leadership Team and parent meeting at the school to discuss what is working at Aspire Preparatory Middle School, what needs to be improved, and how the community can work together to serve students better.

Based on an extensive review of qualitative and quantitative data and community feedback, the DOE has determined that Aspire Preparatory Middle School does not have the capacity to improve quickly and is proposing that the school be phased out.

**Proposing to phase out a school is the most difficult decision we make. We are proposing to phase out Aspire Preparatory Middle School because it is the right action for current and future students in this community.** If the proposal to phase out Aspire is approved, the school would phase out gradually over the next several years. The school would close in June 2014 after its phase-out is complete. A new middle school will be proposed to open in September 2012 in the building where Aspire Preparatory Middle School is located.

We hope you share our view that we can—and must—do better for students. The DOE will continue to work closely with Aspire Prep staff and families to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

### Performance Summary

Proficiency: % of Students on Grade Level		Progress Report Grade			Quality Review Rating
English	Math	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2009 - 10
24%	38%	B	C	F	“Proficient”

- The majority of Aspire Preparatory Middle School students remain below grade level in English and Math. Last year, only 24% of students were performing on grade level in English, and only 38% of students were performing on grade level in Math – putting the school among the lowest performing middle schools Citywide in terms of English and Math proficiency.
- Aspire is not adequately helping students to make progress. Aspire is in the bottom 9% of all middle schools Citywide in terms of learning growth in English and is in the bottom 6% of all middle schools Citywide in terms of learning growth in Math. Learning growth measures annual student growth on State ELA and Math tests relative to similar students. If these conditions persist, Aspire students will fall further behind their peers in other schools.
- The Progress Report measures the progress and performance of students in a school as well as the school environment, compared to other schools serving similar student populations. Aspire Preparatory Middle School earned an overall F grade on its 2010-2011 annual Progress Report, including F grades for Student Progress and School Environment and a D grade for Student Performance.

- While Aspire Preparatory Middle School received a B grade on its Progress Reports in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, it has subsequently struggled. Aspire received a C grade in 2009-2010 and an F in 2010-2011. Based on Aspire's most recent Progress Report, the school is in the bottom 3% of middle schools Citywide.
- Safety issues have been a concern at the school. On the 2011 New York City School Survey, only 35% of teacher respondents agreed that discipline and order were maintained at Aspire Preparatory Middle School.

## Overview of Past Strategic Improvement Efforts at Aspire Preparatory Middle School

Staff members have worked hard to improve Aspire Preparatory Middle School, but even with support the school has not produced adequate outcomes for students. To help the school's efforts to improve performance, the DOE offered numerous supports including:

### Leadership Support:

- Provided extensive leadership training and mentoring for the principal and assistant principals to help them set clear goals for the school while developing the school's Comprehensive Education Plan and Language Allocation Plan.
- Offered on-going support in operating, developing, and maintaining a meaningful summer school program.
- Coached and trained leadership on implementing plans in support of Citywide instructional initiatives and teacher effectiveness.

### Instructional Support:

- Trained and coached leadership, teachers, and curriculum development teams on instructional improvement strategies, including the sequencing and mapping of rigorous curriculum.
- Supported teacher teams in using data analysis to improve instruction for target student populations such as English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students performing below grade level.
- Coached English Language Arts teachers in the development of discussion and guided writing techniques, aimed at raising student achievement and strengthening teacher practice.
- Facilitated training in technology integration and utilization to improve teacher practices, raise student interest, and increase achievement.
- Trained teacher teams in various data driven tools, supports, and measures aimed at improving student achievement through developing data analysis as a best practice.

### Operational Support:

- Coached school staff on budgeting, human resources, teacher recruitment, and building management.
- Trained and supported school leaders in monitoring student progress and meeting compliance regulations for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

### Student Support:

- Offered staff training in conflict management, aimed at improving best practices and outcomes when working with difficult behavior patterns.
- Trained the School Based Support Team in comprehensive guidance programs and evidence-based counseling strategies targeted at developing and improving the capacity for social and emotional supports at the school level.

## What would the proposal mean for current students?

If this proposal is approved, Aspire Preparatory Middle School would be phased out gradually over the next several years and would not admit new sixth-grade students after the end of this school year. All currently enrolled students would have the opportunity to continue their education at Aspire and would be supported through graduation.

In school year 2012-2013, Aspire Preparatory Middle School would serve students in grades seven and eight. Then, during the following school year, it would only serve students in grade eight. The school would close in June 2014 after its phase-out is complete.

## Supporting Current Students

The DOE remains focused on helping Aspire students to succeed. If this proposal is approved, Aspire would be provided targeted, customized, and intensive supports aimed at the unique needs of the school and its students. This support would be in the areas of budget, staffing, programming, community engagement, guidance, and enrollment, including, but not limited to:

- Helping the school to provide students with options that support their advancement and fully prepare students for their next transition point;
- Working with school staff to foster a positive culture; and
- Supporting school leadership to efficiently and strategically allocate resources to ensure a consistent and coherent school environment focused on student outcomes.

## Plans for New Schools for the Aspire Preparatory Middle School and District 11 Community

As we work together to create better options for the Aspire community and for all District 11 students, we will keep in mind what has worked at Aspire and do our best to incorporate those positive elements into the plans for a replacement school. For example:

- We will work with the community to retain partnerships with community organizations that are offering valuable services to the school; and
- We will consider what elements of the school structure are working and do our best to include those features in a replacement school.

## Next Steps and What You Can Expect

In January, the DOE will invite the Aspire Preparatory Middle School community to participate in a joint public hearing co-hosted by the DOE, the District 11 Community Education Council, and Aspire Preparatory Middle School's School Leadership Team. As soon as the hearing has been scheduled, we will notify you of the date and also share with you the formal proposal to phase out Aspire Preparatory Middle School. During the joint public hearing, community members, including parents and students, will be able to share their thoughts on the phase-out proposal.

The proposal to phase out Aspire Preparatory Middle School will be voted on by the Panel for Educational Policy, which is composed of members appointed by Mayor Bloomberg and the five Borough Presidents, during a public meeting scheduled for **February 9, 2012**. During this meeting, the public will have another opportunity to comment on the proposal. If the PEP approves the proposal, Aspire Preparatory Middle School would not accept new students next school year. If the proposal to open a replacement school in the building where Aspire is located is approved, the new school would open in September 2012.

## Sharing Your Concerns and Questions

The DOE is seeking your feedback on the proposal. We will record your comments and include them in our Analysis of Public Comment, which is presented to the PEP prior to the vote on the proposal. Please submit your comments at:

Phone: 212-374-5159

Online: <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/bronx/proposal?id=67>