

Public Comment Analysis

Date: April 19, 2016

Topic: The Proposed Co-location of Academic Leadership Charter School (84X491) Grades 5-8 with District 75 School P754X@X155 (75X754) in Building X155 Beginning in the 2016-2017 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: April 20, 2016

Summary of Proposal

On March 3, 2016, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) and Building Utilization Plan (“BUP”) proposing to co-locate grades five through eight of Academic Leadership Charter School (84X491, “ALCS”) in building X155 (“X155”) beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces, such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and cafeterias. ALCS is an existing public charter school that serves students in grades kindergarten through seven. Building X155 houses the J. M. Rapport School of Career Development (“P754X@X155”). P754X@X155 is one site of an existing District 75 program that serves students in grades nine through twelve. X155 is located at 470 Jackson Avenue, Bronx, New York 10455, within Community School District 7 (“District 7”).

ALCS’s grades kindergarten through four and its pre-kindergarten program are currently housed in building X065, located at 677 East 141 Street, Bronx, New York 10454, and the school’s grades five through seven are housed in building XAEI, a private building located at 500 Courtlandt Avenue, Bronx, New York 10451. Buildings X065 and XAEI are both located in District 7. If this proposal is approved, beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, ALCS students currently in grades five through seven will no longer attend classes in building XAEI. Instead, they will attend classes in X155, where ALCS will be co-located with P754X@X155 and where ALCS will be able to grow to serve students in eighth grade at X155. Building X155 is located approximately 0.8 miles from building XAEI, approximately 0.4 miles from building X065 where ALCS serves grades kindergarten through four, and near public transportation; therefore building X155 is a good location for satisfying ALCS’s request for co-located space.

Building X155 has the capacity to serve a total of 1,079 students. The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a diverse range of high-quality schools at every stage of their education. To this end, the DOE evaluates public school buildings throughout the City that are “under-utilized,” meaning they have space to accommodate additional students. Building X155 is currently “under-utilized.” Therefore, the DOE is proposing to co-locate ALCS in the X155 building with P754X@X155. If this proposal is approved, ALCS will serve a projected 250-290 students in grades five through eight and P754X@X155 will serve a projected 280-420 students in grades nine through twelve in the 2016-2017 school year. This will result in a total projected building enrollment of 530-710 students in X155, yielding a building utilization rate of 49%-66%.

In a separate proposal also posted on March 3, 2016, the DOE concurrently proposed to close Foreign Language Academy of Global Studies (07X520, “FLAGS”), an existing district high school that currently

serves students in grades nine through twelve in building X155, at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. However, because building X155 currently has sufficient capacity to accommodate the co-location of ALCS alongside FLAGS in building X155, ALCS may be co-located in X155 regardless of whether the Panel for Educational Policy (“PEP”) votes to approve the closure of FLAGS, and the viability of this proposal is not contingent on approval of the closure proposal. If the PEP does not approve the closure of FLAGS, the BUP that accompanies this EIS will be revised accordingly. If the proposal to close FLAGS is not approved, the total projected building enrollment would be 610-830, yielding a projected building utilization rate of 57%-77% in the 2016-2017 school year. Accordingly, there is sufficient space in building X155 to co-locate ALCS regardless of whether the proposal to close FLAGS is approved.

The EIS and BUP can be found on the DOE’s website at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2015-2016/April202016SchoolProposals>.

Copies of the EIS and BUP are also available in the main offices of P754X@X155 and ALCS.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A Joint Public Hearing was held regarding this proposal at building X155 on April 5, 2016. The hearing covered both the FLAGS closure proposal and the ALCS co-location proposal. At the Joint Public Hearing, interested parties had the opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 65 members of the public attended the hearing; one member of the public spoke, and three representatives from the Citywide Council on High Schools (“CCHS”) and Citywide Council on Special Education (“CCSE”) made statements. The statements made were all related to the concurrent proposal to close FLAGS, not the ALCS co-location proposal, and these statements can be found in the Public Comment Analysis (“PCA”) issued for the FLAGS proposal. Present at the hearing were: Dorita Gibson, Senior Deputy Chancellor; Michael Alcott, Renewal High School Superintendent; Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, District 75 Field Support Center Liaison for Borough 4-Bronx; Constance Asiedu, President of CCHS and Nedyia Franco, member of CCHS; Pamela Stewart, President of CCSE; Leslie Chislett, Principal of FLAGS; Daniel Hoehn, Principal of P754X@X155; David Frank, Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships; Samantha Gounden and Treniece Sullivan, Office of Student Enrollment; Yissel Martinez and Debra Kelly, Office of Human Resources at the Bronx Borough Field Support Center. Jyoti Folch, Bridget Mercier, and Jonathan Geis from the DOE’s Office of District Planning were also present. The District 7 Community Education Councils (“CEC 7”) confirmed acceptance of an invitation to attend the hearing, but no CEC 7 members ultimately attended due to unexpected scheduling conflicts.

The following questions, comments and remarks were made at the Joint Public Hearing

1. Superintendent Michael Alcott commended Principal Chislett on her efforts and the work being done at FLAGS, but stated the school’s low enrollment is unsustainable and therefore the DOE is proposing to close the school.
2. CCSE President Pamela Stewart commented as follows:
 - a. She is impressed with the school administration’s efforts to rejuvenate the school and this is evidenced by FLAGS’ success in the current school year (2015-2016).
 - b. The DOE made a three-year commitment to all Renewal Schools and it is unfair to the school and students to propose the school for closure before this three year period concludes.
 - c. She is saddened that although FLAGS made strides this school year and met their Renewal School metrics, the High School Directory provides data and information on NYC High Schools from the previous year. She feels that if the High School Directory reflected FLAGS’

data from the current school year (2015-2016), more NYC students might have been more inclined to apply.

- d. She is generally happy with Mayor De Blasio's performance thus far, but was disappointed to see that two of his campaign promises have not yet been fulfilled.
 - e. The first failed campaign promise was to pursue strategic staffing initiatives that would place successful teachers at low performing schools in an effort to turn the schools around. She feels that FLAGS was not given this opportunity.
 - f. The second failed campaign promise concerned reducing class sizes, and she suggested that since FLAGS has low enrollment and small class sizes, it could stay open as a pilot to assess the outcomes of smaller class sizes.
 - g. She hopes that the DOE will reconsider the proposal to close this school and keep it open for the full three-year Renewal School timeframe, and then the DOE can make an assessment as to whether to close the school.
3. CCHS President Constance Asiedu commented as follows:
- a. She speaks on behalf of the students that will now need to be transplanted to another school, expressing concerns about the placement of students in different schools if FLAGS is closed.
 - b. She would like the DOE to track all students from schools that are closing in an effort to ensure that these students' needs are met and that they receive appropriate placements.
 - c. If the DOE tracks these students, then, in the event that students are not happy with their new placement, they should be able to transfer to a different school.
 - d. She understands the proposed closure from an enrollment perspective, but is unhappy with the timing of this announcement, as students were not given enough time to prepare for this change.
 - e. She hopes that students are matched to high schools that have similar programming to FLAGS and fit their needs.
4. CCHS member Nedyia Franco commented as follows:
- a. She sympathizes with the students who will now be forced to make another choice for high school, as well as with the families and communities of the displaced students.
 - b. She is disappointed with the supports provided to this school and this community, noting that increased outreach efforts could have been made to attract more students.
 - c. As an adult, she knows how difficult transitions can be and is sad that students are being asked to move to a new school; ninth graders who just moved from their middle school and eleventh graders who only have one year left must now leave the school.
 - d. She is empathetic to the students who will now need to go through the entire high school application process again by applying through Round Two of the process.
 - e. She suggests that re-siting the school to a new building would have been better for FLAGS.
 - f. She suggests tracking these students to learn from this situation and understand better what happens to these students once enrolled in a different school.
 - g. She hopes that students will receive special services in an effort to assist with the transition.
5. One public commenter commented as follows:

- a. She is part of a group called “Change the Stakes,” which is made up of teachers and parents who are concerned with a number of policies affecting NYC schools, with particular focus on schools in receivership.
- b. She stated that it would be a mistake to close FLAGS.
- c. After hearing the graduation statistics and low demand data of FLAGS, which was read aloud by Deputy Chancellor Gibson at the beginning of this hearing, she believes that this school has already been abandoned since the school has been declining in enrollment and performance for several school years
- d. She inquired about whether FLAGS and ALCS could be co-located in the building rather than closing FLAGS, since the building has space for both schools.
- e. She also asked why the DOE waited so long to tell the families because students did not apply to any other schools in the first round of the High School Application Process since they assumed the school would remain open. Now students must apply in the second round and might not be able to obtain their top choices.
- f. She is frustrated with the lack of transparency from the DOE, and senses that families feel betrayed and deceived.
- g. The DOE had considered several scenarios for FLAGS, including merging FLAGS with another school or re-siting it to a different high school campus, and if the DOE was considering these scenarios it seems that they were aware much earlier in the school year that a proposal would be issued but chose not to issue one until later or include the school in those conversations.
- h. The receivership system is stigmatizing to schools because once that label is attached to a school, it becomes difficult to recruit teachers and students because who would want to join a school that appears to be a “sinking ship.”
- i. FLAGS was promised School Improvement Grant funds that did not arrive until the two weeks before the DOE announced it was proposing to close the school.

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

The DOE did not receive any comments through the dedicated email address or the dedicated phone line for this proposal.

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

None of the comments made at the Joint Public Hearing pertain to this specific proposal to co-locate grades five through eight of ALCS in X155 with P754X@X155.

Please see the DOE website at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2015-2016/April202016SchoolProposals> to access the full text of the PCA for the FLAGS closure proposal, which contains responses to the above-listed comments regarding that proposal.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes have been made to this proposal.