

### Public Comment Analysis

Date: April 19, 2016

Topic: The Proposed Consolidation of M.S. 326 Writers Today & Leaders Tomorrow (06M326) with M.S. 328 Manhattan Middle School for Scientific Inquiry (06M328) in Building M164 Beginning in the 2016-2017 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: April 20, 2016

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### Summary of Proposal

On March 1, 2016, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) posted an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) proposing to consolidate M.S. 326 Writers Today & Leaders Tomorrow (06M326, “M.S. 326”) with M.S. 328 Manhattan Middle School for Scientific Inquiry (06M328, “M.S. 328”) beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. M.S. 326 and M.S. 328 are existing District 6 middle schools serving students in sixth through eighth grades in building M164 (“M164”), located at 401 West 164<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10032.

The DOE is proposing to consolidate M.S. 326 and M.S. 328 because both schools have struggled with low enrollment, which creates budgetary and programmatic challenges. A “consolidation” means that two or more existing school organizations are combined into one school to operate and serve students more effectively. If this proposal is approved, M.S. 326 and M.S. 328 will be combined such that students, staff, and resources of M.S. 326 will become part of M.S. 328 and M.S. 326 will no longer exist as a distinct school option as of the 2016-2017 school year.

M.S. 326 and M.S. 328 are currently co-located in M164. A “co-location” means that two or more school organizations are located in the same building and may share common spaces like auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. M164 also houses a community-based organization (“CBO”), Beacon. If this proposal is approved, Beacon will continue to provide services and maintain its space in M164.

The New York State Education Department (“SED”) assigns an accountability status to each district school—Good Standing, Local Assistance Plan, Focus, or Priority. Both M.S. 326 and M.S. 328 are identified as a Local Assistance Plan (“LAP”) school. Schools are identified as LAP for having a subgroup of students that fail to make progress in English Language Arts, Math, Science or high school graduation rates for multiple years; having large and increasing gaps in performance between specific subgroups of students; or, for schools not located in a low-performing district, having a subgroup perform at or below the benchmark used for low-performing districts. Schools can be identified as LAP any year. If this proposal is approved, the newly consolidated school would retain M.S. 328’s status as a LAP school.

This proposal has been developed by the District 6 Superintendent to address limited resources and low enrollment at M.S. 326 and M.S. 328, which became evident over the course of conversations between the District 6 Superintendent and the principals of M.S. 326 and M.S. 328. In addition to working with the school communities, the District 6 Superintendent has worked closely with various DOE offices to determine the best path to support the students at both schools. The consolidation of M.S. 326 with M.S. 328 will improve resources at the consolidated school and reduce the number of under-enrolled middle schools in the district.

Collaboration at M.S. 326 and M.S. 328 is already underway. The schools are co-located and staff from both schools are working to increase existing collaboration, with a focus on developing shared instructional practices, sharing resources, and building a cohesive school culture. For example, in the current school year, teachers at M.S. 326 and M.S. 328 are planning meetings to share instructional and professional development practices. The M.S. 326 and

M.S. 328 school communities will continue to work together for the duration of the 2015-2016 school year in order to ensure the consolidation is seamlessly executed in the 2016-2017 school year, if this proposal is approved.

M164 has the capacity to serve a total of 907 students. If this proposal is approved, in 2016-2017, M.S. 328 will absorb the enrollment of M.S. 326 and will serve a projected 225-255 students in sixth through eighth grades, yielding a projected building utilization rate of 25%-28%. If this proposal is approved, M164 will still be considered under-utilized because the consolidation is not expected to significantly change the total building enrollment, and there will still be significant excess space available in the building.

The details of this proposal have been released in an EIS which can be accessed here:

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

Copies of the EIS are also available in the main offices of the following schools: M.S. 326 and M.S. 328

### **Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing**

A Joint Public Hearing for this proposal was held on April 6, 2016 at M164. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 16 people attended the hearing and 1 person spoke. Also present at the hearing were: Deputy Chancellor Elizabeth Rose; District 6 Superintendent Manuel Ramirez; Sharon Weissbrot, principal of M.S. 326 and representative of the School Leadership Team (“SLT”); Olga Quiles, principal of M.S. 328 and representative of the SLT; Susan Ramirez, a representative of the M.S. 328 SLT; Oscar Guilamo, a representative of the M.S. 328 SLT; Cherelle Mckeen, a representative of the M.S. 328 SLT; Ivy Jenkins, a representative of the M.S. 328 SLT; Carmen Robles, a representative of the M.S. 328 SLT; and Jasmin Dones, a representative of the M.S. 328 SLT. Ayisha Irfan, a representative from the office of Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, was also present. Sarah Turchin, Anderson Reyes, and Eric Herman from the DOE were also present.

The DOE invited Community Education Council 6 (“CEC 6”) to attend this hearing, and CEC 6 confirmed that a representative would be in attendance. However, CEC 6 did not attend this hearing or inform the DOE that they would not be in attendance.

The following comment was made at the Joint Public Hearing on the proposal:

1. District 6 Superintendent Manuel Ramirez stated that he believes that this consolidation is what is best for the schools and the community.

### **Summary of Issues Raised in Written and Oral Comments Submitted to the DOE**

The DOE received zero (0) voicemails through the dedicated phone number for this proposal.

The DOE received zero (0) emails through the dedicated email address for this proposal.

### **Analysis of Issues Raised and Significant Alternatives Proposed**

Comment 1 expressed support for the proposal and does not require a response.

### **Changes Made to the Proposal**

No changes have been made to this proposal.