



Date: January 26, 2010

Topic: Proposed Co-Location of a New School (31R071) with Existing Schools in School Building R831

Date of Panel Vote: January 26, 2010

Summary of Proposal

This is a proposal to site a new school, 31R071, in school building R831, located at 211 Daniel Low Terrace, Staten Island, in Community School District 31 (“District 31”). Currently, P.S. 16 John J. Driscoll (31R016, “P.S. 16”), a zoned District 31 elementary school, uses school building R831 as an annex. P.S. 16’s main building is located at 80 Monroe Avenue, which shares the school yard with R831. In 2010-2011, 31R071 will serve grades PreK-1 with an enrollment of 90-120 students. Grade 2 will be added in 2011-2012. 31R071 will serve its full complement of grades beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, and will have a target enrollment of 286-336 students.

An Educational Impact Statement on this proposal was posted on the Department of Education’s website on December 11, 2009.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearings

A joint public hearing was held at R831 on January 21, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Twelve members of the public spoke in opposition to proposal, citing the following concerns: (1) P.S. 16 would eventually close and become a charter school; (2) where the start-up funding for the school would come from in the midst of a budget crisis; and (3) the percentage of students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) would not be proportionate to the current demographics of the existing school, P.S. 16. One commenter spoke in favor of the proposal and cited that it was good for the school community of P.S. 16 to have 2 schools that are smaller in population that would address the needs of the children.

Summary of Issues Raised in Written and Oral Comments and Significant Alternatives Suggested

The DOE received a total of five written comments regarding this proposal. Three comments expressed opposition to the proposal, but did not cite specific reasons for their opposition. One person asked for more information about the proposal. Some members of the community also provided feedback on the proposal to the community superintendent, which have been incorporated into this analysis. The majority of these individuals opposed the proposal because they did not believe that there would be equality in the demographics of the new school and P.S. 16. One commenter noted that there is risk associated with starting another school and that data is prone to human error. The commenter suggested that the PEP gather more information and data about potential risks before voting on the proposal. An individual in support of the proposal expressed that it would be good for the community and the parent community to have choice. The alternatives suggested were to have Pre-K children remain for Kindergarten; give extra money to the existing P.S. 16 to have extra programs; and have the two buildings (R831 and the P.S. 16 main building) serve grades PreK-5, with the P.S. 16 principal overseeing both buildings.

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

The Department of Education is co-locating new school 31R071 with P.S. 16 for several reasons. The first is to establish a new high-quality school option for parents in the St. George community. Staten Island parents have responded very favorably to the new schools recently developed through the DOE New School Development process (R861 – *The Staten Island School for Civic Leadership* and R65 - *The Academy of Innovative Learning*). The significant number of applications for these schools indicates that there is a demand for more small school options.

The second is to allow P.S. 16 to become a smaller school and focus on its high-need students. P.S. 16 currently serves 1,150 students, including a high percentage of English language learners and students with disabilities. By phasing down P.S. 16 and establishing a second elementary school in the community, the P.S. 16 administration can focus its programs and services on a smaller student population. The needs of students in the St. George community are great and the DOE believes that a second school organization can help provide additional capacity and support services for students and families. The alternative suggested by some commenters to expand P.S. 16 so that it serves grades Pre-K-5 students in both buildings would not effectively serve the needs of the P.S. 16 students and the community.

Many commenters expressed concern over whether the new school will serve the same high need students as P.S. 16. Both schools will have the capacity to serve ELL students and students with disabilities. The DOE will work with the schools in planning their enrollments to ensure that they are each serving proportional numbers of high-need students.

While there are costs associated with the opening of new schools, the DOE prioritizes allocations of start up funds for new schools as a mechanism for ensuring that all students have an opportunity to attend a high-quality option. New schools serve as replacements

for underperforming schools, alleviate overcrowding in surrounding schools, and add to a diverse portfolio of program and school options that are important for students' success. The investment of start up funds for new schools is one the DOE believes is worthwhile, particularly when considering the costs of low student achievement when we do not create better options.

Any concerns that P.S. 16 will be close and replaced by a charter school are unfounded. The DOE has no plans to phase-out P.S. 16 or to site any charter schools in its main building or in R831.

The DOE chose not to accept the alternative proposed by the opposition and will present the proposal to the Panel for Educational Policy.

A copy of the educational impact statement for this proposal can be obtained at http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/F0043783-8608-433C-855E-99228622A268/73829/BuildingR831_NewSchool_Final.pdf

**Prepared by
Department of Education**