

### **Public Comment Analysis**

Date: March 22, 2016

Topic: The Proposed Consolidation of The Urban Assembly Institute for New Technologies School (05M410) with Renaissance Leadership Academy (05M286) in Building M043 Beginning in the 2016-2017 School Year

Date of Panel Vote: March 23, 2016

### **Summary of Proposal**

On February 5, 2016, the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) issued an Educational Impact Statement (“EIS”) and a Building Utilization Plan (“BUP”) proposing to consolidate The Urban Assembly Institute for New Technologies School (“New Technologies”), an existing middle school serving students in sixth through eighth grades, with Renaissance Leadership Academy (“Renaissance”), an existing middle school serving students in sixth through eighth grades, beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. New Technologies and Renaissance are housed in building M043 (“M043”), located at 509 West 129th Street, New York, NY 10027 in Community School District 5 (“District 5”). A “consolidation” means that two or more existing school organizations are combined into one school to operate and serve students more effectively. The DOE is proposing to consolidate New Technologies with Renaissance because both schools have struggled with low enrollment, which creates budgetary and programmatic challenges. Consolidations are intended to improve under-enrolled schools and address the budgetary, programmatic, and performance challenges that arise as a result of low enrollment. Consolidation decisions are made on a case-by-case basis in partnership with the superintendent and impacted school communities. The DOE is proposing to consolidate New Technologies with Renaissance based primarily on the benefits students would derive from the additional resources made available by consolidating the two school organizations into one. If this proposal is approved, New Technologies and Renaissance will be combined such that students, staff, and resources of New Technologies will become part of Renaissance, and New Technologies will no longer exist as a distinct school option as of the 2016-2017 school year. If this proposal is approved, students attending the consolidated Renaissance will have access to a wider variety of academic and enrichment opportunities, interventions, and other supports that would not be financially feasible for either individual school to offer in the absence of a consolidation. In addition to increased resources, the consolidation will allow the schools to combine the strengths and best practices of each individual school into a single, larger organization.

New Technologies and Renaissance are currently co-located in M043. 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. New Technologies and Renaissance are also co-located in M043 with the following three schools: Academy for Social Action: A College Board School (05M367, “ASA”), an existing high school serving students in ninth through twelfth grades; Urban Assembly for the Performing Arts (05M369, “Performing Arts”), an existing high school serving students in ninth through twelfth grades; and Success Academy Charter School-North West (05M384, “Success-North West”), an existing middle school that is phasing in and currently serving students in fifth through seventh grades. If this proposal is approved, ASA and Performing Arts will continue to serve high school students and Success-North West will continue to phase in until it reaches full scale in the 2016-2017 school year at which time it will serve students in fifth through eighth grades.

The New York State Education Department (“SED”) assigns an accountability status to each district school—Good Standing, Local Assistance Plan, Focus, or Priority. Renaissance is a school in Good Standing, and New Technologies is identified as a Local Assistance Plan (“LAP”) school. If this proposal is approved, the newly consolidated school would retain Renaissance’s state accountability status of Good Standing.

M043 has the capacity to serve a total of 1,506 students. If this proposal is approved, Renaissance will absorb the enrollment of New Technologies and will serve a projected 255-285 students in sixth through eighth grades. ASA will serve a projected 150-190 students in ninth through twelfth grades in the 2016-2017 school year. Performing Arts will serve a projected 315-355 students in ninth through twelfth grades in the 2016-2017 school year. Success-North West will be fully phased in and will serve a projected 320-360 students in fifth through eighth grades in the 2016-2017 school year. This will result in a total projected building enrollment of 1,040-1,190 students in M043, yielding a building utilization rate of 69%-79%. This proposal is not expected to significantly change the total building enrollment. Accordingly, the DOE believes there is sufficient space in M043 to support this proposal.

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

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/leadership/PEP/publicnotice/2015-2016/March232016SchoolProposals>.

Copies of the EIS and BUP are also available in the main offices of the schools currently located in M043.

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

A Joint Public Hearing was held at M043 on March 9, 2016. At that hearing, interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. Approximately 25 members of the public attended the hearing and 8 members of the public spoke. Present at the hearing were: Elizabeth Rose, Deputy Chancellor of the Division of Operations for the DOE; Gale Reeves, the District 5 Superintendent; Melisha Jackman, the principal of Renaissance and representative of the Renaissance School Leadership Team (“SLT”); Roxanne Brown, the principal of New Technologies and representative of the New Technologies SLT; Ayishah Irvin, representative of the District 5 Community Education Council (“CEC”); and Earthy Rocher representative of the Renaissance SLT. Sarah Turchin, Eric Herman, Jacalyn Lee, and Deepa Desai from the DOE were also present. Below is a summary of the comments received at the Joint Public Hearing:

1. Superintendent of District 5, Gale Reeves, expressed her support for the proposal by stating that she is in full support of the proposal.
2. CEC 5 representative, Ayishah Irvin, expressed CEC 5’s support for the proposal by stating, on behalf of the CEC, that they are in total support of the consolidation and will gladly support the schools and the students.
3. A representative from the Renaissance SLT, Earthy Rocher, expressed her support for the proposal by stating:
  - a. She is all for joining both schools because it gives her son, and now her niece, opportunities and exposure they would not have otherwise had.
  - b. She likes the principal and the school staff of Renaissance.
4. A parent from Renaissance’s SLT expressed her concerns related to the proposal by stating:
  - a. She feels this consolidation is overwhelming for the students and for parents.
  - b. Her daughter is worried about how her class size will change after the consolidation.
  - c. Her daughter is worried about how her classes will change after the consolidation.

- d. Her daughter is worried about how her teachers are going to change after the consolidation.
  - e. There was recently a dance hosted in the building for both New Technologies and Renaissance. At the dance, her daughter shared with her, that all the students from New Technologies stood together on one side of the auditorium and all the students from Renaissance stood together on the other side of the auditorium.
5. Principal Jackman expressed her support, and support on behalf of Principal Brown, for the proposal by stating:
- a. She is thinking about what is best for children and wants to give them the best opportunities she can.
  - b. She and Principal Brown are truly in support of the proposal and are looking forward to working together with students and families to build this campus.
  - c. Nothing will go away if this consolidation is approved. Rather, the consolidation will allow the school to grow and expand.
6. A special education teacher at Renaissance, Jicardo Rolsten, expressed his support for the proposal by stating:
- a. He hopes that the consolidation will allow for additional wraparound services since Renaissance will gain additional students with high needs.
  - b. He believes the consolidated Renaissance should receive additional and equitable space that gives students space to learn and grow given that the school is serving younger students with high needs.
7. A student from Renaissance expressed her concerns related to the proposal by stating the following:
- a. She feels that some students are negatively impacted by such a significant change to classes.
  - b. She does not know if the activities or classes will be interrupted by this consolidation.
  - c. She questioned whether student leaders would have to work their way back up to remain in leadership positions.
  - d. She does not know if the teachers will change after the consolidation.
8. A student from Renaissance questioned whether there would be advanced placement classes once the schools are combined.

**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 and Significant Alternatives Proposed**

**Comments 1, 2, 3a-b, and 5a-c are in support of the proposal and therefore do not require a response.**

**Comment 4b expresses concerns regarding the impact on class size at the consolidated school.**

The DOE is proposing to consolidate New Technologies with Renaissance because both schools have struggled with low enrollment, which creates budgetary and programmatic challenges. If approved, this proposal will result in an increased, healthy student enrollment at the consolidated school. The DOE will provide equitable space pursuant to the Footprint to the consolidated Renaissance to account for the increase in enrollment. The consolidated Renaissance has a projected enrollment of 255-285 students for the 2016-2017 school year and will have adequate space to accommodate these students.

The DOE believes that the consolidation of New Technologies and Renaissance will benefit the New Technologies, Renaissance, and District 5 communities, as well as other students in Manhattan and in the City as a whole, by strengthening middle school options and providing increased services and resources at the consolidated Renaissance. Schools that struggle with low enrollment often simultaneously encounter budgetary issues because school funding is allocated on a per-pupil basis. The consolidation of Renaissance and New Technologies will result in a healthy enrollment at the school and provide the budget required to run effectively. Because of the increased resources, the consolidated Renaissance will be able to enhance programs offered, creating a stronger school environment and an improved middle school option.

As mentioned above, schools across the city are allocated space based on the Footprint. The Footprint is applied to schools to ensure equitable allocation of classroom, resource, and administrative space. For existing schools, In addition, per the UFT contract, class maximums for district schools are as follows:

- Pre-Kindergarten: 18 students
- Kindergarten: 25 students
- Grades 1-6 in elementary schools: 32 students
- JHS/MS (all grades 4 – 8 or 5 – 9, if are located in a middle school, then middle school class size applies): 33 students in non-Title I schools; 30 in Title I schools.

If this proposal is approved, the consolidated Renaissance will align classes to the guides established via the UFT contract described above.

**Comments 4a and 4d express concerns that the consolidation is overwhelming for parents and students because they are unsure what it will look like upon implementation.**

If this proposal is approved, New Technologies will be consolidated with Renaissance beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. The consolidated Renaissance will continue to serve students in sixth through eighth grades. Renaissance will absorb the enrollment of New Technologies. The DOE recognizes that this is a significant change to the school community and requires a comprehensive transition plan.

In an effort to make the transition as seamless as possible for both students and families, the current principals of New Technologies and Renaissance are beginning to integrate students and staff from both schools in the current school year. Teachers from both schools are currently participating in professional development together, and the schools have aligned their assessment practices. The schools are also beginning to share activities and sports, such as football and track, and are collaborating on discipline systems, award ceremonies, talent shows, and additional cultural events to build a unified school. Recently, the school hosted a dance for the students at Renaissance and New Technologies. While the DOE recognizes the speaker's concern that there was visible separation between the two schools at the dance, this dance was the first of many cultural events that the schools plan to host in an effort to unite the students and build a cohesive school community in advance of the upcoming school year. Both schools will continue to work together for the remainder of the 2015-2016 school year in order to ensure that the consolidation is seamlessly executed in the 2016-2017 school year, if approved.

**Comment 6a expresses a desire for additional wraparound services.**

Proposals for consolidation look to improve learning environments for schools that are dramatically under-enrolled, like New Technologies and Renaissance, to meet the needs of the students served. If the proposal is approved, the consolidation of New Technologies and Renaissance will improve resources at the consolidated school. The

consolidated Renaissance will receive support services consistent with citywide policies. For additional information related to student support services page on the DOE's website: <http://schools.nyc.gov/StudentSupport/default.htm>.

**Comment 6b expresses concerns about space allocations in M043.**

As described in the BUP, if this proposal is approved there will be sufficient space to accommodate the consolidated Renaissance, ASA, Performing Arts, and Success-North West in M043 pursuant to the Footprint<sup>1</sup>, which guides space allocation and use in city schools. The DOE has applied the Footprint to all schools and/or programs outlined in this plan to allocate rooms in an unbiased manner; and has divided the remaining space equitably based on the proportion of the total students in the building enrolled by each school and/or program, the instructional and programmatic needs of the co-located schools, and the physical location of the excess space within the building.

If approved, based on a projected student enrollment of 255-285 for the 2016-2017 school year, the consolidated Renaissance will receive the following space allocation: 19 full-size rooms, 4 half-size rooms, and the full size equivalent of 1.5 designed administrative spaces. This includes 2 full-size rooms that the consolidated Renaissance will be receiving as excess space.

The ultimate allocation of space and the location of classrooms for all schools will be determined by the Office of Space Planning in conjunction with the principals in M043.

**Comments 4c, 7a-c, and 8 express concerns regarding the impact on programing, including leadership opportunities, at the consolidated school.**

The DOE is proposing to consolidate New Technologies with Renaissance based primarily on the benefits students would derive from the additional resources made available by consolidating the two school organizations into one. Both schools have struggled with low enrollment, which has created budgetary and programmatic challenges. This consolidation is intended to improve the allocation of resources and to improve opportunities for students, which may include existing or additional leadership opportunities.

At the consolidated school, students will have access to enrichment courses in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics ("STEM"), arts, and sports. If this proposal is approved, students attending the consolidated Renaissance will have access to a wider variety of academic and enrichment opportunities, interventions, and other supports that would not be financially feasible for either individual school to offer in the absence of a consolidation. In addition to increased resources, the consolidation will allow the schools to combine the strengths and best practices of each individual school into a single, larger organization.

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<sup>1</sup> The Footprint sets forth the baseline number of rooms that should be allocated to a school based on the grade levels served by the school and number of classes per grade. For existing schools, the Footprint is applied to the current number of classes and class size a school has programmed and is confirmed by a walk-through of the building by the Borough Director of Space Planning and a school's representative. The Footprint can be found on the DOE's website at: [http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/4B3CDB70-5FCD-4DA5-82E0-6F83761B3D12/190379/DOEFootprint\\_December\\_2015.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/4B3CDB70-5FCD-4DA5-82E0-6F83761B3D12/190379/DOEFootprint_December_2015.pdf).

**Comments 4c and 7d express concerns regarding changes to staff after the consolidation.**

As stated in the EIS, if this proposal is approved, some Renaissance and/or New Technologies staff members may be excessed when the school is consolidated. Where possible, the DOE will seek to minimize excessing of represented staff. In the event that staff excessing is required, staff from Renaissance and New Technologies will be merged into one list to determine seniority by license, and all contractual rules regarding excessing will apply.

Barring system-wide layoffs, excessed teachers will be eligible to apply for other City positions, and any teachers who do not find a permanent position will be placed in the absent teacher reserve (“ATR”) pool, meaning that they will continue to earn their salary while serving as substitute teachers in other City schools.

**Changes Made to the Proposal**

- No changes have been made to this proposal.