

## **Fact Sheet: School Improvement Scenarios for P.S. 50 Clara Barton**

### **Summary**

- P.S. 50 has struggled for years. In 2010, only 21% of students were on grade level in English language arts (ELA), and only 31% were on grade level in math—putting P.S. 50 among the lowest-performing schools in the entire City.
- P.S. 50 staff and families have worked hard to improve the school. The Department of Education (DOE) also provided considerable support to P.S. 50. In recent years, this has included: extensive teacher training; guidance around curriculum planning; and working with teachers to better support high-need students. Unfortunately, these efforts have not turned the school around.
- P.S. 50 earned an overall D grade on its 2009-2010 Progress Report, with an F grade on the School Environment sub-section, a D grade for Student Performance, and a C grade for Student Progress. The school was rated “Proficient” on its most recent Quality Review in 2009-2010.
- As a result of the school’s low Progress Report scores, the DOE is launching a comprehensive analysis of the school to determine what steps we should take to address its continued low performance. Possibilities for the school include:
  - Leadership change;
  - Phasing the school out over time and gradually replacing it with new school(s) (while supporting current students who would remain enrolled in P.S. 50);
  - Change in curriculum/program offerings;
  - Staff changes; and/or
  - Grade reconfiguration.

We understand that many P.S. 50 students, families, and staff members believe in the school’s potential, and we know that this is difficult news. At the same time, we hope you share our view that we can—and must—do better for students.

In the coming weeks, we will work with you to figure out how to help P.S. 50 students. We will talk to parents, students, and staff as well as people and organizations that work directly with P.S. 50. We are particularly interested to learn about things that may not be obvious on paper: What do you think is working well at the school? What is not working?

Based on that feedback and a thorough review of school data, we will propose an action plan that we believe will best benefit current and future students.

Please be assured that the DOE will continue to work closely with P.S. 50 staff and families to see that all students receive the support they need to succeed in school. We look forward to your feedback throughout this process.

## Background

### *P.S. 50 Has Struggled for Years*

The overwhelming majority of P.S. 50 students remain below grade level in English language arts and mathematics.

- During the 2009-2010 school year, only 21% of students were performing on grade level in English—putting P.S. 50 in the bottom 4% of elementary schools in the entire City.
- During the 2009-2010 school year, only 31% of students were performing on grade level in math—putting P.S. 50 in the bottom 6% of elementary schools in the entire City.
- With such low levels of students performing on grade level, it is crucial for P.S. 50 students to make substantial progress to catch up. However, P.S. 50 is in the bottom 29% of schools citywide in terms of learning growth in English and in the bottom 10% of schools citywide in terms of learning growth in math. If those conditions persist, P.S. 50 students will only fall further behind their peers in other schools.
- P.S. 50 earned an overall D grade on its 2009-10 annual Progress Report, with an F grade for School Environment, a D grade for Student Performance, and a C grade for Student Progress. P.S. 50 earned overall B grades on its previous two Progress Reports, but received a D grade for School Environment in 2008-2009 and an F grade for School Environment in 2007-2008.
- P.S. 50 was rated “Proficient” on its most recent Quality Review in 2009-2010. During Quality Reviews, experienced educators visit schools over several days, observing classrooms and talking with students, staff, and families. Schools are rated on a four-point scale, with “Well Developed” as the highest rating.
- The school’s attendance rate continues to be very low. In 2009-2010, the attendance rate was 89%, well below the citywide average of 94% for elementary schools. In fact, P.S. 50 ranks in the bottom 1% of elementary schools in the entire City for attendance.
- Safety issues have been a concern at the school. On the 2010 New York City School Survey, 12% of parents reported that they felt their children were unsafe at P.S. 50. In addition, 78% of teachers reported that discipline and order were not maintained at P.S. 50.

### *Demand for the School is Low, Suggesting that Families Are Seeking Better Options<sup>1</sup>*

- Between 2006-2007 and 2009-2010, the number of students enrolled at P.S. 50 decreased by 47 students, or 8%.
- P.S. 50 is a zoned school, but only 63% students residing in the zone attend. This means that more than one in three students—37%—who are guaranteed a seat at the school choose to enroll elsewhere.

### *Despite Our Best Efforts, Performance at P.S. 50 Remains Low*

P.S. 50 staff have worked hard to improve the school, but the school has not yet turned around. The DOE also extended considerable support to P.S. 50, including:

- Extensive teacher training around issues including curriculum planning, improving teaching practices, and individualizing teaching to meet each student’s needs.
- Support for teaching teams focused on the needs of targeted student populations, such as English language learners, special education students, or students who are performing below grade level.
- Fostering opportunities for teachers and administrators to connect with colleagues in other schools, allowing them to learn from one another, improve teaching, and better support students.
- Support in recruiting talented teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> Audited enrollment data is not yet available for the current school year. Data below is from the 2009-2010 school year, audited as of October 31, 2009.

As we consider possible options for the future of P.S. 50, we will be analyzing past strategic improvement efforts at the school to help us identify what has been working and what has not. This information will guide our thinking about how best to support students and the community going forward.

### *We Know That We Can Do Better*

P.S. 50 serves a high-need population: 16% of students require special education services and 17% are English language learners. But other schools serving similar students have achieved far better results. These include schools in P.S. 50's peer group, representing the 25 most similar schools in New York City.

- At P.S. 102, a Manhattan school in the P.S. 50 peer group, 27% of students require special education services and 19% are English language learners. At that school, 40% of students are on grade level in English and 58% are on grade level in math. While still not where we would want them to be, they are getting better results than we are seeing at P.S. 50 while serving a similar mix of students.
- At P.S. 25 Bilingual School, a Bronx school also in the P.S. 50 peer group, 14% of students require special education services and 36% of students are English language learners. At that school, 56% of students are on grade level in English and 54% are on grade level in math. P.S. 25 is also one of the very highest-performing elementary schools in the entire City in terms of annual learning growth, ranking in the top 1% of schools in terms of helping students make progress in English and the top 2% of schools in terms of math progress.

### *We Remain Focused on Helping P.S. 50 Students to Succeed*

Please be assured that the DOE will work closely with P.S. 50 staff to ensure that students get the support they need—this year and in the future. In the immediate term, we will build on past efforts to support the school, including:

- Helping the school better support its highest-need students, including English language learners, special education students, and students who are performing below grade-level.
- Working to identify areas where professional development is needed and assisting the school in meeting those needs.
- Helping to create and enhance relationships with community partners.

## **What You Can Expect**

Over the coming weeks we will carefully review school data as well as your feedback. As we move forward through this process and begin to shape a plan for the school, we will be able to provide more specific details about how that proposal would impact students and the broader P.S. 50 community.

Regardless of the outcome, the DOE will work continuously with P.S. 50 staff and families to ensure that students receive the support they need and the excellent education they deserve.

## Sharing Your Concerns and Questions

The Department of Education is seeking your feedback. We will answer your questions and listen to your concerns as we develop a formal proposal for the school.

Parents, staff, and other community members may submit questions and comments at any time:

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We also encourage you to visit the website created to serve P.S. 50 and interested members of the public at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/changes/bronx/PS50>. We will update that website regularly with important dates, answers to frequently asked questions, and new information as it becomes available.