



Public Comment Analysis

Date: November 15, 2010

Topic: The Proposed Grade Truncation of P.S. 144 Col Jeromus Remson (28Q144) to a K-5 School

Date of Panel Vote: November 16, 2010

Summary of Proposal

P.S. 144 Col Jeromus Remsen (28Q144, “P.S. 144”) is an existing elementary school located at 93-02 69th Avenue, Forest Hills, NY 11375, in Community School District 28. It currently serves students in Kindergarten through sixth grade, and offers a Pre-Kindergarten program. This is a proposal to implement a “grade truncation,” meaning that the school would no longer enroll sixth graders after the current 2010-2011 school year.

At the close of the 2010-2011 school year, all fifth and sixth graders who meet promotional standards would graduate from P.S. 144. In September 2011, these students would enter middle school as sixth and seventh graders, respectively. Beginning in 2011-2012, P.S. 144 would serve students only in Kindergarten through fifth grade and offer a Pre-Kindergarten program. From that time forward, P.S. 144 students would participate in the middle school choice process during fifth grade and move on to middle school for sixth grade.

Prior to June 2010, students in District 28 could attend their zoned middle school or they could apply to choice middle schools on a school-by-school basis. In June 2010, the District 28 Community Education Council voted to adopt “Middle School Choice.” Now, students may apply to and rank middle schools throughout the District on a single application. They also have the opportunity to rank zoned middle schools outside the zone in which they reside. While zoned students still have priority for admission to those schools, other District 28 students are now eligible to attend those schools if they have remaining seats once zoned children are accommodated.

Middle schools typically enroll students beginning in sixth grade, and P.S. 144 students have had the option to apply to start middle school as sixth graders. With the adoption of district-wide middle school choice, P.S. 144 students who wait until sixth grade to apply to middle school are limited to those schools that still have available seventh-grade seats. In particular, there are several unzoned, choice middle schools in District 28, and those schools rarely have open seventh-grade seats, which become available only if sixth graders leave the school. As a result,

students who remain at P.S. 144 through sixth grade will have fewer options than their peers who start middle school a year earlier.

Additionally, P.S. 144 students who start middle school in seventh grade may face transitional challenges related to entering middle school a year later than most of their classmates and they remain in their new middle school for only two years before again transitioning to high school.

The DOE strives to ensure that all students in New York City have access to a high-quality school at every stage of their education. Having elementary schools that terminate in different grades (i.e., K-5 versus K-6) creates unequal levels of access for students based simply on the year they exit elementary school.

This proposed grade truncation will help standardize middle school application and entry grades in District 28, giving all P.S. 144 students access to the same range of middle school options as their peers throughout the District.

At the same time, this proposal will alleviate crowding pressures at P.S.144 and create additional K-5 seats in an area where demand for elementary school seats is high:

- P.S. 144 has a 104 percent target utilization rate,¹ meaning that the school is overcrowded.
- Phasing out the sixth grade will free up approximately 75 seats in the building. Those seats could be used by lower-grade students or to meet other school needs (e.g., art room, resource center).
- Approximately 75 additional K-5 seats will be created in an area that has high demand for elementary seats.

Summary of Comments Received at the Joint Public Hearing

A joint public hearing regarding this proposal was held at Q144 on November 8, 2010, and all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal. There were approximately 9 members of the public in attendance at the hearing, and two speakers. In addition to Superintendent Jeannette Reed, remarks were made by School Leadership Team member Jeannie Kuok and Community Education Council for District 28 member Kathryn Thome.

Below are the comments and remarks made at the joint public hearing:

1. Ms. Thome and Ms. Kuok stated that they believe it makes sense to truncate the school because it would eliminate the school's perennial uncertainty over how many students would stay at the school for sixth grade and it would align the schools.

¹ The official target capacity and utilization rates for the 2010-11 school year are not yet available. All references to building utilization rates in this document are based on target capacity data from the 2009-10 Enrollment Capacity Utilization Report (the "Blue Book").

2. A commenter queried whether fifth graders who are currently in “Bridge” classes would continue to be at the school next year as sixth graders in those classes.
3. A commenter asked what would happen to special education students that would be entering sixth grade.

The DOE received a comment at the Joint Public Hearing which did not directly relate to the proposal.

4. A commenter suggested that the school expand its Pre-K and Gifted and Talented offerings.

Summary of Written and Oral Comments Received and Significant Alternatives Suggested

No oral or written comments were received.

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

Comment 1 is an expression of support for the proposal and does not require a response.

With respect to comment 2, if this proposal is approved, no students will attend sixth grade at P.S. 144 in the 2011-2012 school year. Rather, all current students will move on to middle school after fifth grade by participating in the Middle School Choice process. A bridge class is a type of class that either spans grade levels (but not more than two grade levels) or is a Collaborative Team Teaching class. The student support staff at P.S. 144 will assist students as they select programs that will meet their specific needs. The District 28 Middle School Directory can be found online at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Middle/Publications/Queens/default.htm>.

With respect to comment 3, students with individualized education programs (“IEPs”) will participate in the middle school admissions processes in the same manner as their non-disabled peers. Middle schools will be supported by the DOE in reviewing students’ IEPs to address the needs of students with disabilities by providing individualized service models that ensure students have access to the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible. It is expected that the middle school to which a student is matched will develop a program to meet the students’ needs. This process will apply to students with IEPs currently in fifth and sixth grades at P.S. 144 in the same manner as it applies to all other students.

Changes Made to the Proposal

No changes to the proposal were made in response to public feedback.