

Reality Check:

The Impact of Co-location on a
Sample of Schools

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Chancellor Klein has often said his goal is to create a system of great schools. But this pledge is being violated by the callous and often reckless co-location of charter schools and new small schools within existing school buildings, without conducting a thorough analysis of the consequences. These actions are creating a two-tier system in which charter schools expand at the cost of existing schools that continue to serve the lowest-income students, English language learners, and students in special education.

CEJ is not opposed to charter schools, and there are CEJ members who have their children in charter schools. But charter schools cannot solve the pervasive problem of poorly performing schools. Charter schools will never serve the majority of the city's public school students, and charter schools have thus far failed to effectively serve the city's highest-needs students. Neighborhood schools that serve these high-needs students must also have the space necessary to improve and thrive; they need adequate space for academics, art, music, and lab science, as well as the space to provide essential supports like small-group tutoring and professional development.

In the last few months, public hearings and news reports have surfaced numerous cases of inaccurate or incomplete information in the Educational Impact Statements the New York City Department of Education (DOE) is mandated to provide about the impact of these co-locations on existing schools. Several examples, summarized below, raise serious questions about the validity of the DOE's Educational Impact Statements and demonstrate the need for a temporary moratorium on co-locations until an impartial analysis of the data can be carried out by an independent source.¹

IS 302 Rafael Cordero

IS 302 is a junior high school in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn, that has improved its performance from a D to a B in the past two years. Since receiving a DOE Middle School Initiative Grant in 2007 and a Middle School Success Grant in 2009, the school has made significant progress in closing the gap with the district average.² An Achievement First charter school is scheduled to move into the building this fall, filling the space vacated by PS 89, which is moving out. The majority of PS 89 students were housed in trailers built ten years ago that were not intended to become permanent fixtures in the school.

The Educational Impact Statement cites IS 302 as having a capacity of 1,829, but the DOE Web site lists the target capacity as 1,552. Furthermore, the DOE has counted classrooms as vacant if they are unused for three to four periods a day. But these "unused" periods provide space for small-group instruction,

¹ Proposal detailed in David Bloomfield's column at <http://gothamschools.org/2010/01/06/closing-schools-a-call-for-independent-review/#comments>

² *Space to Thrive at Rafael Cordero Junior High*, Cypress Hills Advocates for Education, February 2010.

teacher collaboration, and preparation, which are all essential strategies for IS 302 to support low-performing students and continue its upward trend in achievement.

PS 188 The Island School

PS 188 is a neighborhood school on the Lower East Side that has received an A for three straight years and that has been cited as an exemplar of integrating academics with robust social and emotional supports for children and families.³ The school shares space with PS 94, a District 75 school for autistic students, and Girls Prep Charter School. Girls Prep is a K–5 school that is scheduled to add middle school grades starting next year, a move that will require PS 94 to scale back in size and PS 188 to give up additional classroom space.

The PS 188 Educational Impact Statement states that “PS 188 and PS M094 will continue to have sufficient instructional space to serve students” and claims that the co-location “will have no effect on other support services offered to students.” However, PS 188 has already given up afterschool programs, adult ESL classes, and its art room and has moved its physical and occupational therapy to inappropriate spaces.⁴ Furthermore, although the Educational Impact Statement justifies the expansion because it will “create a high-quality middle school option in District 1,” the majority of Girls Prep students come from outside the district and represent a significantly more privileged population that either PS 188 or PS 94. As Girls Prep grows, this disparity will cause low-income students, English language learners, and special education students to be concentrated in PS 188 and other district schools.

	Girls Prep Charter	PS 188	PS 94
ELLs	0%	23%	21%
Free and reduced-price lunch	65%	93%	97%
Special education	7%	22%	100%

PS 30 Hernandez/Hughes

PS 30 is a Harlem elementary school that has received two As and a B in the last three years. The Harlem Success Academy II is scheduled to move into PS 30 from its current home at PS 123, where a lack of space and resistance from the school community have created an inhospitable culture. PS 30 currently shares space with Kappa II middle school, which is now phasing out. Recently, PS 30 was forced to eliminate its sixth grade and move its library and computer rooms to smaller spaces in order to make room for co-location with Kappa II.⁵ The school would like to reclaim that space as Kappa II phases down but is now likely to give up even more space for the expansion of Harlem Success Academy II.

PS 15 Patrick F. Daly – Approved

PS 15 is a neighborhood school in Red Hook, Brooklyn, that largely serves students from the nearby public housing projects and that has received As for three consecutive years. In 2008, the PAVE Academy Charter School moved into PS 15 in Red Hook with an agreement to stay two years until

³ <www.wnyc.org/shows/loplate/episodes/2008/06/10>

⁴ <www.thelodownny.com/leslog/2009/12/battle-over-girls-prep-middle-school-intensifies.html> and <<http://normsnotes2.blogspot.com>>

⁵ Interview with Pat Sherwood, teacher at PS 30.

permanent space was secured. Under this arrangement, PS 15 has given up six full rooms and six half rooms to accommodate PAVE. These rooms include academic classrooms, a computer room, a science lab, an occupational therapy room, a speech and language room, a professional development room, the special education office, and a room used by Good Shepherd Services for individual and family counseling.⁶

This fall, the DOE announced that PAVE would stay in the building until 2015 and expand its grades, thus occupying more space each year and forcing PS 15 to shrink further. The Educational Impact Statement states, “There is sufficient space in K015 for both schools to operate at full organizational capacity,” but PS 15 supporters have calculated that for PAVE Academy to reach its full capacity in the next few years, the schools will need a combined seventy-seven classrooms – twenty-two more classrooms than exist in the building. Furthermore, the loss of support services from PS 15 already is in direct contradiction to the Educational Impact Statement’s claim that “Other support services will continue to be provided consistent with citywide policy.”

PS 256 Benjamin Banneker

PS 256 is scheduled to begin sharing space with the Community Partnership Charter School, which is planning to add middle grades starting in the fall of 2010. PS 256 parents estimate that it will have to give up ten classrooms to make room for Community Partnership, including a technology room, science room, and a room used for parent workshops.⁷ The student body served by the incoming charter school is significantly different from that served by PS 256.⁸ As Community Partnership grows, this disparity will cause the lowest-income students and English language learners to be concentrated in PS 256 and other district schools.

	PS 256	Community Partnership Charter School
Free and reduced-price lunch	81%	54%
ELLs	5%	0%

IS 195 Roberto Clemente

IS 195 currently shares space with KIPP Infinity Charter School, which is scheduled to add additional grades in the fall of 2010. The population served by the expanding charter school is significantly different from that served by IS 195. As KIPP Infinity grows, this disparity will cause the lowest-income students and English language learners to be concentrated in IS 195 and other district schools.

	IS 195	KIPP Infinity Charter School
Free and reduced-price lunch	82%	65%
ELLs	19%	10%

⁶ *The Impact of PAVE Academy on PS 15 and the Further Impact If an Extension is Granted Beyond Their Two Year Agreement*, Concerned Advocates for Public Education, January 2010.

⁷ Information from Rona Tyson, PTA president, PS 256.

⁸ NYSED School Report Cards 2008.

Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical High School, Construction Trade Program – Canceled

The construction trade program at Alfred E. Smith High School was scheduled to be replaced by the New York City Charter High School for Architecture, Engineering, and Construction Industries (AECI), which is part of the Victory Schools charter school network. AECI has been fraught with financial and educational problems since its inception. The school’s founder and former chairman is facing federal embezzlement charges. And since September 2009, the principal and five of the fifteen teachers have left, along with one-third of the students. One teacher claims he was fired for supporting unionization.⁹ Furthermore, Smith’s students are not likely to be selected by AECI, as the new school serves a dramatically different population, as indicated below. As AECI grows and Smith phases out, this disparity will cause the lowest-income and special education students to be concentrated in other city high schools.

	Alfred E. Smith	AECI
Special education	21%	9%
Free and reduced-price lunch	71%	47%

After news articles raised questions about AECI, the DOE canceled the school’s move into the Smith building just days before the scheduled vote.

PS 138 - Canceled

PS 138 is a District 75 school serving students with a range of handicaps, including profound developmental disabilities. The DOE proposed to move PS 138 from its location at PS 33 to the American Sign Language School (M047) to make room for the Clinton School for Writers and Artists to move into PS 33. Although the Educational Impact Statement claims that “Building M047 is fully accessible,” the site does not have sufficient elevator capacity to transport multiple students in wheelchairs to classrooms.¹⁰ After news reports on the inadequacy of the new space for PS 138 students, the DOE revised the plan hours before the scheduled public hearing.

These brief profiles reveal that by reducing classroom and enrichment space, as well as eliminating space for counseling, tutoring, and professional development and failing to serve the highest-need students, many of the proposed co-locations will have a much graver, more damaging impact on district schools than the DOE’s Educational Impact Statements indicate. That is why CEJ is calling for a temporary moratorium on co-locations until an independent analysis can be completed. The DOE’s last-minute withdrawals of its proposals to place AECI inside Alfred E. Smith and PS 139 inside the American Sign Language School are examples of how public scrutiny can compel more responsible decision making. If New York City is ever to build a system of truly great schools, we cannot allow some schools to prosper by depriving other schools of what they need to thrive.

⁹ <www.nytimes.com/2010/02/16/nyregion/16smith.html> and <www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/education/2010/02/22/2010-02-22_charter_schools_move_scrapped.html>.

¹⁰ <<http://chelseanow.com/articles/2010/02/12/news/doc4b758f1ba144b569120145.prt>>

