

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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Middle School Committee Meeting Summary

Thursday November 2, 2017, 6:30 pm
PS 165 234 West 109th Street

Attendance: 26 people total inclusive of Ilene Altschul (D3 Superintendent), Kristen Berger (CEC 3 Middle School Committee Chair, Manuel Belliard (Office of Council Member Levine), 12 parents/ administrators from Mott Hall 2, 7 parents/ administrators from PS/MS 165

District Superintendent Ilene Altschul reported, and took questions, on the DOE 'idea' to change the configuration of PS/MS 165 and expand Mott Hall 2 (M862)

This is currently still in 'idea' stage.

- Process:
 - Current idea will be "posted" as a proposal from the DOE
 - DOE then hosts community meetings ("full engagement") "Full engagement" usually consists of two community meetings that will include school communities, meeting with each school's SLT and a walk through
 - Proposal then goes to the Panel for Education Policy (PEP) for the final vote. The public may speak at the PEP meeting as well.
- Timeline: The DOE may choose to post this proposal as soon as early December but it maybe later. Once the DOE posts the proposal it generally can be voted on at the PEP meeting the following month.
- At this point the below changes are for the 2018-19 School Year

Idea:

- PS/MS 165 to truncate to a PreK-5th grade program.
 - Current 8th graders will graduate out
 - Current 6th& 7th grade students will be assisted in finding seats at the Middle School of their choice, where seats are available.
 - Current 5th grade students at PS 165 will apply through the standard Middle School Choice process currently open to entire district (application deadline Dec 1st)
- Mott Hall 2 (M862) to expand and take over vacated space from the co-located PS 165.
 - Mott Hall 2 would expand by 1- 2 sections per grade across all grades over time
 - The total expansion for Mott Hall 2 could be between 70- 175+ students over time
 - 2018 7th and 8th grades would expand to accept interested PS/MS 165 students.

- 2018 6th grade could expand to fill the newly available space with students from the district applicant pool.

Rational:

- PS 165 would have the opportunity to thrive as a dedicated PreK-5 elementary school. Current and future 165 middle school students would be supported by the wealth of D3 Middle Schools.
- Mott Hall 2 would have the potential to expand and fulfil its mission to develop tomorrow's leaders. Mott Hall 2 is the most diverse middle school in D3 and cannot currently accommodate all the students who apply. Additional students in the school will increase the funding and programing flexibility within the school.

Details:

PS/MS 165 current enrollment:

6th grade: 32 students

7th grade: 55 students

6 students total in self-contained classes (grades 6 & 7)

Mott Hall 2: current total enrollment is 334

Concerns:

CEC 3 has requested that the DOE post and make public this idea as soon as possible. CEC3 requested in June that this proposal be brought to the parent community early in the fall of 2017. As that has not happened the CEC authored a letter of October 30th to Chancellor Farina (see separate) adjuring her to bring to the community all potential changes in school configuration in District 3.

Middle School Committee Chair Berger remains concerned that district-wide families need to be made aware of potential changes and should know about changes before the Middle School Application deadline of December 1, 2017 so that they are making fully informed choices.

K-8 model. A number of parents asked about the K-8 school model. Superintendent Altschul indicated that the DOE is moving away from the K-8 model. Chancellor Farina believes students are best served in independent elementary and Middle Schools. The k-8 model will continue to be looked at across the district over time.

One of PS/MS 165 assistant principals exhorted the current families at Mott Hall 2 to be open to any students coming from PS/MS 165 and discussed how wonderful his current students are.

A few Mott Hall 2 parents raised concern about expanding the currently small middle school. Superintendent Altschul assured parents that in communication with the Mott Hall 2 administration she is confident that the school will retain its culture and community when it expands. The school will continue to teach in a heterogenous setting and will not stream students nor isolate the incoming PS/MS 165 students. Mott Hall 2 and PS/MS 165 will start to work together later in the year to bring the two communities together.

Mott Hall 2 parent concerned that a sudden influx of students in the upper grades with lower state test scores may lower the average test scores for Mott Hall 2 and sought assurance that Mott Hall 2 would not

be penalized for these lower scores (ie-Priority or Focus school status). Superintendent Altschul is confident that it would not happen to Mott Hall 2.

A few questions were around staffing. Superintendent Altschul clarified that it is a truncation for PS/MS 165 therefore that teachers and staff would lose their current position and be able to apply elsewhere in the Open Market. Mott Hall II would have full control over their staffing and would not have to offer positions to current PS/MS165 staff.

Submitted by K. Berger