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Comments to the SUNY board on the application of Bronx Success Academy 3 Charter school to be co-located in District 7

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1. Insufficient space in District schools according to DOE's own standards

Though the charter application of Bronx Success Academy 3 claims that "there are more than 6,000 empty seats in District 7 that could be utilized to provide excellent educational options for children," according to the space memorandum recently released by the NYC Department of Education, there is only one elementary school in District 7, PS 277, that has at least 300 excess seats, sufficient for a co-location. PS 277 has approximately 335 extra seats, according to this memo.[1]

Yet as the Bronx Success Academy 3 application reveals, the school plans to grow to 401 students by its third year, outstripping the space in the building.[2] Within five years, it intends to expand to 689 students, far exceeding the space in the building. Upon renewal, the school intends to further expand to eighth grade.[3] There is clearly not sufficient room in the PS 277 building for the charter school to grow to its expected size, without severely overcrowding the students, the classrooms and shared spaces at the existing schools.

Three other buildings in District 7 are also underutilized, according the DOE formula: JHS 22, with fewer than 500 extra seats; IS 184 with about 520 extra seats, and AE Smith HS with about 500 extra seats.

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[1] NYC DOE, Underutilized Space Memorandum as of Oct. 6, 2010, posted at : http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/6EBA8731-4A23-4E36-A528-157D795BA9CE/90273/UnderutilizedSpaceMemorandum100610.pdf

[2] Bronx Success Academy 3 Charter Application, posted at http://www.newyorkcharters.org/pdf/ApplicationsSummer2010/August2010RFP/BronxSuccess3AppRedacted.pdf

5	M301	ARTHUR SCHOMBURG HS (IS 201) - M	HS	626	1,252	M469	Choir Academy of Harlem
7	X027	P.S. 277 - BRONX	PS	519	846	X277	P.S. 277
7	X139	J.H.S. 222 - BRONX	MIDDLE	936	1,413	X224	P.S. / I.S. 224
7	X139	J.H.S. 222 - BRONX	MIDDLE	936	1,413	X334	International Community High School
7	X139	J.H.S. 222 - BRONX	MIDDLE	936	1,413	X343	Academy of Applied Mathematics and Technology
7	X183	J.H.S. 203 - BRONX	MIDDLE	1,075	1,672	X203	M.S. 203
7	X183	J.H.S. 203 - BRONX	MIDDLE	1,075	1,672	X551	Bronx Academy of Letters
7	X184	I.S. 184 - BRONX	MIDDLE	771	1,290	X296	South Bronx Academy for Applied Media
7	X184	I.S. 184 - BRONX	MIDDLE	771	1,290	X298	Academy of Public Relations
7	X184	I.S. 184 - BRONX	MIDDLE	771	1,290	X379	Jill Chaifetz Transfer High School
7	X600	ALFRED E. SMITH HS - X	HS	1,096	1,508	X381	Bronx Haven High School
7	X600	ALFRED E. SMITH HS - X	HS	1,096	1,508	X600	Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical Education High School
8	X084	P.S. 4 - BRONX	PS	733	1,268	X084	P.S./M.S. 084 Orotona Park West

Yet even if the charter was sited in a middle school or high school building, which is unlikely, there are potential problems with this concept as well.

For middle schools, the blue book is aligned to class sizes of 28 and in high school to class sizes of 30, which are much larger than city's Contract for Excellence class size goals of 23 and 25 in these grades, and also much larger than the class sizes that NYC principals believe are necessary for a quality education.[4] (see chart below.)

	UFT Contract limits	target class sizes in "blue book"	Five-Year Plan C4E goals by 2012	class sizes for quality education, acc. to NYC principals
Kindergarten	25	20	19.9	20
1-3 grades	28	20	19.9	20
4-5 (Title 1 Schools)	32	20	22.9	23
4-5 (Non-Title 1)	32	28	22.9	23
6-8 (Title 1 Schools)	30	28	22.9	24
6-8 (Non-Title 1)	33	28	22.9	24
9-12 (core) classes)	34	30	24.5	24

One of the schools currently in IS 184 is also a transfer high school for overage and under-credited students, and is designed to have small class sizes of 18 or less, while the blue book is aligned to class sizes of 30 in these grades. Another school, Bronx Haven, in the AE Smith building is new and has not yet reached its full enrollment.

[4] Prof. Emily Horowitz & Leonie Haimson, "How Crowded Are Our Schools? New Results from a Survey of NYC Public School Principals," October 3, 2008.
http://www.classsizematters.org/principal_survey_report_10.08_final.pdf

2. DOE's "Blue Book" overestimates actual space in school

Even as there is insufficient space according to the formula in the "Blue Book" to accommodate this charter school within the district, the official DOE "Blue book" formula actually overestimates the excess amount of space in schools, according to many experts and NYC principals. [5]

This is not only because the formula is aligned with overly large class sizes, as mentioned above. The formula also fails to allow for sufficient space for cluster rooms and specialty rooms, and does not take into account the actual number of students who require special education and intervention at each school. [6]

According to the school's CEP snapshot, there are high numbers of special education students in the school; 24 of them in self-contained classes, 46 in CTT classes, and 23 who receive services; totaling 93 students out of 519; or nearly 20 percent. [7] This is substantially higher than the overall city rate of 16 percent students with disabilities.[8]

Special Education Enrollment:			
(As of October 31)	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
# in Self-Contained Classes	19	19	24
# in Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) Classes	42	37	46
Number all others	24	31	23
These students are included in the enrollment information above.			

Thus if a new school is inserted in the building, special education students may be forced into hallways or closets to receive their mandated services. There are also 90 students in bi-lingual or ESL classes, who require services and/or smaller class sizes as well.

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[5] See letter to Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein from NY City Council speaker Christine Quinn and Councilmember Robert Jackson, dated Oct. 28, 2008; also principal survey in: Prof. Emily Horowitz1 & Leonie Haimson, "How Crowded Are Our Schools?" October 3, 2008.

[6] "A Better Capital Plan:, October 2008; A Report from the the Manhattan Task Force on School Overcrowding, Class Size Matters, the United Federation of Teachers, and The Center for Arts Education; http://www.classsizematters.org/A_Better_Capital_Plan_final_final.pdf

[7] PS 277X, CEP School Demographics and Accountability Snapshot 2009-2010; http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/oaosi/cepdata/2009-10/cepdata_X277.pdf

[8] NYC DOE, Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, "Accelerating Learning & Achievement of All Students: A System-wide Initiative: An Update to the Citywide Council on Special Education, September 16, 2010.

Since the establishment and co-location of Bronx Success Academy 1 and 2 this fall, class sizes have grown at PS 146, according to the principal, and special education students are now being provided their services in the hallways of PS 30, the two schools which share their buildings with these charter schools.[9]

3. Expected continued enrollment growth in District 7

In addition, enrollment is increasing in District 7, as it is in many parts of the city, with a 5 percent increase in Kindergarten general education in 2009-2010 school year.[10] This enrollment growth is expected to continue in future years.

DOE projections reveal that there will be 5,352 additional residential units created in the District by 2012, and 7,241 additional residential units by 2017.[11] According to the city's CEQR (City Environmental Quality Review) standards, each unit would be expected to generate .39 elementary students, .16 middle school students, and .19 HS students.[12]

Table 6-1a
Multipliers for Estimating Public School Students
Generated by New Housing Units of All Sizes

Borough	Elementary level per unit (Age 4-10)	Middle school level per unit (Age 11-13)	High school level per unit (Age 14-17)
BRONX	0.39	0.16	0.19
BROOKLYN	0.29	0.12	0.14
MANHATTAN	0.12	0.04	0.06
QUEENS	0.28	0.12	0.14
STATEN ISLAND	0.21	0.09	0.14

Note: Housing units exclusively for seniors, aged 55 or older, or New York City Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) supportive housing facilities for special needs populations may be excluded from the analysis. HPD supportive housing facilities consist of studios for single adults who are referred to HPD by the Department of Homeless Services.
Source: New York City School Construction Authority, 2008.

Thus we can estimate that there will be a need for about 2087 additional elementary seats, 856 middle school seats, and 1017 high school seats in the district 7 by 2012.

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[9] Rob Sgobbo, "Public schools feeling squeeze of charters," NY Daily News, September 14, 2010.

[10] Enrollment data provided by the NYC Independent Budget Office.

[11] NYC School Construction Authority, Projected New Housing Starts as Used in 2008-2017 Enrollment Projection for 2010-2014 Capital Plan; posted at http://source.nycsca.org/pdf/capitalplan/2009_HousingWebChart.pdf

[12] New York City's Revised City Environmental Quality Review ("CEQR") Technical Manual, May 17, 2010; at http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/downloads/pdf/2010_ceqr_tm/2010_ceqr_tm_ch06_community_facilities_and_services.pdf

Yet there is not a single new seat or school planned for the district in the School Construction Authority's five-year capital plan for 2010-2014.[13]

Conclusions

We urge you to reject the Bronx Success Academy 3 application, based upon the fact that there is insufficient space within District 7 school buildings, without causing severe overcrowding and further jeopardizing the quality of education of the students who attend existing district schools.

If the SUNY board authorizes this charter school, it will likely cause class sizes to rise above recommended levels in the district's schools, as well as cause the loss of critical cluster and intervention spaces for special needs students.

[13] NYC Department of Education 2010 – 2014 Five-Year Capital Plan - Proposed Amendment - February 2010 - Approved June 2010; posted at http://source.nycsca.org/pdf/capitalplan/2010/Feb2010-2014CapitalPlan.pdf