Public Hearing Summary

Charter School:	Achievement First Aspire and Achievement First Linden Charter Schools
Hearing Date:	November 21, 2017
Hearing Location:	Building K306, 970 Vermont Street, Brooklyn (CSD 19)
Start Time	6:00 p.m.
End Time	8:00 p.m.

Background:

The New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") proposes to re-site and co-locate the middle school grades of Achievement First Aspire Charter School ("AF Aspire") to Building K306 ("K306") beginning in the 2018-19 school year. Concurrently, the NYCDOE is proposing to temporarily co-locate grade 5 of Achievement First Linden Charter School ("AF Linden") for a one year period in K306 during the 2018-19 school year. The SUNY authorized Achievement First Charter Schools not-for-profit education corporation operates both charter schools. K306 is located at 970 Vermont Street, Brooklyn, in New York City Community School District ("CSD") 19.

AF Aspire would be re-sited from Building K202, and co-located with P.S. 306 Ethan Allen ("P.S. 306"), a district school serving students in pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. K306 also houses the community-based organization ("CBO"), Partnership with Children. The New York City Panel for Educational Policy ("PEP") already approved this proposal. AF Aspire will expand in K306 to serve one additional grade level per year until its middle school program reaches full scale serving students in 5th through 8th grade in the 2020-21 school year. AF Linden will be temporarily co-located in K306 for the 2018-19 school year. In the 2019-20 school year, AF will relocate to a private facility.

According to the NYCDOE's Enrollment, Capacity, Utilization Report, K306 has the capacity to serve 1,020 students. Currently, the building serves approximately 316 students, yielding a building utilization rate of 31%. According to the NYCDOE, in 2020-21, when the AF Aspire program is at full scale, approximately 599-699 students will be served in K306, yielding a projected utilization rate of approximately 59%-69%, which demonstrates sufficient space for all schools and the CBO.

The NYCDOE Building Usage Plan ("BUP") allocates AF Aspire 20 full-size rooms and four half-size rooms by the 2020-21 school year.

Hearing Notes:

Approximately 75 people attended the hearing. CSD 19 Superintendent Dr. Thomas McBryde, Jr. facilitated the hearing.

Principal Zachary Segall of AF Aspire spoke in favor of the co-location. He stated he is looking to provide space for enrichment programs and to share the space and partner with the district school.

Inez Barron, New York City Council Member, spoke in opposition of the co-location. She stated that historically, district schools have lost space and expansion programs because they have to give up space to charters. She discussed district schools that previously lost a video studio, garden space, and space for students with individualized education programs. She stated that her experience working for the NYCDOE for 36 years and 18 years in the classroom gives her first-hand experience that schools lose space during assessment of utilization. She discussed how art, music, and other program rooms are not counted and those rooms get lost.

Omowale Clay, a representative from New York City Council Member Inez Barron's office, spoke in opposition of the co-location. He stated that she is concerned that co-location undermines the public schools and that the projections show the P.S. 306 population going down while the AF Aspire population goes up. He stated that charter schools are not limited in who they can serve or recruit, and that they have budgets to advertise schools whereas public schools do not. He stated that the privatization of education cannot work and that charter schools are privately run but are not public schools. He said that charter schools are employment centers for teachers and instructors who are not from the community; they are principally white and the students are principally black and Latino. He stated he believes in self-determination and communities should not be narrowed into an educational channel that is a contradiction of what they are.

An AF Aspire parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated that educators breathe life into scholars every day and that the school is cultivating future doctors, lawyers, and council people but needs the space to properly educate them. She stated that her student attended a district school for one year before being selected for AF Aspire and the AF staff is extraordinary. She stated that partnering with P.S. 306 would be a good compromise.

An AF Linden parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated that her son had trouble learning to read and that now excels in reading and math. She stated that she has seen what charter schools have to offer, and that AF prepares scholars for college, career, and life. She said that the school is helping toward the goal of providing education for every child, everywhere, and that co-location is needed to maintain the same level of education AF children are receiving.

Samantha Sanacore, founding Director of Operations for Achievement First Charter Schools, spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated that she attended a joint hearing three years ago and heard the same issues but co-location has made the schools stronger. She discussed working with the

NYCDOE and that data shows co-located schools get stronger together. She said she is excited to collaborate with P.S. 306.

An AF Linden parent spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated that she would take a new school over a jail cell and that she sees potential in every student within the charter school and public school. She stated that she supports AF Linden and creating more rooms for future leaders and creating more space to build a strong community.

A grandparent of an AF Linden student spoke in favor of the co-location. She stated that her grandchildren struggled in public school, and that AF Linden helps the parents and students with new concepts. She stated that teachers are hands-on, and she can text teachers and they text her back. She stated that AF Linden gives her grandchildren the opportunity to challenge and exceed their potential, academically and morally, and that every child deserves a great education.

Preliminary Determination:

The Institute reviewed the Educational Impact Statement ("EIS") and the BUP prepared by the NYCDOE for the facility at issue. The Institute also inspected the space at the time of the hearing and found it to be a typical NYCDOE building that appeared to be in compliance with applicable law. Based on the documentation prepared by the NYCDOE and the information in the charter schools' renewal (AF Aspire) or charter (AF Linden) applications, the Institute also finds that the proposed use of the space by the charter schools would not violate applicable law.

Based on the site review, the physical space proposed to be allotted to the charter schools was safe and adequate. In addition, there appears to be sufficient common spaces and resource spaces to be shared by the charter schools, the district school and the CBO in the building. Finally, the Institute notes that the BUP, at the time of the co-location hearing, was in draft form. Pursuant to New York Education Law, school leadership teams from the co-located schools are required to agree on a plan to utilize common spaces in the building. As such, the BUP will not be finalized until the co-location is finalized.

With respect to public comments, the Institute thanks the members of the community and elected representatives for their candor. The Institute notes that SUNY has no authority over NYCDOE decisions regarding the physical locations of NYCDOE schools, grants, or programs. SUNY also has no positive authority to place schools into NYCDOE space.

As the charter schools propose to add facilities in the CSD or NYC borough set forth in their charter applications, the Institute only needs to determine whether the space, and the charter schools' use of the space, would be in compliance with the schools' charter and applicable law. In such cases, SUNY does not separately approve the schools' location. Therefore, as the Institute has held the hearing on behalf of the SUNY Trustees as required by the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended), it proposes to approve the facility for use by the charter schools subject to compliance with the terms of their charter agreement regarding facilities.