Please see the jointly written letter below:

Dear P.S. 305, P.S. 20 and Arts & Letters families,

Last spring the superintendent of District 13, Kamar Samuels, and members of the Office of District Planning invited administrators, teachers, and parents from Arts & Letters, P.S. 305, and P.S. 20 to form a working group to discuss a potential move for Arts & Letters into the K305 building by the 2020-2021 school year. So far, this working group has met three times. During the first meeting, the group discussed the needs and priorities of each school community, along with each group’s hopes and fears surrounding the potential move. At the second meeting we looked at school and building data for all three schools and discussed a number of scenarios about how the potential move could happen.

The working group convened for a third time last week. Superintendent Samuels and representatives from the Office of District Planning put up three of the scenarios we had previous discussed for further exploration:

1) a “split-siting” for Arts & Letters, with the school split by grade bands with one part remaining in the K020 building and the other in the K305 building.
2) co-location of Arts & Letters and P.S. 305 in the K305 building,
3) the merging of Arts and Letters and P.S. 305 in the K305 building

Below are descriptions of what each means within the DOE.

- A “split-siting” is when a part of a school is located in a different building than the building in which the school is currently located.
- A “co-location” is when two or more schools are located in the same building and may share common spaces, such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries and cafeterias.
- A “merger” is when two or more existing schools are combined into one school. In a merger students, staff, and resources are combined under one District Borough Number.
The working group discussed the pros and cons of each of these scenarios. Split-siting was a concern for the Arts & Letters representatives. They felt that many of the developmental benefits of a K-8 school would be diminished if the lower grades were separated from the upper grades. There was also concern raised by the DOE officials who advised against split-siting any K-8 school.

Given that P.S. 20, Arts & Letters and P.S. 305 have been co-located within their respective buildings for many years, the working group had a lot to say about this possibility. The pros were that schools had total control over staffing, the vision and culture of the school and there was potential for collaboration across schools for building upgrades. The problems raised with co-location were about the daily difficulties around sharing space, and the limits it places on a school community’s growth within a building. In this discussion the problems far outweighed the benefits. The lack of space in the co-located K020 building is preventing both P.S.20 and Arts & Letters from growing. With this problem in mind, the proposal to co-locate Arts & Letters and P.S. 305 would recreate the same complications but in the K305 building.

The working group concluded that, within the parameters of the possible scenarios presented to us, the best way forward is for Arts & Letters to merge with P.S. 305 in building K305 beginning in the 2020-2021 school year. We believe this plan would help grow enrollment, strengthen programmatic offerings, expand resources, and promote diversity and integration.

There are lots of questions that still need to be asked and answered. Many of the questions are common across all three of our schools like “What will happen next?” “When will I get a chance to voice my thoughts?” “How will my school community change?” and “Will the schools be funded so as to thrive with this move and merger?” Some are individual to each school like “Will P.S. 20 be given time to grow into the space that Arts & Letters is leaving or will the building take in another but smaller DOE program?” or for Arts & Letters and P.S. 305 “How will the merger affect teachers?” And “What about my principal?” We want all of the questions, those we share and those that are specific to our individual schools to be answered in the coming months.

We are currently waiting for the Office of District Planning to provide the specifics around next steps and an anticipated timeline for further community engagement. As the possible merger proceeds through the DOE process, there will be moments for us to come together to talk about it and for opportunities and concerns to be expressed. Our doors will be open and we will be scheduling times to talk with you one on one and in groups. We look forward to discussing next steps as we develop plans that best serve the interests of our students and our school communities.

Sincerely,

Ayanna Behin
President of Community Education Council (CEC) District 13

Lena Barbera
Principal P.S. 20

Pilar Ramos
Principal (I.A.) P.S. 305

John O’Reilly
Principal
Academy of Arts & Letters
Welcome to...

New Staff Members

Genevieve Rose Massett - 1st Grade
Sheana Powell - 7th and 8th Grade Math
Amy Wenzel - Visual

Arts K-4

The A&L Counseling Room
Back to School Highlights

A&L August Staff Professional Development Institute
Around the Recess Yard