



New York City Council Admissions Hearing

NYC Department of Education
January 25, 2023



Spring 2022 Listening Tour: Engaging families to be our true partners

30+ meetings with:

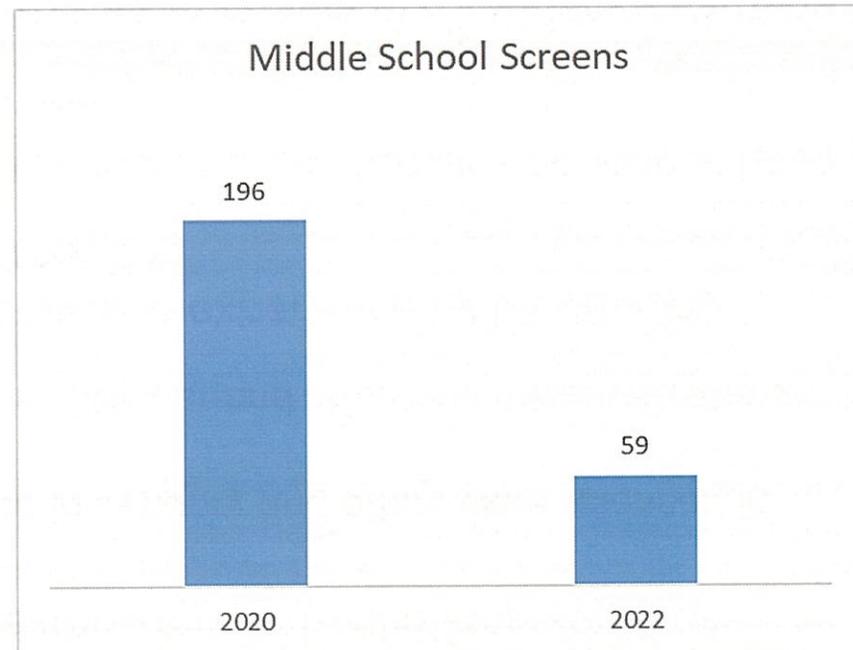
- **PARENTS:** We carried out four trainings for parent coordinators in targeted districts in which we provided guidance on how to facilitate focus groups on the topic of admissions. Parent coordinators were then asked to hold feedback sessions with their families and provide notes back to us. We also spoke with parent-employees of the DOE who had previously gone through the admissions process.
- **COMMUNITY & ADVOCACY GROUPS:** We spoke with several community groups to help us hear perspectives of families or students that we could not effectively reach directly, as well as many groups comprised of parents, educators, academics, and other stakeholders with expertise in education (including NYCIC, Advocates for Children, PLACE, Feerick Center/Appleseed, CACF, UFT Counselors, CCHS, IntegrateNYC)
- **SCHOOL LEADERS:** We hosted 15 focus groups with principals across all grade levels.
- **SCHOOL STAFF:** We surveyed all middle and high school counselors/support staff and hosted a live feedback session.
- **COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCILS:** We surveyed all CECs on what they believe OSE's top three priorities for admissions should be next year.
- **STUDENTS:** We met with members of IntegrateNYC to hear perspectives on admissions.

Fall 2023 Improvements

- Move admissions timeline earlier and release high school offers ahead of independent school timeline.
 - In the past 2 years, admissions launched in January and offers were released in May/June.
 - Moving forward, admissions will launch in October and offers will release in March.
- Improve MySchools virtual audition submission experience by introducing clearer buttons and confirmation of submission.
- Launch an Open House Calendar in MySchools so that families no longer have to navigate to multiple sites to learn about tours.
- Improve application and waitlist experience by providing more detailed demand data and displaying the number of waitlist offers schools have previously made.

Middle School Admissions Over Time

- District-based process with various admissions methods, including lottery, zoned, audition, screened.
- Pre-Pandemic: ~200 screened programs across the City that reviewed academic and behavioral characteristics of students.
- Pandemic: Pause on middle school screening.
- Today:
 - Superintendents engaged communities to determine what the admissions landscape in the district should look like, including whether screened programs should exist based on instructional and community needs.
 - Overall number of schools with academic screens is 59.



High School Admissions Over Time

- Pre-Pandemic: Citywide process with various admissions methods, including Open, Ed Opt, Audition, Screened.
 - Many schools give priority to students from the borough.
 - Broad range of screening criteria; lack of clarity and consistency.
- Pandemic: Centralized ranking and more streamlined selection criteria at screened programs. In 2022, students were admitted to screened programs in groups.
- Today:
 - A more discrete grouping system, with the top 15% of students in each school or the City falling into the top group of screened applicants.
 - Representation from every middle school in NYC and similar demographic representation of top students to previous years.
 - Earlier timeline, earlier offers.

Race	8th Graders Citywide	Offers to Highly Selective Screened Programs for Fall 2020	Offers to Highly Selective Screened Programs for Fall 2022	This Year's Top 15%
Asian	16%	34%	29%	32%
Black	26%	12%	16%	10%
Hispanic	42%	16%	24%	23%
White	14%	26%	22%	24%
Other	2%	3%	4%	4%
Private	-	8%	5%	7%
Number of Students	~76,000	~9,000	~8,000	~13,000

Note: This year's data is based on enrolled students as of summer 2022 and is subject to change.

**Testimony of NYC Public Schools
on New Admissions Processes
Before the City Council Committee on Education**

January 25, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and members of the Education Committee. I am Dan Weisberg, First Deputy Chancellor of NYC Public Schools and I am pleased to be here today with Chief Enrollment Officer Sarah Kleinhandler, as well as other talented members of our team. In a moment, I will turn it over to Sarah, who will speak in greater depth about our admissions processes and policies. Before she does, I want to talk briefly about our broad vision for our school system as a whole.

It is our fundamental belief and guiding principle that every student can achieve excellence and every school has the capacity to make that happen – we just need to support them getting there. Our entire administration is focused on uplifting ALL schools and ALL students. In order to accomplish this, the Chancellor has laid out his pillars that are guiding our efforts to reimagine NYC Public Schools and the student experience. Chancellor Banks's first pillar, community engagement, has led our work since the beginning and it is a value that is reflected clearly in our policymaking about admissions. These policies are not designed to reflect one particular ideology or to find one-size-fits-all solutions which don't exist, but to facilitate a system that is responsive to our families and communities to the greatest possible extent.

Chancellor Banks and I strongly believe in the power of diversity in our schools. On a personal level, I am not only the product of NYC Public Schools but was blessed to have attended integrated schools, where my classmates and friends were white, Black, Latino, Asian, low-income, high-income and everything in between. I understood at a young age the fundamental truth that the differences among us are engines of creativity, laughter and brilliance and that understanding has been the foundation for my entire career in education.

Research reflects the tangible and important benefits of diverse schools – higher graduation rates, test scores, and helping students become more civically minded and tolerant. So we are committed to supporting integration efforts that are community driven, by and for families. It is the only way these efforts truly succeed.

And we are not going to wait for integration to progress across our communities before we act. Our main focus is to ensure that **all** of our city's schools are high-quality, responsive to the needs and demands of local communities and our students and families. This is our charge and one the Chancellor has repeatedly made clear.

I will now turn it over to our Chief Enrollment Officer Sarah Kleinhandler. Thank you.

Testimony of Sarah Kleinhandler, Chief Enrollment Officer for NYC Public Schools

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and members of the Education Committee here today. My name is Sarah Kleinhandler and I am the Chief Enrollment Officer for NYC Public Schools. I am joined here today by Nadiya Chadha, Senior Director for Strategic Affairs in my office. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the admissions processes at NYC Public Schools and the work of the Office of Student Enrollment.

Before I begin, I'd like to share a little about my background. I have been with the DOE for 26 years. I began my career in October 1996 as a high school English teacher at Louis D. Brandies High School in District 3. I was hired in October in response to the long line of students wrapped around the building for the first two months of school waiting for placement. The image of the line of students replicated itself year after year. Later I became the Assistant Principal at Life Sciences Secondary School, then a literacy instructional specialist, and eventually came to the Office of Student Enrollment, where I oversaw the launch of our on-line applications and waitlists while striving to make the experience a fair and better one for families and schools. Even now, I remember the line of students around the building and keep that in mind as I think about the enrollment experience I want families to have.

The Office of Student Enrollment manages admissions and enrollment for over 300,000 students each year. We run the admissions processes for 3-K, Pre-K, Kindergarten, Gifted and Talented, Middle School and High School. Our twelve Family Welcome Centers support families who are newly arrived in New York City and need a school placement, as well as families who need a transfer or require other enrollment help. The Office of Student Enrollment also oversees the P311 call center, and we have teams dedicated to outreach and enrollment for special populations like students with disabilities and students in temporary housing. We offer services to families in multiple languages.

To put it simply, our goal is to make applying to school simple, easy, and intuitive for families at every grade level.

Community Engagement

From the moment Chancellor Banks took office a little over a year ago, he laid out a vision for NYC Public Schools that included engaging families to be our true partners. That commitment to community engagement has driven everything happening in our school system, particularly when it comes to our admissions policies and processes. Over the last year, the Office of Student Enrollment has renewed our investment in community engagement, to listen critically and implement suggestions and feedback from families where we can. This past spring, we launched a listening tour with the purpose of soliciting ideas and perspectives on how best to improve the admissions process, hosting over 30 meetings with a variety of stakeholders, including parents, community & advocacy groups, school leaders, school staff, and students. While not perfect, we have made engagement and feedback an integral part of our work rather than just paying lip service to it.

Admissions Process Changes

For many parents, admissions is the first contact they have with NYC Public Schools, so it is essential that we make the enrollment process accessible and seamless. Tackling the Chancellor's vision of reimagining the student experience must start with admissions. Family feedback has prompted many immediate and tangible improvements in our processes. Specifically:

- After two years of extremely delayed timelines, the middle school and high school admissions applications were opened earlier this year. An earlier application launch means earlier offers for families, which this year is early spring. This timeline enables schools and families to more easily plan and ask questions of the schools their children will be attending. Relatedly, we publicly released the dates of application openings in advance, so that schools and families could plan and prepare for open houses, research schools, and apply on time. As always, all our resources are available in multiple languages.
- To make the application and admissions process more transparent and intuitive, we launched a citywide Events Calendar within the MySchools application system, which is available in the top 9 DOE languages. Every school in our system is encouraged to use the calendar to advertise and attract students and families to open houses, information sessions, and more. There are currently over 3,400 events listed across all our admissions processes. The calendar is searchable by grade span and can be filtered to each family's needs. We also made other improvements in MySchools, including:
 - Improving the on-line tool for submitting auditions to schools, a shift in practice that happened during the pandemic. This year, families received an email confirming their successful upload as well as a receipt for all types of submissions.
 - For middle and high school, we added more information to each school and program's MySchools page, including a filter for applicants per seat, which helps families search for low, middle, and high demand programs as they build a balanced application.
 - After offers are released, families are added to waitlists or can use waitlists to find another school option. When waitlists open this spring, we will display information about how many waitlist offers were made by schools in the past, giving families more context about their waitlist position. Additionally, this past year we extended waitlists to close in September so that any open seats are filled fairly and transparently.

We will continue to implement improvements on an ongoing basis to make the admissions process as straightforward and family centered as we can.

Middle and High School Admissions Policies

The family feedback we received also led to changes in the middle and high school admissions process. For middle school, fifth grade families have long had the opportunity to apply to a range of middle school options, typically within their local community school district. Prior to the pandemic, many programs admitted students through random selection, while others chose students based on their academic records, which is called screening.

During the pandemic, there was a citywide pause on screening at middle schools because there was inadequate academic data to enable schools to select students. Now that schools have by and large returned to the norm, Chancellor Banks asked each Superintendent to conduct engagement with their communities, including their CECs, principals, families, and others, to determine if and where middle school screened programs should resume, based on the district's instructional and community needs. Some ultimately kept their districts completely unscreened, while others selected a few schools to be screened based on historical practice and community feedback. As a result of their thoughtful engagement, each district has a tailored admissions process that has brought the overall number of schools with academic screens down to 59, from 196 prior to the pandemic. This robust process ensured that decisions about middle school screens reflected local needs and were communicated to families in advance of the middle school application opening in October.

Moving to high schools, we have more than 700 programs across 400 schools for students to apply to. Each year, eighth graders can apply to as many as twelve schools. Like middle schools, high schools have different admissions methods. Most are "open" programs, where the only thing a family needs to do is apply to school and students are then selected randomly. Other so-called "Ed Opt" programs select randomly but aim to admit an academically mixed group of students by prioritizing a portion of seats for students from each academic group. In addition, there are approximately 120 high schools that use screening, admitting students based on their academic record, and sometimes additional school-based assessments, such as an essay or portfolio.

Historically, each screened high school had its own criteria for admission and conducted its own evaluation process, which was confusing for families. During the pandemic, the DOE moved schools to a simplified screening process using more standardized criteria. There was also a shift away from having schools handle their own ranking of students and instead had the MySchools system rank students automatically. Families have told us that those simplifications made admissions easier and more transparent, so we have kept it in place.

Last year, screened high schools admitted students in "groups," with top-performing students in group 1 being admitted first, then lower-performing students in group 2 being admitted next, and so on. Under last year's screening criteria, approximately 60 percent of applicants fell into group 1. In our engagement around admissions, we heard from many stakeholders that the criteria for the top group was not stringent enough for screened programs, inadequately rewarding some students for their hard work. At the same time, we heard that the shift to standard admissions criteria helped make the process simpler to navigate. In addition, the group admissions method resulted in greater diversity and representation at some of our most in-demand high schools. These are not easy decisions to make. We looked at our process last year, took the feedback and adjusted the High School Process specifically for screened schools.

We modified the criteria for the screening process so that this year any student who is in the top-performing 15 percent of their school or the top 15 percent of the city is included in group 1. This change narrowed the top group to about 20 percent of students. At the same time, it preserved access for students

from every middle school across the city, allowing for greater diversity at screened programs compared to before the pandemic.

Thanks to the feedback we received from families, and our ability to make these changes in early fall, we were able to move up the timelines for both processes. High school offers will be released in March and middle school offers will be released in April. In the past two cycles, offers were released in late spring and early summer, which left little time for families and schools to prepare before the end of the school year.

In addition to a more thoughtful process, Chancellor Banks believes firmly that while there are academically brilliant children in every neighborhood, many students have to travel long hours to reach academically accelerated learning high schools. To fill that gap in some underserved communities of color, three new accelerated learning academies will be opened in Fall 2024 – informed by community needs. Those schools will be located in the South Bronx, Ocean Hill-Brownsville, and Southeast Queens.

Kindergarten and G&T

As with middle and high school, for Kindergarten and Gifted and Talented (G&T) admissions, we strove for greater simplicity and access. For years, there were two distinct processes for kindergarten and G&T admissions, which resulted in two different offers, on two different timelines, creating more work and more uncertainty for families. Recognizing an opportunity for simplification by combining the two applications, we surveyed a representative group of pre-K parents and received more than 600 responses. The majority of those surveyed were in favor of combining the applications, which will allow us to make offers to families sooner. We hope that combining these processes will raise awareness of our variety of kindergarten offerings to all applicants and simplify the admissions experience. Once families apply for G&T, children are evaluated either by their current pre-K teacher, or by staff from the Division of Early Childhood Education using a nomination tool that reviews gifted qualities.

These changes are building on the expansion of Gifted & Talented seats that was introduced last year in response to DOE's engagement with diverse groups of parents and community stakeholders. This administration added 100 Kindergarten seats and 1,000 third-grade G&T seats, expanding both entry points to all districts. With all of these changes, we are making significant strides towards a more equitable and accessible system.

Early Childhood

Finally, for 3K and Pre-K, we will continue to work with our partners in the Early Childhood division to ensure that we are capturing feedback and adjusting where we can. We are glad to announce that both applications opened this morning. As with the other grade bands, interested families may apply to up to 12 choices. There are a range of seat types for 3K and Pre-K, such as full day seats, which are available to all applicants, as well as extended day and year or Head Start seats, which are only available to families that qualify based on need or income. Every Pre-K applicant receives an offer.

Legislation

I will now turn to the proposed legislation. **Intro 0403** would require the Department of Education to distribute information on and applications for IDNYC to all high school students. We support the goals of this legislation and look forward to working with the Council on it.

Intro 0338 establishes a bullying prevention task force. The Department of Education is committed to ensuring that schools are places where all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported. Our Office of Safety and Youth Development has been deeply invested in this work, including through ongoing collaborations with community stakeholders, and we have made significant progress. So we look forward to further conversations and working with Council on this bill.

Conclusion

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the DOE and my team in the Office of Student Enrollment for all the work that they have put into making the enrollment experience for newly arriving students as seamless as possible. We have had staff at the Navigation Center, hotels, and our Family Welcome Centers available to counsel and support thousands of newly arriving families in their language so that their children can begin attending school immediately. I am proud to be on their team.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our improvements to the admissions process over the past year. As I said earlier in the testimony, we are looking forward to continuing our practice of engaging with communities throughout the year to ensure that we are responding thoughtfully to community needs. We plan to hold more listening sessions with families and community groups in collaboration with the DOE's Family and Community Engagement arm so that we can continue to improve and provide the best possible admissions process for our students. We welcome the Council's feedback and questions as always.



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
BRAD LANDER

**Testimony to the City Council Education Committee on the
NYC Department of Education's Admissions Processes and the Path to Achieving a Less
Segregated NYC School System**

January 25, 2023

Comptroller Lander: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and members of the City Council Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the status of the NYC Department of Education's (DOE) admissions policies. I am joined by my colleague, our Chief Equity Officer in the Office of Comptroller, Sadye Campoamor, who previously served as Executive Director for Family and Community Empowerment at DOE and was a member of the District 15 Diversity Plan Working Group.

Public education is both the foundation of our democracy, a place where young people learn how to be active members of our diverse society, and also a microcosm of its shortcomings, since the patterns of our segregated and unequal world reproduce themselves in and through our schools. Here in the 3rd most segregated City in the nation, we see every day how far we still have to go towards an inclusive, multiracial democracy where young people of all backgrounds have the opportunity and support to thrive. Nowhere is that more true than in our schools.

While admissions is the topic of this hearing, and an important lever for change, I want to make clear on the outset that admissions it is *in no way* the only tool we must deploy to achieve equitable and excellent public schools. As the students of *IntegrateNYC* taught us, school integration will only be successful if we work to achieve **all 5R's of Integration**: Race in enrollment, Real Relationships, Resources, Representation, and Restorative Practices. More on this later.

As a City Councilmember, I began working on confronting school segregation in 2014, on the 60th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, when the UCLA Civil Rights Project reported that New York has the most segregated schools in the nation. After an extensive Council hearing, along with Councilmembers Ritchie Torres and Inez Barron, I sponsored the School Diversity Accountability Act, which required the DOE to start tracking and reporting on school segregation and called on the DOE to take action to address it.

Nearly three years later – after persistent organizing by students through *IntegrateNYC* and *Teens Take Charge*, and ongoing advocacy by the Alliance for School Integration and Desegregation, which we initially convened in the City Council cafeteria – in the spring 2017, the DOE finally announced their commitment to supporting learning environments that reflected the diversity of New York City and launched the School Diversity Advisory Group. The commitment declared: “*We believe all students benefit from diverse and inclusive schools and classrooms, where all families and school staff are supported and welcomed.*”

As part of its plan, the DOE offered resources to community school districts to examine segregation in their schools, to conduct deep engagement with student, families, and educators, and develop plans to integrate their schools. As the City Council Member for District 15, working together with the D15 Community Education Council, ASID, Applesseed, IntegrateNYC, and Parents for Middle School Equity, my Council office petitioned DOE to make District 15 the first to under a diversity planning process. We then engaged in a year-long community engagement process that created the “*D15 Diversity Plan*.”

The D15 Community School District-based planning process was grounded in family and community engagement with the goal of fostering more diverse learning environments for D15 middle schoolers. District 15 is a diverse district, including Sunset Park, Red Hook, Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Windsor Terrace and Kensington. However, at that time, 10 out of the 11 middle schools in the district were screened schools, resulting in highly segregated learning environments. Despite the district’s overall diversity, three of the middle schools were overwhelmingly white, while others were nearly entirely black and Latino.

The planning process was anchored by a 16-member working group, which held 4 public workshops, and dozens of community conversations and meetings. The proposed recommendations included:

- The removal of all middle school screens, while maintaining family choice through ranking preferences.
- Creation of an admissions priority for students who qualify as low-income, English Language Learners (ELLs) or Students in Temporary Housing for 52% of all seats at all D15 middle schools—a threshold that mirrored the overall representation of these students across the district.
- Detailed proposals for achieving this transition, including an equity team in every D15 school, professional development for teachers, and support for each school, so that the plan is not just about moving bodies around, but about everything that needs to happen after to support all students in getting an excellent education.

In September 2018 the Mayor and Chancellor approved the D15 Diversity Plan and nearly all of its 60 recommendations. In the fall of 2019, a far more integrated set of 6th graders reported to our middle schools. According to a report by the MIT School of Economics, “*Integrating New York City Schools: The Role of Admissions Criteria and Family preferences*” from 2015-2021 economic segregation in D15 middle schools declined by 27%, and racial segregation in D15 middle schools declined by 14%.

The planning firm WXY Studio is currently working with D15 Superintendent Rafael Alvarez and the D15 CED on a multi-pronged evaluation of the D15 Diversity Plan, which will examine multiple data sets with a student-centered lens, including surveys, focus groups in every middle school, and a review of data. While the full findings will not be available until the spring, feedback from the focus groups so far indicate:

- Many families and staff celebrate the values of the plan and the work to integrate D15 middle schools.
- Many families and staff named that the admissions process without screens has decreased stress for students.
- Transportation has been a major challenge in the implementation of the plan.

- The loss of Title I funds from schools that previously had 60% low-income students and have dropped just below that threshold is a harmful consequence, and a needless one, since the district is serving just as many low-income students, but they are now more evenly spread across its schools.
- Some parents/caregivers desire support around building out inclusive PTAs.
- Thoughtful implementation of the diversity plan takes resources, support, alignment, collective feedback and review, and oversight.

I look forward to reviewing the full results when they come out this spring. While there remains much to learn and improve, the *DI5 Diversity Plan* is a model of authentic DOE engagement with families, school staff, and community to create public policy that is sustainable, and can affect both admissions and school culture over time.

In response to both this successful process and broader advocacy, in 2019 the Council passed Local Law 225, sponsored by Councilmember Rivera, which mandated the establishment of District Diversity Working Groups in all 32 Community School Districts within 5 years. During the 2019-2020 school year, DOE began this process with 5 additional districts, with more planned.

At that time, as had been the case in District 15, many middle schools in districts across the city used screened admissions processes. According to DOE, 196 (41%) of the 478 middle schools used some screens, and 112 (23%) of them were fully screened. In District 1, 2, 3, and 13, the overwhelming majority of middle schools were fully screened. Commonly used screens included attendance, lateness, test scores, behavioral assessments, report card grades and auditions.

Many of the screens selected for parental resources and behaviors, rather than the abilities of the kids – are 9-year-olds really responsible for getting themselves to school on time? But even with those that are supposed to identify something about aptitude or ability, do we really believe that our best path to shared educational success is to sort kids for life, based on their 4th grade marks and standardized test scores? Screened middle-school admissions functioned largely to maintain segregated school settings and perpetuate the notion that some schools are “good schools” – those that have screened to select “good students” – while other schools – the ones with the majority of kids – are not.

The pandemic paused the district diversity planning processes, and in some cases shifted much of the narrative around our public schools. Anyone who listened to the School Colors Season 2 podcast, focusing on District 28, heard many of the challenges.

At the same time, though, the pandemic simultaneously put a pause on screening. Without kids in the classrooms for so much of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, it was rightly deemed inappropriate to use data from those pandemic school years for admissions screening purposes. The pandemic policy remained in place until this fall, when Chancellor Banks announced a new admissions policy allowing districts to choose whether to restore or discontinue screens.

The data from the choices that districts made is significant. For the 2023-24 admissions cycle, 12 school districts (more than one-third of the total), including District 1, 2, 3, and 13 (where the majority of middle schools were previously fully screened) have chosen to continue the complete removal of middle-school screens. Of the 478 middle schools citywide, there are now a total of 59 (12%) screened middle schools programs, down from 196 (40%) before the pandemic.

Principals from Manhattan District 3 petitioned to keep the removal of school screens and wrote “ranking and sorting our students goes against a celebration of the rich diversities and races our students bring with them.” District 2 eliminated middle-school screens, but introduced additional advanced math and science classes, showing it is possible to eliminate barriers while still offering a range of options to support academic excellence. Many families and educators indicated that they believe students will benefit academically and emotionally – especially important given the mental health challenges elevated by the pandemic – from integrated schools.

Given this dramatic transition, New York City has a real opportunity to move forward – but it will not happen successfully without support. Eliminating screens is an important first step to lessen school segregation, but it must be accompanied by the resources and collective attention to the 5Rs or real integration, and the broader supports necessary to help all kids learn and thrive.

We recommend expanding the equity audit and review process underway in D15 to the broader set of schools and districts that have eliminated screens, in order to understand what’s working, what needs improvement, and what supports must be put in place for success.

Sadye Campoamor: Thank you Comptroller Lander for allowing me to join you. I want to acknowledge Education Chair Joseph along with Education Committee members and the Council. Thank you for all you do.

Good Afternoon, my name is Sadye Campoamor and I serve as Chief Equity Officer at the Office of the NYC Comptroller. I am a proud New York City Public School graduate and current public-school parent. I also served at the NYCDOE for 8 years most recently as the Executive Director for Family & Community Empowerment where I supported and led the DOE’s efforts in School Diversity and Integration.

It is a great honor to be here today. These issues are not only of significant professional importance but also informed by my personal and lived experience as student in segregated schools, and now as a parent.

I come before you today to reiterate what the Comptroller shared, that this is not a call for moving children of color into predominantly white spaces, as we know this has caused harm, and reinforces mental models that perpetuate both interpersonal, and internalized racism. Nor is this a call to replace or devalue much needed affinity spaces.

As a member of the D15 Diversity Plan’s Working Group I recall being enlightened and educated by student activists from the group *IntegrateNYC*. Their *5R framework*, later adopted by the Mayor and Chancellor in 2019 offered the NYCDOE a chance to depart from old habits of 20th century “desegregation” and instead offered us all an invitation to do 21st century, “Real Integration.”

So what are the **5Rs**?

Representation – asks us to look at the racial representation of the educators and all school staff in the building and the impact that has on school culture and academic achievement. In New York City close to 80% of the teaching staff self-identify as white women when nearly 85% of all NYC Public School students are of color.

Resources – asks us to fund schools equitably. It also requires that we take an expansive view of what it means to be a “equitably resourced school.” Access to internships, PTA funding, and social capital that leads to upwards mobility. I want to applaud the hard work of the FSF Task Force, the Mayor and the Chancellor for adding additional weights to the FSF formula, as it puts into practice centering our most institutionally marginalized students.

Restorative Practices – asks us to re-think our approach and relationship to school discipline. And who gets suspended. It also interrogates the notion of safety, and that restorative approaches are explicitly embedded in all integration planning.

Real Relationships – invites school communities to dig deeper with one another. I was born in El Salvador and am from the Nahua People. I had never heard my country, nor this group of indigenous people mentioned once. At best, this can make students feel how I felt: invisible, and at worst give students a sense of shame about who they are and where they come from. NYC Outward Bound Schools have a wonderful model called “Crew” that embeds this time of relationship building into every school day that we can all learn from.

Last, but not least – **Race in Enrollment**, which speaks to student demographics in schools. Across the City, 77% of Black and Latinx students attend schools that are less than 10% white. And according to a Stanford University study “the average Black student in New York City had a poverty rate 22 percentage points higher than that of the average white student.”

Concentrations of poverty are associated with endemic violence, higher levels of stress, and many other disadvantages. This coupled with racial isolation are the conditions that conspire to make segregation so pernicious.

Before I go, I wanted to share a few key ingredients that made our D15 Working Group successful. As you continue to encourage the DOE to follow through with their mandate under the “*Local Law in relation to district diversity working groups.*” I believe in harnessing and improving on successful strategies is mission critical to achieving our shared goals.

This work takes intentionality and resources to reduce barriers for participation such as:

1. Shared anti-racist and DEI training for all working group members to ensure shared language and that a student-centered equity lens is front and center
2. Providing childcare
3. Meals if you are meeting during dinner
4. Translation & interpretation so all can truly participate
5. Transportation
6. Student voice paired with Youth/Adult practices so that young people can meaningfully participate, are heard and feel valued.
7. Make data visually accessible, transparent, and digestible for all to interact with.

These community-driven processes are not a destination, nor are they a one size fits all model. Instead, they are a participatory mechanism to foster a more integrated school system that does more than just moves bodies and recreates harm from the past, but critically examines our admissions policies from an equity lens.

We have educational models to draw from right now, in: Integrated Co Teaching (ICT) classes, School-wide enrichment, Community Schools, School Re-design and building utilization, performance-based assessment schools and more!

The invitation today, is for us to keep going as if our multiracial democracy depends on it.

Because it does.

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you. This is generational work I am a proud to be a small part of it alongside you all.

Comptroller Lander: One final note. While community-led processes like the one in District 15 can make real progress, while district- and school-level engagement is critical, while I am grateful that the Chancellor has supported the community-driven integration model, and while I am genuinely encouraged by the number of schools and districts that chose to eliminate middle-school screens this year ... still, the commitment to ending school segregation cannot be left up to individual districts or schools. It is a collective obligation.

The UCLA Civil Rights Project’s 2021 report found that New York’s schools remain the most segregated in the country. As we were reminded by Dr. King’s words last week, “Justice too long delayed, is justice denied.” What we are learning from the work we have done thus far must help us improve and strengthen our practice, and find the courage to move forward more broadly. This work is up to all of us, and all our students deserve it.

Thank you.

District	Fall 2023 Admissions Middle School Screening			Difference Any Screen from 2020	Difference Fully Screened from 2020
	Total MS	Any Screen MS	Fully Screened MS		
1	8	0	0	-7	-6
2	23	0	0	-18	-16
3	18	0	0	-15	-15
4	13	1	1	-7	-6
5	11	3	3	0	0
6	19	1	1	-8	-4
7	12	0	0	-5	-2
8	16	0	0	-2	0
9	25	1	1	-6	-6
10	27	4	1	-8	-4
11	20	0	0	-3	0
12	14	0	0	0	0
13	10	0	0	-8	-8
14	10	0	0	-6	-5
15	12	0	0	0	0
16	6	0	0	-1	0
17	16	4	2	-5	-2
18	9	1	1	-3	0
19	17	0	0	-7	-3
20	16	3	1	-8	0

21	16	6	0	0	-2
22	10	1	0	-4	0
23	11	1	1	-2	-2
24	17	3	1	-3	0
25	15	3	0	2	0
26	7	5	0	0	0
27	23	2	2	-3	-2
28	14	1	1	-3	-1
29	17	5	0	3	-1
30	17	4	2	-3	-2
31	16	4	0	-2	0
32	9	2	2	-4	0
Citywide G&Ts	4	4	4	-1	-1
Total	478	59	24	-137	-88

Source: NYC Department of Education



**United Federation of Teachers Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Education's Oversight Hearing on the DOE's New Admissions
Processes**

January 25, 2023

Good afternoon. My name is Janella Hinds, and I am the UFT'S vice president for academic high schools. I am joined by Leo Gordon, our vice president for career and technical education high schools, and by Richard Mantell, our vice president for middle schools. On behalf of the union's more than 190,000 members, we would like to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph for holding today's hearing. We value your committee's stewardship over these issues and your consistent advocacy for excellent schools for all children.

To start, we would like to express our support for the bills being voted on at today's hearing. Establishing a bullying prevention task force, amending the administrative code of the city of New York in relation to distributing IDNYC applications to all high school students, and calling on the New York City Department of Education to carry out instruction in bicycle safety in all New York City schools are **all worthy of Council action.**

On the issue of the DOE's new admission processes, the UFT is committed to using multiple measures to allow students to show what they know and can do academically and creating rich high school and middle school experiences for all students in all communities. **Our city's education system is weakened** when we oversimplify the definition of academic success as higher scores on standardized tests rather than the demonstration of critical thinking and other skills that are harder to assess with current testing models. We believe there are many students in our schools who have the capacity to benefit from greater opportunities to engage with challenging concepts and activities and that all schools would benefit from having students with a wider variety of experiences and backgrounds sharing classrooms.

As we have expressed in the past, we support the expansion of academically integrated middle and high schools that make challenging learning opportunities available to a wider range of students, rather than the expansion of screening processes that divide students before they arrive in our middle and high school buildings. To achieve this, we need a top to bottom retooling of the DOE's approach to high school and middle school enrollment, particularly the current overuse of admissions screens in which the test scores and grades of children ages 12 and under carry such weight and can be gamed and manipulated.

Over the past three years of the pandemic, schools and students across the city have faced unprecedented challenges, with academic and social emotional impacts that cut across all our communities. The pandemic required a pause on state tests and, therefore, an adjustment to previous screening processes at many of our middle and high schools that had relied on those test scores and on factors such as student attendance to make admissions decisions. These shifts have had the effect of broadening access to academic opportunities for our city's students in a way we believe is heading in the right direction – away from isolating students in separate schools based on their grades and test scores at young ages, which research has shown to have negative effects on their academic progress.

As I wrote in an op-ed article in March 2019, the “concentration of high-needs students is a product of current screening procedures and the city's complicated high school assignment process. It directly contradicts the findings that when high-need students are concentrated in high schools, it becomes much more difficult for all students to succeed and graduate.” And, at the same time, grouping together “similar” students who received “A” grades works against creating the most challenging and rigorous learning environments in these instances.

At numerous schools and districts that shifted away from the overuse of screens before and during the pandemic, students are thriving. In District 15, covering Park Slope and Sunset Park in Brooklyn, the elimination in 2019 of all middle school screens and the launch of Diversity in Admissions policies that set aside seats for students from underrepresented groups has resulted in both better access to a wider range of schools for students across the district and in the elimination of the stress of competing for seats in a short list of coveted schools for families across the district, all while enrollment has remained steady. When given the chance to bring back middle school screens this fall, superintendents from other districts looked at these results and those of schools in their own communities, and they made similar decisions to mostly maintain the more accessible admissions models for their own local schools, and the number of middle schools citywide that used screens for admission dropped from 196 to 59.

At the high school level, we have multiple examples of schools where students' academic progress has thrived in academically diverse settings. Harvest Collegiate HS in Manhattan and the Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice in Brooklyn have worked to ensure that they admit students from across the academic spectrum even as more advanced students have applied, and they continue to offer access to their project-based learning model for all young people.

The Lab School for Collaborative Studies in Manhattan, which we recently visited, is another school that has used Diversity in Admissions policies to offer opportunities for challenging academic work to a broader range of students in the past several years. During our visit, we saw students with special education needs working side by side with their peers on art and science projects and holding thoughtful discussions about recent literature. All of these schools have maintained high graduation rates and are in high demand even as they have maintained and expanded the academic diversity of the students they admit.

Crucially, the UFT is committed to providing all students, including those who would benefit from access to coursework above their grade level for some subjects, rich academic high school and middle school environments. To support this goal, the union supports the expansion of the use of the district's current "ed-option" formula for high school admissions – one that ensures schools will admit students from across the achievement spectrum while being able to offer higher-level courses to students who would benefit from those opportunities – and a continued move away from both middle school and high school screens. The city would also do well to expand Discovery programs that are committed to ensuring academic diversity in schools, which has been one way previously excluded groups, such as those in the Asian community, have had greater representation in schools with more historically competitive enrollments.

The UFT also supports more access to academically challenging work inside a higher proportion of our high schools and middle schools. At the high school level, larger high schools can often better provide this breadth of offerings and are better suited to serve a range of academic standings and interests. We particularly need to create more large comprehensive high school options for students in Queens, which lacks an appropriate number of seats in classrooms and schools that offer a high level of academic challenge to all students. Throughout this process, it is essential to have conversations with all citizen groups in New York City to ensure no particular groups are excluded in creating the best schools, which necessarily reflect the city in which they sit.

We do a disservice to our students and their parents when we reinforce the narrative that only the eight specialized high schools and other screened middle and high schools are acceptable choices in the city for students who are seeking advanced coursework and success in college and careers. There are successful schools that are hidden jewels, where educators, students and communities work together to empower students academically and socially, and there are many more middle and high school students throughout the city who are capable of succeeding in rigorous academic settings than those enrolled in our screened schools. And I have heard from students and teachers at our screened schools that the increased emphasis in recent years on standardized test scores as the primary measure of academic success has resulted in classroom environments that are limited in their ability to prepare students to use their skills and knowledge in career and college contexts.

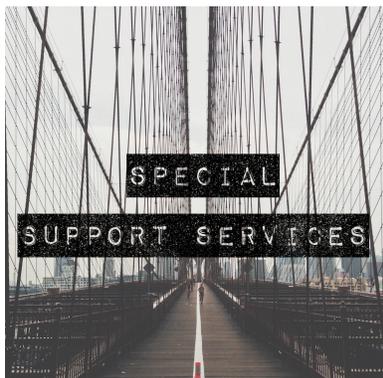
In my own two decades of experience as a classroom teacher, I have met multiple students who were brilliant and engaged participants in classroom conversations and whose presence and perspective benefited their peers, but whose test scores and grades did not necessarily reflect their full capacity. We know from their own accounts that many of our city's current leaders didn't have the highest grades or test scores as students but had the opportunity in school and beyond to develop the skills that led them to their current roles. My classroom and all schools benefit when we do not artificially separate our young people based on limited measures, but instead encourage all our students to see themselves as successful learners in and contributors to our school communities. All students, including those who do well on standardized tests, are negatively impacted when those assessments

become a replacement for real learning experiences and the opportunity to explore the full range of their capacity.

The current system of admissions screening concentrates opportunities for advanced work in a subset of schools and contradicts our school system's duty to offer all students the opportunity to reach their full potential throughout their time in our classrooms. We believe every school community benefits from eliminating arbitrary measures of talent and intelligence and from being exposed to the voices of a wider range of its fellow New Yorkers, and we look forward to collaborating with the Council to find a better way to serve all our students' needs.

End Notes

1. "Academic segregation hurts public schools," Janella Hinds, UFT vice president, The Chief, March 19, 2019, Op-Ed
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/17/nyregion/high-school-admissions-nyc.html>
3. <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/10/26/23424407/nyc-middle-school-applications-selective-admissions-lottery>



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Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)

New York City Council Education Committee

1.25.2023

My name is Jennifer Choi, I'm a Queens resident, a parent of two high school students with IEPs, and a special education advocate at Special Support Services. I am also the founder of a 700 member group called New York City Parents of Teens with Disabilities.

For Students with Disabilities when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states:

“Every DOE middle school and high school welcomes and serves students with disabilities according to their IEPs.”

But what they don't state is that schools will not supervise the school open houses and tours in which parents are directly or indirectly told that the school will only **provide some but not all** of these services.

Some of the things parents and students hear are:

1. Related services such as PT and OT will have to be provided outside of school. This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services.
2. We do not offer integrated co-teaching (meaning a special education teacher and a general education teacher) services for World Language classes even though you need that to graduate with a Regents diploma. Basically this means no special education instruction for students with IEPs to learn world languages.

3. There are no ICT services for AP Classes even though these classes are also used toward completing their high school diploma.
4. They are told that there are no self-contained or special classes which really hurts a child especially if that school is specialized with certain career technical programs.
5. Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.
6. And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. "Don't come here."
7. Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. That is against federal education [policy](#).
8. Also against federal education policy is the practice of Gifted and Talented Schools ask students to remove ICT off their IEP before entry.
9. Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. This tells parents of students who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: **Self-Serve Discrimination** because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. Even if the parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity and what they've done about it. Please also read the *Chalkbeat* article entitled, "[Many High Schools are Off Limits to Students with Disabilities](#)" that speaks to how students with disabilities face discrimination in the admissions process.

More importantly, please examine the schools who are doing it right. [Townsend Harris High School](#), a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child's education and their child's disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent's office also provides exemplary support to parents. Both institutions **look at special education more as a point of excellence rather than a miserable point of compliance. That is what makes students feel safe and included.**

The 20% Rule- Only in New York City:

Did you know that simply having an IEP or 504 plan does not qualify a disabled child to be in the students with disabilities (SWD) category for admissions? Another area that requires inspection is what parents call the 20% Rule in which a student needs a specific amount of special education instructional services to qualify as a student with a disability (SWD) in the admissions process. Ignoring the 13 disability classifications put forth by the IDEA, the DOE arbitrarily determines who qualifies for a Student with Disability seat grouping by determining the amount of special education instruction provided. This rule has a huge impact as it allows only some but not all students with disabilities to be placed in a different pool of applicants that often has less applicants per seat, especially for a very competitive screened school.

This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is not only unfair, this is not legal, especially for students with physical disabilities.

I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you.

Yours truly,



Jennifer Choi, Managing Member and Advocate

Special Support Services, LLC

jenn@specialsupportservices.com

<https://specialsupportservices.com/>

Please see the attached email communication between myself and the Bronx High School of Science as it takes a month with multiple emails with different people to find out that Bronx Science will not fully honor the IEP for my child who was accepted through their admissions process. The student chose another school. This happens to other children too.



Andrew Nasser <nasser@bxscience.edu>
To: Jennifer Choi <[redacted]>
Cc: Sandra Smith <smith2@bxscience.edu>

Wed, Jun 9, 2021 at 1:03 PM

Congratulations! You must be beyond proud of him!

On Wed, Jun 9, 2021 at 1:00 PM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Thank you so much!
He's the salutatorian at school.

Have a great day.

Best,

Jennifer Choi

On Wed, Jun 9, 2021 at 12:48 PM Andrew Nasser <nasser@bxscience.edu> wrote:

Hello Ms. Choi,
If [redacted] were to matriculate at Bronx Science, we would do all we could to offer ICT in World Language.

I know the high school process is a large one and wish you and [redacted] all the best as you make this big decision!

Based on what I read, [redacted] sounds like an amazing young man. I know he will flourish wherever he goes!

Andrew

On Wed, Jun 9, 2021 at 12:12 PM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Hello,
I am following up on this email. Parents have to decide soon. Can you please get back to me?

Thank you

Jennifer Choi

On Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 3:04 PM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Dear Mr. Nasser,
It is good to hear that ICT is offered in all 4 core subjects.

My child has ICT for World Language (LOTE) on his IEP because his IEP Team believed that this was most appropriate for my child at his last annual review meeting. He participated in Italian classes with ICT services for the past three years but he is not taking the competency exam at the end of the year because he was pulled out often for related services. He will not be seeking to do a 2nd year of language in anything. His IEP was made so that whichever language he takes would be supported by ICT services.

Will the school be providing the ICT service in World Language (LOTE) as stipulated by my child's IEP in September?

Thank you.

Jennifer Choi

On Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 11:37 AM Andrew Nasser <nasser@bxscience.edu> wrote:

Dear Ms. Choi,

The ICT is offered in all 4 core subjects, school based supports and individual tutoring is offered in all four subjects. What World Language is [redacted] currently taking?

Andrew

On Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 9:06 AM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Dear Mr. Nasser,

I hope you had a great weekend too.

Thank you for your email. [redacted] has ICT for Language Other Than English course and he really needs this. Are you saying that the school will not provide ICT for LOTE? If so, can you provide a reason?

Thank you very much.

Kind regards,

Jennifer Choi

As he did not answer the whole question. The parent asks again.
6-1-2021

On Tue, Jun 1, 2021 at 8:22 AM Andrew Nasser <nasser@bxscience.edu> wrote:

Dear Ms. Choi,

6-9-2021
Vague answer. Does not say yes and this means he can not say yes that he will follow what is on the student's IEP

We hope you had a wonderful long weekend!

We reviewed [redacted]'s IEP and ICT would be provided in the core classes (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) should [redacted] come to Bronx Science. In addition to ICT, [redacted] would also have the following supports available to him: his Big Sibs (senior students who mentor our 9th graders), Small Group Instruction (either mandated or voluntary. It takes place at the end of the school day, before after school activities begin), National Honor Society Peer Tutors and Tutoring in our school library (during any free time he might have).

Please let us know if you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Andrew

--



Andrew Nasser
Assistant Principal
Pupil Personnel Services
The Bronx High School of Science
Office: (718) 817-7759
Fax: (718) 817-7750
Nasser@bxscience.edu
Room 035L
Gender Pronouns: He, him, his

On Wed, May 26, 2021 at 5:31 PM Andrew Nasser <nasser@bxscience.edu> wrote:

Dear Ms. Choi,
Thank you for your patience as we review what you have submitted. We will be in touch with you no later than Monday.

Kind regards,
Andrew

On Wed, May 26, 2021 at 5:22 PM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Hello,
I'm still waiting to hear from you. Is there anything else you need from me?

Jennifer Choi

On Mon, May 24, 2021 at 8:58 AM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Sure, I am open most of today except for 10:30-11:30 am

Please send me a phone number to call you and a time.

Jennifer Choi

IEP coordinator
needs Asst
Principal to
answer simple
questions

On Fri, May 21, 2021 at 5:40 PM Sandra Smith <smith2@bxscience.edu> wrote:

Hi Ms. Choi,
Having [redacted]'s IEP is helpful for our team. I am also looping in Mr. Nasser, Assistant Principal of Pupil Personnel Services. Would you like to set up a time to discuss [redacted]'s programs and services?

On Fri, May 21, 2021 at 3:59 PM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Hello,
Apparently, families have until June 25 to decide between their specialized and regular offers.

Can you please respond to my question?

My question is the same- Will you be able to provide ICT services?

I have sent you my child's IEP as you requested. Do you require any more information to answer this question?

I am open to speaking on the phone about this. We can schedule a time to talk.

Jennifer Choi

On Thu, May 20, 2021 at 1:05 PM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Hello,
Should we schedule a call to discuss his services?
Thank you.

Jennifer Choi

On Wed, May 19, 2021 at 9:41 AM Jennifer Choi <[redacted]> wrote:

Thank you for writing. I am glad you have his IEP now.

reiterating
simple questions
5-21-2021

Will you have trouble providing the ICT services? If so, which ones?

Jennifer Choi

On Wed, May 19, 2021 at 9:26 AM Sandra Smith <smith2@bxscience.edu> wrote:
Good Morning,

Thank you for your email and for providing [redacted]'s IEP. This is helpful, as I did not yet have access to [redacted] IEP.

On Tue, May 18, 2021 at 4:51 PM Jennifer Choi [redacted] wrote:
Oops, I forgot the attachment. So sorry!

On Tue, May 18, 2021 at 4:48 PM Jennifer Choi [redacted] wrote:
Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for your email.
Here is his IEP. You will see what services he is supposed to have.
My question was if the school will be making sure my child gets ICT for science and math and social studies and science and LOTE? I know you said that you hope to have access to the incoming IEPs soon but what do other students' IEPs have to do with making sure my son has ICT for those classes?

Thank you for offering to talk to me on the phone. I would like to know the answer to these questions before we schedule a call.

Jennifer Choi

On Tue, May 18, 2021 at 3:25 PM Sandra Smith <smith2@bxscience.edu> wrote:

Hi Ms. Choi,
Thank you for reaching out and we look forward to meeting [redacted]. I do not yet have access to IEPs for our incoming class, however, will closely review IEPs once I have access and share the information with Administration to schedule our students. Would you like to set up a time to discuss [redacted]'s IEP and how we can support him as he transitions to Bronx Science? I hope to have access to incoming IEPs soon, however, please also feel free to share it via email

On Tue, May 18, 2021 at 12:39 PM Jennifer Choi [redacted] wrote:
Hello Ms Smith.

Cindy told me to email you.

My child has ICT on his IEP for social studies and math and ELA and science and Language other than English.

Do you have classes doing that now in all the grades?

Will the school provide these ICT services for my child in September?

[redacted]'s mom
Jennifer Choi

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Cynthia Golan** <golanc@bxscience.edu>
Date: Tue, May 18, 2021 at 12:30 PM
Subject: Re: 221359482 [redacted]
To: Jennifer Choi [redacted]

Good afternoon Jennifer and thanks for your email. Ms. Sandra Smith, our IEP/504 Coordinator (smith2@bxscience.edu) would be best equipped to respond to your questions. If you have emailed her and haven't heard back yet, please let me know and I will help facilitate the communication.

Best always,
Cindy

On Sun, May 16, 2021 at 12:05 PM Jennifer Choi [redacted] wrote:
Dear Ms Golan
Thank you.

My child has ICT on his IEP for social studies and math and ELA and science and Language other than English.

Do you have classes doing that now in all the grades?

Will the school provide this for my child next year in September?

[redacted]'s mom

On Fri, May 14, 2021 at 11:52 AM Cynthia Golan <golanc@bxscience.edu> wrote:
Good morning Jennifer. Yes, definitely. Please email me any questions that you may have.

Best always,
Cindy

On Wed, May 12, 2021 at 5:31 PM Jennifer Choi [redacted] wrote:
Thank you Cindy and Lida. Can I ask you questions Cindy?

Jennifer Choi's note:
to get simple
questions answered,
the parent had to
submit personal
information 5-18-2021

Jennifer Choi's note:
The parent coordinator
can not answer these
simple questions. ICT is
a service provided at
almost every school
in this city.

This are the
simple questions
that were asked.

On Wed, May 12, 2021 at 2:45 PM Cynthia Golan <golanc@bxscience.edu> wrote:
Thanks so much Lida. I will respond to the parent.

Best always,
Cindy

On Wed, May 12, 2021 at 2:42 PM HS_Enrollment <HSEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov> wrote:

Good afternoon, Ms. Golan.
I am emailing to inform you that the above-named student has received an offer to Bronx Science and they reached out to us with questions with regard to a student with an IEP. Can you kindly contact the parent (also in this email) and answer any questions they may have?

Thanks,
Lida

High School Admissions
Office of Student Enrollment

Jennifer Choi's note:
This is not the first email to the school. The student originally wrote to the school and did not receive an answer and had to ask the Enrollment Office in getting an answer to special education questions from the Bronx High School of Science
5-12-2021

--
Cynthia Golan
Parent Coordinator
The Bronx High School of Science
golanc@bxscience.edu
Working remotely - please contact via email

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Parent Coordinator
The Bronx High School of Science
golanc@bxscience.edu
Working remotely - please contact via email

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Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn since 1971

**Testimony submitted to the
New York City Council Committee on Education**

**Re: Oversight Hearing: DOE's New Admissions Processes
and
Int. 0338-2022: Establishing a Bullying Prevention Task Force**

January 25, 2023

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Advocates for Children of New York (“AFC”) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Education. Our testimony focuses on recommendations to address barriers to admissions for students from historically marginalized communities to build inclusive, supportive, and effective school environments. Our testimony also supports the creation of a bullying prevention task force and recommends strengthening Int. 0338-2022, the bill establishing this task force, by adding parents and students with lived experience of bullying in or related to school as required members of the task force and paid stipends for their time. We recommend that the task force prioritize researching evidence-based approaches to prevent student-to-student and school staff-to-student bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and sexual harassment and recommend specific strategies schools must implement in order to improve school culture and climate. Finally, we recommend that New York City invest in resources to prevent and address bullying by sustaining and expanding funding for critical initiatives and supports, such as citywide restorative practices, social-emotional learning, school social workers, and student mental health services and supports, including through programs like the Mental Health Continuum.

For 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We speak out for students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, students with mental health needs, students involved in the juvenile or criminal legal system, students who face school discipline, students from immigrant families, and students who are homeless or in foster care. AFC is also a member of Dignity in Schools Campaign-New York (“DSC-NY”), a coalition of youth, parents, educators, and advocates dedicated to shifting the culture of New York City schools away from punishment and exclusion

and towards positive approaches to discipline and safety, and the Campaign for Effective Behavioral Supports in Schools, a coalition that supports increasing student access to mental health services, improving staff training, and creating systemic policies to end the New York City Department of Education's ("DOE's") reliance on punitive, exclusionary practices like the use of Emergency Medical Services ("EMS"), police intervention, and student suspensions to respond to students in behavioral crisis or students with significant mental health needs.

Admissions Processes

One of New York City's greatest strengths is its diversity. Yet, NYC is home to one of the most racially segregated public school systems in the nation. While housing segregation is a major contributing factor, school admissions policies exacerbate the problem by using discriminatory screens, offering few options to students who need placements mid-year, and relying on an application process so difficult to navigate that many families do not participate at all.

In 2019-20:

- 60% of age-eligible children living in shelter did not submit a kindergarten application.
- 35% of age-eligible preschool students with disabilities did not submit a kindergarten application even though these children were already receiving services through the DOE.

NYC should address barriers to admissions for students from historically marginalized communities and build inclusive, supportive, and effective school environments where all students can thrive. NYC should:

- Adopt the recommendations of the School Diversity Advisory Group ("SDAG"). We were proud to serve on the SDAG and urge the City to move forward with these important recommendations for advancing equity, such as:
 - Supporting districts in developing community-driven diversity and integration plans;
 - Eliminating the use of exclusionary admissions criteria like attendance;
 - Implementing culturally responsive practices at all schools; and
 - Expanding efforts to recruit and retain diverse school staff.
- Increase support to help families with application processes from 3-K through high school. We often work with families, including those with low digital literacy or who speak a language other than English, who struggle to navigate the DOE's online application systems or do not feel they have meaningful choices. NYC should help every family understand their school options and provide individualized assistance to families by:
 - Launching new resource centers modeled after the District 1 family resource center and expanding them to assist families with 3-K through high school admissions.
 - Leveraging existing partnerships with community-based organizations and funding new ones to reach immigrant and other underserved communities.
 - Enhancing training for school counselors to provide tailored support.

- Set aside seats at each school for students who need placements after the start of the school year. Newly arrived immigrant youth, students placed in shelters or in foster homes far from their original schools, students reentering school from the juvenile/criminal legal system, and other students who need placements mid-year should not be relegated to schools that did not fill during the admissions process.
- Ensure that as schools accept a more diverse group of students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), schools have resources and tailored supports to meet their needs.

Int. 0338-2022, Establishing a Bullying Prevention Task Force

AFC receives nearly two hundred calls each year from families whose children are either the targets of or accused of bullying behavior in schools. We support the formation of a task force to address the needs of these students and thank Chair Rita Joseph for sponsoring this legislation and moving it forward. Based on our experience working with students facing or engaging in bullying behavior, we have key suggestions on the composition of the task force, the specific topics to be addressed by its members, and funding necessary to implement bullying prevention.

First, we recommend amending Int. 0338-2022, a bill establishing a bullying prevention task force, to add parents and students with lived experience of bullying in or related to school as required members of the task force and to pay them stipends for their time. Their perspective is crucial in order to appropriately address the needs of students engaging in or targeted by bullying behavior. Their time is valuable and deserves compensation.

Second, we strongly recommend the task force examine and devise a plan to prevent and address bullying, discrimination, and harassment of students by school staff. In our work with families of students facing emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges, school discipline, or involvement in the juvenile or criminal legal system, each year we hear stories of students facing bullying, discrimination, and/or harassment by school staff and the resulting harm and trauma that students experience. Here is one example from this school year:

- Both the parent of a student reentering high school and staff at the NYC Administration for Children’s Services (“ACS”) working with the student contacted AFC about bullying, discrimination, and harassment the student faced by a school administrator. Upon arriving at a new high school after leaving a court-ordered facility, the Dean began harassing and bullying the student when learning that he had arrived from Passages Academy, the school for students who are incarcerated. He told the student, “You better not cause any trouble here.” Instead of providing a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive environment, the Dean showed prejudice and

antagonism towards him. Subsequently, the Dean continued to bully the student and excluded him from school without the required due process and academic instruction for behavior the Dean provoked. The Dean even acknowledged in a meeting with the Assistant Principal, the student's mother, and the student's ACS aftercare worker that he had told the student, "You spit on the floor, and I will put you in the floor." Instead of apologizing, the Dean stood by his actions. Furthermore, the Assistant Principal stood by and did nothing. On another occasion, the student's ACS aftercare worker overheard the Dean on a walkie talkie mocking the student's Muslim religion and clothing. This kind of discriminating, harassing, and bullying behavior by any school staff, let alone an administrator, cannot and should not be tolerated. Principals and Superintendents must ensure that school environments are a safe haven for learning.

Third, we recommend the task force prioritize researching evidence-based approaches to prevent and address student-to-student discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying, and sexual harassment of students and recommend specific strategies schools must implement in order to improve school culture and climate and resources. In particular, the task force must recommend strategies that address the needs of students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students, and students from other marginalized groups who are disproportionately targeted by bullying behavior, and sometimes retaliate when the bullying behavior persists.

Historically, the DOE has not permitted the use of restorative practices to address incidents related to bullying and has instead relied on punitive measures. **We strongly recommend the use of restorative practices and social-emotional learning to prevent and address discrimination, bullying, intimidation, harassment, and sexual harassment, when all students involved consent.** Through the use of restorative practices and social-emotional learning, students learn how to build relationships with each other and staff, communicate effectively, empathize, problem solve, and resolve conflicts to prevent problems before they start, and prevent others from escalating.

The New York State Education Department and the New York State Attorney General published joint guidance and model training materials to help schools comply with the Dignity for All Students Act ("DASA").¹ Recognizing that restorative practices help students improve their behavior, the model materials include training tools for schools to implement DASA that list restorative practices as appropriate supports to end bullying, harassment, and discrimination.² Furthermore, other districts use restorative practices to address these behaviors.³ For example, Berkeley Unified School District adopted a policy that "encourages the use of restorative justice and alternative resolutions in lieu of expulsion hearings, even in the most serious cases including cases of sexual assault and sexual

¹ See Press Release: "A.G. Schneiderman And State Education Commissioner Elia Release Guidance And Model Materials To Help School Districts Comply With The Dignity For All Students Act," Aug. 31, 2016, <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-and-state-education-commissioner-elia-releaseguidance-and-model>.

² See New York State Education Department and New York State Center for School Safety, Dignity for All Students Act, Requirements for Schools (Tool for training school employees), 21 (2016), https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/dasa_training_materials_final_-_8.30.16.pdf.

³ See Violence Prevention: Bully Prevention, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, <https://www.ousd.org/Page/1158> (Last modified April 20, 2018).

battery.”⁴ The school board recognized that: “Restorative justice is, in many cases, more likely to repair harm to complainant(s) and likely to be less traumatic to complainant(s) than an adversarial expulsion hearing.”⁵ A national leader in restorative justice has explained that restorative justice provides an option for complainants “to receive healing and vindication in the face [of] the harms suffered.”⁶ Research also indicates the effective use of restorative practices in schools to address bullying.⁷ There is ample support for offering restorative practices to address discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying, and sexual harassment, when all students involved consent.

In addition to restorative practices, curricular strategies, such as culturally responsive education and comprehensive sexual health education, bolster students’ sense of inclusion and safety and create a positive school climate. Culturally responsive education uses educational strategies that leverage aspects of students’ identities to celebrate students, promote cross-cultural connection, and help all students feel valued and develop empathy.⁸ This approach is necessary to prevent bullying behavior and to improve understanding between students of different identities. Comprehensive sexual education provides students with developmentally appropriate and medically accurate information on a broad range of topics related to sexuality.⁹ Teaching comprehensive sexual education is an effective,

⁴ Berkeley Unified School District Board of Education, Board Policy (“BP”) 5144.3, Administrative Regulation (“AR”) 5144.3, Expulsion, (last visited July 25, 2019), <https://www.berkeleyschools.net/schoolboard/policies/>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ See Letter from Sujatha Baliga (sbaliga@impactjustice.org), Director, Restorative Justice Project, Vice President, Impact Research, to Berkeley Unified School District, undated (letter on file with Advocates for Children). There are striking results: “In a study of participating crime victims in Alameda County, including sexual harm victims, over 98% of victims said that they would participate in a RJ process again.” *Id.*

⁷ See, e.g., Center for Safe Schools, Clemson Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life, & Highmark Foundation, Integrating Bullying Prevention and Restorative Practices in Schools: Considerations for Practitioners and Policymakers (2014), <http://www.safeschools.info/content/BPRPWhitePaper2014.pdf> (suggesting ways restorative practices and bullying prevention can be used in tandem); Morrison, B., Bullying and victimization in schools: A restorative justice approach, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, 219 (2002), <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi219> (concluding that restorative justice approaches can be effective in addressing bullying in schools by incorporating a range of processes for maintaining healthy relationships, including community building, conflict resolution, and shame management).

⁸ See New York City Coalition for Education Justice, Chronically Absent: the Exclusion of People of Color from the NYC Elementary School Curriculum (2019), <http://www.nyccej.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/reportCEJ-Chronically-Absent-FINAL.pdf> (describing how culturally responsive education contributes to a healthy school climate for all students); Girls for Gender Equity, The School Girls Deserve, 8 (2017), https://www.ggenyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/GGE_school_girls_deserveDRAFT6FINALWEB.pdf (recommending investment in culturally responsive education).

⁹ Comprehensive sexual education encompasses a broad range of topics related to sexuality, including puberty, reproductive health, interpersonal relationships, body image, harassment, stigma and discrimination, intimate partner violence, gender norms, gender identity, and sexual orientation. See American Public Health Association, Sexuality Education as a Part of Comprehensive Health Education Program in K to 12 Schools, Policy Number 20143 (2014), <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2015/01/23/09/37/sexuality-education-as-part-of-a-comprehensive-health-education-program-in-k-to-12-schools> (supporting comprehensive sexual education programming as an evidence-based way to help students become healthy adults). See also, e.g., American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Comprehensive Sexuality Education Committee Opinion, Number 678 (2018), <https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-and-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Adolescent-Health-Care/Comprehensive-Sexuality-Education?IsMobileSet=false> (affirming that evidences shows that CSE promotes healthy outcomes); American Academy of Pediatrics, Sexuality Education for Children and Adults, 138 Pediatrics 2, e20161348 (2016), <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/138/2/e20161348.full.pdf> (recommending the use of CSE in school).

evidence-based way to empower students with the information and communication and decision-making skills they need to make healthy choices and to create a culture of consent.¹⁰ We recommend that the DOE emphasize and connect these approaches, supports, and strategies to preventing bullying, intimidation, harassment, and sexual harassment.

Moreover, we recommend that any response to bullying developed by the task force focus on non-punitive and non-exclusionary responses, limiting the role of School Safety Agents and other members of the NYPD. Given the bill's composition of the task force, and the inclusion of the Police Commissioner or designee as a required member, we warn against any recommendations that criminalize and harm our students.

Finally, the City must sustain and expand funding for social-emotional and mental health initiatives, such as the Mental Health Continuum and Restorative Practices, which can prevent and address bullying, improve school culture and climate, and provide school staff with critical tools and resources to address students' social-emotional needs to enable them to learn. We commend the DOE for investing in reforms that will help students feel safer in school, including citywide restorative practices, social-emotional learning, more school social workers, and improving access to mental health services and supports through programs like the Mental Health Continuum. However, we are deeply concerned that the Mayor's Preliminary Budget does not include funding for a number of initiatives that provide critical support to students and families.

- **Mental Health Continuum (\$5M):** This innovative model, recently highlighted in the **NYC Speaks Action Plan**, is the first-ever cross-agency partnership (DOE, H+H, DOHMH) to help students struggling with mental health challenges access timely mental healthcare. It will support students at 50 high-needs schools through school partnerships with H+H Child and Adolescent mental health clinics, dedicated staff to provide students with timely access to mental health evaluation and treatment using a combination of on-site school services, tele-health services and clinic-based services, NYC Well hotline to advise school staff with mental health inquiries, Children's Mobile Crisis Teams to respond to students in crisis, school-based mental health managers, training in Collaborative Problem Solving to build school staff capacity to better manage student behavior, and culturally-responsive family engagement. **Funding for the Mental Health Continuum will expire in June 2023 unless extended in the FY 24 budget. At a time when we have a youth mental health crisis, this model is urgently needed.**
- Over the past decade, the DOE has worked to reduce the use of punitive, exclusionary discipline practices like suspensions—which disproportionately harm students of color and students with disabilities and do not make schools safer—and instead, adopt restorative approaches that address students' underlying needs, teach positive behaviors, and keep students in the classroom where they belong. **To this end, the City allocated \$12 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding in FY 2022 and \$14.8 million in FY 2023 to support**

¹⁰ See Girls for Gender Equity, *The Schools that Girls Deserve*, 16 (2017), https://www.ggenyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/GGE_school_girls_deserveDRAFT6FINALWEB.pdf.

the expansion of school-wide restorative justice practices, but this funding is insufficient and expires in October 2024. Restorative practices hold students accountable for their actions, help address the root causes of behavior, and build and heal relationships; their adoption is correlated with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships. The DOE has committed to bringing restorative practices to every middle and high school in New York City. Along those lines, the New York State Education Department just released a **Report to the Board of Regents** with recommendations that school policy and practice must shift from a punitive, exclusionary structure to helping students learn from their mistakes, providing proactive and supportive alternatives to keep students in class, such as restorative practices. Sustaining the progress that has been made in New York City and making this promise a reality will only be possible with continued and expanded funding—at both the individual school and central DOE levels—for full and effective implementation.

We appreciate the Council’s support of the Mental Health Continuum and restorative practices over the past year and urge you to prioritize these programs as the budget process moves forward this year.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to working with members of this Committee to ensure that all students receive the support they need.



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Good afternoon,

My name is Jenna Provenzano, and I am the Youth Transition Specialist at the Center for Independence of the Disabled, CINDY. CIDNY's mission is to ensure full integration, independence, and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural, and civic life of the community.

Today, CIDNY joins this hearing to advocate in support of the establishment of an anti-bullying task force in New York City schools as outlined in Int 0338-2022.

The New York City Department of Education is one of the largest public-school systems in the nation, and serves students representing all races, genders, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability identity.

Historically, differences across these kinds of groups have been known to cause feelings of "otherness", and lead to an increased opportunity for bullying. Recent data indicates that there has been an increase in incidents of bullying in New York City Schools, owing in part to the social isolation students experienced during the period of school closures. Furthermore, students with disabilities are more likely to be victims of bullying stemming from their disabilities, and that are often a response to unmet special education needs. Chalk beat reports that students and families of marginalized groups fall through the cracks when it comes students with disabilities and mental health issues getting the appropriate help they need. Since appropriate help often relies on the family's income and what they can bring to the table. "According to figures from the State education department employees reported a total of 5,875 instances of harassment, discrimination and bullying for the 2017-2018 school year.

Students who are bullied may suffer long term effects that interfere with their daily lives and their social-emotional state. Bullying and otherness are key contributors to stigma surrounding marginalized groups, especially those with disabilities. This stigma often leads to negative self-identification for students with disabilities. In some cases, stigma leads children and families to avoid disability diagnosis as a means of avoiding the negative social ramifications, which also limits the scope of services and supports for that student, ultimately resulting in less desirable academic and post-academic outcomes. Along with this, some of the long-term effects of bullying can prompt disabling anxiety and depression, and serious threat of potential physical injury.

All students should feel safe in school. In fact, students have a right to attend a school where they are safe and supported without the fear of bullying, harassment, or discrimination. Bullying of a student because of their disability is a violation of their right under the law to a Free and Appropriate Public Education. CIDNY advocates for this right to safe, equitable, accessible and socially fulfilling education for all students with



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disabilities, and we believe that the implementation of INT 0338-2022 is a key step towards that goal. In addition, we call on this task force to keenly examine disability-related bullying prevention protocols. The proposed task force would better support the current policies through the reinforcement of conflict resolution experts in bullying prevention, mental health counselors, and other school safety and education. In addition to these initiatives, CIDNY is advocating that disability literacy should be included in this safety education. Students with disabilities are more often targeted for bullying than other students, and CIDNY believes that understanding and addressing the reasons why this is the case is the first step toward generating effective prevention efforts.

With the increase of bullying in schools, CIDNY believes that the timing of the implementation of this task force is crucial, and fully supports initiatives that protect our most marginalized students, including students with disabilities.

CIDNY is also testifying today to indicate our support regarding bicycle safety in schools per Resolution 0129-2022. CIDNY has been pursuing advocacy efforts to make New York City streets & sidewalks safer for all regarding the recreational use of bicycles and e-bikes, which have become a major safety issue for people with disabilities. We firmly support these efforts to address this important safety concern and are glad to learn of this resolution and the positive changes it aims to achieve in cycling safety at the school level.

Thank you,

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**The New York City Council
Committee on Education
Oversight Hearing – DOE’s New Admissions Processes
Written Testimony Submission from Brooklyn Legal Services
January 25, 2023**

Dear City Council Committee on Education, thank you for the opportunity to testify at this Oversight Hearing on DOE’s new admissions processes.

The DOE has decided to reduce the number of students who will be eligible for a priority seat at screened NYC high schools this year. The screened schools program for high school admissions enacted during the COVID pandemic that disproportionately affected families of color (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/nyregion/coronavirus-race-deaths.html>), actually resulted in a slight increase in racial diversity in high schools in the NYC school district, which is still one of the most racially and socioeconomically segregated school districts in the United States. (<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/new-york-city-schools-most-segregated-in-the-nation>) These screening and priority seat policies are based on the theory that 8th grade children who had achieved good grades in middle school had “worked hard” and deserved to be in a screened school. Black and brown students are disproportionately underrepresented at these schools. Parents also favored this system. (<https://news.utexas.edu/2022/01/07/racial-demographics-influence-school-choices-for-white-asian-and-latino-parents-finds-study-of-nyc-school-preferences/>)

The long history and continued existence of institutional and structural racism in this country, along with prevalent micro aggressions affecting black, brown and Latinx people is well documented. By raising the grade average threshold for students to qualify for the screened schools program, the DOE is validating and perpetuating a system that gives preference and opportunity to non-black and brown children, as it has since our system of public school education was first created. (<https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Nearly-70-years-after-Brown-decision-New-York-16828901.php>)

Let’s look behind the opportunity given to these non-black and brown students. The idea that good grades are simply a matter of “hard work” is a questionable premise. The socio-economic advantages enjoyed by non-black and brown families who have often benefited from higher quality preschools and neighborhood elementary schools in predominantly white areas of the city, results in an “opportunity” that allows these children to compete for limited seats in screened high schools against students who were structurally and institutionally held back by denying them a similar opportunity. It is a chain of racism that must be broken.

The segregation of schools in NYC has long been driven by the structural racism in housing and real estate, based on federal and state laws that shut people of color out of desirable neighborhoods, and the institutional racism of the real estate and banking industries employing redlining and housing discrimination to maintain racial homogeneity. Segregated neighborhoods

create segregated schools. (<https://eportfolios.macaulay.cuny.edu/vellon18/residential-segregation/jzaki/how-segregation-continues-to-exist-and-threaten-new-york-citys-future-generation/>) Segregated neighborhoods create a situation in which schools in higher income neighborhoods with fewer students of color can provide more resources and opportunities for their students, so that these students receive a better education not only from their better resourced schools, but because they have the advantage from birth of being prepared for school by their more affluent and educated parents. Such students are not only given more educational preparation in the home as preschoolers, but also benefit from exploring the city, the country, and even the world on family vacations. Such travel itself is an early educational opportunity most black and brown children do not enjoy.

Contrast that with black and brown students whose families have had less access to quality education, less access to higher education, less access to higher paying career paths and jobs. Such families are less likely to be able to live or buy homes in neighborhoods with higher performing elementary schools, more economic resources, and more experienced teachers. Many times, such families do not have jobs or income that allow them to travel with their family as much or at all. (<https://www.thecity.nyc/work/2022/2/15/22936440/nyc-black-unemployment-above-15-percent>)

In the wake of the learning loss caused by the pandemic, it is especially crucial for the DOE to address this structural inequity rather than perpetuating admissions systems that continue to punish socially and economically disadvantaged students. Black and brown students have been systemically treated unfairly based on the color of their skin by the banking industry, the job market, NYPD and law enforcement, the courts (<https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-the-criminal-justice-system>), ACS (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/22/nyregion/nyc-acs-racism-abuse-neglect.html>), and even the health and hospital industry through not only institutional racism but through individual racist biases of many leaders and members of such institutions (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/11/business/jpmorgan-banking-racism.html>), from nursery school through higher education.

These problems can seem intractable and insurmountable, with many believing we cannot stop or even improve these systemic American issues of racism in our lifetime. But education is one of the most important institutions affecting all American children – indigenous, black, white, Asian, Latinx, and Middle Eastern. Regardless of the past and present racism in NYC, all children should be able to attend a school where we can all learn to appreciate our differences academically and socially, not one that is segregated based on economic opportunity where students are rewarded for being born with privileges. Every student deserves to be in a racially and economically integrated environment to learn. This is a path to end racism in the future, and a much loftier goal than telling children that they will be rewarded for achieving a 90 average on a playing field that is far from level.

Test scores and grades should not be used as an excuse to put less advantaged students in schools without sports programs (<https://www.fnu.edu/the-link-between-sports-and-academic-performance/>; <https://www.k12dive.com/news/new-york-city-students-file-lawsuit-demanding-equal-access-to-sports-in-hig/527346/>), arts programs

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/nyregion/arts-education-lacking-in-low-income-areas-of-new-york-city-report-says.html>), musical theater, or adequate facilities. These issues have been addressed in postsecondary education with positive results. Research with respect to entrance exams for law school has shown that students of color entering with lower scores than their white peers but learning in the same institution were just as likely as their white peers to complete law school successfully, pass the bar, and become lawyers.

(<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2019/04/15/study-argues-law-schools-limit-black-enrollment-through-lsat>) Moreover, continuing segregation in screened school admissions places the few black and brown students enrolled in these desirable schools in a minority, where they are more likely to be subjected to racial prejudice and macro- and microaggressions by staff and students in the majority.

Once a black or brown 8th grader is told that based on test scores they “failed to achieve” in spite of all the objective reasons that they were affected and traumatized by racism and its long term effects on them

(<https://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/10.3102%2F0034654320938131-FREE/full>) and their family (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/201509/the-link-between-racism-and-ptsd>), and that they will not and cannot compete not only academically but in sports and the arts, they are really being told that they deserve less education, less resources, and should accept their place at the bottom of NYC society.

(<https://www.npr.org/2019/02/26/696794821/why-white-school-districts-have-so-much-more-money>) These marginalized students who are being denied an opportunity to succeed themselves see other more affluent students coming to NYC from other segregated communities around the United States with more and better opportunities to find careers on Broadway, in publishing, fashion, the arts, and music. They watch these students come from all over to attend the many desirable public and private colleges and universities in NYC, places they have been closed out of due to their lack of opportunity. Instead, they will have to find service jobs waiting on these same people as adults. Such a system is distressingly close to a plantation system of hierarchy based on the color of one’s skin.

The clients that Brooklyn Legal Services of LSNYC represents are the families of these students, and we see how they are weighed down by the misery and problems caused by being denied what is now the privileged opportunity of a good education. Instead, our clients must spend their time dealing with inequitable healthcare, predatory financial institutions, student loan inequity, predatory mortgages, targeting by ACS, immigration concerns, substandard housing and evictions as NYC rents rise faster and higher than their income, whether from wages, retirement, disability, or public benefits. Before 2014, when Steve Banks became HRA Commissioner and suspended the practice, ill-advised “welfare to work” laws were even being enforced against young NYC residents receiving public benefits, prohibiting them from going on to higher education, with some even being challenged on their right to attend and graduate high school if they reached the age where they were required to work to maintain their benefits. BLS challenged such practices when they were in effect.

(<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/todays-read-welfare-to-work-has-failed-so-new-york-city-is-trying-something-new/>) Although BLS has an Education Unit, many of our low-income clients of color face so many emergency problems that they are far more likely to prioritize

seeking assistance to maintain their housing, keep their children, and access benefits before they feel they have the luxury to advocate for their children's educational rights.

The segregated school system also perpetuates the ongoing negative treatment of black and brown students in suspension and discipline, who are not given opportunities to learn as children through restorative practices. Far too often, metal detectors are used at schools with predominantly black and brown students, sending a clear message that black and brown students are “dangerous”, even though statistics show more white people have guns than people of color. (<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/06/22/the-demographics-of-gun-ownership/>) Such schools have police and security on site who sometimes treat students like prison inmates, resulting in disproportionate rates of suspensions, especially long-term suspensions, in contrast to predominantly white schools where administrators and staff are comfortable seeing non-black and brown students as *children* and are less likely to call the police or respond aggressively to students who are misbehaving. (<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/perspectives/disproportionality-and-punishment-cre-approach-school-discipline-2019>) Words like “assault” and “harassment” are used to describe young children and teenagers of color, while other students who are not black and brown are perceived as students simply misbehaving, not criminals. (<https://www.k12dive.com/news/decade-of-data-shows-matching-student-teacher-race-reduced-nyc-suspensions/608102/>)

Before we can discuss which students deserve to be in a more challenging learning environment, we need to recognize that every student actually needs to be educated in a diverse school with equal funding, a diverse curriculum (<http://www.nyccej.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Diverse-City-White-Curriculum-3.pdf>; <https://www.silive.com/news/2019/12/books-in-nyc-classrooms-lack-diversity-of-authors-report-shows.html>) and faculty, and fair discipline practices.

The current admissions system for high school also perpetuates the myth that students who need to be academically challenged can only do so by being segregated with other students who have achieved similarly high grades. Students can learn in environments with students of mixed academic achievement. Students who do well academically can take pride in their accomplishments and not be stressed in an unnatural and competitive setting with other students who are all achieving at the same level. Students in the middle can look up to higher achieving students as role models and experts in their areas of interest and achievement. Students struggling academically in general education or students with disabilities can be in an inclusive environment and not be punished for their challenges or disabilities. All students should have opportunities to learn and flourish in one school community. Our children are better off as future members of society when they do not see themselves as the elite, but as part of a diverse student community. (<https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/articles/detracking-in-k-12-classrooms>)

The NYC subway system creates one of the few places in the United States and NY state where high school students can zig zag across the city and explore its beauty and diversity by leaving their neighborhood, not only to learn at school but to embrace the diverse beauty and culture of all New Yorkers. All our schools should reflect the incredible diversity of all of NYC. That is the most worthwhile goal.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Bedard
Senior Attorney
Brooklyn Legal Services
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718-237-5568

From: Poullette Ha <superha74@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, January 27, 2023 5:01 PM
To: Atwell, Jan; Rivera, Chloe; Testimony; Joseph, Rita; Aviles, Alexa; Brannan, Justin
Subject: [EXTERNAL] City Council Testimony on DOE MS and HS admissions

Esteemed Council Members,

My name is Poullette Healy and I'm the 1st Vice President on the Citywide Council on Special Education. I would have loved to have given this testimony in person but I am undergoing emergency surgery and cannot be with you during this very important oversight hearing.

The issue with the way the DOE applications for middle and high school admissions is access. Families have struggled with the application portal every admissions cycle for a multitude of reasons. Every year the server crashes and families are sent into a worry spiral on whether their child's chances of getting into the school of their choice will be compromised. The lottery numbers generated are opaque and confusing allowing for misinformation to fester with little recourse from the Department of Enrollment. Previous provisions for special populations such as ELL students and students with disabilities are no longer in place in this most recent admissions cycle allowing screened programs to continue accepting only the top 1% of students that meet that academic criteria leaving ELL students, students with disabilities and students that opted out of standardized testing out in the cold. The reimplementation of screened admissions only continues to benefit schools looking to maintain their segregist practices and continue marginalizing the communities they reside in. Data has shown during the pandemic that allowing a school choice model in admissions allowed for a more diversified enrollment at the most top performing middle schools such as Mark Twain and Christa McAuliffe and the increase in diversity did not affect the schools overall standing.

<https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/5/11/22431085/nyc-middle-school-offers-2021-integration>

However, it is worth knowing that reports of bullying and fighting increased in both these schools and families reported they did not feel welcomed in these environments that were still predominantly white and Asian populated and the aggressive competitive culture allowed to foster the school dynamic was prevalent in the rise of school bullying. We, as a society, need to take a closer look at the tools that the DOE continue to utilize to separate and track our kids out of certain programs and into others. We cannot continue to bar access to programs due to language access, disabilities or poverty. The CCSE had created a sub-committee to overhaul both district planning and enrollment. We have the commitment and support of the Special Education Office within the DOE to do this important work. I encourage you to engage us in these conversations around admissions. There are solutions to be had and we would love to partner with the City Council Committee on Education to help push for these changes.

Lastly, I would like to share my own experiences with the admissions process when I attempted to enroll my son into high school. My son Lucas is a D75 student. He has been placed in all of his programs his entire life. I, as a parent, would visit various sites prior to his transition year and attempt to request a specific D75 site through the placement officer at the D75 Superintendent office. I would reject the initial placements because of distance or programming. I would go to the Superintendent office weekly and sit and wait to see the placement officer until she was willing to hear my reasons I was requesting a particular site. It would take weeks before I was given my choice. This is how I spent most of my summer break. During the pandemic, Lucas was ready for a larger classroom and we inquired about Inclusion programs. A list of inclusion programs were given to me and I was tasked to call the schools, look on line for any possible virtual tours and determine whether these would be appropriate places for my son. In my calling the schools, I was met with these varying responses:

"We don't have an Inclusion program here."

"Our program is strictly a behavior program. If your child isn't classified as Emotionally Disturbed this won't be the right place for you "

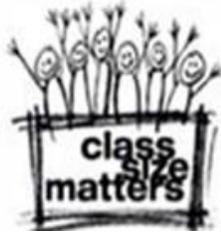
"Our program is a special classroom. Our kids don't mingle with the other kids"

"I've never heard of a D75 program here."

It took me over 2 weeks to actually locate actual Inclusion programs to enroll Lucas in. I then had to sign into My Schools under my daughter's OSIS # because D75 students are placed instead of enrolled and therefore do not have access to the enrollment portal, and look up the program code for each of the inclusion programs that existed and we're appropriate for my son. I then had to send that list of inclusion programs with the codes to my son's guidance counselor to enter into her system for inclusion consideration. It is no wonder the D75 inclusion program has not grown in size since it's conception over 30 years ago! All of this is to say my D75 student should be given the same rights to access when it comes to applying for the school of his choice. These hoops parents of D75 students have to jump through is just another glaring example of the DOE segregist approach to admissions and how it continues to prevent integration of our students by continuing to uphold barriers to access. Please use the collective power of the City Council to push for change and ask that D75 report on what measures they are taking to integrate their students into a more inclusive environment and to work with advocates such as the ones in the CCSE subcommittee on district planning and enrollment in order to develop solutions to address these inequities. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony and thank you for your continued service to our NYC families.

Best Regards,
Paulette Ha-Healy
1st VP on the CCSE

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)



Class Size Matters
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www.classsizematters.org

Testimony before the NYC Council Education Committee on DOE's Admissions Process

January 25, 2023

Thank you for holding these hearings today. My name is Leonie Haimson, and I am the Executive Director of Class Size Matters. As you know, the Legislature overwhelmingly passed a new bill last spring, S9460/A10498, that requires NYC to implement a five-year class size reduction plan beginning in fall of 2022. Gov. Hochul signed the bill into law in September, based upon an agreement that the phase-in will begin Sept. 2023 instead.

The law requires the Department of Education to cap class size at 20 students per class in grades K-3, 23 students in grades 4th-8th, and 25 students in HS classes in core academic subjects by the end of the 2027-8 school year. Each year starting in September 2023, 20 percent of all classes must achieve these caps, with an additional 20 percent of classes each year.

I am very concerned that the NYC Department of Education is not prepared to achieve these caps. There have been no changes in budgeting to allow for smaller classes, and no evident efforts to acquire sufficient space. According to the latest available data in the DOE's Blue Book, their annual Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization reports, last year 347,000 or 38 percent of all students citywide were in schools over 100 percent.

Yet instead of expanding the capital plan for new school construction, the plan adopted last June cut new capacity by over 11,000 school seats. In the new amendment to the capital plan proposed in November, the SCA moved an additional 4,300 additional seats in ten districts into the category of "funded for design only". Our estimate of how many seats will be needed to comply with the new class size mandate range from 48,000 to 100,000, depending on what "efficiency ratio" is used – meaning how many periods a day classrooms and specialty rooms can be scheduled. It takes at least five years to site and build a school in most cases, so the planning for new capacity needs to begin as soon as possible.

It would take fewer seats to comply with the law if enrollment were more equitably allocated across schools. About 20 percent of NYC schools are at 60 percent utilization rates or less, while 28 percent of schools are over 100 percent, and sometimes these schools are sitting close to each other.

Because school funding is tied to enrollment, it is often very difficult to provide a full, well-rounded education at severely underutilized schools. Schools that are very overcrowded face different challenges: They generally have excessive class sizes, many students have to eat lunch early in the morning or late in

the afternoon, and often extracurricular activities and sports are difficult to schedule because the school may be on double or triple shifts.

So it was very disappointing to hear Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg testify in response to CM Aviles at these hearings today there are no changes anticipated in enrollment planning to enable schools to adhere to the new class size caps. Subsequently, in response to questions from CM Krishnan, he said that it was up to the principals at under-enrolled schools to improve their programs to be better able to attract students. Principals have enough to do in order to run their schools than be forced to go out into the community, hand out flyers, and make videos to post on social media, to recruit more students and avoid having to excess teachers and lose programs, as happened in too many schools this year.¹

It really should not be the responsibility of principals to have to market their schools in this way. The entire system of “school choice” created under Mayor Bloomberg depends on a notion of free-market competition, in which good schools would attract more parents, and bad schools would contract and eventually be closed, with new schools and charter schools put in their place. We have had twenty years of this system and it hasn’t work to lift all boats as predicted. Instead, DOE should ensure that all schools are able to provide a quality education, and an important step in doing this is to more equitably distribute enrollment, through rezoning elementary schools and capping admission at the most overcrowded unzoned middle and high schools.

Alleviating overcrowding by redistributing enrollment could provide several important benefits, along with better enabling schools to have sustainable budgets, sufficient staffing and achieve the smaller class size caps in the law. This would also likely create more diversity within schools, as the most underutilized schools tend to have the highest proportion of Black and Hispanic students, and the most overutilized schools the highest proportion of White and Asian students . In the Appendix, I include three charts showing a roughly linear correlation between school utilization rates and the racial breakdown of their student population.

Class Size Matters and many groups have been calling for a Task Force, including parent leaders, advocates, community members, and local elected officials, to help create a workable plan to ensure that class size reduction happens in the most effective and equitable way possible. Many Community Education Councils and the Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council have passed resolutions calling for this Taskforce as well, and many leaders and advocates have signed our letter to the Chancellor, urging him to do so, as there is no time to waste. ² Sadly, so far, Deputy Chancellor Weisberg written responses to CECs concerning this issue have not been encouraging.

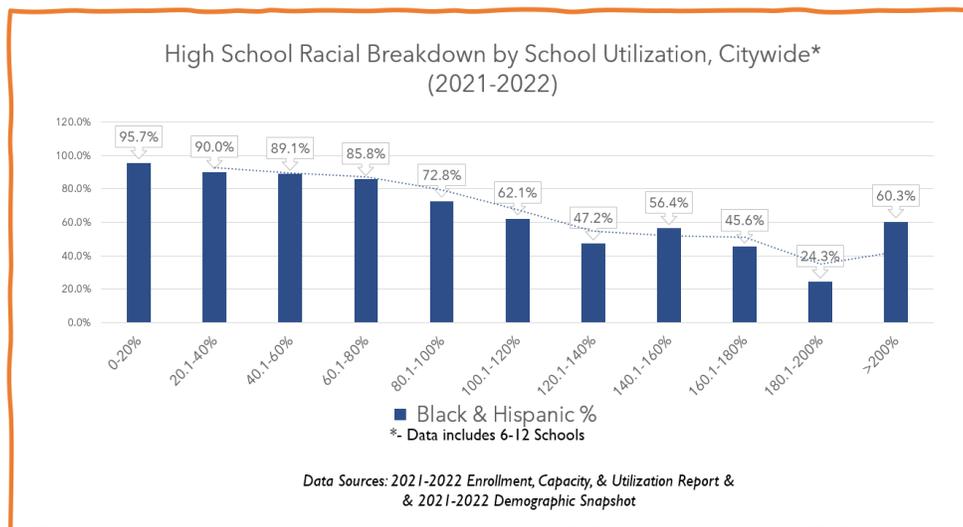
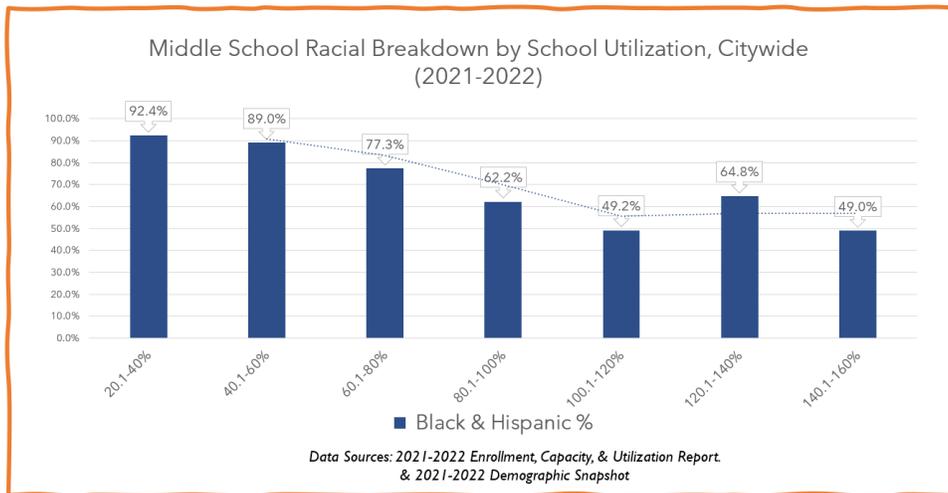
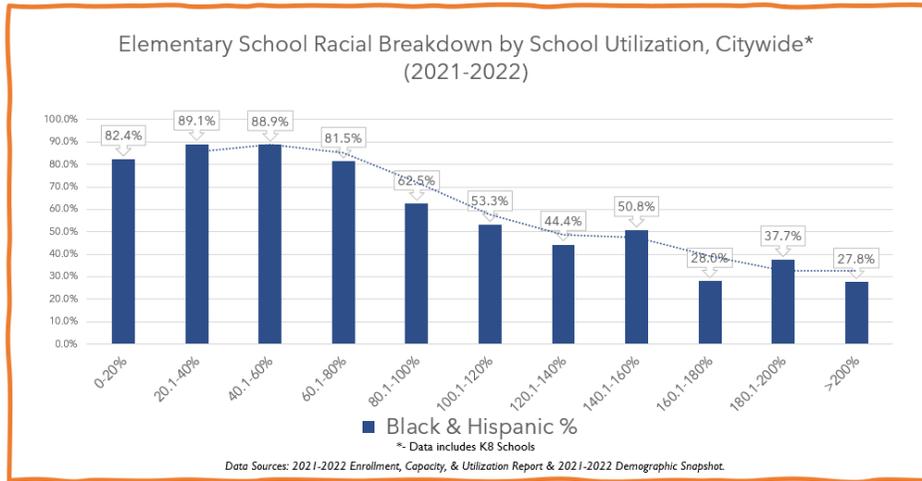
I urge the City Council Education Committee to hold hearings on the DOE’s planning or lack thereof to achieve the five-year caps in the new law, including in the out years, as so far I have seen no evidence that they are preparing to do so.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony today.

¹ See the poignant recent article in Chalkbeat of a principal in the Bronx, desperately and unsuccessfully trying to recruit more students in order not to be forced to lose critical teaching staff. <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/11/2/23437695/nyc-soundview-academy-bronx-budget-cuts-enrollment-declines>

² <https://classsizematters.org/please-join-us-in-urging-that-a-class-size-task-force-be-created-asap-there-is-no-time-to-waste/>

Appendix: The correlation between NYC school utilization rates and student race/ethnicity





The New York City Council Committee on Education Hearing
Wednesday, January 25, 2023

My name is Kulsoom Tapal & I am the Education Policy Coordinator representing the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, otherwise known as CACF. We are the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization bringing together community partners and youth to fight for equity for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI).

Exclusion from curriculum has contributed to long-standing erasure and is a root cause of violence and harassment towards AAPI people. The historic and present erasure has created a seemingly endless cycle of violence and anti-Asian hate incidents both inside and outside the classroom. In 2020, Stop AAPI Hate found that [one in four Asian Youths experience racist bullying in schools](#). Infusing AAPI curricular materials in schools is one crucial way we can address racially-charged bullying while combating ignorance around AAPI communities that leads to hate as it can be helpful in dispelling myths, addressing stereotypes, and preventing misunderstandings that can create animosity between students.

As advocates for the most marginalized Asian American students - English language learners, immigrants, low-income students, and students with disabilities- CACF sees an urgent need for meaningful school admissions reform that accounts for the barriers these students face, alongside in-language, culturally responsive outreach to underserved communities. NYC schools are the most segregated in the US.

It is imperative that this task force addresses this complex issue with a multi-pronged approach. As such, we emphasize that the task force must (1) include representation from the AAPI community (2) consider AAPI curricula as a solution to preventing bullying and (3) mandate reporting of disaggregated data on bullying students of color face in NYC public schools.

We also ask that the DOE (1) presents disaggregated admissions data for AAPI students and (2) commits to admissions integration and providing accessible resources in-language to support AAPI families.

Thank you.

New York City Council, Committee on Education, January 25, 2023

Testimony of Stephen Stowe, President of Community Education Council District 20

Good afternoon Chair Joseph. It's nice to see you again. And good afternoon members of the Education Committee. My name is Stephen Stowe and I serve as President of the Community Education Council for District 20 in southwest Brooklyn. Comments are my own though our CEC has passed several resolutions supporting many of the comments I will make.

Before my prepared statements, I just want to address a point made by Council member Aviles from my district. Most all G&T programs have more demand than available seats. The classroom with 11 in D15 was an exception. It is important to ask if programs are being established in the areas where they are in demand. And if they are being marketed and advertised widely. I know there are many families in D15 that would like a G&T program but may not have been aware or close to this particular program.

As far as the admissions process, Thanks to the DOE for hearing the families that asked to modify admissions policies for accelerated programs and move away from lotteries. I like the 3rd grade onramp in G&T for the reasons that have been discussed. I like giving Superintendents the flexibility to program their districts. But There is room for improvement.

First, All of these new admissions policies based on grades and evaluations are inherently subject to human bias. The Kindergarten G&T admission requires a parent request their child be evaluated. This will inherently favor parents who are in the know or motivated. Parents who are too busy or otherwise unaware will not make the request. Their kids will fall through the cracks. It is also a very short time frame meaning less time for teachers to truly get to evaluate the kids. Furthermore, the current evaluation framework teachers use is biased toward children who are more vocal at a young age. This will surely exclude large numbers of quieter gifted learners. And teachers are being asked to evaluate kids on dozens of areas. Each teacher's methods will vary widely. We especially need to consider that many teachers may be ideologically opposed to G&T.

Seconds, there are also bias concerns in the use of Grades as the sole determinant for the 3rd grade G&T admissions and the middle school screened admissions. If you care about equity, and we want to address these biases in the current policies, the DOE needs to include some type of universal assessment in their admissions policies. If grades are retained as part of admissions, they should use a system based not on the absolute level of a grade but based on students who score a certain percentage level above a given teacher's average grade. That will adjust for teachers who are stricter graders and capture the kids who are above the mean.

Finally, while I applaud the decision to allow District Superintendents to decide on middle school screened admissions, there will be situations in which parents and Superintendents disagree on what such programs should look like. It is a very important decision and there needs to be a feedback process. Engagement on the middle school screening process varied widely by district. I want to point out that simply engaging DOE staff such as principals does not

substitute for engaging parents who are the most important stakeholders in this decision. Supts must be inclusive of all viewpoints in their community. Not wedded to This brings us to what I believe is one of the most important areas for reform – the Superintendent evaluation process. Despite being enshrined in state law 2590-E, the current process is meaningless. CEC's submit an annual Superintendent evaluation but The DOE does not provide responses or engage in discussions and has no incentive to. I encourage the Council to take up the issue of reform of the Superintendent evaluation process as the debate over Mayoral Control extension heats up again very soon. I also happen to think this is a rare area in which parents who often disagree on education issues like Gifted & Talented can actually find some common ground.

Thank you.

*New York City Council Education Committee
Oversight Hearing - DOE's New Admissions Processes*

January 25, 2023

Dear Chair Joseph and Education Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on the High School Admission process. My name is Camille Casaretti and I am the President of the Community Education Council in Brooklyn's District 15, which I have served on for almost 8 years. I've spent most of my life surrounded by public education advocates. My mother and aunt both worked at NYC public high schools for over 28 years and both of my cousins currently teach in NYC public schools, one teaches Kindergarten ICT and the other teaches science in a specialized high school.

My education experience is varied. I have substantial knowledge in education policy and a personal investment in the success of our public school system. I give my time freely and work hard seven days a week to ensure that every child has what they need as well as access to a quantity of opportunities. Over the last 12 years, I have helped shape many of the changes that are lauded in District 15. Prior to my work on the CEC, I was the PTA President at our zoned elementary school, I was a member of the Chancellors' District Planning Working Group, and I am currently serving as Education Policy Committee Chair on the Education Council Consortium. I've participated as an elected and appointed member of two different School Leadership Teams and I serve as Co-Chair of the District Leadership Team in D15. I submit this testimony as an individual, and not as a representative of the organizations or positions with which I am affiliated.

I would like to submit the following recommendations regarding High School Admissions:

- **The Department of Education must end the use of academic screens at all public high schools.** Thanks to admission changes implemented in December 2020¹, under-resourced and historically marginalized students and families have had greater access to public middle and high schools. We've seen that success has come from the removal of academic screens in middle schools and we also know that students thrive in an environment where learning is enriched and inspiring. Every child has the potential for greatness but the way in which the DOE sorts students academically and stunts opportunities should not be allowed. A weighted lottery based admissions method is the only fair way to admit students when applicants exceed available seats. Screening perpetuates a scarcity mindset. Additionally, the current application process is burdensome and stressful for students and families.

¹ <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/12/18/22188384/changes-nyc-school-application-process>

- **Every High School must adopt Diversity in Admissions initiatives.** The use of admissions screens at all levels has been proven to disproportionately exclude Black and Latino, low-income, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities. Many of our public high schools are now participating in an initiative to increase diversity within their schools², whether it be through giving priority to students living in temporary housing (STH), who qualify as low-income (FRL), or are English Language Learners (ELL). The percentage of students varies from school to school and boro to boro. When this initiative was first introduced only a small handful of schools opted to implement the policy. Now, since the pandemic, we see many more schools moving in this direction. They recognize the value and need for a more diverse student body. There is a misconception that accelerated level coursework is not for everyone. We've seen in District 15 that the majority of our 8th graders, when given access and differentiated instruction, are able to achieve 9th grade Regents credits in Algebra and Living Environment. I suggest that within the next 5 years, and as classes are made smaller through the Class Size Bill, the DOE must implement Diversity in Admissions (DIA) initiatives in all public high schools, including the Specialized High Schools.
- **The Department of Education must prioritize language access for families' to navigate the admissions portal.** Our public school system should be accessible including the way in which families access information on admissions. The [myschools](#) portal must be equally accessible and designed to help guide families to the schools that are best for their children. The site is available in 9 languages but there are 146 home languages spoken by our public school families.³ They have the right under federal law to have qualified translation in their preferred language for critical interactions with the school district. High School Admissions are often critical to the future of our children.

Many of the conversations about removal of academic screens and other changes to the High School Admission Process are being led by CECs, Superintendents, Principals, SLTs and our PA and PTA parent leaders. I would invite you, Chair Joseph and Education Committee Members, to please join in these conversations around greater equity and inclusion in our public schools. Changes to the high school admission process is but one small part of a much bigger plan to assure that our school system can provide a fair and just education with a secure foundation that will allow for the growth and support of our children and their children. We can build the society that we would like to see. The future starts today.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations and for your ongoing support.

With respect and admiration,

Camille Casaretti

² <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs/diversity-in-admissions>

³ <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/sy-2021-22-ell-demographics-at-a-glance.pdf>, page 3



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Resolution Calling for the Permanent Elimination of Discriminatory Admissions Methods for Middle and High Schools

The Community and Citywide Education Councils (CCECs) are composed of parents who have been elected or appointed to serve as stakeholders of NYC School Community Districts, and specific cohorts of students, representing NYC public school students and their families.

Approved on September 20, 2022, the following resolution offers CEC 15's position regarding Screening methods for admission to middle and high schools:

WHEREAS, students are returning to a public school system in the midst of recovering from the COVID-19 global health crisis that illuminated the long-standing inequities in our public education system;

WHEREAS, under-resourced and historically marginalized students and families have greater access to public middle and high schools due to admission changes implemented in December 2020;

WHEREAS, all 5th-grade students and their families have not dealt with the burden of navigating admission screening in their search for a public middle school since December 2020,¹

WHEREAS, previously screened middle school programs are entering their third open admission cycle with two active cohorts of students admitted without the use of screens;

WHEREAS, the removal of middle school screens in its first year increased diversity at many of the most sought-after middle schools with the percentage of students from low-income families and English Language Learners increasing on average by 7 and 4 percent respectively;²

1

<https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/874-20/mayor-de-blasio-chancellor-carranza-2021-22-school-year-admissions-process>

2

<https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-middle-schools-pandemic-middle-school-screens-suspension-20210511-bvnten6fmnhibek3jzl6hyna6e-story.html>

WHEREAS, the reinstatement of middle school screens would stunt progress made in diversifying middle schools and once again make the application process burdensome and stressful for students and families;

WHEREAS, we continue to find it fundamentally inappropriate to measure the “worthiness” of a 9-year-old student to attend a public middle school by judging their capacity to learn on their academic record up to that age;

WHEREAS, changes to the high school admission process have also improved access and transparency by centralizing the student ranking process within the Department of Education, standardizing the selection criteria screened schools use, and eliminating [proven discriminatory selection criteria](#) such as attendance and state test scores;³

WHEREAS, changes to the high school admissions process likely increased diversity at several of the most sought-after high schools which saw significant increases in offers going to students from low-income families and Black and Latino students;

WHEREAS, the use of admissions screens at all levels has been proven to disproportionately exclude Black and Latino, low-income, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities;

WHEREAS, the changes made to admissions over the course of the pandemic were widely supported as shown by multiple [petitions](#), [letter sign-ons](#) (see also a sign-on letter from [District 2 educators](#).) and [campaigns](#) led by Black and Latino students;

WHEREAS, the changes to admissions are aligned with multiple past reports that exposed the discriminatory effect of screening, making any reversion to the screening process in the name of supporting students and families unfounded and unsupported by research;⁴

WHEREAS, the racially and socioeconomically disparate impact of COVID-19 has shown us that we must move past inequitable systems, and cannot return to “business as usual,” but rather we must begin to build a more equitable system for all students.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Department of Education permanently end the use of admission screens at public middle schools;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education sustain all the changes made to the high school admissions process including the elimination of the use of attendance and state test scores as selection criteria;

3

https://docs.steinhardt.nyu.edu/pdfs/metrocenter/atn293/sdag/Making-the-Grade-II.pdf?_ga=2.180347746.750278352.1660591005-1047760929.1656694656

⁴ See New York Appleseed’s [report on middle school screens](#); the [NYC Bar Association’s report](#) on competitive admissions methods; and, The Fordham Feerick Center’s [Screened Out](#) report.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED if the Department of Education continues to allow screened programs at the high school level, we demand the Department of Education continue to allow students with a grade point average of 85 or above to receive first priority to academically screened programs;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Education prioritize funding and co-creating programming that supports students, their families, and DOE employees who are critical to supporting the navigation of admissions.

This Resolution was approved at a CEC15 Calendar Meeting held on September 20, 2022 by a vote of members present including: Camille Casaretti, Nancy Randall, Vanessa Ueoka Gonzalez, Nakia Muhasa Brown, Antonia Ferraro, Joe Alexander, Nana-Poku Agyekum, Ivan Banda, and Tia Schellstede.

*The Resolution was voted YES by 9 members.
Opposed: Vincent Lu, Alfred DeIngeniis*

TESTIMONY
CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
CHAIR, RITA C. JOSEPH

Oversight – DOE's New Admissions Processes

Presented on
Wednesday, January 25, 2023



SINCE 1962
COUNCIL OF SCHOOL
SUPERVISORS &
ADMINISTRATORS
Local 1:AFSA, AFL-CIO

The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators
Henry Rubio, President
Rosemarie Sinclair, Executive Vice President
Dale Kelly, 1st Vice President

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On behalf of CSA leadership and school leaders throughout the city, I thank the Committee of Education and Education Chair Rita C. Joseph for holding today's important hearing on the DOE's Admissions Process.

Ultimately, we believe that the admissions processes for middle schools and high schools are generally more effective and efficient when they are decentralized and when individual districts and schools have discretion to make more decisions at the local level. No one knows what's best for a particular school community more than the principal, and we will continue to advocate that the DOE empower school leaders to take necessary actions in the best interests of those they serve.

We of course recognize that DOE Central must operationalize and coordinate many aspects of the admissions process given the size of our system. We asked school leaders what improvements are necessary moving forward, and, for the most part, their feedback regards timelines, communication, and technology.

Principals have reported that the various admissions deadlines are constantly shifting. In the future, it would be most helpful to school communities to have all relevant deadlines announced at the start of the school year. Principals have also reported that results are rarely shared on time, and these delays cause challenges for families who are trying to decide between public schools and private/parochial schools because deadlines to accept other admissions offers are often earlier. When results are finally shared by the DOE, many parents have subsequent questions and concerns that can't be fully addressed on the school level. The algorithms used by the DOE to place students are not fully transparent, and school leaders believe that the DOE should conduct accessible workshops for families to explain the algorithms they utilize.

By all reports, the admissions process is also too confusing for many parents. Since it is far too difficult to communicate with the Office of Student Enrollment, the onus to offer clarifications and explanations usually falls on school staff. DOE Central should provide comprehensive videos that detail the entire process in various languages. Directories should clearly indicate which schools require auditions and essays, and guidelines for essays and auditions for each school must be clear and readily available.

To make communications around the admissions process even more challenging, when parents and guardians engage school staff with questions, the staff often do not have access to the same website pages that parents and students engage with and see. Other concerns regarding technology include difficulty uploading auditions as well as accessibility for parents who non-English speakers, not tech-savvy, or simply can't afford devices at home.

We have raised our members' concerns around the admissions processes with the DOE and they have expressed a sincere willingness to meet to resolve these issues. We will continue to engage our members on what they believe would improve the admissions process for New York City families and escalate their feedback directly to the Chancellor's team.

In Solidarity,

Henry Rubio
CSA President



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council Committee on Education,
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair
At the Oversight Hearing on DOE Enrollment Policies**

January 25th, 2023

Presented By Gregory Brender, Chief Policy and Innovation Officer

Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education for convening this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify. The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early childhood provider organizations in New York City. DCCNY supports its member organizations and New York City's early childhood field at-large through policy research and advocacy, labor relations and mediation, professional development and training for early childhood educators, directors and staff, and referral services for parents looking to find child care. DCCNY member organizations provide early care and education at over 200 sites in neighborhoods across all five boroughs.

Most DCCNY member organizations have contracts with New York City Department of Education. They offer both center-based child care programs and manage Family Child Care Networks which support providers caring for a children in their homes. DCCNY member organizations also provide early childhood education through privately funded programs and the Federal Office of Head Start. DCCNY member organizations operate in all five boroughs and employ over 4,000 New Yorkers, most of whom are Black and brown women.

We believe that there is a meaningful opportunity to reform the Department of Education's enrollment procedures for early childhood education that leverages the connections that community-based child care providers have with the neighborhoods they served.

Under the Department of Education's Centralized Enrollment System which went into effect with the transition of early childhood contracts from the Administration for Children's Services to the Department of Education, parents have limited ability to ensure that their child ends up in the Pre-K, 3-K or child care program of their choosing. Parents select up to ten schools or community-based placements on paper or through MySchools.gov.

The application allows families to rank up to 10 programs of their choice, but the priority rankings of each program, the algorithm used to place families into programs, and knowledge of options remains unclear to many families. This often translates into families putting fewer choices on their applications and unknowingly putting themselves at a disadvantage by doing so. Additionally, families that do not fill out an application within the admission period, which often happens due to a lack of access to technology or lack of awareness around the admissions process, are severely penalized and lose access to the “right to choose” afforded to those families that applied within the admissions period.

Admission into an Extended Day/ Extended Year Child Care program requires meeting strict eligibility standards. This adds an additional layer of confusion and stress for families. When applying to a Child Care program for Pre-K, the application lists several questions that are aimed to help the algorithm determine who may or may not be eligible for child care. These questions include listing income, family size, and what if any government subsidies one might be receiving.

However, these questions are solely a preliminary line of questioning and are not the final decision on whether or not the family is eligible for the EDY program. When families receive an offer letter to a Child Care program they are often surprised that additional information is required of them to determine their eligibility. Parents are often not prepared for the secondary steps required to complete the enrollment process.

Community-based organizations often devote a significant amount of time and effort to ensuring that families can access their programs which is not the same as accessing a school-based program. While a family receiving an offer to a Pre-K seat in a DOE public school center is only asked to provide a birth certificate and proof of New York City residency to enroll their child, a family in Child Care program is faced with a more complex and time consuming process. This adds to the worry that parents enrolling in Child Care will become easily deterred because of the enrollment process and will opt to enroll their child in a public school program rather than a center-based program, hurting Child Care programs’ enrollment.

We have heard from many of our members that parents who wanted to be in their programs have only received offers from Pre- K or 3-K programs in public schools. At the same time, child care providers are being penalized for under-enrollment by DOE when DOE itself controls enrollment.

Similarly, there have been significant wait times for families’ Child Care Assistance applications to be approved leaving vacant seats in child care centers and family child care homes and putting stressors on parents’ trying to access affordable child care. Moreover, many families, including many immigrant essential workers are weary of engaging with government agencies and feel safer with community-based organizations with whom they already have trusting relationships.

Over the summer of 2021, DOE briefly allowed providers to enroll families after the CBO

itself had done a complete eligibility check. This empowered CBO's to start serving eligible families immediately and helped them to leverage their community relationships. However, this policy ended with the start of the school year on September 10, 2021, and was not implemented in summer 2022.

Local community based early childhood providers have strong connections to the neighborhoods they serve. The City should leverage these strong relationships to ensure that families are able to quickly access the child care programs in which they want to enroll their children. This can be most effectively achieved by allowing community-based enrollment, wherein providers have the power to accept and enroll eligible families.

DCCNY urges DOE to take the following steps to improve enrollment procedures for early childhood education:

- Implement community-based enrollment so that providers can accept and enroll families who want to place their children in community-based child care programs
- Suspend the DOE's pay-for-enrollment system which penalized providers for under-enrollment as long as DOE controls enrollment.

Finally, this Committee held an important hearing on October 19, 2022, which exposed many of the challenges that providers face due to late payments from the Department of Education. While there has been some progress, these issues persist for many providers as of today. Our recommendations for this ongoing issue follow:

- Pay ALL providers their contract value for FY22 immediately;
- Migrate invoicing and payment processes from DOE PreKids system to MOCS (Mayor's Office of Contract Services) Passport system, in line with other human services contracts which would simplify the process for providers;
- Pay FY23 invoices promptly assuring the ability for providers to bill for more than one month at time and that the lag between invoicing and reimbursement never exceeds 30 days; and
- Hold providers harmless from enrollment penalties as long as DOE controls enrollment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to take any questions.



INTEGRATENYC
Youth Voice Integrates

We are all kids with enough pressure, and we shouldn't have to be worried about getting into a "good" school or not – all of our schools should be good, and offer various ways for students to excel. Currently, admissions screens keep our schools segregated and only give the very best opportunities to a select few. We need to change this to make sure everyone has equitable access.
-Elena, 14-year old student organizer at IntegrateNYC

In New York City, students and their families are navigating an admissions process that perpetuates systemic racist practices by limiting access to well-resourced schools. The youth organizers at IntegrateNYC developed the [5Rs of Real Integration](#) as a framework for ending these systemically oppressive practices so that students all over the city can access quality education. Our public schools must provide a diverse and inclusive environment for every New York City public school student. New York City public schools currently isolate many students of color, rely on racist and classist admissions policies, and have perpetuated school segregation and white supremacy due to a complex, inefficient and hyper-competitive high school admissions process. We stand for every NYC public high school reflecting the diversity of the city. We want every New York City public school to give equal opportunities to all students regardless of the color of their skin, income of their parents, or where they live.

Victoria- age 18

Admissions screening methods only further disadvantage students who come from marginalized backgrounds and contribute to the segregation of our public school system. In 2017, I applied to several high schools on paper application with the help of a large book that listed in detail all the public schools in the city. As a student with parents of an immigrant background, I was on my own applying to schools I hoped would fit my needs. The process has only become increasingly confusing despite how difficult it was to make my own academic choices nearly six years ago. When assisting my youngest cousin with her high school applications, she had trouble navigating the newly adopted online system. She wasn't sure how, or even where to submit her applications and only stumbled across additional requirements by accident. Several NYC public schools now use additional standardized screening methods such as essays, or short videos as part of their admissions method. The high school supplementals felt hauntingly similar to those I had done when applying to college. Any pre-teen would find the application process confusing, tedious, and stress-inducing, without the guidance of teachers or parental support, the process deters

prospective students from applying to these competitive schools. Many low-income, immigrant, and BIPOC children are left behind.

Eliza- age 16

Screens such as grades, standardized test scores, attendance, and more perpetuate and create the glaring segregation within our city's schools. These admissions screens create barriers that exclude students of color, low-income, neurodivergent, and immigrant students from some of the city's most resourced schools. In addition, the process that 5th and 8th graders have to go through is not only incredibly stressful and competitive, but unfair to students whose families don't have the luxury of time and money to assist them in these daunting and laborious processes. I remember being 10 years old in fifth grade and applying to middle schools in my district, most of which were screened. I remember touring multiple different schools in different neighborhoods, going to audition at one, and taking a test at another. Unlike a lot of kids in the city, I had the advantage of a parent who worked from home with a flexible schedule and could invest time into guiding me and my twin sister through this process which no fifth or eighth grader could go through alone. Many kids throughout the city do not have this accessibility. In addition, I remember hearing from peers at my very privileged and white elementary school in fourth grade about how their parents were getting them tutors for the state test so that they could get into one of what they called the "good" schools, all of which were screened and contained a heavy concentration of the white students in my district. Some people I knew in middle school paid for portfolio or theater classes in preparation for auditions, received years of SHSAT prep, and had their parents write their admissions essays for them. This system of screening clearly puts students in marginalized groups at a huge disadvantage and must be eradicated. It is absurd that within a public school system, certain groups are still being excluded from certain schools. We need admissions policies that intentionally prioritize groups that have been historically and currently are being put at a disadvantage.

Natalhia- age16

The Specialized High School admissions test is an examination administered to eighth and ninth graders, and is used to determine enrollment in one of these 8 schools. These "elite" specialized high schools offer seats to the highest scoring students, without taking into account other factors, such as race, grades, or interests. As a current student in one of these schools, I remember the immense pressure placed on me, and the anxiety and panic I felt in the days leading up to the test. I was aware of my peers in my middle school, which was heavily underfunded and extremely segregated, who had no idea of the test and took it without any tutoring or preparation. Having an eighth and ninth grader study for this exam with no tutoring automatically

disadvantages them from the potential seat. The idea behind administering one test to identify the smartest students is the result of an apparent bias that arises when factors such as race, privilege, economic status, and more are considered. Being in this specialized high school now, I realize how segregated my middle school actually was. I was among kids whose parents spent thousands of dollars on SHSAT tutoring, and didn't bat an eye to the unfairness of the test. Students in my old middle school didn't have the opportunity to get this extremely expensive tutoring, and had no support or no knowledge that the test existed before test day. Going through the admissions process opened my eyes to the importance of implementing new ways of admissions that completely reflects the student's abilities, and isn't a three hour test that ranks them based on their scores on a single multiple choice exam.

Veronica- age16

Being a student in NYC has meant stressing over admissions processes that were designed to segregate marginalized groups. With that being said, it meant taking the SHSAT when I was 14 years old to see if I was qualified enough, on paper, to go to a specialized high school. Or, as many called it, a "good" school. This process was completely degrading as a student, and a young person still developing and growing into the person I want to be. My worth was being minimized to a number, and that does not feel good. What I learned from my test-taking experience was that it took a snapshot of just one day in my life, and put it on paper. If I didn't eat breakfast, my test grade would've reflected that. If I had gotten into a fight with my parents, my test grade would've reflected that. All these big and little things that could've been happening in my home environment would have played a part in determining my test grade--and while the family fight may be over now, the grade is permanent. Going through this process revealed all the inequities that come with applying to schools within the NYC Public School system. A student who's getting tutored--generally white affluent students--will most likely get better grades on these tests, but this doesn't correctly evaluate their academic capabilities. It tells schools how much money they were willing to spend on test prep. Simultaneously as I was getting ready to take the SHSAT, my brother was preparing to take the SATs, and to say the process is similar is an understatement. Both processes reflect more on socioeconomic status than intelligence, and both are processes that reduce and segregate students. We must implement new admissions processes that don't leave our most marginalized and underprivileged groups in the dark.

Elena- age14

I applied to middle school during the first year of the District 15 Diversity Plan. I went to a school that was primarily hispanic, and watched it become more integrated as the years passed by. I remember the lack of screens was so freeing for both me and my peers, because we weren't being judged on how good our grades or test scores were, we were just going to be taught, no matter what school we went to. For high school, however, I studied for over a year for the SHSAT and was privileged enough to have access to tutors and extra classes, but in reality, there

is no way for an 8th grade student to pass the SHSAT without some sort of studying or tutoring. This makes it very discriminatory, as not everyone has the money for tutoring, and those who do are typically high-income white families. Everyone submitting these applications, taking these tests, attending these auditions, are all kids. We are all kids with enough pressure, and we shouldn't have to be worried about getting into a "good" school or not – all of our schools should be good, and have numerous ways in which students can excel. The current screens keep our schools segregated and only give the very best opportunities to a select few, and we need to change them to make sure everyone has equitable access.

TESTIMONY of NEW YORK APPLESEED
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Oversight of New DOE Admission Processes
January 25, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Nyah Berg and I am the executive director of New York Appleseed, a nonprofit organization that advocates for integrated schools and communities in New York City and State. Since 2012, New York Appleseed has been spearheading integration efforts across New York City, including providing research and recommendations on reforming particular student assignment policies that exacerbate segregation in NYC public schools.

For years, middle and high school admissions processes in New York City have been notoriously cumbersome, stressful, and complex.

The NYC high school application process is not unlike the process of applying to college. Students and families are asked to research a list of well over a hundred schools. They then must narrow that down to 12 choices by searching through an online platform (My Schools), attending tours, figuring out open houses, sometimes submitting auditions, and sometimes writing multiple personal essays. For the best “shot” at several of the most coveted schools, we require 7th-grade students to ensure they have at least a 90 or above with few exceptions. And we ask them to do all of these things with the expectation they can make sense of the system primarily in English and with the aid of a well-informed and available counselor. **In sum, we are often asking many students and families to navigate this process with resources they do not easily have, with time they cannot afford to lose, and with an assumption that this process is primarily for English-speaking, independent, non-disabled, housing-stable students with minimal outside needs.**

This is a simplified summary of where the high school application process is now and this is *still* leaps and bounds better than what it was several years ago. Students and families now enter a much more transparent and fair process, thanks to the following changes made in 2020 and 2021, that were further sustained for this admissions cycle:

- The standardization of selection criteria for the majority of screened high schools. Prior to this change, screened schools’ selection criteria was hard to find and rarely made public.
- The centralization of the ranking process within the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) so individual schools are no longer ranking students without any oversight.
- The elimination of discriminatory selection criteria such as state tests, punctuality, district priority, and attendance.

Additionally, the middle school admissions process, once made unnecessarily complex due to

rampant use of selection criteria to evaluate a 8 or 9 year old child's worthiness to attend public middle school, was paused for two years. This pause not only relieved an extreme burden from the shoulders of students and families, it also led to increases in access for students from low-income families and English Language Learners at several of the most sought-after schools.

The above policies, that led to promising increases in diversity in many of NYC's middle and high schools, serve as important prerequisites to building a more equitable and just admissions process. And while the NYCDOE sustained many of the above changes, there are other policy decisions from this year that call into question the the NYCDOE's commitment to outlined goals for equity and excellence.

One of the most egregious reversals was the allowance of screening at public middle-schools at the discretion of district superintendents. The reinstatement of middle-school screens flew in the face of years of advocacy by students and families, undermined statistics that showed within the first year of removing MS screens, 50 of the most selective middle-school programs saw an increase in offers going to students from low-income families and students learning English as a new language,¹ and ignored research and reports outlining the detrimental and segregative effects of competitive admission methods for young children.

New York Appleseed also holds deep concerns for the messaging that accompanied admissions announcements in which the NYC schools chancellor was quoted at an event defending changes stating:

"If you've got a child who works really hard on weekends, and putting in their time and energy and they get a 98 average — they should have a better opportunity to get into a high-choice school, then, you know, the child you have to throw water on their face to get them to go to school every day."²

This callous reasoning behind changes that affect hundreds of students and families is alarming. It lacks empathy for the daily lives of students, it lacks understanding of the influence systemic inequities have on students and traditional measures of achievement and it lacks awareness that many of our students are still reeling from trauma due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All students regardless of income, language, race, ability or housing status deserve the opportunity to thrive in high quality public schools. Our enrollment policies should reflect that. Moving forward, we offer the following recommendations to further equitable admission methods in NYC public schools:

- Support under-resourced students and families in the high school admissions process.

¹ Reema Amin, Big changes to this year's middle school admission process yielded modest demographic shifts, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/5/11/22431085/nyc-middle-school-offers-2021-integration> (May 11, 2021)

² Alex Zimmerman, NYC schools chief criticized for saying some kids deserve top schools more than others, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/10/13/23403030/david-banks-screened-school-admissions-nyc> (October 13, 2022)

by.³

- Developing a standardized curriculum to be integrated into middle schools, after-school enrichment programs, and community based organizations to strengthen students' and family's ability to participate meaningfully in the HS admissions process. Current organizations that run HS admissions programs can serve as partners in developing this curriculum.
- Mandating and funding in all NYC after-school enrichment programs the skills, knowledge, and expert support that students, families and service providers need to effectively navigate the process.
- Investing in guidance counselors, professional development, and community-based programs like the Middle School Student Success centers that work to close access gaps for families and students.
- Making selection criteria available in print to provide alternate avenues of information for those who are unable to access digital platforms.
- Implement and set aside funding for Local Law 225 which states that every school district must have a diversity working group by 2024.⁴
- Recommit to overseeing progress on the over 60 goals outlined on the NYCDOE's "Diversity in Our Schools" website page including goals set in the 2017 diversity statement.⁵

Segregation is an intentional choice and to dismantle it we must be just as intentional in our reforms. Our enrollment policies matter as they can be catalysts for integration or sustainers of segregation. We implore leadership to continue to center equity and diversity in policymaking to avoid the doomed alternative of trying to create separate but equal schools.

We thank the Committee on Education for having this important oversight hearing.

Respectfully,

Nyah Berg

³ Recommendations for resourcing students and families come from a longer brief drafted in partnership with Fordham Law School Feerick Center's High School Application Advisory Committee.

https://www.nyappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/HSAACInfographic22_FINAL.pdf

⁴ See Local Law 225

<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8041148&GUID=3BEAD9EC-5D23-4600-B515-A97E6F883835>

⁵ See Diversity in Our Schools website page

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/vision-and-mission/diversity-in-our-schools>



To: New York City Council, Committee on Education

Re: Public Hearing on the Department of Education New Admissions Changes on 1/25/2023

Submitted electronically to <https://council.nyc.gov/testify/> on 1/28/2023

PLACE NYC (Parent Leaders for Accelerated Curriculum and Education) is a collective of elected NYC public school parent leaders dedicated to improving academic standards, curriculum, and outcomes for all NYC public students in all of our public schools.

Abrupt and Drastic Changes to Admissions

Public school parent communities across the city are deeply concerned about the abrupt and drastic changes to middle school, high school and Gifted & Talented kindergarten admissions processes over the last three years without proper parent engagement through an opaque process. Many of the changes, initiated in the last administration but continued in whole or in part by the current administration, make it challenging to maintain reliably high standards of excellence and expectations for admissions to competitive schools. The unreliability has added further confusion to an already anxiety-ridden experience of navigating through the admissions process for students and families.

Admissions Changes Prompted Enrollment Drops

Schools managed by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) have hemorrhaged enrollment in the past three years with more than 10% of our student population exiting the system. Among our parent community, the changes in admissions have played an outsized role in the departures. Parents have voiced their frustrations with lowered academic standards and the anti-merit admissions policies that the DOE abruptly pivoted to for middle school and high school admissions, affecting over 150K students in 5th and 8th grade each year.

Parents and guardians do not want to enter an unpredictable system and leave the fate of their children's education to chance. In addition to the admissions policy changes, some schools have expanded set-asides (to more than 2/3 of available seats in some instances) leaving many middle

class families to discover during the admissions process that their child only qualifies for a small percentage of seats in their district, greatly reducing the opportunity to attend a school with accelerated programs.

Families with more than one child have had to navigate vastly different application processes each year with changes purportedly made in the name of ever-elusive and constantly changing equity and diversity goals which never seem to center on improving the academic outcomes of students or making any of our schools more rigorous.

Manhattan Families Most Adversely Impacted

With the steep drop in the number of screened schools, expanded set asides for low-income students, and elimination of district and geographic priorities, families in Manhattan have been severely and disproportionately affected. Enrollment loss has been in the double digits at even some competitive programs, leaving these schools disproportionality and ironically, less diverse.

G&T Evaluation Becomes More Subjective, Unclear and Opaque

Another major concern for families in our community is the subjective, unclear, and opaque criteria (such as “curiosity”) which PreK teachers are using to assess and nominate potential students into the program. Nominated students are then placed into the lottery for 2,500 seats with a six applicants to one seat ratio. For families applying to G&T, it is yet another confusing change to apply to the program without confirmation first that their child has been nominated. There are better ways to improve diversity in order to serve the children who have accelerated needs including expansion and marketing of the program in under-represented neighborhoods.

Reinstate Middle School Screens - It’s What Many Parents Want

For middle schools, PLACE asks the Chancellor to direct superintendents to reinstate screened middle schools where there is a demonstrated demand for such schools. In District 2, families spoke strongly in favor of keeping screens in multiple public engagement sessions. However, the superintendent ignored parents' pleas and unilaterally decided to continue with a lottery-style admissions for all middle schools. This decision prompted the elected parent leaders of Community Education Council 2 to pass two votes of no confidence. This refusal from the DOE to compromise as other districts have done is an affront to “parent engagement” and has led to even higher distrust from families who are voting with their feet in this particular school district where K and 6th grade enrollment losses have been greater than most districts.

High School Admissions Shouldn't be a Lottery

With regard to High School Admissions, the DOE did not hold *any* formal public engagement sessions with impacted families. Through outcries and advocacy efforts from PLACE NYC, other CEC and CBO's, parents were able to reduce the disastrous impacts seen with the previous year's admissions which left many students without placement to any of their 12 choices. Even with the adjustments for the 2022-2023 school year, the admissions changes are insufficient and grossly inadequate. Students' educational future should never be determined by a random lottery number when there are criteria that can be used such as tests, grades and other relevant metrics that highlight a student's content proficiency and individual accomplishments.

Restore Objective Criteria and Make It Universal

We strongly urge the DOE to return to an objective G&T screening assessment and make it universally available to parents during regular school hours. The newly announced process where parents first apply to G&T programs without knowing if their child will qualify, and then having PreK teachers evaluate only students whose parents applied will only lead to a higher proportion of applicants coming from parents who are "in the know." Teachers have been instructed to assess the child based on a training video which emphasizes "equity" instead of objective criteria, and to then fill out DOE worksheets to nominate students for the G&T lottery - a process which ironically, is deeply inequitable and wholly insufficient to identify gifted students.

Accountability for Academic Excellence

In conclusion, the parent leaders of PLACE NYC implores the City Council to urge the DOE to restore rigorous academics, accelerated curriculum and merit-based admissions. These criteria are essential to a successful and diverse school system, and positions all children to reach their highest potential. The approach of the last administration to attain equity has clearly taken a toll on excellence AND enrollment, while failing to achieve true sustainable equity and improving academic outcomes. We urge the City Council to adopt stronger oversight measures over the DOE to ensure real equity isn't overlooked at the expense of excellence, and that policies are not anti-academic and really a cosmetic cover for accountability because all our students deserve to have their hard-work celebrated and encouraged.



January 26, 2020

NYC City Council

RE: Testimony for the 1/25/2023 Committee on Education Oversight Hearing on the Dept of Education New Admissions Policies

Dear City Council Education Committee members,

Thank you for providing this opportunity for the public to provide feedback on the new Department of Education Admissions Policies.

As co-Founder of Queens Parents United, a parent advocacy group that supports expanding excellence in our local neighborhood schools, I hear from many parents, and the feedback we consistently have received with regards to the new admissions policies is that lottery admissions for middle and high school is unfair and has created an enormous amount of additional anxiety for families who would prefer to rely on grades & merit for the admissions process.

Per feedback from parents in our 1,000+ group across the borough, the vast majority support bringing back screens the same as it was pre-covid, and eliminating use of lottery admissions that were in effect the last 2 years due to covid.

Some recommended improvements are:

1. Attendance – Using attendance should count, but with a lesser weight to accommodate for covid-related and/or serious health issues. It would be poorly received and deemed highly unfair if a student that is chronically absent (without a health-related excuse) were to receive an offer at a top-tier, high demand school just because that student was fortunate enough to receive a good lottery number.
2. Test Scores – Reinstatement of state test scores as an optional criterion. Since some students are not strong test-takers, we suggest alternate comparable diagnostics be used such as iReady scores. Strong test takers would still have Specialized High Schools to rely on for an option.
3. Grades – Allow school principals to determine the grade criteria for screened schools in conjunction with their respective SLT.
4. ***Return objective measures for nominating students to the Gifted & Talented program.*** The current “teacher nomination” process has been confusing, too subjective and an opaque process. We also strongly recommend that City Council pass legislation to require reporting from the DOE on how many students received offers broken down by demographics and school, similar to the way offers for the Specialized High School offers are reported. It is unclear if the current admissions process is uniformly and equitable serving families across districts based on nominations and offers.

What most families are demanding is a strong signal from the DOE that *the bar of academic standards is still high at schools that previously screened for academics, and the bar of standards is being raised elsewhere to increase access to desired programs/curricula.* If a lottery must be used for admission, the first "bucket" must be a high bar and sized as the smallest bucket to ensure that students with 95+ GPAs have reliability on school selection and not be left to chance. This also incentivizes students to work hard.

Other suggestions to ensure students are not "falling through the cracks":

1. It's simple enough to say "make all schools great" but until that becomes a reality, we would strongly encourage a "discovery" or "bridge" type program during the summer (or after school) for rising 7th/8th graders who would like to attend academically rigorous, competitive high school programs (where resources would come from DOE Central rather than individual school budgets) for low income students in marginalized schools who may need extra supports in order to meet demands from a more rigorous course load but who many not have had access to a high performing school in elementary/middle school. The DOE currently does this for students who would like to apply to LaGuardia High School - this model could be expanded for schools like Townsend Harris, Baccalaureate, etc.
2. Produce more programs for both middle and high school like the newly created one at the High School for Language and Diplomacy where a school with steep enrollment declines are replaced with academically strong programs in areas where there is high demand but shortage of accelerated seats.
3. Create more partnerships with local colleges to strengthen the high school to college pipeline (for academic and CTE programs).
4. DOE to host in person Middle and High School fairs and open houses and allow ALL families (vaccinated & unvaccinated) to attend. Virtual open houses are a poor facsimile and aren't necessarily the best representation with which to base such an important decision and sends a message that the DOE doesn't care about a quality experience for parents.

Lastly, we are greatly concerned with how the DOE intends to manage accelerated seats (i.e. AP, Honors, G&T, etc. classes) with the implementation of the class size mandate? In school districts with overcrowded schools, execution of the mandate inevitably points to a reduction in these classrooms which would be unacceptable for many families.

Sincere regards,

Jean Hahn
Co-Founder, Queens Parents United

Dear Members of the City Council Education Committee:

I am both a NYC public school parent and a former NYC public school student. It saddens me to see that my daughter is receiving a worse education than I did as an impoverished immigrant decades ago, even while billions are being poured into the public schools! Families are leaving the public school system by the truckload. During COVID times, many excuses were made to reason away the enrollment plummet. In-person school is now fully back **and enrollment is still plummeting!** Why? For 2 reasons - **(1) inequities in the system and (2) no focus on excellence.**

(1) Inequity - Outrageously High Diversity in Admissions (“DIA”) Allocations

We live in Manhattan. We are not the ultra-wealthy who can afford private schools. There is a perception that everyone in Manhattan was born with a silver spoon. My family fled to this country so that we wouldn't be killed by the communists in Cambodia (the Khmer Rouge). We lost everything and had to rely on public assistance when we first arrived as **war refugees**. That is a far cry from the multimillion-dollar penthouse dwellers that the Progressives like to pretend are the only people who live in Manhattan. **We've worked hard to be part of the middle class, the backbone of NYC.**

Due to the outrageously high DIA allocations for Manhattan high schools, 50%-75% of spots get reserved for families who fill out the free/reduced lunch forms. So, my daughter oftentimes has to fight for the **remaining one out of four spots** for high school. How is that equitable? Why is she being punished because her parents work for a living? We are not CEO's or investment bankers; we are just regular people! Please click on the link below to see the very long list of schools with ridiculously high DIA allocations.

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs/diversity-in-admissions>

A screenshot from the DIA webpage is shown below (a few of the allocations are circled in red).

- **Urban Assembly Maker Academy** (02M282) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (based on family income) for 70% of seats.
- **NYC iSchool** (02M376) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (based on family income) for 66% of seats.
- **Institute for Collaborative Education** (02M407) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (based on family income) for 66% of seats.
- **Baruch College Campus High School** (02M411) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch Price (based on family income) for 66% of seats.
- **N.Y.C. Lab School for Collaborative Studies** (02M412) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (based on family income) for 75% of seats.
- **School of the Future High School** (02M413) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (based on family income) for 66% of seats.
- **N.Y.C. Museum School** (02M414) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (based on family income) for 50% of seats.
- **Eleanor Roosevelt High School** (02M416) | Priority to applicants eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (based on family income) for 50% of seats.

Per the NYS Comptroller's Office, 14% of New Yorkers live in poverty. How can the DOE justify its inequitable 50%-75% DIA allocations then?

<https://www.osc.state.ny.us/press/releases/2022/12/dinapoli-nearly-14-percent-of-new-yorkers-live-pov-erty-surpasses-national-average-eight-straight-years>

These lunch forms are filled out by parents without any requirements for income verification. Let's face it - without any ramifications, people will lie to get what they want! That's the reality of the situation. A federal study backs up this point.

To clarify, **I have no issues with DIA. I think a 14% allocation (mirroring the 14% poverty statistics from the NYS Comptroller's Office) is the equitable thing to do!**

These high DIA allocations were enacted as part of former **Mayor De Blasio's failed policies.** Mayor Adams is completely right - former Mayor De Blasio completely screwed up NYC and he has the unenviable task of trying to save NYC from imploding!

I know that enrollment is a problem and the NYC school system has lost a lot of funding. Do what's right and stop the enrollment plummet at the same time - lower the DIA allocations!

My daughter applied to HS this fall. Every family I know has a "Plan B" due to the high DIA - the Catholic school system or leaving NYC outright! They will take their HS-bound child and all of his/her siblings out of the public school system at the same time!

(2) No Focus on Excellence

The reality of the situation is that there will be certain families who will stay with the public school system regardless of how much it continues to fail. **To stop the enrollment plummet, the DOE has to fight for the 20% of families who have other options (either private schools or the NYC suburbs where there are excellent schools).** This might not be a politically-correct thing to say, but that is the reality. **So, do you want to stop the enrollment plummet or not? Do you want to keep families and their tax dollars in NYC and federal funding to keep coming to our schools?** If so, the answer is easy. Persuade the families who have other options to stay! How do you do that? **Restore excellence to our schools!**

Below is some data regarding the enrollment drop. Manhattan's D2 and Brooklyn's D15 had far worse enrollment plummets than NYC as a whole. D2 Superintendent McGuire was Assistant Superintendent of D15 before he came to D2. D2 parents have been pleading with him to restore accelerated programs and screened schools. What has he done? **He has ignored them all!** Wow...**what a track record under Superintendent McGuire's helm and policies! Whopping 20% decline in enrollment!**

I believe NYC Comptroller Lander has been going around saying what a success his policies were for Brooklyn's D15 as well. He full-throatedly pushed for the elimination of middle school screens in D15 and attacked accelerated schools in general (e.g., Hunter HS and the Specialized HS's). Look at the "success" he has achieved! **An enrollment plummet that dwarfs that of other school districts!** Wow, what an achievement!

Citywide K entry enrollment -12.5% since 2018.

D2: -21%

D15 -20%

Citywide MS (6th grade) enrollment -10% since 2018

D2: -17%

D15 -18%

Year	Total Enrollment	Grade K	K Entry Ch	Grade 6	6 Gr Entry Ch
2018-19	1,126,501	78,627		81,289	
2019-20	1,131,868	78,587		80,250	
2020-21	1,094,138	72,265		78,763	
2021-22	1,058,888	68,828	-12.5%	73,298	-10%

Administrative District	Year	Total Enrollment	Grade K	K Entry Ch	Grade 6	6 Gr Entry Ch
02	2018-19	62,973	3,033		2,816	
02	2019-20	62,820	3,128		2,780	
02	2020-21	60,327	2,695		2,625	
02	2021-22	57,900	2,518	-21%	2,325	-17%
15	2018-19	33,220	3,040		2,362	
15	2019-20	33,140	2,921		2,193	
15	2020-21	31,261	2,594		2,104	
15	2021-22	29,777	2,421	-20%	1,946	-18%

To add insult to injury, what used to be good schools in D15 are now “in chaos”! Good going, Mr. McGuire and Mr. Lander! Please continue destroying our schools and pushing families out of NYC!

<https://reason.com/2023/01/25/how-brooklyns-much-copied-diversity-plan-helped-throw-its-best-middle-school-into-chaos/>

I was only able to attend Wednesday’s council hearing for a short time, but **I heard a black, female Council Member say “my kids have to commute for hours to go to Bronx Science, why can’t there be a good neighborhood school where we live?” Chancellor Adams is completely right - focus on excellence in all the schools!**

So, again, do what’s right! Educate our next generation of doctors and leaders. Give them the tools they need to succeed by expanding accelerated programs and restoring excellence to our schools! **At the same time, you will stop the enrollment plummet since the families who can afford to leave will choose to stay with the NYC public school system! Superintendent McGuire’s and Comptroller Lander’s “social experiments” have proved to be utter failures! Do what’s right and end their misguided destruction of our kids’ education!**

Thank you,
Alice Luong

I agree with Jennifer Choi's testimony pasted below. My name is Alyssa Gutierrez-Soogrim and I am the parent of a student with a disability (IEP with ICT and AT and Speech) in a DOE middle school in District 6 -Hamilton Heights. We just completed the intense DOE high school admissions process,

"My name is Jennifer Choi, I'm a Queens resident, a parent of two high school students with IEPs, and a special education advocate at Special Support Services. I am also the founder of a 700 member group called New York City Parents of Teens with Disabilities.

For Students with Disabilities when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states:

"Every DOE middle school and high school welcomes and serves students with disabilities according to their IEPs."

But what they don't state is that they will not supervise the school open houses and tours in which parents are directly or indirectly told that the school will only provide some but not all of these services.

Some of the things parents and students hear are:

Related services will have to be provided outside of school. This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services.

We do not offer integrated co-teaching (meaning a special education teacher and a general education teacher) services for World Language classes even though you need that to graduate with a Regents diploma. Basically this means no special education instruction for students with IEPs to learn world languages.

There are no ICT services for AP Classes even though these classes are also used toward completing their high school diploma.

They are told that there are no self-contained or special classes which really hurts a child especially if that school is specialized with certain career technical programs.

Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.

And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. "Don't come here."

Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. That is against federal education policy.

Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. This tells parents of students who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: Self-Serve Discrimination because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. Even if the parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity and what they've done about it. Please also read the Chalkbeat article entitled, "Many High Schools are Off Limits to Students with Disabilities" that speaks to how students with disabilities face discrimination in the admissions process.

More importantly, please examine the schools who are doing it right. Townsend Harris High School, a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child's education and their child's disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent's office also provides exemplary support to parents. Both institutions look at special education more as a point of excellence rather than a miserable point of compliance. That is what makes students feel safe and included.

Another area that requires inspection is what I call the 20% Rule in which a student needs a specific amount of special education instructional services to qualify as a student with a disability (SWD) in the admissions process. This allows the student to be placed in a different pool of applicants that often has less applicants per seat, especially for a very competitive screened school.

This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is unfair to these students, especially students with physical disabilities.

I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you. "

January 25, 2023

Dear City Council Education Committee,

I am sharing Jennifer Choi's testimony below, as this perfectly describes our experience in applying to high school this year. I am a resident of Queens, and parent of an eighth-grader with an IEP; I am also a professor at Queens College, CUNY.

We went on over 20 high school tours, and in MANY circumstances, school administrators made statements such as, "we transition students out of their IEPs to help them prepare for college and real life"; "we don't offer ICT or extra supports for foreign languages"; "we don't offer ICT for CTE or Arts courses" (at CTE and Art schools where these are the majority of classes).

The issue of "self-discrimination" is real. We decided not to apply to many schools that would have been wonderful fits for our child educationally--- or were closer commutes—because it was clear that he would not be given the support or understanding he needs to thrive.

In our experience, it seemed as though some schools actively and very visibly discouraged students with disabilities from applying, I presume to maintain their high numbers and their exclusive rankings.

Students across the city deserve access to the accommodations that schools are legally required to provide. Equity for students with special needs must be a priority for the DOE.

Sincerely,
Prof. Amy Herzog
Queens Collge, CUNY

Support Services, LLC | 1060 Ocean Avenue, Suite F8 | Brooklyn, NY 11226 | 631-403-0569
Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)
New York City Council Education Committee
1.25.2023

My name is Jennifer Choi, I'm a Queens resident, a parent of two high school students with IEPs, and a special education advocate at Special Support Services. I am also the founder of a 700 member group called New York City Parents of Teens with Disabilities.

For Students with Disabilities when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states:

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-Related services will have to be provided outside of school. This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services.

-We do not offer integrated co-teaching (meaning a special education teacher and a general education teacher) services for World Language classes even though you need that to graduate with a Regents diploma. Basically this means no special education instruction for students with IEPs to learn world languages.

-There are no ICT services for AP Classes even though these classes are also used toward completing their high school diploma.

-They are told that there are no self-contained or special classes which really hurts a child especially if that school is specialized with certain career technical programs.

-Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.

-And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. “Don't come here.”

-Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. That is against federal education policy.

-Also against federal policy is asking G and T students to drop their ICT services prior to entry.

-Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. This tells parents of students who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: Self-Serve Discrimination because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. Even if the

parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

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I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you.

Jennifer Choi, Managing Member and Advocate
Special Support Services, LLC

jenn@specialsupportservices.com

<https://specialsupportservices.com/>

January 27, 2023

To: New York City Council Education Committee

Re: Testimony on School Admissions

I am a New York City Public School graduate and parent of a middle school student and an elementary school student, both attending school in District 5. I hold a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from Hunter College. My independent data analysis has demonstrated that tying middle school admissions to district boundaries systematically excludes more Black students (who are more likely to live in geographically small districts like 5 in Central Harlem or 16 in Bed-Stuy) from schools close to their homes than it does White students. I have also mocked up an algorithm that demonstrates the viability of a high school admissions process where students rank their interests, and preferences for school size and travel time, and are assigned to schools based on these features. I developed the idea for the algorithm in partnership with students convened by IntegrateNYC. This is the type of admissions process that I think could be equitable at all levels.

There should be no academic screening for admissions to elementary, middle, or high school programs, and there should be a school assignment plan that emphasizes equity.

Even if a school assignment process does not take race into consideration, the department of education should share analyses every year of the racial impact of any school assignment policy.

One goal of school assignment should be to have schools that are racially representative of the communities in which they are located. To achieve this, one necessary condition is to have an equitable admissions policy that does not sort students into schools or "programs" based on "merit." (To be clear, I am not opposed to flexible ability grouping during instructional time.) It is important, also, to remember that equitable admissions alone will not make schools racially equitable. Schools need to continue their progress towards becoming more affirming of students' and parents' identities and cultures; shift more control over budgets and staffing to parents and students; and make a plan for repairing the past harm that has been done by the school system to students and communities.

Finally, the DOE's admissions practices must include greater outreach to families. In our community families hear from charter schools a lot and from public schools very little. This outreach needs to be caring, bidirectional, and multilingual.

-Anna Minsky

My name is Casey and I have a student in 3rd grade at a gifted and talented elementary school and a student in 7th grade at a large zoned middle school, both in Manhattan District 2.

I support the return of screened admissions to some middle schools, without leaving that up to superintendents. A screened middle school would have better served my 7th grader's academic needs. I would like my 3rd grader to have the choice to apply to screened middle schools.

I also request the immediate creation of accelerated classes in additional subjects in zoned middle schools. Our school offers accelerated math in 6th and 7th grade, but nothing for students who need more challenge in other subjects. This year, all of the parent-elected members of our school leadership team have asked the school to create an honors ELA class, but the District 2 superintendent has refused to allow it. That is NOT listening to and incorporating community feedback.

I'm not alone in these opinions. Not every parent wants these options, but many do, and there's no reason we can't offer choices that appeal to everyone. Instead, we're allowing extremists to drive families who want their children taught in ability-grouped middle school classes out of the public-school system.

Before screened schools were eliminated, most of the families at our g&t elementary chose public middle schools. When screens were eliminated, about half the families we knew either moved to private school or left NYC altogether for middle school. This year I believe about two-thirds of the school's families will exit the public-school system for middle school. These parents aren't racist. Most of us chose public school in the first place because we value diversity. But fast-learners need accelerated schools and classes, and if forced to choose between a diverse NYC public school that doesn't meet our kids' academic needs and a non-diverse private or suburban public school that does, we will be forced to choose the latter.

And it isn't just gifted students being chased out of the public-school system. Our good friends pulled their 6th grader out of a small middle school that, under screening, had been known for working well with students with learning differences, like him. But the lottery placed a number of advanced-learners there, and his parents didn't want him targeted when these students were frustrated with him for holding them back. Now he has to commute every day to a private school in NJ. His family can't afford a private school in the city. Other friends with a shy daughter who performs in the middle of her elementary school class just bought a house in Westchester, because they fear that she will be lost in a middle school class with students performing at so many different levels.

You may not personally like screened schools or ability grouped classes, but many of the people you're supposed to represent do, and providing these choices doesn't require you or anyone else to choose them. If you want families to return to the public-school system; if you want families to feel like they have a viable public-school option, please give us the choices we are asking for. Thank you very much.



NYC Council Committee on Education
Oversight – NYC Department of Education’s Admissions Processes
January 25, 2023

Testimony Submitted by the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you to Chair Joseph and the Committee on Education for the opportunity to offer testimony. My name is Danielle Demeuse and I am the Director of Policy for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF. CHCF is a non-profit organization with a 40-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age. While our primary focus and direct services are around access to high quality, culturally responsive and sustaining early learning and school-aged education, we understand that many intersectional circumstances and experiences within the community impact the well-being of children and their family support structures, and as such we deliver holistically responsive services within the school and wider communities we serve.

CHCF continues to support New York City's early care and education sector through our state contracted work as part of the NYC Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Consortium. Through our work as a CCR&R, CHCF serves providers across all five boroughs, predominantly (but not exclusively) delivering supports to childcare providers in residential settings (Group Family and Family Day Care), both DOE-affiliated providers and those who remain independent and serving NYC's children and families. Through our CCR&R work, we also support families in accessing childcare that is responsive to their family's culture, language, schedule and particular child needs; and further support navigation of often complex bureaucratic systems to access affordable care. Parents/guardians can be connected to CHCF or any of the CCR&Rs through 311 if they are looking for care, birth through school age, and if they need support in determining potential eligibility for subsidy/vouchers and in navigating city agency systems.

CHCF also holds a DOE affiliated Family Child Care Network in the Bronx, currently with 37 affiliated providers, serving extended day infant and toddler seats, extended day/year 3K, and school day/year 3K seats. Our network focus is on uplifting high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining early care programs, offering our affiliated providers linguistically accessible professional development, and educational, mental health, and health and safety support to ensure access to and delivery of quality, responsive care for families and children. Our FCC Network team additionally supports families in navigating eligibility and access to DOE care options.

Through our work in supporting families through childcare eligibility and enrollment – both in Department of Education programming and in ACS and HRA subsidy voucher access – and in our collective work with other Networks, CCR&Rs, childcare sector support organizations, and providers themselves, we are acutely aware when systems are not functioning as they should. The pandemic certainly impacted the ability of city systems to ensure rapid eligibility determination and enrollment for families in need of early care and learning programs, but there have been longstanding issues with





system structures that have always made the processes needlessly burdensome for families and harmful to providers. Prior to 2019, these systems of access predominantly fell to ACS, but once EarlyLearn transitioned to the DOE there was a missed opportunity to improve the system for eligibility and enrollment, which has ultimately perpetuated many of the ongoing difficulties and delays in family access and equitable enrollment in programs that best meet family preference and need.

We still have no clear understanding of the marketing and outreach strategy for families city wide from either the DOE or ACS – particularly for those 17 Community Districts that were specifically identified in the Mayor’s Blueprint. As income eligibility to early care programs has expanded statewide, it is critical that we are thoughtfully and rapidly designing outreach that will connect with the most vulnerable families – those who are more likely to have hesitations or face barriers in reaching out to government agencies and navigating public systems. Currently, only about 10% of income eligible families are accessing affordable childcare in New York. CHCF, along with our advocacy partners and longstanding partners in the field, have continued to encourage the DOE and ACS to engage us and impacted stakeholders in the marketing design and outreach process, as we have longstanding relationships with some of the hardest to reach communities and our staff more often reflect the culture and language of those we serve. To our knowledge, the sector hasn’t been consistently and meaningfully engaged to ensure maximum impact of targeted outreach to increase timely access and enrollment.

One system design choice under the DOE around enrollment is that they use only centralized enrollment, rather than incorporating community partners in the process. Two critical concerns of using a centralized system for outreach and enrollment is that we do not know what staffing turnover and vacancies are looking like in this division at present; and we do not know how the DOE team is trained in their understanding of citywide child care options, to ensure that families are informed of all options and which might best meet their needs and preferences. Additionally, contracted programs and networks are responsible for marketing their programs, but families are then reverted to the DOE’s central enrollment system, where they rank their preferred programs, and the DOE ultimately has control over which program the parents are sent to.

Further, contracted programs and networks are not transparently looped in on the eligibility process of families who are trying to enroll in their programs. Families are being held up from enrolling due to missing required evidence to qualify for subsidized care and the community partners are hitting barriers in trying to reach out to determine what is still needed from the families so they can support them in completing eligibility and enrollment. Not only is this harming families who need care now so that they can fully engage in the workforce, this holds programs under enrolled which leaves them financially vulnerable. We are hearing from some network providers who are sitting with only 1 or 2 enrolled children. Knowing the current state of childcare deserts and that many programs are still dangerously close to having to shut their doors, these types of delays should not be happening.

Engaging community partners in the enrollment process, rather than relying solely on centralized enrollment would help to alleviate some of these barriers in access and timely processing of eligibility. These community partners are also better versed in helping families understand their childcare options across the complex city system and can connect them to care options beyond the DOE, if appropriate. It is critical to name, though, that engaging community partners should not be done without the proper





funding; at present some contracted partners already stretch themselves to do the follow-ups with the DOE on behalf of families, work they are not funded for, while others simply do not have the staffing capacity and are therefore just left to wait, along with the parents, for eligibility clearance to be enrolled in program.

Especially in this moment where there are considerations to move away from further expanding affordable care options through the universal 3K program, it is critical that we fully understand the causes for under-enrollment in city programs, and particularly DOE-run programs. CHCF firmly believes that there is not a lack of need or want. NYC agencies must do their due diligence to market available programs, do outreach to particularly vulnerable families, partner with community-based organizations and contracted partners more thoughtfully to ensure effect family connections and understandings of all available options for which they are eligible, and support families in timely eligibility determination and enrollment. The city has to demonstrate to families that it is not a waste of time to reach out to city agencies to access public benefits.

As we evaluate the city's eligibility and enrollment process to address effective outreach and access, it is important that city leaders *always* include the expertise of impacted stakeholders in decision making spaces. We must set up the systems and structures that will provide for ongoing accountability, alignment, and effectiveness across city agencies. As the Mayor sets out to establish the new Office of Child Care and Early Education and convenes a Child Care & Early Childhood Education Advisory Group, it is critical to push for involvement of representative provider voice (across all modalities – FCC, Legally Exempt, and Center; both contracted and independent), parents, as well as CBOs who support family navigation in all spaces that are tasked with addressing system and structure issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this important matter. If there are any questions about our testimony, please reach out to Danielle Demeuse, Director of Policy, at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090.



Friday, January 27th 2023

NYC City Council Education Chair Rita Joseph
And members of the Education Committee and
Special Education committees and advocates

Dear Chair and members.

I am the mother of a 9th grade public school student who has an IEP for learning differences. I am also a member of a few different citywide groups of special education advocates. We support each other, learn about how to become better advocates and fight together for a better education environment for our kids.

High School applications should include more details about the accountability of special ed and the classes and supports each school has. Like K-8, school guidance counselors and IEP teams must be aware of topics such as twice exceptional education, autism spectrum disorder, executive functioning issues and processing speed disorders. These should not limit the opportunities students have, but should be an area where resources are provided and the facts of teaching and learning must be upfront.

The school I selected for high school is small. Sadly, that means there's little guidance. There's no IEP coordinator, there are very few electives, art and language classes lack the ICT setting, the communication with teachers is abysmal.

It seems every year of school I have to start all over again, reinventing the wheel or asking for supports for my kid as well as compassion and understanding from teachers. He's failing French, teacher never wrote us back, didn't accept late assignments and never let me know he didn't do work. So on 4 out of 6 assignments his grade was a 2/10. When I finally met her, stressing I wanted to know whether he didn't KNOW the work or didn't DO the work, it was the later. Other teachers provided time to make up work. French Teacher, "I am one person in a large class, there's no special ed teacher and there are many other students who need accommodations". Which means, too bad lady, for me.

In art, the teacher, citing being overwhelmed, had her classes all changed to Pass/Fail back in October. She then assigned students to independently do 10 drawing assignments from youtube videos and said the expectation was that they spend an hour each. Turned in late, my son received a 70, though his drawings are impeccable, there is no way to communicate with the teacher.

Jenn Choi, a special ed advocate and fellow testifier to this committee basically told me exactly what the French teacher and guidance teacher told me when I met. The way things go is like this... you kid with an IEP with ICT in the core subjects will fail or get a 65 and they will just give him an exemption. Why couldn't there be support? Why tank the GPA to get the exemption?

That's exactly what was offered to me in the meeting. That, unlike all the students, he would be forced out of the advanced regent track by dropping the world language requirement.

Please create an oversight and support office for special ed students and high school admissions, so that parents can make choices that support their students, not overwhelm them. These factors should be in the school search web pages. Also, more schools should have special ed supports like ICT and study halls to get work done.

Thanks for your time.

Cristina Furlong

I am a solo parent of two bi-racial children in NYC public schools, a resident and retired teacher of District 15. I am also a member of the PTA at MS839.

I strongly oppose the reintroduction of NYS test scores for public school admissions in NYC. EVERY child deserves a chance to go to a school regardless of how they performed on a few days of standardized testing in the spring of 4th or 7th grade, test-based admissions are a driver of school segregation. Test-driven curricula robs our children the student-centered and joyful learning that is every child's right.

In District 15, we found that the removal of ALL admissions screens—academic, attendance, behavior, test scores, auditions—desegregated our middle schools within a single admissions cycle. Thank you for considering this input.

Cynthia Blackwell

Testimony to NYC City Council, Committee on Education, January 25, 2023

My name is Derek Tan and I am the proud parent of two girls who attend public schools in District 2. I am also the proud product of a public school education myself. In addition, I have been an educator for over 20 years, having served for the last 10 as the Director of a graduate program that is widely considered to be one of the top in its field. Our program also has a strong and visible commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, through targeted recruitment efforts, innovative programming and policies, and hard work. As a result, we have a strong track record of recruiting and training students from underserved backgrounds. For example, our program includes students from federally-designated underrepresented groups at levels that are double the national average.

It is with this backdrop that I must express grave concerns about the District 2 High School Diversity in Admissions policy. While well-intentioned, this is an ill-conceived policy that will ultimately harm ALL students in District 2. This policy has an obvious fatal flaw that will drastically damage our schools, in the process undermining the goals of the policy itself.

Because of its astoundingly large quotas, with up to 88% of seats reserved for low-income students, this policy unfairly penalizes middle-class students who are high-performing, but do not qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch. Families who are unable to obtain appropriate school placements for their children based on merit will then leave the public school system. As a result, District 2 will lose financial support arising from enrollment, tax dollars, and direct donations. This will lead to an irreversible death spiral of our public schools.

From my two decades of experience as an educator, I know well that there are students from underserved backgrounds who have tremendous potential, and I have implemented holistic admissions policies effectively and fairly to serve those students. In contrast, the massive quotas that District 2 has implemented are unfair, ineffective, naïve, and, quite frankly, intellectually lazy. I urge you in the strongest terms to discontinue this policy immediately. Instead, seek out experts to provide creative, effective, and equitable solutions to improve public school education for all students in District 2 and across NYC.

Thank you very much for your time.

Derek S. Tan, PhD

Diana Novick

Mother of Middle School Student at Wagner Middle School

Testimony:

- We moved to our neighborhood in order for our kids to attend the academically challenging and amazing public schools (that used to be)
- We continue to pay a major premium to live here, work 24/7 to be able to afford all of the higher costs, but the education quality has dropped significantly
- We want to avoid moving out of state because of education
- Now, we are told that our neighborhood high schools will offer seats to students from other neighborhoods (even other boroughs), using some sort of secretive formula, and I will have to figure out how to send my daughter via the dangerous subway system to a school far away from our home
- Why is this happening?
- The DOE should spend their funding and efforts on ensuring that all kids have proper education in their neighborhoods; kids should not have to commute an hour to school each day (or more)
- The high achievers that like to learn and strive to achieve accelerated learning deserve a spot in their neighborhood High Schools
- Testing should return to gage aptitude and provide a baseline for teaching methods and lesson plans
- We have paid our taxes, contributed to our communities and our children keep getting punished
- My child should not be punished for the city's inability to figure out a proper education system and plan; all of this funding has been wasted on trying to "dumb down the system" instead of bringing UP everyone who needs extra support; that's shameful; my tax money is spent on preventing good education for my daughter

Did you know that simply having an IEP or 504 plan does not qualify a disabled child to be in the students with disabilities (SWD) category for admissions? Another area that requires inspection is what parents call the 20% Rule in which a student needs a specific amount of special education instructional services to qualify as a student with a disability (SWD) in the admissions process. Ignoring the 13 disability classifications put forth by the IDEA, the DOE arbitrarily determines who qualifies for a Student with Disability seat grouping by determining the amount of special education instruction provided. This rule has a huge impact as it allows only some but not all students with disabilities to be placed in a different pool of applicants that often has less applicants per seat, especially for a very competitive screened school.

This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is not only unfair, this is not legal, especially for students with physical disabilities.

esaka001@yahoo.com

To Committee Members:

As a parent of a student with an IEP I could not agree more with Jenn Choi's eloquent and compelling testimony. I add my voice to hers and many other parents of NYC students with disabilities.

Sincerely,
Emily Antoniades



[Support Services, LLC | 1060 Ocean Avenue, Suite F8 | Brooklyn, NY 11226 | 631-403-0569](#)

Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)

New York City Council Education Committee

1.25.2023

My name is Jennifer Choi, I'm a Queens resident, a parent of two high school students with IEPs, and a special education advocate at Special Support Services. I am also the founder of a 700 member group called New York City Parents of Teens with Disabilities.

For Students with Disabilities when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states:

“Every DOE middle school and high school welcomes and serves students with disabilities according to their IEPs.”

But what they don't state is that schools will not supervise the school open houses and tours in which parents are directly or indirectly told that the school will only **provide some but not all** of these services.

Some of the things parents and students hear are:

1. Related services such as PT and OT will have to be provided outside of school. This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services.
2. We do not offer integrated co-teaching (meaning a special education teacher and a general education teacher) services for World Language classes even though you need that to graduate with a Regents diploma. Basically this means no special education instruction for students with IEPs to learn world languages.

3. There are no ICT services for AP Classes even though these classes are also used toward completing their high school diploma.
4. They are told that there are no self-contained or special classes which really hurts a child especially if that school is specialized with certain career technical programs.
5. Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.
6. And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. "Don't come here."
7. Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. That is against federal education [policy](#).
8. Also against federal education policy is the practice of Gifted and Talented Schools ask students to remove ICT off their IEP before entry.
9. Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. This tells parents of students who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: **Self-Serve Discrimination** because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. Even if the parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity and what they've done about it. Please also read the *Chalkbeat* article entitled, "[Many High Schools are Off Limits to Students with Disabilities](#)" that speaks to how students with disabilities face discrimination in the admissions process.

More importantly, please examine the schools who are doing it right. [Townsend Harris High School](#), a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child's education and their child's disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent's office also provides exemplary support to parents. Both institutions **look at special education more as a point of excellence rather than a miserable point of compliance. That is what makes students feel safe and included.**

The 20% Rule- Only in New York City:

Did you know that simply having an IEP or 504 plan does not qualify a disabled child to be in the students with disabilities (SWD) category for admissions? Another area that requires inspection is what parents call the 20% Rule in which a student needs a specific amount of special education instructional services to qualify as a student with a disability (SWD) in the admissions process. Ignoring the 13 disability classifications put forth by the IDEA, the DOE arbitrarily determines who qualifies for a Student with Disability seat grouping by determining the amount of special education instruction provided. This rule has a huge impact as it allows only some but not all students with disabilities to be placed in a different pool of applicants that often has less applicants per seat, especially for a very competitive screened school.

This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is not only unfair, this is not legal, especially for students with physical disabilities.

I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you.

Yours truly,



Jennifer Choi, Managing Member and Advocate

Special Support Services, LLC

jenn@specialsupportservices.com

<https://specialsupportservices.com/>

Emily Mann, LCSW

Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)

New York City Council Education Committee

January 25, 2023

I am a parent of an 8th grader in a district 15 middle school, a resident of District 20, and a parent of 2 children with professionally diagnosed learning disabilities. I am also a social worker who has worked with children and families for over 20 years, and my professional expertise includes childhood social/emotional development and well-being.

I oppose the reintroduction of NYS test scores for public school admissions in NYC because test-based admissions are a driver of school segregation; standardized tests are biased toward children from low income families, children with special needs, and children who are still learning English; test-driven curricula robs our children of student-centered and joyful learning, particularly in schools that predominantly serve our most vulnerable learners; determining our children's academic potential and opportunities based on test performance robs our whole city of the brilliance of children who express their knowledge and ideas in ways that don't involve bubbling in scantron sheets; screened admissions and rob children who are in "selective" programs of the opportunity to learn with peers whose minds work differently from their own.

In District 15, we found that removal of all admissions screens—academic, attendance, behavior, test scores, auditions—nearly desegregated our middle schools within two admissions cycles.

Rather than re-instituting screens, I request that you consider investing in professional learning for teachers and school leaders on teaching heterogeneous classes and leading integrated schools such that they value the voices of all members of their communities.

Do we really, in 2023, need reminding that separate is never equal?

Thank you for considering this input.

Emily Mann

emilymann.x@gmail.com

Brooklyn, NY 11220

Please find below a written copy of the testimony I delivered via Zoom at today's hearing (January 25, 2023) of the Committee on Education:

Thank you, Chair Joseph, for giving me this opportunity to speak.

First of all, I want to comment on the remark by the DOE's Director of Enrollment that PLACE NYC is an organization the DOE has partnered with on outreach. This is an organization founded and led by some virulently transphobic people, whose vicious anti-trans activism is well documented. That the DOE would partner with such a group is an affront to the LGBTQ community and calls into question the DOE's commitment to the safety and well-being of its LGBTQ students.

One of my long-running frustrations with our system is how we spend so much time – in CEC meetings, Chancellor's town halls, and hearings like this one – talking about how to rank and sort kids, while we seem to spend far less time talking about how to actually educate them.

Personally, as the parent of a 5th grader who just submitted a middle school application, I'm in full support of the elimination of admissions screening for middle schools and high schools.

My child attends a school in District 2, where after a thorough and thoughtful process of multilingual community engagement, our District Superintendent Kelly McGuire made the decision to eliminate middle school admissions screens. This was a huge relief to my family. And this thoughtful process of community engagement by our Superintendent was especially important when many of our CEC members in District 2, including the Council President and Vice President, treat families who come to CEC meetings with bias and abuse, particularly directed to those of us who are parents of students with disabilities, leaving many of us fearful of bringing our concerns to our CEC representatives and making a mockery of the Chancellor's pillar of community engagement.

As the parent of a smart, curious, and hard-working 5th grader who happens to have an IEP, I'm already worn out by going through assistive technology evaluations, neuropsych assessments, and all the other hoops the DOE makes us jump through to get services, so the elimination of middle school screens in District 2 saved us a tremendous amount of time and stress, and I'm grateful for that. I believe the DOE should follow this lead and eliminate admissions screens across the board.

Kids apply to middle school in the 5th grade when they're just 9 or 10 years old. They shouldn't be subjected to a competitive admissions process that separates them into rigid boxes at that age, especially when we've seen how admissions screens have contributed to the segregation of our schools by race and socioeconomic status. And also when we've seen how screened schools have done a poor job of supporting English Language Learners and students with disabilities, like my child.

I think we need to reconsider what we mean by a "successful" school. Is a "public" school really successful if it screens out most of the public? It's discouraging to see our school system time and again take the easy road of exclusion rather than the hard path to true inclusive excellence. Please, let's eliminate admissions screens once and for all. They're a deeply regressive tax on NYC families.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak.

Gavin Healy

Good Day esteemed Council Members,

I attended the city council educational oversight meeting virtually today and I wanted to submit a few comments.

Our children go to the most segregated school system in the country. We are the only school district that segregates our disabled children with high support needs into a segregated district and most times in a separate building. The Mayoral control law that was extended for two years by Governor Hochul, codifies under the law legal segregation of these students by establishing an official citywide council. It needs to be said that the majority of the students, over 80% are Black and Brown skinned. So we are not only segregating based on ability but also on race. As we learned from *Brown vs The Board of Education*, separate is very far from equal.

Public schools are for the public. There should not be high stakes admission testing or screens for our children to access a public education. Our children should not be sorted into barrels based on test grades and ability or disability. This system has the consequences of racial segregation, busing issues as students must be bused to program not available in their home districts, and deeply rooted ableism.

I did a FOIL request on the Specialized High School Admissions test for data for the last 5 years on how many students in District 75 schools had sat for this exam. In the last 5 years less than 75 students sat for the test and only 12 were offered a seat, or .1%. In three of those years 0 of 75 students were offered a seat. I heard Chair Joseph inquire of the DOE how specialized high schools intend to increase the representation of students with disabilities. The truth is that under NYS law, these schools are not required to meet the same ratio of students with disabilities as non-specialized schools.

The other issue with screened and specialized schools is that even if a disabled student is able to attend often the school is not accessible. This could be due to physical accessibility such as needed by students with mobility challenges, or because the school fails to offer the required setting in the students IEP. Though schools are not "Allowed" to reject a student because of their IEP requirements, as an advocate I hear all the time that parents are told, "Oh we don't have ICT here" or "we don't have a 12:1:1," or "if you want to take AP and Honors you need to drop the ICT off your IEP as we don't offer that here." This denial of IEP mandates is illegal. Often instead of fighting the systems parents just go elsewhere because they fear sending their child to a school that has made it abundantly clear that they do not wish to accommodate them.

Eliminating screens and merit-based testing in admissions would provide for greater diversity, equity and inclusion as we have seen in District 15. If all schools were supported to be high quality, parents would be able to send their child to their neighborhood school knowing that their child would be getting the same great education as a child in a specialized high school. It would eliminate busing kids back and forth all over the city to special education seats. Ranking children's access to quality schools under a public school system is unjust and unfair and there is no evidence to prove that it will determine greater future success. However; we do know that when a child with a disability is not supported they have a dismal trajectory through school and in their lives post high school, currently just over half of disabled students actually graduate from high school. Around 40% of the nation's prisoners are people with learning disabilities. District 2 CEC members talk about how ending screens are a detriment to their children but for our students with disabilities the stakes are even higher. We should be incredibly alarmed by the statistics and less alarmed because a child didn't get to go to a school that gives extra homework.

I also want to implore the council to not allow hurtful and disrespectful comments during public comment. There were several speakers from district 2 and a woman named Casey Cohn I believe that gave testimony that was incredibly ableist and demeaning and demoralizing to students with disabilities especially given that the council was also meeting about anti-bullying curriculum. Ms Cohn even went so far as to justify the need for "fast" learners to be placed in segregated programs so they won't bully kids with learning differences because their learning will be slowed down if they have to be educated with kids with learning differences. Referring to students as fast learners implies that there is also an opposite, "slow" learners and often these are children with disabilities as Ms Cohn made mention. This kind of public commentary is extremely hurtful and disrespectful to people with disabilities. As a parent of a disabled student I have heard our children with IEPs referred to as "not-so swift," the cause of "dumbing down curriculum," at fault for the closure of STEM programming, not able to compete in global economy. Referred to as THOSE students that make our schools unsafe. Parents say my child shouldn't have to be held back in a class with "those" students with "their" behavior. I would like to also point out that each of those comments came out of the mouth of an elected parent leader or appointee on a public educational council, one was even spoken by a member of the PEP. This kind of commentary should not be allowed in public forums in the same way that spewing racial slurs would not be allowed.

Heather Dailey

January 25, 2023

Testimony on the DOE's New Admissions Processes to the New York City Council Committee on Education by James Thompson a NYC public school parent.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony concerning the New York City Public school admissions process. My name is James Thompson and I am the parent of a NYC public school student and professional data analyst.

I am happy to see that the Committee is obtaining feedback on the school admissions process. It is important for them to hear from the parents who are affected by these policies. I am more than a parent. I am also a professional that reviews operations and makes recommendations on how they can be improved. So hopefully you will find value in my personal and professional opinions. While some recent efforts, like taking merit into consideration in admissions, have made school admissions more fair and just, we still have a long way to go.

They say it takes a village. In NYC it takes a community. It is a place with a history of unique local communities and neighborhoods that reflect the great diversity of this city. And every neighborhood deserves a great school. My child went to our local elementary school, local middle school and we would like her to go to our local high school. Eleanor Roosevelt High School was built to address the lack of high school seats in our community. But they decided to take that away by opening it up to the entire city and also reserving half the seats to applicants that claim to be eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch. These admissions policy changes were made without any input from the community that fought to have a local school built.

I am sure there are lots of parents like myself that would like their kid to go to a local school. But thanks to the DOE, some communities have schools that are failing to provide the minimum in education. A recent audit report from the NYS Comptrollers' Office showed that some high schools where only 15% of the students graduate.

To cover up and hide their failures the DOE is trying to spread it out so it's less noticeable. They want us to believe certain communities can't have great schools. They want us to ignore the success others schools have had in these communities. They are dismantling the hope of great schools in every community.

The previous administration claimed that the **DOE was committed to providing every single child, in every classroom, in every New York City public school, with a rigorous, inspiring, and nurturing learning experience. That is true regardless of family income, race, nationality, disability, language spoken at home, sexual orientation, or gender identification.** The new administration has changed the mission to claiming that they are committed to creating and supporting learning environments that reflect the diversity of New York City. They believe all students benefit from diverse and inclusive schools and classrooms. They strive to welcome and support all students, families, and school staff.

This written testimony will focus on the harm that is being caused by the NYC DOE Diversity in Admissions Program. This initiative is designed to increase diversity within targeted NYC schools. Some schools give an admissions priority to applicants who are low-income, English Language Learners (ELLs) or Emerging Multilingual Learners (EMLs), in the welfare system or live in temporary housing. NYC has 38 highly sought after Public High Schools allocating between 50 to 88% of their seats to students who meet these specific criteria.

I believe that this program will harm underserved communities and the city as a whole. The program also contradicts the administrations missions and goals because:

It harms students from underserved communities. The NYC DOE has recently improved the admission process by initiating a form of ability grouping by giving students who show stronger academic abilities priority in gaining admissions to schools that can address these abilities. Many studies have shown that ability grouping, the process of assigning students' curriculum that can address their academic abilities, is highly effective, especially for low-income students. The Diversity in Admissions program disrupts this process by giving priority to students who can have lower academic ability over those with higher academic ability. According to DOE officials, a student with lower grades who meets the Diversity Admission criteria can get a spot over a student with higher grades and does not meet the criteria. Therefore, low-income, English Language Learners, Emerging Multilingual Learners, children in the welfare system or who live in temporary housing get priority based on a criterion rather than based on their academic ability. This may result in harming students from underserved communities because they are in a school that is unable to address their academic abilities. Recently released data shows the negative impact the Diversity Plan had in District 15. Enrolment in the public schools dropped, funding was lost and overall academic abilities dropped for the entire district. Expanding a similar plan citywide will have the same impact.

It does not improve a supportive learning environment. The DOE claims that it is committed to creating and supporting learning environments. Ability grouping fosters such environments. Having students in a school that is too advanced for their academic abilities is not a supportive environment.

It is not inclusive. The DOE claims that it believes all students benefit from diverse and inclusive schools and classrooms. Admissions based on academic abilities are inclusive because it is unbiased. They are taking seats away from an unbiased admission process to one that is exclusive and biased.

It does not support all students and families. The DOE claims that it supports all students and families. Granting admissions priority based on a biased criteria does not support all students and families. How does a parent explain to their kid, who is a diligent student, that they didn't get a spot in their local school because they made too much money? We should have a system that encourages academic and financial achievement.

It will cause additional declines in enrollment and school funding. This administration has made it a top priority to stop the school enrollment decline that has had a substantial impact on education funding. This policy will cause the exodus from the public schools and city to continue. Families that can afford to send their kids to non-public schools or move out of the city or will do so when they can't get into a school that addresses their kids' academic needs. Students from families who don't qualify for the diversity admissions will take advantage of scholarships offered by non-public schools. This will result in lower enrollment from many income levels.

It is based on data that has been found to be unreliable. One of the criteria used to determine eligibility in the Diversity Admissions Program is if the student is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In the past the US Office of Inspector General has found significant abuse in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, which administers the federal school lunch programs, does not require households to provide income information, leading to hundreds of thousands of ineligible children receiving free lunches. An audit found that more than half of sampled households in NYC approved for benefits were ineligible. Because of the financial benefits, the NYC School District has a clear incentive to register as many students in NSLP as possible. Families also have an added incentive to claim they qualify for the NSLP so they can get their kid into a better school

without having to provide any proof. The end result is that seats are being allocated to students based on unreliable criteria over testing and grades that are more accurate and reliable.

It makes a core problem worse. It has been reported that 65% of black and brown public school children in NYC never achieve reading proficiency. There are schools in communities that receive lots of additional funding with no results to show for it. Incentivizing the best students to leave these communities does not help the schools in them or address the problems in these schools.

In summary, the Diversity in Admissions Program should be stopped immediately because it will harm underserved communities and the entire city that is struggling to recover from the pandemic. It does not address the core problem of failing schools that are not providing the education our kids deserve. The focus should be on creating great schools in every community, grouping kids to address their needs for success and encourage them to thrive academically.

My name is Jeremy and I am a District 2 parent. I would like to make two requests:

First, I request the return of screened middle schools, and the addition of honors classes in multiple subjects at unscreened middle schools. I have an advanced learner at a large zoned middle school and more challenging ability-grouped classes would meet his needs much better than the current mixed-ability classes.

Second, I request that you please lower the percentage of high school seats set aside as part of the city's diversity initiatives and return neighborhood priority to high schools in Manhattan.

I am not opposed to reserving a certain percentage of seats to promote economic and racial diversity, but I was shocked to learn how high these percentages are. In my mind, reserving 20% of seats at a school is reasonable. Reserving 50%, like Eleanor Roosevelt and Townsend Harris are doing, or 73%, like Bard High School is doing, is cartoonishly high. It seems like the aim was not to actually come up with something fair, but to win a game of political one-upmanship.

With respect to neighborhood priority, I want to remind you that even middle class Manhattan students are human beings. Not every student can handle an hour-long subway commute to school. Some students need a high school that is close to home. Some students need the security of friendships from elementary and middle school that continue through the difficult years of high school. Some students aren't ready to navigate the entire city at age 14 and need to slowly grow their independence at local parks, restaurants, and neighbors' homes. Attending high school in the community where you live is a choice that every student in New York City should have, even the ones whose home community is in Manhattan. But between the high number of seats reserved for low income students and the removal of neighborhood priority from zoned schools, Manhattan families have lost the option to choose a neighborhood high school. Please rectify that situation.

Thank you.

Jill Weidman

Brooklyn, New York. 11218

Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)
New York City Council Education Committee

January 27, 2023

My name is Jill Weidman, I'm a Brooklyn resident and a parent to a public middle school student and a private high school student, both with IEPs. I just finished the high school application process for my younger son and am concerned with the lack of transparency and adherence to ADA standards regarding ICT class options at many of these schools.

For Students with Disabilities when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states:

“Every DOE middle school and high school welcomes and serves students with disabilities according to their IEPs.”

But what they don't state is that schools will not supervise the school open houses and tours in which parents are directly or indirectly told that the school will only provide some but not all of these services.

Some of the things parents and students hear are:

1. Related services such as PT and OT will have to be provided outside of school. This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services.
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5. Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.

6. And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. "Don't come here."
7. Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. [That is against federal education policy.](#)
8. Also **against federal education policy** is the practice of Gifted and Talented Schools asking students to remove ICT off their IEP before entry.
9. Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. This tells parents of students who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: Self-Serve Discrimination because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. Even if the parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity and what they've done about it. Please also read the Chalkbeat article entitled, "[Many High Schools are Off Limits to Students with Disabilities](#)" that speaks to how students with disabilities face discrimination in the admissions process.

More importantly, please examine the schools who are doing it right. [Townsend Harris High School](#), a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child's education and their child's disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent's office also provides exemplary support to parents. **Both institutions look at special education more as a point of excellence rather than a miserable point of compliance. That is what makes students feel safe and included.**

The 20% Rule- Only in New York City:

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This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is not only unfair, this is not legal, especially for students with physical disabilities.

I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you.

Yours truly,

Jill Weidman
D15 mom of two IEP kids
jillweidman@gmail.com

Johanna Bjorken

Brooklyn, NY 11220

January 26, 2023

Dear council,

As the parent of an 8th grader who will be attending a public, NYC Ed Opt high school next fall (because that's all we applied to), I would like to vociferously express my opinion that state test scores not be used in admissions processes to either middle school or high school.

Every parent wants the best for their child, and for their child to thrive. But doing so has to not only imagine the past performance of students, but also their potential. When we are talking about 10 year olds, or 12 year olds, we must see a future that holds multitudes of options.

Screening children for admission into high schools, or even worse middle schools, is the antithesis of what public school should do. All our children deserve the opportunity to learn in a diverse learning environment, not be sorted into tracks based on how they bubbled in a test sheet during two weeks in the spring of the prior year. All of our children deserve the belief that they can thrive and be met with challenging curriculum.

Sorting and stacking children by academic ability is a fallacy. Research has shown that it harms those who are designated to the lowest tracks, and does not benefit what the NY Times magazine this past weekend called "rankers", those who are put in higher ranks. We need to believe in all our students, and work to make sure that parents believe in and trust all our schools.

Do not reinstate state test scores for middle school and high school screens.

Sincerely,

[electronically signed]

Johanna Bjorken

From: Katherine.Ochoa@cix.csi.cuny.edu
Sent: Wednesday, January 25, 2023 12:32 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] VIP CUNY COVA Mentoring Program Testimony

Katherine De Los Santos, I have been involved with VIP since Spring 2022, working at Collee of Staten Island. Since becoming a VIP, I have reached out to veterans in the CSI community via email, phone calls, and in-person conversations. As a veteran, one has difficulty transitioning back to civilian life. Many veterans have known military life for a very long time, making it challenging to transition. Veterans face many challenges when going to school to make the transition easier. Many of those need help to have the proper resources to be successful in school.

The VIP program seeks to help veterans know what is available to them. The VIP program has worked hard to get to know what veterans lack. A survey sent out to veterans can assist CUNY in understanding precisely what our veteran population lack. Many veterans have simple needs, from food insecurities to enrolling into their VA benefits. This program is vital for the veteran population to assist them through the transition as their requirements vary.

As a peer mentor, I have provided resources shared through VIP meetings and wellness Wednesdays to our veteran population, from employment opportunities to contact on how to enroll in VA benefits.

Thank you,
Katherine De Los Santos
CUNY COVA VIP Peer Mentor
MSW Student College of Staten Island

01/23/2023

Dear New York City Council Education Committee,

I am the parent of two daughters who attend 6th grade and 2nd grade in District 2 NYC public schools. I am writing to advocate for change in Admissions Policy for Middle Schools and High Schools.

The extremely high allocation of seats for Diversity in Admissions (often 50-75%) means that middle class D2 kids who work hard to have high grades and standardized test scores now have a low chance of getting into a desirable high school. This is unacceptable. Families who can afford to send their children to private schools are doing so. Other families are fleeing the city entirely. For many of us, leaving the NYC public school system is not a viable option. From the position of "equity," this DIA policy is completely inequitable to the middle class.

The continued plummet in enrollment in NYC public schools is evidence of parents' lack of faith in the DOE policies and ultimately our disappointment in the access to quality education.

Please end the Diversity in Admissions policy. Bring back merit-based admissions screenings to high schools and middle schools.

Sincerely,

Katherine H. Tan

Remarks by KEMALA KARMEN kemala@nycpublic.org |

My name is Kemala Karmen. I am the parent of two children who were educated in NYC public schools. I am also a co-founder of the grassroots organization [NYC Opt Out](#).

I am writing this testimony after having listened to the speakers in this afternoon's public comment period. Several of the parents who spoke during that period asked that state test scores be reintroduced into NYC middle school admissions, and warned of dire consequences of flight from the public schools if this demand were not met. They also criticized D15's diversity plan, implying that it had negatively affected that district's record of specialized high school admissions—though I don't believe any of them, unlike me, were actually D15 parents, and apparently they cannot even conceive of a world where a family might not prioritize specialized high school admissions for their child. If I am not mistaken, the majority of these parents were affiliated with the group PLACE, an organization which endorsed both George Santos and Lee Zeldin, and whose co-founder, among other things, has tweeted rapturously in support of teen AR15 shooter Kyle Rittenhouse. (In the council hearing this man called the places where his children study "government schools," a label which the right uses as a slur.) I hope when you weigh the comments made by these folks, you will take into account the context of who is making them.

As you may have surmised by now, I take the completely opposite view. For years, we at NYC Opt Out have called for the removal of state test scores from the NYC middle and high school admissions process.

And for years, our call went unheeded—until a global pandemic wreaked havoc on our city. Initially, NYC Department of Education *had* to drop scores from the process because there were none to be had; the state had canceled the tests when schools went remote. (Well, at least NYCDOE dropped scores for middle school admissions. For high school, they pulled some nonsense, using students' SIXTH grade scores for admission to 9th grade. It was already ridiculous, in the established process, to use scores from 7th grade that would be more than a year old by the time the student entered high school—but the idea that a student, who still has room to grow and mature, should be judged on the scores of their just-into-middle-school self defies common sense.)

While test scores stayed out of middle school admissions this year too, even in the handful of districts which brought back some middle school screens, **I would like to see their removal declared permanent and, further, I believe they should be removed from high school**

Remarks by KEMALA KARMEN kemala@nycpublic.org |

admissions as well. In addition to the many reasons to oppose the tests we've invoked in the past¹, there is now a sustained national trend in higher education to no longer require test scores for college and university admissions. Colleges have recognized that standardized test requirements acted as a barrier to admissions, keeping out students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, who could have contributed to their campuses and progressed to graduation, had they not been locked out from the outset. Among public institutions, there are only a few university systems that insist on scores, and they are all in red states, most notably Florida. Please tell me that NYC does not want to model its educational policy on that of deSantis.

And now for some city council history:

In 2019, I appeared before this committee. It was a memorable occasion because Anthony Ramos, who was at the time making history for his part in the original Broadway cast of *Hamilton*, also testified that day, together with his former high school teacher Sara Steinweiss.

Ramos and Steinweiss told a story that is all too familiar: how a student is seen as dumb or failing because of performance on standardized tests, and how teachers are discouraged from staying in the profession because so much of what they hope to do or accomplish is straight-jacketed by the system's obsession with test-score rankings.

Ramos' tale had a happy ending; his teacher took a holistic approach and saw *him*, not the figure on the Scantron. She went above and beyond and was able to shepherd him into a conservatory program post graduation, where he flourished as an actor. However, the city's school children, its future Anthony Ramoses, ultimately lost out; this talented educator left the classroom soon after Ramos graduated. She felt hamstrung by the strictures of a test-based regimen. It blocked her students' organic development, and sucked the joy out of teaching.

A short while later, at that same hearing, as we were all still marveling at how Anthony Ramos's career almost didn't happen because of his poor test-taking skills, Linda Chen, then the Chief Academic Officer of NYCDOE, confirmed that the NYCDOE had plans to impose EVEN MORE tests on our children. Unlike the other standardized tests our children are

¹ <https://www.optoutnyc.com/10-reasons>

Remarks by KEMALA KARMEN kemala@nycpublic.org |

subjected to, these so-called “screeners” (MAP/Acadience/iReady) are not mandated by the state or federal government; the decision to administer them lies solely with NYCDOE.

The Adams/Banks administration has continued this practice of excessive testing, although they were under no obligation to continue this initiative of the waning days of the deBlasio administration. At a time when our school budgets have been slashed by literally hundreds of millions, we shouldn't spend a single penny on MAP, Acadience, or iReady.

With the pandemic and its associated effects now being measured in years, it is more crucial than ever that we see our children as more than data points. We must remember that Ramos succeeded because Steinweiss managed to see him in his human entirety. We shouldn't offload assessment to a product purchased off the shelf. Instead, we must turn to our teachers, who hold masters and sometimes doctorates in education, to use their professional training to craft assessments that reflect the students in front of them, not the theoretical “student” for whom the MAP² or any other standardized test was designed.

² Regarding MAP, a [U.S. Department of Education study found no statistically significant impact on student achievement](#)

I sign on to what Jennifer Choi said, copied below.

Thank you,
Kim Skadan
Brooklyn

For Students with Disabilities when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states:

“Every DOE middle school and high school welcomes and serves students with disabilities according to their IEPs.”

But what they don't state is that schools will not supervise the school open houses and tours in which parents are directly or indirectly told that the school will only **provide some but not all** of these services.

Some of the things parents and students hear are:

1. Related services such as PT and OT will have to be provided outside of school. This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services.
2. We do not offer integrated co-teaching (meaning a special education teacher and a general education teacher) services for World Language classes even though you need that to graduate with a Regents diploma. Basically this means no special education instruction for students with IEPs to learn world languages.

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3. There are no ICT services for AP Classes even though these classes are also used toward completing their high school diploma.
4. They are told that there are no self-contained or special classes which really hurts a child especially if that school is specialized with certain career technical programs.
5. Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.
6. And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions

about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. "Don't come here."

7. Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. That is against federal education [policy](#).
8. Also against federal education policy is the practice of Gifted and Talented Schools ask students to remove ICT off their IEP before entry.
9. Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. This tells parents of students who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: **Self-Serve Discrimination** because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. Even if the parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity and what they've done about it. Please also read the *Chalkbeat* article entitled, "[Many High Schools are Off Limits to Students with Disabilities](#)" that speaks to how students with disabilities face discrimination in the admissions process.

More importantly, please examine the schools who are doing it right. [Townsend Harris High School](#), a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child's education and their child's disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent's office also provides exemplary support to parents. Both institutions **look at special education more as a point of excellence rather than a miserable point of compliance. That is what makes students feel safe and included.**

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The 20% Rule- Only in New York City:

Did you know that simply having an IEP or 504 plan does not qualify a disabled child to be in the students with disabilities (SWD) category for admissions? Another area that requires inspection is what parents call the 20% Rule in which a student needs a specific amount of special education instructional services to qualify as a student with a disability (SWD) in the

admissions process. Ignoring the 13 disability classifications put forth by the IDEA, the DOE arbitrarily determines who qualifies for a Student with Disability seat grouping by determining the amount of special education instruction provided. This rule has a huge impact as it allows only some but not all students with disabilities to be placed in a different pool of applicants that often has less applicants per seat, especially for a very competitive screened school.

This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is not only unfair, this is not legal, especially for students with physical disabilities.

I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jennifer Choi', with a stylized, cursive-like script.

Jennifer Choi, Managing Member and Advocate
Special Support Services, LLC
jenn@specialsupportservices.com
<https://specialsupportservices.com/>

My name is Lisa Brassell, I'm a Manhattan resident, a parent of one student with an IEP, and one student with ADHD but no current accommodations. I am not an expert on education, so have copied Jennifer Choi's testimony. I have highlighted my own additions in bold below.

For Students with Disabilities, when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states: "Every DOE middle school and high school welcomes and serves students with disabilities according to their IEPs."

But what they don't state is that schools will not supervise the school open houses and tours in which parents are directly or indirectly told that the school will only provide some, but not all, of these services. **The onus is put on the parents, who very often do not have the training and resources to know what is OK and what is not OK. Many parents, especially English Language Learners, do not want to cause too many issues for their students by asserting their rights, and can be misled by the schools who they look at as experts.**

Some of the things parents and students hear are:

1. Related services such as PT and OT will have to be provided outside of school. **This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services. Many parents do not have the time, money or resources to coordinate these services themselves.**
2. We do not offer integrated co-teaching (meaning a special education teacher and a general education teacher) services for World Language classes even though you need that to graduate with a Regents diploma. **This denies students the right to graduate with a full diploma due to lack of school services.**
3. There are no ICT services for AP Classes even though these classes are also used toward completing their high school diploma. **This may make college unattainable, or harder to get into, for students who may otherwise be able to attend. There are many 2E (twice exceptional) students who can access higher-level classes when given the necessary supports.**
4. They are told that there are no self-contained or special classes which really hurts a child, especially if that school is specialized with certain career technical programs.
5. Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.
6. And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. "Don't come here." **Many parents do not have unlimited time and resources to track down of this information- it should be readily available for all to access.**
7. Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. That is against federal education policy.
8. Also against federal education policy is the practice of Gifted and Talented Schools ask students to remove ICT off their IEP before entry.
9. Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. **Not only is this incorrect, it makes college seem unattainable for them if they feel they cannot get services in college.** This also tells parents of students

who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: Self-Serve Discrimination, because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. **Parents need to be able to look at schools as partners in their children's education, and be able to trust that they can provide an appropriate education.** Even if the parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity and what they've done about it. Please also read the Chalkbeat article entitled, "Many High Schools are Off Limits to Students with Disabilities" that speaks to how students with disabilities face discrimination in the admissions process.

More importantly, please examine the schools who are doing it right. Townsend Harris High School, a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child's education and their child's disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent's office also provides exemplary support to parents. Both institutions look at special education more as a point of excellence rather than a miserable point of compliance. That is what makes students feel safe and included.

The 20% Rule- Only in New York City:

Did you know that simply having an IEP or 504 plan does not qualify a disabled child to be in the students with disabilities (SWD) category for admissions? Another area that requires inspection is what parents call the 20% Rule, in which a student needs a specific amount of special education instructional services to qualify as a student with a disability (SWD) in the admissions process.

Ignoring the 13 disability classifications put forth by the IDEA, the DOE arbitrarily determines who qualifies for a Student with Disability seat grouping by determining the amount of special education instruction provided. This rule has a huge impact as it allows only some but not all students with disabilities to be placed in a different pool of applicants that often has less applicants per seat, especially for a very competitive screened school. **It also makes it difficult for parents to know if their child qualifies for a spot. Some parents may question their child's services if they do not qualify as a SWD.**

This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is not only unfair, this is not legal, especially for students with physical disabilities. **Schools should be working with parents to make the process easier, more straight-forward, and supportive for students. Parents shouldn't have to be legal experts, or have a lawyer on retainer, to get the services they are entitled to.**

My name is Lori Robinson. I'm a Manhattan resident and Queens native, a parent of a middle school student with an IEP, and a speech-language pathologist for the past twenty years, working in various schools with students of all ages with various learning issues. I am writing to take this opportunity to address a number of concerns that I have with the current system of Special Education administration in our city.

It concerns me that when touring high schools for my artistically talented and intelligent daughter (who happens to have an IEP for Dyslexia) that I routinely heard the same things:

- We try to "phase out" student IEPs so they can be more independent (even through the federal law that requires IEPs in the first place stipulates that students should be offered a "least restrictive environment" that also addresses their needs)
- Integrated co-teaching is not offered in Language classes or AP Classes even though these classes are 1) Offered in many schools to all students despite grades or achievement, 2) used toward completing their high school diploma required credits and 3) see "least restrictive environment" above.
- A reason we try to phase out services is that colleges don't have ICT classes (Perhaps these administrators are unaware but colleges most certainly do have College Offices for students with disabilities and as my professor brother can tell you, he regularly makes accommodations for various types of disabilities in his class.)

It concerns me that other parents have to suffer the same way we did when we didn't know what was wrong with our child who was not living up to the intelligence she showed in other areas in school. I am sure her teachers and school did the best they could with the (blunt and nonspecific) tools that they had, but she was lucky that she had a trained professional at home to help. We certainly could not have afforded tutoring services at \$100 -150 an hour (the going rate that we were quoted). I feel fortunate to have had a personal interest in improving my own education about Dyslexia which was what ultimately helped me to unofficially identify it in her and ask for an evaluation which led to SETTS services at school and eventually to the ICT class she has thrived in since 6th grade.

It concerns me that educators do not learn more (if at all) about very common learning differences like ADHD (roughly 10% of children), Dyscalculia (roughly 5%), and Dyslexia (the most common learning difference, by some estimates, 20% of the population). It concerns me that educators don't understand that these are brain based issues that affect short term memory, auditory processing, organizational skills and sometimes even motoric (muscle) planning - essentially all the skills required in order to be a good student. And what is even more concerning is that these children often end up suffering from "The Matthew Effect" where the successful students become more successful and the less successful are left to figure it out for themselves in addition to getting into the habit of failing. An eight year old should not tell her mother that she is "just stupid" like my daughter once did.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity in high schools and what they've done about it. Please help to greenlight programs to help identify and

support struggling students in the way they are capable of learning. Please implore Education Schools to consider that “Special Education” is not just a category but that it is a large and diverse one - regular teachers need to learn about these disabilities to know how to help when it shows up in their classroom.

Also, please examine the schools who are doing it right. At least at the high school level, I’m aware that Townsend Harris High School, a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child’s education and their child’s disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent’s office also provides exemplary support to parents. Bard Early College High School seems to understand that students can be intelligent and also have an IEP. These institutions look at special education more as a part of an entire picture of excellence rather than a disgrace to be avoided. That is what makes students and parents feel safe and included and more importantly, keeps us compliant with Federal disability law.

Thank you for your attention to these very important issues. In a city that unintentionally outsources Special Education Services to the tune of the staggering sum of almost \$1 billion dollars, it does seem that at least some of those dollars would be better spent serving the greater good by implementing better services in the public sector.

Yours truly,

Lori Robinson

ljrslp@gmail.com

Dear Chairperson Joseph & Members of the Education Committee:

During testimony before the Education Committee of the New York City Council on January 25, 2023, Ms. Alysa O’Shea identified herself as a parent on the Citywide Council for High Schools elected from Queens. Unlike the subsequent speaker Ms. Maron, she did not identify as Co-President of the advocacy group PLACE NYC. She began several points invoking CCHS as the originator, leaving the Council Committee and audience with the undeniable impression that she was speaking on behalf of CCHS rather than for herself as an individual or as Co-President of PLACE NYC.

Given her position on the CCHS and invocation of it during her testimony, corrections of some errors of commission and of omission are required in order to preserve the good name of CCHS as being a reliable source of information for the Education Committee. I am copying this email to CCHS’ officers and Councilmember Joseph in the hope that further discussion among you will result in more accurate testimony going forward.

1) Ms. O’Shea stated the CCHS represents approximately 320,000 high school students and their families. The DOE Demographic Snapshot clearly indicates total enrollment for all schools in grades 9-12 as **273,237** as of October, 2021. Her contention is almost 47,000 students too high (17%). Even inclusion of other grades that may be attending the same schools (e.g. 6-12) totals 301,711; still far below the figure she provided to the Committee.

2) She alleged that “many” students did not receive any of their 12 high school application choices in the 2021-22 cycle and furthered alleged that this was more frequent in District 2 and indicated the system was skewed against Asian students getting any of their choices. She did not provide a shred of evidence for any of these allegations nor an actual number that quantifies “many.” Similarly, the statement that “many parents” left the system due to the lottery selection process is unsubstantiated by any data that isolates this as a cause separate from other considerations such as high housing costs or job relocations.

3) Her statement that CCHS feels that geographic priorities for high schools are needed, particularly in Queens because the “need for high school seats far outweighs availability” conflates the myths of Queens as a “transportation desert” with that of Queens as needing high school seats:

--Although more subway lines are always desirable, Queens has 11, along with 81 MTA bus routes, 6 dollar van routes, and a wealth of transportation alternatives including bicycle lanes and parent drop-off/pick-up.

--Documents submitted to CCHS by the SCA last month in relation to a proposed school in College Point provided projections of HS students in Queens for the next several years (Column (A) Projected Students). The analysis generally used by the DOE and SCA taken from a document (copy attached for your further reference) entitled “Enrollment Projections for the New York City Public Schools 2021-22 to 2030-31 Volume II” prepared for the New York City School Construction Authority in June, 2022 by Statistical Forecasting, LLC (SCA/SF) offers the same trend but slightly different figures (Column (B) Projected Students). A median of the two projections is provided (Column (C) Projected Students):

Year	(A) Projected Students	(B) Projected Students	(C) Median Projected Students
2022-23	76,374	74,799	75,587
2023-24	75,887	73,671	74,779
2024-25	74,805	72,981	73,893
2025-26	72,833	70,717	71,775
2026-27	71,199	68,744	69,972

--The same SCA documents indicated a current capacity for Queens HS as 81,540 seats (below (D) SCA Inferred Capacity). This is somewhat higher than a survey of the SCA Blue Book done earlier last year indicating 78,863 seats, including those in schools servicing grades other than grades 9-12 (below (E) SCA Blue Book Capacity). Again, a median is provided (Column (F) Median Queens HS Capacity):

Year	(D) SCA Inferred Capacity	(E) SCA Blue Book Capacity	(F) Median Queens HS Capacity	Additions
2022-23	81,540	78,863	80,202	
2023-24	82,335	79,658	80,997	Cardozo (795)
2024-25	82,335	79,658	80,997	
2025-26	85,401	82,724	84,063	Woodside (3,066)
2026-27	86,936	84,259	85,598	Hillside (876); CP (659)

--Finally, comparing the median enrollment projections and capacities for Queens HS, a projected utilization per the below Column (G) Projected Utilization can be seen, **evidencing that there is no current nor anticipated future need for high school seats in Queens:**

Year	(C) Median Projected Students	(F) Median Queens HS Capacity	(G) Projected Utilization
2022-23	75,587	80,202	94.2
2023-24	74,779	80,997	92.3
2024-25	73,893	80,997	91.2
2025-26	71,775	84,063	85.4
2026-27	69,972	85,598	81.7

-- **Beyond 2026-27, there is no ticking time bomb of enrollments that necessitate additional high school seats.**

Page 65 (Table A5) of the "Enrollment Projections for the New York City Public Schools 2021-22 to 2030-31 Volume II" prepared for the New York City School Construction Authority in June, 2022 by Statistical Forecasting, LLC (SCA/SF) indicates an overall decline in Borough enrollment for Queens from Pre-K through to GED to 223,669 in 2030-31 from 2020-21's figure of 260,328; approximately 14%. Similar trends are noted for the other Boroughs indicating no large scale migration of intra-city residents would justify such projects either Queens' PK-12 projections are presented as:

Year	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2021-22	17748	19771	17761	18278	18497	18905	18869	19084	19586	20286
2022-23	16954	18781	19387	17250	17806	18149	18440	18388	18888	19555
2023-24	16246	17822	18422	18824	16818	17471	17703	17978	18213	18863
2024-25	15990	17141	17478	17889	18341	16508	17053	17245	17817	18195
2025-26	16061	16939	16811	16967	17434	18002	16111	16635	17094	17808
2026-27	16133	17016	16615	16322	16532	17115	17589	15711	16485	17086
2027-28	16206	17096	16693	16137	15907	16223	16724	17164	15582	16485
2028-29	16275	17178	16774	16216	15726	15614	15864	16292	17014	15585
2029-30	16351	17254	16855	16297	15805	15435	15267	15482	16162	17021
2030-31	17394	17337	16931	16381	15882	15514	15100	14881	15343	16169

Year	9	10	11	12	GED	Total
2021-22	21991	18496	17305	17149	601	264,327
2022-23	21339	19778	16256	16825	601	258,397
2023-24	20672	19186	17368	15844	601	252,031
2024-25	20064	18567	16843	16906	601	246,638
2025-26	19405	18028	16294	16389	601	240,579
2026-27	19060	17420	15818	15845	601	235,348
2027-28	18422	17118	15291	15361	601	231,010
2028-29	17965	16542	15060	14840	601	227,546
2029-30	17178	16139	14547	14611	601	225,005
2030-31	18425	15408	14209	14094	601	223,669

4) As Ms. O'Shea's statements that geographic priorities and additional locations for Queens high schools are needed due to transportation challenges are patently untrue, it would do her well as a representative of Queens to examine the patterns inherent with the 28 DOE high schools that still have zoned admissions programs. These are about 6% of all DOE HS with Manhattan having no zoned HS; the Bronx with 2; Staten Island with 5; Brooklyn with 6; and Queens having 15.

DOE data concerning demographics of HS age children living within 2.5 miles of each school indicates that 6 of the 15 Queens HS with zoned admissions programs have a plurality of combined White & Asian (ranging from 41% to 49%) while 5 have absolute majorities of combined White & Asian students (ranging from 52% to 75%). The remaining 4 HS have between 23% to 45% combined White & Asian living within 2.5 miles- 2 of these have pluralities of Hispanic students and 2 have majorities of Hispanic students.

None of the 15 Queens HS with zoned admissions programs have a plurality nor majority of Black HS aged children living with 2.5 miles. 12 have fewer than 10% while the remaining 3 schools range from 16% to 22% Black HS aged children living with 2.5 miles. Comparatively, of the 70 unzoned Queens HS for which data is available, 19 have majority Black students in attendance along with 7 having pluralities of Black students ranging from 32% to 49%. 21 schools have majorities of Hispanic students along with 11 showing pluralities ranging from 31.6% to 47.8%. The remaining 12 unzoned Queens HS show 10 with combined majorities of Asian and White students along with 2 showing pluralities ranging from 42.5% to 49%.

The remaining high school zones high schools in Queens therefore obviously disfavor Black students. While 17% of unzoned schools have pluralities or majorities of combined Asian and White, 73.3% of the zoned schools do. Conversely, while 37.1% of unzoned schools have majorities or pluralities of Black students, 0% of zoned high schools do.

Hispanic students have majorities or pluralities at 26.7% of zoned HS compared with 44.3% at unzoned HS.

The geographic bias embedded in zoned admissions programs creates barriers to entry and support inequitable access by constructing preferences not based on student characteristics nor merit.

5) Just as Ms. O’Shea’s statement concerning that the CCHS sees a need for high school seats in Queens due to transportation or utilization is provably false, her statement concerning Queens needing a specialized high school is also incorrect. In addition to one academic specialized high school (not covered by Hecht-Calandra), Queens also has 2 screened academic schools funded by the DOE as if specialized and one audition screened school funded as if specialized audition. Collectively, these 4 Queens schools servicing 3,400 students are 21% of all schools funded by the DOE as if they are specialized.

The myth of the “academic refugee;” students forced out of Queens to attend specialized schools in other Boroughs, also does not justify her statement concerning the need for a specialized high school in Queens. DOE statistics from 2018-19 indicated that 94% of all students in grades 9-12 attend secondary or high schools located within their Borough of residence. This statistic may be understated as the entire enrollments of the 18 high schools which attract the most students from outside their Boroughs was 23,372 for 10/2021- including students for whom the school is within their home Borough. This accounts for about 8.8% of all students in grades 9-12. The same “Enrollment Projections for the New York City Public Schools 2021-22 to 2030-31 Volume II” indicates projected **Citywide for high school grade enrollments** (page 60, Table A1) as:

Year	9	10	11	12	GED	Total
2021-22	78838	71238	64791	64926	4073	283866
2022-23	76218	74112	61904	62986	4073	279293
2023-24	75155	71617	64389	60265	4073	275499
2024-25	72630	70632	62241	62633	4073	272209
2025-26	69784	68252	61360	60562	4073	264031
2026-27	68108	65566	59302	59697	4073	256746
2027-28	64588	64031	56994	57622	4073	247308
2028-29	63217	60659	55769	55347	4073	239065
2029-30	60064	59460	52842	54174	4073	230613
2030-31	64044	56454	52907	51313	4073	228791

Per the above, the capacity of high schools in Queens is more than adequate to service its current and projected students. Students attending schools outside of Queens cannot be attributed to being “forced out” of the Borough due to lack of seats. Rather, they are attracted by programs offered at schools in other Boroughs, notably:

01M696	02M475	02M630	05M692	13K430	02M408	03M541	15K684
02M376	02M519	03M485	10X445	14K449	02M531	10X696	

Conversely, enrollments indicate that students from outside of Queens are attracted to programs at:

24Q299	30Q301	30Q501
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As interborough enrollments constitute a small portion of the overall current and projected high school enrollments, suggesting that other projects for Queens are necessary to accommodate/attract students who might choose to attend schools outside of Queens is ludicrous.

6) Ms. O’Shea’s statement indicating that the CCHS supports more prep and better publicization of the SHSAT as a way to increase diversity in the schools using the test indicates a total ignorance of the research decoupling prep-induced success on single high stakes tests with academic and later career success. Acceptance of this research is evidenced by the devaluation and abandonment of the SAT and ACT by many colleges and universities. Advocacy of such “doubling down” on the already exorbitant costs of the SHSAT in the name of diversity is facetious and will only serve to enhance the profits of the test prep industry.

7) Ms. O'Shea's statement indicating that 15% of high schools have screened programs is inaccurate. 94 high schools have academic screens (20%); in addition to which 21 have audition programs (4%); 69 give preference to continuing 8th graders (15%); and 28 have zoned (6%) - all of which collectively constitute screens for a total of 45% of schools.

8) Ms. O'Shea's contention that CCHS advocates further extension of admissions wait lists into Fall and expansion of CTE into Middle Schools demonstrate such ignorance of school operations and the requirements for CTE that it is not credible an informed organization such as CCHS would endorse these ideas.

9) In light of rampant grade inflation in middle schools, notably that derived from parental pressures on teachers in Districts 2 and 26, and the lack of a City-wide grading policy, Ms. O'Shea's contention that the CCHS favors reinstatement of NYS test scores as a component of a composite scoring system for admissions seems to make sense. However, her accompanying statement that CCHS favors schools setting their own individual criteria negates this position.

Allow me to add that PLACE NYC in no way represents the views of the majority of parents and community members of New York City. Concerning what changes are needed to admissions for high school & secondary schools:

1. Ending of all zoned and geographic priority programs
2. Re-evaluation of building capacities in light of imminent implementation of the class size law
3. Moratorium on SCA construction projects until results of (2) are correlated to use & projected use
4. Re-evaluation of the base amount in FSF in light of imminent implementation of the class size law (teacher: student ratio)
5. Inclusion of NYS State test scores with students' core 6th & 7th grade GPAs to form composite score
6. Use of composite score in ranking for all screened programs & for banding within Education Option
7. Empowering of principals to implement screens when desirable by only using (6) without additional barriers & with set-asides for SWDs & students living in poverty.
8. Reduction of specialized high schools to 4 covered by Hecht-Calanadra only.
9. Reduction of specialized high schools enrollments to 100% of their buildings' capacities with set-asides for SWDs & students living in poverty
10. Ending of preference for continuing 8th graders into grade 9 for 6-12 and K-12 schools.
11. Action at State Level Required: replacement of provisions for free space/rental subsidy within NYS Education Law, Chapter 16, Title 2, Article 56, Section 2853 with provision of space when available at cost to charter schools
12. Action at State Level Required: repeal of the Hecht-Calandra Act

Any of the above would be impactful. Their collective effect would be transformative.

Respectfully,

Michael Athy
Principal (retired)
Member, Chancellor's Budget Working Group

Miriam A. Nunberg, Esq.
Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)
New York City Council Education Committee
January 25, 2023

I am a parent of a current DOE student with an IEP; my older son also had an IEP and graduated recently. I am also a resident of District 15, a co-founder of D15 Parents for Middle School Equity, a member of the NYC Alliance for School Integration and Desegregation (nycASID) and civil rights attorney specializing in supporting parents of children with disabilities in the public schools.

I oppose the reintroduction of NYS test scores for public school admissions in NYC because every child deserves a chance to go to a school regardless of how they performed on a few days of standardized testing in 4th or 7th grade. This is particularly true of students with disabilities, whom the DOE is notoriously terrible at supporting (hence the extra \$38 million on new attorneys that the DOE just announced). It is well documented that test-based admissions are a driver of school segregation, as standardized tests carry proven bias against children from low income families, in temporary housing, with special needs, and who are still learning English. Moreover, preparation for standardized tests in public schools intensifies when these scores are used for high stakes such as school admissions. Test prep also adversely impacts teaching and learning, and test-driven curricula robs our children of student-centered and joyful learning, particularly in schools that predominantly serve our most vulnerable learners.

In District 15, we found that removal of ALL admissions screens—academic, attendance, behavior, test scores, auditions—desegregated our middle schools within a single admissions cycle. Not only did the removal of screens lead to increased integration, but it also eased the sense of anxiety and competition that used to plague children in the old screening based model. When my older son was in elementary school, middle school admissions were a constant source of worry and stress for parents, children and teachers alike.

As a member of the Working Group that oversaw the development of the D15 Diversity Plan, I participated in the careful review of all data associated with middle school screening, and saw how each of the various admissions screens served to exclude children of color and those with high needs. As a civil rights attorney, I find it unconscionable that the DOE has explicit knowledge of the disparate impact of each of these screens, yet is considering resurrecting at least some of them. The DOE is legally required to maintain admissions criteria that do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin or disability, yet the use of these criteria are nothing but discriminatory on their face - as the DOE knows all too well.

Finally, as someone who represents parents of students with IEPs and 504 plans, often in highly selective and specialized DOE schools, I can categorically state that many of these environments flout their legal requirements when it comes to these students. They are too often treated like second class citizens who are expected to get by in these demanding programs with their accommodations ignored or whittled away until they become nearly meaningless. In my

opinion, public schools need to be designed to be inclusionary rather than exclusionary, so that they can meet their legal and ethical obligations to serve all students. Public schools' admissions criteria should therefore be designed to include children of all backgrounds and abilities, not to be bastions of elitism and exclusivity in a city as diverse as ours.

Thank you for considering this input.

Miriam Nunberg
mnunbergesq@gmail.com

Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)New
York City Council Education Committee1.25.2023

Most NYC schools welcome and accept students with special needs. We experienced service delays for things like OT and ST in elementary schools because of staffing shortages. However, once we began seeking a middle school the lack of services seemed baked into the system. What we found was that our son's needs were not met at any of the schools we saw once he hit middle school.

We found that in many of his classes, including world languages (necessary for acceptance to many colleges and for a regent's diploma) ICT services didn't exist. Many of the recommendations of his doctors, neuropsychologist, and even the IEP team, could not be provided. This is including, but not limited to, having work broken down into smaller segments, smaller class size with appropriate academics, ICT in classes such as art and language, access to honors or AP classes with appropriate services. Counseling and other services (OT, ST) were not immediately available to students; and were told that IEPs would "be in place" but could take weeks if not months after school started.

In elementary school shortages of therapists, Sped teachers, and service providers were a constant problem causing missed sessions or inappropriate staffing, sometimes for extended periods of time. However, at the middle and high school level we found that not only were there going to be shortages, but the system was not set up to ever provide the appropriate amount of support for many students.

A system that consistently underserves children is a broken system. We then hear people, including government officials, rail against families that seek appropriate environments in private schools, or by leaving the city altogether. A common refrain is that they are "playing the system" instead of acknowledging that the system is broken. All families, if they could, would want to provide their children with an appropriate education rather than the short-changed system that exists currently. No one wants to fight the city for reimbursement, or travel hours to school each way, or leave their community and even perhaps their job or family, to find a school because their own schools are broken. Yet, this is the system that NYC has continued to offer our kids, a system that asks them to accept being underserved and without access to the means be successful learners.

moria I holland

DOE New Admissions Processes.

I believe that the New Admissions Processes are a **DISASTER**.

I didn't elect Mayor Adams and you guys' so Superintendent McGuire can implement his personal plan for D2 that, unlike most districts, includes ZERO screened MS seats, and in addition has no plan for Honors ELA. I elected you, so the Chancellor **DIRECTS** Mr. McGuire what to do, based on the mayor's excellence driven **promises**, and have Mr. McGuire **EXECUTES IT**.

It is **unbelievable** that the Chancellor allowed the Superintendents do whatever they wanted after "listening to the parents". Why? The parents have already spoken by electing the mayor and you guys, for your excellence driven educational initiatives. **ALL** parents want the **EXACT** same thing anyway. Decent neighborhood schools and options to address every kid's educational needs, low and high, from the underperformers to ELL/ICT to the overperformers. It's **NOT** rocket science.

Many in the DOE keep talking like school "**integration**" is the most important issue for all families, however during his November 17, Washington Post interview, Chancellor Banks, said the following, and I quote:

"When I talk to families across the city, Black families, nobody ever talks to me about integrated schools, not even once," he said, his voice rising. "It's not what they talk about."

I guess, for one more time, the DOE administrators **KNOW BETTER** what the family priorities of the black families are, than the black families themselves.

I find this insulting and so should you.

Mr. McGuire might have great intentions, but unfortunately, as they say, "The road to Hell **IS** paved with great intentions". Mr. McGuire's misguided educational opinions are driven by social justice and not excellence, so he **suffers** from "**selective hearing**" when it comes to listening to the parents, therefore the Chancellor's plan is **no good**.

A ship can't be driven by consensus.

I am asking the captain of the DOE ship, Chancellor Banks, to come up with a **UNIFORM, best practices** plan for all schools, in all districts, driven by, as **promised**, EXCELELNCE and not people's **WRONG** beliefs, like integration, and feelings.

Excellence in education needs to be rewarded again and not be frowned upon as a measure of privilege. We need to stop taking the overperformers' educational "boxes",

as so vividly illustrated by the famous “equality vs equity” slide. It works in minor league baseball games but not in education.

This **excellence** driven **UNIFORM** plan should include, but not limited to,

1. Seats in screened schools as a percentage of the district’s students (a 10% number sounds fair to me),
2. Accelerated classes in Math **and** ELA in **EVERY school and EVERY grade**
3. **Same** district priority in all districts, and
4. **Reasonable** number of DIA seats per school (10% sounds fair to me) and not, as an example, an **infuriating** 50% currently at EI Ro HS.

Thank you.

Nikos Papageorgiou

Father of Bronx Science HS and

Wagner MS seniors.

Alysa O'Shea
Transcript of in-person testimony to
New York City Council's Committee on Education
Admissions Oversight Hearing on Wednesday, 1/25/2023

Hi, good afternoon. My name is Alysa O'Shea; I am the parent-elected representative from Queens on the Citywide Council on High Schools. We represent approximately 320,000 families in the public school system, and I'd like to say thank you Council Member Joseph for attending our meeting last month. We encourage all City Council members to drop in whenever they want and come by and say hello.

I am going to relay a brief history of our council's engagement over high school admission policies with our stakeholders and the NYC DOE, as well as our recommendations moving forward.

CCHS recommended tightening academic bands for the current admissions cycle; we feel that merit and hard work should be recognized in the placement process. In the previous admissions cycle, we received feedback that Tier 1 was too broad and did not yield proper placements for many families. We also advocated for the expansion of waitlist timelines and increased transparency around the realistic chances of obtaining a seat in a waitlisted school.

What if a scholar didn't get any of their 12 choices? CCHS worked closely with OSE to develop questionnaires and outreach to these students. We received many complaints around this in the 2021-22 term, particularly in Manhattan's District 2. We saw data exhibiting an overall skew against placing students of Asian descent in their listed choices. My fear is that many families simply left the system if they had the means, instead of choosing to navigate a confusing system of waitlists and random placements far from home.

CCHS also advocated for geographic priority, especially in the borough of Queens (where there is an enormous need for high school seats that far outweighs availability). We also advocated this year for streamlined applications on an earlier timeline, which DOE responded to.

CCHS successfully advocated for OSE to publish assigned numbers for student lottery numbers in their MySchools accounts. Yet many families still do not understand the key role that lottery numbers play in how a school ranks them, and we call for more transparency around how these numbers are formulated. CCHS does not believe that lottery numbers are the answer for increasing diversity.

So, what will increase diversity? Academic environments in elementary and middle schools that lead to preparedness for our high schools. CCHS would like to see a return to Algebra for All being offered in all middle schools. We must recover from pandemic learning loss and strongly focus on mathematics and literacy to elevate our scholars' scores and abilities. Another suggestion is to begin CTE- and STEM-oriented programs earlier, in middle school, so students have a defined idea of what they might want to explore in the High School level.

New York City has approximately 400 High Schools with 700 different programs. Of these, an estimated 15% have traditionally used screens based on academic performance of applicants to select admitted students.

We would also like to see more outreach for SHSAT materials and preparations offered in multiple languages, especially to our 7th- and 8th-grade families in underserved districts. CCHS believes that this will increase community knowledge of available SHS accelerated learning academies, while increasing diversity and

academic outcomes for our families. We wholeheartedly support Chancellor Banks' promise for the development of accelerated learning environments in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Southeast Queens, and we advocate for the construction of additional specialized high schools, especially in Queens.

CCHS would like to see a return to individual schools designing screened criteria that fits their mission and learning environment. We strongly advocate for a return to include state test scores in the admissions process, and we hope to work with NYC DOE to reinstate this important criterion.

And I will just close with this. We want our students to be in an appropriate learning environment, where they are met at their entry point, wherever that is, and then challenged to expand and properly prepare for higher education and career training programs. One additional suggestion is to create and fund High School bridge programs for remedial skills for incoming 9th-graders, so they are ready to learn starting in September when they go to High School.

Thank you so much for allowing me to testify today.

To the members of the Committee on Education:

As you heard at the hearing on Thursday, many families in District 2 are unhappy with the Middle School Admissions Plan for the 2023-24 school year, which does not adequately provide for the needs of the district's advanced learners. The attached proposal was submitted by parents at P.S. 77, The Lower Lab School, and we beg you to implement it.

Many Lower Lab families feel they have no choice but to leave the public-school system before the start of middle school. This is because of the discontinuity between where they are academically at Lab versus where the district's one-size-fits-all middle school curriculum is in all subjects and the pace and breadth of the district's one-size-fits-all middle school curriculum, which do not match the needs of accelerated-learners.

First Deputy Chancellor Weisberg rejected the proposal to expand Lower Lab, on the grounds that (1) there are currently seats available at other middle schools and (2) the district has some accelerated offerings at district middle schools (math in 6th – 8th grade and Regents science in 8th grade). With respect to (1) the other seats that are available, these are not seats that Lower Lab families want (they seem to be seats that no one wants, as so many families in the district are choosing to leave rather than fill them). Trying to force students into undesirable seats is the opposite of what Chancellor Banks and Mayor Adams promised families when they said they would scale and expand schools that are working and eliminate the "scarcity" model of good schools. With respect to (2) the limited accelerated offerings currently available, these are insufficient to provide Lower Lab students with anything close to a curriculum that picks up where their elementary education left off and challenges them to the fullest extent of their ability.

I hope you will re-consider the proposal to expand Lower Lab through 8th grade, as it would go a long way in re-building the trust that our community has lost in the DOE and in the promises made to us by the new administration, and would help stem the bleed of students out of District 2.

Proposal to Expand P.S. 77–M to Middle School Through Reconfiguration of Existing School Building in District 2

This proposal requests a grade expansion of P.S. 77-M, Lower Lab School (02M077) to grades 6 through 8 and a re-siting of the expanded grades to an underutilized building in District 2 beginning in the 2023-2024 school year. Lower Lab School is an elementary school that runs from kindergarten through fifth grade. The school currently serves 351 students in two sections per grade. The school is in building M198, sharing that facility with a zoned elementary school P.S. 198-M. The proposed grade expansion is not possible within M198, because that building is already over utilized.

A re-siting means that part or all the school will be located in a different building than M198. We propose that the re-siting commence with incremental addition of grades. Starting with the addition of sixth grade in the academic year 2023-2024, adding a grade seven class in the 2024-2025 school year and a grade eight class in the 2025-2026 school year. We propose that the re-sited classes be housed within a District 2 school in proximity to the existing M198 building housing K-5 Lab students to facilitate siblings and staff movement in between the two schools. Once the middle school classes are fully populated and staffed, we propose that the combined K-8 school be transferred to a single location (by reusing an existing school facility or constructing a purpose-built space).

About P.S. 77–M (New York City Lower Laboratory School for Gifted Education):

P.S. 77–M, Lower Lab School is an academically successful and popular school in District 2. The school consistently ranks among the top ten elementary schools in New York State according to US News and World Report. Based on DOE School Performance Dashboard data, relative to other elementary schools in the city, Lab ranks as both a high performance and high impact school.

Lower Lab is a template for expanding accelerated elementary education in NYC:

We believe that the model followed by Lower Lab is the template for the city to grow accelerated education at the elementary level. Mayor Adams has stated a goal to expand accelerated elementary education across the city specifically stating in the article “I would expand the opportunities for accelerated learning.”

Lower Lab is unique as it is the city’s only stand-alone, district gifted and talented (G&T) school. As a stand-alone school it closely resembles the citywide G&T schools e.g., NEST+m, TAG, Anderson, BSI, and Q-300. The citywide G&T schools serve students from kindergarten through eighth grade or high school. We believe that the pipeline of students served at Lab should be extended through at least the end of middle school, as is the case for the citywide G&T schools. However, the citywide schools draw students from across all five boroughs with students often commuting over an hour to and from school. Students at Lab are located within District 2 and a shorter commute and closer proximity to school allows development of a greater sense of community among the student body.

Other G&T elementary schools within zoned districts serve students within their district who have tested into the G&T program, while also serving general education students (for example P.S. 33 - Chelsea Prep, and P.S. 166 – The Richard Rogers School of the Arts and Technology, both of which house general education classes in addition to gifted and talented programming). Lower Lab has no general education track like all the other district-only G&T schools.

Opening multiple gifted and talented / accelerated schools in each of the city's thirty-two school districts could accommodate students who can and want to study the NYC DOE curriculum at an accelerated pace. We believe these school should be structured like Lower Lab, catering to students within their specific district thus fostering a sense of community for accelerated learners. We would love an opportunity to share our ideas about the benefits of a school community like Lab with Chancellor Banks and First Deputy Chancellor Weisberg.

The merits of expanding Lower Lab to middle school:

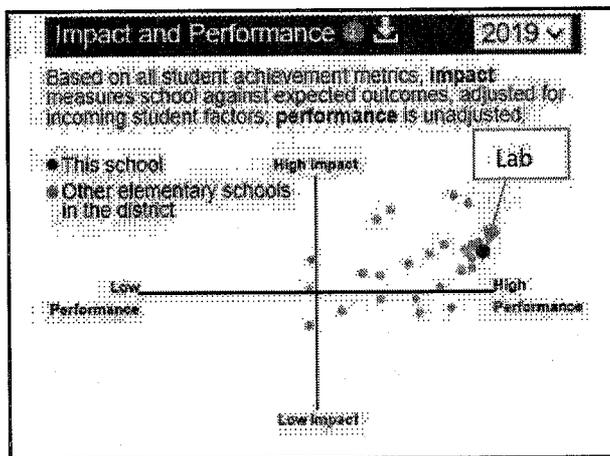
1. Lab is an academically successful school with a tight knit school community.

Children at Lower Lab school receive a rigorous education along with an emphasis on Lower Lab Values of kindness, community, and respect and the results show in consistently high test scores and in a close-knit school community. The school is in high demand and every year the number of applicants exceeds available seats. The students use course materials that are a year ahead of their stated grade level. For example, the fifth graders use a sixth-grade math book. Students graduate from Lab with ELA (English Language Arts), Math and Science skills at least one grade level above their peers.

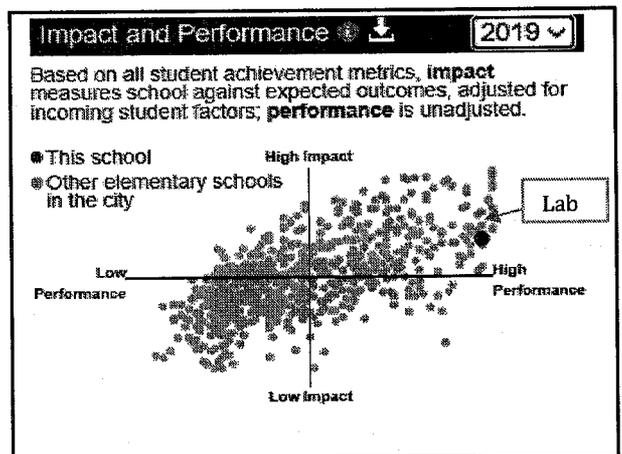
Academic outcomes at Lab rank highly among peers across the city and within District 2. Students at Lab compare favorably to similar students, and to the citywide average (see Figure 1). When current Lab students enter middle school, they often find that instruction in core subjects, for example Math, repeats material the students covered in fifth grade and therefore is repetitive and not challenging. We believe a dedicated screened Lower Lab Middle School would continue to offer these learners advanced academic opportunities and provide seats for additional students in the community seeking to benefit from an accelerated and rigorous instruction.

Figure 1: Impact and Performance at Lab vs. other elementary schools in District 2 and across NYC

Lab relative to D2 peers



Relative to elementary schools across NYC



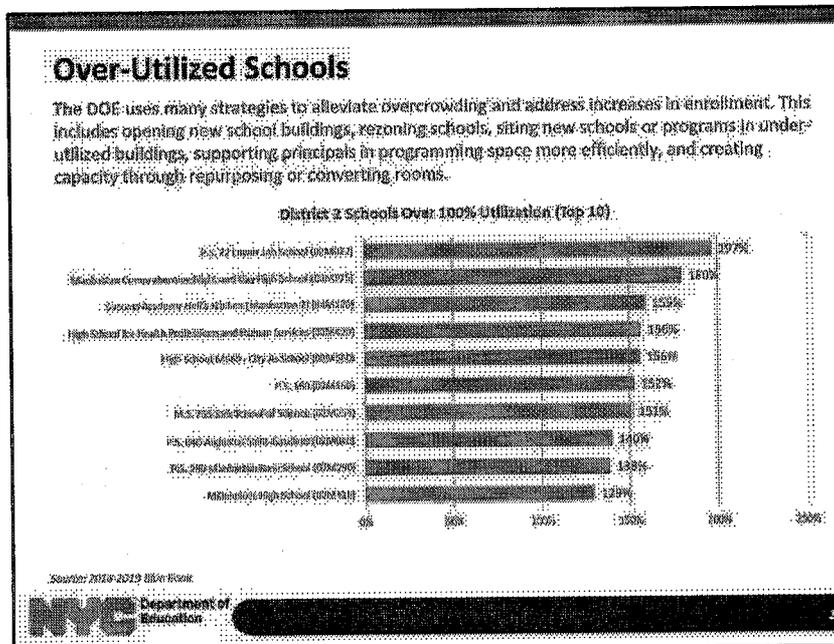
Source: 2019-2020 School Performance Dashboard

2. Lab is an efficiently run school.

Lab administration runs a tight ship, with the school consistently achieving excellent academic results with fewer physical plant and financial resources than comparable neighborhood schools. Test scores for the most recent years available (school year 2019 - 2020) show that 97.8% of Lab students achieved a Level 3 or 4 in ELA and 98.9% achieved a Level 3 or 4 in Math.

These excellent results are even though Lower Lab's physical plant capacity utilization in 2018 - 2019 ranked the highest among all District 2 schools (see Figure 2). According to DOE data the school was functioning at **197% of capacity** during this period. Lab students, faculty and administration occupy the most overcrowded school in the entire district.

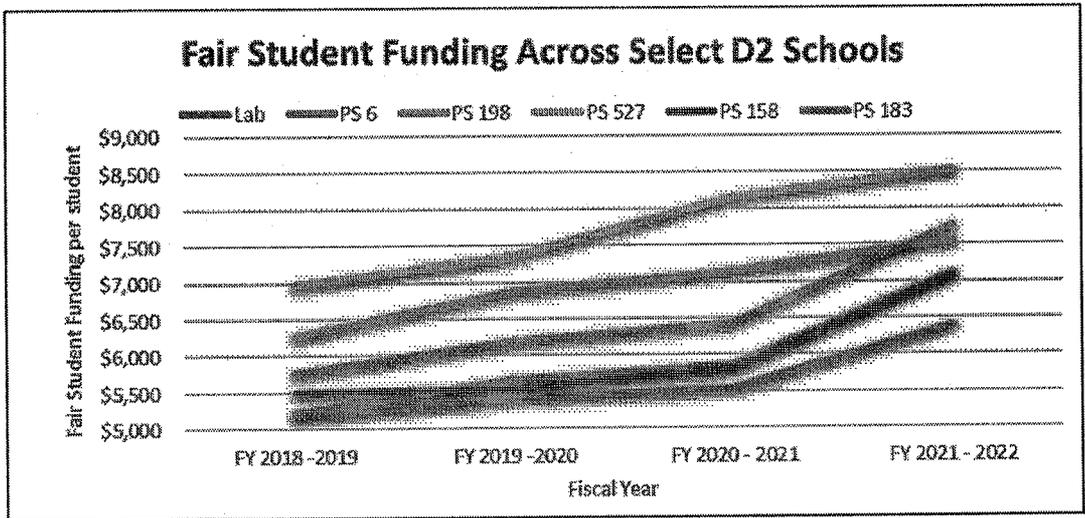
Figure 2: Lower Lab is the most over utilized school in District 2



Source: NYC DOE 2020-2021 District 2 Planning Presentation, Office of District Planning, December 2019

Lab also utilizes fewer financial resources (as measured by Fair Student Funding per student) than comparable neighborhood schools. According to DOE data for the four fiscal years 2018-2022, Lab's Fair Student Funding (FSF) was consistently the lowest per student of five comparable neighborhood elementary schools, (see Figure 3 below - comps include P.S. 198, P.S. 6, P.S. 527, P.S. 183, and P.S. 158).

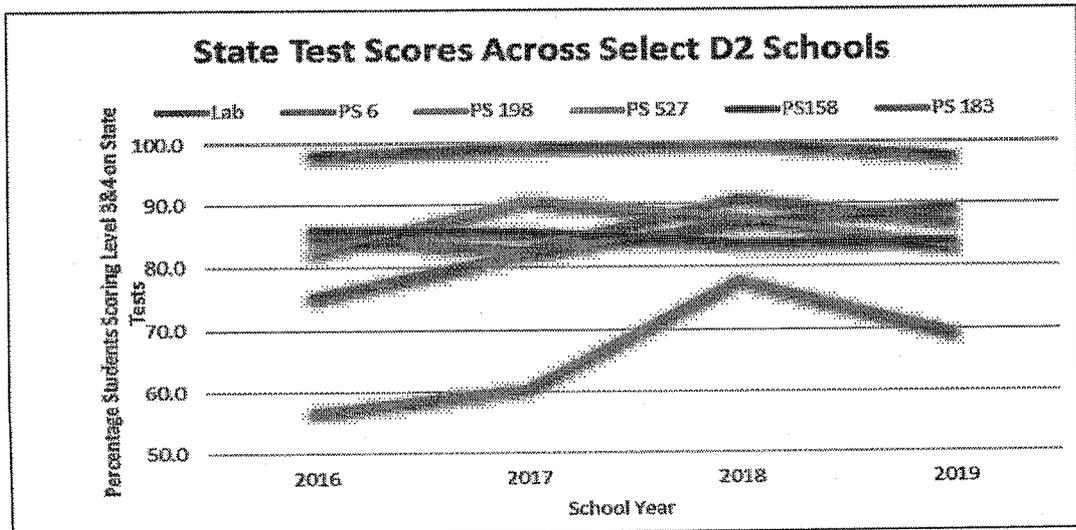
Figure 3: Lower Lab receives the lowest FSF per student among neighborhood schools and yet...



Source: NYC DOE website, Fair Student Funding
 Overview: <https://www.nycenet.edu/publicapps/Offices/FSF/FSFDetail.aspx>

Despite challenges from lower per student funding and limited physical space and resources, Lab students consistently achieved higher ELA and Math test scores than neighborhood comparator schools (see Figure 4 below). Through a combination of strong administrative leadership and deep family engagement the school utilizes all available resources efficiently.

Figure 4: ...has consistently achieved higher test scores than the neighborhood comps



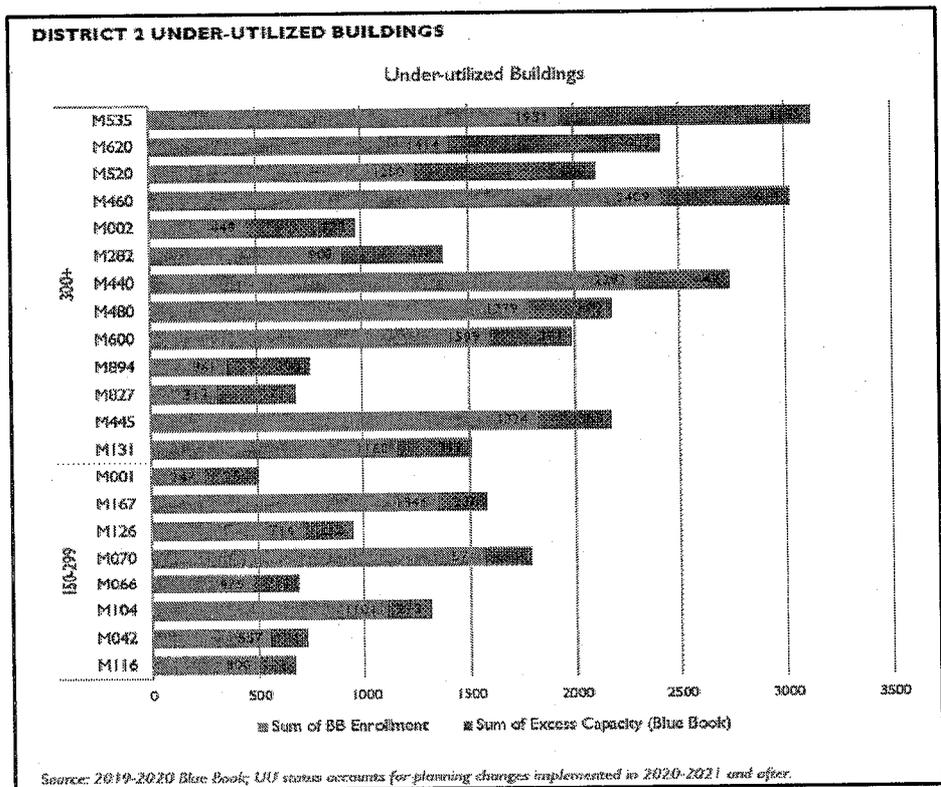
Source: NYC DOE website Info Hub, Test Results <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/test-results>

We believe this commitment to student outcomes, working with limited resources should be recognized by expanding the school. An efficiently run school that successfully teaches accelerated learners can serve as a model for expanding accelerated learning to a broader swath of students, per the Mayor's stated goals for education policy.

3. There are 21 underutilized middle school buildings in District 2.

There is space available within District 2 to add middle school seats for a proposed Lower Lab Middle School. According to the District 2 Data Summary Report prepared by the NYC DOE Office of District Planning, 13 schools in District 2 have over 300 seats available (see Figure 5 below). Additionally, District 2 is expected to have excess capacity in grades six through eight over the next five years. This capacity is available despite pre-pandemic projections by the NYC School Construction Authority (SCA) showing a 5% increase in middle school enrollment in District 2 through 2028. A large majority (86%) of middle school students who live in District 2 prefer to attend middle schools within the district. There is a pressing need for more district middle school seats, a need that top performing schools like Lower Lab could fulfill.

Figure 5. 21 underutilized middle schools in District 2, 13 have over 300 seats available.



Source: NYC DOE, Office of District Planning, District 2 Data Summary, 2022-2023 Strategic Planning Data Considerations

4. Quality schools help retain families / draw them back to the city.

According to some estimates NYC Public Schools lost 50,000 students since the start of the pandemic, a 4.5% drop in the nation's largest school district. If the city hopes to retain residents, investing in quality public schools with good infrastructure makes for sound public policy. District 2 is situated in Manhattan, the borough with the largest number of net residential move-outs during the pandemic. No doubt a portion of these moves was due to the higher wealth concentrated in the borough, and the ability of residents to travel and work remotely. However, if residents in the borough can vote easily with their feet, then it is only good fiscal policy to try and retain these lucrative taxpayers. Instead of losing parents who want an excellent quality education to the tri-state area suburbs or private schools, NYC can draw back parents by expanding high performing, popular schools.

5. Expanding education at Lower Lab through middle school provides consistency in education policy.

Over the past two years not only have families suffered through a pandemic, but there has also been an added layer of uncertainty due to multiple school closures, inconsistency regarding middle school screens, random lottery admissions, cancelation of Regents exams, confusion surrounding the future of the highly popular Gifted and Talented program, and ongoing legal challenges to SHSAT. In a misguided attempt to provide equity in education the prior administration sought to dismantle academically successful programs instead of expanding them. Parents want consistency and clarity with respect to their children's education options and future. Providing a route to middle school within their child's current school would provide Lab parents with consistency and clarity regarding their child's educational path.

6. Uncertainty in availability of accelerated curriculum at existing middle schools.

Over the past several years, middle schools in the city including Robert Wagner Middle School, Lab Middle School for Collaborative Studies (unaffiliated with Lower Lab School) have reduced or eliminated accelerated academic offerings. This led to fewer children taking and passing Regents exams in middle schools. Similarly, high schools like LaGuardia High School have eliminated Advanced Placement (AP) offerings. These moves were deeply unpopular among parents and students who desire acceleration in core subjects.

Expanding Lower Lab to include middle school would ensure that students who desire acceleration have access to it. Children should continue in the educational environment appropriate for their abilities rather than have a random lottery placing accelerated learners in middle schools where the range of ability in core subjects like Math can vary over several grade levels. In recent Community Educational Council (CEC) meetings, parents related incidents where accelerated learners were encouraged to teach themselves Math (see video) or to help their class fellows, some of whom are several grade levels behind. Accelerated learners have a right to a rigorous education that meets their needs and to learn at a pace that is appropriate for them, and a dedicated screened Lab Middle school would meet this need.

Conclusion

The Lower Lab school is a high performing, efficiently run school. The highly capable administration and staff at Lower Lab are not only able to achieve top tier academic outcomes for their students, but they are also able to do this with lower DOE funding per student than its peers. Lower Lab is one the highest performing, high impact schools in the state. Students currently graduate from Lab effectively having completed the sixth-grade curriculum and are having to repeat this material in the district's middle schools even though these schools themselves are high performing middle schools. The citywide G&T schools all go to eighth or twelfth grade and Lower Lab, though a district-only school, is more closely structured like these schools.

Expanding the Lower Lab school to include a middle school and co-locating it in an under-utilized building is beneficial to the city for all the reasons discussed above. We firmly believe accelerated education has a place in the city's public education framework and are strong believers in expansion of Gifted & Talented programs.

It is our dream to see Gifted & Talented programs in every school district, to ensure that children who choose acceleration have access to an appropriate education, and that children who require an extra push / remediation can access resources that provide this. Access to an accelerated middle school education is a natural extension of accelerated curriculum in elementary school. Further, expanding accelerated education at the elementary level widens the cohort of students taking Regents exams in eighth grade, improves education outcomes at the high school level and increases the number of students prepared to take AP classes at the high school level. This results in better prepared, higher educated graduates who are better prepared to make an impact in the world as adults.

For questions or further information please contact Faiza Mawjee (faiza.mawjee@gmail.com)
Co-Vice President of External Affairs at Lower Lab, and author of this proposal.

Reyhan Mehran

Testimony regarding Oversight - DOE's New Admissions Processes (T2023-2814)

New York City Council Education Committee

January 25, 2023

I am a parent of three children in Brooklyn's District 15. I am a co-founder of District 15 Parents for Middle School Equity, a steering committee member of NYC Opt Out, and a co-president of the PTA at my youngest child's 6-12 public school in District 15.

I oppose the reintroduction of NYS test scores for public school admissions in NYC because every child deserves a chance to go to a school regardless of how they performed on a few days of standardized testing in the spring of 4th or 7th grade. Test-based admissions are a driver of school segregation. These tests are biased against children from low income families, children in temporary housing, children with special needs, children who are still learning English, and other vulnerable children in our public schools. Preparation for these standardized tests in our public schools intensifies when these scores are used for high stakes such as school admissions and this process adversely impacts teaching and learning—robbing our children of student-centered and joyful education—particularly in schools that predominantly serve our most vulnerable students.

In District 15, we found that removal of ALL admissions screens—academic, attendance, behavior, test scores, auditions—desegregated our middle schools within a single admissions cycle. All children should have the opportunity to attend a school that is a good fit for them and should not be restricted because they missed too many days of school in 4th or 7th grade or they didn't score high enough on a single test in 4th grade or their grades in 7th grade math weren't as high as their neighbors or their parents couldn't afford to send them to art classes. All our schools should be open to all our children. Let District 15 be the model—don't screen our children out of our public schools.

Thank you for considering this input.

Reyhan Mehran

Brooklyn, NY 11231

Thank you for reading my comment. I am a parent of two kids in D2 district. We are not low income, we have jobs, but by no means come from wealth or are wealthy enough to support private education. Not that we would as we are ardent supporters of the public school system and want the public school system to educate our kids. But we are reconsidering our priorities given the recent dismantling of excellence in NYC public schools in the name of equity.

We are not pro-inequity, but we would like DOE leadership to be realistic about the outcomes of these policies and stop using our kids as a resource, and find more creative ways to reduce inequity. I'd like to speak about DIA allocation and elimination of screening.

DIA allocation: Many D2 high schools have now 50%-60% allocation for "Diversity in Admissions" ("DIA"). How is that equitable when, citywide, less than 20% of families would qualify for DIA? Any kid who is not DIA, and these are again most kids, has very little chance to make it into one of our high schools. Group 1 kids might have better odds, but a kid in Group 2 (the majority of kids) have practically no shot at a local school and have no idea where they'll go. Not all the 13-14 year olds are ready for daily commute. This is not a good option for families and that is why you are observing an exodus of families out of the public system and out of the city in favor of either suburban schools and city private schools.

Elimination of Screening: Superintendent McGuire has eliminated screened MS schools on the grounds that it creates unnecessary stress to families. This is BS because a family can choose not to apply to screened schools if they decide they don't want to deal with the stress. Let the families decide. Again, removing meritocracy and excellence from education will scare many families away from the public system. You are already seeing that.

Please let's be realistic about the outcome of these policies. In trying to support disadvantaged families, you are screwing the middle class, and that is because you cannot come with creative solutions and are instead going with the easy, cheap way, forgetting you also serve middle class kids and instead using them as a resource. As you can imagine, parents are not just going to let you do that, and are voting with their actions, fleeing the public system or the city altogether. I would not be surprised if they also voted differently in the ballot. I know I am tempted. You need the middle class, the backbone of society, but you are scaring it away. Those who can afford it will go to private schools. Others will go to suburbs. In the city, you will be left with public schools that are perhaps more equitable within themselves, but with a larger gap between public schools and private schools, or between public schools in the city and schools in the suburbs. Way to go.

Thank you for listening to my comments,

Rosa Dominguez

Sarah DeLeo - Written Testimony

1. Non-Specialized Public High School Admissions

I am the parent of two children who attended a New York City public school K-8.

My older child graduated from eighth grade in June 2021. When he was applying to high school during the pandemic school year 2020-21, non-specialized high schools admissions were a lottery with an 85 average cutoff for the top group. I knew from my experience with my older child that year that that cutoff was way too low. It requires little to no school work to have an 85 average at a public middle school. As one parent said to me, "they get an 85 just for showing up." This low cutoff was unfair to students who applied themselves diligently to their studies to attain 95+ averages. In my experience there is a real difference in ability and/or motivation in a student with a 95 average and a student with an 85 average. I was one of the many parents who complained about this overly broad admissions category. Students with 90+ averages should have access to academic opportunities appropriate to their abilities and to have like classmates to motivate and inspire them. I agree with the DOE decision to raise the cutoff for the top group for non-specialized public high school admissions.

2. Gifted & Talented Admissions

I am in favor of returning to an objective assessment as admissions for Gifted & Talented (G&T) programs. The current admissions process for UPK students places the onus on the child's teacher to assess the student's readiness. This exposes the child's teacher to coercion by parents, which is unfair. In addition, G&T assessment is not a part of the UPK teacher's job. For private preschool students a DOE employee interviews the parents, not the child! How can a person know if the student is ready by interviewing the parents? An objective measure of the student by a third party would be optimal rather than the current DOE policy.

I reject the argument that children cannot be assessed for intelligence at a young age. Children are assessed from the time of conception. They are assessed by pediatricians, by day care providers, by nursery school teachers and this is all happening long before they enter kindergarten. My oldest child had an IEP starting from age 4. He was assessed three times before kindergarten. Stating that children cannot be assessed for intelligence at a young age is patently untrue. Granted, some children blossom at a later date than others, but that does not negate the fact that an objective testing measure can identify children ready for an accelerated program in kindergarten.

G&T programs should be for children who demonstrate the ability to do accelerated coursework (meaning one grade ahead on the common core curriculum). An objective, third-party assessment is necessary, because unfortunately too many parents will not self-assess and will nominate their child for G&T, even if it is not a fit for the child. That is not fair to the many children who would thrive in that environment. In my experience, the Pearson test did a decent job of identifying students appropriate for an accelerated learning environment. Please urge the

DOE to return to an objective assessment and to expand the number of G&T seats to meet the need. If there is no objective measure, there is in effect no G&T program.

From: Ted Leather <tedleather@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, January 30, 2023 1:36 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony for Education Committee re: Admissions
Attachments: smime.p7s; ATT00001.txt; ATT00002.htm

Dear Chair Joseph

My name is Ted Leather and, since July 2019, I have served on Citywide Council on High Schools as a Manhattan Rep. I submit my comments on admissions as follows.

It is high time for the City Council to research how our graduates perform in the next *system*, which for the majority of students, is both CUNY and SUNY. How do our students, whether they attend a district or a specialized high school, actually do in college? If we knew the answers to this **in detail**, we could shift the debate from being all about admissions to something much more meaningful. Getting in to a high school at age 13 is not the be all and end all, yet far too many people believe that it is.

The six year national college graduation rate, pre-covid, was 66% and in NYC we averaged 60%, and our reasons for trailing the national average are many. And this only looks at students attending four-year public colleges; for NYC students, that is overwhelmingly SUNY and CUNY. The question we are not asking is it is really necessary that college is the focus for so many students when alternative pathways could yield far more rewarding results? The Office of Student Pathways, as currently constituted, is likely doing a less than adequate job.

Sincerely

Ted Leather

Ted Leather
Manhattan Rep
Citywide Council on High Schools

TedLeather@icloud.com

My name is Jennifer Choi, I'm a Queens resident, a parent of two high school students with IEPs, and a special education advocate at Special Support Services. I am also the founder of a 700 member group called New York City Parents of Teens with Disabilities.

For Students with Disabilities when it comes to High School Admissions, the DOE states:

“Every DOE middle school and high school welcomes and serves students with disabilities according to their IEPs.”

But what they don't state is that they will not supervise the school open houses and tours in which parents are directly or indirectly told that the school will only provide some but not all of these services.

Some of the things parents and students hear are:

-Related services will have to be provided outside of school. This puts the onus on the parent to ensure services.

-We do not offer integrated co-teaching (meaning a special education teacher and a general education teacher) services for World Language classes even though you need that to graduate with a Regents diploma. Basically this means no special education instruction for students with IEPs to learn world languages.

-There are no ICT services for AP Classes even though these classes are also used toward completing their high school diploma.

-They are told that there are no self-contained or special classes which really hurts a child especially if that school is specialized with certain career technical programs.

-Likewise, these schools will tell parents that ICT services are not offered in career technical or CTE classes.

-And some of the specialized high schools take weeks to respond to parents' questions about special education and the parents take this delay as its own hidden message. “Don't come here.”

-Some will even tell parents that they will amend the IEP to remove ICT so that the student can take an AP course. That is against federal education policy.

-Also against federal policy is asking G and T students to drop their ICT services prior to entry.

-Some parents hear that the school's trajectory is to declassify the student or reduce services because there is no special education in college. This tells parents of students who will likely need services in 12th grade that this student should not go there.

What ends up happening after parents hear these messages is what I call: Self-Serve Discrimination because the messages make parents choose other schools so that these non-inclusive schools will never be forced to provide for students with disabilities. Even if the parents are willing to fight for their child's IEP that first year, the student is at risk if it is obvious that the school is leaning toward not providing the needed services.

I am asking the Education Committee to please investigate these matters. Please ask high school superintendents and the Enrollment office if they have been told about this activity and what they've done about it. Please also read the Chalkbeat article entitled, "Many High Schools are Off Limits to Students with Disabilities" that speaks to how students with disabilities face discrimination in the admissions process.

More importantly, please examine the schools who are doing it right. Townsend Harris High School, a model for top level education in this country is also a model of special education instructional support services. They are proving to this city that parents do not have to choose between their child's education and their child's disability supports. The Queens North High School Superintendent's office also provides exemplary support to parents. Both institutions look at special education more as a point of excellence rather than a miserable point of compliance. That is what makes students feel safe and included.

Another area that requires inspection is what I call the 20% Rule in which a student needs a specific amount of special education instructional services to qualify as a student with a disability (SWD) in the admissions process. This allows the student to be placed in a different pool of applicants that

often has less applicants per seat, especially for a very competitive screened school.

This rule makes it so that only students who have a high number of instructional services from a special education teacher can be considered for this applicant pool. That means a student who has a full-time paraprofessional, speech therapy, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and even five periods of special educational teacher support services will not qualify to be in the SWD applicant pool. This is unfair to these students, especially students with physical disabilities.

I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you.

Jennifer Choi, Managing Member and Advocate
Special Support Services, LLC

This is me too.
Vanessa Merlis

> On Jan 29, 2023, at 11:21 PM, Venus Sze-Tsang <d31vst@gmail.com> wrote:

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> To Whom It May Concern,

>

> My name is Venus Sze-Tsang, Community Education Council member of District 31. My thoughts are my own. After hearing all the testimonies presented at the City Council hearing on January 25, 2023, I'd like to share my thoughts and my observations that I have gathered from attending education related meetings and my daily life. I am for merit and for diversity. However, I do not believe in forced diversity and the notion that when a school is full of one color then that school is not diverse and intentionally segregated due to screens. There is so much diversity without looking at our skin color alone. I tried to understand and learn at CRT workshops and different CEC meetings why parents are so against merit-based admission process. In New York City, many neighborhoods are segregated and the schools within that neighborhood reflects that demographic. Many immigrant families leave their home country in search for a better life for their children, the road is difficult but they see light at the end of the tunnel through a good quality education. These are the families who voted(well if applicable) with their feet in their country. One of the beauties of NYC is that there are these communities meant to be the home away from home because of language barriers. Immigrants need to learn the language here but what many people don't realize is that it's not a days skill and it's very hard to learn a new language when you are older so that hope is often put on the next generation to bridge conversations. The first set of words immigrant parents often have to learn are survival language, fuck you (excuse me)! I am no stranger to racism being born in NYC and raised in the NYC public education system. I'm tired and over it. I hate that when I attend a CRT workshop, I'm basically being taught to be a racist, to look at the white person as the bad guy and the cause of all problems. I can attest that the racism I endured growing up wasn't only by white people. Frankly, Asians dislike Asians as well. I didn't learn that the N word was a bad word until I was in middle school. It was in every cool song from the 90s. I thought it meant brother, i thought it meant a friend close like a brother, I thought it meant homie. If it was an offensive word why is it so widely used? Is that being hypocritical? Ban that word from songs, tell everyone that it's not a word that's ok to use. When we remove the importance of merit, what message are we conveying to our youth? Asians are not DNA coded to do well in school and our Black & Brown communities are also not DNA coded to fail. Asians are culturally coded to do well because that was the only way to get out of poverty. When my kids tell me they can get rich through being a YouTuber, I know they can easily make more than me but for me, easy money means easy go and once easy comes they won't want to work for anything. Did you watch Black Panther 2? I feel that the messages in these movies are the messages we should deliver to our youth to uplift them. Riri says "To be young, gifted and black-you don't see often at MIT". It is not impossible and we need to spread that message, not lower standards to say they can't achieve and when a man of color achieves, we need to celebrate them and not call them traitors(which I personally witnessed at rallies for quality education). We need to believe in our youth and give them the correct resources. Charter

schools show that people of color can achieve. We need the DOE to continue providing quality education for all so students don't need to turn to charter schools, private schools or leave to other states or countries. Quality education doesn't mean to ignore the Gifted & Talented children. They have educational needs just as much as any other kid. If these needs are not met, those who were thriving would end up acting out in frustration.

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> I'm so deep rooted in NYC, I don't want to move. I love our city so I want to fight for it so that my kids can grow up loving it too. We are all different but we cross paths by choice. We need to unite and deliver the correct message to our youth. The youth who spoke at the hearing yesterday made me realize that as an adult, I still have to deal with racism which I learned are called microaggressions. We should continue to share our stories, acknowledge they happened, make corrections as we go, be apologetic if needed and keep calling people out for their acts of racism so that they can understand and be aware of what they are doing. Penalizing hardworking kids, lowering standards is not a solution.

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> We can look different on the outside or the same but merit based admissions process unite people. People who have like minds, who have a family background who value education and believe that hard work would take people places. The Gifted and Talented test saw no color or language barriers. If a four-year-old is on the gifted track, it should be harvested, it's in my opinion early intervention. Critics argue about test prepping for the exam, that some parents can't afford test prepping and some parents don't have time to go over the test with their kids. I can't deny that this could be a disadvantage for some kids but perhaps the city could develop a program for interested parents to apply to for their kid to gain some familiarity with taking the test and talking to strangers (proctors) to close the gap on this issue. Removing the test entirely is a disservice to all children. If you look at pre-pandemic data, there was always more demand than supply of Gifted and Talented seats. We should really get at least two classes in each district school with both options of test takers and recommendation-based admission (if others believe their kids are G&T but not good test takers or shouldn't be tested at 4). Children are worth our investment. If we want to save money, maybe we can have kids who qualified through testing who wasn't able to get a seat for Kindergarten remain qualified until seated in upper grades. Central can maintain an open and upto date directory showing all available open seats and let families choose if they want to travel. We should bring back merit-based admissions because we need to set goals for all our children. We should have schools from 3K-12 sell themselves in the school directories. When I was researching my zone school, I learned that they do portfolios, go to YMCA in second grade to learn how to swim and other good things. But I felt it wasn't a good fit for me as a parent because I work full time and I needed objective measures so that I can work with my child with where they need help. This research was not easy. I had to dig deep and speak to parents that I found through neighborhood forums. I think if districts want to intentionally diversify by removing a merit-based admission process and their constituents have spoken then it's fair. Please don't impose a no choice policy for all districts to follow. I think hard work should be valued and this is the message I want my children to grow up with. There are many good existing lottery schools so it's not like merit-based schools are the only choices. DOE should look at the data, why are so many kids applying to certain schools and not to others then implement changes to make students want to go to these schools.

>

> If you have read up to here, I thank you so much for reading my (thoughts all over the place) testimony. I hope that I may have influenced another lens to the way we see NYC. We need to have the Department of Education and Teachers Union to see what is best for the children. School choice is so important, allow parents to choose merit if they want or diversity if they want. But please don't limit the choices. Our kids need to be good enough for the international platform because that's our beloved NYC. May I also add that the Department of Education needs to hire or train good negotiators for contracts. We should be getting the best prices for books, programs, software, hardware, construction but they are paying the most expensive prices! Use taxpayer money more wisely and we can stop borrowing so much and stop having parents pitting against each other, serve all.

>

> Yours Truly,

>

> Venus Sze-Tsang

My name is Yehudit Mentesh, I'm a Brooklyn resident, a parent of two rising high school students with IEPs, and a special education advocate at Special Support Services.

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I am available to work with you to help you uncover how parents and students with disabilities face discrimination every application season. Thank you.

Yehudit Mentesh M.A

<https://www.yehuditfeinstein.com/>

January 25, 2023: Hearing on Admissions Changes

Yiatin Chu

Testimony Submitted to NY City Council, Education Committee

I am a public school parent of a current 6th grader, former CEC1 member, former SLT member and cofounder of PLACE NYC. I am also the President of Asian Wave Alliance, a political club focused on issues that matter to the NY Asian community of which education is at the top of the list. I am submitting my op-ed which was published in the NY Daily News on Sept 2022 as my testimony since it summaries my concerns on admissions changes in the past two years.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-merit-based-admissions-nyc-20220910-sx37yvmqb5bihlrmrh2djsf5mq-story.html>

As students head back to school this week, many public school families are already thinking of next year because they need to apply to their child's next school. If Mayor Adams and his schools chancellor want to convince parents to stay in the system, they need to make good on their campaign promises about improving schools and expanding advanced academic options. That means fixing the admissions process which Bill de Blasio weaponized against Asian-American families and high-achieving students.

After losing about 90,000 students over the past two years, DOE projects another [loss of 30,000 students](#) before the end of this year. Adams can reasonably chalk that up to the failed policies of the former mayor and the pandemic, but those excuses won't work going forward. Schools Chancellor David Banks inherited this mess and often speaks to it as the reason for his new initiatives: Gifted and talented program expansion, universal dyslexia screening, new science-based reading curriculum and more school safety agents. All good and all welcomed, but they will not bring back families who left, nor will it be enough to prevent the next wave of families from leaving.

More than 200,000 families will have children in application years: Pre-K applying to elementary schools, fifth graders applying to middle schools and eighth graders applying to

high schools. The last two years upended expectations and plans, often years in the making, of the city's families. Those of us who have public school children relied on a predictable schedule of events — admissions guides with clear criteria sent home in June, routine application timelines, G&T and SHSAT test dates, open houses that allow parents and students to see a school, and offer letters in March through May. Instead, under de Blasio's equity-driven changes, we've been subjected to constantly changing admission rules and criteria including the introduction of lottery numbers and waitlists, uncertainties on test dates and significant delays in results and offers.

The DOE must get back to clearly communicating admissions policies and timelines that families can depend on. Can we start with a date for the SHSAT?

Adams campaigned on the promise of expanding gifted and talented, yet so far [he has added just 100 seats](#) to the 2,400 for kindergarten entry. This was hardly the expansion that families were hoping for. Worse, Adams [indicated he supported objective universal testing](#), but he continued de Blasio's last-minute change to subjective teacher assessments of 4-year-olds. We want DOE to bring back the objective test, and make plans for meaningful expansion so all children in all neighborhoods have access and opportunity to attend.

If Adams and Banks are serious about stopping the hemorrhaging of New York City families from schools, the most important fix is meritocratic admissions to middle and high schools. Merit matters to families; it is an opportunity to differentiate and develop students with high potential. For low-income, immigrant families, this is a chance for their children to access education typically only available in schools in high-priced suburbs.

We want the DOE to bring back screened admission to middle schools and high schools. Make use of grades, test scores, essays, auditions to match students to schools based on merit.

Lottery numbers are not a winning strategy for educating our children.

Families have good reason to believe that lottery numbers for admissions served their intended purpose of re-organizing schools by racial compositions to lower the number of Asian students at in-demand schools. Based on the [DOE's published results](#), 30% of Asian students did not

get their top five school options, compared to 24% for white, 11% for Hispanic, and 10% for Black students.

Finally, kids should always have the option to stay close to home, but in an increasingly unsafe city and subway system, the need to reduce travel time to schools is ever more important to families. Thousands of Manhattan families lost that priority when the DOE eliminated district and borough priorities for the city's high schools. Exacerbated by the lottery process, [18% of District 2 eighth-graders did not get an offer to any of the 12 schools they listed](#). The DOE restored geographic priorities for zoned programs and schools in the other boroughs last year. They could and should do so for Manhattan this year. Don't force kids on long commutes. Where's the equity in that?

Keeping families in NYC is not just about school admissions, but admissions is key to retention. As young families preview what lies ahead, many are opting to not roll the dice in an uncertain process and they make plans to access schools elsewhere that can ensure some certainty.

We need normalcy, predictability and a return to high standards. Merit, not lottery, should determine a child's school. We urge the mayor and chancellor to get back to what works and not propagate the divisive and harmful policies from the prior administration.

I've written the following op-ed's on school admissions which I would like to include in my submissions.

Queens Chronicle, Nov. 17, 2022

https://www.qchron.com/editions/queenswide/asian-students-under-attack-again-by-doe/article_9f6e0769-688a-543a-a249-8eacadd47c43.html

Queens Chronicle, March 10, 2022

https://www.qchron.com/opinion/columns/asian-parents-defend-merit-and-challenge-discrimination-across-the-country/article_cbeede2a-a09e-11ec-86cb-47a82ac30821.html

1. How do you explain statistically significant percentage (65% more likely) of kids born in the last two months of the year being classified with learning disabilities than those born during the first two months. Does DOE have access to IBO reports? If not, please see link here: <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/cgi-park2/2020/02/are-children-born-later-in-the-year-more-likely-to-be-identified-as-students-with-disabilities/>
2. NYC is one of the very few jurisdictions in the United States to have the December 31 kindergarten cut off dates. Public and private schools in the rest of the state and in neighboring New Jersey have much earlier cut off dates.
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_3.asp
3. Materials used by schools in NYC have not been tested on the 4.5 year old age group. Publishing companies whose books are used in NYC Kindergarten classrooms have been tested on children in NV, OH, TX and other states with earlier cut off dates. Therefore, the material used in classrooms is not age appropriate. If NYC is not requiring and developing age appropriate curriculum for its schools based on the current cut off dates, why is the DOE wasting money on materials that do not align with its school age population? See point 1 regarding significant amount of kids born in the last two months of the year being classified with learning disabilities as a result of inappropriate curriculum guidelines.
4. Professors at Columbia Teachers College agree that the Kindergarten curriculum is not age appropriate and at the least a differentiated approach is warranted. However, based on the statistics in point 1, the teachers are not providing differentiated instruction.
5. While I value 3-K and Pre-K programs, these are childcare programs. If they are rich in academic content and expect kids to know how to read at ages 3 and 4, then they are not age appropriate. The effort is worthy, but the implementation without optional cut off dates, creates adverse outcomes for children born in the second half of the year.
6. American Association of Pediatrics suggests that children generally learn how to read by age 7 and not necessarily by 3,4 or 5:
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Helping-Your-Child-Learn-to-Read.aspx>
7. Children of color are disproportionately affected by this misguided policy
8. How does OPTIONAL cutoff date burden the DOE? By not having this policy, you are adversely affecting children born in the second half of the year by creating lifelong aversion to learning due to age and developmentally inappropriate curriculum. You are burdening the classroom teachers with kids who are not developmentally ready to learn the curriculum taught in Kindergarten, depriving both older and younger groups of kids of quality education. You are also burdening the city with substantial testing and evaluation costs and services provided.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0338-2022 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 1/25/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Hudson Chou

Address: _____

I represent: CACF - ASAP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0338-2022 Res. No. _____

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sandra Lu

Address: _____

I represent: CACF - ASAP

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0338-2022 Res. No. _____

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bonnie Shi

Address: _____

I represent: CACF - ASAP

Address: _____



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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Zarith Pineda

Address: Brooklyn, NY 11211

I represent: Territorial Empathy

Address: 1204 Broadway St New York, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: URYLA JUNG

Address: NYC, NY 10014

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: 1/25/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ALYSA O'SHEA

Address: _____

I represent: ROCKAWAY PARK, NY 11694

Address: CITYWIDE COUNCIL ON HIGH SCHOOLS

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: STEPHEN STOWE

Address: _____

I represent: COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL

Address: DISTRICT 20

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0338-2323 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition 1/21/23

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julianne Huang

Address: _____

I represent: CACR-ASAP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 1/25/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: NADIYA HELAL CHADHA

Address: BROOKLYN, NY 11238

I represent: NYC DEPT OF EDUCATION

Address: 52 CHAMBERS ST, 10007

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: DANIEL WEISBERG (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 52 CHAMBERS ST NYC 10007

I represent: NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Kennette Reid (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 52 Chambers St.

I represent: DOE

Address: Bullying

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: _____ (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: Jan 25 2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nyah Berg - Lena Dalke

Address: NYU Metro Center

I represent: New York Applesced

Address: Po Box 6973 NY NY 10150

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

ADMISSIONS in favor in opposition

OVERSIGHT

Date: 1.25.2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SADIE L. CAMPANAR

Address: 1 CENTRE ST. NYC, NY, 10007

I represent: NYC COMPTROLLER

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

ADMISSIONS in favor in opposition

OVERSIGHT

Date: 1.25.2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRAD LANDER, NYC COMPTROLLER

Address: 1 CENTRE ST. NYC, NY, 10001

I represent: COMPTROLLER

Address: _____



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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 1/25/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Cho

Address: _____

I represent: Special Support Services

Address: Brooklyn NY (1060 Ocean Ave #6)

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KAUSHIK DAS

Address: _____

I represent: COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL

Address: DISTRICT 2

VIC PRESIDENT
Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms