



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1400-2020, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1400

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to remove attendance measures as criteria for admissions to screened schools and programs in New York City public schools.

By Council Member Powers

Whereas, The New York City Department of Education (DOE) is the largest public school system in the United States (U.S.) with approximately 1.1 million students; and

Whereas, As of September 2019, there are 1,866 schools within the DOE including 260 charter schools; and

Whereas, DOE's policies and procedures regarding student admissions and transfers are detailed in Chancellor's Regulation A-101 and are implemented through the Office of Student Enrollment; and

Whereas, Admission to all school levels (pre-K, elementary, middle school and high school) is now centralized and in all cases applications can be submitted online, or in person at a Family Welcome Center; and

Whereas, At all levels, students can apply to up to 12 schools or programs in order of preference; and

Whereas, Admissions priorities for elementary school, which starts with Kindergarten, are primarily based on whether the student lives in the zone or district served by the school and whether they have a sibling at the school; and

Whereas, Most elementary students attend their "zoned" elementary school, which means they live in an area zoned for a specific school, but can also apply to any non-zoned schools in their district or borough; and

Whereas, However, at the middle school and high school levels, there are far fewer zoned schools; and

Whereas, Admissions priorities vary for each non-zoned school or program and there are a variety of admissions methods; and

Whereas, For some programs, applicants receive admissions offers based on random selection, while for other programs, applicants are evaluated based on selection criteria and then ranked based on that evaluation; and

Whereas, Programs that admit students based on specific selection criteria such as academic record, talent, or English Language Learner status are called “screened” programs; and

Whereas, Schools and programs that use a screened admission method evaluate applicants based on selection criteria that may include report card grades, standardized test scores, internal assessments, and/or attendance and punctuality, which are then used to rank students based on that evaluation; and

Whereas, Admissions offers are made to ranked students by priority group and in ranking number order; and

Whereas, Using a student’s attendance record, including the number of absences and/or late arrivals to school, for admissions eligibility to various schools and programs is problematic as it is often out of the student’s control; and

Whereas, Tardiness may be caused by the student’s parent or other challenging circumstances such as transportation problems, and should not be held against the student; and

Whereas, Similarly, an elementary or middle school student’s absence is generally determined by a parent and may be due to illness or appointments with medical professionals or social service offices, or other critical needs and therefore should not be held against the student; and

Whereas, Further, it is important to encourage students who are sick to remain at home and not come to school where they can spread the illness to others; and

Whereas, In fact, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent closure of school buildings in March 2020 for the remainder of the school year, the DOE temporarily suspended use of attendance in determining admissions in the upcoming school year in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances some students faced; and

Whereas, DOE's temporary suspension of attendance measures for use in admissions criteria should be made permanent; and

Whereas, Counting absences against students in school admissions provides a strong incentive for students to come to school even when they are sick; and

Whereas, To safeguard students' health, as well as to fairly evaluate students based on criteria that are under their control; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to remove attendance measures as criteria for admissions to screened schools and programs in New York City public schools.

LS# 13842
JA
6/30/20