



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0618-2015, **Version:** *

Res. No. 618

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass legislation requiring the Education Department/Board of Education in cities of one million people or more, where there is a Specialized High School Admission test policy requiring the taking of a ranked order test, to have a test preparation program available for all middle school students whose math and reading scores are level 4.

By Council Members Maisel, Lander and Menchaca

Whereas, There are currently nine Specialized High Schools in New York City that serve the needs of academically and artistically gifted students; and

Whereas, These schools are Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, Stuyvesant High School, The Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, The Brooklyn Latin School, High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at the City College, High School of American Studies at Lehman College, Queens High School for the Sciences at York College and Staten Island Technical High School; and

Whereas, For eight of these schools, admission is based solely on the score attained on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT), while for Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts (LaGuardia), acceptance is based on an audition and a review of a student's academic records; and

Whereas, A 1971 State law, known as the Hecht-Calandra Act, makes the SHSAT exam the only measure that can be used to admit students to Stuyvesant High School, the Bronx High School of Science and Brooklyn Technical High School; and

Whereas, According to the Department of Education (DOE), all 8th graders and first-time 9th graders who are New York City residents are eligible to take the SHSAT; and

Whereas, The results of the SHSAT are ordered from the highest score to the lowest score, with students offered admission to schools based on their score's rank order as well as their stated school preference; and

Whereas, Approximately 28,000 students took the SHSAT for September 2014 admission; and

Whereas, Of those students who took the SHSAT for September 2014 admission, just over 5,000 or 18%, were offered admission to one of the Specialized High Schools; and

Whereas, Students who participate in a test preparation program for the SHSAT have a definite advantage over students who do not participate in such programs, especially since some SHSAT content is not found in the regular K-12 curriculum; and

Whereas, Private test preparation programs for the SHSAT can be costly; for example, on February 19, 2015 Kaplan, one of the leading private test preparation companies, advertised various SHSAT preparation programs from \$899 to \$2,899; and

Whereas, In 2012, the DOE created the DREAM - Specialized High School Institute (SHSI), a 22-month extracurricular tutoring program designed to help eligible economically disadvantaged students prepare for the SHSAT; and

Whereas, To be eligible for the DREAM-SHSI program, a student must be economically disadvantaged as defined by whether they are eligible for free lunch, have a minimum attendance rate of 90% during grade 5, and score above a certain level on the 5th grade New York State English language arts (ELA) and math exams; and

Whereas, If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of available seats, DREAM-SHSI participants are randomly selected from the pool of eligible candidates; and

Whereas, According to DOE, since its inception in 2012, 847 students who have participated in DREAM-SHSI have received an offer at one of the Specialized High Schools, a success rate of 46%; and

Whereas, However, the number of available seats in DREAM-SHSI is small and decreasing due to funding constraints, with only 450 slots funded this year even though more than 6,000 students qualified; and

Whereas, All middle school students who score at level 4, the highest achievable level, on the New York State ELA and math exams, should have an equal opportunity to receive tutoring and preparation for the SHSAT; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass legislation requiring the Education Department/Board of Education in cities of one million people or more, where there is a Specialized High School Admission test policy requiring the taking of a ranked order test, to have a test preparation program available for all middle school students whose math and reading scores are level 4.

LS# 3704
JA
2/19/15