



**Testimony of the NYC Department of Education
on Diversity in NYC Schools and Proposed Intro. No. 511-A**

December 11, 2014

Good morning Chair Dromm and all the Members of the Education Committee here today. My name is Ursulina Ramirez, and I am Chief of Staff to Chancellor Carmen Fariña at the NYC Department of Education (DOE). I am joined by Robert Sanft, Chief Executive Officer of DOE's Division of Student Enrollment and Ainsley Rudolfo, Executive Director of Programs and Partnerships at DOE's Office of Equity and Access. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding diversity in NYC schools and Proposed Intro No. 511-A.

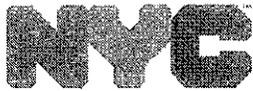
At the outset, I would like to commend the Council for bringing attention to this important and complex issue. As we commemorate the 60th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, it is important to both recognize the progress we have made towards creating more equity in the public school system and acknowledge that more work needs to be done to achieve greater diversity in our schools. As a recent report by the Civil Rights Project of the University of California notes, far too many of our students attend schools that lack racial diversity. It is widely recognized that diverse learning environments benefit students of all academic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Today I want to share with you some of the steps we have taken to increase diversity across the system, the challenges we face, and what more we can do to address school diversity. We also recognize this challenge is not unique to NYC public schools, but a challenge faced by school districts across the country.

Our student body is reflective of NYC's rich cultural, linguistic, racial and ethnic diversity. Our students collectively represent over 190 nationalities and speak more than 160 languages, with 13 percent being English Language Learners. The racial and ethnic composition of our student body is approximately 40 percent Latino, 28 percent African-American, 15 percent Asian, and 14 percent White. Furthermore, when we consider socioeconomic status, almost 80 percent of our students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Across the system, there are what we consider to be racially isolated schools, where at least 75 percent of the student body represents one ethnicity, and we see increased levels of racial isolation at the elementary school level when compared to other grade bands. One factor that contextualizes this reality is that many families choose to send their children to their zoned elementary school, preferring to have young children attend a neighborhood school located close to their home. As a result, the demographics of most elementary schools reflect the ethnicity of the communities they serve.

Any efforts to increase school diversity, particularly at the elementary school level, is somewhat limited by the strong correlation between neighborhood demographics and school demographics.



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Increasingly, the City's housing patterns, and widening income inequality have led to racially and socioeconomically stratified neighborhoods, which, in some cases, have significantly contributed to a lack of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity in our schools.

For example, in six of our 32 community school districts, students from one race comprise 75 percent or more of the student population; this includes District 6 in Manhattan, and Districts 16, 17, 18, 23, and 32 in Brooklyn. This school data mirrors census data. District 18, for example, which primarily serves the neighborhood of Canarsie, is over 80 percent African-American. At the same time, many of our schools have a diverse mix of students of different races and ethnicities. There are 12 school districts where no single race or ethnicity constitutes more than 50 percent of the student body. These districts are located in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens.

While most elementary and many middle school students attend their zoned school, families in every district also have other options. They may choose among non-zoned district or citywide schools, and charter schools. At every level we have increased the number of high-quality school options available to families.

We support the efforts of school communities to implement new methods for promoting diversity within their schools. Most recently, we worked with the CECs in District 13 and 15 in Brooklyn on P.S. 133, a new non-zoned school that has both Spanish and French dual language programs. As a result of discussions with the CECs – and with support from local elected officials including Councilmembers Lander and Levin – a unique admissions priority structure was created to help promote racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. This school admits students from both districts, and gives a priority to English Language Learners and students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

There are many other school communities that are committed to increasing diversity in their schools. We have recently met with several principals to discuss their goals and ideas to increase diversity and we are currently reviewing proposals from these schools to determine how we can be supportive.

New schools, like P.S. 133, present a unique opportunity to work with communities to establish admissions criteria that foster diversity. To this end, the DOE's Office of School Design (OSD) is developing new schools with the goal of promoting diversity factored into the design. Already, OSD has established a leadership training program designed to help new leaders develop strategies to engage parents and families, culturally relevant approaches to teaching and learning, and student recruitment plans that ensure enrollment of diverse student populations as the schools grow.

At the high school level, the citywide admissions process has introduced more equity and access to schools in the system. Each year, 8th graders apply to high schools of their choice and are centrally matched to a school based on their interests and a school's admissions criteria. Consistently, more than 80 percent of eighth graders are matched to one of their top five choices



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and nearly half are matched to their first choice. Because high schools are open to students from across the City – and families are willing to allow their older children to travel a bit further for special programs and academic opportunities – high schools tend to be more racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse than our elementary and middle schools.

Additionally, we have many high school programs that encourage academic diversity through their “educational option” admissions method that explicitly enrolls low-, middle-, and high-performers in proportion to the citywide levels. For example, Queens High School of Teaching, Liberal Arts, and the Sciences serves a diverse student body where 19 percent of the students have special needs and there is no one major ethnicity: the student body is 10 percent white, 19 percent Latino, 44 percent African-American, and 25 percent Asian. The school has an impressive 90 percent graduation rate and the vast majority of graduates go on to pursue college.

Our international and ELL-focused schools celebrate the diversity of recent immigrants. At the High School for Language and Innovation in the Bronx, 78 percent of students are English Language Learners and comprise a diverse group of multilingual students that is 9 percent white, 60 percent Latino, 11 percent African-American, and 17 percent Asian. Nearly 100 percent of parents at this school responded on the most recent school survey that they are satisfied with their child’s education and over 90 percent of students are on-track for graduation after their first year.

The Shared Path to Success reform has provided greater access to an array of high school programs for students with disabilities. To ensure access to programs, seats are reserved for students with disabilities in each high school program in proportion to the borough’s percent of 8th grade students receiving full-time or part-time special education services.

Although prospective high school students now have more options than a decade ago when high school admissions were primarily based on attendance zones, we know we have more work to do to ensure that all families have access to the information and requisite guidance and support to make informed decisions. We are continuously working to increase access to our broad array of schools by increasing our communications to students and parents, and making our recruitment efforts more robust. We have revamped our family workshops on high school admissions. These workshops attracted over 8,000 families this past summer, 20 percent more than in 2013. This year we provided interpreters, translated materials, and piloted a workshop delivered entirely in Spanish. In addition, for the first time, this year we sent over 3,000 hard copies High School Directories, which are translated in nine languages, to middle schools based on the student populations they serve.

Additionally, to enhance families’ abilities to search through information in the High School Directory, we have recently partnered with four organizations to create Admissions Apps, which are currently available on the DOE website. These are web and mobile applications that families and students can use to explore school options based on academic programming, extracurricular activities, school quality indicators, and location. This year, we have also introduced an online



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open house calendar so that families can easily search for the dates and times of school open houses rather than having to call schools individually.

While fewer African-American and Hispanic students attend some of our specialized high schools than we would hope, the DOE has developed several programs to increase access to all of our specialized high schools. Through our Office of Equity and Access, the DOE created the DREAM-Specialized High School Institute (SHSI), a 22 month, extracurricular academic enrichment program designed to help low-income middle school students develop the skills and strategies needed to succeed on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT).

Since its inception in 2012, 847 students who have participated in DREAM-SHSI have received an offer at one of our specialized high schools, a success rate of 46 percent. While we would like to expand the program to meet the demand, we are limited by funding constraints.

We have also increased access by encouraging a greater number of top-performing students across the City to sign up to take the SHSAT. We sent all middle school guidance counselors a list of the top 15 percent of their students and asked them to ensure these students had the opportunity to discuss Specialized High School options and sign up for the test if interested. This new recruitment strategy resulted from finding that top-performing students are not equally likely to sign up for the SHSAT. For example, Latino students, students with disabilities and English Language Learners are less likely to sign up for the SHSAT than other students, even if they are performing at a high level in middle school. While we continue to build our understanding of these disparities, we are actively working to reduce them through new strategies, and we welcome innovative ideas from others.

Within this work, our Office of Equity and Access' mission is to provide every family and every child from all backgrounds and neighborhoods with equal opportunity and access to high-quality programs, with a focus on ending long-standing racial, ethnic and socioeconomic disparities.

We are particularly proud of our NYC Advanced Placement (AP) Expansion Initiative launched during the 2013-14 school year in partnership with the College Board and the National Math and Science Initiative. The NYC AP Expansion Initiative is designed to help high school students prepare to pursue college degrees and careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines. The goals of this initiative are to increase access, participation and performance in Advanced Placement for under-represented students from traditionally under-served communities. The program is currently serving over 3,000 students across 64 high schools, and contributed to a 35 percent increase in the number of students taking one or more AP exams. For African-American and Latino students, the AP Expansion Initiative contributed to 80 percent and 69 percent of the growth, respectively.

Creating more diverse learning environments for our students is a top priority of Mayor de Blasio and the Chancellor. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution to this complex issue and diversity will look different in each community. We are committed to working with our school communities, parents, elected officials, advocates and other stakeholders to achieve this goal. To



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this end, Chancellor Fariña's Strategic Planning Team will partner with the Office of Student Enrollment and take a fresh look at the DOE's admissions and enrollment policies, which are just some of the tools available to help promote diversity in our schools.

At the same time, this Administration remains focused in its core mission to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success in college or careers regardless of neighborhood. In one year alone, we have made great progress, including the historic implementation of Pre-K for All, after school programs for all middle schools students, renewed focus on professional development, the creation of a new framework to support and evaluate schools, strengthening and reimagining the role of superintendents, strengthening and expanding instruction and programs for English Language Learners, establishing the School Renewal Program, a multi-year investment to provide targeted support to our most struggling schools, and 45 new community schools. While we know we have more work to do, we are confident that we are heading in the right direction

Lastly, we would like to express our support for Proposed Intro No. 511-A, which requires DOE to annually report on demographic and achievement data about our students by community school district, school and special program within a school. While we publicly report much of the data requested, the report required by the proposed legislation will serve as a valuable analytic resource for DOE, our school communities and other stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony for the New York City Council Education Committee Hearing on “Diversity
in New York City Schools” on the Proposed Local Law Introduction. No. 511-A-2014
and Resolution 453-2014**

December 11, 2014

**Submitted by Françoise Jacobsohn, Equal Rights Advocates,
fjacobsohn@equalrights.org)**

Equal Rights Advocates respectfully submits the following testimony regarding diversity in New York City Schools. We thank you for the opportunity to address the City Council's Local Law and Resolution proposals to examine and remedy the New York City's school system's lack of diversity which has been found to have strong implications on minority and low-income student outcomes. With this testimony, we will specifically addressing the importance of including gender as part of the measurement and reporting requirements.

Equal Rights Advocates

Equal Rights Advocates (ERA) works to protect and expand economic and educational access and opportunities for women and girls. ERA is committed to ensuring that education is an opportunity enjoyed by all regardless of sex, race, disability, socio-economic status or gender identity.

ERA has been on the forefront of efforts to stop sexual harassment and gender-based bullying so that learning is not limited by fear and intimidation. ERA's works to break stereotypes that limit girls in math and science. ERA also works to ensure that girls receive the same chance to learn and grow through sports. ERA represents female athletes, educators and coaches fighting sex discrimination in school sports as they know sports provides a powerful lesson in equality to those they teach.

Over the past ten years, calls to ERA's Advice and Counseling Hotline have increased by 400%. We routinely hear about brutal bullying based on gender identity, sexual harassment of young women by educators, and peer sexual harassment and sexual assault. We promote girls in all academic pursuits, including those traditionally dominated by men.

Our Women In STEM Fact Sheet examines the pipeline of girls into high-wage, high-demand STEM related fields and other strategies to promote the advancement of women in STEM. In New York City, our Project Manager, Françoise Jacobsohn, is the Vice Chair of the New York City Department of Education's Career and Technical Education Advisory Council and Chair of the Council's Gender Equity Subcommittee.

#Why We Can't Wait

The hashtag Why We Can't Wait was created in the wake of President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative. Almost immediately, an Open Letter of 200 Concerned Black Men followed by another open letter "Why We Can't Wait" from Women of Color. Both letters stressed that any plan for addressing racial and socio-economic inequalities could not succeed without also addressing and integrating the specific challenges that face girls in these same communities.

The historic lack of integrating gender into efforts to redress racial and socio-economic inequalities have resulted in women's higher rate of poverty and lower wages. In New York City, 36.4 % of women-headed households in New York currently live in poverty as compared to 25.8% of Latino families and 23.0% of African Americans families. Female high school graduates on average, earn approximately the same salary as male high school

graduates. African American women not only earn less than African American men, they earn only 64% of white men's wages.

In addition, girls are still missing from educational pathways to high-wage fields. While some of New York City's Schools and Career and Technical programs are attempting to address this disparity, they need institutionalized support from the City Council and the Department of Education to change the stereotyping and discrimination that keep them out of these high wage fields.

The National Women's Law Center recently issued a report with the NAACP Unlocking Opportunity for African-American Girls: A Call to Action for Educational Equity which found that African-American girls are faring worse than the national average for girls on almost every measure of academic achievement. The report also found that African-American girls report higher rates of sexual harassment at school, are disproportionately likely to be victims of domestic sex trafficking and experience higher rates of sexual violence and intimate-partner violence.

Excluding gender from the reporting requirements and progress measurements will leave behind at least 50% of the population that this law and resolution seek to address. The many barriers that girls face in school, including gender discrimination, sexual harassment and assault and steering towards low-paying occupations cannot be addressed if their very existence and differing experiences are not measured and reported.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We hope that the New York City Council's Education Committee will continue to take an active role in redressing the results of the lack of diversity in our schools for all of its students.



FOR THE RECORD

OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Good morning/afternoon. I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak on this important issue. I am here today to testify on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams on the importance of school diversity and in support of the three measures before this committee: The proposed Local Law 511-A; Resolution 442; and Resolution 453.

A diverse student body better prepares students to handle the challenges of the future. It encourages empathy, cooperation, and a deeper understanding of the world, all of which are necessary in a globalized society, and even more so in a city that prides itself on being a melting pot of cultures and ideas. The need for that empathy, cooperation, and deeper understanding is not going to diminish, but rather continue to grow.

The recent UCLA report on New York's school diversity stated what we already knew: too many of our schools remain segregated. In my own borough of Brooklyn, 2/3 of the school districts have 10% or less white student enrollment and 90% of the Charter schools are categorized by the report as intensely segregated. Given these statistics, the proposals before this committee are not only reasonable responses to a continuing and growing problem, but necessary actions that will help to frame the Department of Education's agenda and ensure that diversity in our schools is no longer left to chance or economic status.

Maintaining the status quo is not a plan when New York has some of the most segregated schools in the country. Resolution 453, calling on the DOE to recognize diversity as an important and beneficial goal, sends a message that diversity cannot be something we simply hope for; it must be something we strive for as a common goal for the common good.

Where goals are important, follow-up is vital. Legislation requiring the DOE to report on its efforts to increase diversity leaves no doubt as to the seriousness of those goals and the necessity of continued focus moving forward. Diversity should be a part of every discussion and every policy, and the DOE's efforts should be the model of transparency.

Beyond the need for the DOE to officially recognize the benefits of diversity is the need for the city's elected leaders to leave no question as to the critical need for diversity in our schools. As stewards of the state's largest and most diverse city, this council's call for passage of the proposed changes to the admission criteria at the city's specialized schools is indicative of our own recognition that diversity is more than just a goal, but a priority for every school in every borough.

Students are more than a test score. It is imperative that we move beyond high stakes testing and towards a model that emphasizes real world experience and real world expectations. Regardless of the specialization, those experiences will be more meaningful and more useful if they are gained in a diverse and challenging atmosphere, an atmosphere just like the world they will encounter upon graduation.

These measures are important, but only a beginning. Our focus for the future cannot solely be top down. Building on models of success, we can create peer-to-peer opportunities at the student, teacher, administrative, and community levels to allow us to learn from those who have had success and to help those who have significant challenges ahead.

Perhaps diversity's greatest benefit is an enhanced world view that promotes understanding. To that end, cultural exchanges should be a part of every curriculum, taking full advantage of the incredible diversity present in our city. We would be proud to host some of these exchanges at Borough Hall and encourage our colleagues to do the same.

As with all education initiatives, parental and community involvement are imperative. While peer-to-peer meetings and cultural exchanges can help start a much needed conversation, they must be reinforced at home and in the community. That reinforcement can only come from parents and communities who are as committed to education as the teachers and administrators. PTA's, CEC's, and other community groups can work together to lay the groundwork for effective change that will have lasting benefits far beyond the four walls of our schools.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



New York City City Council Hearing on Proposed School Diversity Measures

**Testimony of Rachel M. Kleinman
Assistant Counsel
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.**

December 11, 2014

Good morning. My name is Rachel Kleinman. I am Assistant Counsel with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. ("LDF"). I would like to thank the City Council for affording LDF the opportunity to address the current proposals to improve school diversity.

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) is the country's first and foremost civil and human rights law firm. Founded in 1940 under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall, LDF was launched at a time when the nation's aspirations for equality and due process of law were stifled by widespread state-sponsored racial inequality. From that era to the present, LDF's mission has always been transformative: to achieve racial justice, equality, and an inclusive society.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that invalidated the American system of legalized racial apartheid in public schools. Although much progress has been made since 1954, LDF recognizes that there is still substantial work yet to be done before equal educational opportunity becomes a reality for all of America's students. One of the cornerstones of LDF's effort to ensure such educational equity is the promotion of the value of and racial diversity in our nation's schools because exposure to different perspectives, viewpoints and life experiences has been proven to be beneficial to all students. To this end, LDF supports the three proposed measures currently before the City Council: specifically, the resolution introduced by Council Member Torres which calls for incorporation of diversity goals in a variety of decisions impacting New York City public schools, including admissions policies and practices, decisions to create new schools, and school zoning decisions; the bill introduced by Council Member Lander calling for accurate and timely collection and reporting of data disaggregated by race and socioeconomic status to help create an accurate picture of diversity and allocation of resources in New York City public schools; and the resolution introduced by Council Member Barron that would

ensure the consideration of multiple measures for admission to New York City's Specialized High Schools, which remain the only public elite high schools in the nation that rely on a single multiple-choice admissions test for entrance.

Research strongly supports policies and practices, like those currently in consideration by this Council, that encourage and support diversity in public schools. In 2011, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education issued guidance on the voluntary use of race to achieve diversity and avoid racial isolation in elementary and secondary schools. That federal guidance underscored the importance of diversity, noting: "Racially diverse schools provide incalculable educational and civil benefits by promoting cross-racial understanding, breaking down racial and other stereotypes, and eliminating bias and prejudice."¹ And this fall, the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance focused on the responsibility of school districts to equitably allocate resources, because "the allocation of school resources . . . too often exacerbates rather than remedies achievement and opportunity gaps."² Given that New York City's public schools are the most racially segregated schools in our nation,³ the measures now under consideration ensure that New York's students receive a better education.

The reforms advanced by Council Member Torres, Council Member Lander and Council Member Barron are also consistent with LDF's ongoing efforts to ensure diversity in New York's Schools. In 2012, LDF, along with LatinoJustice and the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, first called for a change in State law regarding admissions to New York City's Specialized High Schools in a federal civil rights complaint. This complaint was filed with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights on behalf of a broad coalition of New York education, civil rights, and social justice organizations challenging the admissions process at New York City's elite public Specialized High Schools. The complaint – which is currently being investigated by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights – alleges that, in addition to being bad education policy, the single-test admissions policy has an unlawful racially disparate impact. The eleven complainant organizations represent diverse constituencies including African-Americans, Latino and Asian-American community members. In addition, the complaint received broad support including written statements from, among others, the Asian American Legal Defense Fund (AALDEF), the New York Urban League, Advocates for Children, and the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). A complete list of the complaint

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division and U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools*, 2011, available at

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>.

² U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Resource Comparability Dear Colleague Letter*, 2014, available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-resourcecomp-201410.pdf>.

³ UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies, *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and Damaged Future*, finding that "public school students in New York continue to be severely segregated," March 26, 2014, available at <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/news/press-releases/2014-press-releases/new-york-schools-most-segregated-in-the-nation>.

organizations as well as a list of the organizations, individuals and educational experts who provided written letters of support is appended to LDF's written testimony.

Currently, admission into the Specialized High Schools, which are considered some of the most prestigious public high schools in the country, is based exclusively on the results of a single test, which education experts agree is arbitrary, inaccurate, and an unfair measure of merit.⁴ The New York City Department of Education cannot disagree, as it has admitted that it has never studied the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) to determine whether it predicts success in the Specialized High Schools. Amending the single-test admissions policy to allow for additional measures of academic measures will make the process fairer for *all* students.

Furthermore, the current admissions policy has a particularly devastating impact on Black and Latino students, who have startlingly low admissions rates. Of the nearly 12,000 black and Latino students who took the Fall 2012 SHSAT exam, just over 600 were offered admission to any of the high schools. Out of the 952 eighth grade students who received offers to matriculate into Stuyvesant High School this year, 7 are Black and 21 are Hispanic. Of the 968 eighth graders who were admitted to Bronx High School of Science, 18 are Black and 50 are Hispanic. Thus, not only does the current policy lock too many qualified New York City students out of an important pipeline to opportunity, it also tells a false story about the intelligence and promise of the many Black and Latino students who have persevered and pursued excellence, many graduating at the top of their classes, despite difficult circumstances in elementary and middle school. It also robs the current attendees of New York City's Specialized High Schools of the benefits attendant to a racially diverse learning environment, thereby compromising the educational benefits for all students.

Resolution No. 442 calls on the State to change the law to allow all of the Specialized High Schools to open up their admissions policies to include multiple measures of merit. The resolution does not, on its face, recognize that Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Department of Education can, on their own, change to the admissions process for five of the eight Specialized High Schools that are not named in the State law. Therefore, we ask that the City Council amend Resolution 442 to include a call for change at the

⁴ It is well accepted by educational testing experts that "no single test score can be considered a definitive measure of a student's knowledge." U.S. Dep't of Ed., Office for Civil Rights, *The Use of Tests as Part of High-Stakes Decision-Making for Students: A Resource Guide for Educators and Policy-Makers* 25 (2000) (quoting National Research Council, *High Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation* 3 (Jay P. Heubert & Robert M. Hauser eds. 1999)); see also Arthur L. Coleman, *Excellence and Equity in Education: High Standards for High Stakes Tests*, 6 Va. J. of Soc. Pol'y & Law 81, 103 (1998). Because all potential admissions criteria have a degree of uncertainty and imprecision, multiple criteria, used in combination, provide better insight into future student performance than rigid reliance on the rank-order results from a single imperfect criterion. See American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education, *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999) ("The validity of individual interpretations can be enhanced by taking into account other relevant information about individual students before making important decisions.").

City level and to urge the mayor to use his authority to immediately change the admissions policy for the five newest Specialized High Schools in New York City and to join community advocates in calling upon state lawmakers to help change the admissions policy at the City's three oldest Specialized schools—Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech. Implementing expedient change would allow the city to take corrective action before a finding of discrimination is made by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.

LDF urges the advancement of the proposed measures seeking to address and remedy the racial segregation and racial isolation so prevalent in New York City's public schools. LDF stands ready to work with lawmakers and others to advance these measures and continue the work to achieve racial and socioeconomic diversity in our public schools.

Statements from Education and Testing Experts

Available at: http://www.naacpldf.org/files/case_issue/Statements%20of%20Support.pdf

- Michael T. Nettles; Senior Vice President and Edmund W. Gordon Chair, Policy Evaluation and Research Center; Educational Testing Service (ETS)
- Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Urban Education, City University of New York Graduate Center*
- David C. Bloomfield; Professor of Education Leadership, Law, and Policy; Brooklyn College and the City University of New York Graduate Center*

*Institutions listed for identification purposes only

Statements of Support

- Asian American Legal Defense Fund (AALDEF)
- Advocates for Children (AFC)
- Zakiyah Ansari, Advocacy Director, Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)
- CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities
- Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)
- Elba Montalvo, Founder and President/CEO, Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)
- David R. Jones, President and CEO, Community Service Society of New York (CSS)
- José Calderón, President, Hispanic Federation
- New York Urban League (NYUL)
- John C. Liu, New York City Comptroller
- Ronnette Summers, Parent Leader, New York City Coalition for Educational Justice
- Tom Allon, former Stuyvesant High School English teacher and 2013 NYC Mayoral Candidate
- Monty Neill, Executive Director, FairTest
- Jonathan Westin, Organizing Director, New York Communities for Change (NYCC)
- Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)
- Ruben Diaz Jr., Bronx Borough President

List and Descriptions of Complainants

1. NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ)
 - The NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) is a parent-led movement for educational equity and excellence in the city's public schools. CEJ aims to distribute the opportunity to receive an excellent education equally across neighborhoods so that every school in New York City prepares students for college and the world of work. A citywide collaborative of community-based organizations and unions whose members are parents, community residents and teachers, CEJ fights to ensure that every child in NYC receives a quality and well-rounded education.

2. La Fuente
 - La Fuente is an umbrella organization that brings together labor and community partners who are engaged in neighborhood-based grassroots organizing efforts around immigrant and worker rights issues. By helping members develop leadership skills, identify issues of importance to their neighborhoods, and develop campaigns to improve their communities, La Fuente seeks to promote the human rights and dignity of new immigrants in our society.

3. The Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)
 - A statewide non-profit, the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) unites a coalition of parents, children's advocates, schools, teachers, clergy, and others to advocate for high quality public education. Working with all stakeholders, but emphasizing the involvement of parents and youth, AQE combines leadership development, community organizing, electronic activism, extensive media relations, policy work, and lobbying within a cohesive campaign for fundamental education reform.

4. New York Communities for Change (NYCC)
 - New York Communities for Change (NYCC) is a coalition of working families in low and moderate income communities fighting for social and economic justice throughout New York State. Through neighborhood chapters and issue-based committees, NYCC works to ensure that every family throughout New York has access to quality schools, affordable housing, and good jobs. Based on a belief that every child in New York deserves a quality public education and a safe place to go to school, NYCC's education work includes campaigns aimed to improve transparency and accountability in the New York charter schools and to eliminate the presence of toxic chemicals in New York City Schools.

5. Black New Yorkers for Educational Excellence (BNYEE)
 - Black New Yorkers for Educational Excellence (BNYEE) is a progressive organization dedicated to building a black education movement. BNYEE

works to empower parents and youth, recruit and retain Black and Latino teachers, and develop literacy and numeracy campaigns for children.

6. Community Service Society of New York (CSS)

- Community Service Society of New York (CSS) draws on a 169-year history of excellence in addressing the root causes of economic disparity. CSS responds to urgent, contemporary challenges through applied research, advocacy, litigation, and innovative program models that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers.

7. Garifuna Coalition USA, Inc. (GCU)

- The Garifuna Coalition USA, Inc. (GCU) serves as a resource, forum, advocate, and united voice for the Garifuna immigrant community. The Garifuna are an ethnic group of mixed ancestry-descendants of Carib, Arawak, and African people living along the Caribbean Coast in Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Today, New York City is home to the largest Garifuna population outside of Central America with an estimated 200,000 living in the South Bronx, Brownsville and East New York in Brooklyn, and Manhattan's Upper West Side. GCU works to improve economic, civic, and cultural conditions and promotes civic and political involvement of Garifuna Americans. GCU also operates the Garifuna Advocacy Center in the South Bronx to provide information, educational services, networking opportunities, and cultural events for the Garifuna community.

8. Make the Road NY (MRNY)

- Make the Road New York (MRNY) builds the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. MRNY is active in improving the lives of young people in New York by supporting a new generation of leaders through youth organizing, providing community-based afterschool and summer programs, and encouraging academic success and promoting higher education through its Student Success Center.

9. The Brooklyn Movement Center (the MC)

- The Brooklyn Movement Center (the MC) is a membership-led, direct-action, community organizing body based in Central Brooklyn. The MC focuses on parent and education organizing, street action, leadership development, and communication organizing. The MC is staffed by local organizers, supported by volunteers, governed by a community-based board of directors, and guided by an advisory group made up of activists and organizers from across the city. The MC brings together residents to identify important issues in their lives, win concrete improvements in their community, and build power.

10. United Puerto Rican Organization of Sunset Park (UPROSE)

- United Puerto Rican Organization of Sunset Park (UPROSE) is an environmental and social justice organization dedicated to the empowerment of Southwest Brooklyn residents primarily through broad and converging environmental, sustainable development, and youth justice campaigns. Founded in 1966, UPROSE is Brooklyn's oldest Latino community-based organization. UPROSE is a multiracial, multicultural, and intergenerational organization that aims to ensure and heighten community awareness and involvement, develop participatory community planning practices, empower youth, and promote sustainable development with justice and governmental accountability.

11. Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)

- Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), founded in 2000, builds the power of South Asian low wage immigrant workers, youth, and families in New York City to win economic and educational justice, and civil and immigrant rights. DRUM unites its membership base to foster leadership of immigrants, provide critical community services, develop wage campaigns for policy change, and build alliances for social movements.

Testimony of the
United Federation of Teachers

Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Education

Regarding Oversight: Diversity in New York City Schools; and
Proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014; Resolution 453-2014; and Resolution 442-2014

Dec. 11, 2014

Good morning, Chairman Dromm and the members of this distinguished committee. My name is Janella Hinds, and I am the vice president for academic high schools for the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of our union, I want to thank the Council for holding this hearing today and allowing us the opportunity to share our views.

New York has always been a gateway city for immigrants from across the globe and is widely considered a beacon of diversity like no other; yet studies have shown that our schools are considered among the most segregated in the state. The problem is especially prevalent in our specialized high schools, where an alarming racial disparity gap persists and where the student body is increasingly drawn from a small segment of middle schools. In the current school year, Stuyvesant HS admitted 963 students; of those just 7 (.7%) were African American and 21 were Latino, in a school system that is 70% black and Latino.¹ As concerning, in its November 2012 review of the city's top middle schools, the *New York Post* detailed how fewer than two dozen middle schools account for the majority of students receiving offers to the specialized high schools; meanwhile, there are entire districts in the Bronx and Brooklyn where not a single middle school student was offered a seat.² The problem is crystal clear.

When it comes to possible solutions, all stakeholders have strong opinions. The real questions facing us when we read the reports and view the statistics are: Do we believe that both promoting diversity in our school system and affording greater access to schools with selective admissions are desirable? And would such efforts benefit our students and our city? Our answer is yes — and yes.

These are tough issues and they require thoughtful analysis and discussion. We cannot simply bury our heads in the sand and hope these problems go away. As educators and child advocates, we have a responsibility to grapple with the policies and practices that we believe have the greatest impact on children. Our students are depending on us to find solutions, and we owe it to them to do just that.

Today, our union is once again taking a strong stand in the name of increasing diversity in our city schools — and that means ensuring that every child, regardless of background, race or economic status, has access to the best educational opportunities our public schools have to offer.

We commend the City Council and members of this committee for bringing us all together to begin that conversation and we thank Council Members Lander (proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014), Torres (Res 453-2014) and Barron (Res. 442-2014) for introducing these important pieces of legislation. Working together with the Council, we believe that we can help make important policy changes to fix what's broken as well as to expand access and achieve greater equity for high-achieving, talented students in neighborhoods across the city.

Proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014 & Resolution 453-2014

Despite undergoing significant demographic shifts, including an influx of students from all over the world, New York City's racial segregation in public schools has deepened in recent decades. Groundbreaking research being conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) under the auspices of its Civil Rights Project found that among the 32 Community School Districts in New York City, 19 districts had 10% or less white students in 2010. Researchers also found that black and Latino students "are still disproportionately underexposed to white students in New York, as the typical white student is disproportionately overexposed to other white students," while Asian students had the second-highest exposure to white students over time.³

That is why the UFT supports proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014 (Lander), requiring the Department of Education to report annually on the efforts it is making to increase diversity within schools and its progress. Likewise, the UFT also supports Resolution 453-2014 (Torres), calling on the DOE to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity.

Together Int. No. 511-A-2014 and Res. 453-2014 vigorously promote the need to embrace the diverse backgrounds of our students as part of the academic and civic discourse that takes place inside our classrooms. Doing so will enhance our students' educational experiences and better prepare them for the globalized world they will participate in. To successfully diversify our city's schools requires collecting, reporting and analyzing the very data called for in proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014. With that information, we can better shape specific DOE policies, such as those relating to admissions, zoning and school construction, to achieve greater school diversity and ensure shared learning.

Resolution 442-2014

The UFT also strongly supports Resolution 442-2014, which urges state lawmakers to pass S.7738/A.9979. This state legislation, which is one of our top legislative priorities in Albany, enacts a series of changes to the admissions process for the city's specialized high schools that will extend opportunities across the city to a larger pool of deserving students by removing their barriers to access. We want to thank Council Member Barron and the other supporters of this bill, including Council Members Dromm, Rodriguez, Levine and Maisel, all of whom are former public school teachers, for raising this important issue.

The schools in question are the Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Latin School, Brooklyn Technical High School, the High School for Math, Science and Engineering at City College, the High School of American Studies at Lehman College, Queens High School for the Sciences at York College, Staten Island Technical High School and Stuyvesant High School. The teachers in these schools are top notch, as is the tradition of excellence that each of these schools offers to their students.

Gaining entry to one of these prestigious schools is based on just one factor: scoring high enough on the SHSAT. No other aspects of a student's academic record, including independent projects, leadership achievements or extraordinary academic success, are considered as part of the admissions process. (The LaGuardia High School of Music & Art, another specialized high school, does not use the SHSAT.)⁴

We as a profession have long fought the notion that a student's abilities can be judged by a single test score, just as we have long maintained that the only way to properly evaluate a teacher is to incorporate multiple measures. The same principle applies here.

In 2012, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and a group of co-plaintiffs in a civil lawsuit determined that the single measure for admittance resulted in lack of access, amounting to a civil rights violation. The lawsuit argued that “relying on a single test for admission while excluding multiple measures of student knowledge and potential is a distortion and subversion of the meaning of merit.”⁵ Council Resolution 442-2014, if passed, effectively responds to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund’s request that the city ask the state Legislature to change the law on the SHSAT and, additionally, change the admissions policies at the five schools where the state law doesn’t apply. We await the final resolution of the complaint.

At the same time, the UFT took action, inviting educators from these eight schools to participate in a task force that would scrutinize the admission policies for their schools. The dedicated educators who answered the call were united in their goal: retain the rigorous admissions standards at these elite high schools while also expanding access to a more diverse body of scholars.

With the support of the union’s 3,400 member Delegate Assembly, the task force was empowered to seek out fair and equitable solutions to the issues at hand. The task force did not take its issue lightly and the conversations were not easy, but over the course of 18 months, the group developed a set of recommendations on how to move forward.

The task force’s recommendations include:

- Creating language to broaden the definition of what constitutes the highest-performing scholars. Specifically, that there be a “power score” pathway (using a combination of grades, state exam scores, attendance and some version of a revised SHSAT aligned to the curriculum) for entrance into a specialized high school;
- Expanding the applicant pool by better publicizing the specialized high schools admissions procedures;
- Leveling the playing field by providing free electronic preparation materials and other preparation methods for the entrance exam, as well as registering all students for the specialized high school admissions process, along with an easy opt-out; and
- Changing the Discovery program for applicants who narrowly miss the “admit score” to make it mandatory for all schools, resulting in an intensive summer program for scholars; and aligning each Discovery Program with the skills needed for incoming 9th-graders specific to each school.

The bottom line is if we believe that underrepresented students deserve a fair and equitable opportunity to succeed at the highest levels, then it’s crucial that we support policies that expand access to talented middle school students across the city. As persuasively articulated by *City & State* publisher Tom Allon in his June op-ed in the *New York Daily News*, the Discovery Program successfully operated for nearly three decades, affording opportunities to mostly high-achieving black and Latino students by providing rigorous supplemental instruction that eased their transition to the specialized high schools.⁶ Since fewer schools are offering the Discovery Program, students who need a little extra support are not getting it and there isn’t an effective vehicle to level the playing field. The statistics concerning the few middle schools that send students to the specialized high schools speak volumes, and as educators, we’re not proud of the message this sends to our students and their parents in schools that aren’t in that mix.

Anecdotally, teachers who have taught advanced placement courses at non-selective high schools prior to their tenure at the specialized high schools felt strongly that many of their students who narrowly missed the cut score — a score that changes from year to year — would thrive at a specialized high school had they been given an opportunity like the Discovery Program. Notably, at the High School of American Studies at Lehman College, its first student to be admitted to Harvard University matriculated through the Discovery

Program. This program should not only be restored, but it should also be mandated with schools having the flexibility to tailor the program to their specific offerings.

UFT members have met with the DOE to discuss the DREAM program that provides tutoring and enrichment opportunities for underrepresented students seeking to gain admittance to the specialized high schools. This program operates in just 21 districts in New York City and while we support its mission to expand access, we need to do more.

Challenging the Validity of the SHSAT

The UFT has testified previously about the overreliance on high stakes standardized tests and how that has damaged educators' ability to deliver a high-quality and well-rounded education to our students. Our work on the Specialized High School Task Force cemented our views on testing.

What's more, the Education Policy Research Institute at Arizona State University directly challenged the wisdom of a sole measure for admitting students in our specialized high schools. The report, "High Stakes, But Low Validity,"⁷ found that:

- Thousands of students had scores that were statistically "indistinguishable" from competing students whose scores gained admission;
- The likelihood of admission increased or decreased, depending on which version of the test a student was administered; and
- The SHSAT has never been validated to determine whether it excluded "prediction bias across gender and ethnic groups."

The DOE recently issued a Request for Proposals for a Common Core-aligned SHSAT that may include an essay and will be translated into several languages. That's a step in the right direction. It is our hope that the DOE will also take the opportunity to explore test validation as it reviews submissions. Given the legitimate issues raised by the research cited above, the DOE should also investigate the SHSAT's limitations, and also the potential bias it contains.

Looking Beyond the SHSAT

While some people tout the SHSAT as an objective measure unyielding to political pressure or questionable subjective will in admissions offices, research and trends at elite colleges and universities paint a different picture of entrance exams as a single measure. In qualitative research conducted for the American Educational Research Association in 2012, Rachel Rubin, PhD, found that the most competitive elite institutions determine academic merit using formulas comprised of multiple academic measures, among which the most highly valued variable is exceptional talent.⁸

It's also worth noting that a recent University of Chicago study, "Middle Grade Readiness in Chicago Public Schools," found that "attendance and overall grade point average in middle school were the strongest predictors of actual school performance in ninth grade and 11th grade, both of which strongly predict high-school graduation rates and college success."⁹

Similarly, a study called "Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American College and University Admissions," released in February 2014, further confirmed that "despite lots of discussions about high school grading we find high school GPA to be a broadly reliable predictor of college performance, and standardized testing to be very far from 'standardized' in its predictive value."¹⁰

Yet as documented in research from the Thomas Fordham Foundation, New York City's specialized high schools are the only ones among 165 elite schools around the country that used a single test for admissions. Merit and talent simply cannot be reduced to just one number.¹¹

Closing Thoughts

Every New Yorker is familiar with the patterns of racial segregation in the city's housing market. This naturally contributes to the lack of diversity in the schools, but it is not an excuse to perpetuate it. Especially after more choice was introduced into the school system, diversity must become deliberate, recognized as an educational good in and of itself and an issue of fundamental fairness and equity in the schools.

Likewise, tradition cannot be the sole measure of merit. If it did, we would never have gotten beyond the historical legacy when separate was once declared equal and when women were excluded from prestigious educational institutions. Stuyvesant High School was first formed in 1904 as a "manual training school for boys," as was Brooklyn Technical High School in 1922 and the Bronx High School of Science in 1938. It took decades for these three schools to become coeducational, but those who fought for the change knew it was the right thing to do. Also, remember that five of the eight specialized high schools we're discussing today were not included in this elite group prior to 2002.

It was prescient that the NAACP brought greater attention to the debates and discussions that educators in the specialized high schools around the city were already quietly engaged in. In the face of an increasingly diverse public school population and as educators and trade unionists, we will no longer stand by without raising our voices for equitable access to our best public schools. Expanding educational opportunity benefits every constituency.

We also must aggressively address the issues regarding how to prepare talented students early and better position them for success in the specialized high schools and other selective academic secondary schools.

This is admittedly hard work. But we believe we have a moral imperative to change course on policy and redefine who merits an opportunity to experience the best we have to offer.

Thank you.

Endnotes

- ¹ “Status Quo at Elite New York Schools: Few Blacks and Hispanics,” Al Baker, New York Times, March 11, 2014
- ² “Best of middles lead to top HS’s,” New York Post, November 29, 2012.
- ³ “New York State’s Extreme Segregation,” John Kucsera with Gary Orfield, The Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles*, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), March 2014
- ⁴ “The Meaning of Merit: Alternatives for Determining Admission to New York City’s Specialized High Schools,” the Community Service Society and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, October 2013
- ⁵ NAACP Legal Defense Fund: <http://www.naacpldf.org/case-issue/new-york-city-specialized-high-school-complaint>
- ⁶ “A Better Way to Diversify Stuyvesant,” Tom Allon, op-ed New York Daily News, June 12, 2014
- ⁷ “High Stakes, but Low Validity: A Case Study of Standardized Tests and Admissions into New York City Specialized High Schools,” Joshua Feinman, Ph.D., Education Policy Research Institute, Arizona State University
- ⁸ Inside Higher Ed: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/04/09/new-research-how-elite-colleges-make-admissions-decisions>
- ⁹ “Middle Grade Readiness in Chicago Public Schools,” University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago Public Schools, Elaine M. Allensworth, Julia A. Gwynne, Paul Moore, and Marisa de la Torre, November 2014
- ¹⁰ “Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American College and University Admissions,” William C. Hiss and Valerie W. Franks, February 5, 2014
- ¹¹ “Exam Schools: Inside America's Most Selective Public High Schools,” Chester E. Finn, Jr. & Jessica A. Hockett, Thomas Fordham Foundation, Princeton University Press, 2012

TESTIMONY OF
THE CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

BEFORE

the

Committee on Education

on

Oversight - Diversity in New York City Schools

December 11, 2014

**New York City Council Chambers
City Hall
New York, New York**

Prepared by:

**Esmeralda Simmons, Esq.
Executive Director
Joan P. Gibbs, Esq.
General Counsel**



Good morning. My name is Esmeralda Simmons, and I am the Executive Director of the Center for Law and Social Justice. The Center is a twenty-nine year old community legal institution that is a unit of Medgar Evers College of The City University of New York. The mission of CLSJ is to provide quality legal advocacy, research and advocacy training in a personal manner to people of African descent and the disfranchised. CLSJ accomplishes its mission by conducting research, and initiating racial justice advocacy projects and litigation with community groups and organizations in diverse areas including racial equity in NYC public education, voting rights, and immigration, and addressing police and racial violence. Because of its unique performance of advocacy services from a community-based perspective, CLSJ is a focal point for progressive activity.

From its earliest days, CLSJ has advocated for educational equity and meaningful parent, student and community involvement in New York City's public schools in both governance and curriculum development. Since our founding in 1986, CLSJ has trained hundreds of parents in how to navigate the constantly changing public school governance structures and how to be more effective advocates for their children. In fiscal year 2014, CLSJ's PACT program, along with the MEC Pipeline Initiative, sponsored workshops on "Special Education," "the Common Core," and "Schools Collaborating with Community Partners," along with a "Mothers' Day" and "Fathers' Day" programs.

CLSJ applauds this Committee and the other members of the Council for your interest in increasing diversity in New York public schools, including New York's eight specialized high schools. The need for increased diversity in New York City's public schools generally could not be greater. According to a report issued in March of this year by the UCLA's Center for Civil

Rights Remedies, "New York has the most segregated schools in the country."¹ Indeed, for several decades, New York's schools been more segregated for Black students than in any Southern state, although the South has a much higher percent of African American students.²

One of, if not, the main reason, for New York State's ranking is the abysmal record of the New York City public school system. New York City's public school system is both the largest school district in the United States, and one of its most segregated. Sixty percent of the Black public school students in New York State attend school in one of New York City's five boroughs, along with two-thirds of the state's Asian and Latino students, but only 10 percent of New York State's white students attend NYC public schools. New York City's charter schools are also highly segregated. In 2010, according to the UCLA report, 73 percent of New York's charter schools were considered "apartheid schools," because they had less than 1 percent white enrollment, and 90 percent were intensely segregated with less than 10% white population.³ Moreover, the NYC school district has a negative record regarding racial school segregation, and has been under a school desegregation agreement with the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) since the 1970s.

Resolution 453, which calls for official recognition by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) of the importance and benefits of diversity, is an important step towards increasing diversity in the city's public school system. Such a policy and the implementing processes for setting diversity as a priority are necessary when making decisions regarding admissions policies

¹ John Kucsera with Gary Orfield, *New York's State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and Damaged Future* (UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies March 2014) at p. vi. This report available on line at <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/news/press-releases/2014-pressrelease/new-york-schools-most-segregated-on-the-nation>.

² John Kucsera with Gary Orfield, *New York's State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and Damaged Future* (UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies March 2014) at p. iii.

³ John Kucsera with Gary Orfield, *New York's State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and Damaged Future* (UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies March 2014) at p. viii.

and practices, creating new schools, school rezoning, and other pertinent decisions. At the same time, requiring the DOE to annually report on the progress towards increased diversity within the public schools would help ensure that Resolution 453 was being adhered to. CLSJ, thus, supports the passage of both Resolution 453 and Proposed Intr. 511-A.

With respect to **Resolution 442**, CLSJ thinks this resolution needs to be strengthened, but believes it articulates an important step: calling upon the New York Legislature to pass and the Governor to then sign Senate Bill 7738 and Assembly Bill 9979. These bills would change the criteria for admission to New York City's specialized high schools. -- New York City currently has eight specialized high schools.⁴ Of these eight schools, the oldest three are Bronx Science, Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech. Under New York State law, admission to these three schools is governed by a section of the NYS Education Law that mandates admission be "solely and exclusively" determined by a student's rank-order scores on "a competitive and scholastic achievement examination."⁵ To this end, every Fall, the DOE administers a 2½ hour multiple choice exam, known as the Specialized High School Exam (SHSAT). The SHSAT has never been validated or studied to determine whether it predicts success in the specialized high school.

In 2012, CLSJ, along with the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, and LatinoJustice/PRLDEF, filed a discrimination complaint on behalf of a broad coalition of New York education, civil rights and social justice organizations with the federal Department of Education's OCR challenging the use of the SHSAT as the sole criteria for admission to the

⁴ The eight specialized high schools are: Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech, Brooklyn Latin School, the High School of Mathematics, Science, and Engineering at City College; the High School for American Studies at Lehman College; Queens High School for the Sciences at York College and Staten Island Technical High School.

⁵ N.Y. Education Law Section 2590-g(12) (1996).

specialized high schools.⁶ Our complaint alleged that admissions to the specialized high schools based solely on rank-ordered SHSAT scores violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations.⁷ In particular, we alleged that use of the test has had an unjustified racial disparate impact and other negative effects.

Black and Latino students make up the overwhelming majority of New York City's public school students. Reportedly, 40 percent of the NYC's public school students are Latino and 28 percent are Black. You would never know this from the demographics of the specialized high schools. Of the over 12,000, Black and Latino students who took the specialized high exam in the Fall of 2012, only 586 were offered admission to any of the schools. For example, of the 952 eighth graders who were offered admission to **Stuyvesant, merely 7 students were Black and 21 students were Latino.** Similarly, of the 968 eighth graders offered admission to **Bronx Science, only 18 students were Black and 50 were Latino.**

Yes, the criteria for admission to New York City's public specialized high schools need to be changed! New criteria are needed to increase diversity within those schools. Thus, CLSJ support the passage of 442 albeit with amendments. Resolution 442 should be stronger. As previously mentioned, under the challenged current NYS law, use of the specialized high school exam is only required for three of the eight specialized high schools. We, thus, urge that Resolution 442 be amended to call upon the Mayor and the DOE to immediately abolish use of the specialized high school test in the five other schools.

Thank you for raising and acting on this crucial issue, and for allowing CLSJ and others to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions.

⁶ The complainant organizations include the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, La Fuente, Make the Road New York, Alliance for Quality Education, New York Communities for Change, Black New Yorkers for Educational Excellence, Community Service Society of New York, Garifuna Coalition USA Inc., the Brooklyn Movement Center, UPROSE and DRUM - Desis Rising Up and Moving.

⁷ See 42 U.S.C. Section 2000d; 34 C.F.R. Section 100.3



**TESTIMONY BY JOSE PEREZ, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL
LATINOJUSTICE PRLDEF
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION OVERSIGHT HEARING
ON DIVERSITY IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Good Morning. My name is Jose Perez. I am the Deputy General Counsel and Legal Director of **LatinoJustice PRLDEF**. I thank the NYC Council Committee on Education, particularly Chairman Danny Dromm, and Council Members Brad Lander, Ritchie Torres, and Inez Barron for inviting LatinoJustice to participate in this morning's hearing on the current proposals before the Committee to address diversity in NYC's public schools.

LatinoJustice PRLDEF is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan legal defense fund that seeks to protect and advance the civil and constitutional rights of the *pan-Latino* community in the United States. The organization was originally known as the Puerto Rican Legal Defense & Education Fund when it was founded in New York City in 1972. Since then, our law reform impact litigation and related advocacy has advanced equality under the law to improve how Latinos are treated in U.S. society, to promote civic engagement, immigrants' rights, and equal opportunity in education, employment and housing. Our very first lawsuit shortly after opening our doors is the landmark *Aspira v. New York City Board of Education* case where we helped establish formal bilingual education in NYC. Since then, we have fought against the forced segregation of Latino school children in Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. More recently, we have intervened to address and fight against illegal attempts to deny Latino immigrant children and families the right to enroll in public schools locally in Long Island, and in places like Alabama.

In addition to forging pathways for success for Spanish-speaking children in public schools, our *Education Division* has over thirty years of experience of increasing the cadre of Latin@ law students, attorneys and community leaders. We have created a number of innovative ground-breaking pre-law pipeline programs over the years, including *Law Day* to encourage and facilitate law school recruitment of diverse applicants of color, *LAWBound*, and an affordable LSAT test preparation course, in addition to providing individual counselling and mentoring to thousands of pre-law students over the years.

Latinos as we all know, are the largest and most rapidly growing ethnic minority in the country. By 2025, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that one of every four students will be Latino, and that the U.S. Latino population will continue to increase. Latino youth are inextricably linked to this nation's future welfare.¹ However, academically, they lag dangerously far behind.²

Racial segregation in public schools is often assumed to be a problem solely found in the South. However, that long-held belief unfortunately is far from true. Today, NYC's schools are notoriously "amongst the most segregated in the nation."³ New York City must take action to make diversity in our schools one of its top priorities. We must focus on finding ways to live up to our designation as the nation's most diverse city – a "gorgeous mosaic" - where it is needed most- within the walls of our public schools.

This year, we marked the 60th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in which the U.S. Supreme Court stated that state laws establishing separate public schools for blacks and whites was unconstitutional.⁴ Despite this landmark decision decided on the cusp of the Civil Rights movement, New York continues to have the most non-diverse schools in the country.⁵

Our State and City legislators need to ensure diversity in NY's K to 12 public schools becomes a reality. Adopting the City Council's bill **Intro No. 511** and Resolutions 442 and 453 is a positive step towards a commitment to diversifying New York's public schools. Let us wake up to the realities of our current state of segregation in our City, and particularly its harmful effects on our school-aged children of color.

Years of neglect and misguided policies have created the current epidemic of school segregation that New York City is encountering. For decades, racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom has been consistently held to be a vital and compelling interest by parents, educators, and certain legislators.

According to a 2010 US Department of Education report, 93% of the public schools in The Bronx and 71% of the public schools in Kings County (Brooklyn) have less than 10% white students enrolled. This pattern in social segregation is unacceptable because it is harmful to all our students and to our higher learning academies.

A 2014 report by the UCLA Civil Rights Project supports the US DOE's initial findings. It states, "Black and Latino students in the *state* had the highest concentration of public schools with less than 10% white enrollment, the lowest exposure to white students, and the most uneven

¹ Gandara, Patricia and Frances Contreras, *The Latino Education Crisis: The Consequences of Failed Social Policies*, Harvard University Press (2009) at 17

² . Id.

³ Kucsera, John, and Gary Orfield. "New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and a Damaged Future." (2014).

⁴ *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

⁵ Kucsera, John, and Gary Orfield. "New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and a Damaged Future." (2014).

distribution with white students across schools.”⁶ This is simultaneously reflected mirrored in New York City’s public schools.

Racial and economic diversity have been proven to improve educational achievement and life opportunities of minority and low-income children systemically. Yet New York lags far behind in providing access to equal and adequate educational opportunities to all of its students. Research confirms that Black and Latino students perform better on tests in schools that are diverse, while school diversity has no negative impact on the test scores of white students.⁷ In other words, classroom diversity will benefit all students and encourage integration of cultures and experiences in a way in which no other outlet can achieve.

Latino Justice PRLDEF strongly supports the three items on today’s hearing agenda:

(1) **Intro No. 511**, sponsored by Councilman Brad Lander, requires the City Department of Education to issue an annual report on school diversity. This bill would require that the Department of Education provide demographic data by school, district, and citywide; it will ensure greater transparency through providing essential information to evaluate issues of segregation and enables the DOE to establish steps necessary to address the issue of segregation in our public schools. This disclosure bill includes an oversight provision and will serve to lessen the education gap and prevent segregation in our public schools from taking deeper root.

(2) **Resolution #442** co-sponsored by Councilman Ritchie Torres & Brad Lander, calls upon the Department of Education to collect demographic and other data on pupils in the City’s schools. It asks the City Department of Education to establish a critical policy that recognizes the importance and benefits of classroom diversity when making decisions about admissions and to create strategies for more diverse schools. This Resolution provides the DOE with a stepladder so that it may begin to emphasize the importance of classroom diversity when promulgating future admissions standards and rules for New York public schools, and,

(3) **Resolution #453**, sponsored by Councilmember Inez Barron to support New York State Legislative Bill A9979 on reforming the admissions process in NYC’s elite specialized high schools. For the past twenty years, there has been a steady decline in the number of Black and Latino students admitted to NYC’s three “elite” specialized high schools - Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, and Stuyvesant.⁸ The current admissions process depends on a single test in order to be granted admission. This type of “high stakes testing” forces our young people and their families to expend significant out of pocket resources for expensive after-school tutoring and exam preparation classes in order to score a sufficiently high grade needed to gain admission into these “elite” schools. The use of the SHSAT has had a disparate impact on New York’s students of color.

⁶ Kucsera, John, and Gary Orfield. “New York State’s Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and a Damaged Future.” (2014).

⁷ Press Release, City Council of New York, October 19, 2014.

⁸ Inez Barron, Press Release, Council of City of New York, October 19, 2014.

While the City's Black and Latino student population is approximately 70%, only 11% of those students are entering these specialized high schools.⁹ Why is that?

Resolution #453 which supports **A9979** because the legislation would amend NYS's education law's Hecht-Calandra Act, to require the use of *multiple factors in admissions* to the City's specialized high schools. Multiple measures include assessing a student's GPA, attendance levels, school test scores, state test scores using a test that has been validated as an accurate barometer of academic success – with the specialized high school admissions score given less dominant weight.

In other words, admissions to our specialized high schools would be based on a more holistic approach and be more consistent with the best practices of colleges and universities across the country.

Therefore, **LatinoJustice PRLDEF** urges the following steps be immediately taken to facilitate the dismantling of the current barriers to social justice and educational opportunities that hurt the City's most vulnerable populations.

First, pass these two resolutions and **Intro No. 511** as a beginning point to our commitment to diversity, fairness and equal opportunity in the City's public education system.

Second, while **A9979** is pending in the State legislature, we urge the Chancellor of the NYC Board of Education to immediately begin implementing *pilot proposals* that would incorporate the use of multiple factors in admissions to the five (5) specialized high schools *not* governed by the Hecht-Calandra Act. We have already met with the chancellor's staff and offered to participate in the dialogue and creation of alternative approaches.

Third, **LatinoJustice PRLDEF**, along with our sister civil rights groups, the **NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund** and **The Center for Law & Social Justice**, demand that the City's use of specialized high school examinations be properly validated and certified as reasonably educationally predictive in its screening of qualified student candidates.

In closing, I thank you for your attention and support.



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⁹ Id.



LatinoJustice PRLDEF, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College File Complaint Challenging Admissions Process at NYC Public Specialized High Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 27, 2012

CONTACT: John Garcia, Director of Communications, 212-739-7513, 917-673-9095 or jgarcia@latinojustice.org.

NYCDOE Never Validated Test; Blacks and Latinos Excluded from Elite Schools

LatinoJustice PRLDEF, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF), and The Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College filed a federal civil rights complaint on behalf of a broad coalition of New York education, civil rights and social justice organizations challenging the admissions process at New York City's elite public "Specialized High Schools".

The complainant organizations include the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, La Fuente, Make the Road New York, Alliance for Quality Education, New York Communities for Change, Black New Yorkers for Educational Excellence, Community Service Society of New York, Garifuna Coalition, USA Inc., DRUM- Desis Rising Up and Moving, the Brooklyn Movement Center and UPROSE.

Admission to these eight schools is based solely on students' rank-ordered scores on a 2.5 hour multiple choice test called the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT). No other indicators of academic merit are considered in admissions decisions. Students who have stellar grades and other academic achievements may often be denied admission, including several thousand African-American and Latino students.

The impact is particularly severe at Stuyvesant and Bronx Science—two of the Specialized High Schools that serve the largest numbers of students, have the longest track records of educational excellence, and are the among the most popular among test-takers. For example, of the 967 eighth-grade students offered admission to Stuyvesant for the 2012-13 school year, just 19 (2%) of the students are African American and 32 (3.3%) are Latino.

The complaint, filed with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights—the agency's civil rights enforcement arm—alleges that the New York City Department of Education and New York State Department of Education have never conducted a study

to determine whether the test is a valid tool; in other words, it cannot ensure that there is any relationship between students' test results and learning standards in the Specialized High Schools.

"Without a predictive validity study, there is no way that the NYCDOE can know whether the test provides useful information," said Damon Hewitt, Director of the Education Practice Group at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. "And education experts agree that using a test as the only factor to make a high stakes decision is bad educational policy. It also defies common sense. Even elite institutions like Harvard do not misuse tests in this way."

Jose L. Perez, Associate General Counsel of LatinoJustice PRLDEF added, "The New York City and State Departments of Education should follow the trend of other elite high school and colleges throughout the nation that consider multiple factors, including grades, and even geography. At the very least, the Specialized High Schools admissions policy should give all students of a fair chance to demonstrate their academic merit."

In addition to the impact on African-American and Latino students, the current policy harms many Asian students, as well. Monami Maulik, Executive Director of DRUM, said "Low-income South Asian students are also excluded from access to the NYC Specialized Schools. In particular, thousands of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Nepali students are grossly under-represented due to solely test score based admissions that marginalize young people from often under-resourced NYC public schools. Although these students fall under the 'Asian-American' category, they are one of many low-income Asian student groups who are not being admitted in any adequate numbers."

"Diversity of backgrounds and perspectives has always been New York City's and the United State's strength, added Lucía Gómez-Jiminéz, Executive Director of LaFuente. "The key pathways to opportunity in our society, such as those provided by the Specialized High Schools, must be open and accessible to good students from all communities. Ensuring all young people a fair shot to succeed is in everyone's interest."

Although state law requires a test-only admissions policy for three of the high schools, the current NYCDOE administration decided to designate an additional five schools as test-only schools. The text of the complaint, appendices and statements of support from other organizations, experts and notable individuals are available at www.naacplfd.org.

LatinoJustice PRLDEF, established in 1972, has won landmark civil rights cases in education, housing, voting, migrant, immigrant, employment and other civil rights. Through the efforts of LatinoJustice PRLDEF, Latino voters have been critical players in ensuring fair and bilingual election systems and fair redistricting opportunities for the nation's largest minority.

Admissions Figures at NYC's Specialized High Schools Show Persistence of Acute Racial Disparities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 14, 2014

CONTACT: John Garcia, Director of Communications, 212-739-7513, 917-673-9095 or igarcia@latinojustice.org.

During a time when the racial composition of the student composition in the city's public schools continues to receive public scrutiny, the number of black and Hispanic students being admitted to NYC's most selective high schools continues to decrease. The admission numbers to NYC's elite eight specialized high schools announced today by the NYC Department of Education today represent the continuation of the City's trend of unfairness and acute racial disparities in admissions to NYC's eight Specialized High Schools that has been going on for many years. The percentage of African-American test-takers offered admission (only 5%) and the percentage for Hispanic students (7%) is worse than most of the past few years.

Of the 5,096 students accepted to the city's eight specialized high schools this year, 350 were Hispanic, according to data the NYC Department of Education released today, the day that eighth-graders learned their high school placement. Last year, these specialized high schools accepted 375 Hispanic students, continuing a trend of declining admissions in recent years.

The sharpest declines came at the city's most selective schools. Out of 952 students accepted to ultra-elite Stuyvesant High School, just 7 are black and 21 are Hispanic. Last year, the school accepted 33 total black and Hispanic students. At the Bronx High School of Science, only 18 blacks, and 50 Latinos were accepted out of 968 students. In 2012-13, 25 Blacks and 54 Latinos were offered admission.

The continuing decline reflects the impact of the City's reliance on a standardized admissions test that is the single determinant of whether students can attend these specialized schools. As the civil rights complaint filed by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, and the Medgar Evers Center for Law and Social Justice with the U.S. Department of Education in September 2012 sets forth,

New Yorkers will not see a reversal of this trend until the schools' admissions policy changes once and for all. Meaningful change will not occur under the current system -- the exclusive use of a rank-order score on a single multiple-choice exam. In order to ensure fairness, this system must be replaced with a multiple measures approach, which allows for a broader definition of merit that reflects students hard work, demonstrated knowledge and potential.

“The continued decreasing number of Latino students being admitted to NYC’s elite specialized high schools given the large percentage of Latino students enrolled in our public schools is a fervent reminder that much remains to be done to level the playing field”, said Jose Perez, Deputy General Counsel of LatinoJustice PRLDEF. “There needs to be a concerted effort by all concerned to increase enrollment of black and Latino students in these schools.”

"Relying on a single test for admission while excluding multiple measures of student knowledge and potential -- middle school grades, class rank, scores on state-mandated exams, and other factors -- is a distortion and subversion of the meaning of merit," said Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. a separate entity from the NAACP.

“Obviously, there needs to be serious changes made to the one shot admission process that negatively impacts the enrollment of Black and Latino students in these schools,” said Esmeralda Simmons, Executive Director of the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, CUNY.

Assemblyman Karim Camara, chairman of the state Assembly’s Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Caucus and State Senator Adriano Espaillat have proposed state legislation that would require specialized schools to base admissions on multiple measurements, the central demand of a civil rights complaint filed in September 2012. The complaint, which the federal Office of Civil Rights is considering, says admission to the schools would be more fair if students’ grades, teacher recommendations, extracurricular activities, and life experiences were considered.

For purposes of comparison, the appendices to the joint complaint contain data for the 2011, 2010, 2009 and 2008 test results. http://www.naacpldf.org/files/case_issue/All%20Appendices.pdf

Lazar Treschan
Director of Youth Policy
Community Service Society of New York

Testimony to the Committee on Education
of the Council of the City of New York
December 11, 2014

Issue: Proposed Int. No. 511-A - In relation to requiring the department of education report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within schools, including but not limited to, data within charter schools and special programs.

Res. No. 442 - Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.7738/ A.9979, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

Res. No. 453 - Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

Oversight: Diversity in New York City Schools

Recommendation: *Revise the Specialized High School admissions process to better reflect merit and student achievement .*

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about diversity in New York City schools. My name is Lazar Treschan and I am the Director of Youth Policy for the Community Service Society of New York (CSS), an organization that conducts research and advocacy to advance public policy for low-income New Yorkers. We are strongly supportive of all the Council actions being put forth today. I will start by framing my comments with research on school segregation, then turn to the issue that CSS has been working on: how to make the admissions process at specialized high schools fairer, and a better reflection of merit and achievement.

We are glad to see the Council considering issues of diversity in our schools. In a major study released earlier this fall, UCLA Professor and leading civil rights educator Gary Orfield documents the obscene levels of segregation in our schools. Orfield calls New York City the “epicenter of educational segregation for the nation” and notes that recent reforms focusing on school choice and charter schools have only replicated and even intensified neighborhood segregation, stratifying students by race and class. This is true despite the clearly documented benefits of diverse school environments, which include higher academic achievement, future earnings, and even health outcomes, not to mention the social gains from exposure to learning and working alongside different groups.

My testimony today will focus on the lack of fairness (and resulting lack of diversity—not the other way around) at those public institutions which have the potential to serve as the greatest equalizers within our K-12 system, the Specialized High Schools. Each year nearly 30,000 thousand eight graders spend two and a half hours on a multiple choice exam known as the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT); their scores will be the sole determinant of admission to the eight of the best public high schools in New York City. The use of a single, unvalidated test for the Specialized High Schools, which at first glance may appear to be objective, actually ignores true merit. Students’ hard-earned grades, state test scores (about which schools have completely focused their efforts), awards and honors throughout years of middle school are irrelevant in the admissions process, as none of these factors are considered.

CSS has recently obtained data from the NYCDOE that allows an outside organization, for the first time, to examine results of the Specialized High Schools Admission test. We are not ready to release our findings, but our early analysis confirms what we had believed: the SHSAT simply bears little relation to middle school achievement. Why is this a problem? Because it

appears that working hard in middle school, and performing well on both in-school grades, and statewide exams, does little to predict whether you can get into a Specialized High School. In fact, most of the determinations of who will get into these high schools can be seen by screening that happens in 4th grade. It's not that the lack of diversity at these schools is unfair—it's that the lack of fairness is creating a lack of diversity.

Performance on the SHSAT is determined by the resources of families who can get their kids to pass tests that are outside the school system. Essentially, what we are telling our students—work hard, get good grades, and perform well on state exams and you will get an equal chance to succeed—is simply a myth. We are perpetrating a fantasy. The SHSAT exists as an end-around for the families that have the resources to enable their students to do extra work to pass it. And that is simply unfair.

The SHSAT-only admissions policy fuels an increasing inequality, as black and Latino students who take the test in large numbers continue to lose ground in admission. This year only about 4% of black applicants and less than 7% of Latino applicants were granted admission to any of the Specialized High Schools. As a result, the schools do not reflect the broad, rich diversity of the New York—where three-quarters of public school students are black or Latino. Stuyvesant offered admission to only seven black students out of an incoming class of nearly 1,000. It is impossible that there could be so few bright, intelligent black eighth graders in the city. The single-test admissions policy is also unfair to many hard-working and deserving white and Asian-American students. In fact, many leading Asian-American organizations have vocally supported the call for change.

The NYC Department of Education is an outlier, as the only school district in the country that uses a test as a sole criterion for admission to its best high schools. While all standardized

tests can be gamed and studied, the SHSAT is especially unfair because it is not aligned with the curriculum students are expected to learn in middle school. As a result, students who can afford expensive private prep classes enjoy a major advantage. What's more, the city has now admitted that it has no proof that the SHSAT measures anything close to merit, nor has it ever explained or tried to study what the test does measure at all. Yet, parents are told each year that whoever gets the highest scores on this exam must be the smartest. To the contrary, as one expert has found, the test scores of thousands of students who are denied admission to these elite schools are statistically indistinguishable from those who are granted admission.

If the city must use a single test, it should use one of the existing, validated, state exams that all students in middle school already take, and for which every student receives preparation for in their school.

It is the very arbitrariness of this policy and its discriminatory results, cloaked in a false shroud of "merit", that has parents so riled up and has led to a federal civil rights investigation into the matter.

The time has come to change this backwards admissions policy, to end the myth about merit, and to challenge the notion that the Specialized High Schools would somehow be less elite if they employed assessment mechanisms that most other top high schools in the country use.

The mayor has already signaled that he wants to make a change. He should start by announcing reforms to the admissions policy for the five newest Specialized High Schools forced to follow the test-only admissions policy by fiat of the Bloomberg administration. Mayoral control of schools means that with the stroke of a pen he could lift the test-only designation at these schools and adopt a new policy immediately.

In addition, the mayor should join the Council, the UFT, parents, students, education experts and community advocates in actively pushing for legislative change to create a fair admissions policy for the three oldest Specialized High Schools – Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech—, which are required to use the test-only admissions policy under a dubious 1970’s state law enacted to stifle calls for greater diversity.

The city’s new leadership should convene community leaders and educational experts to study and provide recommendations on how to make admissions into Specialized High Schools fairer, more inclusive and based on an honest definition of merit. I cannot stress enough that this must be based on evidence and data, instead of the ideological, emotional, and theory-based discussions that currently dominate. CSS has recently obtained data on SHSAT scores and is comparing them to middle school performance. Our early analysis leads us to believe that we can show how the current exam does nothing to actually measure the merit of New York City students. There appear to be much easier, fairer, and objective ways – including using exams – to determine specialized high school admissions.

The SHSAT-only admissions policy is an arbitrary device that denies many gifted students access to an exemplary educational experience. New York City must do better because its students deserve better.

Last year CSS and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund co-authored a recently published report, The Meaning of Merit: Alternatives for Determining Admission to New York City’s Specialized High Schools.

**Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
New York City Council Education Committee,
Thursday, December 11, 2014**

Testimony by: Zeshan Gondal, Senior, Brooklyn Technical High School

My name is Zeshan Gondal and I am a senior at Brooklyn Tech HS. I am part of a working class family from Bensonhurst and I qualify for free lunch. In middle school, my local Neighborhood Improvement Association gave out free SHSAT test prep books to students who were interested. I studied on my own using that book, learning the format of the test and basic techniques; we couldn't afford test prep.

Ultimately, I scored well enough and making the choice to go to Brooklyn Tech was probably the best decision I ever made. I have had the opportunity to take and succeed at courses that are part of the specialized high school experience. Every single AP course is offered at Tech, and the students use that opportunity – Tech students take the most AP exams out of any school in the nation.

There are no remedial math or English classes, and I'm in classes as diverse as anthropology and sociology. I am one of the first students to take the new AP Cambridge Capstone Research course. I can even choose courses beyond the AP level, like multivariable calculus, which is the third level of calculus in college math classes.

One of my closest friends went to private school before deciding to come to Brooklyn Tech. He tells me that if he had stayed in private school, he would never have been exposed to those outside the rich, white population in his private school. Not only is our curriculum diverse but our student body is very diverse. We have students of every ethnicity in our school. As a student and member of the championship track team, I have the privilege of interacting with

teammates of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds each and every day, students who earned admission through their individual merit, not income or race or connections.

It is clear that students who get in based on the test are prepared to handle the academic rigor of these schools.

Diversity is a virtuous cause, but this isn't about racism. This isn't about politics either, it's about education. For over 40 years, the SHSAT has served as an objective and unbiased way for students of all backgrounds to receive a world-class education. There is no reason to rush for a diversity solution at the expense of logic.

I urge the Council to oppose resolution 442.

**Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
New York City Council Education Committee,
Thursday, December 11, 2014**

Testimony by: Horace Davis, Secretary – Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation; Founder and President of the Caribbean American Society of New York

My name is Horace Davis. I am alumnus of Brooklyn Tech, and secretary of the Alumni Foundation. I am honored to participate in this discussion about the specialized high school admissions test. I believe strongly that eliminating the test absolves us of our responsibility to address where we are currently failing our black and Latino students. My admission to Brooklyn Tech through the Discovery Program and the success I achieved there was a direct result quality of education I received at PS 181 and Walt Whitman Junior High School.

At Brooklyn Tech I majored in electrical engineering. After graduating from Brooklyn Tech in 1984, I attended Lafayette College in Easton Pennsylvania on a football scholarship. At the beginning of my freshman year, my academic advisor, informed me I would need to make a choice between football and engineering as he did not believe I could successfully pursue both; This pronouncement from my advisor was devastating – I was dependent on my football scholarship to finance my education and was committed to pursuing my dream. The strength of my academic preparation gave me the confidence to know I could succeed at both football and school. In 1988, of the more than twenty freshmen who started in the engineering program and played football at Lafayette, I was the only one who graduated with a BS in engineering and played four years of varsity football, which culminated in my participation in the NFL draft, and an invitation to try out with the Pittsburg Steelers. I am immensely proud of my accomplishments as a student athlete and fully recognize those achievements would not have been possible without the preparation I received at Brooklyn Tech.

The under-representation of black and Latino students in NYC's specialized high schools is a complex issue, one that cannot and should not be resolved by the politically expedient elimination of the SHSAT. Subjective admissions criteria will lead to bias, favoritism and possibly worse. It is my opinion that we should direct our efforts toward improving the quality of the elementary and middle schools in black and Hispanic communities.

Over the past three decades I have been involved with numerous organizations committed to helping children in the black and Latino communities achieve their dreams. I am a member of The National Society of Black Engineers, the American Association of Blacks in Energy and the Founder and President of the Caribbean American Society of New York. These organizations alone cannot address the fundamental issues with the deterioration in our elementary and middle school education. But, working together, we can address this issue in a thoughtful and constructive manner.

I look forward to your questions.

**Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
New York City Council Education Committee,
Thursday, December 11, 2014**

Testimony by: Elissa Stein, Co-President, PTA – Brooklyn Technical High School

Good morning all. I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today.

My name is Elissa Stein. My daughter is a junior at Brooklyn Technical High School. I'm currently co-president of Tech's PTA. I also have a son who's in 8th grade. He turned in his high school application last week and took the specialized high school test in October so we've been living the high school admissions process in real time this fall.

While race has been at the forefront of many heartfelt conversations these days it isn't, and shouldn't be the center of every issue. And New York City students shouldn't be penalized by the City Council, NYC Department of Education and, potentially, the New York State legislature for making it into an issue when it isn't one.

As this debate about the specialized high schools has been unfolding, I've been frustrated when people call the test or the admissions process racist.

Admission is based solely on the results of a single test made up of 100 questions, 50 math and 50 verbal.

Earning a seat is based solely on merit. Color, race, gender, sexual preferences, family income levels, neighborhood, borough, native country, aren't part of the process.

The test is biased though -- biased towards kids who work hard to understand and learn content that's not necessarily taught in schools. Content like scrambled paragraphs, where kids are given five sentences they have to reconstruct in logical order. That ability to read, to comprehend, and to interpret is just the kind of critical thinking and problem solving ability that I've heard the principal at Tech say that he and his teachers work to instill in their students. Those kids, who have dedicated and challenged themselves above and beyond their regular school workloads, should have the opportunity to earn seats at these rigorous specialized schools, as students have done for decades.

The issue shouldn't be about race. And it shouldn't be about changing the test or the admissions policy as a cover up for bigger challenges in our educational system, which doesn't serve all students equally. The issue is working with elementary and middle schools, which currently don't have many kids on the specialized path to help them improve their test scores and level of academic achievement. It's educating all NYC families and communities early enough in the process so students have plenty of time to prepare. It's providing test prep and resources for kids who otherwise wouldn't have them.

In the end it's not about the test. Or admissions criteria. This is a bigger conversation about giving every single kid in NYC the opportunity to soar no matter who they are.

**Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
New York City Council Education Committee,
Chaired by Council Member Daniel Dromm
Thursday, December 11, 2014**

**Testimony by: Larry Cary
President, Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation
Chairperson, Coalition of Specialized High School Alumni Organizations**

Res No. 442 - OPPOSE

Testimony of Larry Cary

Good Afternoon Councilman Dromm, I know how passionate you are about these issues, as I am, and I sincerely and respectfully thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I am President of the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation. I am also Chairperson of an alumni coalition representing 120,000 graduates. We oppose Resolution 442 because we believe in diversity, fairness and merit

There are a number of documents attached to my written testimony previously provided the committee, which I will refer to; they should be part of the record.¹

¹ Annexed as Exhibit A is the action plan of the Coalition of Specialized High Schools Alumni Organizations for improving the education at the schools serving underrepresented communities, leveling the playing field when it comes to test prep, providing free test pre and fully funding DREAM and reconfiguring and mandating the Discovery Program. promoting leveling the playing field Annexed as Exhibit B is the December 2, 2014, letter sent by the Coalition to the Speaker and the other members of the City Council explaining our opposition to Resoultion 442. Annexed as Exhibit C diversity not more at the formerly specialized schools.

Annexed to my written testimony as Exhibit C is a copy of *Maintaining Rigor, Defending Merit and Promoting Diversity at NYC's Specialized Schools*, which was issued this past summer by the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation. It details the value of these specialized schools, the root causes for the demographic results of the SHSAT as well as other significant contributors to the problem.

(continued next page)

One of them is our proposed action plan for improving diversity. It could be adopted by the City without changing state law.

We have 1900 Latino and African American students currently attending the specialized schools. By putting resources into improving schools serving the African American and Latino communities, by lengthening the time the test is administered, by funding free test prep for every student who wants it, by increasing funding for the DREAM program, and by reconfiguring the Discovery Program and mandating its use, additional numbers of students from these underrepresented communities would be admitted.

The supported legislation, if adopted, will likely result in less diversity, not more. A white student seeking admission to the top performing schools currently using multiple criteria is about twice as likely to be admitted, as he or she would be to the schools using the test. The majority of students at our schools are from Asian American families, most of them poor and like the students attending our schools from other communities, they are likely to be from first and second generation American families.

The test does not permit bias, favoritism or fraud in the decision to admit a student. By contrast, according to an audit report by the City Comptroller, at 80% of the audited multiple criteria screened schools “the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of student rankings, favoritism, or fraud” in the process could not be ruled out.

Resolution 442 supports a seriously flawed bill. It radically changes the current system and opens the door to unknown risks. A child’s academic ability could be considered by the DOE to be far less significant than the combined weight of other, more subjective criteria, which the DOE is permitted under the

(continued from previous page) Annexed as Exhibit D is the City Comptroller’s June 13, 2013 *Management Audit Report on the New York City Department of Education’s High School Application Process for Screened Programs*, which concludes that in the audited high schools using the types of multiple criteria supported by Resolution 442 the Comptroller could not rule out “the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of students rankings, favoritism, or fraud” in the process.

bill to include in the admissions rubric. Standardized test performance, good attendance, letters of recommendation, performance on an interview or an evaluation of a student's extracurricular activities or participation in sports and other factors could outweigh the child's score on the test.

The underrepresentation of African American and Latino children in the specialized schools is an indictment of our segregated school system which offers unequal educational opportunities based on where a student lives. The answer is to aggressively upgrade those opportunities for our top performing students from every neighborhood so the specialized and other well performing schools better reflect the population of our city.

Please reject Resolution 442.

Coalition of Specialized High Schools Alumni Organizations

Representing the interests of the past, present and future students of The Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, Stuyvesant High School, Brooklyn Latin School, High School for Math, Science & Engineering at City College, High School for American Studies at Lehman College, Queens High School of the Sciences at York College and Staten Island Technical High School

COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN FOR PROMOTING DIVERSITY AT NEW YORK CITY'S SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOLS

December 2014

The Coalition of Specialized High Schools Alumni Organizations, representing 120,000 graduates of New York City specialized high schools, believes in the importance of a specialized high school education and wants to ensure that it is preserved for future generations. The Coalition also values diversity and strongly believes that much can – and should – be done to increase diversity in these schools. However, proposed state legislation to replace the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) with multiple subjective criteria will not achieve this goal and, in fact, could lead to less, not more, diversity at the specialized high schools.

Instead, the Coalition proposes a comprehensive, long-term approach to addressing diversity at the specialized high schools through the creation and implementation of a multi-pronged action plan by the New York City Department of Education. This action plan – which would not require state legislation and focuses on the root causes of this lack of diversity – proposes:

GOAL: Decrease the demographic achievement gap through long term solutions.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

- Create enrichment classes beginning in first grade in elementary schools serving underrepresented communities (focusing on those without Gifted & Talented programs).
- Create enrichment classes in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades to create feeder middle schools in these underrepresented communities.
- In historically underrepresented communities, identify those students scoring at or near above grade level on the sixth and seventh grade assessment tests and enroll them in enriched classes at their middle schools, which will enable them to do well on the specialized test.

GOAL: Revise testing procedures and “level the playing field” regarding test prep through immediate solutions.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

- Add a half-hour to the time allowed for the test. This simple, no-cost change will greatly level the playing field for test takers who have not taken test prep, because it will allow them the needed time to better familiarize themselves with the format and answer all of the questions.
- Offer a PSHSAT – a Practice Specialized High School Admissions Test – administered in the seventh grade. After grading, students could be offered advice about what to study and how to prepare to score high enough on the SHSAT to be

admitted. (Note: The potential cost would be equal to one extra administration of the exam.)

- Provide free test prep for any student who wants it in New York City. Today, more students want to participate in the DOE's DREAM test prep program than there are seats. It is bad public policy to allocate available seats based on a lottery, as is currently being done, and thereby deny thousands of youth the opportunity to get the best possible education available in our schools. (Note: The potential estimated cost is about \$1K to \$2K per additional student for test prep; and about \$10K estimated per student for DREAM participation.)
- The DOE should issue an RFP to enable vendors to bid on contracts to provide free test prep in schools serving underrepresented communities, in order to correct for the lack of quality test prep schools being geographically located within these communities. (Note: The potential cost about \$1K per student.)

GOAL: Reinstitute and reconfigure the Discovery Program as an intermediate solution.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

- The Discovery Program has fallen into disuse. It was intended to promote diversity by creating an alternative pathway for admission of "disadvantaged" test takers just missing the cutoff score by providing advanced summer school course work in order to be prepared for the curriculum at the specialized high school. The DOE should mandate its use at Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, Staten Island Tech and Stuyvesant and, as was originally the case, allow students accepted to a specialized school to participate in Discovery and "bump up" into the school where they had missed the cut-off. This will feed more underrepresented students into Stuyvesant and Bronx Science.
- Redefine "disadvantaged" to better load eligibility from underrepresented communities. For example, this could mean that "disadvantaged" could be defined – for the purposes of Discovery – as coming from a middle school with a low percentage of above-grade level scores on state assessment tests. (Note: Currently, 15% of middle schools account for 85% of the students at the specialized high schools.) This change would promote both ethnic and geographic diversity.

CONCLUSION:

While state legislation to scrap the SHSAT and substitute other criteria is well-intentioned, it represents a flawed, short term approach to a challenging issue and will ultimately prove ineffective. We absolutely agree that diversity at New York City's specialized high schools must be addressed, but are confident that proactive, long lasting solutions can be achieved by the City and the Department of Education without changing state law. Careful thought must be used to consider the underlying reasons for the disparities before changes are made to an admissions process that for generations has created the foundation for these exceptional schools. We look forward to working with City and State policy makers and elected officials on our above-detailed action plan to ensure that all New York City school children have access to the high-quality educational opportunities they deserve.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Joni Yoswein / Leticia Theodore-Greene
Yoswein New York
212-233-5700

Exhibit "B" 1

COALITION OF SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ORGANIZATIONS

Representing the interests of the past, present and future students of
The Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, Stuyvesant High School,
Brooklyn Latin School, High School for Math, Science & Engineering at City College,
High School for American Studies at Lehman College, Queens High School for the Sciences at York College and
Staten Island Technical High School

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS
OF THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
URGING SUPPORT FOR DIVERSITY BY VOTING "NO" ON RES. 442,
WHICH SEEKS TO ELIMINATE THE USE OF THE SPECIALIZED
HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEST

December 1, 2014

VIA E-MAIL and REGULAR MAIL

The Honorable Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker, The New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1856
New York, NY 10007

Re: Opposing Res. 442 in support of NYS S.7738/A.9979, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools

Dear Speaker Mark-Viverito:

We write on behalf of the 120,000 graduates represented by the Coalition of Specialized High School Alumni Organizations to urge you and the City Council to vote "no" on Res. 442. As alumni, we are interested in this issue because we believe in the importance of a specialized high school education and want to ensure that it is preserved for those who come after us. We also value diversity and believe that much can, and should, be done to improve it at the specialized high schools – in fact, we have proposed a number of proactive, achievable measures below – but passing Res. 442 will do nothing to promote this goal. Instead, elimination of the test will likely lead to less diversity, not more, at these schools.

MULTIPLE CRITERIA DO NOT GUARANTEE DIVERSITY

The New York Daily News recently said eliminating the test and adopting multiple criteria similar to that which is currently used at over 100 NYC high schools risks making the specialized schools less diverse. Objective statistics demonstrate that the academically best performing schools using multiple criteria are "whiter and wealthier" than the collective student bodies at the specialized test-in schools. "On the racial scale, while 15% of the city's eighth graders are white, enrollment in the multiple-measure schools is 40% white, compared with 24% at the test-in schools." (NY Daily News, 10/27/14)

The student body at the eight specialized high schools using the test is 76% minority and over half come from a family qualifying under federal anti-poverty guidelines for free or subsidized lunch. By contrast, the student body of the eight best achieving high schools in New York City using multiple admissions criteria is only 60% minority and only about a third of the student body qualifies for free or subsidized lunch. For example, the student bodies of Eleanor Roosevelt, Beacon and Bard Manhattan high schools are respectively 62%, 48% and 47% white.

Another example of the specialized test promoting diversity can be seen by comparing the demographics of the student bodies of the only two NYC public high schools offering students an International Baccalaureate, considered one of the world's most challenging high school curriculums. Brooklyn Latin uses the specialized test to decide admissions. The International Baccalaureate School for Global Education ("IBSGE") uses multiple criteria. The student bodies of both schools are 45% Asian American. But African American enrollment is markedly different. At Brooklyn Latin, where students are admitted based solely on their performance on the specialized test, 25% of the student body is African American. By contrast, at IBSGE only 2% of the student body is African American. (At Brooklyn Latin 12% of the student body is white, while 32% of the student body at IBSGE is white.)

Use of the specialized test as the sole criteria for admissions prevents favoritism, bias or worse in the admissions process. By contrast, according to a recent City Comptroller's audit of high schools using multiple criteria "the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of the student ranking, favoritism or fraud" could not be ruled out. Moreover, the audited schools didn't bother to rank a third of applicants. This means thousands of the students applying to these schools never had a chance to be considered for admission. Current DOE guidance still does not require that all applicants be ranked for admissions consideration. There is little transparency in the ranking process used when multiple measures are employed and schools using multiple criteria can manipulate the process to exclude the students they don't like and admit the students they do like. (See http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/MH12_053A.pdf)

We hope that you and your colleagues, before voting on this resolution, will consider that promoting diversity at the specialized schools is extremely complex and not given to simplistic solutions like elimination of the test. For example:

- The demographic result of the test reflects the demographic achievement gap produced by inadequate educational opportunities at the schools serving the African American and Latino communities. Only about 3% of African American and Latino students scored above grade level on last year's seventh grade math assessment test compare to 31% and 22% of Asian American and white students, respectively. Eliminating the test does nothing to close this achievement gap. Using the assessment scores in its stead, as supported by Res. 442, will not change the demographic outcome.

- The state legislation supported by Res. 442 requires that attendance be used as admissions criteria even though it will unfairly discriminate against Latino and African American applicants who miss school more often than other groups because of their higher rates of asthma.
- The proposed state legislation would require that an applicant's score on the state mandated assessment tests be used as admissions criteria even though such use is currently illegal under state law.

For ninety years the oldest specialized high schools, Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech and Stuyvesant, have served as exceptionally rigorous educational gateways for generations of poor immigrant children to get into good colleges and move into the middle class. In the post WWII period, these schools were filled with children from Jewish families fleeing the Holocaust and war-ravaged Europe. Thirty years ago large numbers of students in these schools came from families emigrating from the Caribbean and from Central and South America. Today, many of the children in these schools come from families emigrating from the Far East, Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. As the demographic character of the immigrant populations in our city has changed, so too has the demographic result of the test.

SO WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

To be sure, the current demographic result of the test reflects more than changes to the immigrant population in our city. The lack of gifted and talented programs and enriched math classes in the schools serving the Latino and African American communities plays a significant role in limiting the numbers of students from these communities who do well enough on the test to be admitted. Real attention must be paid by the Department of Education to correcting the unequal educational opportunities that exist in the elementary and middle schools of these communities. Today 85% of the enrollment of the specialized high schools comes from only 15% of the city's middle schools. The real battle for increasing the diversity of the specialized high schools must be fought at the middle school level. Feeder middle schools need to be created in the African American and Latino communities to boost their enrollment.

The Department of Education does not run gifted and talented programs in the African American and Latino communities when there is an insufficient number of qualifying students to fill a class. When too few students qualifying for gifted and talented exist, the DOE should provide an enrichment class which includes those students identified as gifted and talented as well as other students demonstrating superior ability. Differential teaching techniques should be used in these classes to maximize each student's educational development.

While these efforts will produce lasting results because they focus on the root causes of the underrepresentation of African American and Latino students at the specialized high schools, more immediate efforts can and should also be undertaken. For example:

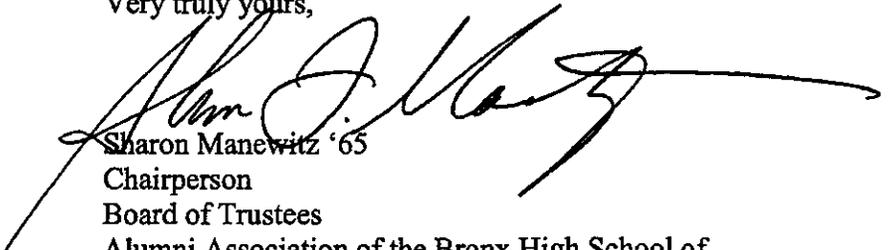
- Add a half-hour to the time allowed for the test in order to limit the impact of test prep. This simple no-cost change will greatly level the playing field for test takers not taking test prep because it will allow them the time needed to answer all of the questions on the test.
- Offer a PSHSAT – a Practice Specialized High School Admissions Test – administered in the seventh grade. When graded, advice about what to study and where the student potentially stands could be given which would equip students to understand what they must do to prepare to score high enough on the SHSAT to be admitted. (Potential cost equal to one extra administration of the exam.)
- Increase the preparation of the students in the underrepresented communities by identifying the students scoring above grade level on the sixth and seventh grade assessment tests and enroll them in enriched classes at their middle schools designed to enable them to do well on the specialized test. (Again, a no-cost or little-cost solution.)
- Increase free test prep for any student who wants it in NYC. Today, more students want to participate in the DOE’s DREAM program than there are seats. It is bad public policy to allocate available seats based on a lottery as is currently being done and thereby deny thousands of youth the opportunity to get the best possible education available in our schools. (Cost about \$1K to \$2K per additional student.)
- The DOE should issue an RFP to enable vendors to bid on contracts to provide free test prep in the schools serving the African American and Latino communities in order to correct for the lack of quality test prep schools being geographically located within these communities. The Alumni Organizations, which are doing this already, should be allowed to bid on the RFP and expand their efforts. (Cost about \$1K per student.)
- Reconfigure the Discovery Program by mandating its use at the four largest specialized high schools, Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, Staten Island Tech and Stuyvesant and redefining “disadvantaged” to better load eligibility from underrepresented communities. This would require, as was originally the case, allowing students with a seat at a specialized school to qualify for Discovery and “bump up” into a school where they had missed the cut-off. Discovery is not used today at Stuyvesant or Bronx Science. Part of the problem with the current configuration of Discovery is that the DOE primarily defines “disadvantaged” in economic terms, that is to say, poor enough to qualify for free or subsidized lunch. Since 75% of all public school children qualify for free or subsidized lunch and because the percentage of African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos living at or near the poverty level in our city is about the same, the use by the DOE of the current economic definition of “disadvantaged” for eligibility to Discovery does not promote needed diversity. (Cost about \$500,000 per year to promote reconfigured and improved Discovery program.)

Performing at the college level is the norm for all students at the specialized test-in schools. Promoting diversity at these schools, which provide the city's most challenging and rigorous course of instruction, is a challenge. It cannot be achieved though use of quotas in admissions decisions whether official or unofficial.

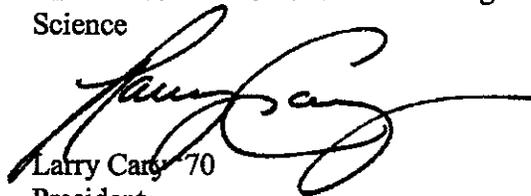
The changes needed to promote true, long lasting diversity at the specialized schools can be accomplished by the city without changing state law. Now that we have a Mayor and a Speaker of the City Council committed to promoting diversity at these schools, we have every confidence that real solutions to the problem of underrepresentation of African American and Latino students can be achieved.

Careful thought must be used to consider the underlying reasons for the disparities before changes are made to an admissions process that for generations has created the foundation for these nationally recognized and exceptional schools of instruction for the children of the poor, working class and immigrant families of New York City. We urge you and your colleagues to support diversity, fairness and merit by voting "no" on Res. 442.

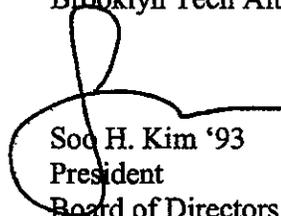
Very truly yours,



Sharon Manewitz '65
Chairperson
Board of Trustees
Alumni Association of the Bronx High School of
Science



Larry Cary '70
President
Board of Directors
Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation, Inc.



Soc H. Kim '93
President
Board of Directors
Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association, Inc.

cc: Members of the City Council (via email and regular mail)
Chancellor Carmen Farina (via email and regular mail)

Maintaining Rigor, Defending Merit and Promoting Diversity at NYC's Specialized Schools

The Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation

1. Introduction

Of the 700 programs in New York City's 400 public high schools,¹ eight are categorized as "specialized" schools, where admission is based solely on students' performance on the Specialized High School Admissions Test—or "SHSAT".² These specialized schools produce exceptional academic outcomes and are recognized as some of the finest high schools in the entire country. They provide a free, first-rate education that would otherwise be unattainable to many students from disadvantaged backgrounds. More than half the student body at these schools is poor, many are from immigrant families and three quarters are from minority groups.³

In spite of this diversity, questions have been raised about the underrepresentation of African American and Latino students at the specialized schools, and about the use of a single test to determine admissions. Indeed, while over 1900 African American and Latino students currently attend these schools,⁴ at some of them, African American and Latino enrollment is exceedingly low. In response, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education in 2012, alleging that the admissions policy at the specialized schools has a discriminatory impact. While the Department of Education has not yet made a determination about the complaint, the public policy debate around specialized schools continues to evolve.

This position paper seeks to inform that debate at an important moment—as Mayor de Blasio assesses the City's policy on specialized schools and New York State legislators consider

¹ Nathanson, Lori, Sean Corcoran and Christine Baker-Smith. April 2013. *High School Choice in New York City: A Report on the School Choices and Placements of Low-Achieving Students*. The Research Alliance for New York City Schools.

² A ninth specialized school, Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, uses an audition and review of student work instead of the SHSAT to determine admission.

³ Data are for 2013-2014 school year, from the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE). Accessed on May 25, 2014, from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>.

⁴ Ibid.

changes to the law that governs the schools' admissions process.⁵ It answers several key questions that, in our view, have received far too little attention to date. These include:

- What are the benefits of the specialized schools as they are currently configured?
- What are the causes of the disparities in specialized school admissions and enrollment?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the SHSAT-based admissions process?
- How viable are the proposed alternatives to the SHSAT?

Based on the answers to these questions, the position paper concludes with a set of recommendations aimed at maintaining the many benefits and unique character of the specialized schools *and* increasing the enrollment of African American and Latino students.

⁵ Darville, Sarah, March 11, 2014. "Few Black and Hispanic students Admitted to Top High Schools, Adding to Calls for Admissions Rules Changes." Chalkbeat. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://ny.chalkbeat.org/2014/03/11/few-African-American-and-hispanic-students-admitted-to-top-high-schools-adding-to-calls-for-admissions-rules-changes/>

2. What Are the Benefits of NYC’s Specialized High Schools?

The academic outcomes of NYC’s specialized schools are unsurpassed by any other school in the City’s system. In 2014, U.S. News and World Report ranked all eight of the specialized schools among the top 200 high schools in the country.⁶ The three oldest specialized schools, Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech, have together graduated 14 Nobel Prize winners, more than most nations.⁷ Bronx Science counts eight alumni as winners of the Nobel Prize, six as winners of the Pulitzer Prize, eight who received a National Medal of Science, and 29 who are current members of the National Academy of Science.⁸ Stuyvesant boasts four Nobel Laureates among its graduates, as well as a host of leaders in science, mathematics, government, law, the arts, and music.⁹ Brooklyn Tech has produced two Nobel Laureates; graduates of the school also invented the digital camera, developed the GPS system, piloted the space shuttle Challenger, discovered proof of the big bang theory of the universe, developed cleaner gasoline for automobiles, and worked on mass production of penicillin—to name just a few of the many accomplishments of specialized school alumni.

**NYC’s Specialized Schools:
Known for Excellence**

As seen below, in 2014, NYC’s specialized high schools were all ranked in the top 30 in New York State, according to *U.S. News and World Report*. Six were in the top ten.

Ranking (of 1,147 high schools in NY State)	School
#1	High School for American Studies at Lehman College
#2	Bronx High School of Science
#3	Brooklyn Latin School
#6	Staten Island Technical High School
#8	Queens High School for the Sciences at York College
#10	Brooklyn Technical High School
#12	Stuyvesant High School
#30	High School for Mathematics, Sciences, and Engineering at City College

⁶ U.S. News and World Report. “Best High Schools.” Accessed on May 25, 2014, from <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools>.

⁷ “Nobel Prize Laureates by Secondary School Affiliation.” Accessed May 25, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize_laureates_by_secondary_school_affiliation.

⁸ The Bronx High School of Science Alumni Foundation and Endowment Fund. “Notable Alumni.” Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://alumni.bxscience.edu/?page=NotableAlumni>.

⁹ Stuyvesant High School. “History of the School.” Accessed on May 25, 2014, from <http://www.stuv.edu/>.

A substantial body of research has demonstrated the value of tailoring instruction for high-achieving students.¹⁰ Finn and Hockett found that the benefits of selective academic environments are far-reaching, with important advantages for both individual students as well as the broader learning community. Selective environments allow students to undertake an entire course of study at a high level (rather than the isolated AP classes that are available in most high schools), and they are incubators for new and improved pedagogy and instructional tools.¹¹ In addition, selective schools provide a group of peers that both challenges and supports gifted students, allowing them to feel a sense of inclusion and belonging that can be critically important for adolescents. Studies have shown that adolescents are likely to emulate not only their peers' academic performance, but also *how they think* their peers are performing.¹² This explains, in part, the power of NYC's specialized schools, where academic achievement is highly valued and highly visible.

According to the DOE, the Cost to Taxpayers

NYC average cost per student =
\$18,598 per year
vs.
Cost per student at Brooklyn Tech,
Stuyvesant and Bronx Science =
\$12,982, \$12,930 and \$12,211,

These strengths notwithstanding, the underrepresentation of African American and Latino students at the specialized schools is a concern. Overall, in the 2013-2014 school year, just 6 percent of students at the specialized schools were African American and 7 percent Latino, while 60 percent were Asian and 24 percent White.¹³ By comparison (though individual schools in New York City usually *don't* reflect the ethnic breakdown of the system as a whole), the total NYC student population was 28 percent African American, 40 percent Latino, 15 percent Asian and 15 percent White.¹⁴

¹⁰ For example, see Reis, Sally M., March 2, 2008. "Research That Supports the Need for and Benefits of Gifted Education." The National Association for Gifted Children. Accessed on May 25, 2014, from http://www.nagc.org/uploadedFiles/Information_and_Resources/Research%20Support%20for%20GT.pdf.

¹¹ Finn, C. E. Jr., & Hockett, J. A. 2012. *Exam Schools: Inside America's Most Selective Public High Schools*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

¹² Jones, M. H., Audley-Piotrowski, S. R., & Kiefer, S. M. 2012. "Relationships Among Adolescents' Perceptions of Friends' Behaviors, Academic Self-Concept, and Math Performance." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(1), 19-31.

¹³ NYCDOE. Accessed May 25, 2014 from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>. Note that the system-wide figures are somewhat skewed by the large proportion of White students who attend private school.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

It is important to note that the enrollment picture actually looks quite different across the specialized schools. Media attention has focused on the schools where African American and Latino enrollment is lowest—for example, Stuyvesant, where just 3 percent of students are African American or Latino. Other specialized schools, however, are much more diverse. At Brooklyn Tech, by far the largest of the specialized schools, 16 percent of the school’s 5,000-plus students are African American or Latino. Brooklyn Latin has a student body that is 40 percent African American or Latino. And, in 2012, *The New York Times* called the specialized High School of Math, Science and Engineering at the City College the most racially integrated high school in the city.¹⁵

The specialized High School of Math, Science and Engineering at the City College is, in fact, the *least segregated* school in New York City.

While it is problematic that specialized high schools, on the whole, are not more representative of all NYC students, this does *not* mean the students at specialized schools are generally highly privileged. In fact, at least half of those attending specialized schools are eligible for free or reduced price lunch—meaning they live near or below the poverty line.¹⁶ This number has increased as the percentage of Asian students, including many immigrants, has grown. For example, at Stuyvesant, about three quarters of the students are immigrants or children of immigrants.¹⁷ In truth, NYC’s specialized high schools serve thousands of students from disadvantaged backgrounds every year, providing an education of unparalleled quality and serving as a ladder up and out of poverty for countless young people.

¹⁵ *The New York Times*. May 11, 2012. “A Portrait of Segregation in New York City’s Schools.” Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/11/nyregion/segregation-in-new-york-city-public-schools.html>.

¹⁶ NYCDOE. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>.

¹⁷ Santos, Fernanda. “To Be Black at Stuyvesant High.” February 25, 2012. *The New York Times*. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/education/black-at-stuyvesant-high-one-girls-experience.html>.

3. What Are the Causes of the Disparities in Specialized School Admissions and Enrollment?

African American and Latino students are underrepresented both among those taking the test and among those who score high enough to gain admission to one of the specialized schools. While African American and Latino students constitute nearly 70 percent of NYC students overall, only 45 percent of students taking the SHSAT for admission to the 2012-13 freshman class were African American or Latino. Specifically, African American students comprised 23 percent of test takers, and only 6 percent of those who received admissions offers. Latinos comprised 22 percent of test-takers, and just 8 percent of admitted students. By contrast, Asian American students accounted for 26 percent of test takers and 47 percent of admissions offers, while White students were 15 percent of test-takers and 23 percent of admission offers. Put another way, the acceptance rate for Fall 2011 test takers was about 19 percent overall, but only 5 percent of African American test-takers and 7 percent of Latino test-takers. Acceptance rates for Asian and White test-takers were 35 percent and 31 percent, respectively.¹⁸

So, why are fewer African American and Latino students taking the test, and why are they so much less likely to obtain a high score? The reality is that disparities in academic outcomes start very early on. By first grade, on average, African American and Latino students in NYC score 25 to 30 percent below Asian and White students on the state standardized English and math tests, a gap that persists through 8th grade and presages disparities in high school graduation rates.¹⁹ African American and Latino students are also more likely to be overage for their grade, suggesting many start school late or are held back at some point. By 8th grade, nearly a third of African American and Latino boys are overage.²⁰ Past research suggests these gaps are due, at least in part, to

Disparities in educational outcomes for African-American and Latino students in NYC start early on. As early as the 1st grade and persist through the 8th grade.

¹⁸ NAACP Legal Defense Fund Complaint, Submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on September 27, 2012. Appendix A. Accessed June 6, 2014, from http://www.naacpldf.org/files/case_issue/All%20Appendices.pdf.

¹⁹ Villavicencio, Bhattacharya, and Guidry. 2013. *Moving the Needle: Exploring Key Levers to Boost College Readiness Among African American and Latino Males in NYC*. Research Alliance for NYC Schools.

http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/MovingtheNeedle_July2013#.U0qYTdfD_IU

See Table 4.

²⁰ *ibid.*

unequal access to high-quality preschool.²¹ They may also stem from higher rates of absenteeism among African American and Latino students,²² which in turn likely results from inadequate health care and higher rates of some chronic health problems, particularly asthma.²³

The elementary and middle schools that students attend also greatly impact their odds of being well prepared to take the SHSAT. African American and Latino students are underrepresented in the City's gifted and talented programs. In many neighborhoods with large concentrations of African American and Latino residents, there is no such program available.²⁴ Increasing access to gifted and talented programs in the early grades and offering enrichment programs at the middle school level would create a better, more diverse pipeline into the specialized high schools.

About 20 percent of the eighth-grade students who sit for the SHSAT each year are enrolled in private middle schools.²⁵ Private Catholic schools have a long tradition of serving African American and Latino students living at or near the poverty level, but these schools are in decline. In the last decade in NYC, many Catholic schools have closed, and overall enrollment in Catholic elementary schools fell by 43 percent.²⁶ Apart from the Catholic school system, there are an array of expensive "independent" private elementary and middle schools. Many of these schools have made efforts to increase diversity in recent years, but their student population is still overwhelmingly White.²⁷

The other 80 percent of SHSAT test takers are students in NYC's public school system. Analysis shows that a disproportionately large number of students who gain admission to the specialized high schools come from a small number of these public middle schools. According to a New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) report, "although the [specialized high school] system does not explicitly consider the student's middle school, 15 percent of the

²¹ Sadowski, Michael. 2006. "The School Readiness Gap." Harvard Graduate School of Education. Accessed May 25, 2014, from http://hepg.org/hel-home/issues/22_4/helarticle/the-school-readiness-gap.

²² Villavicencio, op cit.

²³ NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. July 2012. "Preventing and Treating Childhood Asthma in New York City." Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/survey/survey-2012childasthma.pdf>.

²⁴ Garland, Sarah. March 14, 2013. "Ending Racial Inequality in Gifted Education." The Hechinger Report. Accessed May 25, 2014, from http://hechingerreport.org/content/ending-racial-inequality-in-gifted-education_11468/.

²⁵ "In 2005 and 2006, between 25,000 and 27,000 eighth graders (including 4,500 to 5,000 private school students), took the SHSAT for admission to the ninth grade at the specialized public high schools." Feinman, J. 2008. *High Stakes, but Low Validity? A Case Study of Standardized Tests and Admissions into New York City Specialized High Schools*, Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit.

²⁶ Vitello, Paul. January 12, 2009. "Brooklyn Diocese Moves to Shut 14 Schools." *The New York Times*. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/13/nyregion/13close.html?pagewanted=all>.

²⁷ 70 percent in 2012, according to Anderson, Jenny. October 19, 2012. "Admitted, but Left Out." *The New York Times*. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/21/nyregion/for-minority-students-at-elite-new-york-private-schools-admittance-doesnt-bring-acceptance.html>.

middle schools accounted for 85 percent of [the] offers” made for the 2012-2013 school year.²⁸ This means only about 75 of the city’s 500 middle schools account for most of the demographic makeup of the specialized schools. The New York Post reported in 2011 that “nearly all the top feeder [middle] schools for Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science and LaGuardia high schools are selective entry schools themselves.”²⁹

The impact of these feeder middle schools on the racial make-up of the specialized high schools should not be underestimated. For example, during the 2013-2014 school year, Christa McAuliffe, which had nearly 65 percent of its eighth grade class accepted to a specialized high school, was 22 percent White, 74 percent Asian, less than 1 percent African American and 4 percent Latino. Mark Twain, which had 54 percent of its eighth-graders accepted to a specialized high school, had a student body that was 30 percent Asian, 53 percent White, 10 percent African American and 6 percent Latino.³⁰

One final issue that may be playing a role in reducing the number of African American and Latino students attending specialized schools relates to the recruitment efforts of elite private high schools. The percentage of minority students at the City’s private schools has increased in the last ten years.³¹ And there have been reports that these schools are increasingly targeting well qualified African American and Latino students who might otherwise go to the specialized schools.³² Our calculations show that in 2012 there were approximately 1,600 more students belonging to minority groups in NYC’s independent private high schools, compared with 2002.³³ If only half of the increase in minority enrollment at these schools came from African American and Latino students who would have otherwise attended a specialized school, adding that number alone to the current attendance figures would boost the percentage of African American and Latino students in the specialized schools from the present 13 percent to 18 percent of the student body.

Space in this paper permits only a cursory review of the many factors accounting for the underrepresentation of African American and Latino students in the City’s specialized schools.

²⁸ NYCDOE, Citywide Council on High Schools. Annual Report 2012-2013. Accessed May 25, 2014, from [http://www.cec3.org/www/cecd3/site/hosting/Reports/CCHS%20Annual%20Report%202012-13\(12-11-13\).pdf](http://www.cec3.org/www/cecd3/site/hosting/Reports/CCHS%20Annual%20Report%202012-13(12-11-13).pdf).

²⁹ “Best of Middles Lead to Top HS’s.” November 29, 2012. *New York Post*. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://nypost.com/2012/11/29/best-of-middles-lead-to-top-hss/>.

³⁰ NYCDOE. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>.

³¹ Anderson, op cit.

³² Santos, op cit.

³³ Author calculations based on the following: The New York Times reports that 28.9% of students at private schools are now members of minority groups, up from 21.4% 10 years ago (Anderson, op cit). There are about 21,495 students attending private high schools in the City, according to [high-schools.com](http://high-schools.com/new-york/new-york.html). Accessed December 28, 2013, from <http://high-schools.com/new-york/new-york.html>.

What is clear is that there are multiple and complex underlying causes of this problem—most of which are at play long before students take the SHSAT.

4. What Are the Advantages and Disadvantages of the SHSAT-Based Admissions Process?

Any student in the eighth grade residing in NYC may take the SHSAT.³⁴ They simply need to contact their middle school guidance counselor and sign up to receive a ticket for the exam. They then rank in order of their preference which of the eight specialized high schools they wish to attend.

The SHSAT is a timed, multiple-choice test with two sections, verbal and math, which must be completed in a total of two and a half hours. Students' scores for each section are "scaled"—or standardized—and then added together to create a composite score, which the NYCDOE uses to make offers of admission. Students with a sufficiently high composite score get their first choice of school; lessor ranked students may get their second, third or fourth choice. Each year, about 28,000 students sit for the test, to compete for 3,800 available seats across the eight schools.³⁵

Using the SHSAT to determine admission has several advantages. It is a simple process that students and families can easily understand, unlike the complicated maze of requirements and admission criteria in evidence in some of the City's other academically selective schools. The opportunity to take the test is available to any student, regardless of race, gender, immigrant status, neighborhood, etc. The use of a single test completely eliminates subjectivity from the admissions process—meaning personal judgments, relationships, and biases have no role in admissions decisions. The test also may give a "second chance" to students who have had past problems with attendance, behavior or academics (which would eliminate them from consideration at other academically selective schools).

Still, critics of the test have raised serious questions about its validity and reliability³⁶ (does it identify the most qualified students? do different versions of the test produce similar results?), as well as possible bias—that is, does the test itself have a discriminatory effect against lower-income, African American and Latino students?

³⁴ A small number of students also take the test in the ninth year for admission in the tenth grade.

³⁵ Many students who receive offers of admission do not accept them and instead attend private school or a non-specialized public school. Thus the number of students offered admission is larger than the number of available seats.

³⁶ Herszenhorn, David. "Admissions Test's Scoring Quirk Throws Balance Into Question." *The New York Times*. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/12/nyregion/12exam.html?pagewanted=all>.

Also, Feinman, op cit.

The contract between the NYCDOE and the vendor that develops the SHSAT requires that individual test questions be vetted with sample test takers, and the vendor must certify that the questions used “are free from sex and ethnic bias.”³⁷ In the past, New York City education officials have pointed to the superior academic outcomes of the specialized schools as proof that the test predicts performance,³⁸ but, as some critics of the test have pointed out, no predictive studies have been done to determine whether the test overall skews results based on the

“Just because test scores differ across gender and ethnic groups doesn’t necessarily mean that a test is biased or of limited utility.”

gender or ethnicity of the test taker. As one noted critic, Joshua Feinman has explained, “Just because test scores differ across gender and ethnic groups doesn’t necessarily mean that a test is biased or of limited utility. From a psychometric perspective, the key is whether the predictive validity of a test varies across groups. If the given test score predicts different things for different groups, the test is said to exhibit “prediction bias,” which diminishes its usefulness.”³⁹

We believe a predictive validity study would be helpful, and has potential to improve the test. Yet, as shown above, the SHSAT is certainly *not* the major cause of the disparities seen in specialized schools admissions. The real problem is rooted elsewhere.

³⁷ Op Cit. NAACP Complaint. Appendix F. Requirements Contract between NYC Board of Education and American Guidance Service, Inc., dated March 14, 1989.

³⁸ Baker, Al. September 27, 2012. “Charges of Bias in Admission Test Policy at Eight Elite Public High Schools.” *The New York Times*. Accessed June 6, 2014 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/28/nyregion/specialized-high-school-admissions-test-is-racially-discriminatory-complaint-says.html>.

³⁹ Feinman, op cit.

5. How Viable Are the Alternatives to the SHSAT?

Many have suggested that the NYCDOE should stop relying solely on SHSAT scores to determine admissions to the specialized schools and instead use “multiple criteria.” In effect, this would eliminate the unique character of the specialized high school system and add these schools to the ranks of NYC’s “screened” high schools. There are currently 103 such schools, which select students based on “... grades from the prior school year, reading and math standardized test scores, and attendance and punctuality,” as well as, in some cases, an interview and/or essay.⁴⁰ These schools have the authority to “adjust” their selection criteria based on their applicant pool, and some have additional admissions priorities, such as those that give preference to students from a certain geographic area.⁴¹

There are a surprising number of challenges associated with screening. Compared to specialized schools, where the system for gaining admission is straight-forward (any student wanting to take the test can do so, and admission is determined by their score), the system at screened schools is an uncoordinated patchwork of details, requirements and tasks unique to each school. Students and their parents must navigate a difficult and complex maze to identify schools of interest and successfully apply. The screening process is expensive for schools to implement and much more subjective than reliance on the SHSAT. There is a risk of favoritism or arbitrariness in any system using multiple criteria, particularly if there is insufficient oversight for the process. Indeed, a recent audit conducted by the NYC Comptroller’s Office found serious flaws in the screening procedures used at four of five screened schools it audited, concluding: “...we do not have reasonable assurance that the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of the student ranking, favoritism, or fraud is being adequately controlled.”⁴²

Perhaps most notable is that multiple-criteria screening does not necessarily produce a more diverse student body. To assess the possible impact of converting the eight specialized high schools into screened schools, we identified the eight highest-achieving screened schools (based on 2012 composite SAT scores) to serve as a comparison.⁴³ We found that, while there are somewhat higher percentages African American and Latino students at the screened schools, these students are still wildly underrepresented compared to their numbers in the

⁴⁰ NYCDOE. *Directory of NYC Public High Schools*. Accessed December 21, 2013, from <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/6C650E9E-C2B6-4B78-9D4F-927DF94E4012/0/Introduction.pdf>.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² City of New York, Office of the Comptroller. June 13, 2013. “Audit Report on the New York City Department of Education’s High School Application Process for Screened Programs.” Management Audit MH12-053A.

⁴³ The schools are Baccalaureate for Global Ed., Bard, Bard 2, Beacon, Eleanor Roosevelt, Lab for Collaborative Studies, Leon Goldstein for health Sciences, and Townsend. 2012 SAT data were the most recent available at the time of our calculations.

system overall. When looking at the total minority population, we see that only 55 percent of students at the screened schools are from a minority group (compared with 76 percent in the specialized schools). These data show that a White student is about twice as likely to be attending a top-performing screened school as a specialized school. Furthermore, just 37 percent of students in the eight screened schools are poor or working class (compared with over 50 percent of students in the specialized schools).⁴⁴

Another alternative suggested for increasing enrollment of African American and Latino students is for the NYCDOE to simply reserve a “small” portion of admissions slots for the top-performing students at every public middle school in the City. This proposal is unrealistic for a number of reasons. For one thing, it ignores the vast academic differences between middle schools and would result in better prepared students being excluded while admitting less prepared students. It is also mathematically troublesome: Even if only the top two students from each of the City’s 500-plus middle school programs were granted automatic admission, far from it being a small portion of admissions, more than a quarter of the 3,800 available seats in the specialized school’s freshman class would be filled.

NYC has a large, diverse portfolio of public high schools. The eight specialized schools serve a unique and important purpose in the context of that portfolio—providing a challenging, academically advanced environment for high-achieving students, most of whom could not afford a selective private institution.⁴⁵ Eliminating reliance on the SHSAT runs the risk of erasing what is different about the specialized schools and making them look like others in the system. We believe this is the wrong direction. Yet, there *are* steps that hold promise for sustaining the quality of the specialized schools and enhancing their diversity. Some of these are outlined below.

⁴⁴ Based on percentage eligible for free and reduced price lunch. NYCDOE. Accessed May 25, 2014, from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>.

⁴⁵ In an article about the best fifteen high schools in New York City appearing in *CitiesJournal*, all eight of the specialized schools are included along with such elite and expensive private high schools in Manhattan as Dalton. Accessed June 1, 2014 from <http://www.citiesjournal.com/15-best-high-schools-in-new-york/>.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Increasing the enrollment of African American and Latino students in NYC's specialized schools is important. To make it happen, we must recognize the real root causes of the problem. The SHSAT is not the fundamental reason why African American and Latino enrollment in these schools is lower than it otherwise should be. Gaps in opportunity and achievement are evident from the earliest grades. African American and Latino students have lower attendance rates and test scores, and are poorly represented in many of the middle schools that serve as "feeders" for the specialized high schools.

To maintain the curricular integrity and rigor of the specialized schools *and* increase access for African American and Latino students, we offer the following recommendations:

- *Don't simply scrap the test.* While seemingly an easy prescription for solving a very large and complex problem rooted elsewhere, doing so would hurt specialized schools and is unlikely to have the desired effect (i.e., making schools more diverse). Using the SHSAT to determine admissions is a straight-forward process that families can understand; the test offers an objective way to identify high-achieving students.
- *Make the test as good as it can be.* Invest in research that helps strengthen the test—so we can be confident it that it reliably identifies the most qualified students and that it is equally effective for all groups of students, regardless of race and gender. Any changes to the test should be thoroughly vetted and analyzed before implementation.
- *Ensure that all students have adequate time and resources to prepare for the test.* Share more information about the test with middle school families as they enter the sixth or seventh grade and repeat distribution of this information earlier in the year that the test is taken (e.g., the SHSAT handbook, minus the admissions information, could be made available year round). It is also crucial that students have access to tutoring and test preparation. Very successful tutoring efforts designed to increase the numbers of underrepresented students have been undertaken by alumni at Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech.⁴⁶ The NYCDOE should support and build on these efforts.

⁴⁶ The Science School Initiative, developed by Bronx Science and Stuyvesant alumni, is a year-long free tutoring program one afternoon a week. Of the 53 students who were in the program and sat for the SHSAT in 2010, 31 were Hispanic, 12 were Asian, 7 were African American and 3 were White. Of that group, 45 percent received admission offers to a specialized school—a very high success rate. The Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation, with the financial support of National Grid, is in its first year of a similar effort, which aims to create a STEM pipeline for students in Brooklyn communities that are underrepresented at Brooklyn Tech. The program targets rising 7th graders and their parents, and seeks to generate interest in Brooklyn Tech and STEM education, with the ultimate goal of helping students succeed in college and careers. The first cohort consists of 37 students; half are underrepresented minority students and two thirds are girls. See Phillips, Anna. October 11, 2011. "Alumni

- *Consider ways to strengthen the Discovery program.* Discovery, which already exists in the law, is an alternative path to admission for disadvantaged students just missing the cutoff score. The DOE should look carefully at the population of students who would be impacted if Discovery were reinstated at all specialized schools. Would this change increase the numbers of African American and Latino students? Could Discovery be retooled to make more of a difference for these underrepresented groups?
- *Cultivate more—and more diverse—feeder middle schools.* This strategy is well aligned with the NYCDOE’s current focus on strengthening middle schools and expanding out-of-school-time opportunities for middle school students. We believe offering more rigorous middle grade coursework and providing free SHSAT preparation during and after-school in communities with high percentages of African American and Latino students are critically important for increasing access to specialized high schools.
- *Make informed decisions about any changes to the specialized school admissions process.* Solicit input from a range of stakeholders, including educators, parents and alumni organizations from specialized schools. Make sure decisions are based on a thorough analysis of data about changing patterns of admission in both the specialized high schools *and* other selective schools in the City.

If research shows that the admissions system should be changed, state law should require that:

- Only objective criteria to be used;
- The SHSAT continue to be used and be given the greatest weight among the factors considered;
- The NYCDOE manages the system, rather than the individual schools;
- Any changes apply simultaneously to all specialized schools; and
- In addition the State and City need to still *invest in long-term strategies* that will better prepare larger numbers of African American and Latino students for the SHSAT—and the rigors of the specialized schools. These strategies may include universal pre-K, gifted and talented programs in schools that serve high proportions of African American and Latino students, and various community supports for students and schools.

Tutoring Effort Strives to Raise Diversity at Elite Public Schools." *The New York Times*. Accessed on May 25, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/nyregion/graduates-of-elite-new-york-city-public-schools-tutor-students-seeking-admission.html>.

Exhibit "D"



City of New York

OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

John C. Liu
COMPTROLLER



MANAGEMENT AUDIT

Tina Kim

Deputy Comptroller for Audit

Audit Report on the New York City
Department of Education's
High School Application Process for
Screened Programs

MH12-053A

June 13, 2013

<http://comptroller.nyc.gov>

The Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation

The mission of the Foundation is to support Brooklyn Technical High School as *the* premier specialized high school for science, technology, engineering and mathematics in the Nation by harnessing the intellectual and financial power of 80,000 Tech alumni. Since our founding, we have raised \$30,000,000 to support educational excellence at Brooklyn Tech.



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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John C. Liu
COMPTROLLER

June 13, 2013

To the Residents of the City of New York:

My office has audited the adequacy of the Department of Education's (DOE) controls to ensure an accurate screening and ranking of student applicants in the high school placement process. We audit City processes such as this to ensure the fair and consistent application of stated policies and procedures.

The audit found that DOE lacks adequate controls over the high school application process to ensure an accurate screening and ranking of the students who apply for admission to a screened program. Weaknesses include: the lack of formal written procedures delineating the criteria and steps used by the high schools to rank the students; a failure to maintain sufficient records to document the ranking processes undertaken; and the lack of oversight by DOE to ensure the fair and consistent application of each school's ranking procedures. As a result of these weaknesses, there is limited assurance that the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of student rankings, favoritism, or fraud is being adequately controlled.

The audit made nine recommendations, including that DOE should: require the high schools with screened programs to document their ranking rubrics and processes and submit such documentation to a unit within DOE; review the submitted ranking criteria and periodically evaluate the ranking practices of a sample of screened programs to ensure that the high schools are appropriately ranking students in accordance with their stated criteria; and review the ranking practices of the four screened programs cited in the report for having a considerable number of questionable student rankings and ensure that they are following their stated screens and priorities and DOE's student selection policy for screened programs.

The results of the audit have been discussed with DOE officials, and their comments have been considered in preparing this report. Their complete written response is attached to this report.

If you have any questions concerning this report, please e-mail my audit bureau at audit@comptroller.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JCL".

John C. Liu

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**APPENDIX
ADDENDUM**

THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER MANAGEMENT AUDIT

Audit Report on the New York City Department of Education's High School Application Process for Screened Programs

MH12-053A

AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) has two different high school placement processes. The first process, referred to as the high school application process, is for eighth grade students applying for the ninth grade and first-time ninth graders applying for the tenth grade. There are seven different admissions methods that high school officials use to consider students for their programs: (1) test, (2) audition, (3) educational option, (4) limited unscreened, (5) screened, (6) unscreened, and (7) zoned. (For a description of the admissions methods, see the Appendix.) The second process, referred to as the over-the-counter process, is for (1) new students, (2) students returning to New York City public schools, and (3) New York City public high school students transferring between high schools.

According to records obtained from DOE, there were 284,513 high school students on register as of October 31, 2011. Of these, 215,556 students were placed through the high school application process and were still enrolled at the same high schools as of that date. The remaining 68,957 students were placed in their respective high schools through the over-the-counter process.

This audit determined whether DOE has adequate controls in place to ensure an accurate screening and ranking of students in the high school placement process. This audit concentrated on the high school application process for eighth grade students applying for ninth grade screened high school programs. We determined that the screened admission selection method posed the greatest risk of potential manipulation and accordingly concentrated our audit efforts in this area.

Audit Findings and Conclusion

DOE lacks adequate controls over the high school application process to ensure an accurate screening and ranking of the students who apply for admission to a screened program. Weaknesses include the lack of formal written procedures delineating the criteria and steps used by the high schools to rank the students; failures to maintain sufficient records to document the ranking processes undertaken; and the lack of oversight by DOE to ensure the

fair and consistent application of each school's ranking procedures. We also found that DOE failed to ensure that middle schools retained the original, hard-copy application forms documenting students' high school choices, which prevented us from determining whether the high school choice data in DOE's Student Enrollment Management System (SEMS) was accurate.

As a result of these weaknesses, we do not have reasonable assurance that the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of the student rankings, favoritism, or fraud is being adequately controlled. Our analysis of the ranking process for our sample of five screened programs found that 319 (8 percent) of the 4,075 students ranked by these schools did not appear to meet the selection and enrollment criteria (screen). Of these 319 students, 92 (29 percent) were eventually matched by SEMS to those screened programs and 60 (19 percent) were reportedly enrolled at those schools as of October 31, 2011. Conversely, we found that 1,946 (34 percent) of the 5,702 students who we determined did meet the screens for these programs were not ranked by the schools. DOE does not require the schools to rank every student who meets the screen. Nevertheless, many of the students who appear to have met the screen but were not ranked had higher scores than some of the students who appear to have met the screen and were ranked. By not ranking such students, the schools denied them an opportunity to be matched to these programs.

Audit Recommendations

Based on our findings, we make nine recommendations, four of which are listed below. DOE should:

- Ensure that the high schools comply with the New York State Education Department's *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1* rule. Specifically, it should ensure that the high schools are made aware of the retention requirement and retain the high school ranking documentation for a minimum of six years as required.
- Require the high schools with screened programs to document their ranking rubrics and processes and submit such documentation to a unit within DOE.
- Review the submitted ranking criteria and periodically evaluate the ranking practices of a sample of screened programs, especially those with high demand, to ensure that the high schools are appropriately ranking students in accordance with their stated criteria.
- Review the ranking practices of the four high school screened programs cited in this report for having a considerable number of questionable student rankings and ensure that the schools are following their stated screens and priorities and DOE's student selection policy for screened programs.

Agency Response

In its response, DOE generally agreed with the audit's nine recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Background

DOE provides primary and secondary education to over 1 million pre-kindergarten to grade 12 students in 32 school districts in over 1,500 schools. The Citywide high school placement process offers students the opportunity to apply to over 600 programs¹ in over 400 high schools.

There are two different high school placement processes. The first process, referred to as the high school application process, is for eighth grade students applying for the ninth grade and first-time ninth graders applying for the tenth grade. There are seven different admissions methods that high school officials use to consider students for their programs: (1) test, (2) audition, (3) educational option, (4) limited unscreened, (5) screened, (6) unscreened, and (7) zoned. (For a description of the admissions methods, see the Appendix.) The second process, referred to as the over-the-counter process, is for (1) new students, (2) students returning to New York City public schools, and (3) New York City public high school students transferring between high schools.

For the high school application process, students are able to apply in the fall to specialized high schools and non-specialized high school programs for the following year's admission. Students who are interested in applying to the specialized high schools can obtain from their guidance counselors a test ticket for the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) and/or a ticket to audition for admission into any of the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts (LaGuardia High School) programs.² In order to apply to non-specialized high school programs, students are required to complete a high school application form, which allows them to apply for up to 12 programs ranked in the student's order of preference. The students submit their high school application forms to their guidance counselors, who enter the students' choices into DOE's Student Enrollment Management System (SEMS). For students who applied for audition, educational option, and screened programs, officials at the high school level rank students in order of preference. Students who apply to a screened program must meet the screen or the program's selection and enrollment criteria (e.g., final seventh grade report card grades, standardized test scores, and/or attendance and punctuality) in order to be ranked by the high schools. Based on an algorithm in SEMS, the system matches students to high school programs based on the students' choices and on the chosen high schools' ranking of the applicants. Neither the student nor the high school is aware of the other's ranking.

After SEMS completes the process of matching students to their high school program choices, it is possible that a student can receive multiple offers from schools. For example, a student may receive offers from: (1) one of the specialized high schools that the student ranked when taking the SHSAT; (2) each of the LaGuardia High School programs that the student had auditioned for; and (3) one of the non-specialized high school programs listed on the high school application.³

¹ A high school program has a curriculum in a particular interest area (e.g., Health Professions). High schools can have one or more programs.

² All eighth and first-time ninth grade students who are City residents are eligible to obtain a ticket to take the SHSAT and/or to audition for LaGuardia High School.

³ Students can get one offer from a specialized high school program and one from a non-specialized program. However, they can get multiple offers from the various programs at LaGuardia High School.

Students who did not receive any offers in the first round or who wanted to participate in the second round because they were unhappy with the selection SEMS offered are required to submit their round two high school application forms to their guidance counselors, who then enter the students' choices into SEMS. SEMS attempts to match these students to the high school programs listed on their second round application forms. For those students SEMS is not able to match in the second round, the High School Team from DOE's Office of Student Enrollment manually matches them to high school programs. At this point, all students should have been matched to a high school program. Students may still appeal their placement; if so, an Appeals Committee from DOE's Office of Student Enrollment will review the appeal.

For the over-the-counter process, students are required to register for a high school program at any one of DOE's Borough Enrollment Offices located throughout the five boroughs. The staff at the Borough Enrollment Office determines whether the student was already placed at a high school. If the student does have a high school placement, then the staff will determine whether there was a change in the student's circumstances (e.g., a medical, safety, or travel hardship) that warrants granting a transfer to another high school. If the student does not have a high school placement, then the staff at the Borough Enrollment Office reviews the new or returning student's application, determines their interests and abilities, and searches for programs with available seats. At that point, the staff may register the student directly into a school or refer the student to a school for consideration.

According to records obtained from DOE, there were 284,513 high school students on register as of October 31, 2011. Of these, 215,556 students were placed through the high school application process and were still enrolled at the same high schools as of that date. The remaining 68,957 students were placed in their respective high schools through the over-the-counter process. We determined that the screened admission selection method posed the greatest risk of potential manipulation and accordingly concentrated our audit efforts in this area.

Objective

The objective of this audit was to determine the adequacy of controls in place to ensure an accurate screening and ranking of students in the high school placement process. This audit concentrated on the high school application process for eighth grade students applying for ninth grade screened high school programs.

Scope and Methodology Statement

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective, except for the lack of sufficient, appropriate evidence to determine whether the high school choice data in SEMS was accurate. This issue is further disclosed in the subsequent paragraph. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

In order to perform an accuracy test on the high school choice data in SEMS, we sorted the data by admission code and found that as of October 31, 2011, 215,556 students had been placed through the high school application process and were still enrolled in the same high

school, and 68,957 students had been placed through the over-the-counter process. Due to DOE's record retention policies requiring that schools retain documents a minimum of six years, we included only students placed through the high school application process during the period from July 1, 2007, through October 31, 2011. We randomly selected 150 students from this population of 214,905 students. We then requested the original, hard-copy high school application forms for the 150 students in our sample and obtained access to the SEMS archives for the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years. Our intent was to determine whether the high school choice data in SEMS matched the high school choices listed on the students' original, hard-copy high school application forms. However, DOE was only able to provide the original, hard-copy high school application forms for 14 of the 150 students, which was insufficient for us to draw conclusions. Therefore, we cannot be reasonably assured that the high school choice data in SEMS was accurate.

The scope of this audit covers the period from July 2009 to June 2012. Please refer to the Detailed Scope and Methodology at the end of this report for the specific procedures and tests that were conducted.

Discussion of Audit Results

The matters covered in this report were discussed with DOE officials during and at the conclusion of this audit. A preliminary draft report was sent to DOE officials and discussed at an exit conference held on May 10, 2013. On May 16, 2013, we submitted a draft report to DOE officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from DOE officials on May 31, 2013. In their response, DOE officials generally agreed with the audit's nine recommendations. DOE stated, "We know that we still have more work to do. We thank the Comptroller's office for raising a number of important concerns and for making recommendations about how we can continue to improve the high school admissions process for students and their families."

The full text of the DOE response is included as an addendum to this report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DOE lacks adequate controls over the high school application process to ensure an accurate screening and ranking of the students who apply for admission to a screened program. Weaknesses include the lack of formal written procedures delineating the criteria and steps used by the high schools to rank the students; failures to maintain sufficient records to document the ranking processes undertaken; and the lack of oversight by DOE to ensure the fair and consistent application of each school's ranking procedures. We also found that DOE failed to ensure that middle schools retained the original, hard-copy application forms documenting students' high school choices, which prevented us from determining whether the high school choice data in SEMS was accurate.

Specifically, we found:

- The high schools in our sample do not maintain sufficient supporting documentation to justify their rankings of the students who applied to their screened programs as required by the New York State (NYS) Education Department's policy. This severely limits DOE or independent monitors from evaluating whether the high schools were adequately following their own criteria when ranking eligible students.
- The high schools are not required to submit written descriptions of their ranking criteria and procedures, including the rubrics they use for their student ranking processes (e.g., the weights assigned to grades, standardized test scores, attendance, etc.), to an oversight unit at DOE. This severely limits DOE or independent monitors from evaluating the fairness of the ranking system used or from determining whether the criteria, rubrics, and procedures used are reasonable.
- DOE does not monitor or audit the student rankings performed at the high school level. There is no unit within DOE that methodologically monitors or audits the high schools' ranking results. Without an effective monitoring system, questionable ranking practices could continue to go undetected.
- The middle schools generally are not maintaining the high school applications as required by Chancellor's Regulation A-820. Of the original, hard-copy application forms that we had requested for 150 students, only 14 (9 percent) were available. Because of the insufficient number of applications available for review, we have limited assurance that the guidance counselors accurately entered the students' choices into SEMS.

As a result of the weaknesses cited above, we do not have reasonable assurance that the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of the student rankings, favoritism, or fraud is being adequately controlled. Our analysis of the ranking process for our sample of five screened programs found that 319 (8 percent) of the 4,075 students ranked by these schools did not appear to meet the selection and enrollment criteria (screen). Of these 319 students, 92 (29 percent) were eventually matched by SEMS to those screened programs and 60 (19 percent) were reportedly enrolled at those schools as of October 31, 2011. Conversely, we found that 1,946 (34 percent) of the 5,702 students who we determined did meet the screens for these programs were not ranked by the schools. DOE does not require the schools to rank every student who meets the screen. Nevertheless, many of the students who appear to have met the screen but were not ranked had higher scores than some of the students who appear to have met the screen and were ranked. By not ranking such students, the schools denied them an opportunity to be matched to these programs.

These matters are discussed in greater detail below.

Most of the Sampled High Schools Are Not Ranking Students in Accordance with Stated Policy

Our review found a considerable number of questionable student rankings at four of the five high school screened programs that we sampled. These high schools ranked students who, based on the results of our analysis, did not appear to have met the entire screen or admissions priorities⁴ as defined by the schools, while passing over some students who appeared to have met the screen. Table I provides a summary of the number of students who were inappropriately ranked or not ranked at all by each of the five high schools.

Table I
Breakdown of Rankings of Students by the High Schools
for the Five Screened Programs in Our Sample

Name of High School	Available Seat Target	Total Number of Applicants	Total Number of Students			
			Ranked by the High School		Not Ranked by the High School	
			Who Appeared to Have Met the Screen	Who Did not Appear to Have Met the Screen or Priority**	Who Did not Appear to Have Met the Screen or Priority**	Who Appeared to Have Met the Screen
Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science (Bronx)	81	2,643*	157	24	1,659	803
Baruch College Campus High School (Manhattan)	109	7,712	237	8	6,495	972
Midwood High School, Medical Science Institute (Brooklyn)	300	4,720	1,616	284	2,727	93
Tottenville High School, Science Institute (Staten Island)	68	952	355	3	520	74
Townsend Harris High School, Intensive Academic Humanities (Queens)	270	5,288	1,391	0	3,893	4
Total	828	21,315	3,756	319	15,294	1,946

* Of the 2,643 students who applied to Hostos's program, 2,567 were non-Hostos students and 76 were continuing eighth graders at Hostos. All continuing eighth graders who want to attend Hostos are guaranteed a seat. If all 76 continuing eighth grade students were matched to the program, then only five seats would have been available for all of the non-Hostos students applying to the program.

** While the schools set the priority standards, SEMS assigns the student priority numbers using the algorithms integrated into the system based on the schools' priority standards. Baruch College Campus High School and Tottenville High School have high demand programs with many more student applicants coded priority 1 than available seats. As a result, we did not test students in other priority groups to determine whether they met the screen. For Midwood and Townsend Harris, SEMS assigns priority 1 to all City residents. There are no additional priority categories for these two schools.

As illustrated in Table I, the high schools ranked 319 students who did not appear to have met the screens while at the same time opting not to rank 1,946 (34 percent) of the 5,702 students who appeared to have met the screen. In addition, many of these 1,946 students had higher scores than some of the 3,756 students who met the screen and were ranked. By not ranking

⁴ The admissions priorities section in DOE's *Directory of the New York City Public High Schools* lists the order in which the school will consider applicants. This might include restrictions or priorities based on where the applicants live, where they attend school, or whether they are Limited English Proficiency students who have recently arrived in this country.

the 1,946 students, schools might have denied these students the opportunity to be matched to the program of their choice. Of the 319 students who did not appear to meet the screen but were nonetheless ranked by the schools, 92 (29 percent) were eventually matched to the school program to which they applied and 60 (19 percent) were reportedly enrolled at the school as of October 31, 2011. In the absence of reasonable controls to monitor the ranking process performed at schools, there is a significant risk that the ranking process will not be carried out in a fair and consistent manner. Specifically, high school applicants who do not meet the screen will be improperly placed into a program while applicants who do meet the screen will be improperly denied that same opportunity.

High Schools Are Not Maintaining Sufficient Evidence to Support Their Final Rankings

The five high schools whose ranking processes we reviewed are not maintaining sufficient documentary evidence of their analyses to support the rankings of the students who applied to their screened programs. New York State Education Department's *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1* requires schools to maintain for a minimum of six years any documentation they have regarding the rankings of the students applying to their programs.

For example, schools may download the Program Candidate Lists (PCL) from SEMS into an Excel spreadsheet.⁵ The PCL contains a listing of all the applicants who have applied to the school's program and includes detailed personal information and the scholastic history of each applicant, including grades, test scores, latenesses, absenteeism rates, etc. The schools generally apply formulas based on their screening criteria to the data contained in the PCL spreadsheet to generate the student rankings. One school used filters instead of formulas to identify students who met their criteria. Another school randomly selected students. The applicants who meet the screen receive numeric rankings; the schools then upload the information into SEMS. SEMS matches students to high school programs based on the students' preferences entered on their high school application forms and the schools' rankings of the applicants.

Our review of the ranking process performed by the five schools revealed that the schools were not maintaining adequate evidence to support their final rankings. Some schools provided Excel spreadsheets that were incomplete. For example, some of these spreadsheets did not provide the formulas applied to the PCL spreadsheets. In addition, most schools had no supporting evidence to justify the inclusion of some applicants who did not appear to have met the screen and the exclusion of others who appeared to have met the screen. Without adequate documentation, we have no assurance that the ranking of students who did not appear to meet the required screens, or the decision to not rank students who did appear to meet the screens, was appropriate. As stated previously, many of the students who were not ranked had higher scores than some of the students who were ranked. The absence of such justifications also limits DOE or independent monitors from reviewing the appropriateness, accuracy, or fairness of the schools' final rankings.

⁵ For four of the five sampled high schools, school personnel downloaded their PCLs onto Excel spreadsheets. For the remaining sampled high school, school personnel performed the calculations manually.

Recommendations

DOE should:

1. Ensure that the high schools comply with the New York State Education Department's *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1* rule. Specifically, it should ensure that the high schools are made aware of the retention requirement and retain the high school ranking documentation for a minimum of six years as required.

DOE Response: "We agree that high schools should be aware of and comply with New York State Education Department's *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1*."

2. Require schools to support changes to their rankings that do not adhere to their rubrics by maintaining written explanations or other supporting documentation.

DOE Response: "We agree that schools should document changes to their rankings that do not adhere to their rubrics."

High Schools Are Not Required to Formally Document the Criteria Used for Their Ranking Process

DOE does not require high schools to formally document their ranking rubrics (e.g., the weights assigned to grades, standardized test scores, attendance, etc.) or the methodology used to derive each student's rank. In our sample of five screened programs, none of the high schools maintained their ranking criteria in writing. Furthermore, there is no office or unit within DOE responsible for reviewing, monitoring, or auditing a school's ranking process or methodology. In the high school directory, DOE publishes the screen for all screened high school programs. However, it does not publish the ranking criteria or rubrics applied by the schools. The selection criteria only provide a general idea of the standards the high school will use when considering students for its program. It is the ranking criteria that provide detailed information about the standards that the school uses to rank the students.

For example, Midwood High School's (Midwood) Medical Science Institute Program has a documented selection criteria listed in the high school directory, which states that students need report card grades of 90 to 100 in their seventh grade English, math, social studies, and science classes. However, it does not state that it weighs the seventh grade math and science report card grades more than the seventh grade English and social studies report card grades, which is a component of Midwood's ranking formula.

In another example, Tottenville High School's (Tottenville) Science Institute Program has a documented selection criterion listed in the high school directory, which states that students should achieve scores of 3 or 4 on their seventh grade math and English Language Arts standardized tests. However, it does not state that it weighs the seventh grade math standardized exam score more than the seventh grade English Language Arts standardized reading exam score, which is a component of Tottenville's ranking formula.

If this information were published in the high school directory, it could affect the students' choices in both the high school programs they apply to and their orders of preference for those programs. This is especially important because SEMS matches the student to the high school

program listed highest on their high school application form and for which the student was ranked high enough by the school to be admitted.

In addition, all five screened programs in our sample indicate in the high school directory that one of their selection criteria relates to attendance and punctuality. However, the screened programs have a maximum number of instances that a student could have been absent or late during the seventh grade as part of their ranking criteria. For example, Baruch College Campus High School (Baruch) has a criterion of 10 instances unless there were extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness). Once again, this information is not published in the high school directory.

In fact, the schools had difficulties clearly explaining the criteria they used during our scope period. This complicated our efforts to recreate their applicant rankings. In order to obtain the rubric for each of the five programs, we first had to speak to the high school officials involved in the ranking process to obtain an understanding of their ranking criteria. Four of the high schools then reviewed our written summaries of their verbal explanations of their rubrics. One high school formalized their rubrics for us in writing. For two of the schools, we had to make further modifications to our rankings based on additional clarifications we received.

In order to ensure the fairness and reasonableness of the rubrics used, DOE should require each of the high schools with screened programs to formally document its ranking criteria and process and to submit it to an oversight or monitoring unit within DOE. By not requiring the schools to formalize their ranking criteria in writing, DOE's ability to evaluate the fairness of the ranking systems in place is severely limited. Furthermore, by having no office or unit within DOE monitoring or auditing the schools' ranking processes, DOE has limited assurance that the high schools are applying their ranking processes in a consistent and appropriate manner.

Recommendations

DOE should:

3. Require the high schools with screened programs to document their ranking rubrics and processes and submit such documentation to a unit within DOE.

DOE Response: "We agree that high schools with screened programs should document their ranking rubrics and processes. NYCDOE will issue guidance to schools regarding documentation and publication requirements for ranking rubrics and processes."

4. Review the submitted ranking criteria and periodically evaluate the ranking practices of a sample of screened programs, especially those with high demand, to ensure that the high schools are appropriately ranking students in accordance with their stated criteria.

DOE Response: "We agree that the NYCDOE should review the ranking practices of a sample of screened programs annually. NYCDOE will sample 6-10 PCLs each year, before the Round 1 and 2 matching processes. NYCDOE will intervene when schools are not adhering to their published criteria. If schools are adhering to the published criteria, we will review rankings relative to their documented rubrics. If schools cannot demonstrate why certain students were or were not ranked, we will require changes."

5. Consider disclosing more detailed information in its high school directory about each school's ranking criteria for its screened programs so that applicants can make a more informed decision as to which school programs they might have the best chance of being admitted.

DOE Response: "NYCDOE is committed to including more precise language to reflect school screening methodologies in the high school directory and/or through a website."

Middle Schools Not Maintaining High School Application Forms

Our review found that the middle schools generally are not maintaining the high school applications as required. DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820, *Confidentiality and Release of Student Records, Records Retention*, states that to the greatest extent practicable, schools should retain at the school site all student records for at least 10 years after the student has graduated or has reached the age of 27, whichever is later.

In order to determine the accuracy of the information in SEMS regarding the students' high school program choices, we tried to obtain a sample of original, hard-copy high school application forms from the middle schools to compare the choices indicated on the applications to those entered by the middle school guidance counselors. We selected a random sample of 150 students who participated in the high school application process during the period of July 1, 2007, through October 31, 2011, and requested the original, hard-copy application forms. However, DOE officials provided us with original, hard-copy high school application forms for only 14 students (9 percent). In fact, of the 113 middle schools that the 150 students attended, only 12 had some of the application forms we requested.⁶ Of the remaining middle schools, some were unable to locate the forms, others were unaware of DOE's retention requirements, and still others had already shredded the forms.

Because of the low number of hard-copy applications we were able to review, we were unable to assess the reliability of the SEMS high school choice data.

Recommendation

6. DOE should ensure that the middle schools are in compliance with DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820. Specifically, it should ensure that the middle schools are made aware of the retention requirement and retain the high school application forms as required by DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820.

DOE Response: "We agree that high schools should be aware of and comply with NYCDOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820. . . . As part of initial communications about the opening of Applicant Submission Lists (ASL), OSE will remind schools about the need to maintain and archive any electronic or paper-based records that inform their ranking processes. OSS will provide support for middle schools to assure that student records have been properly archived. OSS will include information about Chancellor's Regulation A-820 in Principals' Weekly and School Support Weekly at the beginning and the end of each school year. OSE will remind principals and

⁶ Of the 12 middle schools that provided applications, six schools provided an application for the one student requested, two provided an application for one of the two students requested, two provided an application for one of the three students requested, and two provided applications for two of the three students requested. Some students may have submitted more than one application, one for each round.

guidance counselors about the need to maintain and archive any electronic or paper-based records that inform their ranking processes during annual training sessions. NYCDOE will consider adding language at the bottom of the high school application form stating that schools, as per [Chancellor's Regulation] A-820, are required to retain a hard copy of the student record."

Questionable Ranking Practices at Four of Five High Schools

Our review found a considerable number of questionable student rankings at four of the five high school screened programs that we sampled. Detailed descriptions of the anomalies we identified are provided below.

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science Did Not Adhere to Its Stated Ranking Process

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science (Hostos) is a school with grades 6-12. Its continuing eighth grade students applying to its Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science Program have priority over other students applying to Hostos. Accordingly, Hostos students are assigned priority 1 in SEMS and non-Hostos students are assigned priority 2. Hostos's continuing eighth grade students still have to submit the high school application forms in order to be considered, but they are guaranteed a seat; they do not have to meet the selection criteria or screen to be accepted. Therefore, Hostos's seat target will always have to be equal to (if not greater than) the number of eighth graders attending the school. On the other hand, non-Hostos students need to meet the screen to be accepted to the program. According to Hostos officials, all applicants who will be ranked should be assigned a unique ranking number (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.).

However, Hostos did not comply with its stated criteria. Students were not assigned unique ranking numbers. Our review of the 2010-2011 PCL found that Hostos ranked 98 students as number 1. This included the 76 continuing eighth grade students and 22 non-Hostos students. Additionally, Hostos ranked 82 students as number 2 and one student as number 3. (The ranking number assigned by Hostos is not to be confused with the priority code assigned in SEMS.) Of the 181 students ranked as number 1, 2, or 3, Hostos ranked 24 students who did not appear to have met the screen. In addition, Hostos opted not to rank another 803 students who appeared to have met the screen. Many of these 803 students had higher scores than some of the non-Hostos students who appeared to have met the screen and were ranked.

When we brought these matters to the attention of Hostos officials, the school principal at Hostos stated in an email that "the names of the few exceptions that fell out of the parameter of the screen [but were still ranked] could probably be attributed to expressed student-parent desire to willingly participate in the early college program." However, Hostos provided no evidence (e.g., letters or emails from students or parents) to support this assertion. Furthermore, this does not explain why Hostos failed to rank 803 students who did appear to meet its screen. Consequently, Hostos did not give the opportunity to those 803 students to be matched to their selected program.

As shown in Table 1, the available seat target at Hostos was only 81. Accordingly, the 24 students ranked by Hostos who did not appear to meet the screen could account for as much as 30 percent of the available seat target. This significant variance from Hostos's stated criteria leads us to question the fairness of the ranking process and whether it was conducted in accordance with the school's stated criteria.

Baruch College Campus High School Did Not Adhere to Its Stated Ranking Process

Our review of the 2010-2011 PCL found that Baruch appears to have ranked eight students inappropriately: seven students who did not appear to meet the criteria for its screened program and one priority 2 student who was ranked ahead of 972 unranked priority 1 students. In addition, many of these 972 unranked students had higher scores than some of the students who were ranked.

According to DOE's high school directory, Baruch gives priority preference⁷ (priority 1) to District 2 students or residents; second priority (priority 2) to Manhattan students or residents; and third priority (priority 3) to other City residents. In addition, according to Baruch's selection criteria, students must have grades between 85 and 100 in four core subjects⁸ and scores of 2 or higher on the standardized tests. Baruch also takes attendance and punctuality into account during the ranking process.

When we asked Baruch officials why they ranked seven students who did not appear to have met the screen, the school principal responded that two of the seven students were from private schools. These private schools did not issue numerical grades, but instead had sent narrative reports. Baruch gave beneficial allowances to the other five students who did not appear to meet the academic or attendance screen because of special circumstances that were personal in nature. Baruch did not provide us with any evidence (e.g., copies of the narrative grade reports or other records) to substantiate why the seven students were given preferential treatment. In addition, neither the selection criteria that Baruch officials described to us nor the information in the high school directory indicates that preferential treatment might be given to certain students. As for the priority 2 student who was ranked ahead of priority 1 students who were not ranked, Baruch officials acknowledged that they might have erroneously ranked him or her.

Furthermore, Baruch officials provided us with conflicting information to justify the ranking process. Officials indicated that committee members responsible for the ranking process randomly select students who meet the screen based on the proportional size of their middle schools' qualified applicant base. However, we found that Baruch did not proportionately select students from middle schools. For example, one middle school had none of their 17 student applicants who appeared to have met the screen ranked, yet another middle school had all four of its student applicants who appeared to have met the screen ranked. When we brought this matter to the attention of Baruch officials, they responded that all schools were not proportionally ranked based on the size of the school's qualified applicant base due to the "human factor." Students from a high-performing middle school will have more students ranked over those from struggling schools. However, Baruch did not provide us with the methodology it used to determine which feeder schools were superior. The principal added that "students from [one school] have struggled at our school over the years so we try to pick their strongest students." However, our review of the applicants from this school showed that some of the students who had very high standardized test scores and report card grades were not ranked while students with lower standardized test scores and report card grades were ranked. Furthermore, although selecting the strongest students from either a struggling middle school or a high-performing one would be reasonable, this approach is at odds with Baruch officials' statements that students were selected randomly.

⁷ Although the schools set the priority preferences for eligibility to their programs, as described in the high school directory, SEMS assigns the priority to students using the algorithms integrated into the system based on the schools' priority standards.

⁸ Baruch's four core subjects are English, math, social studies, and science.

In addition, Baruch's practice of randomly selecting students from those who met the screen seems to contradict DOE's statement in the high school directory that for a screened program, "students are ranked by a school based on a student's final seventh grade report card grades and reading and math standardized scores." Based on this ranking criteria, both parents and students are given the impression that applicants with the highest grades will be ranked highest. However, many of the 972 students who Baruch did not rank had higher grades than some of the 237 students who appeared to have met the screen and were ranked. As a result, we question whether Baruch's policy of incorporating random selection into its ranking process is consistent with DOE's description of what constitutes a screened program. Accordingly, we have limited evidence that Baruch's ranking process was conducted fairly and in accordance with DOE's student selection policy for screened programs.

Midwood High School Did Not Adhere to Its Stated Ranking Process

Our review of the 2010-2011 PCL showed that Midwood ranked 284 students who did not appear to have met the screen for its Medical Science Institute Program while opting not to rank 93 students who appeared to have met the screen. In addition, many of the 93 students had higher scores than some of the 1,616 students who appeared to have met the screen and were ranked.

As stated to us, students were to be ranked based on their weighted averages for the four core classes.⁹ However, we found that the top four students all had a weighted average of 110, yet were ranked 157, 546, 1638, and 1839. The next group of students all had a weighted average of 109.7, but Midwood ranked them as 119, 120, and 273. Consequently, it appears that Midwood did not rank students in accordance with its stated criteria.

When we brought this to the attention of Midwood officials, they responded that it could have been an oversight. They also stated that it could have been based upon the "feeder school variance" because not every feeder school maintains the same grading standards. According to them, a student with a 97 average at one feeder school is not the same as a student with a 97 average at another. Midwood officials said they use their years of experience to be able to modify the final rankings based on this consideration. Because of this "feeder school variance," the ranking numbers do not match the sequential order of the students' weighted averages for the four core classes.

Based on Midwood's explanation, there should have at least been consistency in the student rankings from each feeder school. However, we did not find this to be the case. In the above-mentioned example, Midwood ranked two students with identical weighted averages from the same school as 157 and 546. We also identified a number of instances in which Midwood ranked students with lower weighted averages more favorably than students with higher weighted averages from the same feeder school. Accordingly, we have limited evidence that Midwood's ranking process was conducted fairly and in accordance with the school's stated criteria.

⁹ The four core classes are English, math, science, and social studies.

Tottenville High School Did Not Adhere to Its Stated Ranking Process

Our review of the 2010-2011 PCL found that Tottenville ranked three students who did not appear to have met the screen for its Science Institute Program while opting not to rank 74 students who appeared to have met the screen. In addition, many of these 74 students had higher scores than some of the 355 students who appeared to have met the screen and were ranked.

Tottenville officials did not appear to rank students in sequential order based on the results of the rubric they told us they used to calculate the students' composite scores. In some instances, the composite score rankings and the actual rankings were similar. However, we also found that sometimes the ranking numbers jumped around significantly. For example, the student with the 20th highest composite score was ranked 11th, while the student with the 21st highest score was ranked 324th. In another example, the student with the 26th highest composite score was not ranked at all while the student with the 27th highest composite score was ranked 295th.

When we brought these matters to the attention of Tottenville officials, they responded that while the composite scores are used for their initial screening, other factors are considered for the final rankings. They gave an example of two hypothetical students, student A and student B, both having received the same composite score. Student A's score was based on having received grades of 95 or better in all core subjects, while student B's score was based on having received some grades below 90. According to their explanation, Tottenville will downgrade student B's ranking. In the examples cited in the paragraph above, however, we did not find evidence that this applied. Accordingly, we have limited evidence that Tottenville's ranking process was conducted fairly and in accordance with the school's stated criteria.

Townsend Harris High School Generally Adhered to Its Stated Ranking Process

Townsend Harris High School (Townsend Harris) appears to be generally ranking applicants in accordance with its stated ranking process for its Intensive Academic Humanities Program. However, there was some confusion as to what Townsend Harris's rubric was and how it was applied for purposes of ranking the students who applied to the program. This confusion arose because the school did not properly document its ranking criteria. In addition, Townsend Harris did not maintain adequate documentation to support its results.

Initially, our review of the 2010-2011 PCL found that Townsend Harris ranked 30 students who did not appear to have met the screen and did not rank 41 students who appeared to have met the screen. We based our analysis on Townsend Harris's description of the rubric it used.

When we brought our initial findings to the attention of Townsend Harris officials, they enlisted the assistance of the former Assistant Principal for Pupil Personnel Services, who was involved with the admissions process for the 2010-2011 school year. With the former Assistant Principal's assistance, school officials were better able to explain the methodology they employed and the rubric they applied. Using the additional information, we adjusted our analysis and obtained our final results (as shown in Table 1). Ultimately, we found that the school did not rank any student who did not appear to meet its screen. However, it failed to rank four students who appeared to have met the screen.

The importance of the schools formalizing their ranking criteria in writing is supported by this instance in which current school officials were unable to provide us with a clear description of the ranking criteria or the rubric they used.

Similarly, by DOE not requiring the schools to formalize their ranking criteria in writing, its ability to review the fairness and consistent application of the schools' ranking processes is severely limited.

Recommendations

DOE should:

7. Require the high schools to rank all students who apply to screened programs and who meet the criteria. If a school decides that it is not feasible to rank all of these students, the school should document the reason for its decision and the methodology it will use to determine which of these students to rank.

DOE Response: "We agree that where it is not feasible for a high school to rank all students who apply to a screened program and meet the criteria, the school should document the methodology used to determine which students to rank. . . . NYCDOE will remind schools that candidates who do not meet the school's stated screening criteria should in no case be ranked before all qualified candidates applying to the school."

8. Require all schools to have a rubric to determine the ranking order of the applicants who meet the screen.

DOE Response: "We agree that all screened and audition programs should maintain documented rubrics that can be shared with families."

9. Review the ranking practices of the four high school screened programs cited in this report for having a considerable number of questionable student rankings and ensure that the schools are following their stated screens and priorities and DOE's student selection policy for screened programs.

DOE Response: "NYCDOE will engage the four school principals and remind them about the need to adhere to transparent ranking practices."

DETAILED SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective, except for the lack of sufficient, appropriate evidence to determine whether the high school choice data in SEMS was accurate. This issue is further disclosed in the subsequent paragraph. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

In order to perform an accuracy test on the high school choice data in SEMS, we sorted the data by admission code and found that as of October 31, 2011, 215,556 students had been placed through the high school application process and were still enrolled in the same high school, and 68,957 students had been placed through the over-the-counter process. Due to DOE's record retention policies requiring that schools retain documents a minimum of six years, we included only students placed through the high school application process during the period from July 1, 2007, through October 31, 2011. We randomly selected 150 students from this population of 214,905 students. We then requested the original, hard-copy high school application forms for the 150 students in our sample and obtained access to the SEMS archives for the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years. Our intent was to determine whether the high school choice data in SEMS matched the high school choices listed on the students' original, hard-copy high school application forms. However, DOE was only able to provide the original, hard-copy high school application forms for 14 of the 150 students, which was insufficient for us to draw conclusions. Therefore, we cannot be reasonably assured that the high school choice data in SEMS was accurate.

The scope of this audit covers the period from July 2009 to June 2012. To achieve our audit objective, we performed a number of procedures and tests.

To gain an understanding of DOE's responsibilities pertaining to the high school placement process and to identify audit criteria, we reviewed the following:

- Comptroller's Directive #1, *Principles of Internal Control*, and Agency Financial Integrity Statement (including the Self-Assessment of Internal Controls questionnaire), completed by DOE for calendar year 2010;
- DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-101, *Admissions, Readmissions, Transfers, and List Notices for All Students*;
- DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820, *Confidentiality and Release of Student Records, Records Retention*;
- NYS Education Department's *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1*;
- Information posted on DOE's website regarding the high school admissions process, including the High School Admissions Calendar; Description of the High School Admissions Process (e.g., eligibility, admission methods); Listing of Types of High Schools in New York City (e.g., specialized high schools, career and technical education schools); Listing of Publications (e.g., *Directory of the New York City Public High Schools*), Summer Workshop Handouts; and Frequently Asked Questions (e.g., on the types of high schools); and

- *The Mayor's Management Report 2010.*

To obtain an understanding of the functions and the roles of individuals involved with the high school placement process, we met with and/or conducted walk-through observations with officials from DOE's central Office of Student Enrollment, including the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director of High School Enrollment, and Senior Director for Analytics and Operations, as well as officials from the Borough Enrollment Offices. We also met with high school officials to obtain an understanding of the high schools' responsibilities relating to the high school placement process. To understand the high school program selection process, we also attended Citywide high school fairs offered to parents and students.

In order to determine the number of high school students and the methods used for placement, DOE's Office of Student Enrollment provided information on all high school students registered as of October 31, 2011, which was extracted from DOE's Automate the System (ATS) database. The information contained student-level data, such as the student's name, identification number, school, grades, and the method by which the student was placed (whether through the high school application process or the over-the-counter process). We also obtained school-level information from ATS that contained similar information.

To ensure that the two sets of data obtained from ATS reconciled, we performed a consistency test by matching the student-level data to the school-level data for a random sample of 30 schools.

DOE's Office of Student Enrollment also provided an Excel spreadsheet extracted from SEMS that displayed data on the 2010-2011 high school admissions process (for students applying for admission to the ninth grade for September 2011). The spreadsheet identified for each program the school's name and DBN (District, Borough, and Number), the program's name and code, the selection method, seat target, applicants, and matches for the three rounds (Round One [Specialized Round], Round Two [Main Round], and Round Three [Supplementary Round]).¹⁰

We sorted the data on the Excel spreadsheet to identify the number of programs per selection method: 14 for Specialized, 67 for Audition, 176 for Educational Option, 204 for Limited Unscreened, 192 for Screened, 5 for Unscreened, and 29 for Zoned. We then determined which program selection method posed the greatest risk of potential manipulation. Because high school officials have the ability to rank all students on their PCLs for their screened programs and have the most input into the ranking for the screened programs, we identified this category as the one with the highest risk. As a result, it was determined that this was the area to be tested. (For a description of the admissions methods, see the Appendix).

To determine which of the 192 screened programs had the highest risk of potential manipulation by school officials, we identified those programs where applicant demand was high. We sorted the 192 screened programs by borough and selected the screened program with the highest number of applicants in each borough. The five screened programs included in our sample are: (1) Medical Science Institute Program at Midwood in Brooklyn; (2) Baruch College program at Baruch in Manhattan; (3) Intensive Academic Humanities Program at Townsend Harris in Queens; (4) Science Institute Program at Tottenville in Staten Island; and (5) Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science Program at Hostos in the Bronx.

¹⁰ Starting with the 2011-2012 high school admissions process, there are no longer three rounds; Round One comprises both the specialized round and the main round, and Round Two is the supplementary round.

In order to test the sampled high schools' rankings of applicants for their screened programs, we interviewed school officials to obtain descriptions of the ranking criteria used for the eighth grade students applying for their ninth grade programs. Because the high schools did not have the ranking criteria in writing, four schools reviewed our summaries of their descriptions of the ranking processes and one high school formalized in writing the formula used for its rankings. We then downloaded the 10 PCLs from the SEMS archives onto Excel spreadsheets for the five screened programs in our sample, one for the specialized round and one for the main round. (The admissions process for the 2010-2011 school year included a specialized and main round.) We merged the two downloaded PCL files for each of the five high school programs for the specialized round and the main round into one Excel file and removed the duplicate names of students who appeared in both rounds. Then, we applied each high school's ranking criteria to determine whether the 21,315 students applying to the five screened programs in our sample were appropriately ranked by the high schools (i.e., met the screens). We provided each high school with the results of our test and requested it to provide a response for any anomalies that we found.

To see whether students who did not meet the screens were matched to a program to which they were inappropriately ranked, we searched the 2010-2011 student data extracted from SEMS to determine what programs the students were matched to during the high school application process. We then searched the register as of October 31, 2011, which was extracted from DOE's ATS database, and identified the schools they were reportedly attending as of that date.

DOE High School Admissions Methods**Test**

The specialized high schools require students to take the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) for entrance.¹¹ The test score is the only factor in determining eligibility.

Audition

In order to be eligible for admissions, students are required to audition their talent (e.g., vocal, dance, drama). Some audition programs may also review the student's attendance and academic grades.

Educational Option

Programs are meant to serve a wide range of academic performers. Students are placed into three groups based upon their results on the seventh grade English Language Arts standardized reading exam: top 16 percent, middle 68 percent, and bottom 16 percent. From the applicant pool, half are ranked by the high schools and half are randomly selected by SEMS. Students who scored in the top 2 percent are guaranteed a match to the program if they list the program as their first choice on the high school application form.

Limited Unscreened

High schools give priority to those students who demonstrated an interest in their programs by attending an information session or open house at the school or visiting the school's table at the Citywide or borough-wide high school fairs. Students must sign in at these events in order to be credited with demonstrating interest in the program.

Screened

High schools rank the students based on their screen, such as seventh grade report cards and standardized test scores for English Language Arts and math. Some programs may also review attendance and punctuality. In addition, some high schools may have other selection criteria involving entrance exams, essays, or interviews. For students with a minimum level of English language proficiency, there are screened language programs including bilingual, dual language, and international.

Unscreened

Programs whereby students are randomly selected by SEMS.

Zoned

Programs whereby students are guaranteed admission as long as they are living in the high school's zone.¹² For some schools, there is no zone program. Once a student is admitted to such a school, the student is placed into one of the school's programs.

¹¹ Of the nine specialized high schools in New York City, admissions are based on the score attained on the SHSAT for eight of the specialized schools: (1) Bronx High School of Science, (2) Brooklyn Latin School, (3) Brooklyn Technical High School, (4) High School of Mathematics, Science and Engineering at City College, (5) High School of American Studies at Lehman College, (6) Queens High School for the Sciences at York College, (7) Staten Island Technical High School, and (8) Stuyvesant High School. The exception is Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, where an audition is required to seek admission to one of its six programs: (1) dance, (2) drama, (3) instrumental music, (4) technical theater, (5) visual arts, and (6) vocal music.

¹² There are zoned high schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Queens. Manhattan does not have any zoned high schools.



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H. Tina Kim
Deputy Comptroller for Audit
The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007-2341

May 31, 2013

**Re: Audit Report on the New York City Department of Education's
High School Application Process for Screened Programs (MH12-053A)**

Dear Ms. Kim:

This letter submitted on behalf of the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") constitutes this agency's formal response to the City of New York Office of the Comptroller's ("Comptroller") draft audit report titled *Audit Report on the New York City Department of Education's High School Application Process for Screened Programs* ("Report").

A core goal of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) is to support access to high quality schools for all students. The NYCDOE manages a high school admissions process that streamlines a complicated task for approximately 75,000 families and 400 schools. Each year, our goal is to provide a fair, transparent process that is manageable for schools and families. Consistently over the past five years, more than 75% of students have received one of their top three high school choices.

We know that we still have more work to do. We thank the Comptroller's office for raising a number of important concerns and for making recommendations about how we can continue to improve the high school admissions process for students and their families.

Below are responses to each of the Comptroller's recommendations. Except where otherwise indicated, all action items will be implemented beginning in the 2013-2014 school year.

1. Ensure that the high schools comply with New York State Education Department's *Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1* rule. Specifically, it should ensure the high schools are made aware of the retention requirement and retain the high schools' ranking documentation for a minimum of six years as required.

We agree that high schools should be aware of and comply with New York State Education Department's Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1.

- NYCDOE Office of Student Enrollment (OSE) maintains a snapshot of final rankings uploaded into the Student Enrollment Management System (SEMS) each year.
- Before the final rankings are uploaded and accepted into SEMS, schools will have to indicate that they have read the retention requirement and understand that they are mandated to retain the ranking documentation for a minimum of six years.
- OSE will remind schools about the need to maintain and archive any electronic or paper-based records that inform their ranking processes as part of initial communications about the opening of Program Candidate Lists (PCL).
- OSE will remind principals and guidance counselors about the need to maintain and archive any electronic or paper-based records that inform their ranking processes during annual training sessions.
- The Office of School Support (OSS) will include information about the Records Retention Policy and Chancellor's Regulation A-820 in Principals' Weekly and School Support Weekly at the beginning and the end of each school year.

2. Require schools to support changes to their rankings that do not adhere to their rubrics by maintaining written explanations or other supporting documentation.

We agree that schools should document changes to their rankings that do not adhere to their rubrics.

- In cases where schools are ranking students in a manner that appears inconsistent with their stated screening criteria:
 1. The school will be required to provide detailed documentation regarding the school's process for ranking students. Documentation may include a scoring rubric or a memo detailing the methodology the school uses to determine ranking.
 2. The school will share the updated language reflecting the school's screening methodology in the following year's high school directory, and/or through a website.
- NYCDOE will sample 6-10 PCLs each year, before the Round 1 and 2 matching processes are finalized to determine if schools are adhering to their published criteria. If the schools cannot demonstrate why candidates were/were not ranked, we will require changes.

3. Require the high schools with screened programs to document their ranking rubrics and processes and submit such documentation to a unit within DOE.

We agree that high schools with screened programs should document their ranking rubrics and processes.

- NYCDOE will issue guidance to schools regarding documentation and publication requirements for ranking rubrics and processes.

4. Review the submitted ranking criteria and periodically evaluate the ranking practices of a sample of screened programs, especially those with high demand, to ensure that the high schools are appropriately ranking students in accordance with their stated criteria.

We agree that the NYCDOE should review the ranking practices of a sample of screened programs annually.

- NYCDOE will sample 6-10 PCLs each year, before the Round 1 and 2 matching processes.
- NYCDOE will intervene when schools are not adhering to their published criteria.
- If schools are adhering to the published criteria, we will review rankings relative to their documented rubrics.
- If schools cannot demonstrate why certain students were or were not ranked, we will require changes.

5. Consider disclosing more detailed information in its high school directory about each school's ranking criteria for its screened programs so that applicants can make a more informed decision as to which school programs they might have the best chance of being admitted.

NYCDOE is committed to including more precise language to reflect school screening methodologies in the high school directory and/or through a website.

6. DOE should ensure that the middle schools are in compliance with DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820. Specifically, it should ensure that the middle schools are made aware of the retention requirement and retain the high school application forms as required by DOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820.

We agree that high schools should be aware of and comply with NYCDOE Chancellor's Regulation A-820.

- NYCDOE Office of Student Enrollment (OSE) maintains a snapshot of final application data entry uploaded into the Student Enrollment Management System (SEMS) each year.
- As part of initial communications about the opening of Applicant Submission Lists (ASL), OSE will remind schools about the need to maintain and archive any electronic or paper-based records that inform their ranking processes.

- OSS will provide support for middle schools to assure that student records have been properly archived.
- OSS will include information about Chancellor's Regulation A-820 in Principals' Weekly and School Support Weekly at the beginning and the end of each school year.
- OSE will remind principals and guidance counselors about the need to maintain and archive any electronic or paper-based records that inform their ranking processes during annual training sessions.
- NYCDOE will consider adding language at the bottom of the high school application form stating that schools, as per CR A-820, are required to retain a hard copy of the student record.

7. Require the high schools to rank all students who apply to screened programs and who meet the criteria. If a school decides that it is not feasible to rank all of these students, the school should document the reason for its decision and the methodology it will use to determine which of these students to rank.

We agree that where it is not feasible for a high school to rank all students who apply to a screened program and meet the criteria, the school should document the methodology used to determine which students to rank.

- Schools that exhibit high demand may have several thousand applicants who meet their threshold criteria. Assessing and ranking all of the candidates would be a time-consuming and possibly cost-prohibitive endeavor.
- Schools with screened programs receive data via SEMS that allows them to perform initial ranking and review the pool of applicants to make the ranking process manageable.
- OSE advises schools to rank a pool of candidates that is four times as large as the match target for each program. Generally, this pool is sufficiently large enough to meet the match target and fill all of the seats in that school or program. Schools with low demand will be required to rank at least 90 percent of their applicant pool. If a school has a history of ranking an insufficient number of candidates, members of the network team will support the school staff in completion of this task.
- NYCDOE will remind schools that candidates who do not meet the school's stated screening criteria should in no case be ranked before all qualified candidates applying to the school.

8. Require all schools to have a rubric to determine the ranking order of the applicants who meet the screen.

We agree that all screened and audition programs should maintain documented rubrics that can be shared with families.

9. Review the ranking practices of the four high school screened programs cited in this report for having a considerable number of questionable student rankings and ensure that the schools are following their stated screens and priorities and DOE's student selection policy for screened programs.

NYCDOE will engage the four school principals and remind them about the need to adhere to transparent ranking practices.

- NYCDOE is committed to reviewing the ranking practices of a sample of 6-10 screened programs annually.

Sincerely,



Marc S. Sternberg
Senior Deputy Chancellor for Strategy and Policy

Prospectus for NYC Community School Districts 1, 3, 13 Diversity Planning and Pilot Implementation Project (May 2014)

**Prospectus for NYC Community School Districts 1, 3, 13
Diversity Planning and Pilot Implementation Project
Submitted to: Maya Wiley, Counsel to New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio**

Submitted by:

**Ujju Aggarwal, Donna Nevel, and Yasmin Secada, Parent Leadership Project
(District 3)**

David Goldsmith (Community Education Council, District 13)

Lisa Donlan (Community Education Council, District 1)

Introduction

Despite being one of the most diverse cities in the United States, numerous studies and reports have focused attention on the fact that New York City is now the third most segregated school system in the United States. . A recent report issued by the UCLA Civil Rights Project, *New York State's Extreme School Segregation Inequality, Inaction and a Damaged Future*, demonstrates that New York State's schools are the most segregated in the nation. Sixty years after the U.S. Supreme Court determined that separate but equal could never be so, the separation of New York City's students based on race and income impact the futures of over one million students:

This prospectus outlines a proposal for the development and implementation of a race-neutral choice-based student assignment policy that consciously promotes diversity and avoids racial segregation in three of the most segregated school districts in New York City: Community School Districts 1, 3, and 13.

The pilot project is based on a student assignment framework called "controlled choice," a widely acclaimed and well implemented student assignment methodology that was developed in the 1980s as a way to voluntarily desegregate schools and avoid the imposition of court-ordered student assignment policies.

The primary goal of controlled choice plans is to provide all students with a high quality integrated education by making all schools educationally attractive and diverse schools of choice and assigns students in in a manner that is family friendly and fair to all students and practicable to implement. Research demonstrates that within five years of implementing a comprehensive, transparent, and equity driven controlled choice student assignment plan, all schools within a given district: 1) provide high-quality educational opportunities that encourage every student to thrive; 2) meet benchmarked goals for diversity; and 3) ensure that all schools are well-utilized and resourced.

Based on our research of voluntary integration efforts nationally, and on our community-based research and engagement thus far, we are confident that with the proper support and resources, Districts 1, 3, and 13 can be an effective pilot project that demonstrates the capacity for public schools to equitably serve and reflect diverse student populations.

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Community School Districts 1, 3, and 13

Briefly outlined below are snapshots of Community School Districts 1, 3, and 13. As these snapshots illustrate, each district is home to a diverse population of students and families, yet the public schools in each of these districts are far from diverse.

CSD 1

Community School District One is made up of the East Village and Lower East Side of Manhattan. Schools in District One serve 12,183 students who are eligible to apply to any of the un-zoned Pre-K to 5th grade elementary schools (14), Pre-K to 8th grade elementary through middle schools (4), 6 to 8th grade middle schools (5), 6th through 12th grade secondary schools (2). There are also 4 elementary and middle charter schools, one citywide Gifted and Talented K- 12th grade school, and six citywide high schools located in District One.

According to the NYC DoE 2012-2013 data, District One demographics are incredibly diverse: 22% of students are Asian or Pacific Islander; 18% are Black or African American; 42% are Hispanic or Latino, and 17% are White, with fewer than 1% American Indian/Alaska Native. Approximately 18% of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and receive the full continuum of special education services. 11% of the students are English language learners (ELLs), with Spanish as the dominant language among the vast majority. 129 of the 1,384 students identified as ELL students are also classified as Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). The majority of students in the district are from low-income families, with 65% qualifying for free lunch and 6% of students qualifying for reduced lunch. Of the 31 schools in the district, 24 are Title I eligible. Approximately 7% of students are in temporary housing (STH).

Despite the district's demographics and long-standing commitment to school diversity and equity of access, a recent data study by a third party urban planning group confirms that the community schools are increasingly stratified by race, class and academic performance. The district average for black and Hispanic students is 70%, with individual school percentages ranging from 11% to 97%. Nine out of 25 schools are above 85% Black and Hispanic and 6 are below 50%. The district average economic needs index is 72%, with schools ranging from 15% to 126%. Eight schools are at 92% or higher, while 7 are at 3% or below. Schools with a high percentage of black and Hispanic students also have a higher economic needs index.

On average, 28% of District One students have IEPs. Individual school averages range from 3.6% to 52.3%. Eleven schools serve populations with averages of over 30% IEP students. There are six schools whose average percentage of English Language Learners is 15%, well above the district average of 10%, while seven schools fall below 5%. There is also a close correlation between the percentages of IEP and ELL students in schools with high percentages of economic need and high concentrations of black and Hispanic students.

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CSD 3

Community School District (CSD) 3 stretches from 59th Street to 122nd Streets mostly along the West Side of Manhattan and includes the neighborhoods of the Upper West Side, Manhattan Valley, Central Harlem, and Morningside Heights. CSD 3 is comprised of 11 public (non-charter) middle schools and 21 public (non-charter) elementary schools.

Community School District 3 is one of the most racially and economically diverse districts in New York City; it is also among the most segregated and unequal. At the level of individual schools, some schools have a high concentration of low-income students of color and some schools have a high concentration of middle-income and largely white students. Students with special needs and English Language Learners (ELLs) are also either over or under represented in many District 3 schools. The combined average economic needs index for District 3 public elementary is 61%. However, some schools range under 15% while others range as high as 97-100%. Likewise, while the District's documented average of ELLs is 8.8%, the population of some schools is comprised of 18.5% ELL while other schools serve a very low percentage (under 3%) of these same students. Finally, in a District where 66.5% of students are Black or Latino, the racial concentration of students is striking and parallels the patterns outlined above. For instance, some schools are comprised of 95-99% Black and Latino students while at other schools, less than 30% of the student body is comprised of Black and Latino students. As such, District 3 schools continue to be severely segregated and the separation of students by race and income continues to be inextricably connected to unequal learning environments, resources, curricula, school facilities personnel, and more. These resources make an enormous difference in students' educational outcomes and academic achievement levels. (Data drawn from NYC DoE 2012-13 Progress Report Results for Elementary/Middle Schools)

CSD 13

Community School District 13 is located within the borough of Brooklyn and serves students in grades Pre-K-12 who reside in the diverse neighborhoods and communities of Brooklyn Heights, Dumbo, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Park Slope, Prospect Heights and Bedford Stuyvesant. The District has 46 public schools that comprises 16 Pre K -5 elementary schools; 10 middle/intermediate/junior high schools; 3- K-8 schools; 2-grades 6-12 schools; 15 high schools; and a K-12 school. And, there are 6 charter schools located in the District which contributes to the fact that 45% of the school-age children who reside in District 13 are not attending its public schools.

The District's public schools currently serve approximately 23,000 students from culturally diverse backgrounds, and are home to many new immigrants from Bangladesh, China, the Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean. According to available data, the racial/ethnic composition of the District's student population in the 2013-14 school year is as follows: 54.6 % are Black or African American; 17.9% are Asian or Pacific Islander 15.6 % are Hispanic or Latino, 10.0% are White, and 0.5% of the students are American Indian/Alaska Native.

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These data also indicate that 11.2% of the District's students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 4.2% are English language learners (ELLs), with Spanish as the dominant language among the vast majority and nearly 5% of the District's reside in temporary housing (STH). The majority of students in the District are from low income families with 59.9 % qualifying for free lunch and 5.9 % qualifying for reduced lunch. As a result of this high concentration of low income students 38 or 83% of the District's schools are Title I eligible, 35 schools are implementing Title I School Wide Programs (SWP) and one school is designated as a Title I Targeted Assistance School (TAS).

District 13 elementary and middle schools currently serve a predominately "at risk" student population that is highly concentrated and identifiable by race, income and ELL students. As indicated by 2012-13 K-8 enrollment data, the district average for Black and Hispanic students is 88.9%, with individual school percentages ranging from 28% to 97.4% and 20 schools being at or above 90%. The District's average Economic Need Index is 78.4% and ranges from 13% to 115% for individual schools and 8 schools have an ENI that is between 90% and 96% and 5 schools are over 100%. These data also indicate that the District average of ELL students is 6.0% and that the percentage of ELL students for individual schools ranges from 0.6% to 18.9% with 6 schools being over 10%.

Nevertheless, the current demographic makeup of the District's public schools does not reflect the significant demographic changes that are taking place in District 13's rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods that include Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Prospect Heights and Bedford Stuyvesant. Although a recent report by Orrick and NY Appleseed indicates that many schools in Districts 13 have seen an increase in the number of white students during the past four years, 45% of the students that reside in District 13 are still not attending its public schools and it is highly unlikely that District 13 will reverse this trend and realize the benefits of having more diverse schools if its students continue to be assigned by the DOE's diversity "blind" and inequitable assignment policies.

Groundwork

Over the past years we have laid considerable groundwork in establishing consensus among these stakeholders on two points: 1) that there is a problem concerning educational inequities that need to be addressed; and 2) that controlled choice presents a viable option to address these inequities and improve the educational opportunities of all children. Leadership within each district has engaged a wide spectrum of stakeholders (that have included parents, teachers, principals, and elected and district officials) in the planning processes. These efforts have varied in form, ranging from charrettes to the development of task forces, yet have been unified by the emphasis on participatory, community-based processes. Indeed, a factor that has been significant in the success of controlled choice plans is the considerable leverage established via community "buy-in" that is established before the implementation phase. Each of our districts has also drawn upon the expertise of Michael Alves, a well-known education planner. Mr. Alves, along with his team (represented by The Alves Educational Planning Group, Ltd) bring over

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thirty years of experience designing and implementing comprehensive and diversity conscious controlled choice student assignment plans.

Controlled Choice

Controlled choice is a constitutionally permissible framework that actively promotes the integration of students from diverse socioeconomic, racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds with varying educational needs and achievement levels. The goal of controlled choice is simple: to create student assignment plans processes that are accessible, transparent, and implemented consistently for all families and ensure that all schools reflect the diversity of the student population in a district. Based on their size, diversity, and enrollment patterns, Community School Districts 1, 3, and 13 are suitable for controlled choice policy frameworks. Briefly outlined below are planning and implementation phases and related goals that would be required for the development of controlled choice plans.

Phase 1: Defining Diversity and Setting Community District Diversity Goals (Timeline: 8-12 Months)

Phase 1 of this project focuses on how diversity should be defined.

Planning teams that are comprised of a wide range of stakeholders will analyze the current student assignment plans and their related impact in relationship to district demographic data, school enrollment patterns, and students' academic achievement. Based on this assessment, planning teams will identify the criteria or "controls" for diversity that should be considered for a district-specific controlled choice plan. The findings of the planning team will be documented in the form of a written memorandum that delineates what was learned and agreed upon as the planning process moves forward.

Phase 2: Developing a Community District Driven Choice-Based Diversity Conscious Student Assignment Plan (Timeline: 6-8 Months)

Phase 2 focuses on the development of a diversity conscious controlled choice student assignment policy. While plans are district-specific, Alves Educational Planning Group has identified the following best practices as critical to the success of controlled choice plans:

1. **Grandfathering:** Students already enrolled in a Community District Public School will be allowed to remain in their assigned school and will not be involuntarily reassigned to another school.
2. **Sibling Assignments:** Siblings will be allowed to attend the same school provided that they are attending the school at the same time.
3. **Proximity Assignments:** Students who reside within walking distance from a school will be given a priority to attend that school.
4. **Diversity:** All assignments would be subject to the race neutral, diversity goals established for the Community School District.

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5. **Choice:** All parents would be allowed to rank-order their preferred schools of choice.
6. **Scope of Choice:** All of the Community School District's elementary and middle public schools and grade-levels would be included in the diversity conscious choice-based student assignment policy.
7. **Pre-K Assignments:** Every effort should be made to include Pre-K students in the diversity conscious choice-based student assignment policy.
8. **Assignment Lotteries:** Batched application assignment lotteries will be conducted for students enrolling in the entry-grades of the Community District's elementary and middle schools.
9. **Transparency:** The algorithm that will be used to assign the lottery applicants will be transparent and fully comprehensible to all parents and have a proven track record of promoting diversity and maximizing first-choice assignments.
10. **Testing:** Mock student assignment lotteries will be conducted to beta test the efficacy of the diversity conscious choice based assignment algorithm.
11. **Walk-In Assignments:** All "over-the-counter" or no-lottery walk-in students will be assigned to a school of choice with available seats in accordance with provisions of diversity conscious choice-based student assignment policy.
12. **Facilities Utilization:** Enrollment capacities will be established for each school and program and no school or program will be allowed to become overcrowded.
13. **Stability of Assignment:** Once assigned no students will be involuntarily re-assigned to another school.
14. **Family Resource Centers:** Each Community School District will establish a Family Resource Center that will coordinate the parent outreach and targeted recruitment efforts associated with the implementation diversity conscious choice-based student assignment policy.
15. **School Improvement:** Each Community District will develop a school improvement plan for facilitating the replication of attractive schools and programs and the development of new programs that will attract diverse student population groups.
16. **Monitoring:** Each Community School District will establish a community-based monitoring committee that will document and assess the implementation of the diversity conscious choice-based student assignment policy.

Phase 3: Pilot Implementation and Evaluation

Phase 3 focuses on implementation. Each Community School District will develop an operational plan for the implementation of their diversity conscious controlled choice student assignment policy. The operational plans will be drafted at the end of Phase 2 and will be utilized to guide the implementation of the new assignment policy effective for the 2015-16 school year. The piloted implementation will be carried out over a three year period and will be fully assessed and evaluated to determine the policy's strengths

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and weaknesses and transfer value for other community school districts as well as the City's high schools.

**Presentation at New York City Council, Committee on Education,
Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools**

December 11, 2014

New York City Council Chambers - City Hall

Submitted by Yasmin Secada, representing *District 3 Equity in Education Task Force*

My name is Yasmin Secada, and I'm a co-coordinator with Flor Donoso of the Parent Leadership Project (PLP), and a steering committee member of the *District 3 Equity in Education Task Force*. * I am pleased to be here today to share with you the work we have been doing in Community School District 3.

District 3, which stretches from 59th Street to 122nd Streets, mostly along the West Side of Manhattan (and includes the neighborhoods of the Upper West Side, Manhattan Valley, and the southern portion of Central Harlem) is one of the most racially and economically diverse districts in the nation's largest school system, yet is also one of the most segregated and unequal.

Although our district's public school population averages 66% students of color, many of our elementary schools do not reflect this reality.

According to the criteria put forth by UCLA's Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles recent report, "New York State's Extreme School Segregation" (March 2014), "intensely segregated" schools are schools with less than 10 percent white student enrollment, and "apartheid schools" are schools with less than 1 percent white student enrollment. Based on these criteria, nine schools in District 3 are "intensely segregated;" and of those nine schools two are "apartheid schools."

According to the Task Force's findings, CSD3's current admissions policies and criteria have resulted in uneven access to the district's schools and an uneven distribution of students:

- **Socio Economic Status:** the combined average Economic Need Index for District 3 public elementary schools is 61%. However, some schools range under 15% while others range as high as 97-100%.
- **English Language Learners:** ELLs comprise 8.8% of District 3 students, yet the percentage of ELLs at District 3 schools ranges from a low of 0.2% to a high of 18.9%.

- **Race:** Approximately two-thirds (66.5%) of District 3's students are Black or Latino. Some schools, however, are comprised of 95-99% Black and Latino students while at other schools, less than 30% of the student body is comprised of Black and Latino students.

For many years, a member-led social justice organization, the Center for Immigrant Families (now PLP) challenged inequitable admissions and segregated and unequal schools. CIF documented the stories of over 300 low-income parents of color and identified disparate treatment and mechanisms of exclusion at work in CSD3. At PLP, we are committed to organizing through the lens of racial and economic justice, and our community has to include all segments of the community. As we think about our schools, we must always ask, who has access and who doesn't.

In 2012, the Parent Leadership Project joined forces with educational leaders in CSD 3 to spearhead a district-wide task force to examine the inequality in CSD 3 schools.

Amongst other reasons, the Task Force responded to a need for new and innovative policy. Other policy measures have not worked: the 2009 federal magnet grant recognized the racial and socioeconomic disparities among schools in CSD3 and awarded the district an \$11 million grant to address the high rates of racial isolation. Despite best efforts and good intentions, the magnet grant had limited impact.

The task force includes educators, community leaders, parents, and education activists with the common goal of furthering equitable access for all students to all schools in our district. Over the course of two years of meetings, we came to a consensus on a framework for creating a fair and equitable admissions policy in CSD 3, which we have recently published and have begun to share with others. As our findings demonstrate, a controlled choice policy can effectively achieve equity in CSD 3 and ensure that our public schools reflect, respect, and serve all families in the district.

We look forward to continuing our work together—work that is rooted in our communities. Thank you.

***District 3 task force steering committee members include Ujju Aggarwal, Teresa Arboleda, Donna Nevel, Yasmin Secada, Lizabeth Sostre**

Good afternoon. My name is Lisa Donlan and I am the President of CEC 1 (the LES and East Village in Manhattan), and I want to thank the Education Committee Chair Danny Dromm and City Council member Lander and others for holding this important hearing on school segregation.

CSD 1 has a long history of fighting for equity and diversity in our community schools.

In 1991 the old CSB, led by parents and community members removed the school zones or catchments to create an equity based assignment plan whose goal was to help all the schools in the neighborhood reflect and serve the whole community. Based on parent choice, the plan controlled for fairness and equity by establishing lotteries - initially, for racial and ethnic targets that were pegged to the community census, and then - over time to include other factors such as academic achievement, and SES status .

As a data study undertaken by an independent urban planning agency last year demonstrates, admission policy matters. That plan the study shows, was helping to progressively integrate the D1 schools.

With the onset of Mayoral control and the dissolution of school boards and district offices, the plan was dissolved over community protest and eventually centralized policy for admissions was imposed by by OSEPO, turning controlled choice into blind choice.

As the D1 data study (and reams of research across the US) make clear, choice alone segregates. Under Bloomberg's market based choice plan, the D1 schools have begun to re- stratify by race, SES and academic achievement.

Over the past 10 or more years the CEC and the D1 community, with the support of our electeds, have engaged with the DoE to address the growing inequities among our schools caused by the choice plan.

The previous administration did make some changes – giving preference to siblings, eventually allowing Pre- K students to have priority to articulate into Kindergarten- but the past administration's response to our calls for managing choice for fairness and equity was always: CHOICE IS EQUITY.

Not only does the independent data study make clear that is not true, a quick review of the demographics of the D1 Elementary and Middle Schools shows high concentrations of at risk student in a few schools, with some schools serving proportionally very few ELLS, SWD, STH. D1 schools are also racially and economically highly stratified as well.

In the hand out made available to you there is a recap of and links to that data and history.

I just to want to catch you up on our most recent initiative- we have piloted and launched a series of monthly community workshops that bring together diverse groups of community stakeholders to build consensus around the diversity priorities and values that matter to our community.

In the workshops diversity school admissions planner Michael Alves is helping us to define together what diversity looks like- how we define it and how we measure it.

At the end of the school year we will have completed the first phase of a pilot program on school diversity based assignment plans by creating community wide conversation on diversity and integration, doing

community outreach and building consensus around a solution that will create equal opportunities for all children and families in District One.



Community Education Council For District One

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Daniella Phillips–District 1 Community Superintendent

SCHOOL DIVERSITY & EQUITY

History of Advocacy

1991-2002: School board removes zones/catchments and implements measures of fairness for lotteries based on gender, race, ethnicity, and eventually adding linguistic and academic diversity

2004-2007 Community School Board is dissolved and regional structure is implemented. Move toward centralization is finalized in the March of 2007, making all lotteries blind. Gifted and Talented programming introduced late summer 2007 without follow up on policy for early childhood/elementary. Strong community advocacy through working groups is established to advocate for continuity between Pre k-k, and sibling priority. Summer of 2007, Supreme Court rules that diversity can be used as compelling education goal as long as it can be defined and achieved with markers other than race alone.

2008-2010: Enrollment is centralized for K admissions, but DoE grants policy giving preference to returning Pre-k students selecting their returning school as well as sibling priority. Advocacy continues. Deputy Chancellor John King endorses equitable and diversity based admissions plan as mechanism for improving school achievement.

2011 – 2012: Spring 2011 Chancellor Walcott appears at CEC, responding to request for mechanisms of fairness regarding equitable and diverse admissions by saying that choice is equity. Advocacy efforts increased through speak-outs and educational workshops with Michael Alves on the permissibility of diversity based admissions. CEC 1 partners with D3 for community forum to discuss the effects of the DoE changing district's controlled choice to pure choice and the ensuing segregation. Summer 2012, Office of Civil Rights complaint filed claiming discriminatory admissions against 3 gentrifying schools in D1

2013 – 2014: Neighborhood School drafts letter requesting PS 133 set aside model. Data Study is released in fall of 2013 detailing stratification resulting from choice. School Diversity workshop piloted in March 2013. On September 17, 2014, CEC 1 held a School Diversity Town Hall with Chancellor Fariña to present to the community information about the current demographic break down in District One schools.

See more at- <http://cec1.org/district-1/history-of-unzoning/choice-admissions-timeline/>

Data Study

This research study considers the effects of Open Choice policy from 2000- 2010 on the levels of diversity within the District 1 schools. The presentation was made by Adam Lubinsky, PhD AICP and Managing Principal of WXY, a planning and design firm; George Janes, AICP, principal planner at George Janes Associates; and Ajay Khashu, president of Youth Studies, a firm specializing in the evaluation of educational programs.

Executive Findings:

1. From 1999-2011, there has been an increase of clustering of students by race and free lunch status, increasing each school's dissimilarity from the other schools in the District. This increase has been most pronounced during the open enrollment period.
2. From 1999-2011, there is an increase in variability between schools in terms of student achievement as measured by Math and ELA scores.
3. Based on a comparison of 2000 and 2010 Census information, there appears to be a sharp increase in the number of children with the District 1 area attending NYC DOE schools (defined as "uptake").
4. When compared to other NYC schools districts that utilize zoned assignment such as District 13 in Brooklyn which has also gentrified assignment, such as District 13 in Brooklyn which has also gentrified considerably and has a large proportion of public housing, the stratification of schools by race/ free lunch/ achievement scores and the increase in "uptake" is noteworthy.

See more at- <http://cecd1.org/cecl-initiatives/school-diversity-equity-data-study/>

District One Inequities Under Open Choice

Students in Temporary Housing

The district average of Students in Temporary Housing for 25 Pre K – 8 D1 schools is 13%. In four schools, Students in Temporary Housing make up 20%-43% (up to 3 times the district average) of the schools' demographics. On the other end of the spectrum, in 8 schools fewer than 5% of students live in temporary housing.

Economically Disadvantaged

The district average in 25 D1 elementary schools (Pre k- 8) of economically disadvantaged students is 79%. 10 of these schools enroll over 90% economically disadvantaged while half of these (5) are at 100%, yet 4 schools serve fewer than 50%.

Title I

Across 25 Pre k – 8 schools, the average Title I is 75% with 18 of 25 schools meeting the threshold of 60% Title I enrollment. Half (9) serve over 90% students eligible for free/reduced lunch. Five D1 schools serve 100% students eligible free reduced lunch while 5 schools serve below 50%.

English Language Learners

The district average for English Language Learners across 25 D1 Pre k - 8 schools is 10%. 8 schools serve 5% or fewer English Language Learners, while 6 schools enroll 3 to 4 times as many English Language Learners

(17 - 21%).

Students with Disabilities

District 1 serves a high number of students with special needs and as result, our District Leadership Team has always tracked for equitable distribution of students with special needs in our community schools. Removing the schools that have historically and structurally underserved students with disabilities –

Gifted & Talented and Dual Language- the district average rises from 27% to 29%. Students with disabilities are relatively evenly distributed around the mean (29%).

Demographic Breakdown

Across 25 D1 Pre k – 8 schools including two 6 – 12 schools, the average demographic of students are as follows:

Hispanic – 51%
Black – 19%
White – 13%
Asian – 15%

- 13 of the 25 D1 schools are comprised of 82% - 97% Black and Latino student populations
- 3 schools enroll closer to the district average percentages of students
- 3 schools serve higher than average percentages of Asian students
- 6 schools serve higher than average percentages of White students

See the entire presentation at - <http://cecd1.org/cec1-initiatives/1256-2/>

School Diversity Workshop Series

The School Diversity Workshop series, originally piloted in March 2013, is designed to build consensus around school diversity priorities for a community driven controlled choice policy

Throughout the 2014-2015 school year, CEC 1 will host seven sessions. Each session will consist of 6-7 schools in District One with 5-7 representatives from each school community consisting of parents, staff, administration, and/or school community leaders.

Workshop Goals

- Provide a conceptual framework for controlled choice using key school diversity factors
- Build consensus based around diversity factor priorities to create a community-driven controlled choice student assignment policy.
- Create an environment of collaboration that encourages dialogue about diversity

Learn more at - <http://cecd1.org/cec1-initiatives/diversity-equity/>

Community School District One

Community School District 1 represents 31 schools serving students in grades pre-K-12 that are geographically located in the China Town, East Village and Lower East Side sections of the borough of Manhattan, New York. The District is comprised of 13 elementary schools; 5 middle/intermediate/junior high schools; 4 K-8 schools; 2 6-12 schools; 6 high schools; and 1 city-wide Gifted and Talented K-12 School. There are 4 charter schools in the district. The District serves a population of approximately 12,183 students from culturally diverse backgrounds, and the District's community is home to many new immigrants from China and the Dominican Republic.

According to the latest available ethnic data from 2012-13 21.6% are Asian or Pacific Islander; 17.5% are Black or African American; 42.10% are Hispanic or Latino, and 16.8% are White and fewer than 1% of the students are American Indian/Alaska Native. Approximately 18.2% of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and receive the full continuum of special education services.

11.36% of District One students are English language learners (ELLs), with Spanish as the dominant language. 129 of the ELL students in the District are Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE).

The majority of students in the district are from low-income families with 65.45% qualifying for free lunch. 5.58% of students qualified for reduced lunch. Approximately 6.93% of students are in temporary housing (STH). Of the 31 schools in the district, 24 are Title I eligible.ⁱ

District One Enrollment History

In 1991, the District One Community School Board replaced zoning catchments with a choice-based policy that aimed to promote diversity and improve equity of access within the district. Diversity-based lotteries were established in schools with more applicants than seats. Based on census and enrollment data, the district lotteries aimed for gender, race and ethnicity benchmarks that would create schools that reflected the neighborhood demographics.

Around this time all day Pre-K programs were established in all district schools which offered priority to siblings to foster educational continuity and schools as learning community, as whole families became integral part of their school communities. In 2003 Community School Boards were dissolved under Mayoral control. In the years that followed, the admissions process became increasingly centralized. In 2007, following a widely misinterpreted Supreme Court decision on race and admissions, the District One community lost the ability to control for diversity and equity. The process for oversubscribed schools became a "blind lottery", with no controls for diversity or fairness.ⁱⁱ

District 1 Segregation/Stratification

With the centralization of admissions and the imposition of market-based school choice, District One has seen a significant rise in school segregation based on race, free lunch status, and student achievement.

72% of students in District One are considered “economically disadvantaged” by NYSED, based on free/reduced lunch as well as other economic assistance programs families receiveⁱⁱⁱ. According to the NYC DoE 2012-2013 demographic snapshot, schools in District One with a high percentage of black and Hispanic students also have higher percentages of IEP and ELL students as well as a higher economic needs index. For example, PS 15 serves a population of which 33.3% of students have IEP and 13.2% are classified as ELLs. Black and Hispanic students represent 90.6% of the student population. PS 15’s economic needs index is 1.25. In comparison, PS 364, the Earth School’s black and Hispanic population is 47.7%, 17.4% of students have IEPs and, 3.9% are classified as ELLs. Earth School’s economic needs index is 0.34.^{iv}

In October 2013, the Community Education Council (CEC) of District One commissioned a study to assess the effects of open choice student assignment policy on school segregation on District One schools. Based on ELA and Math scores for grades 4 and 8, the schools in District One have become increasingly dissimilar by academic achievement between 2000 and 2011. In grade 4, the variability index increased by nearly 10% over the course of the study period in both Math and ELA. In grade 8, while the results are less linear, there was a net 20% increase in variability among schools in both Math and ELA.^v

Community Engagement

The mission of the Community Education Council for District One includes advocating for an equitable admissions policy that will help schools to reflect the diversity of the neighborhood. Over the past 10 years, the CEC has actively worked with District One schools and community members by creating policy statements and resolutions, hosting town halls, workshops, and speak outs, in addition to legislative breakfasts, visits, and meetings. Similarly, the CEC has worked to establish task forces and working groups to explore mechanisms that facilitate diverse school populations and improve equity of access through structural changes to admissions policy.^{vi}

Since January 2013, CEC One has worked with school leaders and parents at The Neighborhood School (PS363) to develop an admissions policy based on the PS 133 set-aside model, approved the year prior by the DoE. The DoE General Council placed the proposal on hold pending the resolution of an Office for Civil Rights complaint, recently tabling the matter until June for the Fall 2014 admissions cycle.

District Actions and Proposals

From June 2014 through June 2015 District One stakeholders will participate in a series of outreach meetings, communication efforts, workshops and town hall style forums. The initial town hall will introduce community members to the diversity planning process, and allow the larger neighborhood and school-based community members to providing input from their varying perspectives across eight workshops designed to build consensus on school diversity goals and priorities.

Workshop Series

Workshop Goals

- Provide a conceptual framework for controlled choice using key school diversity factors
- Create an environment of collaboration that encourages dialogue about diversity
- Build consensus based around diversity factor priorities to create a community-driven controlled choice student assignment policy.

Each workshop will consist of two learning session, facilitated by Michael Alves followed by activities that explore controlled choice concepts.. Participants (parents, staff, administration, and school community leaders), using a variety of tiny, brightly colored objects, or “found objects” will develop a personalized conceptualization of diversity. The process is first introduced by asking people to build a childhood memory from items located at group stations. Participants will see that, despite differing backgrounds, people come from a similar starting point: childhood imagination. The purpose of this exercise is to move beyond normative discourse about what diversity is or looks like.

Part I – Learning Session & Break Out Group

“Is it legally permissible for school officials to voluntarily and consciously promote diversity and avoid racial/ethnic segregation in the assignment of students to public schools in the United States?”

Michael Alves will explain the historical and legal context of controlled choice and provide information on the different types of assignment policies. From this; participants, broken up into teams will depict what school diversity looks like, using the found objects. Teams will share back to larger groups, highlighting common themes. Finally, the larger working groups will share with each other and highlight similarities and differences.

Part II - Learning Session & Break Out Group

"What is Controlled Choice?"

Michael Alves will give an overview of the key features of a diversity conscious controlled choice student assignment plan:

- Diversity Factors
- Assignment Options
- How the seats in District One schools should be allocated to achieve the diversity goals.

Each participant will begin by prioritizing various diversity factors on a worksheet and then, again in small teams, collaboratively deciding on team priorities. The entire working group will then vote on diversity factor priorities.

Timeline

The community established priorities from each workshop will be aggregated and shared with the public for feedback and timeline of next steps. The CEC for District One will work with Michael Alves and the DoE to begin building capacity for the implementation of the community-driven controlled choice policy. This includes planning with the Office of Student Enrollment, district superintendents, and principals, to develop an implementation plan.

In addition, substantial public outreach will inform District One families about the family resource center. Located in the District One central office, the parent resource center serve as a place where community members can go to access important information including the types of programs District One schools offer, class size information, as well as materials to assist in the school selection process. Throughout phase II and implementation, the family resource center will support and guide families throughout the enrollment process.

As enrollment deadlines approach, families will engage in public forums, informational fairs and school tours. Parents and families can meet at the family resource center to discuss options and get equipped with tools and information for making a sound decision.

Outcomes and Measures

Each workshop will include a pre and post survey to assess each participants' change in perspective on what diversity looks like and how they function within a controlled choice assignment policy. These surveys will assess the shared level of engagement and support for the proposal.

ⁱ Information from 2013-2014 District Comprehensive Education Plan

ⁱⁱ Admissions Timeline: <http://cecd1.org/district-1/history-of-unzoning/choice-admissions-timeline/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://data.nysed.gov/businessrules.php?type=enrollment>

^{iv} Overview of District One public Elementary and Middle School 2012-2013

School	% IEP	Economic Need Index	% Black/Hispanic	% ELL	4th Gr ELA	4th Gr Math	% Overag-
P.S. 015 Roberto Clemente	33.3%	1.25	90.6%	13.2%	2.38	2.57	
P.S. 019 Asher Lewy	27.3%	0.65	75.3%	9.6%	2.46	2.67	
P.S. 020 Anna Silver	20.8%	0.85	62.9%	15.9%	2.60	2.89	
P.S. 034 Franklin D. Roosevelt	22.9%	1.01	90.8%	8.5%	2.70	3.14	
The STAR Academy - P.S. 83	31.2%	0.72	89.5%	4.5%	2.54	2.74	
P.S. 051 Robert Simon	41.4%	0.85	85.4%	9.8%	2.52	2.70	
P.S. 110 Florence Nightingale	15.3%	0.42	58.3%	5.8%	3.00	3.28	
P.S. 134 Henriette Stold	22.2%	0.82	70.4%	11.8%	2.47	2.85	
P.S. 137 John L. Bernstein	38.5%	1.01	82.0%	14.4%	2.52	2.51	
P.S. 140 Nathan Straus	50.4%	0.92	92.3%	16.1%	2.51	2.84	
P.S. 142 Amalia Castro	19.9%	0.95	88.2%	10.8%	2.52	2.69	
P.S. 154m Shuang Wen	3.3%	0.48	10.8%	15.6%	3.21	3.21	
P.S. 128 The Island School	22.2%	1.26	93.3%	17.4%	2.60	2.90	
Henry Street School for International Studies	52.3%	0.95	80.2%	17.4%	2.52	2.59	3.3%
Technology, Arts, and Sciences Studio	38.2%	0.80	86.7%	8.9%	2.62	2.90	1.8%
The East Village Community School	30.8%	0.26	42.7%	5.1%	3.14	3.53	
University Neighborhood Middle School	29.2%	0.94	86.6%	18.8%	2.58	2.71	2.8%
Collaborative Academy of Science, Technology, & Language/Arts Education	29.3%	0.83	82.0%	8.4%	2.69	3.12	2.6%
The Children's Workshop School	25.9%	0.41	49.1%	5.8%	2.77	2.87	
Neighborhood School	30.3%	0.36	45.9%	4.2%	3.01	2.97	
Earth School	17.4%	0.94	47.7%	3.9%	3.02	3.14	
School for Global Leaders	25.2%	0.80	95.2%	13.6%	2.71	3.00	4.4%
East Side Community School	36.1%	0.55	81.1%	1.2%	3.89	3.28	2.0%
New Explorations into Science, Technology and Math High School	3.7%	0.15	17.2%	0.2%	3.92	4.16	
Tompkins Square Middle School	24.3%	0.50	61.6%	4.7%	2.97	3.40	3.1%

Source: <http://schools.nyc.gov/accountability/tools/reports/default.htm#citywide>

*The Economic Need Index reflects the socioeconomics of the school population. It is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Economic Need Index} = (\text{Percent Temporary Housing}) + (\text{Percent HRA-eligible} * 0.5) + (\text{Percent Free Lunch Eligible} * 0.5)$$

For universal lunch schools, the percentage of free lunch eligible comes from the last year the school collected lunch forms. "HRA-eligible" refers to students whose families have been identified by the Human Resources Administration as receiving certain types of public assistance. HRA-eligible is based on current year data. Students are identified in temporary housing if they have been identified in temporary housing anytime in the past four years. Students identified in temporary housing who are also HRA eligible count toward both percentages. Students who are HRA eligible also count toward Percent Free Lunch Eligible.

^v <http://cecd1.org/district-1/school-diversity-equity-data-study/>

^{vi} Admissions Timeline: <http://cecd1.org/district-1/history-of-unzoning/choice-admissions-timeline/>

Testimony and Hearing

Int. No. 511: In relation to requiring the Department of Education report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within schools, including but not limited to, data within charter schools and special programs.

Res. No. 453: Calling upon the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity. Dec. 11, 2014

Introduction

My name is Megan Fisk, and I am the Director of Family Services at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Community Center. I am grateful for the opportunity to address the important school diversity issues Int. 511 and Res. 453 seek to address.

Each week, 6,000 individuals visit The Center and in addition to our Youth, Families, Wellness and Recovery programming, The Center is host to over 300 different educational, cultural, professional, and recreational groups. I am here today to testify in strong support of the Committee on Education's proposal to require the Department of Education to report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within school and for the Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity.

Current Situation and Challenges

The Center annually serves over 2000 LGBT youth and families and has contact with countless school personnel through community outreach and trainings. I have worked with families and youth in New York City for almost 10 years, and school diversity, and the institutions abilities to competently address diverse family and student needs is a subject that arises time and time again. In addition to identifying as LGBT, many of our community members are youth of color, have an immigrant experience, are impacted by poverty, underemployment and are affected by multiple oppressions. From young people accessing Youth Services to find support for being bullied in the hallways at school, to LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care sharing their personal stories about the challenges of graduating on time after repeated "disrupted" placements, and to parents wondering if they have to move neighborhoods or boroughs to find an affirming school for their family, the common theme is simple – youth and

families just want and need safe and supportive schools to learn, thrive and succeed.

Community impact

While the New York City public school system has made strides, such as the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and the 2007 launch by the Department of Education Respect for All program, there remains little to no oversight of these requirements other than through hearings like this. We continue to see many students and families face what is often called bullying but is really discrimination, harassment, assault and worse, based on real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or family make-up.

While there have been great strides towards equality for LGBT community members in the nation and in New York State, there are still disparities in the treatment of LGBT families and youth in New York City public schools. We know that institutional policies and the lack of inclusion obstruct the wellbeing of LGBT families. A 2008 nationwide survey of LGBT parents and their school-age children found that 40% of students with LGBT parents reported being verbally harassed at school because of their families¹ and that key findings of a 2009 survey of LGBT students in New York City² showed:

- 3 in 4 experienced verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation and about 3 in 5 because of their gender expression.
- 1 in 4 was physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) because of their gender

¹ Movement Advancement Project, Family Equality Council and Center for American

Progress. (2011) *All Children Matter: How Legal and Social Inequalities Hurt LGBT Families (Full Report)*. Accessed here: <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/all-children-matter-full-report.pdf>

² GLSEN. (2011). *School Climate in New York City (Research Brief)*. New York: GLSEN.

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expression and 1 in 10 was physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked or injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation.

- Nearly half reported experiencing electronic harassment or “cyberbullying” and about 40% had property (e.g., car, clothing or books) deliberately damaged and/or stolen.
- Furthermore, the majority of NYC students who were harassed or assaulted in school never reported it to school staff, or family member. Among those who did, nearly half didn’t feel that they got the help they needed.

In our LGBT Parent Advisory group, we hear concerns about the lack of inclusive forms, school staff that are not culturally competent in working with LGBT families, and the lack of educational materials and books that are inclusive of LGBT families and identities.

Comments for the City Council

LGBT headed households remain under-represented and under-valued in New York City public schools. When school staff and administrators fail to make the hallway, bathroom, and classroom spaces free of homophobic and transphobic language, our children are scared, angry, and alienated.

We are hopeful that the recognition of LGBT students, family and staff in public schools will create safer learning environments for all, and that requiring the Department of Education to not only report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity, but will also hold them accountable that ensuring staff are accessing necessary resources and mandated trainings. When bullying occurs, victims need to be supported and offending peers educated in issues of diversity, and appropriate language and behavior is modeled by school staff and administrators. Centralized forms with gender-neutral language and parentage status for registration, emergency, and medical contact forms are a small way to ensure that LGBT families, of all make-ups, are included and their experiences validated.

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We recommend that the City Council continue to implement the Respect For All Program and the Dignity For All Students Act, and actively seek out the successes and challenges of both. City Council supported and mandated anti-bullying and harassment policies, trained and effective school personnel, active and supported Gay-Straight alliances, LGBT-inclusive curricular resources, and the active participation of parents and staff can positively affect school climate and ensure that New York City public schools are inclusive for all LGBT students, family, and staff.

Conclusion

The Center is thankful to Council Member and Chair of the Committee on Education Daniel Dromm for holding this hearing. We are hopeful that Department of Education can do more to recognize and support the diverse population of children and families, including LGBT students and families, in public schools. Your support in addressing this is needed, and The Center is a willing collaborator to work with the City Council on how to best recognize the LGBT population in Department of Education settings.

Thank you,
Megan Fisk, LMSW
Director of Family Services
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender
Community Center

Testimony in Support of New York City School Diversity Bills
New York City Council, Education Committee
Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
Thursday, December 11, 2014

The National Coalition on School Diversity (NCSD) is a network of national civil rights organizations, university-based research centers, and state and local coalitions working to expand support for government policies that promote school diversity and reduce racial isolation. We also support the work of the state and local school diversity practitioners. Our work is informed by an advisory panel of scholars and academic researchers whose work relates to issues of equity, diversity, and desegregation/integration. See www.school-diversity.org.

The National Coalition on School Diversity respectfully submits this written testimony in support of the following agenda items:

1. Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding student assignment, admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.
2. Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.7738/ A.9979, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.
3. A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of education report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within schools, including but not limited to, disparities within charter schools and special programs.

Benefits of Diversity in Education

The resegregation of U.S. schools in recent years has resulted in an unequal distribution of educational opportunity throughout the nation, with the academic performance of low-income and minority students suffering as a result. Taking steps to understand and increase racial and economic diversity in schools can be an effective method of countering this disturbing trend. The U.S. Department of Education has observed that “[t]he benefits of a diverse school environment cannot be overstated.”¹ A significant body of academic research supports this statement, indicating that low-income and minority students exhibit better academic performance in diverse, rather than segregated, school settings.² Economically diverse schools may also have

¹ *Promoting Diversity and Desegregation*, 3(4) *The Magnet Compass* 1, p. 1, available at http://www.msapcenter.com/doc/MagnetCompass_July2014.pdf.

² Racially and socioeconomically integrated schools have higher rates of graduation than high-poverty, segregated schools. See “Who Graduates? Who Doesn’t?: A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of

greater access to fundraising resources, as well as a greater distribution of political influence, which can potentially result in a more equitable distribution of educational resources and greater gains for students.³ Furthermore, the benefits of diversity in schools are not restricted to minority students, research shows a diverse educational setting can lead to improved critical thinking skills and better academic performance in non-minority students.⁴

Diversity Deficit in New York City Schools

Nationwide, racial isolation and poverty concentration in schools have been on the rise, with the average student experiencing a greater degree of racial isolation than was seen as far back as 1970.⁵ In particular, public schools in New York state have recently been recognized as the most segregated in the country.⁶ These high rates of segregation are present in New York City schools, which is particularly troubling given the City's exceptionally diverse population.⁷

2001," Christopher B. Swanson, Education Policy Center and The Urban Institute, at 35, *available at* http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410934_WhoGraduates.pdf, ("there is a strong and very detrimental linkage between graduation rates and the environmental conditions that go along with factors like poverty and segregation."); Brief of 553 Social Scientists as *Amici Curiae* in Support of Respondents, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School Dist. No. 1*, 127 S. Ct. 2738 (2007), at App. 39, ("An examination of over 13,000 public high schools across the country in 2004 showed that schools with a higher concentration of blacks and Latinos tend to have lower "promoting power," which indicates the percentage of students who stay in school and are promoted each year from grades 9 to 12.") citing Robert Balfanz and Thomas C. West, "Racial Isolation and High School Promoting Power," in Graduation Gap Policy Brief (Baltimore: Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, 2006). *See also* Robert Balfanz & Thomas C. West, "Racial Isolation and High School Promoting Power," *Graduation Gap Policy Brief*, CENTER FOR SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS, Johns Hopkins Univ. (2006). 8; Jonathan Guryan, *Desegregation and Black Dropout Rates*, AM. ECON. REV. 94, no. 4 (2004), at 919-43. Racially integrated schools also result in better reading scores for minority students and smaller achievement gaps than racially isolated schools. *See* "The Race Gap in High School Reading Achievement: Why School Racial Composition Still Matters," Shelly Brown-Jeffy, (2006), 13 *Race, Gender & Class* 3/4, pp. 268-294, at 290 *available at* <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41675185>, ("These study results reveal that the Black-White gap in reading achievement in schools with less than 10% Black, Hispanic, or Native American students enrolled is substantial. On the contrary, results show that schools with 25-55% Black, Hispanic, and/or Native American students have average reading achievement scores that are on average almost two points higher than in schools with 55% [or] more Black, Hispanic, and/or native American Students. While these schools do have a Black-White achievement gap, the gap is not as large as in schools where less [than] 10% of the population is Black, Hispanic, and/or Native American.") .For a comprehensive survey of recent research, *see* the website of the National Coalition on School Diversity, *available at* <http://school-diversity.org>; *see also* NY Appleseed, "KEY RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: HOW DIVERSITY PROMOTES BETTER EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES," *available at* <https://www.appleseednetwork.org/promoting-diversity-in-new-york-city-schools/>.

³ *See generally* Richard Kahlenberg, *Turnaround Schools That Work: Moving Beyond Separate but Equal* (2009), *available at* <https://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-turnaround.pdf>.

⁴ Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, *Research Brief 8: How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools*, National Coalition on School Diversity (2012), *available at* <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf>.

⁵ Gary Orfield, John Kucsera & Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, *E Pluribus... Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students*, Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles (2012), 21, *available at* http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/e-pluribus...separation-deepening-double-segregation-for-more-students/orfield_epluribus_revised_complete_2012.pdf.

⁶ Gary Orfield & John Kucsera, *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction and a Damaged Future*, Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles (2014), *available at* <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/ny-norfler-report-placeholder/Kucsera-New-York-Extreme-Segregation-2014.pdf>.

⁷ *State & County QuickFacts: New York (city), New York*, United States Census Bureau, *available at* <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3651000.html>; Nancy Foner, *How exceptional is New York? Migration and multiculturalism in the empire city*, 30(6) *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 999 (2007), *available at*

Fortunately New York City has an enormously diverse population which could be leveraged, along with other educational investments, to bring significant educational gains.⁸

How Proposed Agenda Items Support Diversity in New York City Schools

The proposed resolutions and bill support diversity in NYC schools in multiple ways. First, by calling on the NYC Department of Education to recognize the importance of diversity and integration in education and set diversity as a priority for education policy in the city, the City Council can put public pressure on the Department to expand innovative, popular, and effective diversity plans such as the plan in place at PS 133 in Park Slope. Second, the City Council resolution calling on the Governor to approved changes the admissions policy for NYC's specialized high school programs has the potential to result in admissions policy changes that can diversify these elite, racially isolated schools, resulting in an environment that more closely resembles the City as a whole, preparing NYC's top-tier students to function at a high level in an increasingly diverse America. Finally, amending the administrative code of NYC to require annual reporting on progress and efforts towards creating diversity in schools will not only place additional pressure on the Department to implement diversity strategies by creating a public record, but will provide a wealth of information for advocates and policy makers nationwide regarding the success or failure of certain strategies.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to comment. We would be glad to meet with the City Council Education Committee and further discuss the proposed items, as well as the benefits of diversity in education more generally.

Sincerely,

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Philip Tegeler
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Washington, DC

Tanya Clay House
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<http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/peoplingnyc2012wednesday/files/2012/01/Foner-how-exceptional-new-york.pdf>

⁸ *Supra* note 2.

TESTIMONY
OF THE
STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL BLACK ALUMNI DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

Before the

Education Committee of the New York City Council

City Council Chambers
City Hall
New York, NY

December 11, 2014

10am

Testimony Presented by:
Carole E. Brown
Tanya Messado
Heidi Reich
Kimberly Denise Williams

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I. Education Committee Testimony: Recommendations of Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative to improve the specialized high school admissions process

Recommendation 1: "Establish the fairness and validity of any test that is part of the specialized high school admissions process."

Testimony of Heidi Reich:

Good Morning: My name is Heidi Reich and I am member of Stuyvesant High School's class of 1985. I am currently employed as math teacher at LaGuardia High School and a doctoral candidate at Columbia University's Teachers College in the field of mathematics education.

Although I am not Black, I support the goals of the Stuy Black Alumni Diversity Initiative because it pains me that the current student body at my alma mater has such an embarrassingly and shamefully small proportion of Black and Brown students, and because I firmly believe that, as a society, we have a deep responsibility to find and nurture real intellectual talent, which can be a difficult task; as opposed to granting admission to those with access to resources, which is relatively easy.

For this reason I have worked closely with the Stuy Black Alumni Diversity Initiative to help increase the number of Black and Latino students who are admitted to Stuyvesant and the city's other specialized high schools. In 2011, I recruited colleagues to provide instruction to nearly 100 Black and Latino students as part of a free test prep boot camp which the group offered at the school. As a result of this experience, I became very familiar with the SHSAT and developed concerns about its fairness to test takers. I will be addressing these concerns, and the need to address these issues if a new test is adopted.

As is the larger alumni community, our group is divided on whether a single test should continue to be used, and so as a group, we have not taken a position on that issue. Regardless, however, of whether a

single test continues to be used or the admissions process is changed to allow consideration of more information about applicants, any test which is part of the admissions process must be fair to all applicants. The test should not contain elements that give an advantage to students who have had access to advanced curriculum and/or test prep. We feel that the inclusion of the scrambled paragraphs, in particular, favor those with access to test prep since that is not part of any school's standard curriculum. We feel strongly that it is important to align the content of the test with what is being taught in public schools.

We believe that it is possible to create a test that measures academic potential and critical thinking skills effectively without "watering down" the content of the SHSAT. It will be important to evaluate both the new test and its scoring methods to ensure that it actually measures what it purports to measure.

In the appendix provided, I have included a few questions from the SHSAT Student Handbook that I believe are unfair with the reasons why I believe them to be unfair. In general, they either test knowledge of material which a 7th or 8th grade student on grade level would not know or contain vocabulary to which a student on grade level would not have been exposed. As such, they do not test ability nor potential, but rather exposure to concepts and/or vocabulary.

If a student has never learned that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees and of a quadrilateral is 360 degrees, or is familiar with the theorem that vertical angles are congruent, s/he cannot answer this question correctly. I teach both of the latter concepts in 10th grade geometry.

A student who has never heard the term "prime factorization" will not be able to answer a question about it.

And the use of the word "inclusive" in an unfamiliar context transforms a problem that is not especially challenging to one that is "very challenging."

As I am a math teacher, I consider myself qualified to critique the math questions. We welcome the Department of Education's efforts to introduce a new SHSAT as an effort to address these serious concerns which impact opportunities for students each year.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this issue.

Recommendation 2. "Guarantee opportunities for exposure to enriched and accelerated instruction for all talented students."

Testimony of Tanya Messado:

I am a graduate of Georgetown Law School and Yale University. But before that I was a graduate of Stuyvesant High School, Class of 1993.

The African American and Latino student representation at the time was roughly 10%, roughly 300 students out of 3,000 in total. It is just a fraction of that today.

Like many of my Stuyvesant classmates, I grew up in a working-class family. Mine in particular had emigrated to New York from Jamaica during the 60's. My mother was a single parent who spent her days teaching at a preschool in Crown Heights and her evenings commuting to Garden City in Long Island to attend college courses at Adelphi University. Mine is a familiar story.

When I arrived at Stuyvesant in the fall of 1989 I knew that with effort it had the potential to open doors but I never realized exactly how impactful the experience could be. In the spring of 1993 I received an offer for a full scholarship to Yale University. My other classmates of color would in turn receive scholarship offers to Cornell, Harvard, Barnard and NYU. We are now lawyers, doctors, and tech entrepreneurs.

The list of notable Stuyvesant alumni is extensive:

Eric Holder, the U.S. Attorney General

Richard Buery, a Deputy Mayor Of New York City

Thelonius Monk, Jazz musician

Actors Lucy Liu, Tim Robbins, and Paul Reiser

Political advisor David Axelrod,

Success Academy's CEO Eva Moskowitz

I now reside in Crown Heights and have a two year-old daughter who will be entering Pre-K in the fall of 2016. I would like her to have the same educational opportunities as I was afforded. However, district 17 is historically one of the lowest performing school districts in the city. The options for gifted and talented programs in the neighborhood are few and far between.

Although G&T programs are a pipeline into the specialized high schools, there are limited numbers of them in African-American and Latino school districts. In an ideal world all neighborhood middle schools would adequately prepare its students to compete for spots in the city's top high schools. The reality of the situation is starkly aberrant. Only a small number of public schools in the city-- labeled by some as "feeder" schools -- send hundreds of students to Stuyvesant and the other specialized high schools each year, while many public schools send none. Two years ago there were no Gifted & Talented Kindergarten classes in all of District 17. If you won a spot at a program you had to try your luck finding a seat for your child out of district. This year in District 17 we still have only one. In comparison, District 2 has 12 G&T programs.[1] It's no surprise then that District 2 counts five feeder schools while District 17 counts none.[2]

Until two years ago there were no gifted and talented programs at any elementary schools in the district. The majority of Stuyvesant students arrive from feeder schools that are concentrated in a handful of neighborhoods throughout the city. None of those feeder schools are located in historically Black and Latino neighborhoods.

The disparity in applications to the G&T program by race and socio-economic stats is dramatic. As of 2011, roughly 70 percent of all New York City public school students were Black and Latino, but more than 70 percent of kindergartners in G&T programs were white or Asian.

Let's compare District 17 to District 2. District 17 covers the predominantly African-American working class neighborhoods of Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, and East Flatbush. District 2, on the other hand encompasses some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. In 2014 only 300 students in district 17 sat for the Kindergarten Gifted & Talented admissions test. In District 2, which encompasses the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city, (the East Side south of 97th Street and the West Side south of 59th street), that number was over 1800. [3] Of that number 449 students in district 2 were given offers, compared to 37 from district 17.

The low number of students who sit for the test in African American and Latino neighborhoods can be attributed partly to the fact that parents are solely responsible for navigating the gifted and talented process on their own. In contrast, before the current day setup, gifted programs relied primarily on teachers and in-school testing to identify academically talented students. Unfortunately, information regarding gifted programs is insufficiently disseminated to parents in lower income and minority school districts. As a result, low income and non-white students are severely underrepresented in these feeder schools, and in gifted and talented programs citywide.

I want my child and all children living in African-American and Latino neighborhoods to have the same opportunities for educational achievement as their white and Asian peers. The gifted and talented programs as they are currently set up has created a segregated two-tier public school system which effectively pre-determines a child's chances at success based upon the school district in which their families reside, and their parents' willingness and ability to navigate this complex system. We need to

raise the bar so that challenging programs for gifted children are available in all school districts, and not just a few.

[1] http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/C431B3F3-C8F4-4AE0-BE20-B9C7171CD559/0/20142015GTSectionCountybySchoolandGrade_051914.pdf

[2] <http://www.scribd.com/doc/114825150/F8834-Released-11-28-2012>

[3] http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/57C22B40-2771-4028-AA85-40FD6A9C5DB2/0/GT20122014KindergartenSummaryofOutcomesbyDistrict_web.pdf

Recommendation 3. "Rededicate the Discovery Program and DREAM-SHSI to provide an avenue for admission to specialized high schools for students in underrepresented communities."

Testimony of Kimberly Denise Williams:

Good morning: My name is Kimberly Denise Williams and I graduated from Stuyvesant High School in 2003. I am here today as a member of the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative, a group formed in 2010 to help increase the number students of African descent who are admitted to Stuyvesant and the city's other specialized high schools.

Out of the approximately 40 Black and Latino students in my class, nearly half attended the 18 month long Math Science Institute sponsored by the Department of Education. Collectively, we represented schools that typically did not send students to the specialized high schools, and we came from neighborhoods where students typically did not attend Stuyvesant. The fact that almost half the Black and Latino students in my class came to Stuyvesant by way of this program stands as a testament to its effectiveness. Unfortunately, MSI has been replaced by DREAM-SHSI which does not target the same underrepresented communities, but is instead open to all qualified students who meet its income requirements. In addition despite provisions in state law which authorize the use of a Discovery Program to provide admission to specialized high schools to disadvantaged students, neither Stuyvesant nor Bronx Science have offered this option for many years. We believe that city sponsored prep programs like DREAM-SHSI and Discovery need to be reinstated at Stuyvesant and Bronx Science, and expanded at the other specialized high schools, and refocused on the communities underrepresented at these schools.

MSI, the program which paved the way for me and many students like me to attend Stuyvesant, was created in 1995 to help black and Hispanic students. Enrichment courses, free transportation, a rigorous lesson pace, free books, and innovative science labs were highlights of the program. Black and Hispanic students who attended the program were more likely to get in, than those who did not have this prep. In 2007, a lawsuit was filed by an Asian parent alleging the program was discriminatory because Asians and

whites were held to income standards that others were not, and subsequently aspects of the program changed. Instead of providing access to students from communities underrepresented at these schools, the program focused on students who were economically disadvantaged. After these changes, Black and Latino students became a small fraction of those who participated. Black enrollment at Stuyvesant decreased to less than 90% of its numbers the year before, Hispanic enrollment in the program was decreased by more than half, while Asian enrollment more than doubled.

One of the new qualifications for all students is qualifying for free lunch. Based on my observations having been a student, volunteer, and employee in various incarnations of MSI/Dream, I know that students whose household income is slightly over the free school lunch threshold need extra help. They are in the same neighborhoods and schools as free lunch recipients, receiving the same limited resources. Those in the middle-who needed help AND would have benefited- were subsequently left out. These are the students who have no guidance on how much prep is necessary. These are the students whose schools are not receiving Title I funding because the population falls just under 60% of students receiving free lunch. These are the students the system misses for extra opportunities before high school.

The current format of DREAM is still new, so there aren't years of results to analyze. However, it is imperative that lessons from the early years are gleaned-best practices are kept, and real attention is paid to who needs help the most, who has the best chance at success, and where they can be helped.

DREAM is a great prep program for the time before the test. The Discovery Program should be used to catch students right after the test. Discovery was a program where students who just missed the cut off scores could be prepped during the summer before 9th grade, and then brought into the school with the general population. The program was altered, and eventually eliminated at Stuyvesant and Bronx Science because of an inability to select the most competitive students for the program. This can be changed. Allow the schools to pick students that only missed the school's admission by a few cut off points. It

would be hard to argue, that a student falling a few points short-who could attend Bronx Science, is not fit to attend Stuyvesant.

Within Discovery, there is a wonderful opportunity to address the special criteria that some would like to bring into the normal admissions program. This is the program for high achievers who needed more preparation. This is the program for those who simply do not test well. And yes, as in the past- this is a great way to identify those who have attained great success despite language barriers, economic issues, cultural barriers, and the other forces that affect educational success.

My experience at Stuyvesant and with the various prep programs associated with the school are anecdotal but representative. I graduated from Harvard College in 2007- and yes, admissions policies there have changed, but they still have noticeable tendencies. Of all the New York City schools represented in my college class there were only two dominating public schools- Stuyvesant High School and Brooklyn Tech. There were less than 30 students accepted from those schools, and 4 were members of Contingent III of the Math Science Institute at Stuyvesant High School. By today's standards, none of us would qualify for the DREAM Program or have the opportunity to go through Discovery. Our attempts to make progress should not leave students behind.

Thank you.

Recommendation 4: "Increase outreach to families in underrepresented communities."

Testimony of Carole E. Brown:

I am a co-founder of Stuyvesant's Black Alumni Diversity Initiative. We have coordinated information sessions and seventh grade test prep scholarships since 2010.

I live in Ms. Cumbo's District 35. My children attended kindergarten through eighth grade on variance in Mr. Levin's district 33.

Black communities have a couple of obstacles on the road to the specialized schools: lack of awareness and decreased access to accelerated middle school programs.

When I entered Stuyvesant, coming from an SP class that no longer exists (most students of my background came from SP/Gifted and Talented programs or private/parochial schools), nearly everyone knew a specialized high school alumnus because of the numbers. I was one of eighty seniors of African descent, ten percent of the graduating class. My Brooklyn Tech friends were among forty percent graduating, but when my children recently graduated from Brooklyn Tech themselves, there were less than ten percent.

The Diversity Initiative is asked the same questions over and over and the questions indicate poor knowledge about Stuyvesant and the other specialized high schools. Following are the most Frequently Asked Questions and comments that Diversity Initiative members encounter while doing outreach.

- What's so special about Stuyvesant?
- Where is it? I don't want to go to Bed Stuy.

- Are there AP classes?
- Do children go to good colleges like the private schools go?
- Is there a fee to take the test?
- What is the website address for the Department of Ed?
- What test scores do you need for Bard and Midwood?
- My guidance counselor just mentioned this school yesterday. Do you need high grades?
- My guidance counselor won't let me register for the test. What can I do?
- From principals: I don't have any students to refer to you; you know we go from grades six to twelve, too?
- Black Stuy student: I didn't even know that you could get test prep for the SHSAT. I just took the test.
- More parents: When my child finishes DREAM program they automatically get a seat at Stuyvesant.
- How much is Stuyvesant's tuition each year?
- My child's uncle says that blacks are not allowed at Stuyvesant.

These are NOT questions that you would ever, ever hear from families at the FIVE middle schools that eventually make up 30% of Stuyvesant students.

But thanks to private schools' diversity push, our target families certainly know all about Exeter, Dalton, Choate etc.

Thus, conversations in some communities are different than other communities.

Most don't know that just two gifted and talented schools feed 200 freshmen into Stuy. TWO hundred out of 900 freshmen.

These feeders are not diverse in regards to African and Latino Americans, so our target families would not know.

They don't know that these feeders offer High school Regents Biology, History, Languages, Algebra, and Geometry. Regents in middle school.

Feeders send advanced students to Stuy ready to jump into AP and unique challenging classes that give Stuy that great reputation.

Is lack of awareness why ALL the best high schools —specialized and selective non-specialized schools where the majority of the students will not need remedial courses in college and have good SAT scores — all experienced a five to FIFTY per cent DROP in Black students just since 2008? Our target families are also not familiar with those non-specialized schools because the highly selective NON-specialized high schools pick from those same — less diverse —middle school feeders.

My children's middle school in District 15 was not a G&T, but it had a Regents Algebra program. Their classmates talked about the best high schools all the time, so everyone was very familiar with which high schools were best for high-achievers.

You gotta know to apply.

You know competition for a good middle school is intense, when you see 3,000 gifted students apply for 66 sixth grade seats in Brooklyn School of Inquiry. But those seats will be filled by current students who have been in Inquiry since kindergarten. Many G&T schools fill their seats in kindergarten, and there are not enough G&T seats in the entire City for gifted kindergartners. There is little movement after that, so very few G&T seats become available after kindergarten. Mark Twain is a grades 6-8 school but its

science program accepts only 3% of its applicants. Because of their locations, these two examples can be a burden to commute to everyday from most Black communities.

Our few current Black Stuyvesant students were among the few in Gifted and Talented classes, selective feeders or private/parochial schools.

We communicate with middle school parents who check homework, limit TV, electronics, pay for arts classes and athletics, put children in church groups every Sunday. They're doing the right things. But they're still under-informed.

Suggestions:

Based on my recent experience of having to navigate the high school admission process with my children and their success in attending specialized high schools, I personally recommend that the Department of Education, City Council and State Legislature consider the following suggestions that will increase the numbers of qualified Latino and African-American students taking the SHSAT:

More SP/G&T schools: Most of my classmates were from SP/gifted and talented classes located in our neighborhoods. Most of these SP classes no longer exist. Additionally, there should be centrally located citywide G&T schools easily accessible to major public transportation from under-represented neighborhoods, like Downtown/Fort Greene, Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn's Flatbush Junction, Jamaica in Queens.

Awareness: It is harder to feed into Stuyvesant or any selective school without access to an accelerated K-8 foundation coupled with accurate, detailed and timely information about which schools are best and how to apply.

Advertising: If only G&T programs and Specialized High Schools were promoted months in advance of application, just like the Pre-Kindergarten campaign this year... Advertising on buses and bus stop shelters in under-represented neighborhoods would go a long way.

Middle School Staff Information: It would make a great impact if all middle school guidance counselors and principals visited Stuyvesant while class is in session. They would see that the high schools that they normally refer their students to do not compare to specialized high schools, and that they have been doing a disservice to their brightest students. After becoming familiar with what Stuyvesant offers, more principals and guidance counselors will want their students to attend Stuy, and will make changes and/or improvements in order to make that happen.

Pre-Test Pump Priming: A mandatory pre-SHSAT administered in the fall to all seventh graders would spread word about the schools instantly. More candidates would be identified, possibly to the surprise of everyone. Parents would have to do research and gain knowledge about specialized high schools in order to sign an opt-out form. Opt-out should not be easy to do, however; as a matter of fact, I would recommend that opt-out forms be signed by parents/guardians in person at school or in front of a notary public. Students would then not be able to forge their parents/guardians' signatures in order to get out of taking the pre-SHSAT. Parents must make an informed decision and not automatically say no based on what they think they know about the specialized high schools. The test should be administered during the school day so as not to interrupt weekend obligations. The remainder of the morning should be dedicated to informing students how seventh grade performance affects their overall high school application in the following year. This seventh grade over-view will be valuable in helping students envision what is expected of them in this crucial year.

Expand DREAM-SHSI and Discovery Qualifications: send invitations to all promising students enrolled in Title 1 schools in under-represented districts, even if their own families surpass income cutoffs for

free/reduced price lunch. All children, regardless of income, are disadvantaged in a school that is majority-disadvantaged. These students are unable to or do not move to a better neighborhood with better schools, do not attend schools outside their district on variance, nor attend parochial/private schools. For various reasons, the parents remain in the neighborhood and enroll the students in disadvantaged schools. Their reasons or problems should not be held against the children.

Following is a scan of index cards with some of the Frequently Asked Questions received from families over the years. The questions show that Stuyvesant is not well-known in under-represented communities. These are the parents who actually make the trip to our Diversity Open Houses.

Also following are two charts: demographic profile of the top five feeder schools that provide Stuyvesant with 30% of its freshmen each year, and a list of specialized and highly selective schools that show a troubling trend of the decline in enrolled students of African descent in the top high schools just since 2008.

Thank you for this opportunity to share this information with you.

Sources:

- i Stuyvesant High School Indicator yearbook for Class of 1981.
- ii Brooklyn Technical High School yearbooks, Class of 1980 and Class of 2014
- iii Demographic Snapshot, New York City Department of Education, <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2E15D48F-21A5-47CE-984C-208C416EC259/0/DemographicSnapshot20078to201314Public.xls>
- iv "Best of middles lead to top HS's", New York Post, November 29, 2012
- v "Best of middles lead to top HS's", New York Post, November 29, 2012
- vi Demographic Snapshot, New York City Department of Education, <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2E15D48F-21A5-47CE-984C-208C416EC259/0/DemographicSnapshot20078to201314Public.xls>
- vii 2014–2015 Directory of NYC Public High Schools, NYC Department of Education
- viii New York City Department of Education
- ix "MAP: These Are The Most Popular Middle Schools in New York City", <http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/2014/10/28/morningside-heights/map-these-are-most-popular-middle-schools-new-york-city>
- x Summary of Gifted and Talented Outcomes, 2012-2014, NYC Department of Education
- xi "MAP: These Are The Most Popular Middle Schools in New York City", <http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/2014/10/28/morningside-heights/map-these-are-most-popular-middle-schools-new-york-city>

II. About us: THE STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL BLACK ALUMNI DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

The Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative was formed in 2010 to address the declining enrollment of Black and Latino students at Stuyvesant and the city's other specialized high schools. Our goal is to reverse this trend, and increase the number of Black and Latino students who attend these schools. Since our inception, we have assisted the school and the Department of Education with outreach; hosted a series of successful "Why Stuy?" Open House events at the school for prospective applicants and their parents, featuring panel discussions by alumni from diverse backgrounds, school tours and test taking tips; organized informational forums for alumni and the public on issues related to the specialized high school admissions process; sponsored a free, test prep boot camp; and raised funds which allowed us to underwrite professional SHSAT prep for talented students provided by the Kaplan Company. In 2014, two thirds of the students we sponsored were admitted to specialized high schools, which far exceeded both the citywide admission rate, and the admission rate for the underrepresented groups which we target.

Although the founding members of this group are Black alumni of Stuyvesant High School, we welcome partnerships with groups and individuals who support our goals and who are willing to work cooperatively. We have elected to remain the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative, however, in recognition of the unique voice and perspective we have as Black alumni of the school.

III. Witness Biographies:

Carole E. Brown, Stuyvesant High School Class of 1981, received her BA in Psychology/Media Studies from Fordham University and an MFA in Film from Columbia University's School of the Arts. She is a founding member of the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative, and coordinates the group's sponsorship of SHSAT Test Prep in conjunction with the Kaplan Company. Ms. Brown has worked for 20 years in development for non-profit organizations. Ms. Brown was the only public school student from her district to attend Stuyvesant in her class year. She is also a parent of two alumni of Brooklyn Technical High School and was an elected Tech PTA executive board member for four years.

Tanya Messado is an alumna of Stuyvesant High School, class of 1993. She was born and raised in Brooklyn and currently resides in Crown Heights, District 17 with her husband and her two year old daughter. She received a B.A. in Political Science from Yale University and a J.D. from Georgetown University. She has been an active member of the Stuyvesant Black Alumni Diversity Initiative for the past three years.

Heidi Reich is an alumna of Stuyvesant High School, class of 1985. She has a BA in Russian Literature from Dartmouth College, Masters degrees in Russian Literature from Stanford University and Columbia University and an MPhil in mathematics education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She expects to defend her dissertation in February 2015. She has been teaching mathematics at LaGuardia High School since 1999. She has also been a master teacher with Math for America since 2005. She has been an activist for much longer than that. In 2011, she recruited colleagues to provide instruction to nearly 100 Black and Latino students to provide free test prep in conjunction with the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative. She has been working closely with the group ever since.

Kimberly Denise Williams is an a member of Stuyvesant High School's class of 2003. It was during her high school years that she started volunteering and working with various education initiatives. Her first job was working with the New York City Department of Education's Specialized High School Initiative - a program that has since evolved into the DREAM Program. Since then, Kimberly has volunteered with junior high school students in Boston and New York and worked with Harvard College's Undergraduate Minority Recruitment Program and other education outreach programs. Currently, she is a member of the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative. Kimberly is also a trained SAT, SHSAT, and US History SAT tutor. Kimberly received a Bachelors of Arts in History and African and African American Studies from Harvard University, and a Masters of Science in Media and Communications from the London School of Economics.

IV. APPENDIX

- i. September 22, 2014 Letter to Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina from the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative setting forth our recommendations concerning the specialized high school admissions process
- ii. Sample SHSAT Questions, with analysis by Heidi Reich
- iii. Chart, “Troubling Decrease In Enrolled African-Descended Students at Top High Schools 2007-14” compiled by Carole E. Brown from NYC Department of Education data
- iv. Chart, “Middle Schools with Most Students Receiving Stuyvesant Offers”. compiled by Carole E. Brown from “Best of Middles lead to Top HSs”, New York Post, November 29, 2012 and NYC Department of Education data
- v. Actual questions submitted by parents and students who attended “Why Stuy?” Open House Panel discussions, various years.

September 22, 2014 Letter to Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina from the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative setting forth our recommendations concerning the specialized high school admissions process



STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL BLACK ALUMNI DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

September 22, 2014

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Carmen Fariña
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: An Open Letter on Specialized High School Admissions from the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña:

In 2010, a group of alumni from Stuyvesant High School created the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative to explore the reasons for the dramatic decline in the number of students of African descent who attend Stuyvesant and the City's other specialized high schools, and to try to reverse this trend. Since its inception, our group has engaged in outreach to make sure Black and Latino families understand the value of attending Stuyvesant and other specialized high schools, supported efforts to prepare students for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT), and met with Stuyvesant students to identify ways that we can support them.

We are writing you now to share some of our insights on the specialized high school admissions process gleaned from our experiences as students, proud alumni, parents and as volunteers who simply want to make sure that bright children from all New York City neighborhoods have the opportunity which we enjoyed.

As you know, earlier this year, two bills were introduced in the New York State Legislature to amend the education law governing admission to New York City's specialized high schools. These bills would mandate the use of multiple academic measures, instead of just the single, multiple-choice test now used for admission to Stuyvesant, Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School and the other specialized high schools. While this legislation is well intentioned and supported by many in our group and within the larger alumni community who believe that a better process would allow the consideration of more information about applicants, we think there is much that the Department of Education can do to improve the current process without the need for legislative action at the state level.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Establish the fairness and validity of any test that is part of the specialized high school admissions process.

For the most part, we were pleased to read about the Department of Education's plan to introduce a new specialized high school admissions test. We applaud this step, since we believe the current test is unfair and has contributed to the current imbalance in specialized high school admissions. We think a test aligned with what most children are taught in school is a positive step, but changing the test is not enough. The new test and its scoring methods need to be studied in order to ensure that they are valid measures of academic talent and to ensure that the test does not provide an unfair advantage to particular groups. While the test should be challenging, and seek to evaluate students' critical thinking skills and their ability to apply what they have been taught, the concepts assessed should be aligned with the standard public school curriculum and should not be beyond the scope of what most children have been taught in school. In the case of the current test, the "scrambled paragraphs" and logic questions, which comprise two of the four sections of the current test, are unfamiliar to most of the eighth grade students who sit for the test. We suspect that these sections offer a tremendous advantage to students who have had the benefit of preparation outside of school and so we would advocate for their elimination. We welcome the Department of Education's efforts to introduce a new SHSAT as long as these concerns are addressed.

2. Guarantee opportunities for exposure to enriched and accelerated instruction for all talented students.

Beyond the test, however, is the issue of access to preparation. Indeed, in the debate over whether the criteria for admission to the specialized high schools need to be expanded to support diversity, we believe important questions regarding whether all students have equal access to preparation are being overlooked. For any test to be a fair measure, students must have an equal opportunity to learn whatever is being assessed. As long as schools are unequal, a single test will yield unequal results.

We support Chancellor Fariña's embrace of the school wide enrichment model and the commitment it represents to the goal of identifying and nurturing talent in every community. We believe that the members of our group stand as a testament to the effectiveness of a more decentralized approach to gifted education. While this year's freshman class at Stuyvesant is about 2% Latino and less than 1% Black, most of the members of our group attended Stuyvesant when Black students represented about 10% of the student population, and about 5% were Latino. Many of us found our way to Stuyvesant by way of gifted programs in our neighborhood schools. These classes offered their students an enriched, accelerated curriculum and created a pipeline to other educational opportunities.

Over the last three decades, however, most of these programs have been consolidated into limited citywide programs. Gifted programs are now concentrated in only a handful of middle schools located in certain school districts. Students at these schools take high school level courses such as Algebra and Geometry while still in middle school; while these subjects are included on the current SHSAT, they are not taught in most public middle schools. Students who are not able to access these advanced courses, or don't have access to high quality supplemental education programs will not have been taught some of the concepts covered on the SHSAT. As a result, a small number of schools – labeled by some as

“feeder” schools – send hundreds of students to Stuyvesant and the other specialized high schools each year, while most public schools send none.

The primary means of entry into G&T programs today is through a single exam administered to students before they begin kindergarten. This places responsibility for initiating identification in the hands of parents. Preference is given to siblings, and most of the seats in these programs are filled in kindergarten. In contrast, before these reforms, gifted programs relied primarily on teachers and in-school testing to identify academically talented students. Unfortunately, information regarding gifted programs is insufficiently disseminated to parents in lower income and minority school districts. As a result, low income Black and Latino students are severely underrepresented in these feeder schools, and in gifted and talented programs citywide.

It is outrageous that most specialized high school students come from just a handful of middle schools, and that opportunities for academically talented students to receive an appropriate education are so limited. We need to restore resources for the education of gifted and talented students to neighborhood schools, so that every city middle school has the opportunity to be a feeder school. The City's Universal Pre-K program offers an excellent opportunity to identify talented students: Pre-K teachers should be trained in the use of culturally sensitive approaches to identifying gifted learners in their classrooms, and be charged with preparing these students and their parents for the next steps in their education.

3. Rededicate the Discovery Program and DREAM-SHSI to provide an avenue for admission to specialized high schools for students in underrepresented communities.

To ensure that New York City's specialized high schools stay true to their mission of educating talented students from all over the City, we urge the Department of Education to reexamine the current utilization of the Discovery and DREAM-SHSI Programs and target their application to talented students in underrepresented communities. This is consistent with the spirit of the law that created the Discovery Program and would ensure that talented students from every city neighborhood have access to the City's top high schools. Currently, only Brooklyn Tech admits students through a Discovery Program; this program should be re-instituted at each of the specialized high schools, and the Discovery Program as well as DREAM-SHSI should be specifically targeted to students who come from communities underrepresented at the specialized high schools.

4. Increase outreach to families in underrepresented communities.

Finally, more resources need to be devoted to outreach and making families in underrepresented communities aware of the advantages of attending the City's specialized high schools. In our outreach to these families, we have encountered too many who were misinformed or uninformed about the specialized high school admissions process and the benefits of attending these schools. Our popular "Why Stuy?" Open House series, which features accomplished alumni from diverse backgrounds speaking about the benefits of their specialized high school experience, should be replicated at the other specialized high schools and underwritten by the Department of Education. Consideration should be given to employing a "Diversity Coordinator" to manage these activities citywide.

As Stuyvesant alumni, we are extraordinarily proud of our school's rich legacy and competitive status, and we have a vested interest in seeing both maintained. Our goal will always be to ensure that Stuyvesant admits only the most highly qualified students from across the City. We earnestly believe, however, that the universe of qualified students is much more diverse than the current Stuyvesant student body. Talented children from all neighborhoods need to be guaranteed access to the type of instruction that creates a pipeline for admission and successful enrollment at the City's best high schools. Furthermore, if a standardized test continues to be used to determine which students have the opportunity to attend these schools, we need to make sure that the test is fair, and that it is measuring academic talent, without bias.

We support your goal of providing all of our City's children an equal opportunity to realize their full potential. We believe that the recommendations made above will increase opportunities for bright students from all neighborhoods to gain admission to the City's top high schools, without the need for changes in the state law.

We welcome the opportunity to continue this dialogue, and to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

The Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative

Horace Anderson, Esq., '87

Vanessa M. Bing, Ph.D., '80

Carole Brown, '81

Juño Casado, '94

Michael R. Clarke, Esq. '79

Pamela Davis-Clarke, Esq. '80

Linda DeHart, '87

Teri Graham, '77

David Jacobs, '87

Irving Pressley McPhail, Ed.D., '66

Thomas Mela, Esq., '61*

Ann Mejias, '79

Tanya Messado, Esq. '93

Lisa Mullins, '77

Leonard Noisette, Esq., '75

Jonathan Pomboza, '94

Heidi Reich, '93

Pamela L. Skinner, LMSW, Class of 1980, Brooklyn Technical High School; Founder, Blacks and Browns of the Big 3, Inc.

Kimberly Denise Williams, '01

*added November, 2014

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outreach; hosted a series of successful "Why Stuy?" Open House events at the school for prospective applicants and their parents, featuring panel discussions by alumni from diverse backgrounds, school tours and test taking tips; organized informational forums for alumni and the public on issues related to the specialized high school admissions process; sponsored a free, test prep boot camp; and raised funds which allowed us to underwrite professional SHSAT prep for talented students provided by the Kaplan Company. In 2014, two thirds of the students we sponsored were admitted to specialized high schools, which far exceeded both the citywide admission rate, and the admission rate for the underrepresented groups which we target.

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Distribution List (via email):

New York City Officials:

The Honorable Bill de Blasio, Mayor, City of New York (by certified mail only)
Ms. Carmen Farina, New York City Schools Chancellor
The Honorable Richard Buery, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives, City of New York

Specialized High School Officials:

Mrs. Jie Zhang, Principal, Stuyvesant High School
Mr. Soo Kim, President, Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association
Members, Diversity Committee, Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association
Mr. Larry Cary, President, Brooklyn Technical High School Alumni Foundation
Ms. Chistine Klayman, Executive Director: Bronx High School Alumni Association

New York State Elected Officials:

The Honorable Karim Camara, New York State Assemblyman (Bill Backer)
The Honorable Adriano D. Espaillat, New York State Senator (Bill Backer)
The Honorable Simcha Felder, New York State Senator (Bill Sponsor)
The Honorable Luis R. Sepulveda, New York State Assemblyman (Bill Sponsor)
The Honorable Grace Meng, United States Representative (D-NY, 6th District)

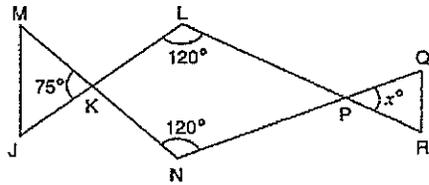
Media Outlets:

The Harlem Times
The New York Amsterdam News
The New York Daily News
The New York Post
The New York Times
The Wall St. Journal
WBAI
WNYC
Errol Louis, NY News 1, Inside City Hall

ii.

Sample SHSAT Questions, with analysis by Heidi Reich

1.



In the figure above, \overline{JKL} , \overline{MKN} , \overline{NPQ} , and \overline{LPR} are straight line segments. What is the value of x ?

- A. 25
- B. 45
- C. 50
- D. 60
- E. 75

If a student has never learned that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees and of a quadrilateral is 360 degrees, nor is familiar with the theorem that vertical angles are congruent, s/he cannot answer this question correctly. I teach both of the latter concepts in 10th grade geometry.

2.

What is the prime factorization of 714?

- F. $2 \cdot 357$
- G. $2 \cdot 3 \cdot 119$
- H. $2 \cdot 7 \cdot 51$
- J. $6 \cdot 7 \cdot 17$
- K. $2 \cdot 3 \cdot 7 \cdot 17$

A student who has never heard the term “prime factorization” will not be able to answer this question.

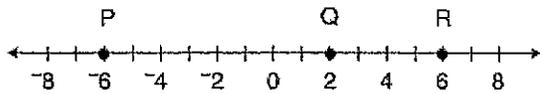
3.

Set R contains all integers from 10 to 125, inclusive, and Set T contains all integers from 82 to 174, inclusive. How many integers are included in R, but not in T?

- F. 23
- G. 48
- H. 49
- J. 71
- K. 72

This is not a particularly challenging question, but the usage of the word “inclusive” elevates it to “very challenging” for those who are unfamiliar with the word “inclusive” used in this context.

The following two questions presume that a student knows what a "midpoint" is. When I teach this in 10th grade, not all of my students recognize the term.



How many units is it from the midpoint of \overline{PQ} to the midpoint of \overline{QR} ?

- A. 2
- B. 4
- C. 6
- D. 8
- E. 10



On the number line above, point E (not shown) is the midpoint of \overline{AC} and point F (not shown) is the midpoint of \overline{BD} . What is the length of \overline{EF} ?

- F. 1 unit
- G. 2 units
- H. 2.5 units
- J. 3 units
- K. 11 units

Here are four different questions with the word "integer." If a student didn't know the definition of that word, s/he would miss all four questions. N.B.: the fifth question doesn't use the word "integer" even though it probably should.

How many integers are between $\frac{5}{2}$ and $\frac{20}{3}$?

- A. 3
- B. 4
- C. 5
- D. 10
- E. 15

If R, S, and T are integers and $R + S$ and $T - S$ are both odd numbers, which of the following must be an even number?

- A. $R + T$
- B. $S + T$
- C. R
- D. S
- E. T

Set R contains all integers from 10 to 125, inclusive, and Set T contains all integers from 82 to 174, inclusive. How many integers are included in R, but **not** in T?

- F. 23
- G. 48
- H. 49
- J. 71
- K. 72

If x can be any integer, what is the greatest possible value of the expression $1 - x^2$?

- F. -1
- G. 0
- H. 1
- J. 2
- K. Infinity

Here's the question where they finally use a different word for "integer" (although "integer" is the appropriate choice):

How many positive two-digit numbers are evenly divisible by 4?

- F. 22
- G. 23
- H. 24
- J. 25
- K. 26

Here are some questions in which the presumption is that the student knows the meaning of the terms "mean" and "median." As above, neither is a particularly difficult question; the real question is, does the student recognize those words?

In a restaurant, the mean annual salary of the 4 chefs is \$68,000, and the mean annual salary of the 8 waiters is \$47,000. What is the mean annual salary of all 12 employees?

- A. \$47,000
- B. \$54,000
- C. \$55,500
- D. \$57,500
- E. \$61,000

The set P consists of all prime numbers greater than 6 and less than 36. What is the median of the numbers in P?

- F. 17
- G. 17.75
- H. 18
- J. 18.75
- K. 19

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Chart, "Troubling Decrease In Enrolled African-Descended Students at Top High Schools 2007-14"
compiled by Carole E. Brown from NYC Department of Education data

Troubling Decrease in Enrolled African-Descended Students at Top High Schools 2007-14

Carole Brown 12/11/14

DBN	School Name	Peak % African Amer Enrollment	Peak Year of Af-Amer	2013-14 Af-Amer Enrollment	2013-14 %Asian	2013-14 Latino	2013-14 Other	2013-14 White	2013-14 Title 1	Admission Requirements
01M696	Bard High School Early College Manhattan	17.7%	2008-9	13.8%	16.1	18.9	3.4	47.9	28	85% GPA, state test scores, writing & math assessments, then invitation to interview
03M479	Beacon High School	17.0%	2007-8	14.7%	9.2	24.5	4.1	47.5	27.9	85% GPA, state scores, copy of graded paper/project, essay, group interview.
02M416	Eleanor Roosevelt High School	8.5%	2007-8	3.8%	21.1	10.5	2.4	62.1	25	District 2-only can apply. 85% GPA, state scores,
03M485	Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts	16.6%	2007-8	11.6%	19.4	19	4	45.9	31.5	SPECIALIZED HS; 85% GPA, state scores, essay and arts audition
05M692	High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at City College	18.4%	2010-11	9.0%	36.8	23.9	5	25.2	46.9	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT
02M418	Millennium High School - Manhatan	13.1%	2010-11	7.1%	36.2	19.1	2.6	35.1	42.8	District 2-only can apply. 85% GPA, state scores
01M539	New Explorations into Science, Technology and Math	12.1%	2010-11	9.3%	32.4	11.3	4	43	26.6	1.5 hour exam (aka "SHSAT"-lite), 90 GPA, state scores. Many were in NEST's citywide G&T K-5, or arrived at NEST's middle school via exam
02M408	Professional Performing Arts High School	28.5%	2009-10	24.2%	4.9	21.1	2.5	47.3	32.8	80% GPA, state scores, arts audition
02M475	Stuyvesant High School	2.0%	2007-8	1.0%	73.2	2.3	1.8	21.7	46.7	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT
10X696	High School of American Studies at Lehman College	19.7%	2007-8	7.0%	22.5	15.5	1.6	53.5	27.6	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT
10X445	Bronx High School of Science	4.4%	2007-8	3.3%	63.4	6.9	3	23.5	48.4	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT
14K449	Brooklyn Latin School, The	36.7%	2007-8	24.5%	44.6	15.4	3.2	12.3	68.1	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT
13K430	Brooklyn Technical High School	13.1%	2008-9	8.2%	60.5	8	3.3	19.9	64.3	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT
21K525	Edward R. Murrow High School	26.3%	2007-8	24.9%	26.8	20.3	1.6	28.5	51.8	Brooklyn priority, all GPA levels accepted in balanced format or arts audition
22K535	Leon M. Goldstein High School for the Sciences	16.7%	2007-8	8.7%	18	10.2	1.1	62	46	80% GPA, state scores
22K405	Midwood High School	38.2%	2007-8	31.4%	33.1	12	0.8	22.7	46.7	Brooklyn priority; 90% GPA and state scores for Medical Science and Latin programs; zoned resident lottery for remaining seats
30Q580	Baccalaureate School for Global Education	14.7%	2007-8	2.0%	44.8	19	2.2	32	44.4	Current students and Queens priority, 90% GPA, state scores
24Q299	Bard High School Early College Queens	19.5%	2007-8	11.5%	35	17.2	1.7	34.7	45.2	See Bard Manhattan for entrance info
26Q430	Francis Lewis High School	12.1%	2007-8	7.7%	52.7	23.8	1.5	14.3	74.7	Queens priority; high GPA and state scores for special programs; zoned lottery for remaining seats
30Q501	Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School	22.2%	2007-8	15.2%	9.1	29.5	1.2	45	38.6	85% GPA, state scores, essay and arts audition
28Q687	Queens High School for the Sciences at York College	17.0%	2007-8	6.9%	74.2	10	2.6	6.4	61.6	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT
25Q525	Townsend Harris High School	7.4%	2007-8	6.0%	58.1	12.6	1.2	22.1	50.9	90% GPA, state scores
31R605	Staten Island Technical High School	2.2%	2009-10	1.1%	36.1	5.4	0.6	56.8	31.3	SPECIALIZED HS --SHSAT

Top Schools: majority of students not needing remedial courses in college

(from "Demographic Snapshot", NYC Department of Education data)

Chart, "Middle Schools with Most Students Receiving Stuyvesant Offers". compiled by Carole E. Brown from "Best of Middles lead to Top HSs", New York Post, November 29, 2012 and NYC Department of Education data

Middle Schools with Most Students Receiving Stuyvesant Offers (aka "Feeders")

Carole Brown 12/11/14

DBN	School	# Students receiving Stuyvesant Offers 2012	Overall Demographics (entire school, all grades)						% Title 1
			Type	% Asian	% Afr-Amer	% Hispanic	% Other	% White	
01M539	New Explorations into Science, Technology and Math (NEST+m)	37	Citywide G&T K-12	32.4	9.3	11.3	4	43	26.6
02M312	New York City Lab Middle School for Collaborative Studies	42	District 2 only selective 6-8	41.2	2.8	8.9	8	39.1	32.1
20K187	The Christa McAuliffe School\I.S. 187	83	District 20 only G&T 6-8	73.6	0.6	4.1	1	21.5	65
21K239	Mark Twain I.S. 239 for the Gifted & Talented	99	Citywide G&T 6-8	30	10.7	5.9	0.8	52.6	38.5
26Q067	J.H.S. 067 Louis Pasteur	40	District 26 6-8 school w/G&T classes	61.3	2.5	10.4	1.1	24.7	38.5

Total Accepted in 2012: 301

Total seats Stuyvesant offers annually (average): 950
 Offers to students from (above) top five feeders -301
 Annual offers to private school students (average): -160

Average # of seats remaining to offer to mini-feeders and other public schools:* 489

* There are approx 450 public middle school programs. Mini-feeders are middle schools that receive 10 Stuy offers or more.

(from "Best of middles lead to top HS's", New York Post, November 29, 2012. Demographics from NYC Department of Education)

Actual questions submitted by parents and students who attended "Why Stuy?" Open House
Panel discussions, various years.

Class Schedule: What are the general class schedule like?
Tuition: What are the tuition scale like?

Academics - How does the academic challenge here compare with other high schools in NYC eg Brooklyn Tech.?

Do Admissions officers look at your 7th grade averages or your score on the SHSAT?

Does Stuyvesant High School care about your 7th grade grades or only your SHSAT?

How do I prepare my 8th Grader for testing in Oct 2013?

Is there a special Test Prep Classes Tutoring Session or Services offered? If so how can I get the info?

Does the school offer any Study or Summer Program to prep 7th &/or 8th graders for the SHSAT?

Is my child at a disadvantage because she does not attend public school? She attends a catholic school. Or is admission based solely on how well she does on the test?

Does both the 7th and 8th graders take the SHSAT?

QUESTION: Can a 7th grade student sit the SHSAT and if he or she did not score the grades, can he or she retake the test the following year (8th grade)

HOW DO YOU PREP FOR THE SHSAT?

Q: Can you name the most important things to have on your resume for Stuyvesant?

What age do you start here?

What other sports do you have?

About how many years does it take to get a b.a. degree.

Are scholarships given? If yes, does it happen rarely?

1) What score is that do you have to get to go to this school?

2) What are the chances of getting Placement after passing SHSAT?

- 3) What art programs does this school offer?
- 4) What science programs does this school offer?
- 5) What Languages do you offer?

Is there uniform?

Do they have internships?

What Types of Internships can you get by putting stuff on your Resume

8. What are the percents of races are there?

When can I take the test?
 Can I retake the test?
 What's the score in order to get in?
 How many hrs of H.W?
 Where can they enroll for the test?
 What's the % of minority they allow?
 What are they doing to improve it?
 What's the cut off number for Chinese or Latino?

What's the test about? Algebra and what else?

How do you get access to the ~~stand~~ test prep the kids need to take what and is it the same of the test???

- 1. What makes this school unique from others?
- 2. How does this school make kids think above and beyond?
- 3. As latinos and blacks, how did you feel in this school?
- 4. ~~How~~ If you ~~went~~ went to a different school, how would your experience or route in life be different?

The New York City Council

Resolution 0442

December 11, 2014

Members of the New York City Council,

The current admissions procedure for the seven Specialized High Schools is a transparent, merit-based, and color blind method that selects the brightest, most inspired, and hardest working students from the five boroughs. The sad fact is that the admission rate for African American and Latino children is well below where it should be, based on their relative numbers in the pool of potential applicants.

But this is not a function of a failed admissions process. It's a function of the systemic failure of Mayor de Blasio, the Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers under the leadership of Mr. Mulgrew to provide an equitable, inspiring and high quality education to our deserving African American and Latino students. The longer these cohorts are in the DOE/UFT system, the worse they do in the DOE's own metrics of success.

By 8th grade, the percentage of African American and Latino students who receive the highest grade, a four, on the English Language Arts test is less than 4%. Compare that to near 20% for Asian and White students.

They're failed even worse in math education. By 8th Grade, the percentage of African American and Latino students who get a 4 on the state Math test is less than 3%. White and Asian students hit this threshold over 15% of the time, more than five times that of their fellow African American and Latino schoolmates.

This unacceptable inequity in the K through 8 education provided our African American and Latino children by the DOE, the UFT, and Mayor de Blasio is a chokehold on any hope that these deserving kids can reach their potential. And the low quality schooling provided them when compared to their White and Asian counterparts is murder on their chances of thriving in high school and beyond, let alone getting accepted into a specialized high school.

The focus on the admissions process of these seven schools is nothing better than the old Three Card Monte hustle. Through trickery, we're distracted from the real issues that cause this sad disparity in representation in the halls of these great schools. It's not because of a test that more African American and Latino kids don't walk these halls. It's because they are fundamentally failed, year after year, by those entrusted to educate and inspire them.

Changing the current admissions policy will degrade or destroy these crown jewels of American public education and keep New York on its backwards trajectory of

FOR THE RECORD

providing public education. It will not help children who have been profoundly failed since kindergarten.

Instead of talking about blowing up the SHSAT, we should take to the streets, led by the NAACP, to demand that African American and Latino students are provided an equitable education and the inspiration to triumph over whatever unique socio-economic issues that they bring with them to our public schools.

What the current admissions policy does is expose a systemic and criminal injustice served to African American and Latino students by our mayor, our DOE and the UFT that is a violation of their civil rights. Don't destroy something that exposes an injustice so as to keep it hidden. Instead, demand that this injustice itself is righted. Demand that Mayor de Blasio, the DOE and the UFT provide an equal and equitable education, and a superb one, for all children, regardless of race, so all can excel in whatever path they take. If they finally provide African American and Latino children with a high quality and inspiring education starting when they enter the system, they halls of our Specialized High Schools will soon reflect the make up of our middle schools. And they will be there because they deserve to be.

Adam Stern
41 West 83rd Street, #7B
New York, NY 10024

Former co-president, Parents' Association of the Bronx High School of Science

NATIONAL COALITION OF DIVERSE CHARTER SCHOOLS

Testimony at New York City Council, Committee on Education
December 11, 2014

DANIEL KIKUJI RUBENSTEIN

Co-Founder/Executive Director of Brooklyn Prospect Charter School

Dear Council Members

My name is Daniel Kikuji Rubenstein and I am the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Brooklyn Prospect Charter School.

Thank you for holding these meetings on school diversity at these especially poignant times for issues surrounding cultural understanding and creating more inclusive communities.

I'm sure what is or will be apparent by the conclusion of this hearing is that school integration is challenging and complex; thus, there is no "one solution." If anyone today tells you they have "the solution" to integrating our schools, they are most likely not working in the field.

Today I am speaking as the leader of Brooklyn Prospect Charter School, a school founded on the idea that students should sit side-by-side in the classroom who come from different backgrounds—there are numerous well documented social and academic benefits of a purposefully integrated classroom. Brooklyn Prospect Charter School is a member of the National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools, which was established because charter schools can and should contribute to solving the historic challenge of integrating our public school system. Currently there are 15 public charter schools in NYC which are working together to promote policies of school integration.

Diverse Charter Schools generally see getting an integrated student population as only half of the solution—the other half is succeeding with an incredibly diverse population. Given the currently levels of racial and economic isolation in general, I will focus on reducing racial isolation in the public schools, all public charter and district.

1. Less emphasis on where a student lives and their academic background in choosing a school.

In New York City, all public schools assign their students in one of three ways:

1. Geographic Zones—where a student lives determines where he or she goes to school.
2. Academic Achievement—how a student performs on a test, audition, interview or grades determines where the student goes to school.
3. Lottery—random assignment.

I would recommend more emphasis on the 3rd method of student assignment, lottery, with less emphasis on the first two, rigid zones and student achievement. The most racially and economically isolated schools in the city tend to draw students from small geographical zones and narrow academic backgrounds.

It is also possible under state laws to preference a lottery for the purpose of increasing diversity among the student body. Some charter schools currently reserve seats for students who live in public housing. Others give lottery preference to students who qualify for the free/reduced price lunch program. There are both district and charter schools which effectively use weighted lotteries to integrate their student populations, and this option should be available and encouraged at more schools, charter and district. This is an area that charter school leaders and DOE administrators have begun to collaborate, and I look forward to this continued collaboration.

2. Nothing changes without public data

For better or worse, little changes in education without public data. Similar to how a school's test scores are published today, the NYC Department of Education and State Board of Regents should create a statistic for racial and economic integration similar to the methodology used by the Civil Rights Project of UCLA—a study that has been much publicized by the press.

By creating a diversity index, school leaders and communities will know where they stand. It also sends a message that we do value students sitting side-by-side in the classroom who come from different backgrounds. We can understand better what methods are working for different types of schools and the public will be more informed about which schools are succeeding in increasing and maintaining diversity.

MIRIAM NUNBERG

Senior Director of Policy and External Affairs at Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School

My name is Miriam Nunberg and I am the co-founder and co-leader of the Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School (aka BUGS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on such an important civil rights issue facing the New York City schools. I am speaking to support the passage of Resolutions 511 and 453.

Our school is an example of one with lottery-based admissions, a diverse and vibrant student body and an academic program designed to support all learners. We believe that the use of a lottery is an effective method of ensuring a student body reflective of New York City.

We founded the Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School to address the need for additional high quality middle school seats in our district. We were committed to founding a school based on equitable access – especially since we are located in a district where the DOE middle school application process is dominated by competition for a few selective schools. The demographic study that we conducted as part of our chartering process demonstrated that the local middle

schools with selective and subjective entrance criteria - such as interviews or auditions - were all disproportionately white and high income when compared to the District's population. We did not want to contribute to that problem, but rather aimed to provide a high quality education to a heterogeneous student body without regard to past performance. Admissions by lottery seemed the most direct way to ensure equal access for all applicants, and we chose the charter route in part due to the legal obligation that charters accept students via lottery.

As a charter, we not only are required by the State to accept applicants via lottery, but also to document our efforts to attract and retain high needs students. We report on our progress in this regard annually, and actively seek out students with disabilities, English Language Learners and low-income students as part of our recruitment efforts. We are proud of the fact that we welcome fully students from these categories and serve them well alongside high performers from more privileged backgrounds.

The Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School is currently in its second year of operation and serves a student body that is 18% white, 32% African-American, 26% Hispanic, 7% Asian and 17% mixed race. Approximately 50% of our students qualify for free and reduced price lunch and 27% receive special education services. Our students reflect a wide range of academic performance levels and run the gamut from very high performers to those below grade level. As educators, we consider the obligation to differentiate instruction to be at the core of our professional responsibility to students. We designed our program to challenge and support our vastly different learners in an integrated, heterogeneous and engaging environment.

As a result of the heterogeneity of our school, a number of our parents have expressed their real appreciation for both the diversity of our student body and our capacity to meet our students where they are academically and socially. A number of families with a variety of racial and ethnic mixtures have found a home at our school, as have those who come from less traditional family structures. The variety of backgrounds represented by our student body means that accepting, appreciating and respecting those with vastly different life experiences and perspectives is frequently discussed in our school community. Harmonizing these perspectives is not always easy – but we would not have it any other way.

In closing, the Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School fully supports the City Council's efforts to promote increased diversity in the public schools, and can attest to the benefits offered by the use of lottery-based admissions, and a commitment to serving all learners.

HALLEY POTTER

Advisor to the National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools and co-author of *A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education*.

My name is Halley Potter and I am speaking to you today as a researcher and advisor to the National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools. Thank you for holding these discussions and bringing much needed attention to diversity in our schools.

My colleagues in diverse charter schools and I would like to share our support for Proposed Introduction 511. We believe that having better data on enrollment and diversity is an important first step toward creating more integrated schools across the city. However, we encourage the Council to go farther with this legislation.

In addition to requiring data reporting, the legislation should require the department of education to define goals for diverse enrollment and rate every school against those definitions. One district that has developed a sophisticated diversity plan of this kind in recent years is Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools in Tennessee. Nashville now evaluates every school, whether district or charter, on meeting diversity goals for race and ethnicity, income, language, and disability.

We also heartily support Resolution 453. A large body of research shows the academic, social, and civic benefits of integrated schools. We would welcome affirmative strategies in each community school district to encourage school diversity.

We also hope that these strategies would include providing ways for charter schools and district schools to work together in offering more students the chance to attend integrated schools. New research being released today from the Tapestry Project shows that as a whole, the city's charter schools have a greater level of economic integration than district schools, as a result of the random admissions lottery process used in charter schools. Two-thirds of charter schools are mixed-income, falling within 15% of the citywide average for low-income enrollment, compared to just one-third of district schools. Any new school diversity strategies must address the role that geographic and academic admissions requirements play in perpetuating segregation, and they should provide more opportunities to use lottery-based admissions, with preferences aligned to diversity goals when necessary, in public schools of all kinds.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education

Re: Diversity in New York City Schools and Proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014

Advocates for Children of New York December 11, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi Levine, and I am Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 40 years, Advocates for Children has worked to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

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Recent events, including those in Ferguson, Cleveland, and here in New York City, have reminded us of the need to come together as a community to address the racial disparities that exist in public education and in our public lives. We recognize the potential of public education in New York City to bring together different groups of children and promote the values of diversity, inclusion, and opportunity. Among the benefits of integrated schools is the ability for children to learn firsthand from the earliest ages that all lives matter.

Advocates for Children works on behalf of children who are at greatest risk for school-based discrimination or academic failure due to poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile or criminal justice systems. We thank the sponsors of Proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014 for broadening the bill to include many of these groups of students. We are alarmed by the disparities in educational outcomes for the groups of students included in the bill. For example, on the 2014 English Language Arts exam, while nearly 50% of NYC's white and Asian students performed proficiently, only 18% of black and Hispanic students performed proficiently; only 6.7% of students with disabilities, 4 out of 5 of whom are black or Hispanic, performed proficiently; and only 3.6% of English Language Learners performed proficiently. The proposed bill will give us important data about which populations of students are accessing which schools and programs and will help inform recommendations for policy change.

Ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds have access to high-achieving schools and programs is critical, but is only one step. As the City Council strives to ensure that every school and program in NYC serves a diverse group of students, the City and DOE need to prepare schools to provide an excellent education to these



students. Schools need resources, training, and the development of specialized programs to meet the needs of all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Just this week, we received a call from the parent of a kindergarten student of color. The student has a disability and is living in a shelter. The student is enrolled in a popular school that has been touted as high achieving. However, the school was not prepared to meet this student's needs. Instead of developing a plan to support and include this student, the school placed the student on a half-day schedule illegally, explaining that it could not manage the child's needs for a full day. Since September, the student has attended school for only three hours per day. To improve school outcomes for students, we must do more than give them access to different schools; we need to change what is happening inside those schools to ensure they are prepared to serve diverse groups of students.

We appreciate the work of the City Council and look forward to working together to advance these goals. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.



The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.

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Testimony of Triana D'Orazio, Policy and Communications Associate The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. (CHCF)

Before the Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools City Council's Education Committee

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Triana D'Orazio and I am the Policy and Communications Associate for The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc., or CHCF. I thank Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, as well as the other members of the Committee on Education, for giving me the opportunity to participate in this hearing.

CHCF supports **proposed Introduction No. 511-2014A** requiring the Department of Education to render annual reports on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity in schools, including data within charter schools and special programs, and including dual language programs. Our organization also agrees with **resolutions 0453-2014 and 0442-2014**: respectively a) calling for the Department of Education to officially recognize the benefits of school diversity and b) calling upon the New York State legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.7738/A.9979 to change admission criteria for NYC's nine specialized schools.

Since 1982, CHCF has combined education and advocacy to expand opportunities for children and families and strengthen the voice of the Latino community. We work tirelessly to involve families in all aspects of their children's education, by providing workshops and instruction on the common core standards, college exposure and access, effective school partnerships, and by implementing program activities that build and foster positive relationships among parents as well as between families and their children. CHCF believes that the most effective way to support Latino families is by building upon their existing strengths and fostering self-sufficiency.

However, self-sufficiency will go only so far when hindered by both overt and nuanced discrimination, as can be found in our public school systems. This is why CHCF supports the proposed Introduction and Resolutions.

NCLR
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA

Proposed Int. No. 511-2014 A - Annual Reporting on racial and socio-economic data:

- Although the New York City Department of Education has improved its process of collecting student demographics, there is considerable room for improvement. Gathering and posting data disaggregated by grade level from pre-k to 12, as the proposed legislation delineates, would help to accurately track the number of Latino children and English Language Learner students, their socio-economic backgrounds, their progress and the support and services they receive and need throughout their schooling.
- This research would also help determine, with accuracy, the number of homes where a language other than English is spoken; the proficiency of English spoken in the home; and level of research focused on ELL students.
- The data collected through this proposed legislation will also help determine the exact numbers of enrolled students in charter schools, their admission criteria, their method of enrollment, their population of ELL students, and their waitlists, among other issues. While CHCF is not against charter schools, they are privately-run schools using public funds, and, in increasing instances, public spaces. It is necessary that they be held accountable for inequities in enrollment, offer more bilingual and dual language programs and provide transparent financial structures.
- While data collection is a necessary and useful first step, the information gathered must be used to create and reinforce programs that work for and reach all of our children.

Resolution 453-2014 - Reporting about increasing diversity in schools

- New York State indeed has the most segregated school systems in the country.
- A strong, official position will help increase plans for integration and dismantle our segregated system currently ghettoized by race and poverty level.
- Our children need to be exposed to other ethnicities, experience cultural diversity, learn other languages, and know that there is a greater world beyond the borders of their boroughs.
- This exposure can only strengthen the bonds among our students and increase trust and levels of engagement within communities – mollifying any existing or potential racism.
- Our schools need to reflect the increasing racial and demographic transformation of NYC's population; and raise the public's awareness about the value of diverse educational settings for *all* of our children.
- We must implement civil rights standards and acknowledge that education is a basic human right.

Resolutions 442-2014 - Specialized schools

- CHCF agrees with the resolution that the City's Specialized High Schools Admissions Tests are inherently unfair and exclude a major section of the City's student population, mainly African Americans and Latinos.
- We need to elevate our children above whatever socio-economic barriers impede them from overcoming an admittance policy exemplified by a single, racially discriminatory entrance exam.
- Admittance to these specialized schools must revolve around other factors, such as overall performance in school, teacher input, interviews, etc.

CHCF practices what it preaches. We provide services through Youth Development programs, an Early Care & Education Institute, and the Latino Family Policy Center. CHCF's model is innovative in its effective inclusion of cultural and linguistic competencies to effect change. Our grassroots focus makes us one of the few Latino organizations in NYC that combines direct services with policy work that amplifies Latino voices at the local, state and national levels. To that end, CHCF formed the Latino Coalition on Early Care and Education (LCECE) in 2007 to bring attention to the educational needs of Latino children. LCECE is committed to increasing the availability and quality of culturally and linguistically appropriate child care and early education for Latino children and all English Language Learners (ELLs) at both the city and state levels.

Thank you.

Testimony for Resolution 442

Thursday, 12/11/2014

My name is Steve Chung. I represent United Chinese Association of Brooklyn and also Brooklyn Asian Community Empowerment, an umbrella organization that consists of more than 30 member organizations. We're here to oppose the Resolution 442 which is to change the current SHSAT test system.

I agree that our current specialized high schools are severely under represented with Latino and African American students, yet the schools are amazingly diverse with students coming from all over the world, with different religions, speaking different languages and drastic difference in economic background. I agree that the current test is not the best method; nevertheless, it produces 14 Nobel Prize winners, most among our country. Finally the current test system's results are totally transparent, no favoritism involved and students selection are solely based on merit and performance.

The mayor argues that the current test creates a "rich-get-richer" dynamic that benefits the rich. Based on BOE data, since 2006, low income students in Brooklyn Tech shot up from 29% to more than 60% and in Stuyvesant HS from 18% to 29%. It is the poor students who value education as the best path to success and work hard to earn their privilege into these specialized HS.

Why Latino and African American students are underrepresented in the specialized HS is because our junior HS school system fails to educate them. 2013's NYS English exam results show that less than 4% of Latino and African American 8th graders are at level 4 and the math

exam is less than 3%. The data clearly explains their low enrollment percentage. The real solution to increase their admission rate is to boost up their academic proficiency.

Let's forget about the competition among our students racial background in the admission test. We must face the fact that we are living in a world of globalization. Our students are not only competing locally but also competing students globally. Our high school performance had already fallen behind to countries like Singapore and Belgium. We are losing many of our high tech jobs oversea.

NYC is the most important city in our country, and education and our children are the foundation of our nation's future. This is the time that our legislators and leaders must take action to regain our world leadership in education. We must reform our education policy, retrain our teachers, motivate our children to work harder and convince the parents that education is the road to success. We must expand the current test system, by building more specialize HS to accept more students.

Don't change it!!!

Glyn J. Caddell
Staten Island Tech, Class of 2002

As a graduate of Staten Island Tech and an active Alumni Association member, I can offer some valuable insight in the effects of using multiple criteria, as opposed to the objective entrance exam, the SHSAT. Staten Island Tech didn't always use the SHSAT for admission into the school. Prior to 2005, admission was based on multiple criteria. Using multiple criteria, the 2002 freshman population was 82% white. Today, using the SHSAT, the freshman class is only 57% white. Also, according to the education website chalkbeat.org, Tech had 13 students who had individualized education plans or required special services, out of a total of 1,100 students. When multiple criteria was used, that number was zero. The use of the SHSAT actually resulted in a dramatic increase in diversity.

I am also proud to say that as a result of the use of the SHSAT and the hard work of the teachers and students, Staten Island Tech was recently ranked #6 and #5 in the country by Newsweek and Niche respectively. The current students prove on a daily basis that they deserve to be in Staten Island Tech. The students voluntarily fill their schedules with: AP classes, theater projects, sports, after school clubs and even internships. The use of the objective SHSAT has contributed to an increase in academic achievement by the school. The admissions process works. We should not compromise the recent successes of the school, by altering the admissions process.

Increasing the representation of blacks and Hispanics in Tech is something I would like to see done, but we shouldn't rig the admission process in a way to get that result. The right way to do it involves a little bit of effort.

- We should improve education in elementary and failing intermediate schools that are predominantly black and Hispanic.
- We should raise awareness of the test and the specialized high schools, years before the students have to take the test.
- We can make the test mandatory and offer it on a school day, rather than over the weekend.
- And we could expand the DREAM- SHSI program, which offers free SHSAT preparation for qualifying students.

But let's not make changes that will damage the integrity of Staten Island Tech and the other specialized high schools.

I would like to end with an excerpt written by another Staten Island Tech graduate, Maggie Fox. She is a proud Hispanic graduate and asked me to present this to you. Here are her words:

“The mayor's opinion that this process needs to be made easier for the underrepresented population is insulting. The mayor is implying that blacks and Hispanics need extra help to get into these schools and the lack of prep classes creates an uneven playing field. The idea of making a process, like this one, easier for a student because of race, undermines the accomplishments of students of

these underrepresented races that are accepted. His plan has the appearance of a hand out and ignores the actual problem.

The key to understanding why out of all the students who took the SHSAT last year and were admitted into a specialized school, only 7% were Hispanic and 5% black (DOE), is not in analyzing the admissions process or the test. The key to seeing why these students are not making it into these schools, requires going back to their educational beginnings. Students need to have a strong educational foundation for success. It is clear that many students, in largely low income and highly minority populated areas, are not getting a fair education. Above all, what needs to be fixed is the educational system because without the basics there is nothing to build upon. Instead of just changing the system to make it easier for underrepresented minorities to gain admission to these specialized schools, the focus should be on providing a strong education in lower grades for these students. This would allow for a higher caliber of work later on.

As a recent graduate of Staten Island Technical High School, which is one of the Specialized High Schools, I have been through this admissions process that the mayor is trying to reform. I, as a Hispanic woman, was part of the underrepresented minority population. What I used to my benefit, was the strong foundation I received from my public school education and the support of my family. I did not take any outside prep work to prepare for the test and received admission based solely on my test score. I would not have wanted to attend the school unless I earned my spot the same way as everyone else. I do not, nor, would I ever want the appearance of a hand out to shadow my accomplishments.”

I believe the following testimony is pertinent to both **Proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014** and **Res. 453-2014**.

Submitted by Kemala Karmen (kemala@nycpublic.org)

Parent of two NYC public school students & Deputy Director of parent advocacy group NYCpublic

In preparing to write this testimony, I decided to look up the demographics of my zoned elementary school. Inadvertently, I clicked on an elementary school with the identical PS number, but in a different borough. What a tale of two cities! My totally random matchup yielded a picture of such stark differences: one school had a population that was 72% white, while white students made up just 1% of the other school; 9% of children at one school qualified for free lunch as opposed to nearly all students (98%) at the other.¹

I grew up in the South and started public school in the 60s. My elementary school back then started out as racially isolated as the schools in this example, but by the time I graduated court-ordered busing had begun. As a result, *the schools I attended in the Deep South for most of my pre-college life were more integrated than the schools most NYC kids attend in 2014!* This is scandalous for any number of reasons. For starters, and as I am sure others will mention, research shows that student academic performance—for all students rises—in integrated settings.² But striving for diverse schools goes beyond academics; the racial tensions that we are seeing in our judicial process and in our streets will certainly not be eased if we cannot even bring the youngest of us together.

So while I am glad that the DeBlasio/Fariña DOE has decided that it is better to support so-called failing schools than to close them (partially because closing schools has often caused harm not only to those schools but to other schools who are overwhelmed by the influx of needy students the shuttered schools pass along to them), I do not think the community schools model is enough if it means that those schools will remain racially and socioeconomically isolated. There must be a concerted effort to think about how to make schools more diverse, even if this means shaking up the status quo and moving away from a zoned-only view of how to assign students to elementary schools. At this juncture, you would be correct to say, however, that moving away from zones at the middle and high school level, a practice instituted in NYC during the Bloomberg years, has not resulted in more diverse schools. I would argue that is because the Bloombergian de-zoning was set up as a “blind” choice model and that model, in which parents are charged with negotiating a bewilderingly complex admissions process, favors those families (like my own) with the time to tour multiple schools and the savvy to figure out the optimal way to rank their choices. In practice, this has meant that those “in the know”—who tend to be better off financially—have concentrated their sights on a narrow band of schools. These schools then become pockets of the middle class (which is often correlated to race), while all other schools remain places of concentrated poverty (which also frequently correlates to race). It is a vicious cycle, as those schools with the neediest students find themselves overtaxed and thus less appealing to the better off, and those with the least needy populations become even more attractive because they are better able to build up their schools through fundraising, volunteer time, etc.

This stratification seems also true of existing unzoned elementary schools, unfortunately. Before the Bloomberg years, Community Education Council 1, which is unzoned, had fewer racially isolated schools; blind choice changed that.³ My child’s school, PS 146, the Brooklyn New School, an unzoned school that draws from several Brooklyn districts, had a more diverse student body before the city’s introduction of the blind choice pre-K lottery. More recently, the blind choice Kindergarten Connect process, which was rammed through in the last months of Bloomberg’s tenure—without so much as a public hearing—and implemented for the first time under Chancellor

Fariña's watch, appears to have eroded diversity at BNS even further. Kindergarten Connect, a massive student assignment vehicle which falsely promises city parents "900 choices" for kindergarten, was not designed with an eye towards mitigating the city's growing segregation.

There are ways to remedy this, some more radical than others. At one end, the city could preserve blind choice, but give parents and schools better resources to even the playing field during the choice process. This might include hiring "navigators" to help parents through the admissions process—akin to the navigators who help people sign up for Obamacare. Better in my opinion, would be a "controlled choice" model that would have schools set aside seats for certain populations—such as kids receiving free lunch or children of incarcerated parents, etc. This has been instituted successfully on a large scale in several cities (Cambridge, MA; Raleigh-Durham, NC).⁴ CEC 1 has ideas about how controlled choice could work on the district level and even individual schools could have admissions policies that promoted diversity. (PS 133, a shared D13/D15 school has such a policy; BNS would like NYCDOE approval for its proposed plan.) Middle and high schools could also improve diversity by becoming "Ed Opt" schools. Ed Opt schools, which were once more abundant in the city than they are now, have admissions formulas that reserve some spots for academically high, low, and on-target achievers.

In closing, I would like to come back to my own education. I said that the schools I attended were more diverse than NYC schools, but it would be false to infer from that that I sat in classrooms that were integrated. Tracking was so intense that it all but ensured that kids remained segregated by race and class in their "honors" or "remedial" classes. Rather than expanding Gifted & Talented programs or other screened admissions schools, NYCDOE should be encouraging school leaders to adopt curricula and methodologies that allow all children to succeed. This means that schools may have to give some extra thought about how to work with students who are coming in with different strengths, meeting them where they are, cultivating those strengths and addressing their deficits. The schools of the New York Performance Standards Consortium provide a good model in this regard; they have an excellent track record of educating a diverse student body via inquiry- and project-based learning and using rigorous but nonstandardized forms of student assessment.⁵ It is schools like these, not the "no excuses" charter chains whose rigid disciplinary codes and test-focused classrooms require massive advertising campaigns to draw the middle class, that we should be looking to to raise the boats in which all our children sail.

¹ Retrieved December 10, 2014 from insideschools.org

² Siegel-Hawley, G. (2012) *How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools*. (Research Brief #8, National Coalition on School Diversity)

³ *A Study of Assignment Policy Effects in Community Education Council 1*. Retrieved December 10, 2014 from http://cecdistrictone.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/2013_10-31_cec1_wxy_assignmentpolicystudy-final-with-edits.pdf

⁴ Alves, M. et al. (2002). *Student Diversity, Choice and School Improvement*. Greenwood Press.

⁵ Retrieved December 10, 2014 from <http://performanceassessment.org/consortium/cfaq2.html>

New York City Council Committee on Education
Thursday, December 11, 2014

Public Testimony from Jane Lee Delgado, Ph.D.

Resolution 442: calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign Senate Bill.7738/Assembly Bill.9979 to change the admissions criteria for NY City's Specialized High Schools.

I am a social science researcher and an organizational psychologist. My background is in large-scale assessment and evaluation. Ten years ago I moved from California to New York City to work as a Research Scientist at the College Board. For the last five years, until very recently, I was the Dean for Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning at a CUNY Community College. Currently I am working with NYCpublic, a parent-led advocacy and consulting group, and I am studying the New York City school system. I would like to speak to the evidence in support of Resolution 442.

- At the college level, study after study has shown that high school GPA is a better predictor of college performance than the scores from standardized tests. (Bowen, et al. 2009). Colleges know that they must look at multiple indicators when making admissions decisions.
- At the high school level, researchers have looked at key middle school performance measures to predict high school grades and graduation. They have found that the opportunity to take Algebra by the 8th grade, attendance, and middle school GPA are all significant predictors. (Adelman, 2006; Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Kurlaender, et al. 2008)
- Even more recently, the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (2014) compared multiple middle grade indicators of readiness for high school success. They found that earlier test scores were strong predictors of high school test scores but were WEAK indicators of high school grades and completion. The best single predictor of high school graduation was course grades or GPA. GPA was more important than test scores AND background factors such as race, SES, or gender. "Eighth-grade core GPA was the strongest single predictor of on-track status and earning high grades in high school." (Allensworth et al., 2014)
- The Chicago study also found that middle school attendance was more predictive of high school passing rates than were test scores. It was more important to improve attendance rates than it was to improve test scores for subsequent success. When attendance rates and GPA were combined, the two indicators together provided the optimal prediction. Adding additional indicators did not provide more information.
- According to the 2014 Schott Foundation report by Holzman, in almost half of New York City Community School Districts, students have little opportunity to learn in a high performing school. But in every middle school in New York City, grades still matter. Grades reflect effort, persistence and study skills. They reflect the academic behaviors and habits of mind required "to come to class regularly, get assignments completed, participate, study and deliver high-quality work day after day." (Allensworth et al., 2014)
- In my position as a research and planning Dean at a CUNY community college, I saw repeatedly that even if some students got low scores on the entrance exams, if they saw themselves as good scholars, with good GPAs in high school, they would work hard to make up the opportunity gap. You could see the differences in one semester.
- I urge you to give all good students a chance to catch up and excel in a specialized high school. They will show you what they can do. Please support Resolution 442.

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Bowen, William G., Matthew M. Chingos, and Michael S. McPherson. (2009). *Crossing the Finish Line*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

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Kurlaender, M., Reardon, S., Jackson, J. (2008). *Middle School Predictors of High school achievement in Three California School Districts*. Santa Barbara, CA: California Dropout Research Project, University of California Santa Barbara

New York City Council Committee on Education
Thursday, December 11, 2014

Public Testimony from Jane Lee Delgado, Ph.D.

Resolution 453: calling upon the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

- The resolution effectively summarizes the research that demonstrates the level of extreme school segregation by race in the New York City schools. It also summarizes a number of research-based findings that point to the important benefits of diversity for individuals as well as the community, the city, and the nation.
- There is also considerable evidence that despite the various attempts to improve the funding algorithm and conditions for segregated schools, 94% of New York City schools are underfunded and the available resources are distributed unevenly. African-American and Hispanic students are still more likely to be taught by younger and less experienced teachers and those teaching outside their area of expertise. (Subramanian, 2013; Boyd et al., 2008; New York State School Report Cards, 2012-2013)
- School environments vary widely in our city. African-American and Hispanic children are more likely to face metal detectors, bars, wire, uniforms, hostility, and punishments. Their schools are more likely to resemble “soft prisons,” while other schools, in the same city, look and feel more like modern “corporate offices,” or recreation centers (Cookson, 2013; U.S. DOE, Office of Civil Rights, 2014).
- Under Chancellor Joel Klein, the New York City Department of Education created school report cards (now tweaked and called the ‘school quality snapshot’) and school quality reviews. Our current Mayor recently announced a “School Renewal” plan to help 94 schools. All of these efforts are based on the flawed premise that individual schools are the cause and the cure for the systemic differences that we all see. Policy decisions, or non-decisions, at the central level have preserved the historical inequities to avoid political discomfort. Our problems are system wide and can’t be fixed school by school. (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014)
- Historically, we have rejected the citywide structural changes that would result in equitable opportunities to learn across racial and economic barriers (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014; Holzman, 2012). We see the result in the anger, disengagement, and institutional distrust that students, parents and communities demonstrate daily.
- We have a situation of choice in New York City, but opportunity without preparation, entitlement and engagement is meaningless. Families shouldn’t have to CHOOSE to attend good schools that meet the needs of their children. A good education is a human right to which ALL New Yorkers are entitled. It shouldn’t be a scarce resource, available only to those who can successfully navigate a complex market-based system (Cookson, 2011; Auerbach, 1995).
- This resolution adds an important strategic objective to the mission for education in New York City. We know how to reach all students – the research is in. It just takes the political will and the strategic allocation of resources. We also know how resources follow savvy parents, and we know that we have to make a commitment to every student in every community district that will ensure that each school has equivalent advocacy.
- When we embrace ambitious public goals, such as those presented in this resolution, and then demand a plan of action, we raise the potential for significant and lasting social change. We are lucky to be New Yorkers. We have the opportunity to utilize the unique strengths of the most amazing city in the world and demonstrate how the future can work for everyone. Please support Resolution 453.

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SCIENCE SCHOOLS initiative

Contact: Michael Mascetti, Executive Director, Tel. 917.304.7195, Email: mike@scienceschools.org

Good afternoon Council Members and staff, my name is Michael Mascetti and I am an elder law attorney and Executive Director of a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization called the Science Schools Initiative. I was born and raised in Queens, a graduate of Stuyvesant High School (Class of 2002), Fordham University and the CUNY School of Law. I have come here today to speak about my passion – teaching algebra to 12 year olds on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

In 2006 and 2007, I founded the Science Schools Initiative with a fellow Stuyvesant High School alumnus. Having privately tutored for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) for many years prior, we set out to start a program targeted at families who could not afford high quality preparation for the SHSAT but who had children with the potential to do well on this exam with 8 to 10 months of tutoring. All of our tutors are graduates of the Specialized High Schools and have had years of experience preparing students for difficult exams. All of our tutors have had the unique experience of preparing for this exam at 12 and 13 years old and inspire kids to attend their alma maters.

Former Council Member Robert Jackson, Mr. Dromm's predecessor as Chair of the Education Committee, had a daughter who attended the Bronx High School of Science. When we met with Council Member Jackson in 2007, he immediately shared our view that there are as many intellectually gifted students on 177th Street as there are on East 86th Street. Council Member Jackson helped us obtain space from Columbia University Medical Center – where we have held classes for the last 7 years. He also helped us print our books, and gave us substantial discretionary funding every year that he served on the Council since 2007. We have since received funding from Council Members Ydanis Rodriguez, Mark Levine, and Melissa Mark-Viverito. These funds have been the lifeblood of our small but determined tutoring organization.

This past October we finished two programs with 40 students at our Washington Heights location, and 30 students in Brooklyn where we tutor students at the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation's STEM Pipeline Program. Because we draw students from neighborhoods that are composed of predominantly African American and Latino families, the overwhelming majority

SCIENCE SCHOOLS initiative

Contact: Michael Mascetti, Executive Director, Tel. 917.304.7195, Email: mike@scienceschools.org

of our students are African American or Latino. Every year, at least 41% of our students have been admitted to the Specialized High Schools. Although we are a small program, every year African American and Latino students who participated in the Science Schools Initiative program have entered Stuyvesant High School, the Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Tech, the High School for American Studies, and the High School for Math, Science, and Engineering. In addition, we have learned that our families need extensive support to guide them through the Screened Public High Schools Admissions process so we now spend almost an entire year educating our families on this complicated high school admissions system. Our focus is on getting kids into, AND PREPARING KIDS FOR, top public high schools where we know they will succeed and eventually move on to top colleges.

While we educate students and their families on high school admissions, and teach students reading comprehension, logic, time management, and study skills the majority of our program focuses on developing our students' understanding of mathematics so that they are prepared for the rigorous mathematical problem solving skills demanded by the SHSAT and by the Specialized High Schools themselves which are most all specialized STEM schools. Over our 8 to 10 month program, we provide advanced enrichment for students who want to soar and we identify and support students who need extra one-on-one and small group tutoring support or even testing accommodations. Our program is very long compared to most private test prep centers because we need the time to look at what kids have learned and address their fundamental deficiencies in essential academic knowledge.

One year we were invited into a school which was forced into a Turnaround Model because of low student performance on the state Math and ELA exams. We spent Saturdays providing enrichment to the HONORS class at this school in Norwood (in the Bronx). What I saw at this school was shocking! These students had 90+ averages and were bright students yet they all struggled to do simple arithmetic problems like adding $\frac{2}{7}$ and $\frac{4}{9}$ [*see answer at bottom of testimony*]. These students were not being challenged in a way that matched their innate level of high ability. Even more troubling, the students and their parents did not know how far behind they were from middle school students in other parts of the City.

SCIENCE SCHOOLS initiative

Contact: Michael Mascetti, Executive Director, Tel. 917.304.7195, Email: mike@scienceschools.org

Math is a particularly sequential subject. If you do not master a concept in the 4th grade and no one addresses that knowledge deficiency, that deficiency will haunt you as you struggle in the 9th grade and throughout high school. I believe that math is a subject where many kids begin to fall behind, *feel* stupid, and lose confidence in their talents and abilities. Middle school math is particularly critical. This is when students learn about algebra, and it is when many kids begin to approach a point where their cumulative knowledge deficiencies become too great for most to overcome.

Diversity is a very important goal, but it is also important that we do not set students up for failure. The reality is that there are many middle schools throughout this City that have NO students who are prepared to do the type of school work demanded by the Specialized High Schools. In 2014, only 2.1% of African American public school 8th graders and 2.8% of Latino 8th graders were high performing scorers on the state math exam. This is appalling, and it receives virtually NO ATTENTION. We need to support ALL students who have high academic potential. Instead we focus most all of our attention on preventing drop outs and focusing on “not leaving any child behind,” leaving families to fend for themselves if they have an intellectually gifted but unchallenged child. The City government should make a decision that additional academic support for academically gifted students is important. I implore you to focus greater resources on supporting extracurricular academic programs in underserved communities.

I have learned over the last 7 years running the Science Schools Initiative that there are hundreds of students and parents IN UPPER MANHATTAN ALONE who are thirsty for a rigorous extracurricular academic program. But such programs are few and far between. Kids want to be supported but also challenged. Preparing for the Specialized High School Admissions Test is a way for students to strive to improve their academic abilities. I ask each of you to stand up and support additional educational opportunities and to vote NO on Resolution 442 which is a false solution to a significant educational problem.

Thank you.

SCIENCE SCHOOLS initiative

Contact: Michael Mascetti, Executive Director, Tel. 917.304.7195, Email: mike@scienceschools.org

Science Schools Initiative Parents Expected to Testify with Michael Mascetti:

1. Ms. Tendai Watkins

Parent of Science Schools Initiative (Manhattan) Program Participant.

Son is an 8th grader at Excellence Boys Charter in Bedford Stuyvesant.

2. Ms. Valerie Boss

Parent of two Science Schools Initiative (Manhattan) Program Participants.

One daughter went on to Stuyvesant and is now at Harvard, and the second daughter is currently at Brooklyn Tech.

They live in Washington Heights.

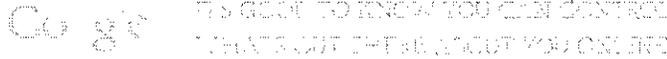
Answer to testimony problem:

$\frac{2}{7} + \frac{4}{9}$ [Need to find the Lowest Common Multiple of 7 and 9 is 63.]

$= \frac{2}{7} (*\frac{9}{9}) + \frac{4}{9} (*\frac{7}{7})$

$= \frac{18}{63} + \frac{28}{63}$

$= \frac{46}{63}$ [ans.]



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Alumni Tutoring Effort Strives to Raise Diversity at Elite Public Schools



Nicola Bengiveno/The New York Times

Susant Yin with students in Washington Heights. The Science Schools Initiative tries to prepare students for an entrance exam.

By ANNA M. PHILLIPS
Published: October 11, 2011

On a Saturday morning in August, Philip Cleary stood in a white, fluorescent-lit classroom in Washington Heights, facing a dozen sleepy seventh graders he and others are training to pass an entrance exam for the city's seven specialized high schools.

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"The inequality question," he said. "Who was struggling with that?" He was asking about a problem on a math practice sheet, but it might as easily have been a question directed to the city's elite public schools.

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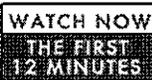
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Joshua Bright for The New York Times
Michael Mascetti, left, and Darren Guez, both 27 and graduates of

For more than a decade, the number of black and Hispanic students scoring high enough to be offered a seat at the city's specialized high schools has been on the decline.

Last February, just 12 black and 13 Hispanic students were admitted to Stuyvesant High School, which had 3,287 students. At Brooklyn Technical High School, which is the largest of the elites and offered seats last school year to more black and Hispanic students than any other specialized high school, the percentages are dropping. During the 2010-11 school year, black students were about 11 percent of the school's 5,140 students, a drop from 21 percent in 2002.



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5.

Stuyvesant, founded the Science Schools Initiative in 2007.

Admission to those schools hinges on a single exam, given every October to thousands of eighth graders (this year's test is on Oct. 29 and 30). Now a handful of graduates from

the elite schools have started tutoring programs with a singular focus, meant to prepare low-income, minority students to pass it.

In Washington Heights, graduates of Stuyvesant High School and the Bronx High School of Science run the Science Schools Initiative, a yearlong free tutoring program held for three hours every Saturday morning. To qualify, students must show promise on a diagnostic exam and meet the city's benchmark for poverty.

"The whole point of this thing is basically to get economically disadvantaged kids into these schools," said Mr. Cleary, who until recently was the program's executive director. "I'm not looking to hit a certain number; I'm looking for some equilibrium."

Of the 53 students in the program who took the exam in 2010, 31 were Hispanic, 12 were Asian, 7 were black and 3 were white. Although they came from schools like Mott Hall II and Junior High School 54 Booker T. Washington, where many students are high-achieving, most of them lived in poorer neighborhoods and commuted long distances to school. Of that group, nearly 45 percent received offers to one of the seven specialized high schools. Others were given scholarships to private schools.

Darren Guez and Michael Mascetti, both 27-year-old Stuyvesant graduates, founded the Science Schools Initiative in 2007 with one class of 11 students. Mr. Guez, who is a lawyer, said the idea occurred to him while he was a student. "I was always alone on the A train going uptown" from his school, Mr. Guez said. "And I thought that was very strange." He knew at age 17 that he wanted to help more students like him pass the entrance exam, he said.

As the program grew, he gradually brought in Mr. Cleary, a graduate of Bronx Science, as well as other young graduates. From the beginning, the program's founders were aware that the city's Department of Education had its own preparatory program, known as the Specialized High Schools Institute. But they were critical of its results. So, Mr. Guez recalls deciding, "I might as well make one that works."

Another specialized high school boot camp begun this year has a similar focus. That program, the Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity Initiative, was created by Renee Eubanks, a 1981 Stuyvesant graduate who was frustrated by the school's decreasing racial diversity. For five weeks this fall, 120 students will study for the exam at the Stuyvesant High School building.

According to Pamela Davis-Clarke, another Stuyvesant graduate who is part of the preparatory program, a majority of its students are black and Hispanic, and there is no bar for entry.

The city's preparatory program was designed by Ramon C. Cortines and expanded under Joel I. Klein, both former schools chancellors, and was intended to generate more black and Hispanic candidates for the specialized high schools. But after a 2007 lawsuit, the city stopped giving preference to black and Hispanic students. In 2009, a majority of the students in the program were Hispanic; by last year, most were Asian. Of the 864 city-prepared students who took the admission test last year, 41 percent received an offer from a specialized high school.

Unlike the programs run by graduates, which are highly focused on test preparation, the city's offering is more like an enrichment program. Students study science and read novels, and while they do prepare for the exam, there is also an emphasis on preparing for more demanding class work.

For the Science Schools Initiative, getting students to pass the test is the sole objective.

Classes are quick-paced, informal and devoted to running through multiple-choice questions and reminding students how many points shy they are of a spot at a top school. The classes are small, often no more than a dozen students. Tutors know their students



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well enough to tell which ones benefit from cheerleading and which ones respond to admonishments.

This year, about 60 students in the Science Schools Initiative program plan to take the exam. For many of them, racial diversity is not something they want to talk about; others describe the statistics as startling.

“For me and friends, we were looking at Stuyvesant’s Web site and the population, and it was like 1 percent black,” Moyosola Oshin, a student at Mott Hall III, said. “It’s like a challenge.”

Though the initiative has relied on some financing from City Council members — mainly Robert Jackson, chairman of the Education Committee — it is now moving into new territory. **J.H.S. 80 the Moshulu Parkway**, a struggling school in the Bronx, has contracted with the program to run test preparation classes for sixth and seventh graders this school year. One result of the tutoring program is that its students’ scores on the state’s standardized exams have gone up, something that appeals to school administrators. If the initiative can succeed with J.H.S. 80’s students, the tutors hope to expand it to other schools.

“There are kids who can do it, but there are not that many,” Mr. Guez said. “It’s almost as if the greatest challenge for the initiative is finding those kids.”

A version of this article appeared in print on October 12, 2011, on page A19 of the New York edition with the headline: Alumni Tutoring Effort Strives to Raise Diversity At Elite Public Schools.

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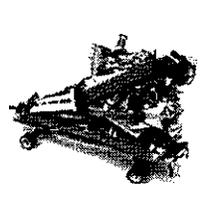
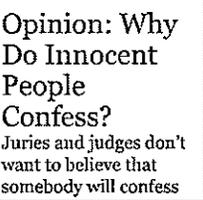
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MORE IN N.Y. / REGION (1 OF 28 ARTICLES)

**Because U.S. Erred in '90, Bronx
Resident Becomes a Man Without a
Country**

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My name is Tendai Watkins and I am a parent and education advocate. I have come here to ask each and every one of you to vote no to resolution 442. I bring you the story of a young man named Tarisai who is an 8th grader at Excellence Boys Charter School in Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn. He spent the last 9 months from March 2nd to October 19th of this year travelling alone round-trip 2.5 hours for a 3 hour class. He sacrificed 30 Sunday and spent 90 class hours not counting study time preparing for the Specialized High School Test (SHSAT). He did this with no summer break and concurrently maintained his regular school workload earning strong marks – going to school essentially 6 days a week. This scholar is motivated, high achieving with a quick wit and strong work ethic – he scored fours' on his math and English state exams 2 years in a row (6th and 7th grade) and he lives in District 16 – which has no gifted and talented programming, has no rigorously challenging academic enrichment programming and as far as I know no magnet programs that prepare students for college preparatory work. What he did have was a persistent mother, who scoured the internet to find affordable test preparation – but there was none. But what I did find was the Science Schools Initiative.

A program that serves Title I students in upper Manhattan, relies on donations and has no permanent site switching between Columbia University Medical Center on 168th Street and a public school on 135th Street. This program is run by Mr. Michael Mascetti and a small group of dedicated specialized high school alumni and current students – who believe in equal access for well qualified and deserving students from low-income backgrounds. My son, Tarisai was blessed to be one of 40 kids to successfully complete the program and sit for the SHSAT with confidence, ready and prepared to meet the challenge that is the 3 hour exam for one shot a free selective education. This program was critical and met my son at his current academic abilities and elevated his skills – strengthening his capacity to be strategic, and focused during a high-stakes exam. The demand for programming like this is high in District 16 – but there is no one to meet the need.

I implore the City Council members to understand that a commitment to diversity is appropriate, but enacting legislation that funds proven, scalable and sustainable programs like Science Schools Initiative will have a long-lasting and far greater impact on students and the families you each serve. Changing the criteria for admission to mimic selective boarding or private day schools where other factors beyond test performance are taking into account – is a grave mistake with far reaching consequences. I appeal to each and every one of you to recognize and change what is unequal in our educational system – **Equal Access**. Black and Hispanic children when provided with the same level and quality of resources of teachers, curriculum, materials, and funding – can become well qualified students

and will not show just incremental gains in performance but significant and sustained performance – but it requires equal access and consistent supports. New York City Department of Education operates the largest school system in the country with a \$20.6 Billion operating budget – in the Empire State where citizens in the 5 boroughs pay disproportionately higher taxes than other municipalities in the state our children all across NYC don't receive equal school funding so that truly no child is left behind.

Currently as it stands the majority of Black and Hispanic children are at a marked academic disadvantage with their Asian, Indian and White peers, it will become increasingly hard for these students to be academically competitive, unless all council members do something today; work together, develop a comprehensive and cohesive plan that utilizes existing infrastructure and resources and implements it in a phased approach to equal access – take a actionable and quantifiable plan to Governor Cuomo. Please remember today's high school experience is unlike anyone else in this building who attended high school in NYC. It's longer, it is harder and it requires more.

I firmly believe that "education is the best long-term economic investment anyone can make and that a high quality education is the foundation for every child to grow, prosper and contribute positively to society. I thank the City Council and Education Committee members for their time and willingness to hear the voice of the people – who are directly impacted by this issue of diversity which is really an issue of equal access. Thank you very much – have a great day.

5 POINT PLAN

1. A well funded curriculum available in all regular public schools– reintroduce the practice of convening regular and magnet classes side-by-side ensuring rigor, challenge, engagement
2. Develop and Implementation Gifted & Talented Programming in underserved communities – create strong feeder middle schools in more districts (e.g. District 16)
3. Access to rigorous academic enrichment that is not focused on remedial work but rather programming that builds time management, math, logic and reasoning skills.
4. Fund and scale model programs like Science Schools Initiative that have best practices and a strong track record of success preparing students for SHSAT exam and consistent admission
5. Re-instate Summer Discovery Program for students who just missed SHSAT cut off scores

Sarah Camiscoli
IntegrateNYC4me

Contact: snoellecamiscoli@gmail.com

Phone: 201-218-9325

Coordinator: IntegrateNYC4me

ESL Teacher, Bronx Academy of Letters

Oversight on Diversity in Schools

Topic: What is IntegrateNYC4me?

Good afternoon councilmembers and thank for inviting me to speak.
My name is Sarah Camiscoli.
I am the coordinator of IntegrateNYC4me and an ESL and English teacher of 6th- 12th graders at the Bronx Academy of Letters.

The possibilities I believe in for NYC schools are wholeness, inclusion, integration, and equity. And I believe that every individual in this room has a leadership role in achieving those possibilities.

To give you some background, IntegrateNYC4me is a project that emerged from my 10th grade advisory. Each week, we would meet and students would share what occurred to me as the impact of segregation of people and resources in the NYC DOE: They complained of oversized classes, teachers with back to back classes unable to meet regularly for extra help, lack of free space in a tightly collocated building, school schedules filled with Regents prep classes and requirements, alarming numbers of disciplinary referrals and an overall feeling that they were being treated unjustly. And as a teacher who teaches oversized classes, as a teacher with back to back programming across six grade levels, as a teacher who struggles to make time for extra help, as a teacher who shares a classroom with four teachers, and as a teacher who sometimes feels like a disciplinary referral is my only option in a moment of complete distress, I felt like they were resisting powerfully against injustice and I wanted to stand with them. Today I stand here with five powerful, creative, warm, brilliant young individuals, their amazing parents, and an endlessly supportive administrator. Standing with these brilliant leaders, I can ensure you that the inequities you are reading about in the current data are much more about how the abundance of resources and diverse individuals are currently segregated in the Department of Education rather than any imperfection or deficiency that you may believe our schools or communities to have.

My hope today is that you hear the possibilities in the words of each of our student leaders here. I ask you to listen to them as you would any council member, policy maker, or political leader, and you consider their wisdom as you discuss the need for the DOE to prioritize diversity, for there to be explicit data reported on progress, and for the specialized schools with the most resources, are made more accessible to them and their families.

I hope our work today provides you with a new framework to understand the data, the campaigns, and the requests that are emerging in the wake of NYC being named the most segregated school district in the nation. I hope that you can see it is the wisdom these students will share today that hold the possibilities of a whole, integrated NYC Public School System. Thank you again for this opportunity.

Contact us!

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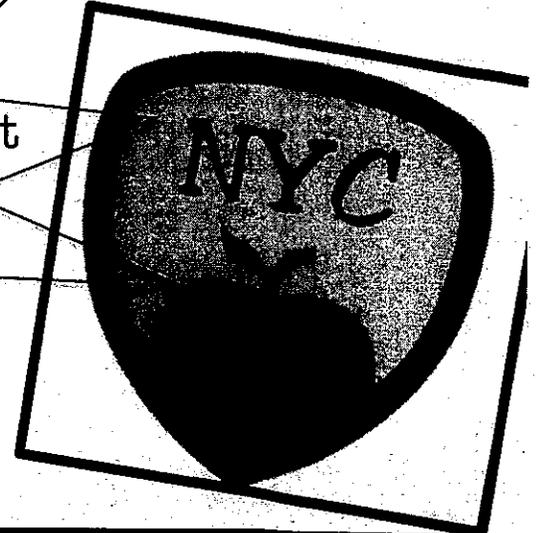
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Segregate- to divide; to set apart

Integrate- to bring together

NYC- our city



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We are a student-lead project that aims to bring...

- Harmony** to New York City communities
- Peace** across student groups
- Acceptance** in Schools
- Equality** across race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion.
- Community** between people who may have never met
- Total integration** of people, ideas, and resources to NYC schools

What are we doing?

IntegrateNYC4me will be sharing our experiences on how segregating people and money affects us in terms of- academic support and services available for ESL students and students with disabilities, the availability of music and arts programs for students, programming options for classes, afterschool activities, and sports teams.

Julyssa Cruz
IntegrateNYC4me

10th Grade
Bronx Academy of Letters

Oversight on Diversity in Schools
Topic: Inequality of access to sports programs

Good afternoon councilmembers and thank for inviting me to speak.
My name is Julyssa Cruz
I am in the 10th grade at Bronx Academy of Letters and I am a student intern with IntegrateNYC4me.

The possibility I believe in/dream I have for NYC schools is total equality across race, class, and gender. As well as acceptance in schools of many different types.

The topic I selected to research on the inequality in NYC schools is girls sports teams.

through my research I found that public schools like mine in the South Bronx don't have many sports teams, especially female sports teams, the sports teams that you will find in many schools are basketball, volleyball, baseball, and finally softball. South Bronx public schools also have a lack of funding for uniforms and lack of space as well. This is mostly because so many schools have to share their gym. In my schools case we have to share our whole building, not just the gym, with six different schools.

If the council and the department of education want to make schools more equitable they can improve young women sports teams by not only having just three sports teams young women can join but by having other teams as well, like for example cheerleading. There's not that many cheerleading teams in South Bronx public schools. You can also help by giving us funds for new uniforms or spaces to practice so that teams won't have to wait for other schools in the building to get out.

I think it is important for schools to report their improvement towards increasing diversity and equality because then it will be easier in the future to make different necessary improvements rather than make the same changes.

I think it is important for the New York City Department of Education to make diversity and equality a priority because all kids should be able to share the same changes or possibilities.

I think it is important for the New York State to change how students are accepted into specialized schools with a lot of resources and support because I don't believe it is fair that for some specialized schools you get in by taking a test and you could only get in if you pass the test.

I hope my research and opinions shared today has influenced your decisions on whether or not you will change NYC south Bronx public schools for the better of all the students, their education, and the students involvement in school. Thank you again for this opportunity.

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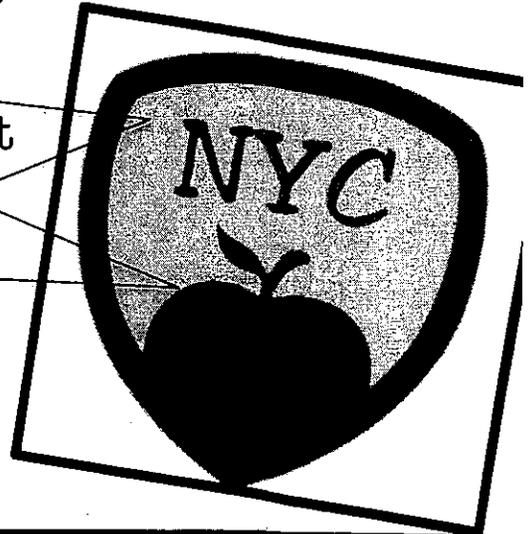
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Timothy Martinez
IntegrateNYC4me

10th Grade
Bronx Academy of Letters

Oversight on Diversity in Schools
Topic: Inequality of School Provided Nutrition

Good afternoon councilmembers and thank for inviting me to speak.
My name is timothy martinez
I am a sophmore at Bronx Academy of Letters. I am here to represent
#IntegrateNYC4me.

The possibility I believe in/dream I have for for NYC school is....
is total equality across race , class and gender.
The reason is say this is because I feel that everyone should have a lot of
exposure to many opportunities and people. Why should some schools have
more advantages than others? Why should it be up to me to look for extra
curricular activities outside my school ? Why should other kids have the
opportunity to just go down there hall and see all these oppourtunities and I have
to travel to get the exact same things if I even get them? There are many
reasons to provide total equality across race, class, and gender in schools, but
the one I selected to talk about today is nutrition.

The topic i selected to research on the inequality in NYC schools is Nutrition
because I would have to say it is one of the biggest problems in NYC public
schools. I sometimes ask myself, "Why do I have to wake up in the crack of
dawn to be in school when I know I won't get provided with a decent meal? Why
is that other students get provided with hot meals and we get provided with
frozen the reheated meals for breakfast and lunch?

Through my research I found that public schools like mine in the South Bronx
have terrible lunches. The free and reduced lunches that students receive are
frozen and defrosted. Many students in my school feel like the food is not fully
cooked. Is that right? This affects how we can learn in class, because if we don't
eat or the food is not nutritious we cannot focus. This is a huge issue of
inequality.

I hope my research and opinions shared today have helped to think about how
important it is to address the equality of schools for all students across race,
gender, and class.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

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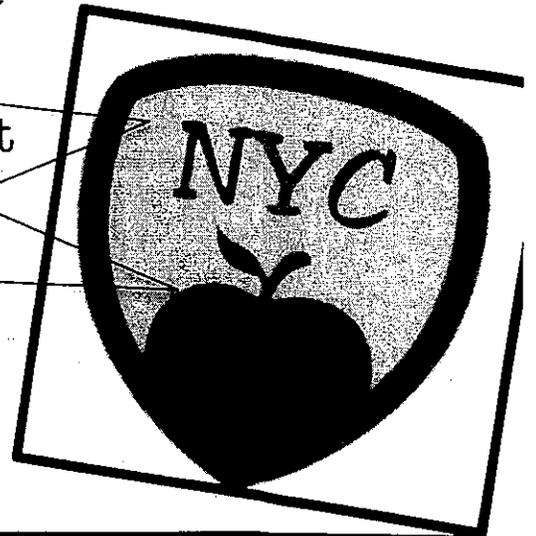
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Samantha Ramos
IntegrateNYC4me

10th Grade
Bronx Academy of Letters

Oversight on Diversity in Schools

Topic: Inequality of Access to Music and Arts Programming

Good afternoon councilmembers and thank for inviting me to speak.
My name is Samantha Ramos
I am in the 10th grade at Bronx Academy of Letters and I am a student intern with IntegrateNYC4me.

I believe that NYC schools are the bedrock for the future of this nation. The way you raise a human being is the way that they become. When an educator is teaching a class, they are teaching doctors, presidents, policemen, lawyers. I dream that we can share the future of our nation because the future of our nation is us.

I researched music and art. Music and art is what keeps us new yorkers sane. Music is what the people turn to, and art is the way to express.

I live in the Bronx and my school is only 2 blocks away from where I live. There is another high school that is also 1 away from where I live. I did some research on it. My school has instruments and 2 pianos, but we still have no music classes and no band room. The other school I researched DID, in fact, have music and a band room.

, I think it is important for the New York City Department of Education to make diversity and equality a priority, In terms of resolution 452-2014, because we as the future of NYC, need to practice equality and diversity. The future of NYC shouldn't be the a society that is composed of hatred and animosity, it should be a society that is used to other people who are like them.

To address proposal 442-2014, I feel that it is essential for New York State to change how students are accepted into specialized schools with an abundance of resources and guidance because some kids are rejected and in the end, all children should have proper resources and guidance.

I hope that my assessments and research shared today has impacted and brought us all to a semblance of perception and gratification.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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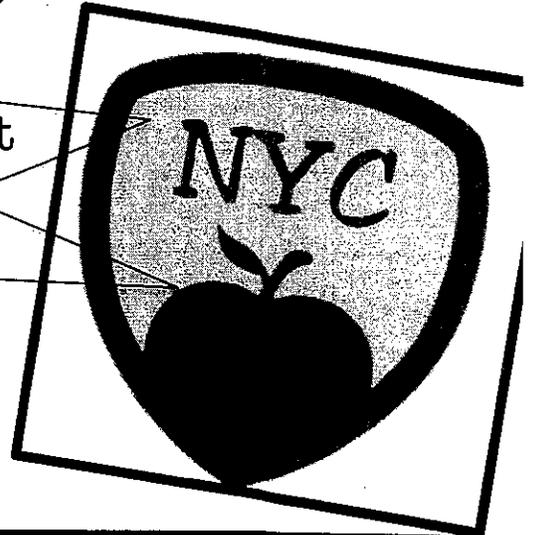
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Francisco Cornejo
IntegrateNYC4me

10th Grade
Bronx Academy of Letters

Oversight on Diversity in Schools

Topic: Inequality of Access to Diversity of Classes

Good afternoon council members and thanks for inviting me to speak.
My name is (Francisco Cornejo)
I am in the __ (10th) __ grade at Bronx Academy of Letters and I am a student intern with IntegrateNYC4me

The Possibility I believe in for NYC school is for students to have Total equality across race, class, and gender, this is important to me because every student should be entitled to the same access, and to a great education.

The topic I selected to research on the inequality in nyc schools is how certain schools have many options for class which students can take and some have a very few.

Through my research I found that public schools like mine in the South Bronx, students don't have access to the classes that they want to take. I would like to take for example, music, theatre, writing. Instead almost my whole day is filled with requirements and regents prep. Every day I feel useless because I don't get to explore what i want to explore.

If the council and the department of education want to make schools more equitable they can improve by giving students all option for classes they in interesting in.

In terms of Proposal 511-A, I think it is important for schools to report their improvement towards increasing diversity and equality because...If students dont get to explore classes they can't figure out what they want to be in the world.

I think it is important for the New York City Department of Education to make diversity and equality a priority because people who don't get this opportunity feel tired and school actually gets in the way of them wanting to do anything.

I think it is important for the New York State to change how students are accepted into specialized schools with a lot of resources and support because...all students should be able to feel attracted to school.

I hope my research and opinions shared today have changed the way you all are thinking about giving students the opportunity to have more selections and choices in their education.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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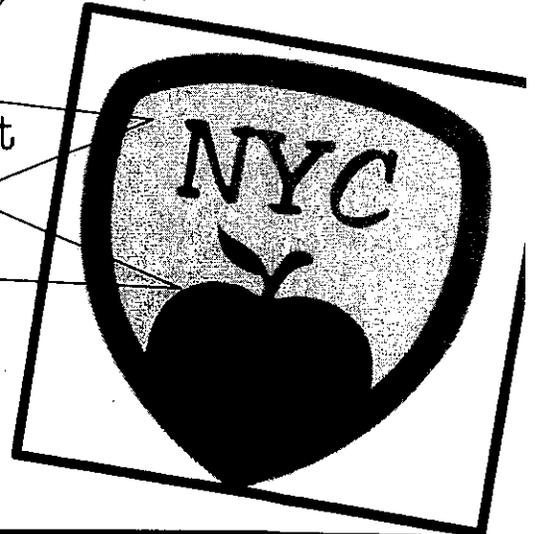
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Britney Soto:
IntegrateNYC4me

10th Grade
Bronx Academy of Letters

Oversight on Diversity in Schools

Topic: Inequality of Offerings of After School Programming

Good afternoon councilmembers and thank for inviting me to speak.
My name is Britney Soto
I am in the 10th grade at Bronx Academy of Letters and I am a student intern with IntegrateNYC4me.

The possibility I believe in/dream for NYC school is total equality across race, class, and gender and acceptance in schools. I feel we should have equality because we should not be judged based on what our race is or what our grades are. We should all be equal because at the end of the day we are all human beings and we should not be divided based on basic stuff like what color we are and what our gender is. Acceptance in schools should be equal because we all get to choose our schools so we should not have to take tests and have to prove how "smart" we are in order to be accepted into a school.

The topic I selected to research on the inequality in NYC schools is after school programs

Through my research I found that my school has little to no after school programming. The major after school programming this school offers is basketball.

If the council and the department of education want to make schools more equal they can improve after school programs by having more programs so students can be more active.

In terms of Proposal 511-A, I think it is important for schools to report their improvement towards increasing diversity and equality because schools need to be better and prove that they are getting better.

In terms of resolution 452-2014, I think it is important for the New York City Department of Education to make diversity and equality a priority because I feel like everyone should have different opportunities.

To address proposal 442-2014, I think it is important for the New York State to change how students are accepted into specialized schools with a lot of resources and support because every school should have access to the same resources and schools should not accept only some people into "specialized" schools. Everyone should have a chance to be accepted without a test.

I hope my research and opinions shared today has persuaded you to change what most NYC schools have access to and has gave you an idea about what you guys can do to change these ideas.
Thank you again for this opportunity.

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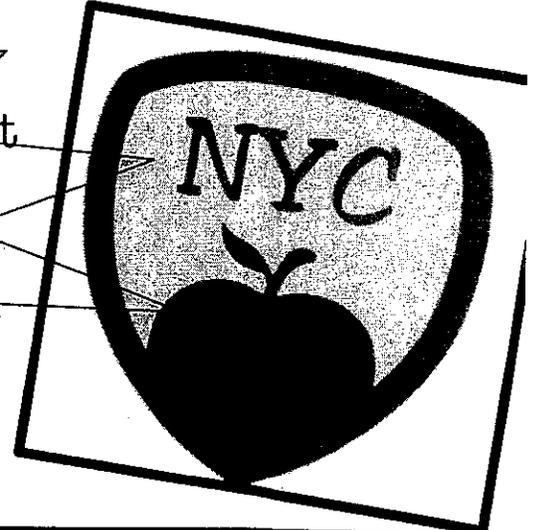
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FOR THE RECORD

Testimony regarding

Res 0442-2014 Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.7738/ A.9979, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

Rosalie Friend, Ph.D.
December 11, 2014

As an educational psychologist I support Resolution 0442-2014. The American Psychological Association has a long standing policy that no decision which will affect a person's future should be made on the basis of a single psychological test. The mind is too complex to be measured directly by any tests that have been developed by psychometrics. The claim that the tests used to place children in New York City's specialized high school programs are objective, is false. They identify the children who a) come from backgrounds similar to the test developers and b) have the greatest skill at taking tests. These tests do not identify the children with the greatest ability to learn, i.e. intelligence. It has been known for a long time that the error rates in group tests mean they cannot distinguish ability to learn.

Basic textbooks in educational psychology warn, "Since group measures are not as reliable as individual measures of intelligence, they are not used for placing children in special programs" (Pressley & McCormick, 1997, p.337). "Be wary of group test scores." (Woolfolk, 2004, p. 114). Woolfolk spells out that even individual test scores are only estimates. She admonishes us to ignore small differences in scores, be aware that scores change over time, and that the scores reflect past learning and experiences. She further warns that the major tests all underestimate the abilities of students from minority groups, a standard conclusion of educational psychology.

The SAT, used for college admissions, is similar to the tests used for admissions to specialized high schools. The College Board was forced by the courts to stop using the word "Aptitude" in the name of the SAT because it was proven that scores were significantly influenced by test preparation. The scores were not reflecting individual's ability as distinguished from the amount of preparation they received. Of course the same thing is true of the tests for New York City's special high schools. Well-to-do families spend hundreds of dollars to prepare their children for these tests, because the preparation enables their children to do better than children who do not have access to such preparation. Tests screen out children who have different backgrounds and those whose thinking is original. We need more breadth in classes, so children can stimulate one another to think.

All the research in my field supports Resolution 442's recommendation that would establish procedures and standards for admission to the special high schools of New York City which will consist of multiple objective measures of student merit including grade point averages, school attendance records, school admission test scores and state test scores.

I am submitting two pages of information about the SAT developed by the National Center for Fair and Open Testing. The test for the specialized high schools has the same flaws as the SAT.

References

Pressley, M. & Mc Cormick, C.B. (1997). Educational Psychology: Learning, Instruction, Assessment. New York: Longman

Woolfolk, A. (2004), Educational Psychology. Boston: Pearson

The tests for admissions to New York City's specialized high schools have the same flaws as those described below.

The National Center for Fair & Open Testing

10 Myths about the SAT

1. The SAT gives all students an equal shot at college admission.

Because of the way the test is constructed, its rewards for strategic guessing, the highly-speeded pace, and cultural biases, the SAT denies African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and women equal opportunities for higher education. Research shows that when admissions offices place heavy emphasis on SAT scores - particularly when they use rigid cut-off score minimums - the number of qualified students of color and low-income students admitted goes down. What's more, using scores to award scholarships prevents students of color and women from getting their fair share of badly-needed tuition aid.

2. The SAT is only the messenger: score gaps merely reflect differences in students' academic backgrounds.

Even when students are matched for academic preparation, there are still large gender and racial gaps in their SAT scores. A federal court reviewed the test-makers' best arguments, which took into account variables such as ethnicity, parental education, high school classes, and proposed college major, and concluded that "...[U]nder the most conservative studies presented in evidence, even after removing the effect of these factors, at least a 30 point combined differential [between males and females] remains unexplained."

3. SAT scores are precise, like inches on a yardstick.

The College Board's ATP Guide long stated, "Users learn to understand and appreciate the meaning of a score of 430 in the same way that they have learned to understand and appreciate the meaning of, say, 14 inches..." But it notes in other publications that the SAT's margin of error is approximately 60 points. Even more incredible, the test-makers admit that two students' scores must differ by about 120 points before anyone can be sure that the differences are meaningful. Adding to the confusion, ETS "recentered" test scores in 1995. This changed the formula used to convert raw scores into the SAT's 200-800 point scale, resulting in an average score increase of nearly 100 points. If the SAT is a "common yardstick," as the test-makers say, it must be made of elastic.

4. At least the SAT is more accurate than high school grades.

On the contrary, despite all the differences between courses and grading standards, high school grade point average (GPA) is still the best predictor of first year college grades -- which is all the SAT claims to predict. As a student moves through college, SAT scores become even less accurate predictors, with high school GPA and rigor of courses trumping the SAT in forecasting bachelor's degree attainment. This shows just how inaccurate the SAT really is.

5. But colleges still need test scores to make admissions decisions.

The nearly 400 colleges and universities that admit a substantial number of applicants without regard to test scores show that you can have a rigorous admissions process without the SAT. Highly selective institutions can follow the example of Bowdoin College, which has found that the diversity and quality of its students improved after it made the SAT optional 25 years ago. Fewer than 150 colleges in the country reject more than half of their applicants. Admissions officers at these schools have many other ways to deal with differences in high school curriculum and quality.

6. When girls and boys are matched by ability, the score gap on the SAT-Verbal section disappears.

The College Board's way of "matching by ability" is to match test-takers' SAT scores! So if the test is flawed as an overwhelming body of research and legal cases indicates, then matching by scores is also skewed. The real cause of the gender gap is bias in the test: despite the fact that they receive better grades in high school and college in comparable classes, females receive lower scores on the SAT. This remains true even when course taking patterns and course difficulty are accounted for. The test-maker has been unable to adequately account for this discrepancy, but independent research shows that the timed, multiple-choice format of the exams, the roles of females in test questions, the penalty for guessing, and "stereotype bias" may all play roles in artificially depressing females' test scores.

7. Test coaching doesn't work.

Studies collected by FairTest show that good coaching programs can raise a student's scores by 100 points or more. Many of these courses are very expensive (\$800 and up), and teach little more than test-taking strategies specific to the SAT. The fact that short-term coaching works undermines the test-makers' claim that the SAT measures skills and knowledge learned over a long period of time. It also adds another income-related bias to the test, since students who come from families that can afford an expensive coaching class are already more likely to score higher on the test. Moreover, why do both ETS and the College Board sell test preparation products if coaching doesn't work?

8. The test-makers' "exhaustive bias reduction procedures" guarantee that the test is fair.

Whatever else their procedures may be doing, they are not eliminating bias from the test. ETS' own research indicates that the overall format of the test itself is to blame. The SAT is a fast-paced, multiple-choice test which rewards strategic guessing -- a non-academic skill at which males tend to excel. The methods used to screen individual test items for bias, such as "differential item functioning," fail to eliminate large discrepancies between students of different racial groups. One analysis of the October 1998 SAT showed that out of 78 Verbal and 60 Math questions, there were no items on which African Americans or Chicanos outperformed Whites.

9. The SAT is needed to counteract grade inflation.

No definitive proof exists showing that grade inflation is running rampant throughout U.S. high school, as many in the testing industry claim. Even if one assumes that grades are going up at a much faster rate than test scores, this trend would be a rising tide that lifts all boats. Applicants can still be accurately compared with one another since everyone's grades would be increasing and rank-in-class does not change.

10. The SAT measures what you need to know in college.

The SAT is a mind game that has nothing to do with skills necessary for higher education: it tests a tiny range of techniques, mainly how quickly you can choose among four or five answers without thinking deeply about any of them. For example, research shows that over 40% of reading comprehension items can be answered correctly without reading the passage. Some of the many qualities you need in college that the SAT cannot measure are writing ability, strategic reasoning, higher order thinking skills, experience, persistence and creativity.

For Submission To:
The Honorable Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker, The New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1856
New York, NY 10007

December 11, 2014

I am an alumnus of the High School of American Studies at Lehman College (HSAS), one of the eight specialized high schools that use the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) as the sole factor in determining admissions. Throughout my time at HSAS, I witnessed a pronounced shift in the school's racial demographics. When I applied in 2010, 44 percent of its students were black or Latino. By the time I graduated, the freshman class was a substantially lower 14 percent black or Latino.

Having witnessed the increasing segregation of my academic and social environment, I set out to understand better the high school selective admissions policies. During my senior year, I devoted a large amount of time to a documentary film project that explored efforts to reform the admissions process for the specialized high schools. **This project, entitled *Reforming Admissions*, can be found on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRH0LCaDMOs>).** Specifically, my project considered the suggestions of the UFT Task Force, which included four of my teachers, and contextualized their proposals with student and educator voices from within the HSAS community. I spent several hours each week discussing the complexities of reforming the admissions system with my teachers, and listening to students' experiences and challenges with issues pertaining to diversity in an increasingly homogenous social environment. I also distributed surveys to HSAS teachers and students, attempting to determine and analyze several key topics of interest:

- 1) the nature and extent of demographic changes occurring within HSAS;
- 2) the correlation between students' racial backgrounds and their preparation for the SHSAT;
- 3) teachers' perspectives on reforming the admissions system for specialized schools.

I have already stated some of my findings on changes in the racial demographics of HSAS. I will add, however, that **my findings demonstrated a direct correlation between a decline in racial diversity and a decline in socioeconomic diversity at my school.** For example, in the Class of 2014, 29 percent of students identified as black and Latino, and 29 percent identified as working or lower middle class. In the Class of 2017, 14 percent of students identified as black and Latino, and 15 percent identified as working or lower middle class.

My findings also revealed a significant disparity in the methods by which students of different racial backgrounds prepared for the SHSAT. While 77 percent of the white students at HSAS paid for test prep, only 18 percent of the black and Latino students did. Given that these percentages reflect only a subset of students who placed into one of the more competitive specialized schools, we can expect that the percentage of black and Latino students who paid for test prep in the rest of New York City is significantly lower than other racial groups.

Moreover, I found that **teachers at my school were overwhelmingly supportive of efforts to change the admissions process to specialized schools** with the intent of promoting a more diverse student body. Of the 26 teachers at my school, 82 percent agreed that “the specialized high schools admissions system should be reformed.” Eighty eight percent supported “the expansion of the Discovery Program,” 76 percent supported “the consideration of an additional score based on GPAs, attendance records and state examination scores,” and 59 percent supported “offering seats at specialized high schools to valedictorians and salutatorians of every NYC middle school.”

My project attempts to reflect the complexities involved in reforming the admissions system of specialized high schools. As such, my intention was not to advocate particular policies, but to promote a constructive dialogue on reform. For such a dialogue to exist, we will first have to acknowledge the seriousness of the lack of racial diversity in New York City public schools and recognize promoting diversity as a primary concern when evaluating admissions policies and practices.

Eero Arum
High School of American Studies at Lehman College, Class of 2014
eero.arum@gmail.com

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Adam Freilich and I am a Bronx Science Alumnus from the class of 2013.

We have come to a crossroads in today's culture where race has once again surfaced on the forefront of our media, our justice system, and now our education.

The statistics are irrefutable. There is an alarmingly small percentage of Black and Hispanic students in our most elite secondary educational institutions, and this number only becomes more jarring when compared to our fine city's demographic complexion.

Our city's diversity is precisely the reason that we must not reform the admissions process for specialized schools.

The elimination of this test is regarded as a solution, or at least a massive leap forward, in giving our most impoverished demographic a new means out of poverty. Today I will address why the proposed reform does not create new roads to success, and how this shift in focus entrenches the system of discrimination. I stand here today as a citizen speaking with the hopes of bringing forth a future, which looks to be void of privilege and thrives in equality.

Eliminating a singular test in favor of a system that mirrors our college admission process seems to me, a regressive step for inclusivity. In New York City, Black and Hispanic citizens comprise 47% of our impoverished populationⁱ. Many proponents of reform have cited this poverty as a cause for the lack of diversity. What normally seems to be neglected is that our city's largest impoverished demographic is that of Asian Americans, who account for over 60% of the specialized high schools' populationsⁱⁱ. In fact, if poverty *were* the root cause of the admissions gap, the proposed reform would create problems, seeing as it calls to take into account extra-curricular activities. Usually it is the more affluent children who have the privilege to build a résumé beginning in their youth.

In light of the recent Supreme Court decision in *Schuetz v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action* (2014), many news outlets published updated data on racial enrollment and achievement disparities at the collegiate level. We have done a great deal to address our racial admissions gap, and as of 2011 Black enrollment trails White enrollment by only 5%ⁱⁱⁱ. Unfortunately, enrollment does not necessitate the same academic success. The Current Population Survey notes that graduation rates have become stagnant, with 40% of White students attaining a bachelor's degree while only 20% of Black and 15% of Hispanic students can boast the same merit^{iv}.

To clarify, the notion of extending equal opportunity is *not* wrong, however to believe that we operate in a system that provides equal opportunity is ignorant. The numbers seem to indicate that we do not provide the necessary means for success, even if we bring our disadvantaged fellows to the level playing field. Instead we

should focus on producing equal roads to succeed by the time the next generation reaches the age to take this test.

If we treat reform as a solution we turn our cheek to the neighborhoods and districts that truly need our assistance. The New York Times^v reports that disadvantaged children gain the most from preschool level education seeing that if they fall behind at a young age, they simply remain behind. Julia Isaacs of the Brookings institute notes that preschools offer the most promise for fixing this gap, making children 9% more likely to be school-ready by kindergarten.^{vi} To ignore schools in need is to deny progress. To eliminate this test is to say we are content with how the system stands.

Thank you.

ⁱ Chakraborty, Ranjani. "Elite NYC schools wrestle with drop in black, Hispanic students" Aljazeera. November 24, 2014. <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/articles/2014/11/24/nyc-schools-blackhispanicasian.html>

ⁱⁱ ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics. "Percentage of recent high school completers enrolled in 2-year and 4-year colleges, by income level: 1975 through 2011" U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, CPS. June 2012. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_236.asp

^{iv} Casselman, Ben. "Race Gap Narrows in College Enrollment, But Not in Graduation" FiveThirtyEight. April 30, 2014. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/race-gap-narrows-in-college-enrollment-but-not-in-graduation/#fn-1>

^v Porter, Eduardo. "Investments in Education May Be Misdirected" New York Times. April 2, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/business/studies-highlight-benefits-of-early-education.html?pagewanted=all>

^{vi} Isaacs, Julia B. "Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children" Center on Children and Families at Brookings. March 2012. http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/3/19%20school%20disadvantage%20isaacs/0319_school_disadvantage_isaacs

Hearing on Diversity in New York City Public Schools

Intro. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442

Thursday, December 11, 2014 at 10 AM

City Council Chambers, City Hall

Education Committee, Hon. Daniel Dromm, *Chairman*

Testimony Respectfully Submitted By Michael Benjamin

Good afternoon Councilman Dromm,

My name is Michael Benjamin. I am a former state legislator and I am a proud alumnus of the Bronx HS of Science (Class of '76). My wife and I currently reside in the Morrisania section of the Bronx.

Succinctly, I oppose Reso 442 and support as presently constructed the use of the *Specialized HS Admission Test* (SHSAT) as the sole criterion for admission to the City's specialized high schools because the exam serves as a fair and unbiased arbiter of scholastic merit.

The SHSAT entrance examination is the only truly fair and unbiased arbiter because every student admitted will have earned his or her place.

My cousin, Kenon Tutein, a 1993 Bronx Science graduate and a Carnegie Mellon University engineer, asked me to remind you that "the SHSAT is an entrance exam, not an assessment test."

The test itself is neither racist nor discriminates based on race or ethnicity.

The much ballyhooed "disparate impact" on black and Hispanic students is not caused by the test. The test uncomfortably reveals the systemic disparities visited upon middle schools in black and Hispanic neighborhoods. Only 3% of black and Hispanic students scored above grade level on last year's seventh grade math assessment test as compared to 31% of Asian American and 22% of white students. That is the heart of the disparity.

I truly believe that the best way to aid the poor, black, Hispanic and underrepresented students is to commit significant resources to turnaround the low performing middle schools that for decades have ill-served vast numbers of those students.

And to that end, the Council should direct and fund the Department of Education to create high quality gifted and talented academic programs in every community school district.

Leveling the academic playing field should first begin by desegregating middle schools where possible, maintaining higher standards, implementing challenging curricula, and increasing academic supports in our low-performing middle schools (which are in predominantly black and Hispanic communities).

Ending unequal middle school education should be your goal, not weakening our best schools and certainly not establishing an academically harmful minority quota system at those schools.

I urge that the Council individually and collectively recall the despicable “gentlemen’s agreements” and changes in admissions criteria that once limited the number of Jews at elite US colleges and universities.

Asian students and their parents are opposed to lowering standards or instituting quotas. They, in fact, feel targeted for being high achievers.

Who could blame them?

Working class Asian families invest in their education and suddenly the City Council would penalize them for being [quote, unquote] “overrepresented” at specialized high schools.

Lastly, I stand my October 24 op-ed wherein I described Intro 511-A as a Trojan horse disguising an attack on charter schools and the Asian students attending specialized high schools.

The proposed admission criteria which range from administering the exam in five languages and adding an essay to using portfolios, attendance, grade point average, and extracurricular activities would favor non-Hispanic, white middle school students over Asians, Blacks and Hispanics.

In fact, the number of minority students offered seats at specialized high schools while low has held steady for a decade. However, the number of white students has fallen by 40 per cent and 22 per cent at Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech, respectively.

I urge this Council to forget race-based solutions and, instead, to focus on providing fiscal equity and academic solutions which will fix the dismal middle schools which are disproportionately located in residentially segregated black and Hispanic communities.

Once we revamp the city’s middle schools, raise expectations and improve scholastic achievement, the number of blacks and Latinos at the very best public high schools will increase.

New Yorkers of good conscience want merit, not race and class, rewarded at our specialized high schools.

I urge you to withdraw from consideration Intro. 511-A, Resolution 453 and Resolution 442.

Thank you.

Michael Benjamin (@SquarePegDem)

FOMB08@gmail.com

-30-

For Resolution 0442-2014

My name is Phil Gim, I am one of the founders of CoalitionEdu, and an alumnus of Brooklyn Tech. I also ran for the Assembly in Northern Queens this year.

I have two concerns - one has to do with the impact of A9979 on Queens and the other has to do with the representation of Asians in this issue.

It is obvious that the intention of bill A9979, and the proponents behind it, are to evenly redistribute the seats at the specialized high schools. However, this will severely impact the Queens high school students and their families negatively. Queens sends the most students to the specialized high schools every year, with about 1900 students, which is 36% of all specialized high school students. In fact, 60% of Bronx Science students come from our borough. The redistribution of specialized high school seats would reduce the number available for Queens students and would send them back to the borough to look for seats. Queens, however, is uniquely short of over 7000 high school seats. No other borough is like this and it would devastate the already overcrowded high school situation in our borough. Queens should not be a dumping ground for education.

Queens has another unique statistic. The most recent Census in 2010 indicated that 100,000 Asian immigrants moved into the borough. Also, Asian Americans have the highest rate of poverty among all minorities at 29%. The Specialized High Schools reflect these statistics. About 60 to over 70% of the students are Asian American depending on the school; and about 60% are economically disadvantaged. The portrayal of Asian

students at these schools as wealthy and privileged test preppers is absolutely inaccurate and is a stereotype.

Certainly, when you have a discussion about diversity at these schools, the Asian American presence must be recognized. Yet among the dozens of articles that have been written over the last few months, many mentioned a “lack of minorities at these schools”. Writers and even politicians seem to ignore the fact that Asian Americans are also a minority and the word Asian is rarely mentioned. To the best of my knowledge, no Asian community based organizations were approached when Resolution 0442 was drafted.

Asian American immigrant families in New York have limited choices when it comes to education. Due to the language barrier and unfamiliarity with navigating the educational system, they have honed in on the specialized high schools as their school of choice for high achievers. They see these schools as an opportunity for their children to get a head start toward success and achieve the American dream. A9979 has ramifications that will adversely affect New York City Asian Americans who already have their own socio-economic problems.

With limited representation in government, legislators need to thoroughly consider the impact of their policies on the city’s fastest growing minority group. I urge you to not pass Resolution 0442 until you broach that consideration.

Good morning to you all.

Thanks for the invite.

By law, we say "No child shall be denied access to any school because of his or her race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation or economics. (Yes, I threw that last one in)

Live by that law and it should be fair to say "No child shall be admitted because of his or her race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation or economics."

For that reason, your proposal should fail. Keep the test as it has always been.

It is simply not a good idea to take a decades old admissions standard, which is a straight forward, color blind aptitude test and now propose to put in subjective factors just to fulfill some diversity matrix. It's gaming the system and invites corruption. You are taking equality and want to make it unequal. This is misguided legislation. It is offensive and clearly sends a wrong message.

Here are some suggestions to increase enrollment in communities without altering the admission standards-

High schools have become so competitive that the emphasis on educational excellence has to begin practically after birth.

Many Asian and Eastern European communities understand this. Parents impose long hours of study and not a lot of play including sports. They show up at the schools and meet with the math and English teachers. Parents also seem to spend a lot of time and money in prep courses for these tests. By all means, keep the Discovery Program. Tweak it. Expand it a few years even. Every community should have armies of Tiger Moms.

Also, make it more economically and logistically viable for kids in far reaching communities. Public transportation may be free, but it can be long. The kid who lived in Far Rockaway and went to Bronx Science a year or two ago made headlines with his commute. Ironically, Bronx Science has an express school bus from various locations in Queens, but it costs upwards of three hundred dollars per month. The LIRR is reduced from regular monthly to around one hundred fifty per month. Not everyone can afford the time and money.

Finally, build more specialized high schools. The number of kids taking the Specialized High School Admission Test is in record numbers year after year. Those who miss the cut off by a few points or those who made it and choose not to go, probably number in the thousands. They are still very smart kids who are now basically relegated to their zoned schools which may only have a limited number of honors program seats. They are also lumped in with the general education students. Give them schools they can take pride in and call their own. The four to six hundred seat boutique specialized high schools co-located in CUNY campuses are good, but small. I suggest next time you close a failing high school, re-open it as a specialized high school. Take these suggestions and they will come from all communities. In droves.

Testimony from Stanley Blumenstein

I am testifying in opposition to Resolution #442-2014

As a former student, assistant principal and the fifth principal of The Bronx High School of Science, I am in a unique position to evaluate the merits of the proposed resolution. The specialized high schools in the city of New York are the crown jewels of public education, recognized for their extraordinary success on both a national and world stage. To tamper with the admission process, in any way whatsoever, is an invitation for disaster.

I am totally indebted to my alma mater, Bronx Science, not only for the advanced education I received during my formative years, but also for the incredible inspiration that resulted from the camaraderie of the student body, which consisted of the most intellectually curious and capable students imaginable. Each of my peers was a budding scientist, and we shared our stories of kitchen experiments and beyond-the-horizon dreams. I credit those years of inspiration for my eventual work as an engineer working for Grumman Aircraft on NASA's Lunar Module. It was my high school environment that convinced me to join the space race and to help our country land a man on the moon.

I am not the only one so positively affected. Sheldon Glashow and Steven Weinberg sat together at lunch, sharing ideas that projected them both into science research for which they were each awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics. In all, eight Bronx Science alumni became Nobel Laureates, more than any school in the nation, and more than most countries in the world. Six alumni won Pulitzer Prizes, and we also have had more Westinghouse semi-finalists than any other school in the nation!

Clearly, the founding fathers of Bronx Science designed a school that works at the very highest level, a school that has not only realized its mission, but has surpassed even the wildest dreams of those who created the school. And what was that mission? Its mission, then and today, is to create opportunities for the city's brightest, for those who are most gifted and talented, to prosper and to develop into the nation's leaders.

The clouds of war were on the horizon when Bronx Science was conceived in 1938. And the school helped meet the nation-at-war's need for creative, inventive scientists and engineers. The dangers to our country's welfare are no less today than they were in 1938. And so the school's mission is as important today as it was 76 years ago. We must not change the formula for success that has helped mold the leaders upon which our nation depends.

We are all dismayed by the lack of diversity in the specialized schools, a diversity that does not match the ethnic and racial make-up of the city. But is that the goal of the specialized high schools, to reflect the ethnic and racial make-up of the city, or is the goal to prepare the most talented and gifted students in our great city for positions of leadership in the challenging world that we live in?

The real question is—can we increase the number of under-represented minorities in the specialized schools, WITHOUT affecting the school's primary mission? I believe there are ways, but NOT by circumventing the objective exam. Allowing a consideration of subjective factors such as grade point average or teacher evaluations would destroy the integrity of the admission process; of this, I am absolutely certain.

When I was principal, I received numerous phone calls from elected officials from all areas of government, requesting that I do them a favor by accepting a child of one of their constituents... a nice boy or girl from a nice family. Imagine a system in which the test was not sacrosanct. The integrity of the admission process would be destroyed. It would become porous, and open to all kinds of unholy pressures. Is that what we want? Would students who could not score well on an exam testing mathematical and verbal acuity be able to succeed on the advanced placement and college-level exams which are the sine qua non of the specialized high school curricula? I am afraid not.

So the question remains—is there a way to increase the number of under-represented minorities, WITHOUT changing the admission process, which has been the key to the schools' success for generations? One must look at the big picture. What is the root cause of the lack of diversity in the specialized high schools? Any honest appraisal would point to the lack of preparation students receive in grades K-8.

When I was principal, we conducted a program with various districts in the Bronx and upper Manhattan to train middle school teachers, most of whom were embarrassingly lacking in science and math skills. The city needs to invest more to ensure the presence of top notch teachers in the lower grades, and to create more gifted programs once the most capable students are indentified. Many of my former students took prep-courses for the specialized high school exam. I recall that some students even took the course in Taiwan, before coming to the U.S. The city needs to offer prep-courses for those who can't afford the private ones. Better communication regarding the specialized schools is also needed. Many middle school parents aren't properly informed, and so their children never sit for the exam.

Last but not least, the Discovery Program created by the Hecht-Calandra Act of 1972 was successful in increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of Bronx Science when I was principal. Financially indigent students whose scores fell just short of the cut-off were allowed admission if they successfully completed a summer preparatory course. To my knowledge, this program has not been utilized in the recent past. The Discovery Program should be reinstated.

In conclusion, it is the mission of the specialized high schools to nurture and prepare the most talented and gifted students in our great city for positions of leadership in the world that awaits them. The exam that has been used for generations is objective, color-blind and highly successful. To tamper with a process that works by introducing subjective criteria would destroy the schools in which we all take such pride. We must not be fooled into diverting our attention from the root causes of the under-representation of minorities. The real inequity lies in the deficient preparation that some students receive, and that is where our efforts and finances should be directed.

Respectfully submitted,



Stanley Blumenstein
Bronx Science Alum, Class of '63 and
Retired Principal, 1994-2000

Vincent G. Galasso
Principal (retired)
The Bronx High School of Science

My name is Vincent Galasso. I served at The Bronx HS of Science for over 30 years, including more than four (4) years as Principal. (1990 - 94 and again for the latter part of the 2001 school year). I am here to speak against Resolution 442, specifically its conclusion that the NYS legislature pass and the Governor sign S.7738/A.9979, to change the admission criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

The suggested plans for utilizing multiple criteria for selecting students for the three original Specialized High Schools are flawed. Using GPA's from lower levels would not be fair since there is no uniformity from school to school in either the curriculum or grading. The use of Essays as part of the selection process, assuming over 40,000 ~~entrants~~ ^{Candidates} would be time consuming, expensive and extremely subjective. Attendance data can be tainted by judgment decisions regarding what constitutes excused vs. unexcused absence. Even using statewide exam scores can be flawed. There have been a number of well publicized cases where there have been serious breaches of security and deliberate actions by teachers or administrators to "improve" test results.

As all Past Principals of Bronx Science can attest, we have been asked to "do something" about accepting students who did not make the cut-off for the school. Our response was to simply say that NYS law dictates that the SHSAT (entrance exam) determines who is accepted directly or offered a position in the Discovery Program. Therefore Principals had the means to avoid undo pressure and time wasting tactics of parents, elected officials and other dignitaries. One of the unintended consequences of Resolution 442, if enacted, would be to shift a singular pressure (acceptance) from the Specialized HS Principals to multiple lines of pressure (grades, attendance statewide exams) to large number of teachers and administrators. The collective time lost dealing with these issues will be monumental and likely lead to inconsistencies and possible illegal activity.

The success of the Bronx HS of Science program is dependent upon, its students, its faculty, its curriculum*, parents and over the last two decades, its alumni. The success of the school is undeniable. Each year, virtually 100% of the senior class graduates and goes on to higher learning, More than 50% eventually wind up working in science, engineering, medicine etc. Many of its graduates have gone into Law and excelled in business. Eight of its graduates have won the Nobel Prize in Science. I predict there will be more such honors in the future. All this has been accomplished with the selection process currently in place. This is because the present construction of the SHSAT tests prospective students for qualitative and quantitative reading and math skills that are essential for students to succeed at The Bronx HS of Science. Changing the selection process will inevitably lead to the same results as occurred at the 4-year City Colleges following the institution of Open Enrollment. Recall that remediation courses had to be employed to bring many of the entering students up to date and, furthermore, top students declined to apply, a situation that has been remedied to an extent, only recently.

My own experience as Principal during a budget crisis is very instructive as to what is likely to happen at Bronx Science if the entrance requirement is changed. The budget was so poor that I had to choose between maintaining the teaching staff and the school's superb academic program or excess support staff. I chose to retain the teaching staff and the entire curriculum. This would not be possible if entering students require either remediation or much smaller class sizes than the contractual limits normally employed. Higher class sizes in the 9th and 10th grade allow the school to have more advanced course offerings in the 11th and 12th grades than would be otherwise possible. Lower class sizes in the 9th and 10th grades would force cuts in either the curriculum or support staff unless the school's budget was substantially increased. This being said, I can only imagine the chaos that would ensue if our 9th and 10th grade students need for either remediation or smaller class sizes was accompanied by another budget crisis.

As the Spanish philosopher, George Santayana said: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." So I ask you to remember

- *Remember the problems that will most assuredly occur if multiple criteria are used to select students for the Specialized High Schools.
- *Remember the problems caused by Open Enrollment and how they could have been avoided by utilizing the Community Colleges for students to prove themselves.
- *Remember how effective the SHSAT has been in selecting successful students.
- *Remember that the Discovery Program and the original Specialized High School Prep (SHSP) program was very successful in improving diversity.
- *Remember the excellence exhibited by past Bronx Science students.
- *Remember that change can be brought about in many ways. It is possible to improve teaching and learning in the lower grades so that students will have a greater opportunity to enter a Specialized HS. Think about establishing Magnet Middle/Junior HSs.
- *Remember the school's motto - "Commitment to Excellence." has been magnificently achieved for 76 years

Most of all - Remember to vote NO on RESOLUTION NUMBER 442.

* Note- The curriculum and teaching methodology utilized at Bronx Science was awarded Model Program Status by the US Office of Education, Office of Gifted and Talented. Over a three-year period, we hosted hundreds of teachers and administrators nationwide who wanted to learn about our methods to stimulate higher-level learning and activities.

SHSAT Hearing with NYC Council

By: Ivan Khan, MD, MPH

Good morning everyone, my name is Dr. Ivan Khan, CEO at Khan's Tutorial & a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science class of 1999. I am providing this testimony in opposition to Resolution 442. Over the past 20 years, our team at Khan's Tutorial has helped over 1,625 low income New Yorkers across the outer boroughs gain admission to NYC's Specialized High Schools. In March of 2014, we helped a record number of 185 students gain admission. After personally working with low income New Yorkers for the past 16 years, **I speak before you today to share our vision for increased diversity at New York City's Specialized High Schools while maintaining an objective admissions criteria.**

Firstly, I'd like to state that an objective single test admissions criteria has proven to INCREASE diversity at the Specialized High Schools. In fact, at Staten Island Technical High School, the number of African American and Hispanic students INCREASED when changing from a holistic admissions process to a single test admissions method about 10 years ago. A holistic admissions process ALREADY exists in New York City's SCREENED high schools. **This holistic system mainly helps wealthier students.**

The Holistic/SCREENED approach has led to schools such as Townsend Harris in Queens or Midwood HS in Brooklyn where the median family income is much higher when compared to that of a student from Stuyvesant, Bronx Science or Brooklyn Tech. Ultimately, the percentage of Caucasian students is generally higher at a NYC Screened HS than at a Specialized High Schools & the student body happens to be much wealthier at a Screened HS. In order to truly increase diversity, we must totally remove subjectivity in the admissions process.

The inclusion of subjective criteria such as essays, extra curricular activities, interviews and even GPA places poorer, less privileged 12-year-old students in a much worse battle than their wealthier counterparts. By the admission of the Department of Education themselves, public schools receive different grades from the DOE, making it impossible to compare GPAs across the city. An A- in District 10 in the Bronx is very different from an A- in District 26 in Queens, or District 20 in

Brooklyn. An A- in District 10 in the Bronx, where less than 30% of students are reading at grade level and where passing rates on certain regents exams are as low as 30%, is very different from an A- in District 26 in Queens, where the lowest passing rate is 65% on any regents, or District 20 in Brooklyn.

The sad reality is that New York City's public school system is failing in many communities. Dozens of our poorest districts, particularly in the outer boroughs of Queens, Brooklyn & the Bronx have schools that face the daunting challenge of educating some of our most vulnerable families. By increasing the number of criteria for the Specialized High Schools, hard working families new to the United States from South America, Nigeria, China, Korea, Bangladesh, India & Eastern Europe will be expected to excel in a public school system that often falls short in serving our poorest & newest families. Increasing the number of admissions criteria will hurt families with non-English speaking parents, and severely harm top immigrant students from Queens, as well as low-income students throughout the rest of the city.

Since 1994, the vast majority of students gaining admissions to the Specialized High Schools through Khan's has been new immigrant families from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Guyana, Trinidad, Nepal. More recently African Americans & Hispanics have been gaining admission through our program.

Similar to generations of New Yorkers before us, most of our families migrated to the United States to achieve the American Dream. For many families, this was through a world-class education for their kids. Nearly all of our students at Khan's are from blue-collar working class families in which parents are working as taxi drivers, restaurant workers, hotel staff, & other professions that many immigrants enter when starting out in this country. For each of these families, working towards admissions to the Specialized High Schools has been their only chance at getting their families out of poverty & the issues commonly faced by immigrants in our beloved city.

The current objective system helped a wonderful young man who surpassed many obstacles early in life and persevered through several challenges on his way to an outstanding education at Bronx Science. Santiago Munoz first made headlines a

few years ago as NYC's very own Guinness Book of World record holder for having the longest commute to school by a student, by any child, in any country, in the entire world after Hurricane Sandy damaged many public transit lines. Since then, Khan's Tutorial has provided Santiago FREE tutoring, every week, throughout the year in our signature High School Achievement Program, until the day he graduates from Bronx Science. Students like Santiago realize how many increased barriers he'd face if a holistic criteria were in place.

There are thousands of similar stories that you will hear regarding graduates & current students at the Specialized High Schools. For most families, the Specialized HS represents the one shining star in an otherwise struggling school system where inequality starts at the K-6 level. As a leader in the South Asian community, and an advocate for all New York City families, I urge the City Council to hear the voices of Stuyvesant HS, Bronx Science & Brooklyn Tech regarding their own admissions criteria.

Don't change the admissions criteria. Instead, **work towards improving our middle schools, work towards providing free tutoring in under-represented communities, eliminate the registration process so that every NYC public school 8th grader can take the SHSAT, offer the exam twice to reduce testing anxiety, and overall, increase awareness about the exam and the different opportunities suited for different families.** This past Spring, Khan's Tutorial awarded 18 scholarships totaling \$100,000 to provide **FREE tutoring for the SHSAT** to 18 students from African American & Hispanic families. This month, we re-launched the **scholarship for 20 new students** in honor of our late Founder, Dr. Mansur Khan. 20 top students from African American and Hispanic families will be announced on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend.

I leave you today urging you to hear our voice. Preserve the SHSAT. **Increase diversity while maintaining an objective admissions criteria. Thank you.**

TESTIMONY OF DAVID F. TIPSON, DIRECTOR OF NEW YORK APPLESEED
New York City Council – Committee on Education
“Oversight: Diversity in New York City Schools”
Thursday, December 11, 2014

Chairman Dromm, members of the Committee on Education, thank you for inviting me to testify on the critical issue of segregation in New York City public schools. My name is David Tipson, and I am the director of New York Appleseed. New York Appleseed is one of 17 Appleseed justice centers around the country and in Mexico. Appleseed centers work with pro bono professionals to address structural barriers to opportunity and justice with systemic solutions. New York Appleseed and its pro bono partner Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe have studied and advocated around the issue of school segregation in New York City for nearly four years. I am also the parent of a first-grader in the school system and serve on the steering committee of the National Coalition on School Diversity, which is separately submitting testimony today. Because of the range of expertise represented in the oral and written testimony for this hearing, my testimony today will focus on the importance of leadership from The New York City Department of Education (DOE) – the subject of Res. 453.

You have received testimony today from community leaders who are facilitating authentic local processes and developing innovative and cutting-edge solutions. New York Appleseed has had the privilege of providing support to some of these efforts. I believe that DOE has an exciting opportunity to collaborate with these communities to generate big wins for everyone involved. New York Appleseed and Orrick were honored to be included in a task force led by Council Members Brad Lander and Stephen Levin on the new PS 133 school building in northern Park

Slope, Brooklyn. What was remarkable about that process was that it resulted in a solution – a pro-diversity admissions plan - that was supported and praised by Chancellor Walcott and the DOE, elected officials, the community education councils, parents, and the school leadership itself. School diversity was the issue that unified all of these stakeholders, and there was almost no opposition to the plan in the community. How often does this happen in the New York City education world? Wouldn't this suggest that DOE should be seizing similar opportunities to collaborate with local communities on this issue?

At the same time, the DOE can and must also adopt citywide policies. That is what the legislation before you is about, and that is where I will focus my testimony today. Over the last four years New York Appleseed and Orrick have interviewed scores of experts across the city and nationally. Our goal was not to prove that city schools were intensely segregated. (*The New York Times* established this fact in a series called "A System Divided" in 2012.) Nor did we set out to demonstrate the harms of segregation and benefits of diversity – both of which (as you will see in today's testimony) are well established in the scholarly literature. Rather we sought to understand how it is that one of the most diverse places on the planet has the third-most segregated urban school system in the country. In a series of three policy briefings we examined *the mechanics* of school segregation in NYC.

What we found ran against some of the conventional wisdom: For example, it is frequently said that schools in NYC are segregated because neighborhoods are segregated. Although we found that housing segregation was a primary driver of school segregation (and continue to insist on

the critical importance of strong neighborhood integration policies), we found that housing segregation alone does not begin to explain the extreme levels of segregation that we see in our schools. Neighborhood segregation does not explain segregation in diverse community school districts, in gifted and talented programs, in middle schools without attendance zones, and in high schools. Our policy choices severely exacerbate the school segregation that neighborhood segregation alone would have caused. If you take nothing else from my testimony today, I hope you will remember as that the persistence of school segregation is a choice that we make and, consequently, a problem we can fix.

Another thing we hear is that our schools are segregated because that's the way most parents want them. What we found in our research and in our advocacy around PS 133, by contrast, is that parents of all backgrounds do want more diversity in their schools. The problem is that the only thing on the menu for most parents is segregation. What we have seen is that when diversity is actually on the menu parents will choose it. In places like Park Slope Brooklyn, where I live, it is in fact parents *choosing* diverse schools that has made them less diverse over time. The problem has been the absence of any intentional, systemic policies to stabilize diversity over time and across schools. That was the theory behind the PS 133 plan – to prevent the flip that occurs when too many parents of one background choose a school, and other parents get crowded out.

So if New York City school segregation isn't determined by neighborhood segregation and if many parents of all backgrounds want more diverse schools, there is a golden opportunity for

leadership from the DOE. One of the things we heard consistently from the people we interviewed was that strong leadership on this issue from the DOE would dramatically improve the situation. What might this leadership look like?

A clear statement of departmental policy favoring diverse schools along with accountability standards will require principals and DOE officials to consider how each of the myriad administrative decisions they make each day lines up against the goal of school diversity. Behind the seemingly rational and objective series of school-admissions priorities laid out in official DOE publications lies a wilderness of discretion in which principals and school officials grapple with questions like whether and how to recruit under-represented populations, when to cap enrollment, how to administer waitlists and “over-the-counter” admissions, how to “market” a school and to whom, how to choose between progressive pedagogies (assumed to be favored by middle-class parents) and those of “rigor” (assumed to be favored by parents who are low-income and of color),¹ whether and how to value parents of all backgrounds, and how to respond to the demands of middle-class parents for more conveniently located schools and programs tailored to their preferences.

Leadership and clarity from DOE on how principals and administrators are expected to achieve diversity will allow DOE officials, superintendents, principals, and educators across the city to move forward with confidence as they innovate towards diversity.

¹ Ginia Bellafonte, “Schools Chancellor Brings Joyful and Fierce Style,” *NY Times*, Jan. 3, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/05/nyregion/schools-chancellor-brings-joyful-and-fierce-style.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>.

What we have received from the DOE is, unfortunately, the opposite of leadership. To the handful of schools that have made reasonable requests for the innocuous PS 133 plan, the DOE has yet to provide an answer apart from muttering vague and unspecified legal concerns. On the 60th anniversary of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the DOE released the following lawyerly statement:

“As we mark the 60th anniversary of the landmark *Brown vs. the Board of Education* ruling, we are disappointed with the findings of the recent UCLA report on segregation in our schools. With a multicultural student body that is 40% Latino, 29% black, 15% Asian, and 15% white, we celebrate the incredible diversity in our schools, and support integrated, culturally-rich environments in which all of our students learn from one another and grow together. We recognize that for our students to achieve success, we must close the achievement gap, not just for high school graduation but for entry into college and careers. This is what we at the Department of Education are committed to delivering.”²

This statement sends a regrettably all-too-familiar message of institutional ambivalence and timidity in the face of one of the great civil rights issues of American history. This statement does not give superintendents the leadership and confidence they need so they will strive aggressively for more diversity in their schools. It is unacceptable in the 21st century. It is unacceptable in New York City. And it is unacceptable particularly as our city continues to

² Geoff Decker, “Fariña responds broadly on school segregation, with few hints of a stand,” *Chalkbeat*, May 16, 2014, <http://ny.chalkbeat.org/2014/05/16/farina-responds-broadly-on-school-segregation-with-few-hints-of-a-stand/#.VIIdcv8n4LqN>.

suffer from the legacy of racial and ethnic discrimination, and many city residents perceive that our institutions of government do not view them as full human beings to be served and protected.

This is why Res. 453 is so important. A strong policy statement from DOE represents a simple, practical step that the DOE can take to give principals, educators, department officials, and all members of our school communities the confidence to aggressively pursue strategies to increase and maintain diversity in our schools and to bring the proven educational benefits of diversity to all of our children.

Municipalities receiving federal funds are required to “affirmatively further fair housing” – that is, to affirmatively promote policies with the goal of neighborhood integration. These jurisdictions must undertake fair housing planning consisting of an Analysis of Impediments to fair housing choice and actions to address the effects of the identified impediments. Similarly, we believe that DOE must adopt and promote an official statement to affirmatively further school diversity.

In coordination with Community School District staff, the Department should analyze impediments to school diversity and equitable access in each school, in each community school district, and within the Department’s central office. The Department must develop a menu of specific actions that it expects schools, school districts, and its own central office to use in

addressing the effects of the impediments. Schools should also be encouraged to innovate their own strategies to remove impediments to diversity.

Of course, accountability must run both ways, and the Department must support and partner with schools and districts to implement these actions. Ideally, the Department will report to the public annually on its progress in identifying impediments to diversity at the school, school-district, and departmental levels.

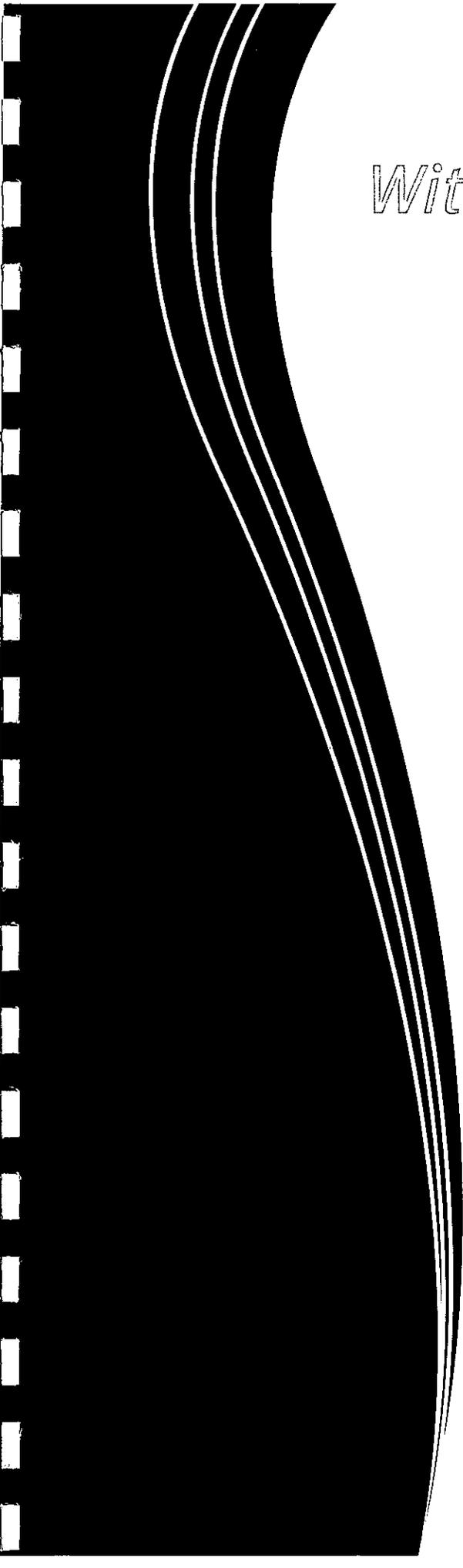
We look forward to the passage of this important resolution by the City Council and we are eager to begin working with officials at the DOE to craft this policy statement with implementing standards and to remove the impediments to school diversity.

We also support Int. 511A, which would require the DOE to release data essential for policy makers and advocates to understand and assess segregation in our public schools. At present we do not have reliable data to answer a question as simple as what is the racial composition of kindergartners in Community School District 13. This bill is therefore essential to advance the conversation around school diversity in New York City.

Thank you again for considering this critical issue. Please know that New York Appleseed is standing by to work with the Education Committee and the Council as a whole.

ATTACHMENTS:

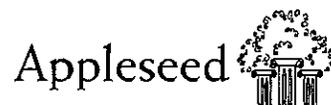
- *Within Our Reach: Segregation in NYC District Elementary Schools and What We Can Do About It: School-to-School Diversity*, July 2013.
- *Within Our Reach: Segregation in NYC District Elementary Schools and What We Can Do About It: Addressing Internal Segregation and Harnessing the Educational Benefits of Diversity*, February 2014.
- *Within Our Reach: Segregation in High Schools and What We Can Do About It: High School Choice*, April 2014.

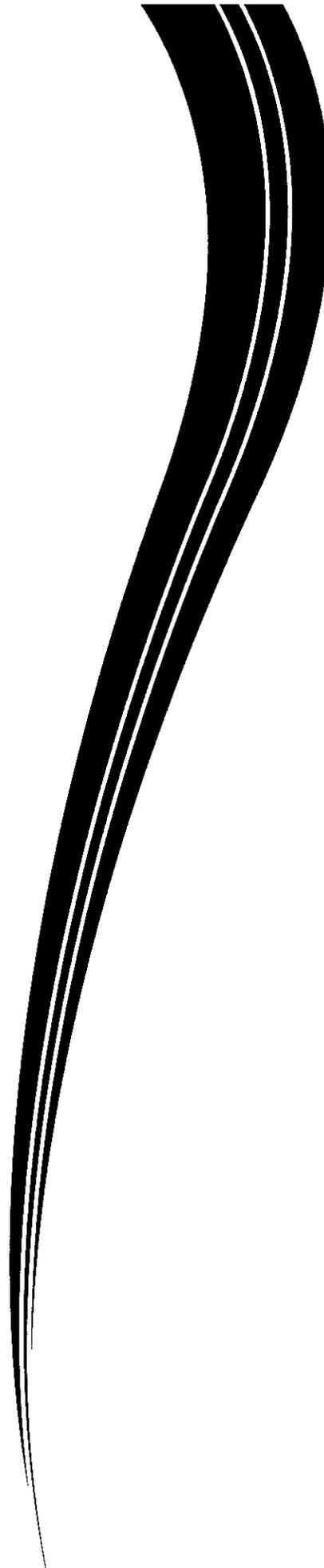


Within Our Reach

Segregation in NYC District Elementary Schools and What We Can Do About It: School-to-School Diversity

New York Appleseed[®]





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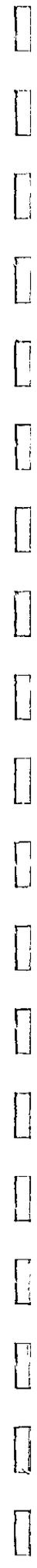
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Acknowledgements

New York Appleseed wishes to thank **Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP** for assisting New York Appleseed with the research and advocacy behind this briefing. In particular, the conviction and drive of Pro Bono Counsel **Rene Kathawala** have underpinned all of our efforts to advance school diversity and public understanding of the issue. Thanks also to colleagues **Lisa Donlan, David Goldsmith** and **Donna Nevel** who reviewed early versions of this document and provided important feedback. Finally, New York Appleseed wishes to thank fellow members of the **National Coalition on School Diversity**, who shared their time and made critical introductions for us. The coalition and its resources have been invaluable to our efforts.

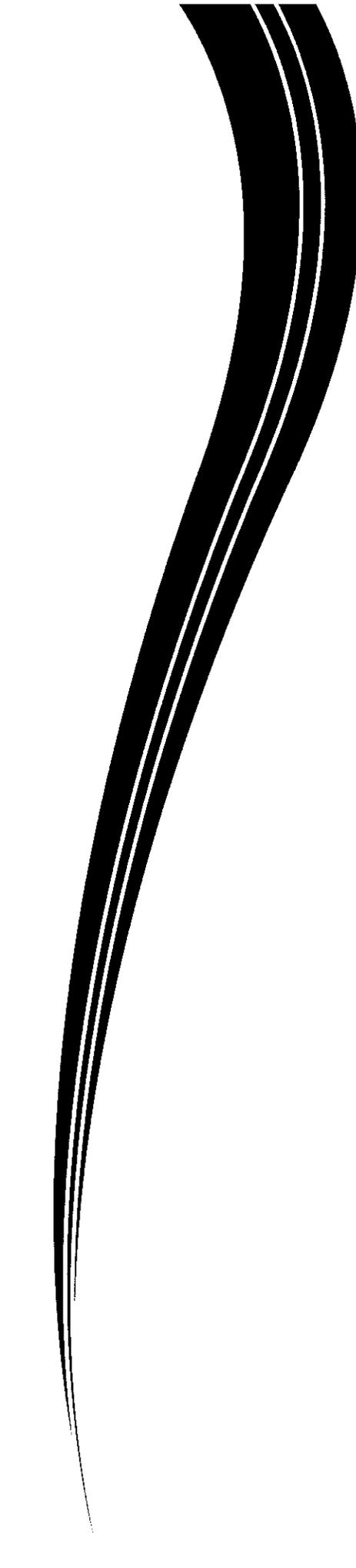
This work would have not have been possible without generous grants from the **New York Community Trust**, the **Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe Foundation** and the **Sirus Fund**. Additionally, the members of the **New York Appleseed Advisory Council** provided critical seed money for this work at a time when the goal of pursuing school diversity across New York City may have struck them as quixotic. Thanks to their initial confidence, this goal lies increasingly within our reach.

About New York Appleseed

New York Appleseed advocates for equity of access and fair allocation of resources to schools and neighborhoods in New York City and its greater metropolitan area. We collaborate with volunteer lawyers, parent groups, demographers, real estate professionals, government officials, and community advocates to uncover regional disparities, develop practical solutions, and advocate for implementation of our recommendations. New York Appleseed is a non-partisan, independent voice for reform. For more information, visit: ny.appleseednetwork.org.

About Appleseed

Appleseed, a nonprofit network of 17 public interest justice centers in the United States and Mexico, uncovers and corrects social injustices through legal, legislative, and market-based structural reform. Appleseed and Appleseed Centers bring together volunteers from the law, business, and academic professions to devise long-term solutions to problems affecting the underprivileged and underrepresented in such areas as education and financial access. For more information, visit: www.appleseednetwork.org.



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About This Series

The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free common schools, wherein all the children of this state may be educated.

New York State Constitution, Article XI, Section 1

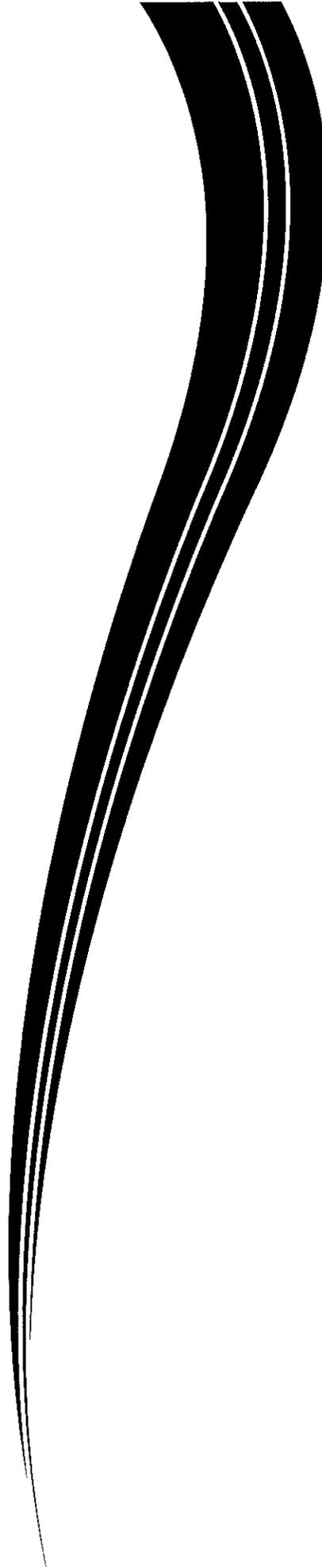
This policy briefing is the first in a series addressing the issue of racial and economic segregation in the New York City system – the third most segregated school district in the country according to the *New York Times*. This series summarizes research and advocacy findings conducted by New York Appleseed and the global law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe. From 2011 to the present, while actively engaged in advocacy with community partners, we have separately interviewed scores of experts in New York City and around the country – academics, parents, advocates, principals, teachers, government officials.

Our series of briefings advances a simple proposition: meaningful school diversity is possible and necessary in large areas of the city comprising multiple community school districts and hundreds of thousands of students. Our belief that school diversity is within our reach both logistically and politically derives from over 50 interviews conducted with experts across the city and also from successful advocacy conducted with parent groups.

It has not always been the case that school diversity was possible in New York City. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, integration efforts stalled in New York City due to large-scale white flight from the city. At the same time, many reasonably asked why integration was even necessary or desirable when merely equalizing resources among schools might accomplish the same goals.

Three things happened in the four decades that followed: First, in all the jurisdictions that have attempted it, achieving resource equity among schools in the absence of integration has proven difficult, if not impossible. We have learned yet again that separate is not equal. Second, social-science researchers have developed a far more sophisticated understanding of the benefits of diverse schools – benefits not easily replicable even under the most equitable conditions. Finally and more recently, in a historic demographic shift, middle class and white populations are returning to New York City in a process that one scholar has dubbed a “reversal of white flight.” In light of these realities, New York Appleseed believes we must return to the fundamental American project of the common school, where children of different backgrounds and income levels may attend school together.

Seizing today’s opportunity for promoting school diversity in New York City, however, requires an understanding of the complex and often surprising ways in which *segregation* currently plays out in the school system. Yes, housing segregation plays a key and – in some sectors of the city – dispositive role



in perpetuating school segregation. The New York City metro region is the second most segregated in the nation, and appropriate policies to affirmatively further fair housing and promote residential inclusion are more important than ever. Residential patterns do not explain much of the school segregation that we see in more diverse and rapidly gentrifying community school districts, however. In some cases, school segregation may be doing more to increase neighborhood segregation than the other way around.

This series is intended to uncover and demystify those formal structures beyond housing patterns that perpetuate racial and economic segregation in schools. We also wish to provide practical and achievable strategies to overcome those structures. Our hope is that this series will give parents and policy makers the analytic tools they need to understand the incidence of school segregation in their communities and workable strategies to address the underlying causes.

Please visit our website ny.appleseednetwork.org for more information about New York Appleseed's work to promote school diversity and the scholarship demonstrating the educational benefits of diversity for all children.

David Tipson, *Director*
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Introduction

In the heart of Park Slope, Brooklyn is one of the most sought-after elementary schools in New York City – PS 321. The attendance zone or catchment area for the school covers a cross section of the neighborhood and is predominantly white and upper-income. In the 2011-2012 school year, PS 321 served a student population approaching three quarters white. Less than ten percent of the student body received free or reduced-price lunch.

Also in Park Slope one third of a mile away is PS 282 – an elementary and middle school. PS 282's attendance zone is also populated by predominantly white and upper-income families. In the 2011-2012 school year, however, only eight percent of PS 282's student population was white, and most of these white students were concentrated in the school's pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes. 54.4% of the students received free or reduced price lunch.

These two schools can be said to be segregated. Their presence in the same neighborhood demonstrates rather dramatically that residential segregation does not provide a complete explanation for the levels of racial and economic segregation we see in New York City elementary schools. Although contrasts between nearby schools are not usually so stark, the circumstances leading to these segregated outcomes are unexceptional and repeat themselves all over the city. This briefing will explain what these circumstances are and how they work to perpetuate segregation in our city's elementary schools.

The Mechanisms of Segregation among Elementary Schools

A 2012 *New York Times* article identified the New York City school system as the third most racially segregated in the nation.¹ A recent analysis by the city's Independent Budget Office looked at trends over the last decade and found that the city's extraordinarily high levels of racial segregation in elementary schools had either changed little or – for African Americans and Asians – become worse.² The city's Independent Budget Office also demonstrated that segregation is most pronounced for all racial groups in elementary schools.

How is it that students become disproportionately grouped in particular schools by their race or socioeconomic status? Housing patterns of course play a major role; the 2012 *New York Times* article noted above showed a correlation between the 100 most segregated schools (of all types) and the "most segregated neighborhoods."³ Unnoted in the article, however, was that a significant number of these 100 most segregated schools were *not* in the most segregated neighborhoods. As is typical in New York City, a number of these most segregated neighborhoods were small and adjacent to other neighborhoods of different racial composition. (In fact, whether a

neighborhood appears segregated or diverse in New York City often depends on the size of the area selected for study).⁴

Neither is school segregation mandated by parent preference and political reality. It is difficult to make generalizations about parents in a school system as large as New York City's, and many parents undoubtedly prefer to send their child to a school where children of the same race and socioeconomic status predominate. New and emerging research, however, demonstrates that substantial numbers of parents would prefer to send their children to diverse schools with demographic balance if they only had the option.⁵ New York Applesseed believes strongly that elementary-school segregation is not the fault of individual parents navigating a complex system and making difficult decisions about where to send their children to school. Rather it is a systemic problem – a failure of the city's student-assignment policies to resolve the collective action problem of creating and maintaining diverse learning environments.

Although housing patterns and parent fears place real constraints, there are still abundant opportunities for pursuing school diversity in New York City. To understand why this is true and what these opportunities are requires a comprehensive understanding of how children are assigned to elementary school.

New York City: A System of Community School Districts

New York City has 32 "community school districts," each, on average, comprising a portion of the city's population equivalent to the population of Newark, New Jersey. Students have a right to attend an elementary school within their community school district and receive preference for schools in the district over students applying from outside the district. In most cases, children attend elementary school in their community school district, but significant numbers do not. Either way, the district a child lives in largely determines the range of schools available to her.

The current system of community school districts was established as a final act in the city's controversial experiment with decentralization of school administration in the late 1960s.⁶ The district lines were idiosyncratic and, many believe, may have increased segregation in an attempt to allow individual communities to control their own destiny.⁷ To this day, demographics can vary dramatically from district to district: in the 2011-2012 school year, 53 percent of children attending school in District 26 in Queens received free or reduced-price lunch. By contrast, 88 percent of children attending school in District 12 in the Bronx received free or reduced-price lunch.⁸ Community school districts typically comprise multiple neighborhoods, but, in some instances, district lines can divide a neighborhood. In the Park Slope example, PS 321 is in District 15, which covers the middle and southern portion of Park Slope. PS 282 is within a small hook reaching from the bottom of District 13

Some notes on the term *segregation*

Racial or economic?

This briefing considers both racial and economic segregation and assumes that elementary schools that have higher levels of racial isolation from whites will almost always have higher numbers of lower-income children as well since these categories are closely linked in New York City. There are of course exceptions. This briefing will use the term *segregation* to refer to the significantly disproportionate grouping of students by race *and* class (as is the case with PS 282 and PS 321). When referring to only to one form of segregation, we will specify *racial* or *economic*.

Degrees of segregation

Schools today are rarely completely segregated– that is homogenous – but are segregated by degree. The levels of segregation found in New York City by the *Times* and by the Independent Budget Office are considered extremely high by national standards.

Inter-school or intra-school?

Segregation can occur school to school or within individual schools. The *Times* article, the Independent Budget Office and this briefing analyze *inter*-school segregation or how segregation plays out *among* schools. A later New York Applesseed briefing will describe how segregation can occur within schools (*intra*-school segregation).

and grabbing the northern portion of Park Slope. One resident of the area remarked that the lines were so drawn because this portion of Park Slope was lower-income and home to certain ethnic groups at that time.

Despite this history, segregation today is usually starkest within community school districts than between them.

Community School Districts with Attendance Zones

Although there are subtle differences among the community school districts, it is possible to speak generally about student-assignment policies for elementary schools in New York City. All but three community school districts are subdivided into attendance zones or catchment areas for individual elementary schools. Students living within a school's zone have admission priority over students who live outside the zone, but, importantly, do not have a right to attend that school.¹³ For the city's most popular or otherwise overcrowded schools it is common every year for some zoned students to be denied admission and placed on a waitlist for their zoned school. In 2013, for example, 2,361 students were placed on waitlists for kindergarten at 105 overcrowded zoned schools. The waitlist average of 24.5 children per school was 25 percent longer than in 2012.¹⁴

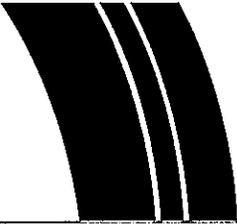
Although some refer to this system of student assignment as one of neighborhood schools, attendance zones are often not the same as neighborhoods, and New York City's extraordinary population density usually allows for a single neighborhood to have more than one elementary school. Moreover, zone lines change as the population of eligible children changes in relation to school capacity. In the Park Slope example, the attendance zones for both PS 282 and PS 321 make up only a portion of the total Park Slope neighborhood, and both schools have had their zones dramatically reconfigured in the last year.

Depending on the district, zones can play an enormous or limited role in where children actually attend school. Although parents often choose to send their children to the "zoned" school, many choose to have their children attend other zone schools for which their children are not zoned, schools that have no zones (sometimes called choice or unzoned schools) or charter schools. The numbers vary dramatically by district, but substantial numbers of parents in all kinds of zones choose not to send their children to the zoned elementary school. In the 2011-2012 school year, over 80% of children in the PS 321 zone attended PS 321. In all of District 15, 71% of children attended their zoned school. By contrast, only 37% of children in the PS 282 zone attended PS 282, and only 42% of children in District 13 as a whole attended their zoned school.¹⁵

Given these numbers, it is accurate to describe elementary-school student assignment in the 29 community school districts with attendance zones

Was NYC ever desegregated?

Many assume that New York City must have undergone a period of court-ordered desegregation like Boston or other northern cities. With the exception of lawsuits around a few individual schools, however, New York City has never been subject to a comprehensive desegregation order, and, to our knowledge, no citywide lawsuit was ever filed.⁹ The city experimented with some attempts at voluntary desegregation through its "open enrollment" program offering students of color a chance to attend predominantly white schools.¹⁰ It also experimented with moving zone lines.¹¹ Ultimately, however, these efforts were overwhelmed by white flight and New York City's descent into fiscal crisis.¹²



Text of the Chancellor's Regulation on School Assignment in Zoned Districts

1. Zoned schools are obligated to serve all students residing in their zone, space permitting, regardless of when families show up to register. Applicants must be admitted to zoned schools in the following order of priority:
 - a. Zoned students whose verified siblings are pre-registered or enrolled at the time of application submission and will be enrolled in grades K-5 in the school at the start of the following school year in September;
 - b. Zoned students other than those in (a) above applying to the zoned school;

If space allows, and if the Office of Student Enrollment deems appropriate based on district needs, offers may be made for the following priority groups, in the order outlined below. Only the Office of Student Enrollment may authorize the placement of non-zoned students out of this priority order; for example, for students who cannot be accommodated at their zoned school, or for special programs, such as dual language or inclusion classes for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
 - c. Students whose verified siblings are pre-registered or enrolled at the time of application submission and will be enrolled in grades K-5 in the school at the start of the following school year in September who are not zoned to the school but are residents of that district;
 - d. Students whose verified siblings are pre-registered or enrolled at the time of application submission and will be enrolled in grades K-5 at the start of the following school year in September who are residents of another district;
 - e. Students currently attending the school's pre-kindergarten program who reside outside the school's zone but in the school's district, without a sibling who will be in grades K-5 at the school in the following school year;
 - f. Students currently attending the school's pre-kindergarten program who reside outside the school's zone and district, without a sibling who will be in grades K-5 at the school in the following school year;
 - g. Students other than those in (c) and (e) above who are residents of that district;
 - h. Students other than those in (d) and (f) who are residents of another district.¹⁷

as a hybrid system based on both student residence and the exercise of school choice. The interplay between residence and choice is captured in the Department of Education's Regulations of the Chancellor, which lay out eight levels of priority for students seeking entry to a zoned school, only two of which (the highest priority levels) pertain to zoned students. (See the sidebar with the text). Both zoned and unzoned applicants receive higher levels of priority if they already have siblings in the school. None of the listed priorities, however, encourage school diversity, and nothing in the Chancellor's Regulations on elementary-school admissions lists school diversity as a goal. To the contrary, the Regulations contain a footnote stating that "Race may be considered as a factor in school enrollment only when required by court order."¹⁶ This statement is unclear and appears to be an attempt to summarize U.S. constitutional law. Taken literally, however, the statement is more restrictive than the standard required by the U.S. Supreme Court and represents an unnecessary limitation on the Department of Education.

Community School Districts with Pure Choice

Until very recently, District 1 in the Lower East Side was the only district in New York City that did not have attendance zones. Within the last year, however, the DOE has discussed "unzoning" to ten additional districts, and two of them, Districts 7 (South Bronx) and 23 (Ocean Hill – Brownsville) have accepted. Although each district has different priority schemes, in Districts 1 and 23 all students residing within one of these districts receive the same level of priority to any particular elementary school regardless of where they reside in the district.¹⁸ The same is true in District 7 except that the district is divided into northern and southern "priority areas" and students residing in a priority area receive priority to a school within that priority area over students from the other priority area.¹⁹

How Current Student Assignment Policies Lead to Segregation in Elementary Schools

Understanding that student assignment in 29 of the 32 Community School Districts is a *hybrid* system of assignment by residence and the exercise of school choice by parents is critical to understanding why elementary schools in those districts are segregated to the degree that they are. Both "zone" and "choice" student-assignment schemes tend toward segregation on their own. Fused together as they are in New York City, these systems become even more potent perpetrators of segregation.

Assignment by Zone

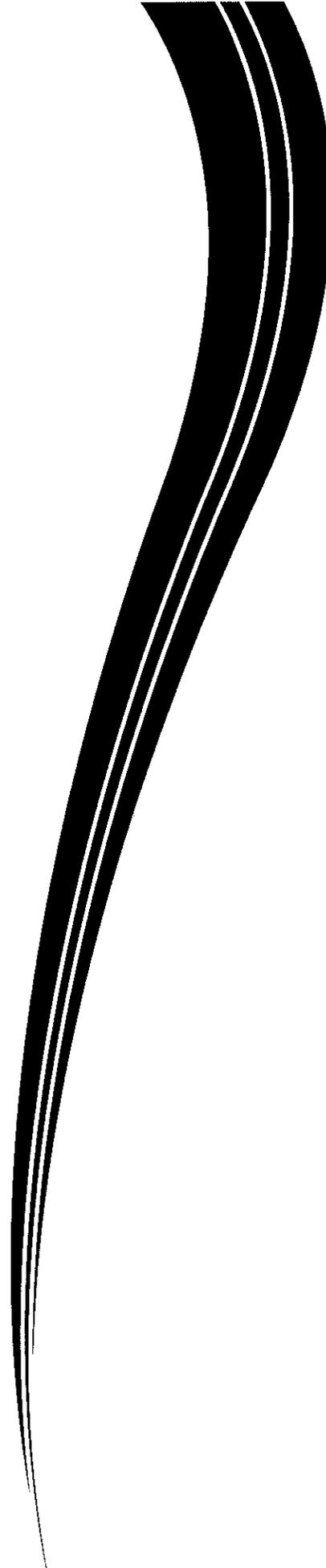
Assignment by attendance zone tends toward segregation in elementary schools because it reproduces residential segregation. In fact, attendance by zone often amplifies residential segregation within schools, since there is a reciprocal relationship between residential segregation and school

segregation. That is, not only does neighborhood composition affect school composition, but school composition affects neighborhood composition. The National Association of Realtors estimates that 25% of home buyers nationally listed school quality as a key factor in their selection of a home, and it is easy to see how the rising popularity of a school can lead to cascading residential gentrification within a particular zone.²⁰ Park Slope real-estate agents prominently market the fact that homes are within the PS 321 zone, and home values are believed to be higher in that zone than in surrounding zones.²¹ As an article in the *New York Times* real estate section noted very recently, “[m]oving to a particular neighborhood in order to land a seat at a coveted public school has long been the middle-class modus operandi for obtaining a high-quality education in New York.”²²

Despite all this, because of New York City's density and because individual pockets of segregation within a district can be relatively small, one could imagine a system of zone lines that would use residential segregation as a *means* of achieving school diversity. Indeed, Justice Kennedy in the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Parents Involved in Community Schools*, made clear that it is permissible for school systems to redraw zone lines through segregated neighborhoods to achieve racial and economic diversity.²³

Even zone lines drawn by the best intentioned officials insulated from the political process are unlikely to produce *lasting* diversity, however. First, families zoned for a school they do not want their child to attend may simply move. This is especially true in a city where an unusually high number of inhabitants are renters, but even homeowners in New York City have chosen to rent out their home while leasing an apartment in a desired zone. Once their children have gained admission to the school, the location of residence no longer matters.²⁴ Many have labeled this phenomenon as a form of school choice for people with the means to afford it.²⁵

Second, even for parents who don't or can't move, being zoned for a school doesn't mean they will send their child there. Parents with the means will often choose to send their child to private school. At least some of the children living within the PS 282 zone and not attending the school are attending private school instead. Introducing school choice to the zoning scheme facilitates a different form of exit by allowing the additional option of attending a different school while staying within the (free) public school system.



Choice

"If you have choice without civil rights policies, it stratifies the system," said Gary Orfield, the co-director of the Civil Rights Project at U.C.L.A. . . .
*"People who have the most power and information get the best choices."*²⁶

If assignment by zone tends toward segregation, then a system of pure choice or open enrollment might seem to be the antidote. It is not. Although pure choice may have benefits, integration is not one of them.

Even before the battles over school reform in the 21st century, the concept of school choice had a complicated history. In the 1960s "freedom of choice" was a principal strategy used by Southern school districts to resist integration while seeming to accommodate it. In practice, these plans did not offer meaningful "freedom of choice" to African American students.²⁷ "White parents," according to historian Kevin Kruse, "had a much easier time keeping their children in largely white schools."²⁸

A half century later, even though the intent to segregate may be gone, the mechanisms by which school choice leads to segregation are not altogether different. First, choice, as with any market-based device, allocates resources efficiently only when participants have access to information. Lower-income New Yorkers often do not have the time, resources or access to inside information to make meaningful distinctions among elementary schools or to negotiate the admissions process to gain entry to the school of their choice. Increasingly there are reports of parents paying "specialists" to navigate the school-selection process.²⁹ The Department of Education has not been able to make the investment required to counteract this problem by ensuring that lower-income parents have access to the information they need to make informed choices. As a result, choice confers an enormous advantage on middle- and upper-income parents seeking the best educational opportunities the city has to offer. These advantages are then compounded over time by preferences for siblings of children already in the school.³⁰

Second, despite the all the efforts to centralize the administration of the New York City school system over the last decade, the elementary-school application process in the 29 zoned districts remains utterly decentralized and rather primitive. Parents do not receive so much as a letter indicating that they must apply to kindergartens in February and March, and public service announcements on the topic are few, if any. Parents who find out on their own must apply to each school individually and have no ability to rank their preferences in relation to one another. With each school operating its own admissions program, problems inevitably arise. A 2004 study revealed that lower-income parents and parents of color encountered exclusive practices when attempting to gain information about popular schools in District 3 (Upper West Side).³¹ There is widespread belief that, even after the applications are submitted, principals of zoned schools enjoy substantial discretion in selecting

out-of-zone applications from the same district.³² Although some principals might use such discretion to *increase* access for lower-income students, the financial realities of school administration would undoubtedly lead many principals to favor applicants perceived as likely to boost test scores or bring resources to the school. Whether by excluding low-income students or favoring higher-income parents, such practices provide yet another advantage to more affluent families.

Finally, even with the best intentioned and inclusive school administrations, the advantages enjoyed by higher-income parents in the choice process – and, according to some experts we interviewed, the different educational preferences of parents from different backgrounds – often result in a perception of the school as having a culture tailored toward white or more affluent parents. Once this happens, it is often difficult for a school to convince those who do not seem to fit the school's mold that the school is "for them" or even a desirable place to receive an education. The cycle perpetuates itself.

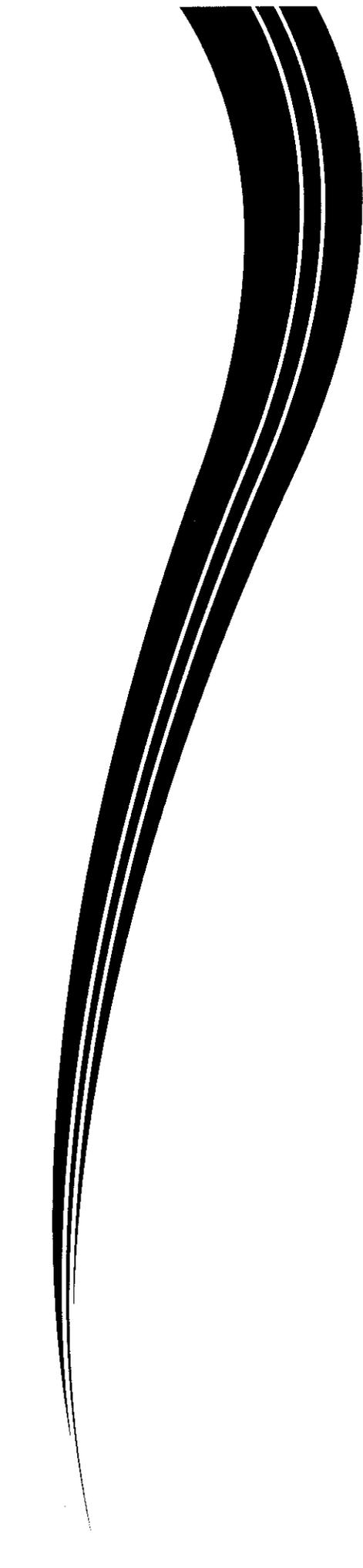
For all these reasons, many of the choice elementary schools and charter schools – even some that espouse diversity – do not reflect the demographics of their community school districts. Community School District 1, which was forced by the Department of Education to go to a pure-choice model in 2006 after operating a successful integration program for years, has witnessed striking patterns of re-segregation in the years that followed.³³ There is no reason – other than a relative lack of diversity in the two districts – to expect differently for Districts 7 and 23, which began pure-choice admissions this year.

Zoning + Choice: A Perfect Storm

If zoning and choice tend individually towards segregation, their combination in the hybrid system of student assignment employed in 29 community school districts is a perfect storm of segregation and unequal access. Put starkly, New York City's hybrid system allows parents with means to flee schools they don't like even as it excludes others from the schools that affluent parents do like.

Despite the flaws we have described, zoning by itself as a method of student assignment might be said to have the virtue of encouraging school integration (if only briefly) in zones that have diverse demographics (in today's New York City, almost always neighborhoods that are gentrifying). In other words, if children were forced to attend their zoned school, struggling schools might see an influx of middle-class parents bringing resources.

Because of the hybrid system, however, higher-income parents (who have not already chosen relocation or private school) will send their children to a racially isolated, poverty-concentrated zoned school only when conditions are exactly right – conditions such as a welcoming and motivated principal, "progressive"



school climate, and a sense of the school being on the upswing.³⁴ It is the presence of these factors that will encourage middle-class parents to choose a school – not zone lines. Parents in the “wrong” zone use legal and, if scores of anecdotes are to be believed, illegal methods of getting their child into the “right” school.³⁵ These parents have the greatest ability to exercise an exit option because they have the greatest residential mobility and the most time, resources and access to inside information to identify desirable schools and navigate the choice admissions process. Sixty-three percent of school age-children in the PS 282 zone (not attending private school) travel to public schools or charter schools in Districts 13, District 15 or elsewhere.³⁶

On the other hand, choice by itself might appear to have the virtue of allowing at least the most motivated and resourceful low-income parents a shot at the best elementary schools in the district. Under the hybrid system, however, popular zoned schools are almost always enrolled beyond capacity and offer no legal access for those unable to afford the staggering real estate prices found within the zone. Even for the schools with some small number of seats available for out-of-zone students, middle class parents enjoy an advantage in obtaining those seats for all the reasons described above. PS 321 is nearly impossible to get into for out-of-zone students whose parents cannot afford to move into the zone.

Conclusion

Although neighborhood segregation clearly plays a role in segregating New York City elementary schools, it does not explain the extent of school segregation we see in the city’s more diverse community school districts. In these areas it is not residential segregation but the city’s curious blend of student assignment by geography and by individual choice that explains the otherwise avoidable sorting of children by race and class. With higher-income (predominantly white) parents free to leave zoned schools they don’t like and enabled to exclude others from the zoned schools they do like, racial and economic segregation in New York City’s elementary schools is all but inevitable.³⁷

As a result, low-income children and children of color are not receiving the benefits of school integration. They are more likely to attend schools with fewer educational resources or with resources of lower quality. They will not have exposure to middle-class children, whom some scholars believe should be considered educational resources in themselves. Exposure to middle-class peers provides low-income children and parents with the access to social networks and inside information that can be just as important to lifelong success as formal education. (The very student assignment process we have just described shows how important such contacts can be in accessing opportunity). Low-income children and children of color who attended segregated elementary schools are more likely to go on to a segregated

middle school. And students from segregated middle schools are more likely to attend segregated high schools.³⁸

Middle-class and white children also miss out. Diverse schools improve critical thinking, facilitate cross-racial understanding, reduce racial prejudice and mitigate housing segregation for all children. Perhaps even more importantly, middle-class children miss out on the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to create and maintain a truly inclusive environment where all are welcome – a vexing problem for private sector employers today. Many children will come to believe that there is something organic or natural about attending school with children only like themselves – even in the heart of New York City. In short, segregated schools will not prepare our children to live and work in a United States that will be majority people of color by 2042.

Even apart from issues of racial and economic segregation, the student assignment system we have described does not provide proportionate or equitable levels of access for low-income students and students of color to the city's most coveted schools. The city's best schools are least available to those who need them the most.

Solutions: Diverse Schools in Diverse Districts

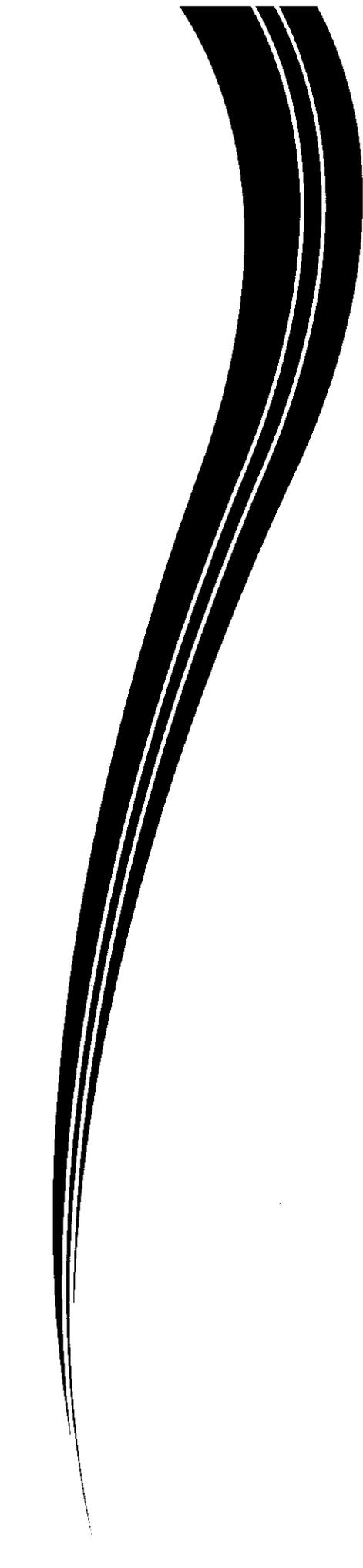
Solutions to address the problems of segregation we have described are practical, achievable, relatively inexpensive and can be adopted without disruption to the city's system of community school districts. New York Appleseed believes that community needs and the range of available strategies will vary from place to place and should be addressed locally. We are committed to the principle that parents and members of local communities need to be the ones to assess local conditions, define what meaningful diversity looks like and develop strategies for proposal to the Department of Education. We do not believe that one strategy fits every community school district, and we do not believe that there is only one strategy that can work in any particular district. With these principles in mind, we provide broad outlines of solutions here.

The New York City Department of Education

Emerging evidence from scholarly research and from New York Appleseed's own work suggests that parents across New York City of all backgrounds want diverse schools and crave leadership from the Department of Education.³⁹

The Department should take the following steps to signal to parents and community leaders that it is prepared to lead on this issue:

An unambiguous policy statement: The Department should immediately adopt and promote an official statement recognizing the importance of diverse learning environments and announcing a policy that all elementary schools must foster an environment in which people of all races, cultures and



economic backgrounds are genuinely welcome. Although the Department has made strides just in the last year, it has often sent mixed messages on diversity.⁴⁰ An official, widely circulated statement is essential.

Accordingly, the Department should also remove the ambiguous footnote in the Chancellor's Regulations stating that "Race may be considered as a factor in school enrollment only when required by court order." To the extent it attempts to state the standard announced by the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Parents Involved in Community Schools* decisions, the statement is both inaccurate and unnecessary. If, on the other hand, the attempt was to set an even more restrictive standard than that required by the U.S. Supreme Court, it sends the wrong message to New York City and could produce a chilling effect on otherwise legal, race-conscious initiatives.

Pursuant to this official statement, the Department should gradually adopt implementing policies, including:

- Accountability standards for both individual schools and community school districts on progress towards diversity goals. Schools should be encouraged to implement programs that appeal to a wide range of parents in quality and subject matter.
- Consistent with the above, the DOE should authorize more dual-language programs in elementary schools across the city. Such programs must be designed and managed carefully to prevent unnecessary segregation *within* a school, but they remain an excellent way to attract parents of different backgrounds to a school.
- A commitment to work transparently and in good faith with community school districts, city council members, community boards, community groups and individual schools to develop appropriate student-assignment plans in furtherance of diversity goals.
 - This commitment should extend to federal Magnet School Assistance Program grants. Although the purpose of this program is desegregation, the Department of Education has completed these grant applications perfunctorily using professional grant writers and a formulaic template. Failing to include the affected community in the development of the required desegregation plan, the Department repeatedly misses golden opportunities to rally local communities around diversity with the prospect of increased resources for elementary schools.
 - This commitment should also extend to student-assignment policies for all new, unzoned elementary schools (including charter schools) and requires working with stakeholders to

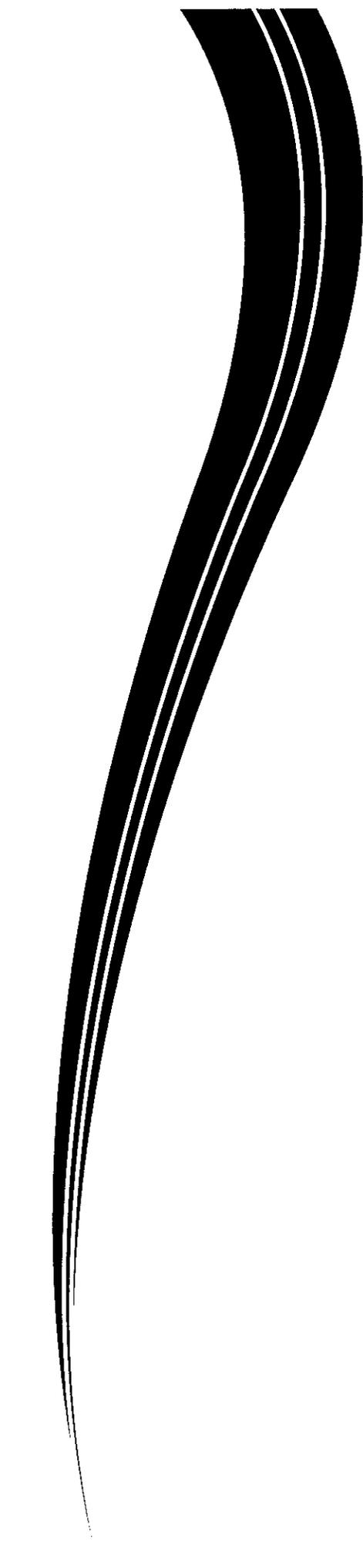
make sure that such schools respond to actual community needs.

- A policy of evaluating the impact on the diversity of nearby schools for all major actions, including proposals for zone-line changes (including unzonings), co-locations, school closings, opening new elementary schools and providing space for charter schools.⁴¹
- School admissions should be handled at the level of the Community School District, rather than school-by-school or by DOE's central office. The school admissions process should be transparent and fair with opportunities for parents to rank their preferences in relation to one another (as with pre-k applications). This may require providing district offices with additional staff.
- The Department needs to work with Community School Districts to create parent-resource and -information centers to ensure that all parents have access to the information they need to make informed choices for their children's elementary schools and to navigate the application process. Parent centers need to be accessible to all communities and to provide translation services and informational materials translated into common spoken languages in each district.
- The Department should completely overhaul its methods of disseminating information according to the detailed, but relatively costless, suggestions in New York Appleseed's "Essential Strategies for Equity and Access".

Community School Districts

Because segregation is a systemic problem, we believe that systemic, community-school-district-wide solutions are most likely to be effective in fostering diverse schools. In fact, pursuing diversity in a single school without regard for the effects of the policy on surrounding schools can *increase* segregation across a district as a whole (a common problem with charter schools).⁴² As compared to the enormous expense (both public and private) of so many school-reform strategies currently in vogue, creating more equitable methods of admission to elementary schools is likely to be both far more effective in raising student achievement – and far less expensive. One of the easiest ways to do this is to through influencing the manner in which students not attending their zoned school are assigned to other schools.

As Professor Orfield noted, choice without civil rights policies stratifies the system. Such civil rights policies are essentially mechanisms that counteract the segregating effects of unbridled choice while preserving its benefits. For years, Community School District 1, which has no attendance zones, used a system wherein parents exercised school choice, but within a framework ensuring that rough demographic balance was achieved among all schools in



the district. Most parents received their first or second choice of elementary schools, and the program was popular and effective until it was shut down by the Department of Education in 2006. (The Department's move seems to have reflected the views of the then current Chancellor and do not appear to be representative of the Department's stance on diversity now.) In the years that have followed, District 1 elementary schools have re-segregated to the horror of local parents.

District 1's former plan is sometimes referred to as "controlled choice." Not all plans labeled "controlled choice" are the same, but the phrase typically refers to a system of managed school selection in which parent preferences are accommodated within a framework of diversity and equity of access. Plans like this exist in scores of jurisdictions across the country and are generally popular. Many plans choose to include a provision ensuring that students are guaranteed admission to at least one school within walking distance. These plans typically require parents to fill out questionnaires providing information on their socioeconomic status, and participation rates are high.

Although these plans work best in the absence of the kind of attendance zones currently used in New York City, even districts with highly popular zoned schools such as District 15 have large numbers of students attending a school other than their zoned school. In District 13 over 55 percent of all students were attending a school other than their zoned school. Even with the problems of zoning, applying a diversity framework to the way in which students are admitted to schools other than their zoned school could go a long way toward addressing elementary-school segregation.

In addition to addressing student-assignment itself, some relatively small gestures can also be important in making diversity a priority in a district:

Community Education Councils, superintendents and other community members should demand that the Department of Education study and present the impact of rezoning decisions on the diversity of all nearby schools. Community Education Councils should adopt a policy of vetoing any rezoning proposal that increases segregation.

- Community Education Councils, superintendents and other community members should demand that the Department of Education study and present findings as to the impact of any major decision, including collocations and charter school placements, on the diversity of all nearby schools.
- Community Education Councils and superintendents can encourage cooperation and coordination among elementary schools within the district so that schools are not working at cross purposes (competing for children in the same neighborhoods, creating duplicative programs, etc.)

New York Appleseed and its community partners are available to present in more detail to Community Education Councils, parent and community groups and other local stakeholders on the legal and practical issues that arise in these various strategies.

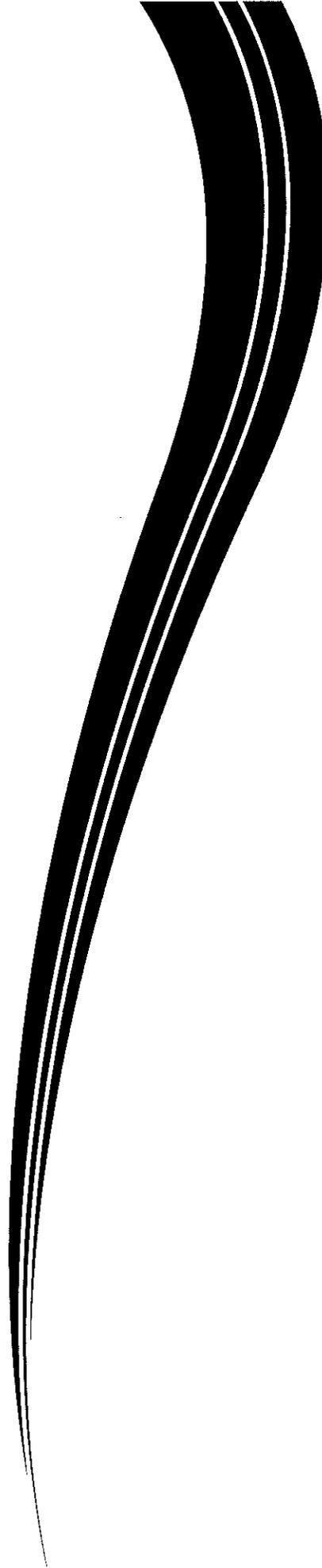
Individual Schools

Despite our preference for systemic solutions, some communities may wish to begin by promoting diversity at individual schools. In a breakthrough development, a task force of local stakeholders including New York Appleseed convinced the Department of Education in 2012 to adopt an unprecedented student assignment plan for diversity at PS 133 in Brooklyn, a now unzoned school. The plan sets aside the first 35 percent of seats for low-income students and English Language Learners. Remaining seats are then available by open lottery. The plan therefore provides not a quota, but a boost to students in the target categories when demand exceeds capacity. This boost works to counteract the advantages that upper- and middle-income parents have in the choice process. Importantly, the plan only works to create diversity when there is a critical mass of applicants from the target populations. In most cases, this will require schools to do targeted recruiting of low-income students and English Language Learners. The Department of Education has stated unambiguously that it wants this plan to serve as a model for other schools across the city.⁴³

Individual schools and their communities (principals, School Leadership Teams, PTAs) interested in diversity should consider convening a diversity committee to develop recommendations for a school to foster and maintain diversity. Diversity committees will want to start with the PS 133 plan as an example of a system the DOE has been willing to adopt. Since the plan was developed for specific community needs, individual schools may wish to change idiosyncratic features (such as the plan's super priority for English Language Learners) that derived from special circumstances.

Whether under a district-wide or an individual-school student-assignment plan, however, a school will only thrive and maintain its diversity when conditions within a school are right. Schools need to provide a genuinely open, caring and inclusive environment where a variety of norms can be accommodated and all parents and children feel welcome. Schools need to avoid internal segregation or tracking, for which there is little justification at the elementary-school level. Strong and committed leadership from the principal is essential, but teachers, parents and students also play key roles. (Issues of internal segregation and how to avoid it will be the subject of a later briefing).

New York Appleseed is available to assist school communities in reviewing the operation of the PS 133 plan and in forming a plan to create and maintain diversity over time.



Community School Districts without Economic Diversity

Although we believe that over half of all school districts already have or are on their way to having sufficient numbers of middle-class or white students to pursue traditional racial and economic diversity strategies, a substantial number do not. In those districts, we believe that pursuing other forms of diversity including ethnic and (non-white) racial diversity is a goal worth pursuing. Although there is less available research on these forms of diversity, benefits such as critical thinking, cross-racial understanding, exposure to different cultures and norms, and preparation for a diverse workforce are still likely to be present. Moreover, equitable and transparent student assignment is always a benefit in itself.

Housing Policy

On that note and despite our belief that there is much that can and should be done immediately to improve access to diversity, elementary schools across the city will never be fully integrated so long as residential segregation persists. New York City must continue to support and expand a robust inclusionary housing program to preserve and develop affordable housing in the city's more affluent or gentrifying areas (Please see New York Appleseed's guide to the program). Similarly, policy makers must aggressively preserve affordable housing in rapidly gentrifying areas so that they do not flip from one demographic to another, but become stably integrated, mixed-income neighborhoods. (Please see New York Appleseed's manual on strategies for preserving affordable housing).

Conclusion

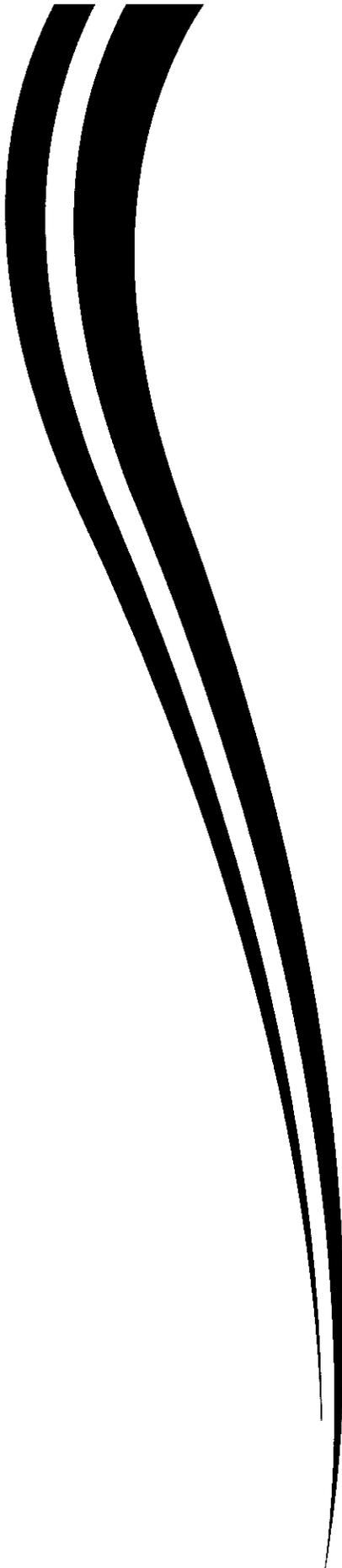
New York City is one of the most diverse places on the planet, but its schools largely fail to capitalize on this priceless asset. Meaningful *economic* diversity in our elementary schools is increasingly within our reach in over half the community school districts in the city. Communities and the Department of Education can and should also be pursuing *racial and ethnic* diversity in elementary schools of all districts.

We now have the tools to reduce segregation and provide diverse learning environments for our children and can no longer hide behind the fiction that segregation in elementary schools is inevitable. Similarly, the expansive exercise of school choice in zoned districts has exploded the myth that parents always (or even more often than not) prefer the zoned school.

School-diversity plans work best when communities participate meaningfully in their creation and implementation. Although the Department of Education can and should exercise leadership as suggested in this briefing, community education councils, city council members, community boards, community groups and individual schools do not need to wait for that to happen. Rather

these community-based actors should begin hosting community conversations to educate parents and – equally important – to learn from them what kinds of diversity strategies are likely to succeed locally.

School integration – at the heart of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s “beloved community” – lies within our reach in the community school districts of New York City.⁴⁴ It is hard to imagine any other policy that would so effectively eliminate intra-district resource disparities among schools for almost negligible expense. Unlike so many of the issues afflicting New York City schools, school segregation is a problem we know how to fix.



- ¹ Ford Fessenden, "A Portrait of Segregation in New York City's Schools," *NY Times*, May 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/11/nyregion/segregation-in-new-york-city-public-schools.html?ref=education>.
- ² NYC Independent Budget Office, "Have NYC Schools Become More or Less Integrated Over the Last 10 Years?," <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/printnycbtn11.pdf>.
- ³ Ford Fessenden, "A Portrait of Segregation in New York City's Schools," *NY Times*, May 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/11/nyregion/segregation-in-new-york-city-public-schools.html?ref=education>.
- ⁴ Craig Gurian, "New maps show segregation alive and well," *Remapping Debate*, April 20, 2011, <http://www.remappingdebate.org/map-data-tool/new-maps-show-segregation-alive-and-well>.
- ⁵ Amy Stuart Wells and Allison Roda, "Why NYC Should Make Diversity a School Choice," *SchoolBook*, March 13, 2013, <http://www.schoolbook.org/2013/03/13/more-diverse-schools-needed-to-attract-affluent-gentrifiers/>; Amy Stuart Wells, "What Are We Holding Our Public Schools Accountable For? The Gap Between What is Measured and What is Needed to Prepare Children for an Increasingly Diverse Society," *Poverty & Race*, Vol. 21, No. 5, September/October 2012, pp. 3-4, 12, http://www.prrac.org/full_text.php?text_id=1410&item_id=13888&newsletter_id=125&header=September/October%202012%20Newsletter.
- ⁶ Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools*, 2000, p. 387.
- ⁷ Ravitch, at 350: "The New York Urban Coalition brought together a new alignment: those who seriously wanted to support the needs of blacks and Puerto Rican; and those members who never actively supported integration but could unhesitatingly support community control, since it assured the continuation of the all-white neighborhoods where they lived." Historian Thomas Sugrue writes that "some of the local boards were led by advocates of African-themed curricula, but others fell into the hands of whites who used community control to protect the homogeneity of their neighborhood schools.", *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, 2008, p. 476.
- ⁸ The New York State District Report Card: Accountability and Overview Report 2010 – 11. <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/counties.php?year=2011>.
- ⁹ For a summary of the issues pertaining to bringing a city-wide desegregation lawsuit in the 1970s, see Gary Orfield, *Must We Bus?*, 1978, pages 188-191.
- ¹⁰ Sugrue, at 190, 463.
- ¹¹ Sugrue, at 466; Jonathan Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*, 2005, at 190.
- ¹² Sugrue. At 475-7.
- ¹³ New York City Chancellor's Regulation, A-101 at Section II(E)(6), <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/1CC25F63-74E8-41A6-8031-490F206F148D/0/A101.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ Philissa Cramer, "Annual tally of soon-to-be kindergartners on wait lists is 2,361," *Gotham Schools*, April 12, 2013, <http://gothamschools.org/2013/04/12/annual-tally-of-soon-to-be-kindergartners-on-wait-lists-is-2361/>; Kaitlyn Meade, "School waitlists increasing at P.S. 276, 234 & 89," *Downtown Express*, February 28, 2013, <http://www.downtownexpress.com/2013/02/28/school-wait-lists-increase-at-p-s-276-234-89/>. For previous years, see, for example, Philissa Cramer, "City urges calm as 2,500 children put on kindergarten wait lists," *Gotham Schools*, April 6, 2012; Anna Phillips, "Despite new school openings, kindergarten waitlists persist," *Gotham Schools*, March 24, 2011; Anna Phillips, "2,000 soon-to-be kindergarten students on wait lists this year," *Gotham Schools*, March 23, 2010.
- ¹⁵ Office of Portfolio Management, *Proposal for Rezoning Presented to District 13*, November 20, 2012, p. 16, http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B8F9408C-6091-4FF7-9D4C-2FF434B89DF7/0/District13RezoningPresentation_112012.pdf; NYC DOE attendance data from school year 2011-2012.
- ¹⁶ New York City Chancellor's Regulation A-101, at Section I(A)(1), footnote 1.
- ¹⁷ New York City Chancellor's Regulation A-101, at Section II(C)(1).
- ¹⁸ NYC DOE, *Elementary School Directory, 2013 – 2014: District 1*, p. 1, <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/A5BC0FB7-9EA4-475C-BC69-06528B867308/0/201314D1Directory.pdf>; NY DOE, *Elementary School Directory for Students Starting Kindergarten in September 2013: District 23*, p. 2, <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/60803AA2-CE9B-457B-9E6E-FDB3FD99C3EA/0/201314D23ESD.pdf>.
- ¹⁹ NYC DOE, *Elementary School Directory for Students Starting Kindergarten in September 2013: District 7*, p.
- ²⁰ National Association of Realtors, *Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers 2012*, <http://www.realtor.org/field-guides/field-guide-to-schools-and-the-home-buying-decision>.
- ²¹ Elizabeth A. Harris, "At an Overcrowded School in Park Slope, No One Wants to Leave," *New York Times*, October 29, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/30/nyregion/at-an-overcrowded-school-in-park-slope-no-one-wants-to-leave.html>.
- ²² Michelle Higgins, "The Get-Into-School Card," *New York Times*, May 3, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/realestate/your-address-as-get-into-school-card.html?_r=0.
- ²³ *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007), Kennedy, J., concurring in judgment.

²⁴ Higgins.

²⁵ See generally Jennifer Jellison Holme, "Buying Homes, Buying Schools: School Choice and the Social Construction of School Quality," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 72 No. 2 Summer 2002, available at <http://epp1751socofed.wmwikis.net/file/view/Holme.School.Choice.pdf>.

²⁶ Liz Robbins, "Integrating a School, One Child at a Time," *NY Times*, June 15, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/education/brooklyn-magnet-schools-see-hurdles-to-integration-even-in-kindergarten.html?pagewanted=all>.

²⁷ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, 2005, pp. 237 – 239.

²⁸ Kruse, p.238.

²⁹ Higgins.

³⁰ The Brooklyn New School (PS 146), an unzoned school, provides an example. Although the school was founded on the principle of student diversity, choice and sibling preferences have resulted in a student body in which only 23% of the students in 2011-2012 were eligible for free or reduced price lunch – a percentage completely out of synch with the districts from which it is required to draw. (It should be noted that the school maintains admirable racial diversity).

³¹ Center for Immigrant Families, "Segregated and Unequal: The Public Elementary Schools of District 3 in New York City," 2004.

³² See, for example, Jim Devor, "How We Devised a Pro-Diversity Admissions Rule in a Changing Neighborhood," *SchoolBook*, January 10, 2013, <http://www.schoolbook.org/2013/01/10/how-we-devised-a-pro-diversity-admissions-rule-in-a-changing-neighborhood>.

³³ Julie Shapiro, "East Village Schools Split Along Racial Lines Under City Policy," *DNAinfo.com*, January 30, 2012, <http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/2012/01/30/lower-east-side-east-village/city-policy-segregates-east-village-schools-parents-say>.

³⁴ See generally Jennifer Burns Stillman, *Gentrification and Schools: The Process of Integration When Whites Reverse Flight*, 2012, for a description of the processes by and the conditions under which "gentry" parents will choose to send their children to a mostly segregated school.

³⁵ See Meredith Kolodner, "When Applying to Kindergarten is a Second Job," *Insideschools.org*, January 31, 2012, <http://insideschools.org/blog/item/1000234-when-applying-to-kindergarten-is-a-second-job>; Eliza Ronalds-Hannon, "For Parents Seeking School Choice, Boundaries Don't Apply," *Gotham Gazette*, June 22, 2011, <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/education/774-for-parents-seeking-school-choice-boundaries-dont-apply>.

³⁶ Office of Portfolio Management, *Proposal for Rezoning Presented to District 13*, November 20, 2012, p. 16, http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B8F9408C-6091-4FF7-9D4C-2FF434B89DF7/0/District13RezoningPresentation_112012.pdf.

³⁷ For a documentary on similar trends in Boulder, Colorado, see This Train Productions, *An Elementary Education*, 2008, copies available by emailing thistrain@gmail.com.

³⁸ Sean Corcoran, speaking at "High Stakes Decisions: High School Choice in New York City Public Policy Forum at the New School, April 25, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xu3oi-1EjY&noredirect=1>, at 27:08.

³⁹ See Wells and Roda.

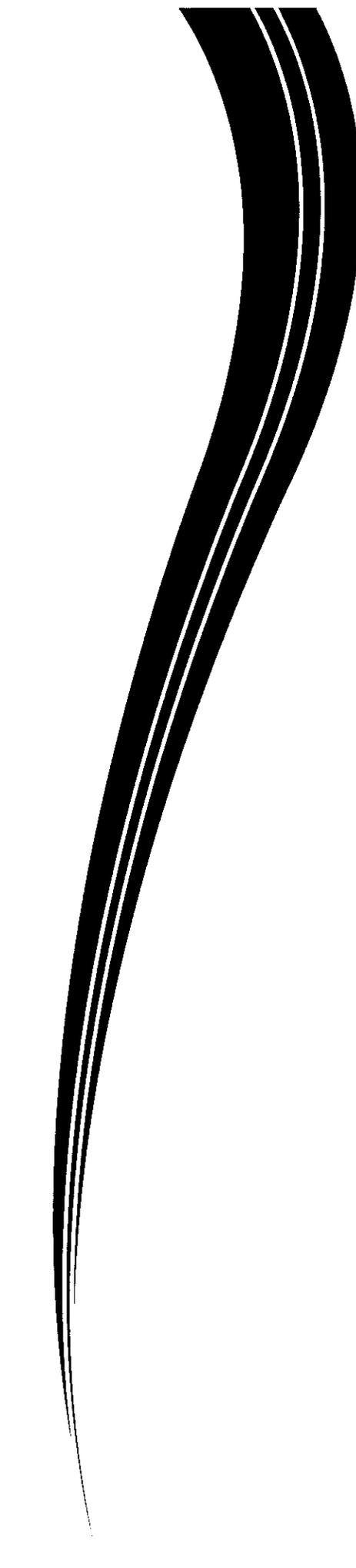
⁴⁰ See, for example, the statement of the Chancellor to the *New York Times* in summer of 2012: "I am focused on having high-quality schools in all neighborhoods," Mr. Walcott said. "That's the ultimate civil rights policy," in Robbins.

⁴¹ Recently, the Department of Education has stated that it will consider effects on school diversity in rezoning decisions (although it is only one of many factors considered). New York City DOE Office of Portfolio Management, *Proposal for Rezoning presented to CEC 15*, November 13, 2012, p. 6, http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/267B0CC5-1C37-497E-BA39-836B65B4AD1B/0/D15RezoningPresentation_111312.pdf

⁴² See Khin Mai Aung and David Tipson, "Aim for Diverse Schools, But Don't Leave it Up to Charters," *Next City*, February 28, 2013, <http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/op-ed-aim-for-diverse-schools-but-dont-leave-it-up-to-charters>; for information on how *segregated* charter schools also affect demographics in the system as a whole see The New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project, *How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement*, September 2009, page II-3: "...New York City's charter school students are disproportionately black and disproportionately not white or Asian. The existence of charter schools in the city therefore leaves the traditional public schools less black, more white, and more Asian," http://users.nber.org/~schools/charterschoolseval/how_NYC_charter_schools_affect_achievement_sept2009.pdf.

⁴³ Rachel Monahan, "School bus snag threatens Brooklyn elementary school's attempt at 'poverty quota'," *The New York Daily News*, December 23, 2012, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/potential-school-bus-strike-threatens-poverty-quota-article-1.1226415#ixzz2VqGXmoVJ>.

⁴⁴ See Greg Groves and Philip Tegeler, "Dr. King's Unfulfilled Dream of School Integration for America's Children," *America's Wire*, February 2013, <http://americaswire.org/drupal7/?q=content/dr-king%E2%80%99s-unfulfilled-dream-school-integration-1>.



APPENDIX

Essential Strategies for Equity and Access

Parents in most of the New York City's community school districts exercise substantial choice in the selection of elementary schools. Ensuring that these choice systems conduce to equity and access is a goal that DOE officials, parents and community advocates can all support. Here we offer practical, readily available and inexpensive strategies toward equity and access in the administration of elementary-school choice.

Background: Currently three community school districts in New York City assign students based on choice, and do not have attendance zones or catchment areas. The other 29 "zoned" districts also offer choice, but give preference to students residing within the delineated school attendance zone. Scholarly literature has shown that unbridled school choice results in racial and economic segregation in the absence of intentional policy to avoid stratification.

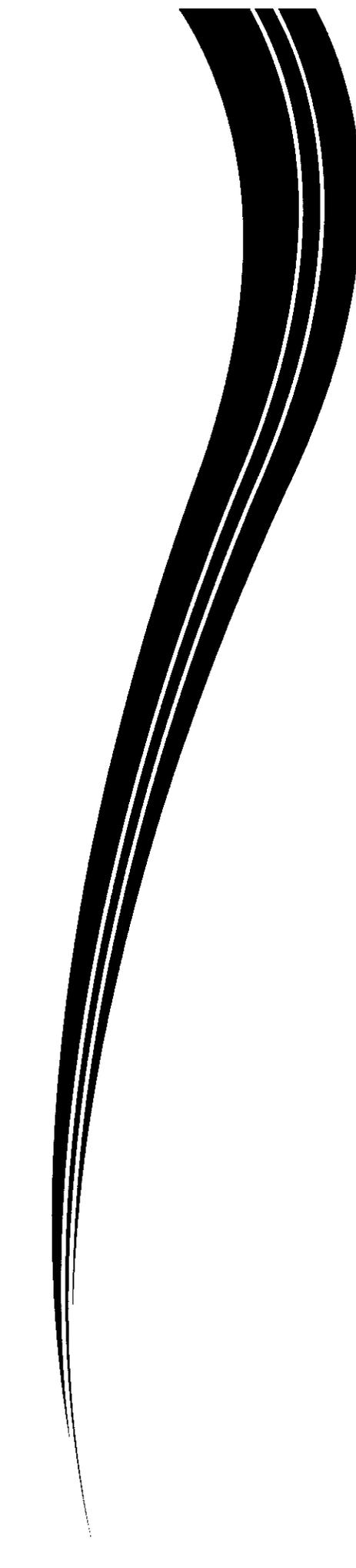
New York Appleseed and its community partners support controlled choice, a student-assignment plan used in scores of school districts across the country that helps to prevent segregation by race, class and language status. But every kind of choice-based plan requires that parents have access to the information they need to make appropriate selections for their children. For this reason, equitable choice-based student-assignment plans require a parent resource center – a multi-lingual, one-stop shop that can provide unbiased guidance and one-on-one counseling on how to negotiate the choice process.

Strategies: Both controlled-choice student assignment plans and parent resource centers require political will, community process and extensive planning. By contrast what follows are simple, inexpensive and effective strategies developed by New York Appleseed and Lisa Donlan, President of District 1 Community Education Council. DOE could be employing these strategies right now to advance its goal of making choice work for parents. While nothing here should suggest that these ideas are sufficient in themselves to address pervasive problems of equity and access, these steps are nevertheless minimally necessary if the DOE is serious about using choice as a tool for greater equity. We offer these strategies not as a critique of current DOE policy or to advance our own more expansive vision for diverse schools and equitable student assignment, but simply because they are good practical ideas that will advance goals shared by DOE and most parents:

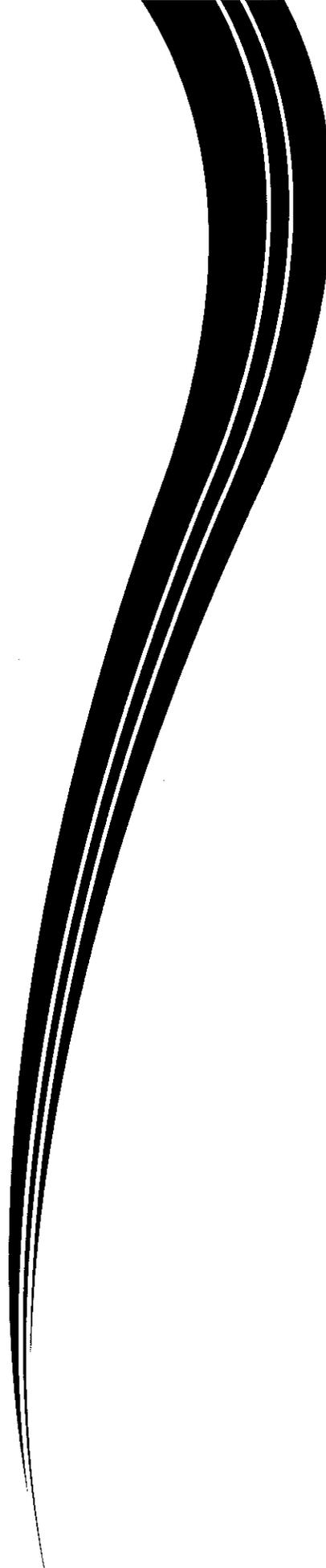
- Office of District Family Advocate. According to the DOE website, District Family Advocates "provide information for the community and support the resolution of family inquiries and concerns. They provide information to families and community members to increase

awareness about academic standards and school resources and develop helpful connections with schools.” These offices should play a greater role in expanding equitable access to schools by:

- Providing abundant copies of the district’s school directory in any languages spoken by 20% of students in the district;
- Developing relationships with universal pre-k programs and day cares so that directories can be distributed through those channels;
- Providing at least three public computers for families to do school research and to complete online pre-kindergarten and kindergarten applications;
- Providing up-to-date, reliable information on school tours for all schools in the district;
- Developing workshops, trainings and handouts on:
 - How do I apply to schools? (with a flow chart of the different options, timelines and processes for pre-K, kindergarten and middle-school enrollment);
 - How do I complete a school application? (online, 311 assistance (see below), borough enrollment offices and at the school (over the counter));
 - What kinds of schools are available? How do I decide what school is best for my child?
 - What to look for and ask on a school tour? (questions to ask/observations to note/ establishing personal criteria and priorities)
 - What do I do if a school seems unwelcoming? What are my rights?
- Maintaining a website with school tour dates and contact information plus electronic copies of all information listed above.
- Support for Principals and Schools. As schools do not have the resources, personnel, expertise or tools required to market themselves to parents effectively, DOE can provide more support inexpensively by developing guidance on:
 - Best practices for school tours so as to be as welcoming and inclusive as possible to parents of all backgrounds;

- 
- How to prepare for and successfully present your school at the annual school fair, including materials, brochures, presentations, participants (teachers, staff, students and parents);
 - How to foster and maintain a supportive and inclusive environment for students with disabilities, English Language Learners and other students with high needs;
 - How to use parent coordinators to meet equity and diversity goals;
 - How to leverage the school community of parents and staff in recruitment efforts;
 - How to create a school culture that celebrates and fosters diversity;
 - How to help teachers teach to a diverse classroom.
- School Fairs. Choice districts currently hold elementary-school fairs. Choice schools and undersubscribed zoned schools in zoned districts should also have the opportunity to participate in fairs. To use these tools more efficiently, however, DOE needs to:
 - Place advertisements for the fairs in prominent and appropriately targeted local newspapers and social media;
 - Distribute flyers to appropriate locations such as local laundry mats, health clinics, grocery stores, nursery schools, daycare centers, housing complexes, street fairs and other venues suggested by community members;
 - Provide abundant multi-lingual school directories at the fair along with the handouts described above under the Office of District Family Advocate;
 - Collect parent emails for later communication;
 - Keep track of the number of attendees and compare with registry numbers, eligible families and previous year's attendance;
 - Hold trainings leading up to and during the event (in breakout sessions) on how to choose a school for your child and how to complete the application.
 - Pre-Kindergarten. Pre-kindergarten is an obvious, but underused opportunity for getting information to parents:

- Community Based Organization (CBO) pre-k providers. DOE should:
 - Provide kindergarten directories to all CBOs providers;
 - Train CBO providers in the kindergarten admissions process to assist their families;
 - Create CBO communication networks to spread information;
 - Make multiple joint presentations with CBOs to families.
- DOE should also mail a least one letter to every parent who has applied for public pre-k to inform them about:
 - Kindergarten admissions process in February (including the admissions flow chart mentioned above);
 - Where they can get support, information, translation and other assistance.
- DOE Office of Public Affairs. Many divisions of DOE could improve their communications dramatically by following practices used by the Department's own Office of Public Affairs. In service of all the above strategies, DOE should encourage its divisions to collaborate with its Office of Public Affairs and to borrow its expertise to ensure that information reaches:
 - NYCHA tenant associations;
 - City Council members and citywide elected officials, including community boards and their committees;
 - State legislators;
 - Community Based Organizations;
 - Congregations.
- Public Service Announcements: DOE needs to use public service announcements on subways, buses and on the radio to encourage more parents to participate in the spring kindergarten pre-k and kindergarten admissions process.
- Transparency Around the Admissions Process: So that parents can make realistic selections and optimize their chances of admission

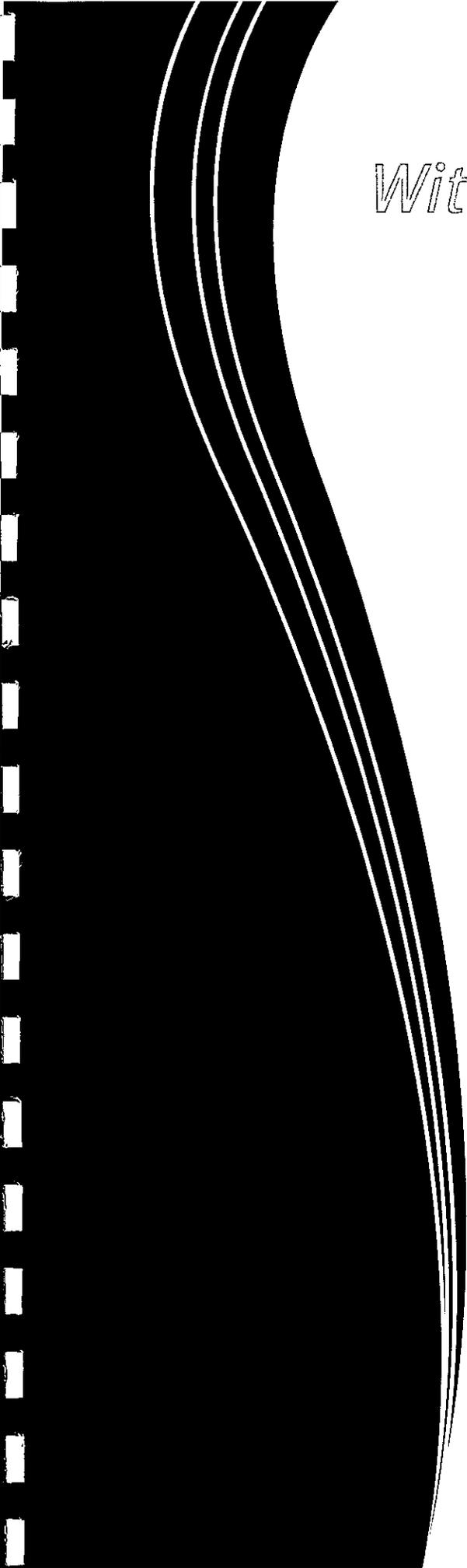


to their school of choice, DOE must offer substantial transparency around:

- The chances that particular categories of students (siblings, returning pre-k, students with disabilities, general applicants, etc.) have in gaining access to each school based on data from prior years and an explanation of the algorithm used to make student assignments;
 - The process by which each school's wait list is administered and the applicant's position on the wait list;
 - The process by which "over the counter" students are admitted and the relationship between wait-list admissions and over-the-counter admissions;
 - Data on outcomes for each school (for example, x total students admitted, x% were siblings, x% were returning pre-k students, etc.).
- DOE's 311 Pilot. DOE took an important step last year with the development of a pilot program in choice districts that allows parents to use the city's 311 system to obtain help in completing the on-line school application process. DOE can ensure the success of this tool by:
 - Sharing data on how pilot is working in districts 1, 7 and 23 along with data on the choice systems in general;
 - Demonstrating openness to ideas for improvement and feedback from the community.

David Tipson, *Director*
New York Appleseed
August 2013

New York Appleseed is part of the national network of Appleseed centers around the country and Mexico. Appleseed centers have long worked on closing equity gaps, providing parents with necessary information and parental engagement. Please visit www.appleseednetwork.org for more information.

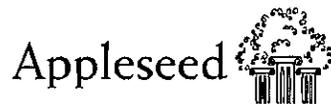


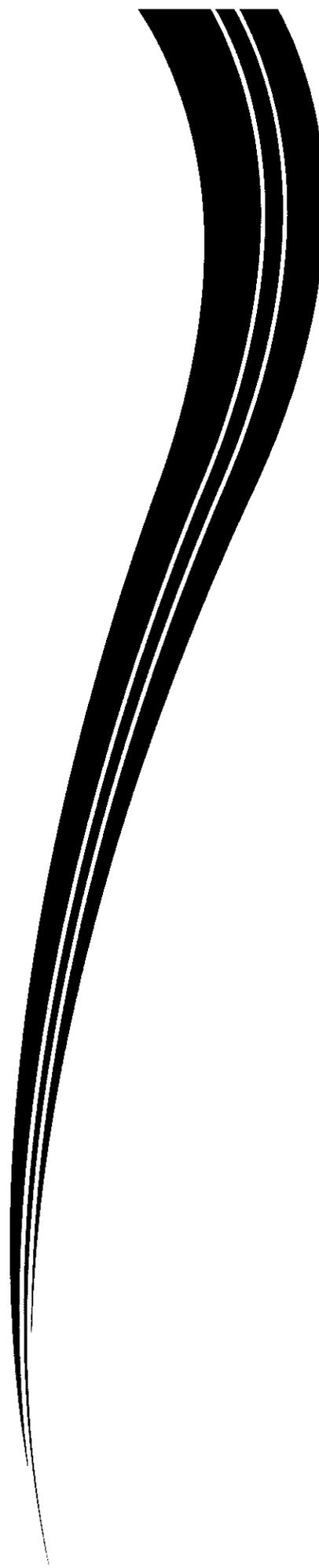
Within Our Reach

Segregation in NYC District Elementary Schools and What We Can Do About It:

Addressing Internal Segregation
and Harnessing the Educational
Benefits of Diversity

New York Appleseed[®]





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Jennifer Swanson served as the principal editor of this document. Her substantive and stylistic contributions transformed some disorganized notes into a unified and readable document. Special thanks are due to colleagues **Michael Alves, Khin Mai Aung, Lisa Donlan, Jennifer Weiss Friedman, David Goldsmith, Donna Nevel, and Halley Potter** who reviewed portions of this briefing and provided important feedback. Finally, New York Appleseed wishes to thank fellow members of the **National Coalition on School Diversity**, who shared their time and made critical introductions for us. The coalition and its resources have been invaluable to our efforts.

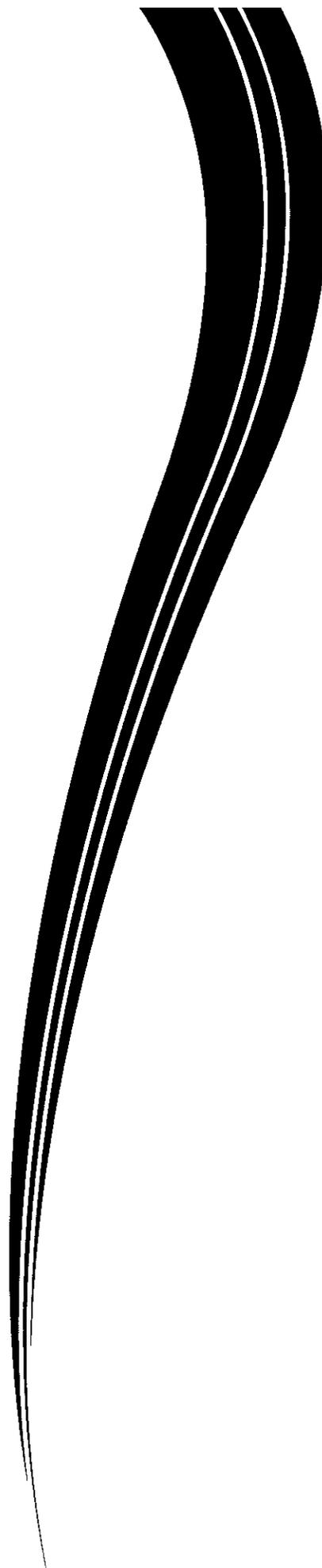
This work would have not have been possible without generous grants from the **New York Community Trust, the Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe Foundation** and the **Sirus Fund**. Additionally, the members of the **New York Appleseed Advisory Council** provided critical seed money for this work at a time when the goal of pursuing school diversity across New York City may have struck them as quixotic. Thanks to their initial confidence, this goal lies increasingly within our reach.

About New York Appleseed

New York Appleseed advocates for equity of access and fair allocation of resources to schools and neighborhoods in New York City and its greater metropolitan area. We collaborate with volunteer lawyers, parent groups, demographers, real estate professionals, government officials, and community advocates to uncover regional disparities, develop practical solutions, and advocate for implementation of our recommendations. New York Appleseed is a non-partisan, independent voice for reform. For more information, visit: ny.appleseednetwork.org.

About Appleseed

Appleseed, a nonprofit network of 17 public interest justice centers in the United States and Mexico, uncovers and corrects social injustices through legal, legislative, and market-based structural reform. Appleseed and Appleseed Centers bring together volunteers from the law, business, and academic professions to devise long-term solutions to problems affecting the underprivileged and underrepresented in such areas as education and financial access. For more information, visit: www.appleseednetwork.org.



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About This Series

The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free common schools, wherein all the children of this state may be educated.

New York State Constitution, Article XI, Section 1

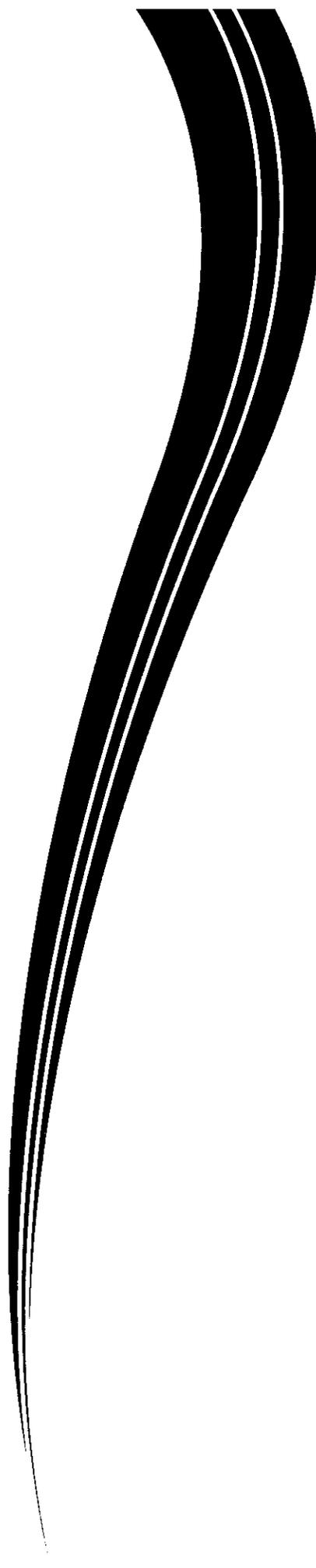
This policy briefing is the second in a series addressing the issue of racial and economic segregation in the New York City system – the third most segregated school district in the country according to the *New York Times*. This series summarizes research and advocacy findings conducted by New York Appleseed and the global law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe. From 2011 to the present, while actively engaged in advocacy with community partners, we have separately interviewed scores of experts in New York City and around the country – academics, parents, advocates, principals, teachers, government officials.

Our series of briefings advances a simple proposition: meaningful school diversity is possible and necessary in large areas of the city comprising multiple community school districts and hundreds of thousands of students. Our belief that school diversity is within our reach both logistically and politically derives from over 50 interviews conducted with experts across the city and also from successful advocacy conducted with parent groups.

It has not always been the case that school diversity was possible in New York City. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, integration efforts stalled in New York City due to large-scale white flight from the city. At the same time, many reasonably asked why integration was even necessary or desirable when merely equalizing resources among schools might accomplish the same goals.

Three things happened in the four decades that followed: First, in all the jurisdictions that have attempted it, achieving resource equity among schools in the absence of integration has proven difficult, if not impossible. We have learned yet again that separate is not equal. Second, social-science researchers have developed a far more sophisticated understanding of the benefits of diverse schools – benefits not easily replicated even under the most equitable conditions. Finally and more recently, in a historic demographic shift, middle class and white populations are returning to New York City in a process that one scholar has dubbed a “reversal of white flight.” In light of these realities, New York Appleseed believes we must return to the fundamental American project of the common school, where children of different backgrounds and income levels may attend school together.

Seizing today’s opportunity for promoting school diversity in New York City, however, requires an understanding of the complex and often surprising ways in which *segregation* currently plays out in the school system. Yes, housing segregation plays a key and – in some sectors of the city – dispositive role in perpetuating school segregation. The New York City metro region is the



second most segregated in the nation, and appropriate policies to affirmatively further fair housing and promote residential inclusion are more important than ever. Residential patterns do not explain much of the school segregation that we see in more diverse and rapidly gentrifying community school districts, however. In some cases, school segregation may be doing more to increase neighborhood segregation than the other way around.

This series is intended to uncover and demystify those formal structures beyond housing patterns that perpetuate racial and economic segregation in schools. We also wish to provide practical and achievable strategies to overcome those structures. Our hope is that this series will give parents and policy makers the analytic tools they need to understand the incidence of school segregation in their communities and workable strategies to address the underlying causes.

Please visit our website ny.appleseednetwork.org for more information about New York Appleseed's work to promote school diversity and the scholarship demonstrating the educational benefits of diversity for all children.

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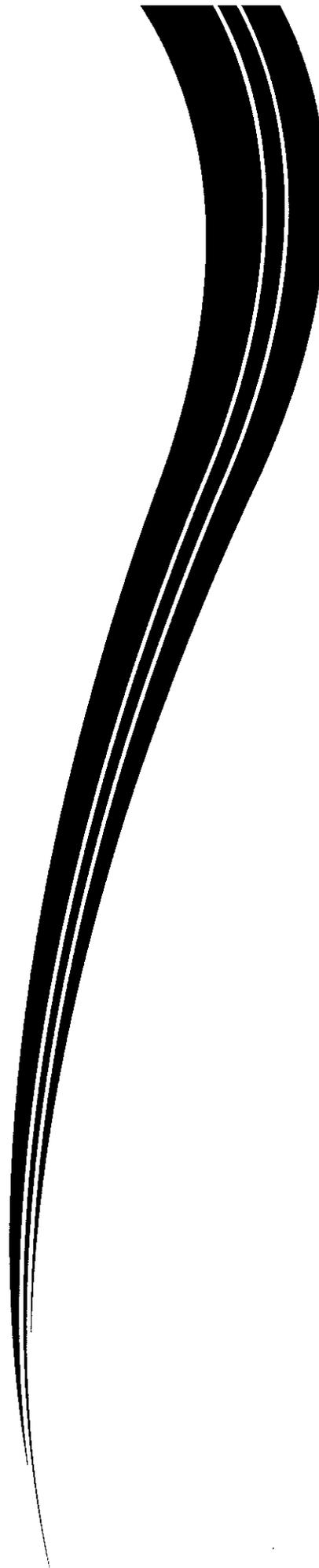
Introduction

New York Appleseed's first briefing in this series, "Segregation in NYC District Elementary Schools and What We Can Do About It: School-to-School Diversity," explained the complex mechanisms by which such inter-school segregation occurs. Even as the system as a whole has become more segregated, however, some schools have become more integrated – at least temporarily.

Without intentional efforts by school leadership, however, a school that appears to be moving toward greater integration may in fact be "flipping" to become predominantly white and more affluent. Even schools in New York City that appear to be stably integrated from the outside can be deeply segregated within the walls of the building. Other schools may not be internally segregated, but nevertheless fail to foster the kind of school environment where diversity thrives and redounds to the educational benefit of students.

The racial and socioeconomic composition of a school is not always reflected in the classroom, cafeteria, or after school program.¹ David Johnson and Roger Johnson observe, "Once diverse children are brought together in the same school and classroom whether the diversity among students results in positive or negative outcomes depends largely on how student-student interaction within learning situations is structured: competitively, individualistically, or cooperatively."² Without an active and intentional school program that recognizes the importance and value of diverse learning, a school runs the risk of creating a segregated student body even within an ostensibly diverse school.

This briefing examines how issues of segregation and school diversity play out within individual elementary schools in New York City. Part I describes Gifted & Talented (G&T) and dual language programs – what one scholar has called "enclaves" within schools.³ Part II describes steps that teachers and administrators can take to facilitate integration within the school and classroom.



Part I: Avoiding Internal Segregation in School Programs

Gifted & Talented Programs

“At the classroom level, students enrolled in the few public schools that are more diverse overall tend to be divided into special ‘gifted and talented’ ... versus ‘general education’ classrooms based on testing and an application process that occurs when they are in pre-school. In these more ‘diverse’ schools, G&T and general education classes are remarkably distinct racially and ethnically, with all the white and Asian students in the G&T classrooms and virtually all the black and Latino students in the general education classes....”

“Walking down the hallways of these schools evokes in researchers and parents alike a sense of racial apartheid.”

Professor Amy Stuart Wells in a recent article in *Poverty & Race*⁴

New York City Gifted and Talented (G&T) programs are a mechanism of sorting students based on academic abilities and intelligence (real or perceived), and were originally intended as a strategy to retain more white and middle-class families in public schools.⁵ Regrettably, they also divide students of different races and socioeconomic levels. This section focuses on the City’s traditional G&T programs in elementary schools.

A national study found that when classes within a school are segregated, it can almost always be traced to a form of academic tracking.⁶ Tracking, also called ability grouping, is the practice of grouping students according to skill or ability levels.⁷ Assignments to tracks “tend to be racially biased, making classrooms more segregated than they would have been had assignments been made strictly on ‘objective’ criteria.”⁸ When elementary school students are sorted by ability, these divisions largely reflect and reinforce socioeconomic differences that have shaped children’s experiences and exposure during their earliest years.

G&T programs have long been a divisive topic within the New York City education community. They have been the subject of legal and policy challenges as well as investigations internally, by outside groups, and by United States Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights. In 2003, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (ABCNY) published a report detailing documented problems of discrimination within the City G&T program going back to 1995. These individual programs used a wide array of application procedures. Many relied on IQ tests as the sole point of entry. Others required an application or testing fee. In response to Title VI complaints filed against both an individual community school district and the city program as a whole, Chancellor Rudolph Crew threatened to promulgate

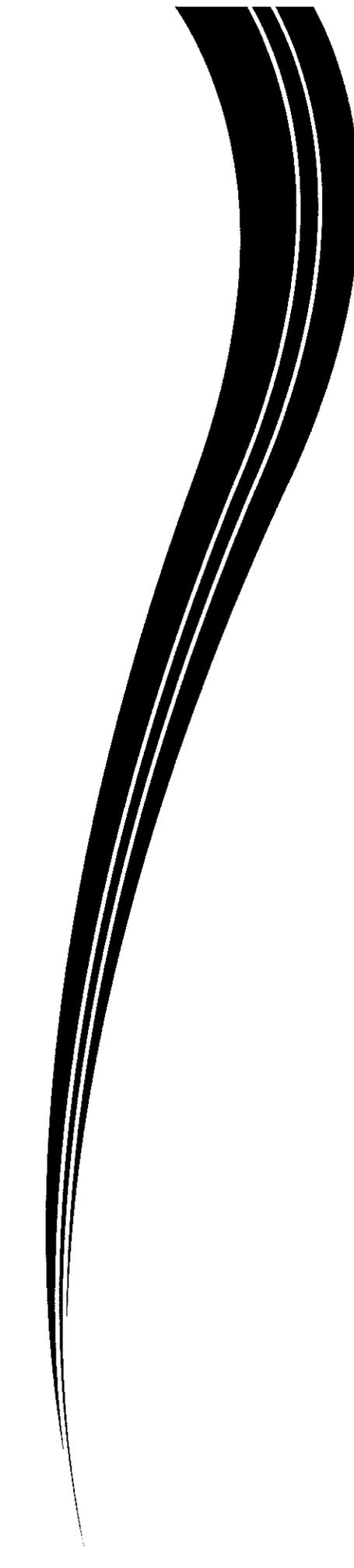
citywide regulations, but never followed through. In 1998, the advocacy group ACORN found that New York City G&T programs segregated white students in enclaves within racially diverse general school populations.⁹ Reports issued by New York City Department of Education (DOE) found “minimal effort on the part of some districts/schools to familiarize parents with the existence of G&T programs and admission requirements.”¹⁰ In one district, whites were 47 times more likely to both apply and be admitted to the G&T program than African Americans. English Language Learners (then called Limited English Proficiency students) and special education students were vastly underrepresented.¹¹

These issues notwithstanding, former Chancellor Joel Klein expanded G&T programs rapidly during his tenure – apparently under the belief that providing such enclaves was the way to keep middle-class families in the public school system.¹² Five years after ABCNY released its report, DOE adopted a single, citywide admission criterion and process for G&T admissions which ended the policy of allowing districts to determine what constituted “giftedness.” Admission to both district-based programs and citywide programs is now based solely on standardized tests.¹³ Children who score above the national 90th percentile are eligible for the programs within their school district. Children who score above the national 97th percentile are eligible for both the district and citywide programs, but are not guaranteed a seat in the latter. Every year far more students qualify than there are available seats for the citywide programs.

In 2008, the new, citywide system of G&T admissions used two standardized tests to identify students who would benefit from placement: the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA). These tests were administered by NYC certified/licensed teachers trained by Pearson Assessments.¹⁴

DOE took great pains to explain that the tests were fair, an accurate predictor of student intelligence and ability and race neutral:

Each test question on the OLSAT has been rigorously reviewed by educators, measurement specialists, and psychologists to ensure that it is of high quality and without bias toward any subgroup, including gender and ethnic/racial categories. The questions have also been reviewed for clarity, appropriateness of content, accuracy of correct answers, plausibility of answer options, and appropriateness of vocabulary. All items on the BSRA have been statistically analyzed and evaluated for difficulty, reliability, fit, bias, and effectiveness across each age group and for each subtest. Both tests have proven to be reliable and valid assessments according to official studies. Reliability refers to the accuracy and precision of the test scores. Validity refers to the extent to which the test measures what it is intended to measure.¹⁵



The city G&T program, however, became even less diverse after centralization of the application process, and many of the problems described in the ABCNY report remained. In 2011, even as black and Latino students made up 70 percent of all children in the school system, 73 percent of kindergarteners in G&T were white or Asian, up from 68 percent in 2009-2010. Black representation dropped from 15 percent to 11 percent, while Latino representation remained at 12 percent. Many attributed that trend, and the general low percentage of minority enrollment, to more affluent parents providing their children with professional test preparation and other similar advantages, like persistent advocacy and retesting, to secure their child a seat.¹⁶ A data request placed by the *Wall Street Journal* found similar demographics in the 2012-2013 school year.¹⁷

Last year the DOE modified the application process again with a new test, the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), which now counts for two thirds of an applicant's score. Much as they did with OLSAT and BSRA in 2008, DOE officials claimed that NNAT is a better measure of intelligence, will not prejudice applicants who do not speak English, and is less susceptible to test preparation. They also expressed hope that emphasis on the new test would improve the diversity of G&T programs – although declined to state that diversity was a goal.¹⁸

Substituting one standardized test for another, however, was unlikely to improve equity of access or diversity in the G&T programs. Test results from last year revealed an alarming trend of increasing numbers of qualifying scores in the city's most affluent community school districts and decreasing numbers in the poorest districts.¹⁹ In fact, under the new test the number of community school districts where fewer than 25 students qualified (the minimum number required even to have a program in the district) has increased from six to nine – nearly a third of the total number of districts.²⁰ By contrast, *over 50 percent* of children taking the test in Manhattan Districts 2 and 3 received qualifying scores.²¹

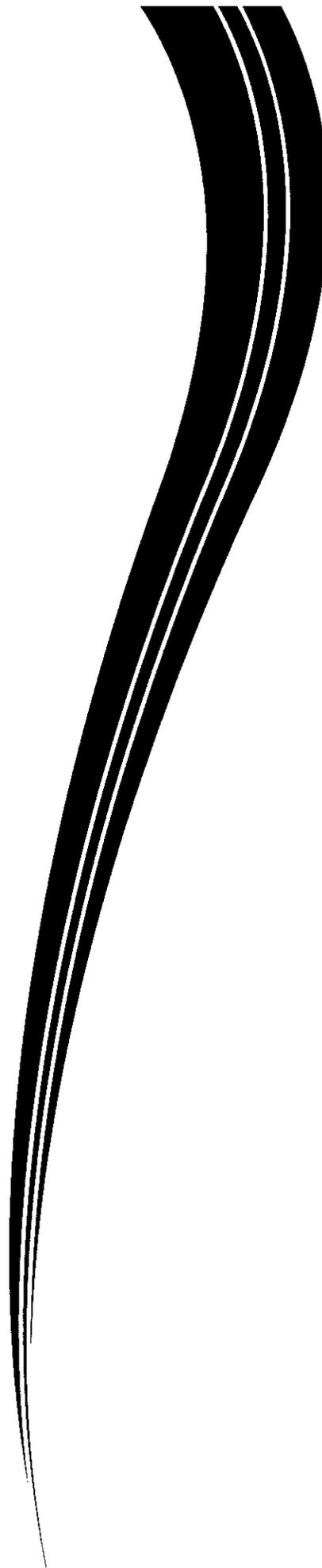
The issue of inequitable access to the city's G&T program would be alarming enough by itself, but is made even more serious in light of the fact that G&T students are typically separated from general education students. Some schools are split evenly between separate G&T and general education classes, giving the impression of two different schools.²² The separation can be so extreme that G&T children enter the school through a different door, and have their class schedules staggered from those of the rest of the student body so that the two populations do not meet and interact.²³ These practices tend to have the effect of isolating white and more affluent children from African American and Latino children. They create the impression that children of color must be kept separate from children in the G&T program and reinforce harmful stereotypes about race and intelligence.

Since the departure of Chancellor Klein, many have perceived a shift in the DOE's priorities away from G&T to more "heterogeneous classes."²⁴ G&T

programs, however, remain a fixture of the educational landscape in New York — and a major barrier to racially and economically integrated classrooms — perhaps because school officials and principals believe them to be too closely guarded by the most affluent and powerful parents. New research, however, undercuts the prevailing view that the existence of G&T programs accurately reflects the preferences of middle-class parents. In her recent study, researcher Jennifer Stillman found profound ambivalence and in some cases opposition to the inequity and segregation endemic in the city's G&T programs among what she calls “gentry” parents.²⁵ Columbia University professor Amy Stuart Wells and Allison Roda have even found that a substantial number of white and more affluent parents choose private schools precisely to avoid the racial segregation they perceive within public elementary schools.²⁶ Although Park Slope, Brooklyn is generally regarded as an upper middle-class stronghold, its extremely popular schools have no G&T programs (PS 10 ended its G&T program a few years ago, and nearby PS 139 just announced that it will be following suit.)²⁷ Roda observes the irony that G&T programs and the racial segregation that accompanies them may actually be driving some middle-class parents from the public school system, noting “how uncomfortable parents are with the ongoing segregation between programs and the feelings of superiority and inferiority that the G&T and Gen Ed labels produce for parents and students.”²⁸

Whatever the ethics of providing segregated G&T programs in elementary schools to retain middle-class families in the public school system, such a strategy is outdated and counterproductive. The strategy is outdated because the forces driving the so-called “reversal of white flight” in New York City are social, historical, global, and beyond the ability of targeted education policies to influence in either direction. While the memories of abandonment, disinvestment, and decline are still fresh in the minds of many New Yorkers, the reality today is that many areas of the city are rapidly gentrifying with harmful and destabilizing effects on low-income communities.²⁹ In fact, the supply of apartments for rent or purchase in large portions of the city is currently at a historic low, and families whose commitment to living in the city is predicated on the hope of their children attending G&T programs would be happily replaced by middle-class families who do not place such demands on public schools. Although many white and upper-income families do in fact choose private schools, these schools are largely at capacity.³⁰ Even assuming the private school sector in the region would grow in proportion to demand, many middle-class families — particularly since the onset of the current economic recession — cannot afford private education for their children.³¹

And it is counterproductive because new research suggests that the appearance of “apartheid” presented by segregated G&T programs may be repelling as many middle-class parents as the programs are attracting.³² Many private schools in New York City have made remarkable strides in improving their own racial and economic diversity — often in the face of opposition from privileged persons.³³ If upper-income students are choosing diverse private



schools over segregated public schools, the DOE would do well to learn from their counterparts in the private sector.

G&T programs are a form of special education. In its recent Special Education reform initiative DOE has concluded that “all schools should have the curricular, instructional, and scheduling flexibility needed to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities with accountability outcomes.”³⁴ The Department repeats a mantra equally applicable to G&T programs: “Special Education is a **service**, not a **place**.”³⁵ As public school systems around the country are increasingly using integration by achievement level as a strategy to achieve diversity in the classroom, New York City is doing the opposite with its elementary school Gifted & Talented programs.³⁶

Recommendations

First, DOE should eliminate separate classrooms for G&T instruction and should instead integrate G&T students and G&T instruction into general education classrooms as they have already done with other special-needs students. In the meantime, schools that currently offer segregated G&T classrooms should begin phasing them out either through outright elimination of the program where possible or by moving independently to integrate G&T students and curriculum into general education classrooms. By integrating G&T students into general education classrooms, and thus eliminating the feeling of academic inequity between the populations, schools can work to ensure that student diversity has a positive outcome.

Second, challenge all children using the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), in which children receive enrichment in clusters based on interest in particular subject areas. Some New York City public schools already use SEM. For example, PS/IS 78Q in Long Island City, Queens finds its pool of talent from parent and community volunteers and experts who help to develop curriculum for the entire student population in grades 1-5 —special needs, ELL, and G&T.³⁷ Two middle schools in Washington, DC have implemented SEM programs in place of traditional self-contained gifted classes. Instead of separating children out by test results, a practice that has clearly resulted in classrooms divided along race and socioeconomic status, the SEM provides enrichment to all students. Using SEM, schools can ensure that classrooms retain diversity without sacrificing academic rigor for its higher- achieving students.³⁸

Advocates and candidates for office have proposed multiple fixes to the G&T program in recent years. They fall into the categories of mitigating the impact of test preparation, delaying the testing of children until they are old enough to be tested meaningfully, increasing outreach to parents, and ensuring that more (if not all) students take the admissions tests.³⁹ The DOE, for its part, has issued an RFP for yet another set of “assessment instruments suitable for children between 4-8 years old.”⁴⁰

Some of these proposed solutions, if implemented, may serve marginally to increase equity and diversity but will not address the problematic idea at the core of many G&T programs – namely that elementary school children need to be segregated by “ability,” when such “ability” is likely to reflect primarily the privilege and experiences conferred by socioeconomic status. As one G&T parent acknowledged to the *New York Times*: “I don’t think the fact that G.&T. programs are clearly and disproportionately white ... is the result of anyone’s bad intentions I think it is really the result of people committed to a system that can never work if the objective is diversity.”⁴¹

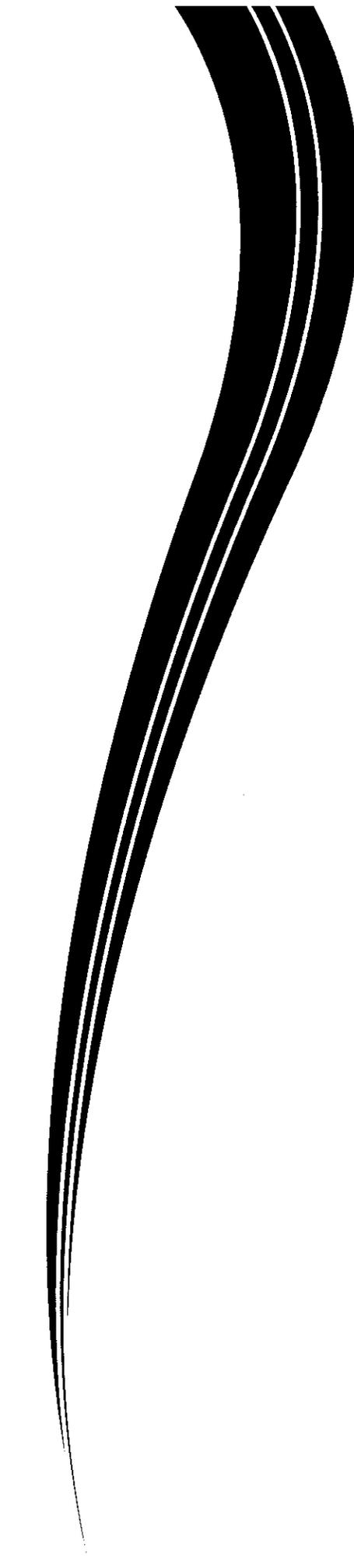
History demonstrates that it is impossible to administer G&T admissions in a way that is neither discriminatory towards individuals nor inequitable towards disadvantaged student populations. Even if assessing children’s abilities at age four were not inherently problematic, there appears to be little pedagogical justification for segregating students by ability in elementary school.

Research suggests that tracked classes may harm lower achievers, while offering a single, de-tracked, rigorous curriculum for all students can improve performance of lower-achieving students without harming higher achievers.⁴² Arguments that G&T programs are necessary to retain middle-class parents in the public schools are no longer relevant, at least in New York City. For all of these reasons, we believe that values of equal opportunity, integration, and equitable access to education are fundamentally incompatible with segregated G&T programs in New York City’s elementary schools.

Dual Language Programs

New York Appleseed’s first briefing in this series endorsed dual language programs as a strategy for overcoming *inter*-school segregation – a logical first step in fostering integrated classrooms.⁴³ Some principals have successfully used dual language programs to attract middle-class parents to an otherwise segregated school.⁴⁴ If not carefully designed and managed, however, dual language programs can contribute to exclusion and *intra*-school segregation.

Although good data on dual language programs is nearly impossible to obtain, at present about 200 elementary schools have bilingual programs (either Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or dual language), and about 80 of those have some kind of dual language program.⁴⁵ Programs identified as dual language in New York City elementary schools in fact comprise a surprisingly broad range of bi-lingual programs with different pedagogical philosophies, admissions policies, and classroom compositions.⁴⁶ For better and for worse, elementary schools have enjoyed substantial freedom in addressing these aspects of the program. Generally, however, New York City’s dual language programs provide learning environments such that at least half of the students are native speakers of English, and half speak a different primary language at home. Classes are taught in each language on alternating days or weeks so that the students become fluent in both. ⁴⁷



Dual language programs were originally intended to serve the educational needs of English Language Learners (ELLs), but they provide enormous benefits to all children.⁴⁸ Rather than approaching limited English as a disadvantage, dual language programs harness the great strength of ELLs – namely their fluency in their first language – to further the cognitive and linguistic advantages of bilingualism for all of the students in the classroom. Two-way immersion programs, in which two linguistic groups are simultaneously learning in both their own and another language, are by necessity integrated environments.⁴⁹ Properly structured, dual language programs can serve the needs of the city's ELL children while providing tremendous benefits to other children who participate. Many of the city's dual language programs undoubtedly serve this important purpose.

In recent years, however, some dual language programs have increasingly functioned more like G&T programs – separating white and more affluent children from other students for academic enrichment and superior resources. In one school, the French dual language program is not only segregated vis-à-vis the school as a whole, but also as compared to the Spanish language program. In that school, the nearly all-white French program is widely perceived as having teachers and resources superior to those of the Spanish program, which has a high percentage of Latino students, and to those of the general education program.⁵⁰

Whatever their educational merits, dual language programs become vehicles for segregation when they are designed for the educational goals of more affluent parents rather than the needs of ELLs in the community school district. Some schools, for instance, have initiated programs that teach languages appealing to more affluent parents but not spoken by ELLs in the district. In other cases, a language like French may be chosen, but the school fails to recruit and attract ELLs from French-speaking immigrant families.⁵¹

In these instances, so long as language-proficiency requirements are met, schools have enjoyed enormous discretion in selecting students and have not been required to respect even a zone preference.⁵² Although parents of Anglophone students do need to make a serious commitment to embracing the second language in the home, excessive emphasis on the program's rigor and "advance commitment" may discourage some parents of ELLs from applying.⁵³ Moreover, such warnings betray merit-based admissions priorities that undermine values of inclusion and integration.⁵⁴ Under these circumstances, middle- or upper-income children can qualify for the nonnative-speaker slots if their parents are foreigners or they speak a different language with their caretakers, and in some programs may even enjoy an advantage over ELLs if they and their parents are perceived to have more "commitment."⁵⁵ Ideally, such students would fill the English-dominant seats in a dual language program rather than ELL seats. The combination of these factors leads some dual language programs to become vehicles of exclusion and segregation and denies their promise of integrated education.

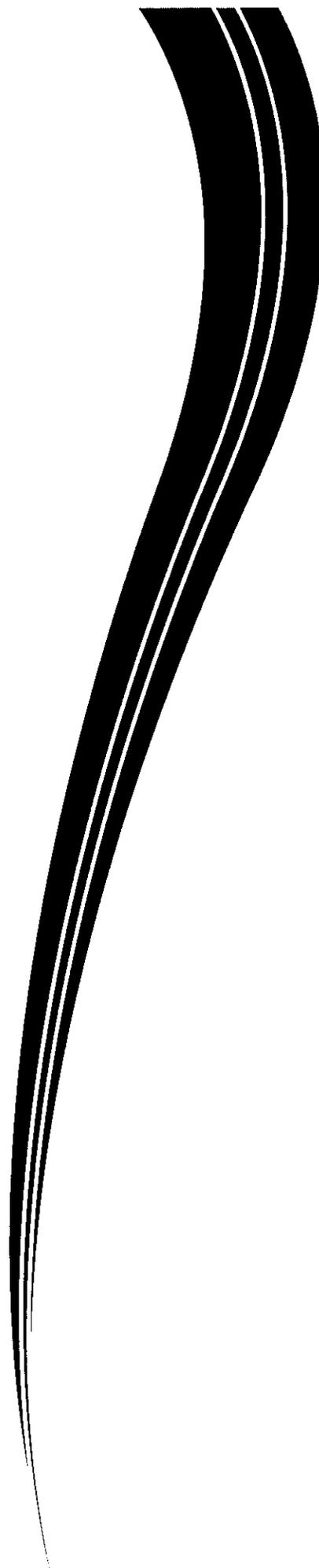
Recommendations

Dual language programs should rededicate themselves to the educational needs of English Language Learners in their districts while allowing schools to modify their instructional model based on the actual populations within their schools. Since there are abundant models for dual language programs with ELLs representing more than half of the class, DOE should adopt a policy that ELL applicants should be given priority admission to a dual language program over non-ELL applicants. By selecting languages for study appropriate for local ELLs, marketing affirmatively to their communities, and removing admissions preferences that screen out rather than include, dual language programs can model integrated learning practices.

Parents of ELLs are uniquely positioned to accomplish this goal: In New York City, if there are 15 ELLs who speak the same language in two contiguous grades in the same school, those children are legally entitled to bilingual education – either a dual language program or transitional bilingual education.⁵⁶ Many community school districts in the city, however, are not in compliance with this requirement, and parents have an opportunity to stand up for their right to bilingual education.⁵⁷ The Asian American Legal & Educational Defense Fund and Advocates for Children are currently pushing DOE to survey parent preferences more frequently once children are in school so as to expand access to bilingual education. Parents who demand dual language education in particular can reorient the program to its appropriate goals and to facilitate diverse learning classrooms that will benefit ELLs and Anglophone children alike.

School districts that do not have the required number of ELL students to be mandated to provide bilingual education should nevertheless be encouraged to maintain dual language programs to support bilingualism in languages spoken by ELLs in the district. These schools need flexibility to implement best practices in dual language education based on the needs of the students in these programs.

Finally, although dual language programs are by design separate from the general education classes, school administrators and educators should find opportunities to have students in the dual language program mix with the rest of the student body without undermining the goals of the program. School administrators should be careful to avoid the reality and appearance that dual language program students are receiving more or better educational resources.



Part II: Leveraging the Potential of Diversity in Elementary Schools

Successful, diverse schools form partnerships and welcome collaboration between administrators, teachers and staff, families, and community members. Inclusive schools are not only receptive to the idea that staff and students have different, valid experiences, they are also open to adapting their pedagogical and administrative practices to the needs of their diverse population. While this can be a daunting undertaking, New York Appleseed has identified resources for administrators, teachers, and families to explore and, most importantly, to adapt to their individual needs.

Administrative Practices that Manage Diversity

Managing diversity, defined by B.R. Grobler as “a planned, systematic and comprehensive managerial process for developing a school environment in which all people, with their similarities and differences, can contribute to the strategic and competitive advantage of the school and where no one is excluded on the basis of factors unrelated to productivity,” is key for a school to take advantage of the learning spaces provided by diversity within the student body, administration, and staff.⁵⁸ As Caleb Rosado articulates, “Managing diversity is an on-going process that unleashes the various talents and capabilities which a diverse population bring to an organization, community or society, so as to create a wholesome, inclusive environment, that is ‘safe for differences,’ enables people to ‘reject rejection,’ celebrates diversity, and maximizes the full potential of all, in a cultural context where everyone benefits.”⁵⁹ Successful integration therefore requires not only an awareness of how diversity can be involved in nearly every administrative and curricular choice, but also the ability to share leadership with the people on the front lines—teachers, families, and members of the community.

An administrator must exercise responsibility for managing education programs for *all* students. Some of the tasks that principals may find themselves performing outside of more traditional roles include: Articulating the vision and providing pedagogical and other types of support and leadership to staff members as they deal with issues related to diversity in the classroom; participating as a member of collaborative, problem-solving teams that identify and implement solutions to any barriers inhibiting the successful inclusion and education of any child; and securing supports to enable staff members to meet the needs of all children.⁶⁰ The role of an administrator at an inclusive school is dynamic because it requires that management, or at least goal-setting, occur in a holistic manner that learns from and incorporates input from teachers, families, and community members. As a school leader, the principal is ideally positioned to ensure that a school’s diversity helps, rather than hinders, its functioning.⁶¹ The methods a principal uses to lead a school can directly influence the level of success it experiences.

Principals should use clear and consistent application of diversity principles in personnel decisions including recruitment, hiring, training, and promotion practices

A principal, no matter how committed, cannot successfully manage a diverse school without the support of staff and faculty. Adherence to diversity principles like recruiting, hiring, and promoting staff members who reflect the diversity of the community, are sensitive to its needs, and have the desire to work in a diverse environment is crucial. Communicating the school's mission and commitment to diversity throughout the hiring process ensures that the teachers who are hired are a good match.⁶² Because of the documented shortage of diverse teachers as well as the shortage of teachers trained to succeed in diverse learning environments, the recruiting and hiring process can be difficult.⁶³ Thus, to better support teachers, administrators must understand both the time-tested and the cutting-edge pedagogical tools available to teachers working in a multifaceted classroom.

Principals should provide pre-service and in-service training

One of the ways that schools have addressed the intimidating task of being a first-year teacher is through induction programs that include first-year mentorship coupled with intensive training.⁶⁸ In addition to first-year induction programs, peer teaching can continue to serve as a source of learning for both new and veteran teachers. In-house training can benefit both students and teachers; where classrooms are combined for periods, students are able to engage with a new group of peers while teachers have the opportunity to observe one another's practices.⁶⁹

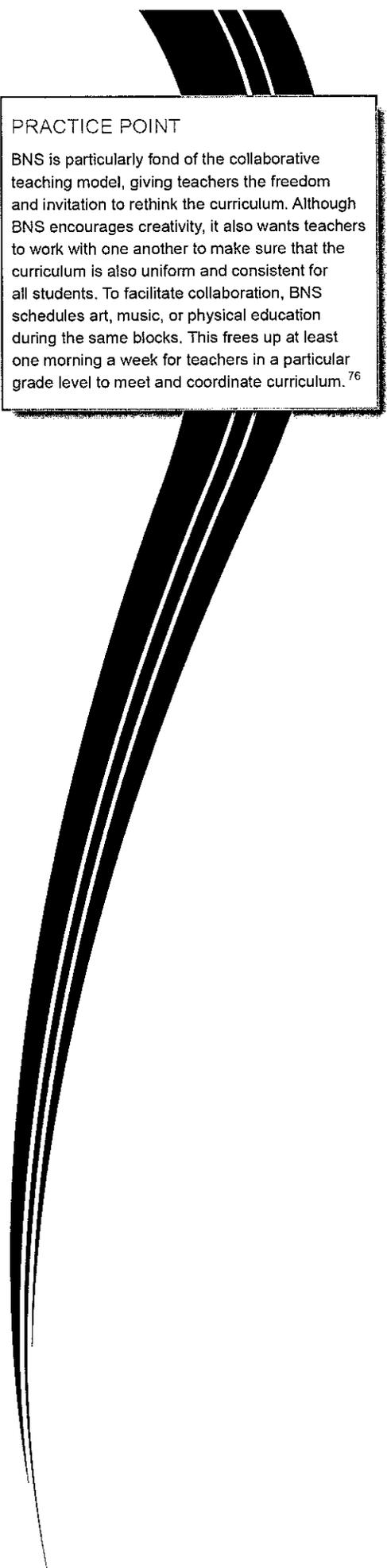
As Carolyn Riehl notes, "The development of inclusive structures and practices must be accompanied by new understandings and values or they will not result in lasting change. Principals are key agents in framing those new meanings."⁷⁰ Principals will likely need to provide training for incoming and existing teachers throughout the process of developing inclusive structures and practices. Training can come in many forms depending on the needs of the individual school. Some of these forms include courses, mentoring, team teaching, study groups, summer institutes, or workshop series.⁷¹ For example, Brooklyn New School (BNS) has partnered with Bank Street to provide professional development for supporting children in early childhood who come into the classroom with social and emotional issues stemming from community or familial disputes. This program was designed to align with both the school's demographics and its mission to provide a great education for a diverse set of students.⁷² Planning is critical and, to the extent training can become a natural outgrowth of the school's culture and structure, administrators will need to rely less on formal and resource-intensive programs.

PRACTICE POINTS

At Brooklyn New School (BNS), a public elementary school in Brooklyn's Carroll Gardens neighborhood, the number of applications far exceeds the number of available positions. For Anna Allanbrook, principal of BNS, a successful candidate has a strong educational background coupled with extensive experience in diverse environments. Her team asks interviewees to talk about four topics: collaboration with colleagues and parents, differentiation within the classroom, a particularly good teaching moment they have had, and recent professional literature that the candidate has read or a children's book that the candidate has used in his/her teaching.⁶⁴ Although diversity within the teaching staff is important for Allanbrook, the most important factor is knowledge of the teaching practice.

Jeanene Worrell-Breeden, principal of Teachers College Community School (TCCS is a public school in Manhattanville affiliated with Teachers College), comments that the ideal candidate has both a diverse background and practice area knowledge. At the same time, when presented with a candidate who is willing to learn, that readiness can go a long way, particularly when you can help them master a particular skill. As part of the hiring process at TCCS, candidates are asked to do a demo lesson in which Worrell-Breeden looks to see how a particular candidate: (1) meets the needs of children, (2) handles a diverse classroom in terms of ensuring that everyone is engaged and understanding, (3) interacts with children, and (4) manages the classroom.⁶⁵ For TCCS, diversity played a more central role in hiring than at BNS. Worrell-Breeden specifically sought out teachers with diverse backgrounds who spoke more than one language. From her perspective, these teachers would be more able to service an increasingly diverse community in the area and thus the students who would likely attend the school.

At PS 10, a public school in Brooklyn's South Slope neighborhood, principal Laura Scott notes that "we can't afford to hire [teachers] without diversity already in their backgrounds."⁶⁶ Although the task of selecting teachers that will be successful in diverse learning environments is not an easy one, by observing how teachers interact with kids, Scott says, she can better understand how a particular candidate deals with diversity in the classroom.⁶⁷



PRACTICE POINT

BNS is particularly fond of the collaborative teaching model, giving teachers the freedom and invitation to rethink the curriculum. Although BNS encourages creativity, it also wants teachers to work with one another to make sure that the curriculum is also uniform and consistent for all students. To facilitate collaboration, BNS schedules art, music, or physical education during the same blocks. This frees up at least one morning a week for teachers in a particular grade level to meet and coordinate curriculum.⁷⁶

Principals should schedule periodic meetings to assess implementation and success of identified strategies

Principals play a key role in initiating and sustaining conversations in their schools around a variety of issues related to teaching and learning. In a diverse school, those conversations should include issues related to combatting intra-school segregation and fostering an inclusive environment. Weekly or monthly on- or off-campus meetings may be useful in developing collaborative curricula, sharing best practices, and tinkering with existing practices.⁷³ In-house presentation by teachers to teachers on a particularly successful strategy will encourage other teachers to innovate while rewarding those teachers who have done so successfully.⁷⁴ "School-Based Options" allow schools in New York City to modify the citywide collective bargaining agreement to accommodate the needs and philosophy of particular schools and can give teachers and principals the ability to customize teachers' schedules to accommodate teacher collaboration across grades or curriculum areas.⁷⁵

Principals should make classroom assignments with diversity in mind

Principals support and promote inclusion gained through removing separate tracks when they help to establish new class assignment processes, when they provide resources so that teachers can learn to teach heterogeneous groups, and when they help teachers generate the kind of assessment information that will make the impact of tracking and de-tracking more visible.

A diverse school not only brings together people from different backgrounds, it also brings together people with different educational needs. Diversity in educational background may suggest a need for more or less challenging class offerings. Some students may need English language support, others may need extra support because of identified learning disabilities, and still others may find stimulation in an enrichment program. While it's crucial for schools to meet students where they are, programs that separate children according to their individual learning needs have historically been sources of segregation within a school. One of the key challenges of administering a diverse school is to raise expectations for all students and to remove any obstacles that might prevent some children from achieving these expectations.⁷⁷

Policymakers, administrators, and teachers alike recognize the capacity and advantages of teaching all students of varying abilities in the same classroom. As Grant Wiggins wrote over two decades ago, "We will not successfully restructure schools to be effective until we stop seeing diversity in schools as a *problem*. Our challenge is not one of getting 'special' students to better adjust to the usual schoolwork, the usual teacher pace, or the usual tests. The challenge of schooling remains what it has been since the modern era began two centuries ago: ensuring that *all* students receive their entitlement."⁷⁸

Teaching Practices that Promote Genuine Diversity

It is equally important for teachers to have a toolbox of teaching methods that will help them to educate their diverse classroom in a way that is sensitive to students' abilities and limitations as well as cognizant of the ways in which students can learn from other students. As DeVillar notes, "Physically integrating students of diverse language, ethnic and racial backgrounds by assigning them to 'work together' in small groups will not generally lead them to cooperate with one another...The principle of cooperation must then be complemented by the concurrent application of additional principles – specifically communication, and integration...."⁷⁹ Teachers can play an essential role in aiding the integration of a diverse classroom population through thoughtful use of teaching practices. Gordon Allport notes that when students of the presumed "dominant" and "subordinate" groups are able to demonstrate their equality in skill in situations when students aim toward a common goal, these categories can dissolve.⁸⁰

While there is a rich literature of innovative, integrative teaching practices, Appendix II of this briefing provides examples to give readers an idea of the breadth and range of available strategies to promote genuinely integrated, inclusive classrooms. Some examples provide an overarching framework or structure for incorporating curriculum whereas others are more concrete. Many, if not most, teachers pick and choose from portions of many different strategies and tailor those to the specific needs of their classroom. As discussed in Part I of this briefing, often teachers do not know what barriers to inclusivity they will come across until they are in an actual classroom with a diverse population of students. These teaching strategies not only promote genuine diversity, but many of them conduce to what Daniel Pink calls *A Whole New Mind*, where students gain so much more through education than can be captured on standardized tests; they gain creative and reflective skills, multiple perspectives, collaborative skills and more of the very skills the workforce and our diverse democracy need.⁸¹

Integration beyond the Classroom

Principals, teachers, and families also face challenges when it comes to fostering diversity in non-classroom spaces such as extracurricular activities. Administrators and teachers can play a key role in encouraging broad-based participation in extracurricular activities by ensuring that a wide variety of opportunities are available and by promoting diversity within each particular activity, sport, or club.

After School Programs

Although extracurricular activities play less of a role at the elementary school level, many primary schools do have an after school enrichment program in addition to offering no-cost extended day help for children who need extra instruction in English and math. Because after school programs in New York City are not funded by the state, access to the programs can be difficult. The main barriers to attendance reported by schools are program costs that are too

PRACTICE POINT

At BNS, the school finds that the after school program may be cost-prohibitive for some parents. Additionally, many students who are bused into BNS cannot attend, because the buses only provide transportation at the end of the school day. Access to these programs, therefore, continues to be a challenge in even the more successful schools.⁸²

To compensate for students' tendencies to self-segregate, Columbia Secondary School provides multiple non-classroom forums in which students can mix freely. The school reports that the period between 2:20 p.m. and 3:10 p.m. is allocated for students to select from a rich portfolio of elective options. Further, the principal suggests that students mix freely and across ethnic lines during the lunch period.⁸³

Some teachers also report deliberate action to counteract self-segregation, with one BNS teacher suggesting to parents certain other students to invite for a play date.⁸⁴



PRACTICE POINT

For TCCS, being clear about both what the school *is* and the opportunities it presents has been key to attracting new students and parents who are committed to its vision of a well-rounded, diverse school. TCCS has used a number of marketing methods including email blasts, blogs, use of listservs, parent information fliers, and just general word of mouth. The school has also utilized community groups in its recruiting efforts, going to tenant association presidents and public housing organizations to see whether there may be interested parents in the community.⁸⁹

This type of community engagement is both important for the success of the school as well as in starting a discourse in the community around education and various educational options and opportunities.

At PS 10, Scott encourages parents to continually participate in school programming. Where parents have proposals, Scott is happy to hear their concerns. Recently, some parents expressed concerns over an ice cream fundraiser, which might encourage poor eating habits. The parents suggested selling granola bars, and Scott was more than happy to accommodate.⁹⁰

high for some families, an inability to provide school buses to bring home after school participants, and programs which often end too early in the afternoon to be a viable child care solution for working parents. While after school programming provides yet another space for students to learn and expose themselves to students of different backgrounds and abilities, preserving an otherwise diverse student body within the after school program can be a challenge. While individual schools are not able to offer transportation to students attending after school enrichment or extended day programs, they may be able to offer tuition relief or scholarships to help lower-income students whose parents are available to pick them up at the school to participate. PS 144 in Queens is piloting such a program for the spring semester of 2014. Working in conjunction with school administration to identify children who could benefit from tuition relief, the Parents' Association of PS 144 has not only set aside enrollment costs and spaces for children to attend for free, it has also implemented a 10% discount for families with multiple children attending the program.⁸⁵ The Wingspan after school program at the Neighborhood School in Manhattan has implemented a similar program.⁸⁶

Community Engagement

Students' exposure to the values of diversity can be reinforced when the larger community shares a cohesive vision of inclusivity with the school.⁸⁷ Educating the community about the benefits of a diverse education environment is beneficial to ensuring informed, democratic discourse. Principals and administrators can play a key role in providing these resources to the community. At the same time, stakeholders may have varying justifications for why *they* want an inclusive school. Bringing all these perspectives to bear will not only provide spaces for collaborating with and educating the community, but also focus the central issues and goals of the community.⁸⁸ Community support is also key to maintaining a diverse school; if the parents and community are committed to diverse learning spaces, they will also support housing projects and other programs and policies aimed at improving access to the school.

Carolyn J. Riehl identifies the importance of involving parents and community in creating a working definition of diversity for each school, arguing that when community members are contributors to this definition, they will be more likely to not only embody those values in their conduct but also to support new school initiatives aimed to improve integration.⁹¹

Formulating and Implementing a Mission Statement through Community Discourse

Community discourse should ultimately lead to the development of a mission statement for the school, preferably one that includes diversity and inclusion as core values. Although the mission statement should ultimately come from the community, principals and administrators can provide relevant information, build rapport with community members, and play a key role in its formulation,

as they will be responsible for implementing the mission pervasively through the school's programming.⁹²

In It Takes A Parent: Transforming Education in the Wake of the No Child Left Behind Act, Appleseed urges that parental and community involvement should not stop once the vision has been set.⁹³ Rather, continued parent and community involvement is key to the success of an inclusive school. Administrators should both encourage and initiate programs at school that bring together community members. Programs could include family resource centers; remedial and enrichment activities for children outside usual school hours; recreation, athletic and arts programs for adults and children; and adult education programs.⁹⁴ Using the school space as a hub for community and family activities can encourage further integration of the school into the community and, similarly, the mores of the school into the community.⁹⁵

When resources are scarce, pulling from parent and community groups can be essential to the success of a diverse school. Superintendent Vic Meyers of Colorado Springs says, "We seek out community groups to partner with—the Black Chamber of Commerce, the Asian Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the NAACP. We try to keep the community informed and to build as many partnerships as possible."⁹⁶ Closer to home, in Rockland County, New York, over half of the schools have a Family Resource Center where families can come together to determine their community and school needs and how those needs can be met.⁹⁷

School Diversity: Not Just About Students

Successful diverse schools have diverse and inclusive School Leadership Teams (SLT) and Parent or Parent-Teacher Associations (called PTAs in this briefing). Although they have different functions, both SLTs and PTAs have parent members elected by the parent body. When these bodies are dominated by a single group of parents with similar backgrounds, the school will be more likely to cater to the needs of represented parents, sometimes at the expense of those whose voices are not heard. Moreover, segregated parent bodies deny the opportunity for parents of different backgrounds to develop collaborative solutions to problems that will benefit all children. Because these are elected positions, it is critical that a diverse population of parents feels welcome and empowered to participate. One important resource for New York City schools is the Parent Coordinator, who builds working relationships with members of the school community and creates a welcoming school environment for all parents. The Parent Coordinator can also act as a resource for recruiting diverse parents to the SLT and PTA.

The SLT is made up of not only elected parent members but teacher representatives, a UFT representative, the principal, and the PTA president; it is responsible for developing the Comprehensive Educational Plan which sets the school's priorities and goals and to which the school's budget must be aligned.¹⁰³ PTAs, on the other hand, are intended to be the voice of all

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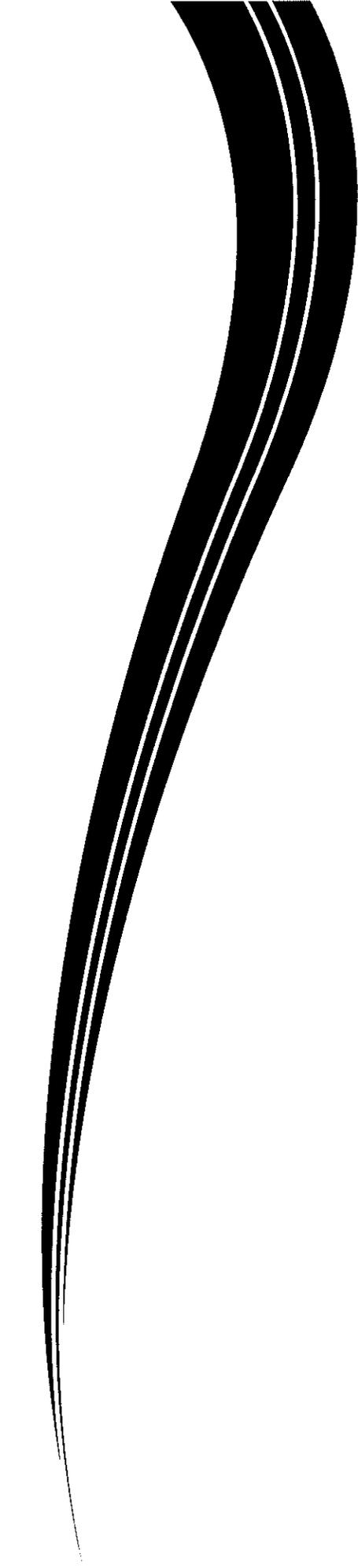
For community engagement, BNS has partnered with Added Value, a nonprofit organization promoting sustainable development in Red Hook where many of BNS's lower income students live, and Brooklyn Arts Exchange, which provides arts and theater programs for students.

BNS also retains a strong relationship with its parent population, sending out weekly newsletters covering community events and politics as well as school affairs. The parent coordinator and principal also host weekly parent breakfasts and monthly "learning partner" days in which parents are invited into the classroom to observe.⁹⁸ BNS teachers report that these approaches lead to individual parents as well as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) body wanting a school that is best for *all* children, even if some parents begin with specific and exclusive views related to the environment afforded to their children.⁹⁹

Similar to BNS, TCCS takes a proactive approach to encouraging parent involvement, also hosting parents (up to five at a time) as learning partners. During this period, parents can see the pedagogical technology in use and observe the teacher managing the classroom.¹⁰⁰

At PS 10, Scott has also added outreach programs to get more parents involved. Parents of Pre-K and Kindergarten students can accompany their children to the classroom at morning drop off and spend five minutes with their kids before leaving. The trust engendered during these years, says Scott, helps build support in the later years as well.¹⁰¹ The school also does team learning workshops where parents are allowed into the classroom to either observe or teach alongside the teacher. The PTA at PS 10 has grown from a group of three parents to one with an executive board of 22, with significantly more non-executive participants. Parents provide volunteer and monetary support for the school programs.

In addition to investing in parental involvement, the school has developed a multi-year relationship with the Metropolitan Opera Guild which comes in to perform operas at the school. Scott successfully applied for a Goldman Sachs grant, which paid for the renovation and restocking for PS 10's library.¹⁰²



parents in the school community.¹⁰⁴ In a diverse school, this includes a wide range of parent backgrounds and income levels. Although the challenges of involving low-income parents are frequently cited, more active parents need to understand that lower rates of participation by some parents do not mean that less active parents care less about the school or their children's education. Low-income parents often have a range of responsibilities that may impede their ability to make meetings.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, affluent parents dominating a parent board may inadvertently create and foster a culture where other parents are uncomfortable. Affirmative recruiting is critical, but to be successful in the long-term parent bodies must create a culture of inclusion and respect where all parents feel that their ideas are equally valued. PTAs must offer opportunities for issues of race, class, and privilege to be discussed often and openly. Although the conversations can be difficult, pretending that the underlying issues do not exist or that the school community is "color-blind" will ultimately lead to exit by one group of parents or another. In a thoughtful treatment of these issues, a Boston Public Schools parent, Susan Naimark, argues that difficult conversations – far from representing some unwelcome distraction – are, in fact, at the heart of the public school project:

"Enough process," several of the white parents responded to these efforts. "We have work to do."

But isn't *this* the work?

Our public schools are among the few places where we have the opportunity to engage people of different races, ethnicities, economic circumstances, and life experiences. These schools are rich learning environments, not just for children, but for parents, teachers, and other adults who make up the school community. By avoiding such discussions, we model for our children how not to talk about race and racism.¹⁰⁶

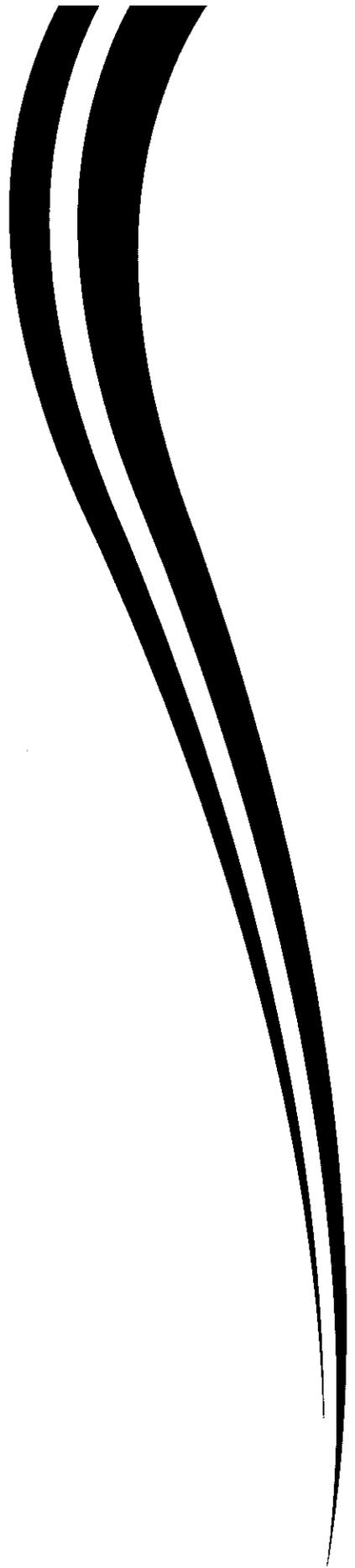
Creating a culture that welcomes alternative perspectives in an SLT or PTA can help to avoid tensions around specific issues that may seem inconsequential out of context.¹⁰⁷ While fundraising is seen as the primary role of a PTA, especially in an era of tight public school budgets, fundraising strategies must be developed sensitively and collaboratively so that they can be opportunities for the school community to come together. Parents who work full-time may feel closed out of parent groups or believe that they are seen as less willing to be involved in the school. Ensuring that meetings are scheduled when working parents can attend is important, as is distributing all PTA notices on paper as well as electronically to make sure every parent receives valuable information.¹⁰⁸ While working parents may not be as visible in the school, it is important to make sure volunteer opportunities are shared with the school at large; this helps to foster a sense of community and reinforce the message that all parent participation is valid and welcome.¹⁰⁹

Because fundraising is often the most visible activity of a PTA, fundraising efforts should benefit the broadest range of students in the school rather

than an elite subset. Parents must balance the short-term benefits of certain strategies (higher prices for bake sale items and entry fees to fund raising events for instance) against long-term problems associated with excluding families who cannot participate. Parent events with connotations of privilege and exclusivity (wine tastings) should be avoided if a PTA is to create an atmosphere of welcome for all families.

More importantly, the underlying issues that make these conversations difficult is also what makes them rewarding – even transformative. Again, Susan Naimark:

This experience was one of my first lessons in the “entitlement gap”—the vast difference in understanding about what we are entitled to in our interactions with the school system. When we white, middle-class parents understand how our sense of entitlement excludes others, we begin to find our own teachable moments about racism. We then can speak up, find allies, and take specific actions to “spread the wealth.”¹¹⁰



Appendix I: Tools for Principals

Teacher Support

In *Creating an Inclusive School*, Richard A. Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand have assembled the following collection of collaborative teaching models from a variety of sources that can be used to foster inclusivity in the classroom.

- Consultant Model – support personnel (e.g., special educator, Title I teacher, psychologist, speech and language therapist) provide assistance to the general educator, enabling him to teach all students in the inclusive class.¹¹¹
- Parallel Teaching Model – support personnel and the classroom teacher rotate among different heterogeneous groups of students in different sections of the general education classroom.¹¹²
- Supportive Teaching Model – the classroom teacher takes the lead role and support personnel rotate among the students.¹¹³
- Complementary Teaching Model – a support person does something to complement the instruction provided by the classroom teacher (e.g., models note-taking on a transparency, paraphrases the teacher's statements).¹¹⁴
- Co-teaching Model – support personnel teach alongside the general education teacher, sharing responsibility for delivering content, guiding student learning, and managing classroom behavior. At many schools throughout NYC and elsewhere, student-teachers provide support for the general education teacher. Although student-teachers are there to learn, they learn by doing and in the process support the teacher's work in developing and delivering content.¹¹⁵

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Many BNS classrooms are Integrative Co-teaching (ICT) classrooms because of the school's high proportion of special education students. As a result, many classrooms have more than one adult in the classroom at any given time, opening up a variety of different teaching models and curricular devices that would otherwise be difficult to implement.

The principal of BNS meets with teachers each year to hand-schedule students. The team aims for a similar racial and socioeconomic make-up within each class. Additionally, the team considers the students' abilities, making sure that there is a range of skills within each classroom. Over the course of the six years that some students will spend at BNS, the team tries to ensure that students have an opportunity to be in an ICT classroom at least once, and have gotten to know most of the students in their grade.¹¹⁶

At PS 10, teachers privately rate students' ability level on a scale of 1 to 4. Laura Scott and her staff work to ensure that each classroom has an equal balance of ability and a good mix of students from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.¹¹⁷

Tools for scheduling and grouping to foster inclusive classrooms

Hand-scheduling is a practice that allows teachers and administrators to group children in a way that ensures that each classroom has students representing a range of abilities and backgrounds. Block scheduling is a particular way of organizing a student's schedule in which each class period, or block, exceeds sixty minutes. Longer class periods provide more space for teachers to experiment and use different teaching methods depending on the class, subject, and needs of students.¹¹⁸

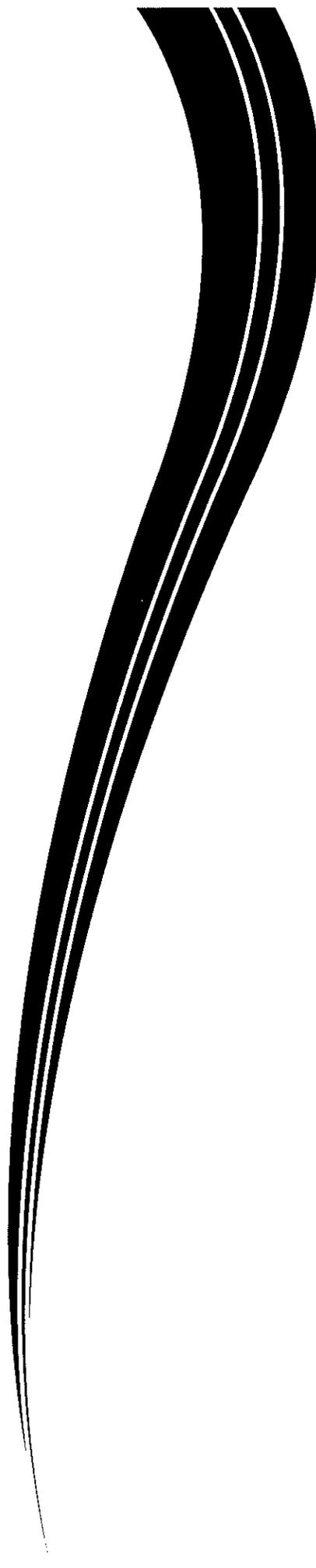
Multiage grouping and looping are two techniques in which students stay with the same teacher for a period of two or more years. Multiage grouping is the grouping of children of different ages and grades in a single classroom; this group remains together for more than one academic year.¹¹⁹ Within each group, students are "encouraged to learn at different rates and levels."¹²⁰

Teachers follow each group of students as they advance, allowing the teacher to develop practices that meet the needs of both the class and individual students. This approach has been particularly effective in elementary schools, and has been gaining some attention in middle and high schools.¹²¹

Looping is similar to multiage grouping, but rather than being grouped in classes with heterogeneous ages and grade levels, students are grouped by grade. The class stays with the same teacher typically for two but sometimes more years. At the end of the "loop" the teacher starts over with a new set of kids.¹²² As with multiage grouping, benefits include stronger relationships among students and between students and teacher, increased continuity in instruction, and enhanced learning. These arrangements also benefit parents, who are able to build stronger relationships with a single teacher, as opposed to rebuilding relationships with a new teacher each year.¹²³ Looping and multiage grouping can be used in the same school – at Walnut Hill Elementary, parents can choose between traditional kindergarten, first, and second grade classes or mixed-aged classes (K-1, 1-2, and 2-3) but all students get the benefit of staying with their kindergarten teacher for at least two years.¹²⁴

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Columbia Secondary School is one local organization where looping is used. In the fall, 96 students enter the school and are divided into three classes of 32 students each. The school assigns classroom names using references from popular culture (often drawing on *Harry Potter*). The students in those classrooms stay together for three years. The decision to have students change classes after three years was not the original plan, which was to keep students together for seven years. However, parental pressure to reorganize the classes developed as it became clear that some students were progressing more rapidly than others. Even the principal concedes that having the students in the same group for more than three years could be too restrictive.¹²⁵



Appendix II: Tools for Teachers

As noted in Part II, teachers will need to accumulate a toolbox of integrative teaching methods to be adapted to a class's individual needs. The following is a sampling of methods recommended for use in inclusive schools. They include Multicultural Curriculum Planning, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Cooperative Learning, Universal Design for Learning, and the Workshop Model.

Multicultural Curriculum Planning, as delineated by Christine I. Bennett in *Comprehensive Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice*, involves framing classroom discussion under the following six goals:¹²⁶

- Develop multiple historical perspectives by cultivating an awareness of historical and contemporary experiences among the world's diverse nations and ethnic groups.¹²⁷
- Develop cultural consciousness. Cultural consciousness is the recognition or awareness on the part of an individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared and that differs profoundly from that held by many members of different nations and ethnic groups.¹²⁸
- Increase intercultural consciousness, or the ability to interpret intentional communications, some unconscious cues, and customs in cultures different from one's own.¹²⁹
- Combat racism, prejudice and discrimination by revising negative attitudes and behaviors that are based upon misconceptions about the inferiority of races and cultures different from one's own.¹³⁰
- Develop awareness of the state of the planet and global dynamics through exploration of prevailing world conditions, trends and developments.¹³¹
- Develop social action skills – knowledge, attitudes, and behavior needed to help resolve major problems that threaten the future of the planet and well-being of humanity.¹³²

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy ("CRP") – defined by Gloria Ladson-Billings as a call for a conscious link between schooling and culture – relies on three elements for an instructional framework.¹³³

- Teachers promote students' academic achievement by using the students' culture.¹³⁴
- Teachers communicate that students do not need to compromise their cultural identities in order to succeed in the classroom, and in fact use

a student's unique cultural expression (e.g.: dress and/or language) as an educational tool.¹³⁵

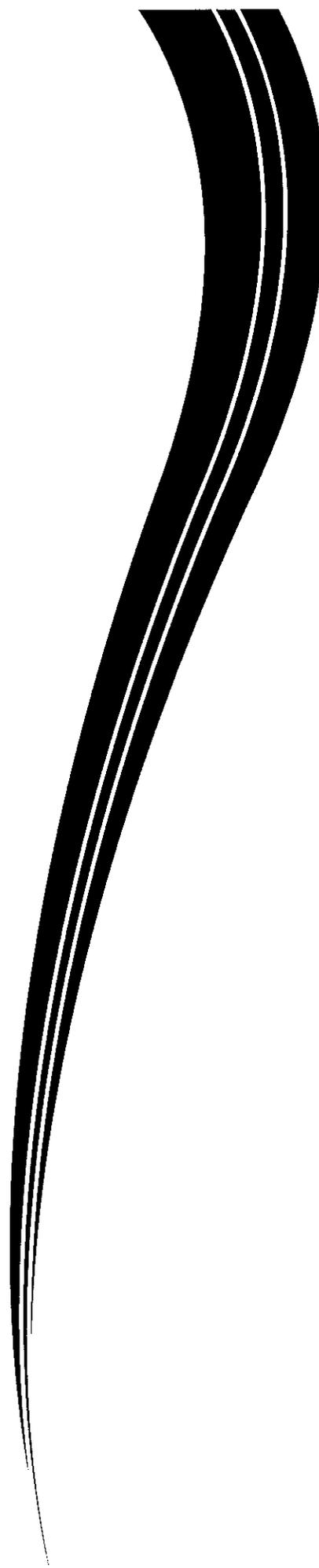
- Teachers empower students to see themselves as agents for cultural and social change and assist them in seeing their political positions in the world.¹³⁶

Though it doesn't declare itself as using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Teachers College Community School has integrated the cultural backgrounds of community leaders in its invitations to local professionals to speak to students, specifically looking for female, African American dentists to speak to students during Dental Health Month.¹³⁷

Cooperative Learning utilizes learning in small groups so students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. In "Cooperative Learning in the Culturally Diverse Classroom", David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson describe five elements as being characteristic of cooperative lessons:¹³⁸

- Positive interdependence: Students must believe that they are linked with others in such a way that the individual cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed.¹³⁹
- Face-to-face promotive interaction: Students orally explain to each other how to solve problems, discuss with each other the nature of the concepts and strategies being learned, teach their knowledge to classmates, and explain to each other the connections between present and past learning.¹⁴⁰
- Individual accountability: Educators ensure that the performance of each student is assessed and the results given back to the group and the individual.¹⁴¹
- Social skills: Groups cannot function effectively if students do not have and use the necessary leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills.¹⁴²
- Groups process: The group assesses how well students are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships among members. Two relevant questions: (1) What is something each member did that was helpful for the group? and (2) What is something that each member could do to make the group better tomorrow?¹⁴³

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), identified by David H. Rose and Anne Meyer, uses the following techniques to remove barriers to learning created by one-size-fits-all curriculum:¹⁴⁴

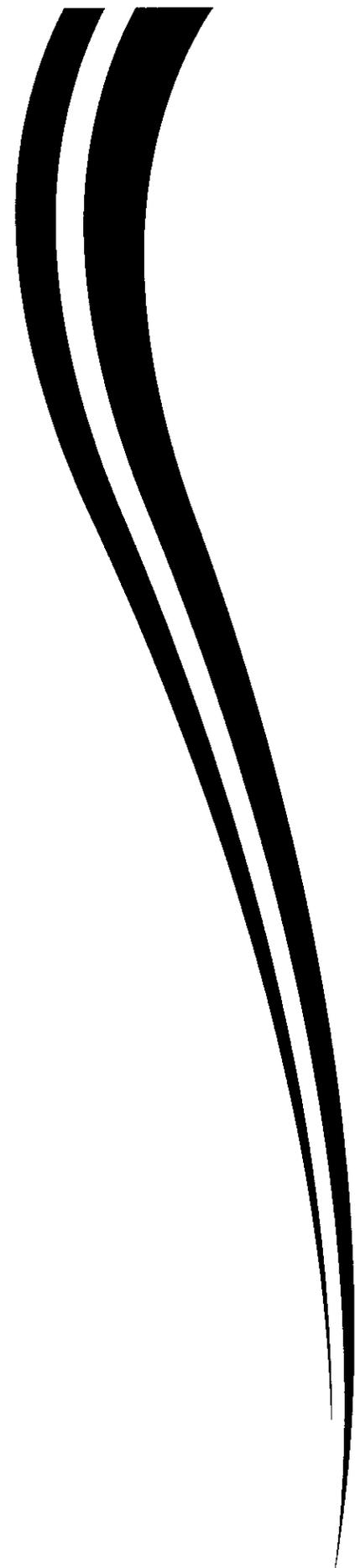
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- Account for differences in student profiles in areas such as social and academic abilities, strengths and learning outcomes as an essential first step. Universal Design for Learning draws on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which assumes that all students possess an array of human intelligences that can be cultivated and that emerge in unique configurations for each individual.¹⁴⁵
 - Account for disparities in past learning profiles, learning experiences, working, and prior knowledge as well as current interests and abilities when designing multilevel goals and objectives for members of the class.¹⁴⁶
 - The organizational design of a learning experience or the lesson format dictates how information is imparted to students and how they will interact with that content. Strike calculated balanced between large group or whole class instruction; teacher-directed small group instruction; small group learning; one-to-one teacher-student instruction; independent or individual work; partner learning, peer tutors, or cross-age tutors; and cooperative learning groups.¹⁴⁷

Please see *Creating an Inclusive School* for more information about the goals of UDL, its benefits, and how it can be implemented in a classroom.

The Workshop Model provides a framework aimed at comprehension and critical thinking skills. Although the Workshop Model is focused on reading curriculum, the lessons that it emphasizes can be mapped onto other subject areas as well. There are three key components that make up Workshop Model:

- Provide students daily opportunities to practice "on-level." This means, for example, providing students with an opportunity to read a book of their choosing and within range of their skill level or scheduling independent time for some students to work on single digit multiplication while giving other students an opportunity to work on long division.¹⁴⁸
- Scaffold instruction for all students with a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student – the goal is for students to be self-learners. Scaffolded instruction can be as easy as introducing the strategy, modeling the strategy, guiding students through the practice, and finally reviewing and reflecting independently.¹⁴⁹
- Provide opportunities for students to collaborate and talk about their learning. Throughout the day, teachers should create spaces for students to work together to talk about their learning. This can include interactive real aloud, partner time, and in older classrooms, small group instruction.¹⁵⁰

The goal of the Workshop Model is to ensure that teachers not only have the requisite resources to be successful in the classroom, but also that they bring a certain level of intentionality into a classroom of students with diverse backgrounds and ability levels.¹⁵¹ Although one cannot expect teachers to mimic the Workshop Model every day, it provides a general framework for being successful with a group of diverse learners over the course of the year.¹⁵² Students should be provided opportunities to learn from one another and, at the same time, feel supported and challenged.¹⁵³ The approach reminds teachers to meet students where they are, but to also make sure that no student falls behind.



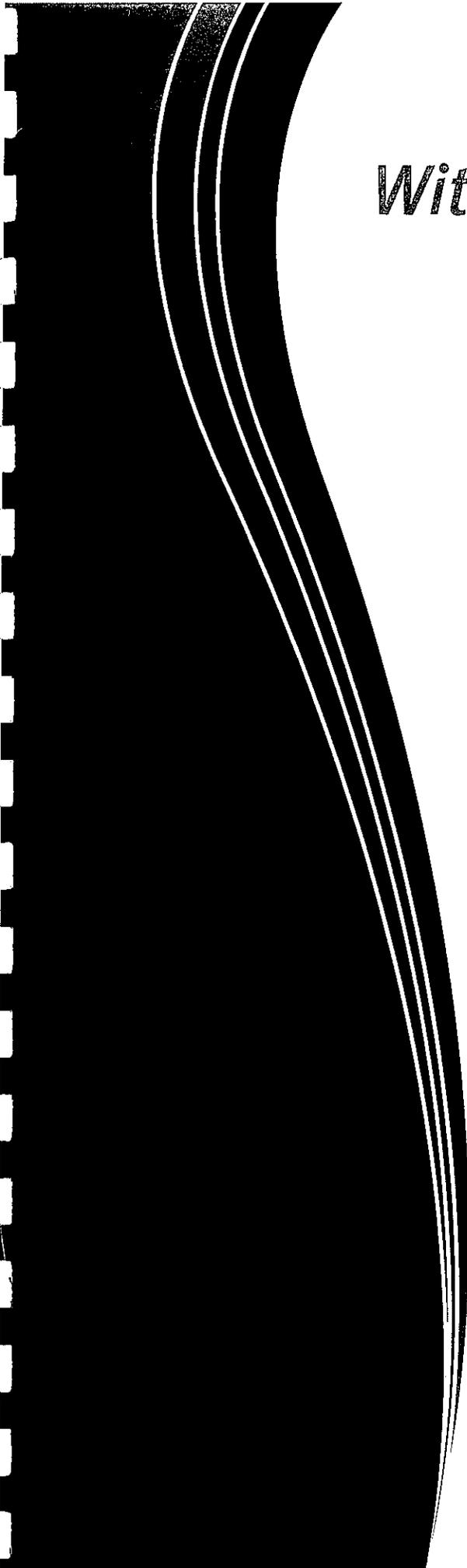
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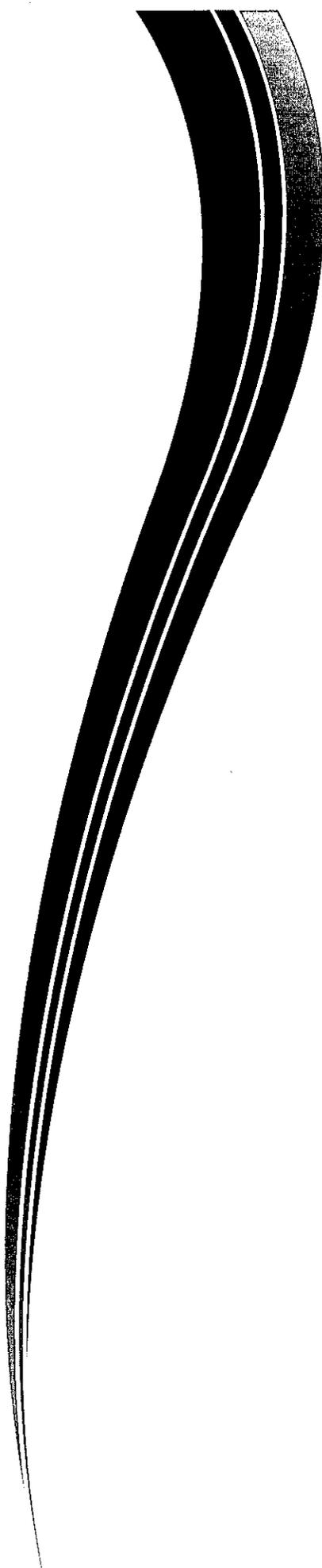


Within Our Reach

Segregation in High
Schools and What We
Can Do About It:
High School Choice

New York Appleseed[®]





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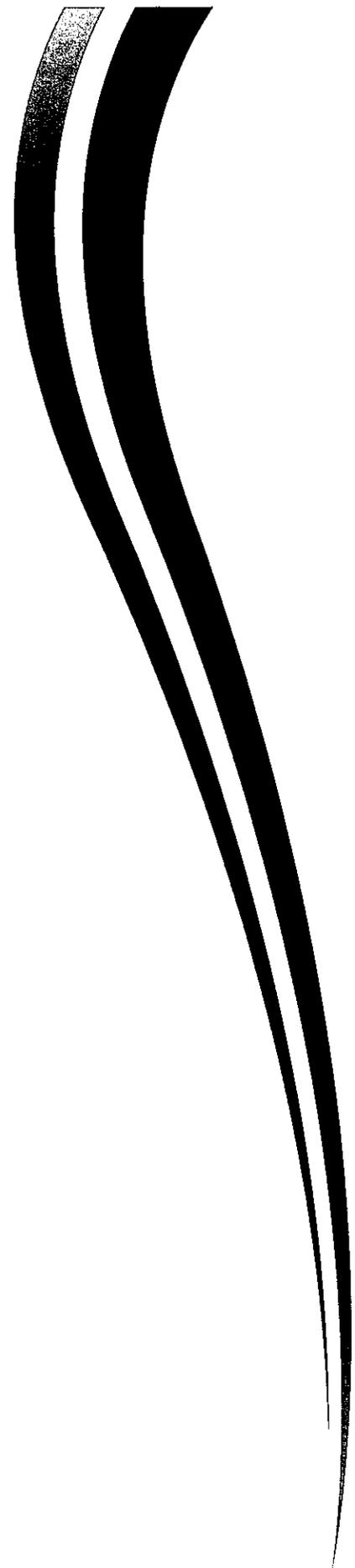
This work would have not have been possible without generous grants from the **New York Community Trust**, the **Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe Foundation**, and the **Sirus Fund**. Additionally, the members of the **New York Appleseed Advisory Council** provided critical seed money for this work at a time when the goal of pursuing school diversity across New York City may have struck them as quixotic. Thanks to their initial confidence, this goal lies increasingly within our reach.

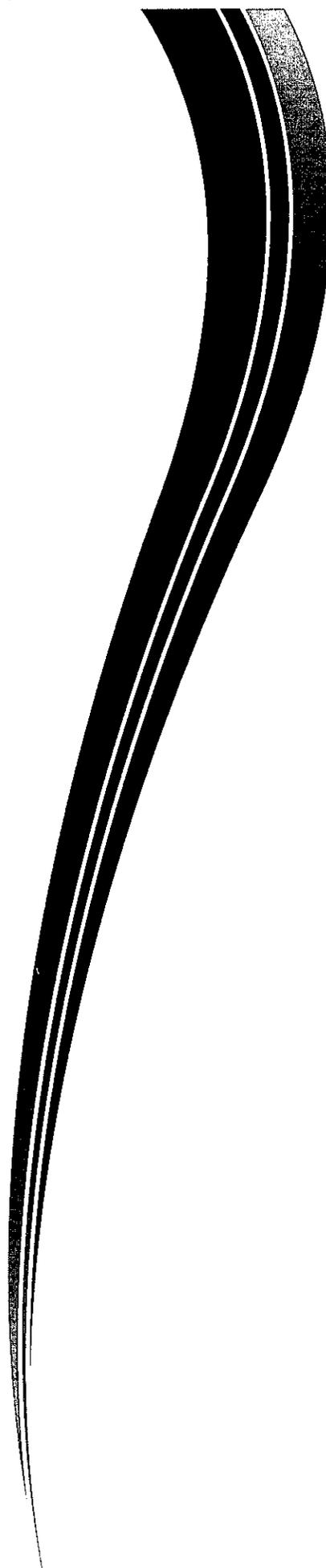
About New York Appleseed

New York Appleseed advocates for equity of access and fair allocation of resources to schools and neighborhoods in New York City and its greater metropolitan area. We collaborate with volunteer lawyers, parent groups, demographers, real estate professionals, government officials, and community advocates to uncover regional disparities, develop practical solutions, and advocate for implementation of our recommendations. New York Appleseed is a non-partisan, independent voice for reform. For more information, visit: ny.appleseednetwork.org.

About Appleseed

Appleseed, a nonprofit network of 17 public interest justice centers in the United States and Mexico, uncovers and corrects social injustices through legal, legislative, and market-based structural reform. Appleseed and Appleseed Centers bring together volunteers from the law, business, and academic professions to devise long-term solutions to problems affecting the underprivileged and underrepresented in such areas as education and financial access. For more information, visit: www.appleseednetwork.org.





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About This Series

The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free common schools, wherein all the children of this state may be educated.

New York State Constitution, Article XI, Section 1

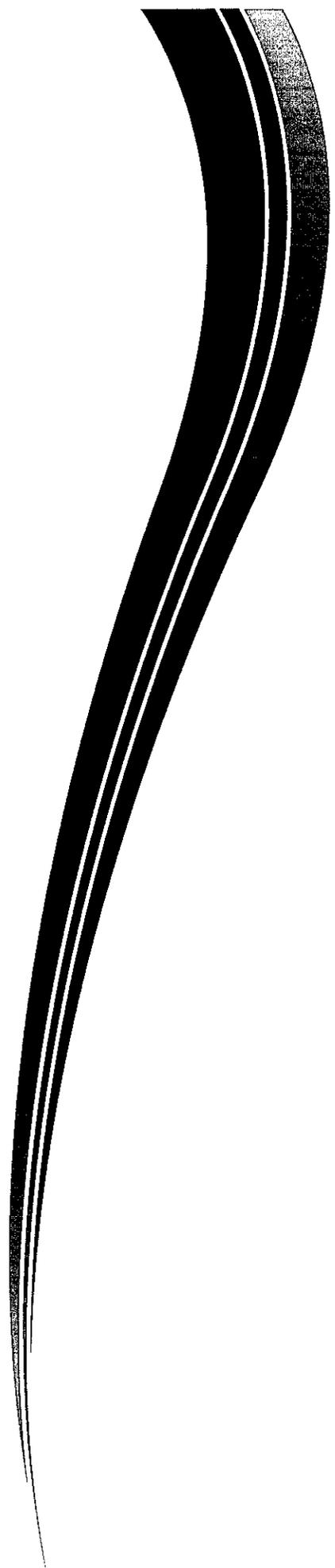
This policy briefing is the third in a series addressing the issue of racial and economic segregation in the New York City system – the third most segregated school district in the country according to the *New York Times*. This series summarizes research and advocacy findings conducted by New York Appleseed and the global law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe. From 2011 to the present, while actively engaged in advocacy with community partners, we have separately interviewed scores of experts in New York City and around the country – academics, parents, advocates, principals, teachers, government officials.

Our series of briefings advances a simple proposition: meaningful school diversity is possible and necessary in large areas of the city comprising multiple community school districts and hundreds of thousands of students. Our belief that school diversity is within our reach both logistically and politically derives from over 50 interviews conducted with experts across the city and also from successful advocacy conducted with parent groups.

It has not always been the case that school diversity was possible in New York City. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, integration efforts stalled in New York City due to large-scale white flight from the city. At the same time, many reasonably asked why integration was even necessary or desirable when merely equalizing resources among schools might accomplish the same goals.

Three things happened in the four decades that followed: First, in all the jurisdictions that have attempted it, achieving resource equity among schools in the absence of integration has proven difficult, if not impossible. We have learned yet again that separate is not equal. Second, social-science researchers have developed a far more sophisticated understanding of the benefits of diverse schools – benefits not easily replicated even under the most equitable conditions. Finally and more recently, in a historic demographic shift, middle class and white populations are returning to New York City in a process that one scholar has dubbed a “reversal of white flight.” In light of these realities, New York Appleseed believes we must return to the fundamental American project of the common school, where children of different backgrounds and income levels may attend school together.

Seizing today’s opportunity for promoting school diversity in New York City, however, requires an understanding of the complex and often surprising ways in which *segregation* currently plays out in the school system. Yes, housing segregation plays a key and – in some sectors of the city – dispositive role in perpetuating school segregation. The New York City metro region is the



second most segregated in the nation, and appropriate policies to affirmatively further fair housing and promote residential inclusion are more important than ever. Residential patterns do not explain much of the school segregation that we see in more diverse and rapidly gentrifying community school districts, however. In some cases, school segregation may be doing more to increase neighborhood segregation than the other way around.

This series is intended to uncover and demystify those formal structures beyond housing patterns that perpetuate racial and economic segregation in schools. We also wish to provide practical and achievable strategies to overcome those structures. Our hope is that this series will give parents and policy makers the analytic tools they need to understand the incidence of school segregation in their communities and workable strategies to address the underlying causes.

Please visit our website ny.appleseednetwork.org for more information about New York Appleseed's work to promote school diversity and the scholarship demonstrating the educational benefits of diversity for all children.

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Introduction

"For any school choice program, whether from elementary charters to the city's universal high school program, the basic requirements to reduce segregation and inequitable opportunity are that first of all, it has a diversity goal; secondly, that there is a commitment and leadership behind that goal; thirdly, that it recruits actively to create a diverse student body; fourthly, that it provides transportation so that the students can get there; and finally, that it has no screening mechanism. These are crucial elements, and they are sadly lacking in New York City's choice programs...."

The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles in *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction and a Damaged Future*¹

Every year nearly 80,000 students participate in New York City's high-school choice process. They choose from almost 700 programs located within over 400 schools.²

While school choice was a focus of education reform under Mayor Michael Bloomberg at all levels of the NYC school system, nowhere was it more evident than in the administration's policies with respect to high-school admissions. In 2004, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) put in place a "universal high-school choice policy."³ From the beginning and up until the very end of the Bloomberg administration, officials touted the opportunity offered by the policy for low-income students to escape low-performing neighborhood schools.⁴ Other stated goals included requiring all students to engage in the process of choosing their school and facilitating the matching of student interests with schools offering programs in those areas.⁵

The Bloomberg DOE spoke less about its goals for the system as a whole and the intended benefits to administrators. Centralizing high-school admissions, according to one proponent, leads to "reliable and robust data on community demand for schools" and "enhanced transparency into access to ensure accountability for results."⁶ New York City's high-school choice program consistently scores highest among large school systems on an index called the Education Choice and Competition Index (ECCI) used by the Brown Center on Education Policy. As suggested by its name, the index is principally concerned with the degree to which choice systems expose schools to competitive pressures that will in theory cause them to improve. The ECCI website indicates that "the prospect of closure or restructuring of an unpopular school is ... an anchor of choice-based competition."⁷

There is, however, an inherent tension between serving the here-and-now needs (and rights) of students and using students as data points for future improvement of schools, that is, for providing administrators with an "unprecedented level of comfort in closing low performing schools."⁸

For the purposes of this briefing, it is important to note that using competition as a foundation for school improvement necessarily requires proponents to place disproportionate emphasis on rewarding and punishing schools based on ex-ante parent preferences. Policies that serve other goals – worthy or not – must be removed to so as to preserve this direct relationship. As stated by the Brown Center, “A fundamental rationale for school choice is its effects in creating a vibrant marketplace for better schools. There is evidence that it presently does so, but its effects are muted by administrative and legislative requirements that reduce choice and buffer schools from the effects of competition.”⁹ Through this kind of lens, policies that manage choice processes to ensure that students are able to attend diverse schools are regarded as intrusions on the marketplace.

As revealed by the technical details of the city’s high-school choice policy outlined in this briefing, the pursuit of diversity in NYC high schools was not a policy goal of the universal choice system. The preexistence and continuance of a highly stratified and selective system of high schools rendered notions of “choice” and “escape” impossible from the start. Coupled with the design and mechanics of New York City’s high-school choice process itself, the policy inevitably perpetuated the already high levels of segregation for all racial groups in New York City high schools.¹⁰ At the conclusion of this briefing we offer concrete steps that the new administration can take to promote a system of high school choice that promotes diversity and equity.

New York City's Specialized Schools:

This briefing is not about specialized high schools, which are public high schools with a separate admissions procedure. For excellent treatment of the issue of declining minority admission to specialized schools, see the Title VI complaint filed by NAACP LDF and the February 25, 2012 New York Times article, "To Be Black at Stuyvesant High." We believe the problems of specialized schools – as they have historically existed – are better described as access issues than as segregation problems. As with G&T programs in elementary schools, specialized high schools are unlikely to represent the diversity of the city's students even with significant and much needed changes to the admissions procedures. Nor is it clear that all of the specialized schools are able to offer the kind of school and classroom environment in which diversity can flourish.

In any event, because fixing the admissions problems at these schools would require state legislation, because these schools serve a very small percentage of the city's total high-school students, and because the means by which they exclude have been thoroughly documented, we will not discuss these issues in this briefing. This briefing is about New York City's system of high-school choice, which does not include specialized schools.

Admissions Methods Used by New York City High Schools:

Each high-school program in NYC uses one of the following eight admissions methods to evaluate applicants. From the most recent high-school directory:

1. Audition

Students who apply to Audition programs are ranked and selected based on their performance in an audition assessing proficiency in a specific performing arts and/or visual arts area. Audition requirements, dates, and times are included on the school pages. Some Audition programs may consider students' academic performance and attendance from the previous school year.

2. Educational Option (Ed. Opt.)

Educational Option programs are meant to serve a wide range of academic performers. Based on English Language Arts (ELA)

The Mechanics of High School Choice in New York City

Although often presented as something novel, choice based systems of student assignment have existed for over half a century. As we discussed in our briefing on elementary schools, "freedom of choice" plans were first developed by Southern school districts intent on resisting court-ordered desegregation. Beginning in the 1970s, however, "controlled choice" plans incorporated equity and diversity in the program design. Over the last four decades, school districts and practitioners developed extensive expertise in using controlled choice plans to promote school integration. For reasons that are not well understood, however, the DOE chose to hire a program designer whose principal experience was with placing medical students to medical residencies and did not acknowledge the prior history or collective experience of designing K-12 choice plans in the United States.

The high-school admissions process in NYC is a "match" process.¹¹ Eighth grade students and first-time ninth graders who wish to attend a traditional public high school (i.e., not a charter school or private school) must fill out an application ranking up to 12 choices of programs. (Some schools host multiple programs with different curricular foci or specializations.)¹²

There are more than 700 programs – or choices – available throughout the City and roughly 80,000 students participate in the process each year.¹³ According to DOE, the "high school admissions process is centered on two principles: equity and choice."¹⁴ Placements are ultimately made by the same computer program used by hospitals to select medical students.¹⁵

The high-school choice process is immensely complex. Applicants must choose among schools of different size, theme or specialization, and admission criteria.¹⁶ (See the sidebar on admissions criteria.) Some schools require an admissions test, portfolio, or audition.¹⁷ Small schools – those with enrollments under 600 students – increased significantly during the Bloomberg administration.¹⁸ Small Learning Communities operate within larger schools, but are designed so that students have close relationships with a core group of teachers and students.¹⁹ Career and Technical Education Schools offer workforce skills training in specific vocational areas. Transfer schools are available for students who have dropped out or fallen behind.²⁰ Notwithstanding this array of options, most City high-school students continue to attend large, comprehensive high schools that each serve more than 1400 students.²¹

According to DOE, every eligible student is assured entrance into a public high school. The problem is the huge range in school quality among the city's high schools and the difficulties of navigating the application process.²³ As one researcher has explained:

"[New York City] schools and programs vary widely in terms of size, quality, and academic outcomes. Although the district has shown

gains on a number of educational indicators in recent years (including graduation rates and percentage of students reaching proficiency on the [National Assessment of Educational Progress]), there continues to be an undersupply of high performing high schools. According to an analysis conducted by researchers at the Center for New York City Affairs, only 38.8 percent of high schools with graduating classes in 2007 had a graduation rate of 75 percent or higher (Hemphill & Nauer). This figure includes students graduating with a Regents diploma as well as those who received the less rigorous local diploma. Starting with the entering 9th grade in the fall of 2008, all students are now required to pass five Regents exams with a score of 65 or better in order to graduate; local diplomas will no longer be awarded. If the Regents diploma is used as the threshold for graduation, Hemphill and Nauer's (2009) analysis shows that only 12.6 percent of high schools had a graduation rate of 75 percent or above in 2007.

"Graduation rates constitute only one measure of school quality; however, given the significance of obtaining a high-school diploma for lifetime earnings (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008), they are a particularly important metric to consider. Schools in New York City also vary dramatically in terms of size, concentration of low income students, safety record, teacher stability, and student satisfaction, among other characteristics. The unevenness in school quality is evidenced by the publicly available Progress Reports, Annual School Report Cards, Quality Reviews, and Learning Environment Surveys published by the NYCDOE."²⁴

Ten percent of eighth graders in the 2013-2014 process were not matched to any of their choices and will have to reapply in a supplemental process to schools that were not filled during the first round.²⁵ Even for those students who were matched to one of their choices, as discussed below there are serious questions about the extent to which that choice is equally meaningful for all students and families.

standardized test scores from the prior school year, students will be matched to Ed. Opt. programs based on the following distribution: 16% from the high reading level; 68% from the middle reading level; and 16% from the low reading level. Half of the students matched to Ed. Opt. programs will be selected based on their rankings from the school; the other half will be selected randomly. If you score in the top 2% of all students in the City on your previous year's ELA reading exam, and you list an Ed. Opt. program as your first choice on your application, you are guaranteed a match to that program.

- 3. Limited Unscreened**
Limited Unscreened programs give priority to students who demonstrate interest in the school by attending a school's information session(s), open house event(s), or by visiting the school's table at any one of the High School Fairs. You must sign in at these events to receive priority to the school's Limited Unscreened program(s).
- 4. Screened**
Students who apply to Screened programs are ranked and selected based on the following criteria: final report card grades from the prior school year, reading and math standardized test scores, and attendance and punctuality. There may be additional items that schools require to screen applicants such as an interview or essay. Review the Selection Criteria to determine what other criteria Screened schools use to rank applicants.
- 5. Screened: Language**
Screened: Language programs provide services for students with a minimum level of English language proficiency. Admission to these programs is based on a student's proficiency in English and in some cases on home language.
- 6. Unscreened**
Students who apply to Unscreened programs are randomly selected.
- 7. Zoned**
Zoned programs admit students who live in a geographically designated area.²²

Hunter High School:

Hunter is administered by Hunter College / the City University of New York, not by DOE, but is nevertheless a tuition-free, publicly funded high school. In 1995, its seventh grade class was 12% black and 6% Hispanic. In 2009-10, it was 3% black and 1% Hispanic, with 8% identifying as multiracial. 47% of the 2009-10 class was Asian and 41% white.²⁹

Those numbers have prompted considerable controversy at Hunter over the exam-only admissions policy, which many identify as an obstacle to a more diverse enrollment. "Faculty committees have recommended broadening the admissions process to include criteria like interviews, observations or portfolios of student work, in part to increase minority enrollment and blunt the impact of the professional test preparation undertaken by many prospective students."³⁰

In 2010, a student graduation speaker stunned his audience when he admitted to feeling guilty because his admission to Hunter was the product of an upper-middle class upbringing, good schools, and tutoring, all of which he characterized as "circumstance and luck."³¹ "If you truly believe that the demographics of Hunter represent the distribution of intelligence in this city," he said, "then you must believe that the Upper West Side, Bayside and Flushing are intrinsically more intelligent than the South Bronx, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Washington Heights. And I refuse to accept that."³² The following day Hunter's principal resigned citing a number of factors, one of which was the administration's anger that the principal did not stifle faculty calls for changes to Hunter's admissions policy.³³

The Dean of Diversity at Hunter College has stood by the test, arguing that it is integral to the high school's success. Admission to Hunter remains by exam only.³⁴

Screened Schools and Exam-Based Admissions Policies

The principal limitation on "choice" of high schools in New York City is the fact that about thirty percent of high schools are screened.²⁶ In general, if a student does not meet the school's selection criteria, she cannot obtain access to that school. The most elite schools – those that require a score of proficient or higher (a 3 or 4) on both the state math and reading exams and those that require a spectacular score on the specialized test – show a huge discrepancy in who is enrolled based on income. One reporter found that while 74 percent of all public high school students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, only 41 percent are eligible at the city's most selective schools.²⁷

In many instances, the school's only or principal criterion for entry is a test score. Experts and educators have long argued that testing as a sole measure of educational achievement is likely to lead to segregation, particularly given the characteristics of NYC's public school system.²⁸ That seems to have been the experience at Hunter College High School – an elite school on Manhattan's Upper East Side that serves grades 7-12 – which also bases student admission entirely on a test and also enrolls very few black and Hispanic students. (See the sidebar.)

Laissez Faire Choice and Segregation

For the same reasons we described in our briefing on segregation in elementary schools, choice systems not intentionally designed for equity and diversity are likely to produce the opposite. Not surprisingly, NYC's extremely complex high-school choice process tends to work better for families whose children qualify for a screened school or program and who have more time, information, and resources. These families are more likely to complete the process correctly, to make strategic choices about which schools to choose and how to prioritize them, and to gain admission into one of the schools that they chose.

DOE views the choice process as a controlled market in which it plays the role of quasi-market facilitator.³⁹ The Office of Student Enrollment (OSE) produces and distributes some information about the choice process, but leaves much responsibility to families to take an active role. Descriptions of the choice process on the DOE website logically envision middle school guidance counselors as the contacts for middle school students participating in the process, but in practice, most middle schools have insufficient guidance counselors, and those counselors who are present do not prioritize choice-process counseling.⁴¹ Some schools do not offer choice-process counseling at all. According to one researcher:

[OSE] does not require that middle school personnel attend trainings about high school choice, but they organize optional workshops and offer support for guidance counselors upon request. District administrators reported that they expect middle school guidance counselors to review

all of the high school applications before they are submitted. Yet there is negligible monitoring of school-based efforts around high school choice.⁴²

One explanation for middle schools' general failure to counsel their students through the high-school choice process is that neither the provision of such counseling, nor the extent of school choice success, is a part of the schools' accountability framework.⁴³ It is therefore not part of guidance counselor evaluation metrics, either.⁴⁴ That leaves little incentive for counselors to take up what is an objectively difficult and time-consuming task.

Unfortunately, the lack of adequate counseling at the middle school level combined with the DOE's quasi-hands off approach to providing students and families with the information they need results in an uneven playing field. Families with the wherewithal and resources to devote substantial time and effort to mastering the process, or who belong to social networks that pass along such information, have a clear advantage. In contrast, parents who do not speak English, or who lack internet access, are at an enormous disadvantage. Translation services at information sessions (at those schools that actually conduct them) are often poor, and a host of information that is available through DOE's website is not distributed in print to students or their parents.⁴⁵ Moreover, cultural differences may be at play for families from outside the NYC system, whether they are new immigrants from another country or simply coming from outside of New York. For these newcomers, it is not necessarily intuitive that successful navigation of the City's school system will require zealous and sustained parental advocacy.⁴⁶

In the absence of information and services, many students who qualify for a screened program base their choice of schools solely on factors such as safety and proximity to home.⁴⁷ While those may be important criteria, for children who come from segregated neighborhoods, basing school selection on those factors alone makes it more likely that they will end up in racially isolated schools.⁴⁸ For students who do not qualify for a screened school or program, it may not even matter how much time or resources they have: it is extremely difficult to make meaningful distinctions among the hundreds of unscreened schools based on the information provided online. Students in this situation would need to visit each of the schools to obtain enough information to make an informed decision. Under these circumstances, it comes as little surprise that students tended to attend school close to home, rather than "escape" their neighbourhood school as envisioned by DOE officials.

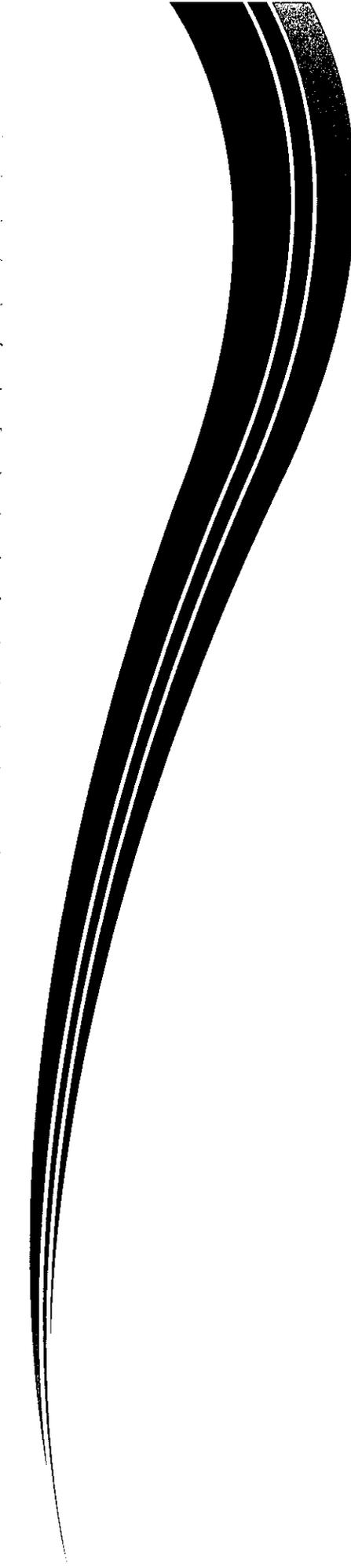
In apparent recognition of these problems, in 2013 DOE announced a small pilot project called Middle School Success Centers to support students and families in the high-school application process.⁴⁹ Two of these centers began running workshops this year to assist applicants in navigating the process.⁵⁰ Although small in scale, this admirable step represents a tacit acknowledgment by the outgoing administration that the "market" will fail without the provision of adequate information to its participants.

High Schools That Accord Intra-District Preferences

Although forms of screening represent the most common limitation on the ability of low-income and minority students to "escape" their neighborhood high schools, school preferences also play a role. In addition to schools that offer preferences for continuing eighth graders and "feeder schools," some of the city's most desirable high schools use geographic preferences, including Millennium High School (Districts 1 and 2), Baruch College Campus High School (District 2), Eleanor Roosevelt High School (District 2), NYC Lab for Comparative Studies (District 2), NYC Museum School (District 2), School of the Future (District 2), Benjamin Banneker Academy (Districts 13, 14, 15, and 16), Benjamin Cardozo High School (D26), Frances Lewis High School (District 26), and Bayside High School (District 26). In District 2's case, the preference traces back to a former superintendent who received permission from DOE to set up an experimental intra-district K-12 system.³⁵

DOE officials have not always been consistent on the reasons for the persistence of the geographic preferences. In one recent article DOE suggested that its hands were tied by the decisions made by previous administrations.³⁶ Yet in another article, a DOE official indicated that the DOE decided to keep these preferences "because the communities have invested in these schools."³⁷

Although obviously inequitable to the high-performing low-income and minority students living in other community school districts, it is not clear that removing the preferences would cause the schools to become more diverse. As one District 2 parent pointed out, the schools would likely become more elite by screening applicants from across the city.³⁸ In any event, these school preferences demonstrate in stark terms the difference between the prior administration's rhetoric around school choice and the reality.



“Over the Counter” Students

Lower income and immigrant parents are often disadvantaged if they participate in the choice process for all the reasons described above. Some students, however, for various reasons do not participate in the choice process. These students are labeled “over-the-counter” or OTC, since they are placed in schools through processes independent of the formal high-school choice process. This population is about 15,000 children each year and comprises a disproportionately high number of students at risk of academic failure.⁵¹

Choice systems, whether designed for diversity and equity or not, must anticipate and plan for OTC students. OTC students represented a conundrum for the DOE inasmuch as acknowledgement of their special issues requires acknowledgement that unbridled choice doesn’t serve all students equally well – or at all. In 2011 State Education Commissioner John King called attention to the fact that the high-school choice process was concentrating these students disproportionately in a small percentage of schools with already had high proportions of at-risk students. DOE struggled internally with how to characterize their response to this extreme example of “market failure” and – how to balance the here-and-now needs of students with the ideologies of choice-based competition.⁵²

A 2011 DOE memorandum in response to the Commissioner’s concerns outlined an aggressive plan for intervention in the choice process to prevent the continued concentration of at-risk and OTC students (emphasis added):

In schools that serve a percentage of students in a subgroup that is greater than one standard deviation from the district or borough-wide average (as applicable) for that subgroup, **NYCDOE will aggressively pursue reducing the OTC enrollment** at those schools... The Department will do this **through limiting OTC placements** at the 24 schools, advising all OTC students of their school choices, including schools not proposed to implement the Turnaround model....

For the schools noted above which exceed one standard deviation in a subgroup, we will ... **take action to better balance** new admissions. The NYCDOE **will monitor** the school’s OTC admits to avoid exacerbating this concentration even further.⁵³

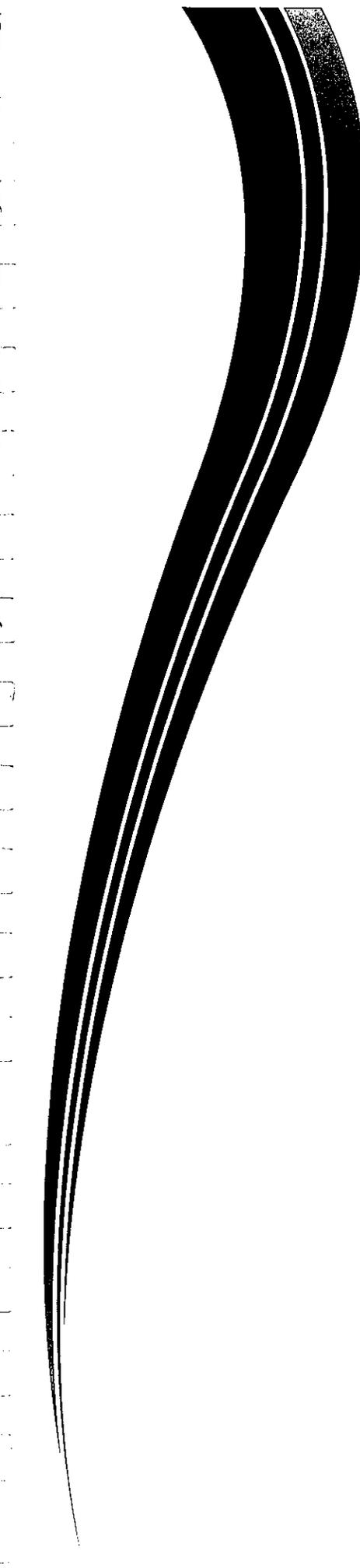
Yet there appeared to be sharp divisions within the DOE around this issue, and one official continued to insist that “the recent changes were aimed at offering more choices to over-the-counter students and their families, not distributing high-need students more equitably” even as other officials in the DOE appeared to shift.⁵⁴ As with the Middle School Success Centers mentioned above, the key point is that the DOE conceded – however grudgingly – the necessity of “regulating” the high-school choice “market” to prevent inequity.

Educational Option Schools

Educational Option schools stand in sharp contrast to the screened schools that increased under the Bloomberg administration. These programs are aimed specifically at attracting a representative academic cross-section of students from NYC. These programs do not focus specifically on racial diversity, but instead on academic performance.⁵⁵ Educational Option schools are required by formula to select 16% students performing above grade level, 68% students performing at grade level, and 16% students performing below grade level based on the 7th grade English Language Arts reading standardized exam. Further, the highest performing students—those scoring in the top 2% on the 7th grade standardized reading exam—are guaranteed admission to any Educational Option program that they list first on their application. Additionally, in order to work against any bias on the part of school administrators, school officials select half of the students from the applicant pool and the other half are randomly selected by computer.

Educational Option programs began in NYC in the 1970s as a response to the push for school desegregation.⁵⁶ The original goal of the Educational Option program was to establish themed schools—such as “communications”—that would be available to students from across the City and increase racial diversity through achievement diversity. In their original form, Educational Option schools were required to accept 50% of students reading at grade level, 25% reading above grade level, and 25% reading below grade level.⁵⁷ Within these parameters, school administrators were free to select students from among the applicant pool using whatever criteria they saw fit.

In 1985, Advocates for Children issued a detailed report criticizing the lack of transparency in the NYC high-school admissions process. The report pointed out that at the time there was “no consistent, clearly articulated citywide criteria for determining which of the three basic selection models (screened, unscreened, or educational option) [was] appropriate for a given high school.”⁵⁸ The report also noted that schools were not required to make any effort to publicize the criteria used for selection, and as a result could set standards that excluded entire feeder schools and populations.⁵⁹ Even within programs like Educational Option, schools were able to game the system by choosing students scoring at the top of each of the proficiency categories.⁶⁰ The report also identified problems with the rates of application among above grade level students and below grade level students: above grade level students were applying in much larger numbers than their below grade level counterparts for the same number of seats in Educational Option programs.⁶¹ The majority of students applying for the 25% of seats reserved for students performing above grade level were white due to the fact that predominately white schools traditionally have higher average standardized test schools. This oversubscription by white students performing above grade level resulted in above grade level black and Latino students facing a more competitive applicant pool with lower chances of admission.⁶²



On top of the structural problems faced by Educational Option programs, the report also pointed to widespread political and family influences that forced Educational Option schools to admit students outside of the official admissions process. This resulted in even fewer students of color gaining admissions to selective Educational Option programs. In order to eliminate this type of improper manipulation of the admissions process, the report called for a blind admissions system, in which the students from each category were selected at random by computer.

In response to the Advocates for Children report and widespread calls for uniformity, the DOE developed a uniform admissions process in 1986. The system created the current 16-68-16 bell curve based on students' 7th grade standardized test scores. The change was supposed to give average and low income students an equal chance at admission to Educational Option programs. The reform also instituted the blind admissions process called for by Advocates for Children. Post reform, half of the student body is now selected by school administration and the other half is randomly selected by a computer sorting program. Schools must hire and develop teachers who can teach successfully to a range of abilities and who understand and can incorporate into their pedagogical methods the reality that many of their students come from poverty-concentrated, racially isolated backgrounds.

Educational Option schools have remained popular to this day, and as of 2011 were in fact the second most popular type of school among participants in the choice process.⁶³ In apparent contradiction of the notion of "choice" and "markets," however, the numbers of educational option schools decreased over the course of the Bloomberg administration even as the number of screened schools increased.⁶⁴ (Lower-income students were also more likely to obtain their first choice when it was an educational option school, and less likely when their first choice was a screened school.)⁶⁵ Some Educational Option schools have actually become screened schools.⁶⁶

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this briefing we have noted the inherent tensions under the prior administration between relying on *ex ante* preferences expressed in the high-school application process to provide competitive pressures on schools and the imperative of serving the immediate needs of high-school students – particularly the need to receive high-school education in a diverse setting. So long as “administrative and legislative” requirements that might elevate equity and civil rights values are regarded as reducing choice and buffering schools from competition, we will not see the diversity of our city represented in individual high schools.

We have also noted that these competitive pressures have not always resulted in offerings that reflect the applicants’ preferences: educational option schools, which integrate students by achievement level, have declined in number even as their popularity remains high in the choice process. In the case of “over the counter” students, even the Bloomberg DOE was forced to conclude that the market had failed and needed regulation. But the market is failing by over-concentrating other student populations, and these failures need also to be addressed.

We are greatly encouraged by Chancellor Fariña’s attention to many of the issues addressed in this briefing and want to work with the new administration to promote a system of high school that serves the goals of diversity and equity. In that spirit, we offer the following recommendations:

The Long Term Solution for the DOE

Given these realities, we first conclude that the ultimate goal of the Department of Education must be to engage in a complete and total overhaul of its high-school choice process. Emerging evidence from scholarly research and from New York Appleseed’s own work suggests that parents across New York City of all backgrounds want diverse schools and crave leadership from the DOE. Half a century of experimentation with choice in other jurisdictions demonstrates that the benefits of the current system can be maintained – even enhanced – while incorporating intentional policies to promote diversity and equity. Successful models of “controlled choice” (as described in our first briefing) provide a starting point for the DOE to begin working with principals, parents, and students to envision a better system and better city.

This year 45 percent of the 77,043 applicants participating in high-school choice received their first choice, 84 percent made it into one of their top five choices, and 10 percent received no match.⁶⁷ Most controlled choice policies yield statistics at least as good and arguably better (with respect to the students who received no match) while preserving diversity and equity.

Yet consistent with the philosophy of controlled choice, DOE cannot implement a new program top down as it did ten years ago. The Department will need



to conduct a public planning process to solicit ideas from the local experts who encounter problems with the current system every day. The imperative of working with and listening to local community members, however, does not absolve the DOE of the responsibility of denying community demands when they conflict with the goals of equity for all students. DOE needs to balance community requests for schools offering preferences to residents of certain districts with the rights of all students to have access to educational opportunity.

As with all controlled choice plans, the DOE must provide “resource centers” to ensure that all parents and students have access to the information they need to make informed choices and to navigate the application process. Resource centers must offer one-on-one counseling, must be accessible to all communities, and must provide translation services and informational materials translated into common spoken languages. The DOE should look to the groundbreaking work done by the Legal Economic and Educational Advancement Project (LEEAP) at Fordham Law School’s Feerick Center for Social Justice as a model for counseling services. In 2012 LEEAP developed a promising pilot to assist low-income students navigate the high-school choice process.

Short Term Actions for the DOE

Second, we conclude that even before such an overhaul, DOE must begin significantly increasing the number of educational option schools and significantly reducing the number of screened schools. Under the previous mayoral administration, the number of screened high schools increased while the number of educational option high schools decreased – the popularity of these schools notwithstanding. We will not make progress towards diversity in high schools unless both of these trends are reversed.⁶⁸

Integration by achievement level is increasingly common and necessary in integration programs across the country. So long as screened schools represent a third of all high schools and disproportionately exclude low-income and minority students, our high schools will be segregated by race and income, and the notion of choice is illusory. Low-income and minority students will have less access to the schools regarded as gateways to college.⁶⁹ To some extent, the situation may be remedied through more holistic screening, rather than exam-only admission. As with Gifted & Talented programs in elementary school, however, middle-class students will always enjoy advantages in obtaining admission to screened schools no matter what the screening process.

Within the Next Year

Finally, as already called for in our briefing on elementary schools, the Department should immediately adopt and promote an official statement recognizing the importance of diverse learning environments

and announcing a policy that all elementary schools must foster an environment in which people of all races, cultures and economic backgrounds are genuinely welcome. The DOE under the previous administration appeared conflicted on the issue; clear leadership starting with an official, widely circulated, and oft-repeated statement from the new administration is essential.

Pursuant to this official statement, the Department should gradually adopt implementing policies, including:

- Accountability standards for individual schools on progress towards diversity goals. Schools should be encouraged to implement programs that appeal to a wide range of parents in quality and subject matter and to use educational option admissions policies whenever possible. The DOE should initiate a public-relations campaign to educate the public about the benefits of educational option schools.
- The Department needs to work with Community School Districts to create parent-resource and -information centers to ensure that all parents have access to the information they need to make informed choices for their children's elementary, middle, and high schools and to navigate the application process. Parent centers need to be accessible to all communities and to provide translation services and informational materials translated into common spoken languages in each district.
- At the same time DOE should make student choice counseling part of the accountability framework of middle-school evaluation and middle-school guidance-counselor-evaluation metrics.

Individual Schools

A school will only thrive and maintain its diversity when conditions within a school are right. Schools need to provide a genuinely open, caring and inclusive environment where a variety of norms can be accommodated and all parents and children feel welcome. Schools need to avoid internal segregation or tracking whenever possible. Strong and committed leadership from the principal and school leadership team is essential, but all teachers, parents and students must also play key roles. Our second briefing on elementary schools describes strategies and resources that are relevant to high schools as well.

- ¹ John Kucsera with Gary Orfield, *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction and a Damaged Future* (March 2014).
- ² Lori Nathanson et al., *High School Choice in New York City: A Report on the School Choices and Placements of Low-Achieving Students*, (2013) 1, available at <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/gqg5/HSChoiceReport-April2013.pdf>.
- ³ Sean P. Corcoran et al., *The Impact of High School Choice on Mediators of Student Success*, prepared for SREE Spring 2012 conference, available at <https://www.sree.org/conferences/2012s/program/downloads/abstracts/521.pdf>.
- ⁴ Marc Sternberg, "School Choice Liberates Students from Zip Codes," *SchoolBook*, May 28, 2013, available at <http://www.wnyc.org/story/302329-school-choice-liberates-students-from-zip-codes/>.
- ⁵ See Corcoran et al., *The Impact of High School Choice on Mediators of Student Success*, at 1.
- ⁶ Neil Dorosin, "The Elephant in the Classroom – School Choice Exists. We Just Manage it Poorly," guest blog on the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation website: <http://www.msdf.org/blog/2012/11/neil-dorosin-the-elephant-in-the-classroom-school-choice-exists-we-just-manage-it-poorly/>.
- ⁷ <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2011/11/30-education-choice-whitehurst>.
- ⁸ Dorosin.
- ⁹ Grover J. Whitehurst, "The Education Choice and Competition Index: Background and Results 2011," available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2011/11/30-education-choice-whitehurst>.
- ¹⁰ Asians became even more segregated. New York City Independent Budget Office, "Have NYC Schools Become More or Less Integrated Over the Last 10 Years?" available at <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/printnycbtn11.pdf>.
- ¹¹ See generally NYC Department of Education, *Directory of NYC Public High Schools 2013-2014* (2013), available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/6C650E9E-C2B6-4B78-9D4F-927DF94E4012/0/Introduction.pdf>.
- ¹² See Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj, "Communication Breakdown: Barriers to Success in Informing Immigrant Families about High School Choice" in *New York City, in School Choice and School Improvement: Research in State, District, and Community Contexts*, M. Berends et al. (Eds.), (2011) (hereinafter "Barriers to Success") at 14.
- ¹³ *Id.*; NYC DOE, *Directory of NYC Public High Schools*, at 1.
- ¹⁴ This former mantra of the DOE is now difficult to locate on its website. An example appears at NYC DOE, "Amended Public Comment Analysis," November 25, 2013, available at http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B122F4F4-30A6-420E-9A0B-97FB288B216A/155116/CampusMagnetPCA_final.pdf.
- ¹⁵ *High Stakes Decisions: How NYC Students Have Fared Under School Choice*, A Center for New York City Affairs and Insideschools.org forum (hereinafter "High Stakes Decisions"), presentation by Sean Corcoran (April 20, 2011); Interview with Michael Alves (the process is especially secretive and can result in a child being matched to his or her first choice then "bumped" to a lower choice based on which schools she ranked versus other children).
- ¹⁶ "Barriers to Success" at 15.
- ¹⁷ The Legal, Economic, and Educational Advancement Project (LEEAP) at Fordham Law School's Feerick Center for Social Justice, *New York City High School Application Assistance Program: Selecting and Ranking High Schools Volunteer Counselor Supplementary Memo, Spring 2014*, 9 (on file with NY Appleseed).
- ¹⁸ "Barriers to Success" at 15.
- ¹⁹ LEEAP at 13.
- ²⁰ NYC DOE, *Directory of NYC Public High Schools*, at 8.
- ²¹ "Barriers to Success" at 15.
- ²² NYC DOE, *Directory of NYC Public High Schools*, at 5.

- ²³ See High Stakes Decisions: Robert Sanft, the CEO of DOE's Office of Student Enrollment explained that supply lags behind demand because it takes several years for new schools to become schools that applicants seek out.
- ²⁴ "Barriers to Success" at 14-15.
- ²⁵ Sophia Rosenbaum and Erica Pearson, "45% of New York City 8th-graders got into top high school choice: Education Dept." *NY Daily News*, March 11, 2014, available at <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/45-city-students-1-high-school-choice-article-1.1717700#ixzz2vrL9VRtD>.
- ²⁶ Liz Robbins, "Lost in the School Choice Maze," *NY Times*, May 6, 2011, available at www.nytimes.com/2011/05/08/nyregion/in-applying-for-high-school-some-8th-graders-find-a-maze.html?scp=1&sq=The%20School%20Choice%20Maze&st=cse.
- ²⁷ Meredith Kolodner, "Do 'Screened' Schools Screen Out Poor Kids?," *Insideschools.org*, January 18, 2012, available at <http://insideschools.org/blog/item/1000219-do-screened-schools-screen-out-poor-kids>.
- ²⁸ See, for example, Lazar Treschan *et al.*, *The Meaning of Merit: Alternatives for Determining Admission to New York City's Specialized High Schools*, 2013, available at http://b3cdn.net/nycss/b72f6ba9554188f841_d3m6bzkxa.pdf.
- ²⁹ Sharon Otterman, "Diversity Debate Convulses Elite High School," *NY Times*, August 4, 2010, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/05/nyregion/05hunter.html?scp=1&sq=Diversity%20Debate%20Convulses%20Elite%20High%20School&st=cse>.
- ³⁰ *Id.*
- ³¹ *Id.*
- ³² *Id.*
- ³³ See *id.*
- ³⁴ See *id.*
- ³⁵ See High Stakes Decisions (discussion).
- ³⁶ Beth Fertig, "In Era of High School Choice, One District Retains Elite Status," *SchoolBook*, November 20, 2013, available at <http://www.wnyc.org/story/era-high-school-choice-manhattan-district-retains-elite-status/>.
- ³⁷ Sarah Kramer, "Matching Students With Schools," *NY Times*, April 12, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/nyregion/interview-with-the-chief-of-enrollment-in-the-new-york-city-education-department.html>.
- ³⁸ Fertig.
- ³⁹ See High Stakes Decisions (discussion, Sean Corcoran and Robert Sanft).
- ⁴⁰ See High Stakes Decisions, presentation by Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj.
- ⁴¹ See *id.*
- ⁴² "Barriers to Success" at 15-16.
- ⁴³ See High Stakes Decisions, (discussion, Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj).
- ⁴⁴ See *id.*
- ⁴⁵ See High Stakes Decisions, presentation by Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj; "Barriers to Success" at 17-19.
- ⁴⁶ See High Stakes Decisions, presentation by Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj.
- ⁴⁷ Corcoran *et al.*, at 30.
- ⁴⁸ Norm Fruchter *et al.*, *Is Demography Still Destiny: Neighborhood Demographics and Public High School Students' Readiness for College in New York City*, 2012, available at <http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/Demography%20is%20Destiny.pdf>.

⁴⁹ The DOE does not appear to have made any formal announcement of the pilot project, but DOE officials mentioned it at a meeting of the New York City Council's Committee on Education on "Oversight – DOE's Admissions and Transfer policies," held December 11, 2013. Information on the meeting is available at <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=276388&GUID=72FD08BE-AD22-4DE3-BBA7-CE7DE00B2CA3&Options=infoI&Search=>.

⁵⁰ Henry Street Settlement newsletter, "The Week of February 10, 2014," available at <http://www.henrystreet.org/programs/youth/this-week/thisweek21014.pdf>.

⁵¹ NYC DOE, "NYCDOE's Response to NYSED's May 31st Letter Regarding SIG," undated, published by *GothamSchools* at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/97976994/NYCDOE-Response>.

⁵² Philissa Cramer, "City-state schism over challenge of needy students grows wider," *Chalkbeat*, July 26, 2012, available at <http://ny.chalkbeat.org/2012/07/26/city-state-schism-over-challenge-of-needy-students-grows-wider/>.

⁵³ NYC DOE, "NYCDOE's Response to NYSED's May 31st Letter Regarding SIG."

⁵⁴ Cramer.

⁵⁵ The original goal was to spur integration; African American and Latino students tended to comprise a larger portion of those students performing below grade level.

⁵⁶ See Leslie Berger, "School Maze," *NY Times*, December 1, 2002, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/01/nyregion/school-maze.html>.

⁵⁷ See Advocates for the Children of New York, Inc., *Public High Schools: Private Admissions: A Report on New York City Practices* (1985) (hereinafter "Public High Schools: Private Admissions") at 7, available at http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/public_hs_1_of_3_1985.pdf?pt=1.

⁵⁸ Public High Schools: Private Admissions at 3.

⁵⁹ See *id.* at 41.

⁶⁰ See *id.* at 3.

⁶¹ See *id.* at 11.

⁶² See *id.* at 42.

⁶³ See High Stakes Decisions, presentation by Sean Corcoran.

⁶⁴ Nathanson *et al.*, at 6.

⁶⁵ *Id.*, at 36.

⁶⁶ Sean P. Corcoran and Henry M. Levin (2011) "School Choice and Competition in the New York City Schools," in *Education Reform in New York City: Ambitious Change in the Nation's Most Complex School System*, eds. Jennifer O'Day *et al.*, Good examples are The Beacon School and Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem.

⁶⁷ Sophia Rosenbaum and Erica Pearson, "45% of New York City 8th-graders got into top high school choice: Education Dept." *NY Daily News*, March 11, 2014, available at <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/45-city-students-1-high-school-choice-article-1.1717700#ixzz2vrL9VRtD>.

⁶⁸ We join the Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles*, the Research Alliance for New York City Schools, and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform in calling for expansion of educational option high schools: Kucsera; Nathanson *et al.*; Fruchter *et al.*; Nathanson *et al.*

⁶⁹ Kolodner.

TESTIMONY BY DORA GALACATOS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FEERICK CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

AT THE PUBLIC HEARING OF THE

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DECEMBER 11, 2014

Fordham Law School's Feerick Center for Social Justice (the "Feerick Center") submits this written testimony to provide feedback on the New York City high school application process, which implicates the issues of diversity and racial segregation in New York City public schools and which might be of assistance to the New York City Council Committee on Education.

I am writing in my capacity as Executive Director of the Feerick Center for Social Justice. The Feerick Center strives to create concrete, achievable solutions to problems of urban poverty. Among other activities, the Feerick Center runs the Legal, Economic, and Educational Advancement Program ("LEEAP"). LEEAP has two major focus areas: improving consumer justice and facilitating access to high-quality secondary and higher education for low-income New York City students.

LEEAP was launched in 2012 through an AmeriCorps VISTA grant received by the Feerick Center. Through LEEAP, the Center has steadily formed new partnerships each year with schools and community-based organizations across New York City and has worked to recruit volunteers who are committed to guiding underserved students through the complicated

high school choice process. As of December 2014, LEEAP has worked with over 15 community-based organizations and schools to develop or implement mentoring programs to serve middle school students and their families. LEEAP staff have trained over 60 volunteers and worked with over 150 students since the program began in 2012.

Preliminary research on, and our experience with, the high school choice system in New York City reveals a great need for guidance and resources. The New York City school system is the largest in the country, the most diverse, and also the most segregated. A study conducted by the Civil Rights Project at the University of California Los Angeles revealed that “[b]oth the inner-ring region of the metro (consisting of Rockland and Westchester counties) and New York City region experienced a segregation increase (i.e., uneven distribution) between white and black students over the last 20 years.”¹ The high school application process is complex; it is comparable to applying to college, with over 700 programs to sort through and rank. This choice system assumes that each child has a savvy, knowledgeable parent advocate who can guide the child through this intensive research and informed decision-making exercise. Not every child has such an advocate—someone who speaks English, has the time to carefully collect and evaluate relevant materials and information, and possesses the wherewithal to make it through such a process.

The LEEAP program provides assistance to those underserved students and families navigating this process. Based on our work with schools and community-based and advocacy organizations, we have identified a few issues that are particularly problematic in relation to the

¹ Kucsera, John & Gary Orfield, *New York State’s Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction and a Damaged Future*” viii (2014), <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/ny-norfler-report-placeholder/Kucsera-New-York-Extreme-Segregation-2014.pdf>. See also Fruchter, Norm, et al., *Is Demography Still Destiny?: Neighborhood Demographics and Public High School Students’ Readiness for College in New York City* (2012), <http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/Demography%20is%20Destiny.pdf>.

high school application process. First, there is a clear lack of sufficient resources in public middle schools to serve the large number of students embarking on this process. A greater number of knowledgeable and dedicated staff and other guidance and support tools in middle schools would aid those students who lack the resources and parent advocates required to take full advantage of the choice system.

In 2013, two organizations received grants from the Department of Education (“DOE”) to establish Middle School Student Success Centers (“MSSSC”) to serve five middle schools in New York City. One such MSSSC is run by Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation and operates out of I.S. 171 in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. The MSSSC is open year round and has three full-time employees. It provides invaluable resources to students and parents who could not otherwise access the best schools for which students are qualified. The effectiveness of the Success Center highlights the power of resources in middle schools. If all middle schools were equipped with Success Centers or comparable resources, the choice system might become a more viable option. A second MSSSC is operated by Henry Street Settlement and launched in January 2014.

Second, as noted previously, the high school application process is exceedingly complex. Students select and rank among 700 programs, which comprise different kinds of schools with differing eligibility criteria and admissions methods and requirements. In 2012, LEEAP coordinators created the High School Application Advisory Committee to discuss issues surrounding high school admissions with various stakeholders. Through these bi-monthly meetings with DOE officials, community-based organization staff, advocates, researchers, and volunteers, Feerick Center staff have developed a better idea of how to best navigate the admissions process, but this is only after a few years of dedicated research, and we have yet to

finalize a set of best practices.

Clara Hemphill and Kim Nauer's 2009 report on the choice system highlights its complexity. They found that "[n]early all of 56 parents interviewed by the [Center for New York City Affairs] describe the process as overwhelming, stressful, or confusing. Many say they did not receive any help from their child's guidance counselor, who must submit high school applications to the central office of student enrollment. Others say the help they received was inadequate."² This last sentence echoes our first point: if a process as complicated as the choice system is employed by the New York City schools, sufficient resources must be available to all students involved in the process.

We would add that conclusions from the Hemphill and Nauer 2009 report continue to be true today for too many parents and students. We would also add, however, that the DOE should be recognized for the efforts it has made in recent years to improve access to information and outreach to parents and students.

Finally, we would like to make clear that while we are putting forth our best efforts to recruit volunteers to aid students with the complex application process, volunteers are not a substitute for staff. Volunteers are happy to give their time and work with young people, but they should not be the sole source of advice for students. Those children who come from families that may not be from New York City or familiar with the high school process must be able to find adequate resources at their middle schools to choose appropriate and high-quality high schools. (We note the insufficient supply of high-quality high schools for low- and middle-performing students—yet another significant problem.) It is especially difficult to obtain DOE resources in

² Hemphill, Clara & Kim Nauer, *The New Marketplace: How Small-School Reforms and School Choice Have Reshaped New York City's High Schools* 54 (2009), http://www.newschool.edu/milano/nyc affairs/documents/TheNewMarketplace_Report.pdf.

languages other than English. Some information is translated on the Department's website, but for students and families who do not have regular access to a computer, physical copies of application guides and tips are the main sources of information and therefore should be printed in a variety of languages. Volunteers certainly constitute a viable way to expand the capacity of a guidance counselor or other middle school staff. However, volunteers should serve only as a supplement to existing resources, not a replacement.

The Feerick Center supports the DOE and the City Council in their efforts towards creating more diversity in schools. Examination of the high school application process is a critical component of such an undertaking. We also encourage efforts to increase the equity of the admissions process; while the choice system may appear equitable, it is clear that students with greater resources fare better in the process.

We respectfully submit the following recommendations in connection with the high school application process. Assuming the current high school choice system continues, we recommend that:

- the DOE replicate and expand Middle School Student Success Centers;
- the DOE enhance training and support to middle school guidance counselors and other key staff;
- the DOE make oversight of the high school application process a metric for review of school performance and that such a metric should include evaluation of the quality of student choices;
- the DOE enhance and expand outreach efforts to parents and students, particularly non-English speakers and families without access to the Internet; and

- the DOE continue to develop technological tools to assist students and families with the process, including a more robust search engine that permits students and families to search schools by graduation rates and college readiness;³

We believe that, to promote equity and choice, the DOE should reexamine the current system, and study and adopt strategies and models to diversify high schools based on socio-economic, racial, and academic performance measures. For example, the DOE has long operated Educational Option schools, which admit students based on academic performance and include a wide distribution of low, middling, and high performing students. Such schools and use of such admission criteria should be expanded.

Thank you again to the New York City Council Committee on Education for conducting this public hearing today. It is crucial that we bring attention to the impact of diversity on students' education and life, particularly those students who lack an advocate who may assist them in optimizing their chances at receiving a quality education.

³ Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj's 2014 book, *UNACCOMPANIED MINORS: IMMIGRANT YOUTH, SCHOOL CHOICE, AND THE PURSUIT OF EQUITY*, highlights the discrepancy between the parental and school support that the DOE believes each student will receive and what actually happens on the ground. For example, she writes that "the district did not establish minimum standards for what each middle school must do to prepare its students and parents to choose high schools, nor did it monitor or evaluate school personnel's actions." Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj, *UNACCOMPANIED MINORS: IMMIGRANT YOUTH, SCHOOL CHOICE, AND THE PURSUIT OF EQUITY* 38 (2014).

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Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj, UNACCOMPANIED MINORS: IMMIGRANT YOUTH, SCHOOL CHOICE, AND THE PURSUIT OF EQUITY 38 (2014).

FOR THE RECORD

To: The New York City Council Committee on Education
From: Deena Hellman, Program Director, Goddard Riverside Community Center (Star Learning Center)
Re: Oversight: Diversity in New York City Schools
Date: December 10, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the crucial issue of achieving diversity in New York City's public schools. My name is Deena Hellman, and I am the Program Director of Goddard Riverside Community Center's Star Learning Center. Goddard is one of New York City's leading human service organizations, providing food, shelter, and education through 26 different programs serving over 17,000 people annually on the Upper West Side and in West Harlem. Our program areas focus on children, youth and families; homeless people; older adults; and, advocacy and tenant assistance. Each year, Goddard serves more than 3,000 children and youth through school-based, after-school, evening and weekend programs. The vast majority of these children and youth come from low-income, African-American and Latino families. At Star Learning Center, whose primary focus is providing one-to-one academic tutoring to students in grades 2 through 12, 65% of the more than 300 students attending the program last year were Hispanic, and 26% were Black.

Since many children return to the program for multiple years, we have been fortunate to establish close relationships with the individual students and their families. This has led to our playing a much larger role in their lives, from connecting them to free and low-cost enrichment, academic and summer programs, to assisting them in securing appropriate special education services. To that end, we partner not only with all of Goddard's programs but with outside groups ranging from Advocates for Children to the Education Component of Fordham Law School's Legal, Economic and Educational Advancement Project (LEEAP). It is this last partnership, forged in order to better assist our middle school students and families with the incredibly complex high school application process, which has led to our submitting this testimony today. If we do not find a way to systematically support students from low-income and diverse backgrounds to effectively navigate this process, the diversity in schools that this committee correctly seeks to achieve will remain elusive and our school system unacceptably segregated.

The education component of the LEEAP program seeks to study and redress inequities in the New York City High School Application process. For the past two years, Star Learning Center has been a pilot site, implementing a model that pairs volunteer lawyers with a 7th or 8th grade student who attends tutoring at Star. The goal is to have the volunteer mentor the student through the complex process by reviewing that student's record and then discussing with the student key interests and priorities, such as school location, in order to arrive at a list of high schools. While labor-intensive, the model seeks to provide a consistent, available adult who has received training about the process to guide the student to make informed choices about applying to high school. The lessons that we have learned over these past two years as to why the current high school application process is flawed include the following:

- Many students in 8th grade have limited understanding of the process, and are unable to come up with a meaningful and appropriate list of high schools on their own. Few middle schools have the means to assist students on a one-to-one basis in making choices consistent with the student's academic profile and interests. While they need an adult's guidance to take them through every single step, the majority of students from diverse and low-income backgrounds do not have a parent at home who is able to play this role, as described below.
- Many non-English speaking parents consistently report that they are not given a copy of the directory, or any other instructions as to how to help their child, in their native language. Even when they receive a directory in their own language, they are totally overwhelmed. Many cannot understand the incredibly complicated vocabulary ("limited unscreened" and "educational option" schools, for example) that appears throughout the book. These parents struggle to find out the most basic information needed, such as the district number where they live, or their child's 7th grade state test scores—something that would never happen to a student from a family with more resources.
- Even after identifying possible schools of interest, students did not have the help needed to participate fully in the "choice" process. Our students often had no adult available to help them with essays, or to schedule interviews—both of which are typically part of the screening process at the "better" high schools. They had no adult available to take them to Open Houses, yet many schools required that a parent be present. Unlike students who were fortunate enough to have a parent/guardian managing the complete application process, our students did not know when tours and open house events were taking place. By the time they met with their mentors and identified possible schools to visit, most tours were full.
- In those cases where students learned about upcoming Open Houses or tours at schools of interest, parents who worked could not attend these events due to their inability to take time off or be excused early from their jobs. Most 8th grade students at Star visited from 1 to 4 schools, despite guidance counselors requiring them to list 8 to 12 schools on their applications.
- While the DOE has developed a good online tool to help students search for schools, many of our families do not have internet access or even computers at home. This also means that these students couldn't look at school websites from home, or locate essays or other admissions requirements posted on those sites by many of the "better" schools.
- As a result of these significant flaws, many students end up applying to their neighborhood high schools—where there is almost no diversity—by default. Others choose schools because a sibling or friend attended, or because the school appeared on a generic list handed out by a guidance counselor as being a "popular choice" among graduates of the student's middle school. These lists, which rarely took into account the individual student's qualifications and interests, were often the only "help" that guidance counselors had time to offer.

As the above examples illustrate, we will never achieve the diversity in our public schools envisioned by this Committee if we do not ensure equal access and equal help for students and their families facing this complicated process. We have created a two-tier system where race, ethnicity and income govern whether a student can participate meaningfully in high school choice—or not. We are confident that the Committee would agree that this is not acceptable.

We fully support the language of Resolution 453, which calls on the DOE to “commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.” There are two excellent examples of such a strategy that the DOE has funded and could now take to scale. These programs, called “Middle School Success Centers”, are just beginning to address the inequities in the high school application process—a process that is clearly one of the impediments to diversity that the DOE must address. Both Success Centers are housed within community-based organizations, and work directly inside of middle schools in low-income neighborhoods. This not only affords them daily contact with their students as early as 6th grade, but enables them to identify students who could be directed toward less diverse high schools, including the Specialized Schools. In fact, at one of the centers, no students sat for the Specialized High Schools Admissions test in the program’s initial year. By this fall, only the program’s second year of operation, 40 students took the exam, after participating in a free summer course offered by the Success Center to prepare them. Staff also uses a cadre of trained volunteers to further expand their capacity to help individual students, and they even accompany them to open houses and tours. It’s a promising model that is helping students who could not do so on their own to make informed choices about where they would like to attend high school. Yet there are just two such school-based centers operating today—and there are 75,000 students applying to high school this year.

One option that would start to address the lack of parity would be to create and fund additional Success Centers in the 80 Beacon programs that are currently funded by the city. These free afterschool programs, also located inside of middle schools in low-income and minority communities, are doing what they can to assist their students on an ad hoc basis. For them to be able to make a meaningful difference, and enable their students to find the best high schools possible that match their skills and interests, would require both DOE funding and a commitment to staff development that currently does not exist.

We strongly believe that the current inequities inherent in the New York City high school admissions process can and must be addressed. By providing the type of help outlined above to our neediest students and their families, we can take another important step toward achieving greater diversity in our public schools. This diversity is indeed our city’s greatest strength, and we commend the City Council for taking such a strong stand on eradicating the status quo, and taking all measures possible to achieve this worthy goal.

Testimony of Dr. Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj

before the Committee on Education and Committee on Immigration

New York City Council

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to share my research findings and thoughts on how the New York City Department of Education can better educate and support immigrant students and families in New York City. I testify today in my capacity as an educational researcher. My research and my perspective are also informed by my experience working at the NYCDOE where I saw first-hand the commitment among NYCDOE administrators to serve all students in New York City schools but also bore witness to the frequent barriers, missteps, and lack of understanding about what must be done to ensure that immigrant students' needs are considered and met.

Between 2004 and 2006, I worked as a program manager in what was then called the Office of Multiple Pathways to Education at the NYCDOE where I helped to launch alternative high schools and programs and worked with school leaders, counselors, and school-based support staff to identify and reengage older youth who were disconnected from school. Despite considerable effort expended to develop rigorous, specially-tailored school models and to identify eligible students, our office failed to consider the translation needs of non-English-speaking families and did not effectively advertise these new options to all students. The disconnect between our mission to reengage students—many of whom came from non-English speaking homes and/or were English language learners themselves—and the steps we took (or failed to take) to inform them of these educational opportunities highlighted a widespread practice of the NYCDOE and many other government agencies of operating without a sufficient understanding of the population they are serving and how to best engage with them.

I identify below a series of weaknesses in the NYCDOE's current approach to inform, educate and work with immigrant students and families and provide recommendations in response. Many of these issues and proposed solutions are drawn from a study I conducted between 2008 and 2010 of how low-income first and second generation children of Latin American immigrants negotiated New York City's mandatory high school application process, gathered information about schools, and made school choice decisions. The study took place primarily in one large, high poverty, low performing Queens middle school and it included over 400 hours of ethnographic observations, 75 interviews with students, parents, and school personnel, and a survey administered to 490 eighth grade students at the middle school site. I found that the possibility of achieving the district's stated goal of equitable access to high quality education in New York City through choice is substantially limited given the biases of the current school choice policy.

First, although the NYCDOE recognizes the high school admissions process as one of its banner policies, the modes that the NYCDOE has consistently employed to circulate information about the application process excludes many families who do not read in English or who do not have frequent Internet access. Specifically, the NYCDOE's reliance on electronic resources and the lack of translated materials available in printed format means that people without Internet access and those who require materials in languages other than English are left with fewer official sources of information and guidance. During the school years in which I conducted my study, the *High School Directory*, the most comprehensive resource on high schools in New York City, was only available in printed format in English. The question of families' Internet access notwithstanding there are serious costs associated with downloading and printing a 600-page document. Yet, other than the single-page description of each high school in the *Directory*, virtually no information about individual schools was readily accessible in printed format. The NYCDOE also depends heavily on third party websites such as Hop Stop.com or the Metropolitan Transit Authority to assist families with school choice by getting estimated travel times to different schools. The district's failure to take into account the range of language and technology needs of the diverse population it is indicative of the larger issues of access and normative assumptions associated with the choice policy and many other policies and practices.

Next, the expectations of parental knowledge and involvement embedded in the choice policy served to disadvantage the low-income children of Latin American immigrants in my study. In fact, the NYCDOE's often unarticulated assumptions of significant parental involvement in high school choice and other educational processes has negative consequences for many students, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, whose parents' behaviors do not conform to the NYCDOE's expectations. In the case of high school choice, because middle schools are not required by the district to provide information or guidance about the choice policy, many students who need the most help are left virtually alone to make consequential choice decisions. Yet, receiving personalized guidance on high school choice (or any other policy and procedure) could be particularly helpful for low-income, immigrant-origin students whose families may not be serving this function.

In sum, policy-makers and educators working in schools with large numbers of immigrant-origin students often do not understand the families they serve, the supports they need or the expectations they have of schools. As a result, opportunities are lost and policies may perpetuate rather than counteract disadvantages. In response, the NYCDOE should conduct focus groups with immigrant students and parents to learn about what they do and do not understand about different policies and practices, about the school system's expectations of them, and about the materials produced by the NYCDOE. Next, translated materials should be available in printed format in addition to online. The NYCDOE should also develop workshops for immigrant parents about how the education system works in the United States, and these workshops could explain the different stages of school, the expectations of parental involvement and the adult

educational options that exist. These and other steps could begin to address the weaknesses in many of the NYCDOE policies and practices and better respond to the immigrant students and families who are increasingly being served by New York City schools.

I would welcome the opportunity to work with the City Council and the NYCDOE on any initiative to better support immigrant students.

**New York City High School Choice Process: Recommended Supports to Increase Access & Equity for ELL
Students and Parents**

Dr. Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj

12/11/2014

- I. School personnel serving large numbers of immigrant-origin students often do not understand where the parents are coming from: what they know, what they don't know about how things in NYC or the U.S. are different from their countries of origin
 - Develop training for school personnel so they will have realistic expectations of what immigrant parents know or understand up front
 - Provide training on cultural exchange and conversations between school personnel and parents

- II. Students often choose schools without any participation or input from parents/adults: Students need more intensive, personalized guidance support
 - Provide additional resources to high-need schools for school choice counseling
 - Offer per-session for guidance counselors to work with students on school selections
 - More extensive training of parent coordinators about HS choice process
 - Provide training about the high school choice process for different agencies and after-school programs that work with students

- III. Develop explicit guidelines or minimum requirements for what middle schools must/should do to inform students/parents about the high school choice process
 - Provide minimum required number of events or forms of outreach
 - Give calendar for when different events/outreach should occur (including events for students in 6th and 7th grade)
 - Build this into the accountability structure so schools have incentives to make sure their families are informed about choice
 - Include information about what works well to inform students/parents about HS choice in knowledge management system.
 - Use network structures to share info

- Measure parent and student satisfaction with high school information and guidance
- Publish an annual report of each middle school's high school choice results
- Publish an annual report of middle school graduates' high school performance and outcomes

V Improve Information Provision

- Publish translated versions of school choice documents in print
- Create a stand-alone school choice advisory entity
- Provide free school choice trainings for community-based organizations
- Conduct focus groups with parents to see what they understand and do not understand about the materials produced by OSEPO about HS choice
- Conduct focus groups with parents after attending city-wide or school based informational events to see what they understand

Additional Suggestions:

1. Start preparing students and parents for the process earlier
 - Do workshops and provide information in 6th grade and 7th grade
 - Make fall high school choice a school-wide event, not just for 8th graders
2. Emphasize to parents that 7th grade attendance and grades/scores count
 - Encourage schools to hold special meetings for 7th grade parents about high school choice and why the 7th grade year is important
3. Use partnerships with community organizations/religious organizations as additional information outlet.
 - Provide detailed information to partners about HS choice
 - Encourage them to work with students and parents on this
4. Create incentives for schools to engage parents about high school choice process
 - Include questions about HS choice in Learning Environment Survey
 - Give schools reward if more kids get into higher tier high schools [use model of high school to college relationships; schools prestige increases if more students get into better colleges]
 - Factor school choice (school assignments and/or outreach) into middle school's into Progress Report Grade
5. Create city-wide parent information centers as collaborations among different city agencies (DOE, DYCD, Health and Mental Hygiene)
 - Provide information about range of public services and policies to parents

- Education
- Health
- Employment

6. Develop workshops for immigrant parents about how the education system works in the United States
 - Explain school stages
 - Role of parents
 - Adult education options

7. Include information about high school choice in Adult Education programs.



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Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, New York City
Local 1: American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO

FOR THE RECORD

New York City Council Education Committee
Hon. Daniel Dromm - Chair

NYC Council Hearing on Oversight: Diversity in New York City Schools
Thursday, December 11, 2014

Res 0453-2014 - Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

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The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) support the Council's Education Committee Res. 453-2014. This resolution calls on the DOE to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

Calling on the DOE to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

It is particularly noteworthy that this is the 60th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education 1954. Given the current data, we could substitute Department of Education 2014, given the fact that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Whereas NYS has the most non-diverse schools in the country, according to the 2014 UCLA study. To further support the need for this resolution, a 2012 NY Times analysis of school data for the 2009-10 school year found that more than half of the city's schools were at least 90% Black and Hispanic. In 2013, the Independent Budget Office (IBO) reported that while lack of diversity exists at all levels of City schools, elementary schools are the least diverse and high schools the most diverse.

The research tells us that diverse schools promote better educational outcomes and provide benefits for all students. Importantly, the research also confirms that African-American and Hispanic students perform better on tests in schools that are diverse, while school diversity has no negative impact on the test scores of white students. We also find that attending diverse schools also improves high school graduation and college matriculation rates for minority students. Other benefits include improving cross-racial understanding and reducing racial prejudice.

Therefore, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) strongly support this resolution that calls on the DOE to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

Ernest A. Logan
President



Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, New York City
Local 1: American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO

FOR THE RECORD

New York City Council Education Committee
Hon. Daniel Dromm - Chair

NYC Council Hearing on Oversight: Diversity in New York City Schools
Thursday, December 11, 2014

Proposed Int. No. 511-A - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of education report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within schools, including but not limited to, data within charter schools and special programs.

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The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) strongly supports the Council's Education Committee's efforts with proposed Int. No. 511-A-2014, in relation to requiring the Department of Education to report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within schools, including but not limited to, disparities within charter schools and special programs. CSA has always supported efforts that create greater transparency with the large bureaucracy at the DOE. This resolution will create more accountability and greater scrutiny in addressing these disparities.

This local law will require the DOE to report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within schools, including but not limited to, data within charter schools and special programs. This law will go a long way in creating the necessary transparency of data that should already be disseminated. It includes the total number of public school students in grades pre-k through grade 8 that reside in each community school district. Further, it will include the number and percentage of students in each of the categories disaggregated by grade level: race/ethnicity, gender, special education students, English language learner, primary home language, lunch eligibility (free, reduced or paid), temporary housing status, foster care status, over the counter (physically registering at the school), place of birth, attending school out of zone, attending school out of district, the number of students in grades 3-8 who completed the state math examination disaggregated by performance level and the number of students in grades 3-8 who completed the state ELA examination disaggregated by performance level. Similar information will be required for high school students.

Data will also indicate whether a school's admission policy is based on a lottery, a geographical zone, a screening of candidates, a standardized test and whether other specialized criteria is used for admission. Such report shall compare the data required in this section from year to year. Most importantly, the DOE shall list the steps that it has taken to address the lack of diversity in each school or program.

CSA is hard-pressed to see why anyone would be opposed to the transparency of this data and the intent to openly and closely monitor the levels of diversity across the board in all schools and programs under the jurisdiction of the DOE.

Ernest A. Logan
President

Testimony of Amanda Robb in Support of 0453-2014, etc.

Good afternoon,

I am here today to add my voice to the Council's resolutions to improve diversity in New York City high schools. This is one of those happy occasions when most everyone agrees about what is right – in this case, inclusion, access, and fairness in education. What we need to work out is how to get there.

To make our efforts most fruitful, I encourage you to look beyond New York's nine specialized high school, which after all account for less than five percent of the City's high schools.

I would also like to suggest that improving education must begin with plain knowledge. If you want to change the mix of students at schools, you need to know how they choosing the students they are currently admitting.

Unfortunately, the New York City Department of Education keeps this information secret. They keep it secret even though nearly two year ago to they promised share it with families and students.

In 2013 the NYC Comptroller's Office audited the High School Application Process for Screened Programs. So-called screened programs account for three-quarters of New York high school placements – those at the city's more popular, higher-performing schools. Of the schools the Comptroller audited, 80 percent did not adhere to their published – though often vague – admissions criteria. Worse, faculty could often not even explain how the reached admission decisions. And they

didn't keep records. Bottom line: more than a third of students who met all published screens were NOT admitted.

The Comptroller concluded, "We do not have reasonable assurance that the possibility of inappropriate manipulation of the student rankings, favoritism, or fraud is being adequately controlled."

In response – also in 2013 – NYC DOE made nine promises, including creating actual admission rubrics to share with families, to create and publish a methodology for determining rank when it is not feasible to admit all students who meet a screen, and to simply keep records.

Nearly two years have passed. DOE has NOT complied.

I, along with many other parents, have repeatedly asked the Comptroller to revisit this audit, to ask for a demonstration of progress – anything. Nearly a year has passed, and the Comptroller has not replied.

So we decided to try ourselves: We submitted multiple Freedom of Act Law requests to DOE in order to obtain records to confirm – or refute – anecdotal experience that certain middle schools have extraordinarily high admission rates to selective high schools and others have dismally low admission rates. Thus, an A student at one school may be favored over an A student at another.

DOE has not complied.

We filed a lawsuit. Only then did DOE provide the 2014-2015 admissions rubric for the most popular high school in New York City, LaGuardia High School. More than 15,000 eighth-graders apply to LaGuardia every year – that is, more than

one-in-five New York City public school students. The admissions criteria for LaGuardia in DOE's Directory of High Schools says that students must pass a talent audition and have above an 80 in grades and above a 2 on standardized tests.

What was the truth?

Standardized tests counted 44% percent in admission and talented counted 14%. It at least two studios the absolute highest scoring talent students – 97 and 98 – on a 100 point scale; students who also happened to be A students, were not admitted.

Also counting 14% EACH at LaGuardia were grades, tardies, and absences. Students began losing points after three absences. NYC public school teachers, by contract, are allowed 10 absences a year. A student applying to LaGuardia with 10 absences lost 75% of her possible attendance score.

I would suggest that penalizing students who do not have ABOVE 98% attendance is dangerous, particularly in an era of rather frightening infectious diseases. De facto, it encourages sick children to come to school.

It would be very helpful for everyone to know exactly what the admission rubrics are at every New York high school. Then we can all have a good educational experience – that is, an informed discussion.

So: Thank you for championing diversity. It is not only a core NYC value it is hope of the world. Always remember that peoples who are at war with other elsewhere, all ride the subway together here. Wouldn't it be awesome if our kids went to school together, too.

FOR THE RECORD

Link to Comptroller audit:

http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/MH12_053A.pdf

Amanda Robb - amandarobb@me.com

**Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
New York City Council Education Committee,
Thursday, December 11, 2014**

Testimony by: Marc Williams, Assistant Principal at Brooklyn Technical High School; Board Member – Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation

My name is Marc Williams. I am alumnus of Brooklyn Tech, and the Assistant Principal of English at Brooklyn Tech. And I owe my success to my education at Brooklyn Tech. And the greatest way that I give back is when I lead a tour, especially for young Black and Latino children. Those tours remind me of how it all began for me. My aunt told me to take the test. The kids at my middle school talked about applying to the specialized high schools. The staff at my middle school walked us through the application process. I was surrounded by people who not only had access to the information, but also encouraged me to apply. Fast forward twenty years later and I'm a panelist for a summer workshop for parents about the specialized high schools. One mother approached me afterwards; her son was in the eighth grade, but she had known little about the specialized high schools, and she didn't know anything about the SHSAT. I've met other parents who also expressed this. Greater access to the information is essential. If we want to increase diversity in our specialized high schools, we need to increase our efforts to provide information, not just by hosting city-wide workshops that people may attend if they hear about it, but rather by being proactive and taking this information into the underrepresented communities.

I've done outreach and the two most common requests I hear are about getting more information and test preparation. I'm happy to hear about test prep, because the SHSAT is an objective means of offering an equal chance to every child. And every child should have the opportunity. When I walked the halls for the first time after passing the test, I witnessed that all children have the opportunity, not because of the color of their skin, not because of the neighborhood where they lived or the school they previously attended, not because of who they knew, and not because of any other particular measure.

The test is fair. And to score high enough, students have to prepare. What should be offered are more middle school enrichment programs like the STEM pipeline program we offer at Brooklyn Tech to 36 middle schoolers and after school programs in test preparation.

Academic Enrichment, Pipeline programs, Access to Information, and Measure by Examination are the answers.

Resolution 442 is not the answer.

Testimony of Prof. David C. Bloomfield
before the NYC Council Education Committee
December 11, 2014
in Support of Prop. Int. 511-A-2014 and Res. 453-2014
with Qualified Support for Res. 442-2014

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee. There is no more important factor than classroom diversity to assure quality education and a just society for our children. I commend the Council for its courage in addressing this issue since we know that actions to correct segregation are almost as painful and politically dangerous as a failure to act.

I have written on diversity in three recent pieces [<http://nyti.ms/1wevqWe>; bit.ly/1xYm2WR; bit.ly/UZC7ZX] appended to my written testimony, so I will keep these remarks brief. I wholeheartedly support Int. 511 and Res. 453 as necessary steps to focus the Department of Education's attention on schools and school processes that limit diversity. Every time a selection procedure fails to provide for diversity of academic, economic, geographic, racial, linguistic, gender, and ethnic populations, the DOE should have to justify not just the reasons for disproportionate inclusion of certain groups but why others are excluded.

We know from studies of student progress that all gain from exposure to difference. Even if, in a given school, test scores go up or down, individual student scores do not decline and the humans behind those scores infinitely profit from diversity's cognitive, affective, and social benefits. When we ignore that in the name of privilege or identity, we take a step backward in fulfilling the American promise. Current crises of racial polarization, income inequality, and sexual predation are tied to the limited opportunities and demographic isolation inherent in segregated school settings. Int. 511 and Res. 453 put the Council squarely on record promoting those goals.

In qualifying my support for Res. 442, I note my long and vigorous involvement in the federal complaint against the current Specialized High School exam which has a clear, shameful discriminatory impact against Black and Latino students. The test also fails to meet modern standards of merit-based admission practiced by other selective high schools and colleges nationally. The exam's single great appeal is that it sorts quickly and numerically, inducing a test centered culture mired in racial bigotry. But to my mind the answer is not to amend Education Law 2590-h(1)(b) but to **repeal** it. Why should the State Legislature be dictating selection procedures at all, setting in stone criteria which will always be, at best, imperfect? I prefer to devolve selection procedures to the city, without this strange legislative strangle-hold established by Calandra-Hecht in 1971.

Thank you for your time.

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NY TIMES

The Opinion Pages | Letters

Ways to Improve New York's Schools

NOV. 11, 2014

To the Editor:

You are correct to call for more immediacy and specificity in New York City's school rescue plan. An important addition should be a temporary end to "over the counter" midyear and upper-grade admissions that the Annenberg Institute, in its 2013 report "Over the Counter, Under the Radar," cited as a major cause of school failure.

Indeed, Bloomberg-era small schools and many charters, often praised by The Times, are protected from over-the-counter admissions, especially when new, to build and preserve stable student cultures.

Short-term rebalancing to renew struggling schools that too often bear the brunt of other schools' more favored status will immediately reduce class size and turmoil where most needed.

As the Annenberg report proves, many have inequitably profited from past steering of over-the-counter students to schools now on the low performance list, contributing to, if not creating, the very situation requiring remedy.

DAVID C. BLOOMFIELD
Brooklyn, Nov. 8, 2014

The writer is a professor of education leadership at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center.

FIRST PERSON

How de Blasio is perpetuating Bloomberg's myth of the failing school

by David Bloomfield on November 25, 2014 2:25 pm



David Bloomfield

David Bloomfield is Professor of Educational Leadership, Law, and Policy at the CUNY Grad Center and Brooklyn College. He is the author of "American Public Education Law, 2nd Ed." (Peter Lang, 2011) and other works.

MORE IN FIRST PERSON

- ▶ **What Mayor de Blasio's school-improvement plan is missing: a goal**
- ▶ **As changes come to social studies testing, it's time to reinvent the teaching**

WHAT IS FIRST PERSON?

In the First Person section, we feature informed perspectives from readers who have firsthand experience with the school system. View submission guidelines here and contact our community editor to submit a piece.

In his renewal plan for struggling schools, Mayor de Blasio has mistakenly fallen for a myth usually promoted by his conservative adversaries: that failure is the fault of individual schools, not the school system. His proposed solutions — community services, extra instructional time, and increased professional development, timed to a three year deadline prior to closure — treat these schools as isolated problems rather than the natural result of insidious central policies.

Like any myth, the assertion has some basis in truth. Some principals provide poor leadership and, while it is rare in my experience, concentrations of poor teaching can mire a school in mediocrity.

But the main reason the myth is attractive is because it is an easy way to avoid looking at systemic problems. Research demonstrates that the scale of New York's "failing schools" is caused by district policies that lead to concentrations of highly mobile, low-achieving students. Too often, New York City has pre-determined "winners" in its school policies without admitting that other schools will lose in a trumped-up competition to cast the central administration in a positive light.

Former Mayor Michael Bloomberg was a famous proponent of the myth. His widely praised, simplistic solution of closing schools he deemed failures clearly didn't solve the problem, since Mayor de Blasio

inherited these schools which he is now under fire to clean up. What Bloomberg really did was not close schools, but move children who should have been the real targets of his help.

This massive shell game cloaked systemic failure — 94 schools are on this list alone! — to provide cover for policies like small schools and choice and to avoid central responsibility for politically difficult solutions.

As stated by Profs. Jennifer Jennings and Aaron Pallas in a 2010 Annenberg Institute report:

The "winners" in [New York's school choice] system survive by attracting the students and other resources that can enable them to succeed, and the "losers" run the risk of being closed. The NYCDOE might view its role primarily as creating a market and providing students and families with information about the population of high schools that can help them make an informed choice ... But such a view treats each school as an independent entity that rises or falls on its own merits. What is missing is a view of the population of high schools as a system, in which schools occupy distinct niches, and the fortunes of one school can influence what happens to other schools.

How the system set a school up for failure was ably described by the New School's Center

for New York City using Paul Robeson High School in a case study:

All agree that enrollment at Robeson increased and its student body changed dramatically beginning in the early- to mid-2000s, as Chancellor Joel Klein began to close down many of the city's large high schools. The DOE had set out to create scores of smaller schools to provide more intensive attention and support for low-performing students. ... As a result, Robeson took in hundreds of students who would previously have gone to larger high schools but were instead displaced when those schools were closed down. Many such students had a history of truancy and were much older than Robeson students in the same grades.

The case study concludes that as a result of these and other system-driven demographic changes, "the graduation rate plummeted to 40 percent. Robeson had become a different kind of school, and it clearly needed help."

Robeson has closed, but many of the schools on de Blasio's "renewal schools" list undoubtedly faced similar challenges, as students from other closing schools enrolled or their situations were otherwise compromised by central office decisions. Now, the city needs to take ownership of solutions, instead of blaming the students, teachers, and principals triaged to benefit others. If de Blasio only tries to staunch the bleeding by creating a series of temporary fixes for select schools, instead of repairing the system's inequities, his plan will fail.

One place to start would be to diminish the number of latecomer students, who are known as "over-the-counter" students and who often have more severe academic and social needs, enrolling at struggling schools. The city has already put those limits in place at Boys and Girls and Automotive high schools, but the other struggling schools need that benefit as well so that those students are spread more equally throughout the system.

Another goal should be to develop a system of choice that avoids concentrations of haves and have-nots in city schools. As stated by Baruch College Professor Judith Kafka, "Our school system already concentrates poverty. Does choice interrupt this process? It can when the school system makes integration a priority and enacts what is often called 'controlled choice' as described in the work of the Century Fund's Richard Kahlenberg." Those policies focus on admissions rules that emphasize choice and also aim to create stable, economically diverse student populations.

Real solutions will require politically difficult changes to budgeting and enrollment policies, as well as a concerted effort to help schools improve their reputations. Such solutions would involve trade-offs, and some schools would likely benefit more than others. But the varied recommendations for solving our struggling schools crisis put forth so far by Board of Regents Chancellor Merry Tisch, the New York City Charter Schools Center, and even Mayor de Blasio, fail to adequately address the systemic causes of school failure.

FIRST PERSON

Failing The Stuyvesant Test

by David Bloomfield on January 11, 2013 9:00 am



David
Bloomfield

David Bloomfield is Professor of Educational Leadership, Law, and Policy at the CUNY Grad Center and Brooklyn College. He is the author of "American Public Education Law, 2nd Ed." (Peter Lang, 2011) and other works.

MORE IN FIRST PERSON

- ▶ How de Blasio is perpetuating Bloomberg's myth of the failing school
- ▶ What Mayor de Blasio's school-improvement plan is missing: a goal

WHAT IS FIRST PERSON?

In the First Person section, we feature informed perspectives from readers who have firsthand experience with the school system. View submission guidelines [here](#) and contact our community editor to submit a piece.

In 1971, the New York State Legislature passed the Hecht-Calandra bill, requiring that rank-ordered results from a single test determine admission to the city's elite high schools: Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech. According to New York University professor Floyd Hammack, writing in the American Journal of Education, support for the bill was closely tied to racially-charged controversies over community control and was intended to protect these elite institutions through a mandated exam. The results have been devastating.

Today, black and Latino students attend Stuyvesant and its sister schools at levels far below those of other racial groups. In 2010-11, the most recent year with published State Report Card data, out of a total enrollment of 3,288 students Stuyvesant High School had only 40 black students (1 percent) and 94 Latino students (3 percent, none with limited English proficiency). This means the school had only about 10 black and 24 Latino students out of over 800 students per grade level. The problem starts with the rank-order, test-only admissions policy. While over 12,000 black and Latino students took the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test last year, only 5 percent of black test takers and 6.7 percent of Latino test-takers were offered admission to any specialized high school.

New York City's use of a single, rank-ordered test to determine admission is unique in American education.

According to Chester Finn, who was appointed as assistant U.S. Secretary of Education by the first President Bush, of hundreds of competitive high schools across the country, only New York City employs a system where a single test means everything. I know of no American college or university, no matter how selective, that uses such a system. Even in New York, many other selective high schools rely on multiple measures that require students to demonstrate their qualifications across dimensions — not just a single, coachable test.

In bringing its federal complaint against the Specialized High Schools admissions policy, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (to which I am an unpaid advisor) is challenging both the effect of the test in diminishing opportunities for bright black and Latino youth and shining a light on the arbitrary nature of the admissions process. How peculiar, to have the state legislature determine these procedures! Normally, such technical matters are left to educators versed in psychometrics and professional judgment. Here, a 40 year-old law trumps everything we know and otherwise practice about academic merit.

That SHSAT scores are highly sensitive to test prep is beyond dispute. Rigid rank ordering creates hair's-breadth distinctions without substance. The test has never been validated to determine its consistency with actual high school performance so the city Department of Education cannot even demonstrate a relationship between admitted students' test results and those of others who might have been more successful meeting elite high schools' demands. Discounting the use of middle school grades, portfolios of student work, and (after substantiated widespread cheating at Stuyvesant) character diminishes merit to a narrow gauge of tutored test-taking proficiency on a given day in an adolescent's life.

Who would rely on such a system in 2012 if it wasn't for the momentum of a law passed in 1971? Use of the SHSAT as the sole criterion for admission to New York's elite high schools perpetuates a political moment long since past. It is educationally, legally, and socially indefensible. It creates an artificial barrier to thorough decision-making, promotes racial isolation, and flies in the face of every other system used in the United States to assess academic merit.

Like any such barrier to opportunity, sole reliance on the SHSAT should fall. A judicious set of admissions criteria can assure both access and excellence. The matter is directly in the hands of the state legislature and, now, the U.S. Department of Education. The main stumbling block to reform, however, is Mayor Bloomberg's "let them eat cake" declaration that the current system is somehow fair, though his argument runs contrary to other merit selection processes used by his administration.

If the mayor ends his opposition, the legislature could do its work free of the political pressures that gave rise to the original statutory imposition of Hecht-Calandra. The complainants and their supporters in the current action, including leading Asian-American advocacy organizations, are not asking for anything more than a rational system of multiple measures that will assess applicants for specialized high school placement that includes, but is not limited to, the SHSAT.

In the end, this is a call for a political solution to a politically created problem. New York is debased by its continued adherence to an irrational system that perpetuates racial bias.

David C. Bloomfield, an attorney, is professor of Educational Leadership, Law, and Policy at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. He is an unpaid adviser to the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, which filed a complaint about the Specialized High Schools Admission Test with the U.S. Dept. of Education Office of Civil Rights.

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The Bronx High School of Science Parents' Association



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Bronx Science Parents' Association Statement on SHSAT

June 16, 2014 by The Parents' Association

[0 Comment](#)

June 11, 2014

The Parents' Association of the Bronx High School of Science opposes S 7738 Felder that proposes changing the mandated admissions process of the specialized high schools in the City of New York. We stand for an admissions process that is a pure meritocracy, with one standard that is transparent and incorruptible. The suggested changes to the admissions process do nothing to address the root cause of inequity in elementary and middle school education. Further, the proposed new admissions criteria are deeply flawed. Disparities in academic outcomes start very early on.

Using multiple criteria such as a student's GPA assumes that all middle schools are equal. By the Department of Education's own school grading system, this is clearly not the case. The Schools are not equal and therefore, GPAs cannot be compared fairly. Considering GPAs at the same time as the common core curriculum is introduced will further divide and expose disparities in populations.

Bronx Science has for over seventy-five years been a home for gifted and hard working students of all backgrounds to attain the American Dream. With a population that is a wonderfully diverse as New York City itself, Bronx Science is a home for students across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Bronx Science (and its fellow schools Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech) has a long history of serving immigrant and economically disadvantaged communities

The current admissions process is color blind and immune from corruption and politics.

Nearly half of the student body at Bronx are eligible for free or reduced lunch, a metric that captures families that live near or below the poverty line in New York City.

More than half of families currently at Bronx Science do not speak English in the home at all, including 568 students who are immigrants themselves.

Our students and their families make tremendous sacrifices to attend Bronx Science, most of whom travel more than an hour each way to get to school.

As parents, we believe strongly in exceptional education for all of our children. The SHSAT is not the cause of the problem, but rather a symptom of an unacceptably flawed and inequitable elementary and middle school education system. We agree that the underrepresentation of the African American and Latino populations needs urgent attention. We believe the following proposals would help address the root causes of underrepresentation of African American and Latino students in the specialized schools while maintaining the incorruptible method now in place.

Dramatically improve middle and elementary school education for all. This is the number one cause of this issue and must be immediately addressed by the Department of Education. Every child, regardless of ethnicity, deserves an education of equal quality that will inspire each to reach his or her potential.

Offer the SHSAT to all 8th graders during the school day and eliminate the current process where students have to register for the exam on a Saturday.

Provide access to free tutoring and test prep programs for any interested student to hone their skills and confidence in taking the exam.

The specialized high schools are the jewels in the crown of our education system. With a myriad of problems facing our public schools today, focusing on schools that are thriving fails to address the root causes of educational inequity. In 1971 our wise state legislators realized that the admissions process for the Specialized High Schools needed to be protected by law from the tides of politics, pandering, and poor planning, passing the Hecht-Calandra Act. Changing a meritocracy and already fair admissions procedure deflects from real failure to fairly educate every student equally and only further hurts all of our children.

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My name is John Chan, I am the Chairman of Brooklyn Asian Community Empowerment (BRACE). I am here today to represent BRACE. BRACE is an umbrella organization that consists of more than 30 non-profit organizations, family kinship associations, and business and community leaders. We oppose city council resolution 442-2014 ~~_____~~ We oppose these resolutions because keeping SHSAT as the sole admission criteria to the specialized high school is very important for the low-income working class families and students, who are trying hard to achieve their American dream through education. As a community leader, I have seen our immigrant parents sacrificed greatly to support their children's academic success. Through a fair and objective process entering specialized high schools is important to these working class families. Moreover, SHSAT is a fair and open examination. All of BRACE members believe we should keep SHSAT as the sole admission criteria for our kids. Thank you!

Good morning Everyone. My name is David Zhu. I am the president of American Fujian Artist Association. On behalf of my organization, I oppose City Council Resolution 442-2014 ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ We believe SHSAT is an unbiased and objective way of admitting students into the specialized high schools. Specialized high schools are for gifted and talented kids. We hope this can be continued (keeping SHSAT as the sole admission criteria for the specialized high schools) for our kids.

Thank you!

My name is Jimmy Li. I am the Executive Director of Urban United Association (or UUA), a member organization of BRACE. On behalf of UUA, I oppose City Council Resolution 442-2014 ~~_____~~. We believe that keeping SHSAT as the sole admission criteria is necessary. Just like SAT, SHSAT is an objective and fair process for 8th grade students to enter specialized high schools. Many of these accepted high school students come from Southern Brooklyn area. Changing the fair admission process would have a strong impact on our community.

According to Department of Education data, majority of kids attending specialized high schools are from working-class families. They certainly are not privileged. They study hard. Their parents work hard to save every penny to support them academically. Eliminating a fair and objective admission process is unfair to these students and their families because it takes away the only opportunity that these gifted students can receive an excellent education since their families cannot afford private school educations. I hope every council member from Southern Brooklyn should oppose these resolutions. Thank you!



THE COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**New York City Council Committee on Education
Oversight Hearing: "Diversity in New York City Public Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442"
December 11, 2014**

**Testimony of Sheelah Feinberg, Executive Director
The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)**

Good Afternoon. My name is Sheelah Feinberg and I am the Executive Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). I would like to thank Committee Chair Dromm and members of the Education Committee in holding this important oversight hearing on diversity for our public school system. We believe all the bills and resolutions scheduled for today's hearing is a step towards a stronger diverse and equitable learning environment for our youth.

For over 25 years, CACF has been the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization and works to improve the health and well-being of Asian Pacific American (APA) children and families in New York City in three key policy areas: education, health, and child welfare. CACF advocates on behalf of underserved families in our community, especially immigrants struggling with poverty and with limited English skills. CACF promotes better policies, funding, and services for East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander youth and families living in New York City.

Often when APA students are mentioned in discussions of the public education system, it is to praise them for being smart, successful, for attending specialized schools, for being self-sufficient, and therefore do not require additional support and assistance. While the perception of APA students as high-achieving minorities continues to prevail, these beliefs are far from the reality in which many APA students live. They face a multitude of challenges that decrease their ability to compete with their peers academically. Making up 14% of New York City's public school population, at-risk APA students often come from immigrant and low income families, face language barriers, and are the first-generation in their families to attend American schools and pursue higher education.

There is an achievement gap that exists within the community itself. More specifically, while only 5% of APA students in New York City attend the top 3 specialized high schools, there are many more APA students who fail to meet education standards, and struggle throughout their academic career. These students find themselves isolated and marginalized, and often lack the necessary support to navigate the education system and access services critical to becoming competent, well-adjusted, civic-minded adults. Consider these facts: **1 in 4 APA students in New York City's public school system does not graduate on time or at all.** Unfortunately, due to stereotypes and a lack of public awareness, APA students remain largely invisible and their needs are not considered in discussions on education reform initiatives.

CACF testifies today on the need to improve educational equity for all students in NYC public schools, while highlighting the challenges that APA youth face. Regarding Intro 511 CACF supports the reporting of racial and socio-economic data, particularly on the crucial need to include the disaggregation of data. For the past 4 years, CACF have been working to pass legislation to collect and report disaggregated data in city and state social service agencies. We are pleased to see the specific mention to report the disaggregation of languages spoken, place of birth and "over-the-counter" status in Int. 511. The APA community in New York City is a diverse and growing population with **over 40 Asian ethnic groups and speaking over 100 languages.** We are also by percentage the fastest growing group in New York City,

nearly doubling every decade since 1970. 1.3 million APAs reside in all five boroughs, and make up approximately 15% of the city's population. Currently, 78% in our community are foreign-born. Tracking our dynamic and growing population is critical to ensure that each emerging community is receiving the proper linguistic and cultural appropriate resources for families to support their children to succeed in schools. The collection and reporting of disaggregated data would spotlight challenges and barriers that APA groups face in public school education as many struggle with financial, linguistic and cultural barriers. The reporting of such data would also contradict prevailing perceptions of APA's as a homogenized well-to-do group.

CACF supports Resolution 422 for Albany to consider additional alternative methods to increase the diversity of these high schools. CACF promotes accessible and structured free academic support programs for all communities to be able to participate if youth have interest in applying for Specialized High Schools. CACF signed on the NAACP LDF's complaint in 2012, citing that we believe in promoting more equity in the Specialized High Schools, which the current SHSAT process is not providing. We do however, urge that before determining what the best alternative measures are, a task force of experts in education, diversity, and testing should be brought together to help inform the Council and the Department of Education on their recommendations.

Contrary to media reports claiming there is a race war with Asians and Whites against Black and Latino youth, we are here to testify that policy makers, the Department of Education and community members should work together in find the best ways to ensure that every child in NYC have the proper support to access these schools if they choose to pursue it. In addition, we would like to state that the current system of standardized testing does have explicit impact on the learning development of New York City's APA youth and students.

The current emphasis on high-stakes test for the Specialized High Schools has created an environment where there are increased pressures and expectations placed upon our youth to meet higher academic standards, but without the additional support.

APA youth experience increase pressures from their families, peers and teachers to succeed academically and fit into the mold of a successful student. With high expectations placed upon them, youth feel overwhelmed and disappointed in their own abilities if they cannot live up to such standards, specifically the SHSAT as being the marker for "success" for graduating middle school students. Many APAs strive solely to score high on this test. These tests have steadily increased in difficulty each year and the test score is the sole criteria of entry into the schools. As a result, many APA families enroll their children in private tutors, and third party for-profit prep courses. Some even work additional jobs to have the income to cover these expensive costs. Students and families are conditioned from the beginning to believe that cramming to score high on the SHSAT cements a pathway of future success. Many are not aware or exposed to the other critical layers of personal development that prepares youth to be post-secondary ready.

Even after high school, many APA students that go onto college still face many struggles, and many of the challenges they face are connected with social-emotional issues. **Asian American college students report higher levels of depressive symptoms than white students**¹. The focus on standardized tests shifts focus away from supporting students' ability to apply their knowledge and skills in real settings and enhance broader competencies such as interpersonal skills, critical thinking, self-confidence, resiliency, and self-advocacy skills. Many psychological studies have expressed the

¹ Liu W, Yu EH, Chang C, Fernandez. The Mental Health of Asian American Teenagers: A Research Challenge In Stiffman AR, Davis LE (Eds.), Ethnic Issues in Adolescent Mental Health

importance of social and emotional learning in addition to academic learning to educate and develop youth to be healthy, socially skilled, caring, responsible adults.

It's important to note again that only 5% of APA high school youth in NYC attend specialized high schools; for the majority of the non-high achieving APAs, they still face similar pressures, but with additional challenges. Many come from low-income, working class communities, and many face the challenges as immigrants or being the children of immigrants. In New York City, **1 in 2 Asian Americans are born into poverty**, and many Asian American families identify as "working poor." These financial barriers create another challenge for students to navigate through public school and achieve access to higher education, as their families encourage them to take on added responsibilities such as help to support the family financially, care for younger siblings, find employment instead of applying to college, or attend a nearby college close to home.

What would help our youth most would be additional culturally appropriate services and programs that can assist in academic engagement, personal motivation, and decision making skills. These young people feel overwhelmed as they attempt to understand and navigate the system themselves. Many also deal with communication issues and language barriers within their families as **28% of APAs live in linguistic isolation where no one over the age of 14 in a household speaks English well**. This situation forces students to serve as interpreters for their families which may cause additional undue stress and anxiety. For recently arrived immigrant youth who are of high school age, they are at a larger disadvantage as they are not afforded the time and support to fully adjust to a new way of life, and gain the needed language skills to be able to keep up with the rigorous coursework, much less prepare for standardized exams.

Lastly we commend the public will as exemplified in today's hearing, to strengthen diversity in our schools and we support Resolution 453. CACF adamantly agrees with the particular provisions outlined in the resolution pertaining to all the benefits in promoting a diverse learning environment as it will increase students' critical thinking, retention and classroom engagement. CACF would like to see the incorporation of an Ethnic Studies curriculum to enhance all the aforementioned benefits of teaching and learning in a diverse setting. Ethnic studies would include the vast histories, experiences and contributions of our diverse communities of color as well as other historically marginalized curricula including women and LGBTQ studies.

Thank you again for holding this important oversight hearing and for giving me the opportunity to testify.

Boosting Achievement by Pursuing Diversity

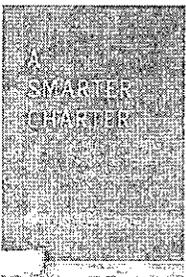
Halley Potter, Fellow | potter@tcf.org | [@HalleyTCF](https://twitter.com/HalleyTCF)

Most K-12 education reforms are about trying to make “separate but equal” schools for rich and poor work well. The results of these efforts have been discouraging. The Century Foundation looks at ways to integrate public schools by economic status through public school choice. At the higher education level, we examine ways to open the doors of selective and non-selective institutions to students of modest means.



The Future of School Integration: Socioeconomic Diversity as an Education Reform Strategy
Edited by Richard Kahlenberg (2012)

The Future of School Integration looks at how socioeconomic school integration has been pursued as a strategy to reduce the proportion of high-poverty schools and therefore to improve the performance of students overall. It examines whether students learn more in socioeconomically integrated schools—and pre-K programs—than in high-poverty institutions and explores the costs and benefits of integration programs. The book also investigates whether such integration is logistically and politically feasible, looking at the promises and pitfalls of both intradistrict and interdistrict integration programs. Finally, it examines the relevance of socioeconomic integration strategies being pursued by states and localities to the ongoing policy debates in Washington over efforts to turn around the nation’s lowest-performing schools and to improve the quality of charter schools.



A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education
By Richard Kahlenberg and Halley Potter (2014)

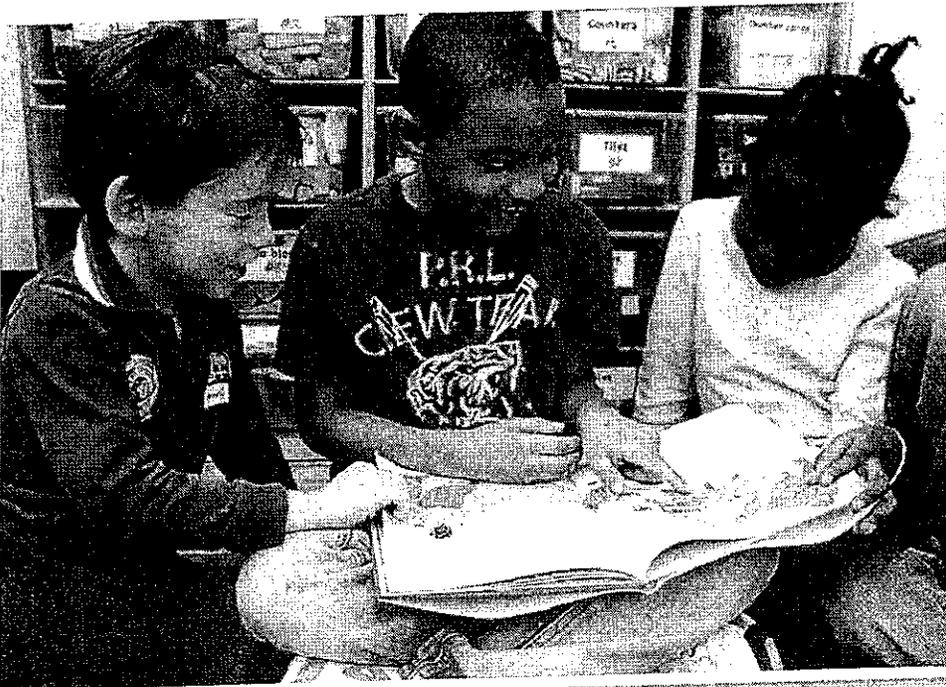
Moving beyond the debate over whether or not charter schools should exist, *A Smarter Charter* wrestles with the question of what kind of charter schools we should encourage. The authors begin by tracing the evolution of charter schools from teacher union leader Albert Shanker’s original vision of giving teachers room to innovate while educating a diverse population of students, to today’s charter schools where the majority of teachers are not unionized and student segregation levels are even higher than in traditional public schools. In the second half of the book, the authors examine two key reforms currently seen in a small but growing number of charter schools—teacher voice and socioeconomic integration—that have the potential to improve performance and reshape the stereotypical image of what it means to be a charter school.



All Together Now: Creating Middle Class Schools Through Public School Choice
By Richard Kahlenberg (2001)

This provocative book asks a simple question: Since we know that middle class schools tend to work best, why not give every child in America the opportunity to attend a public school in which the majority of students come from middle class households? Economically integrated schools, the author argues, will do far more to promote achievement and equal opportunity than vouchers, standards, class size reduction, or any of the other leading education proposals on the left and right that seek to make “separate but equal” schools work. Building on two recent education trends—the decline in racial desegregation as a legal tool and the movement toward greater public school choice—*All Together Now* provides a blueprint for creating schools that educate children from various backgrounds under one roof. Concurring with the concerns of voucher proponents about the unfairness of trapping poor kids in failing schools, the book provides a practical, viable, and legally sound plan for promoting economic and racial integration among public schools.

Boosting ACHIEVEMENT by Pursuing DIVERSITY



PHOTOS BY SAHEA ROHANI AND JAMES ROY. COURTESY OF COMMUNITY ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL AND EL HAYNES PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

What can we learn from schools that are improving student achievement by breaking up concentrated student poverty?

Halley Potter

One morning last December, a crowd gathered at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in Washington, D.C., for a discussion on school turnaround. Panelists debated whether the best way to fix persistently underperforming schools was simply to replace the administrators and teachers at the school, or whether reopening under new charter management was the only effective option.

But what if, instead of changing the principal, teachers, or management in the hope that this will turn around a



Socioeconomic integration improves student outcomes because **mixed-income schools are more likely to have certain resources or characteristics that foster achievement.**

high-poverty school, we changed the mix of students, rebalancing enrollment so that the school did not serve a concentration of the most disadvantaged students? When asked this question, panelist Carmel Martin, assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Education, said, “I think it’s a really important question.” But she quickly added, “We’re focused on governance and the people [adults] in the building, which we think are critical ingredients.”

Although few policymakers and wonks are talking about it, a small but growing number of schools are attempting to boost the achievement of low-income students by shifting enrollment to place more low-income students in mixed-income schools. Socioeconomic integration is an effective way to tap into the academic benefits of having high-achieving peers, an engaged community of parents, and high-quality teachers.

In the last decade, the number of public school districts that consider socioeconomic status in student assignment has grown from just a handful to more than 80 (Kahlenberg, 2012). Early adopters included La Crosse, Wisconsin, which created a districtwide plan to balance school enrollment by socioeconomic status in 1979, and Cambridge, Massachusetts,

which made socioeconomic status the main factor in its controlled choice program in 2001. Newer additions include Bloomington, Minnesota, and Salina, Kansas, both of which used socioeconomic balance as a factor in redrawing school boundaries in recent years.

Adding to this list, a number of charter schools now actively seek socioeconomically diverse student enrollment as part of their design. They include schools like High Tech High, which began in 2000 as a single charter school and is now a network of 11 schools in San Diego, and Citizens of the World Charter Schools, which opened its first school in 2010 and is striving to create a national network of diverse charter schools.

Going against the grain in a country where many public schools are de facto segregated by income, these socioeconomically integrated charter schools have developed innovative methods for enrolling and serving a diverse student body.

The Case for Socioeconomic Integration

On average, students’ socioeconomic backgrounds have a huge effect on their academic outcomes. But so do the backgrounds of the peers who surround

them. Poor students in mixed-income schools do better than poor students in high-poverty schools.

Research supporting socioeconomic integration goes back to the famous Coleman Report, which found that the strongest school-related predictor of student achievement was the socioeconomic composition of the student body (Coleman et al., 1966). More recent data confirm the relationship between individual achievement and student-body characteristics. A 2010 meta-analysis found that students of all socioeconomic statuses, races, ethnicities, and grade levels were likely to have higher mathematics performance if they attended socioeconomically and racially integrated schools (Mickelson & Bottia, 2010). And results of the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress in mathematics show steady increases in low-income 4th graders’ average scores as the percentage of poor students in their school decreases (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Of course, multiple non-school-related factors could explain why low-income students in mixed-income schools outperform their counterparts in high-poverty schools. Students attending mixed-income schools might be more likely to have involved parents or live in a more affluent community,

for example. However, a number of studies have found that the relationship between student outcomes and the socioeconomic composition of schools is strong even after controlling for some of these factors, using more nuanced measures of socioeconomic status, or comparing outcomes for students randomly assigned to schools (Reid, 2012; Schwartz, 2012).

Socioeconomic integration improves student outcomes because mixed-income schools are more likely to have certain resources or characteristics that foster achievement. Rumberger and Palardy (2005) found that the socioeconomic composition of the school was as strong a predictor of student outcomes as students' own socioeconomic status. However, the researchers found that the advantages of attending a mixed-income school could be fully explained by school characteristics such as teachers' expectations, students' homework habits, and school safety. They concluded that high-poverty schools could work "if it were possible to alter those policies and practices that are associated with schools' socioeconomic composition" (p. 2021).

That *if* is a serious caveat. High-performing, high-poverty schools are very rare. The economist Douglas Harris (2007) calculated that only 1.1 percent of majority-low-income schools consistently performed in the top third of their state. Further, to the extent that the biggest advantage of socioeconomic integration may be direct peer effects (Reid, 2012)—picking up knowledge and habits from high-achieving, highly motivated peers—high-poverty schools will always be at a disadvantage, given the strong relationship between students' own socioeconomic statuses and their academic performance.

Socioeconomic integration is a win-win situation: Low-income students' performance rises; all students receive the cognitive benefits of a diverse learning environment (Antonio et al., 2004; Phillips, Rodosky, Muñoz,

& Larsen, 2009); and middle-class students' performance seems to be unaffected up to a certain level of integration. Research about this last point is still developing. A recent meta-analysis found "growing but still inconclusive evidence" that the achievement of more advantaged students was not harmed by desegregation policies (Harris, 2008, p. 563). It appears that there is a tipping point, a threshold for the proportion of low-income students in a school below which middle-class achievement does not suffer.

Estimates of this tipping point vary; many researchers cite 50 percent low-income as the maximum (Kahlenberg, 2001). However, in a report that Richard Kahlenberg and I coauthored for the Century Foundation, we profiled diverse charter schools in which the proportion of low-income students (as measured by eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch) ranged from 30 to 70 percent, within 20 percentage points of the 50 percent goal (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2012). The findings suggested that, more than a precise threshold, what mattered in these schools was maintaining a critical mass of middle-class families, which promoted a culture of high expectations, safety, and community support.

Lessons from Socioeconomically Diverse Charter Schools

Despite the evidence of their advantages, socioeconomically integrated schools are not the norm in the United States. In traditional public schools, 65 percent of low-income students are concentrated in majority-low-income schools. In charter schools, that figure is 78 percent (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2010).

Many choices have led to our economically segregated school system.¹ Districts have chosen to let school boundaries reflect or even amplify residential segregation. Reformers have chosen to focus more on fixing high-poverty schools than on breaking



up concentrations of poverty. Policymakers and philanthropists have favored interventions targeted at reaching as many low-income students as possible. But de facto school segregation also persists because balancing student enrollment by socioeconomic status, like most education reforms, is logistically, politically, and operationally difficult.

Socioeconomically diverse charter schools are developing practices to overcome some of the challenges of enrolling and serving a diverse student body. They have identified strategies that could help other schools and districts create successful integration programs.

Enrolling a Diverse Student Body

One of the foremost logistical barriers to integrating schools by socioeconomic status is geography. Residential poverty tends to be concentrated, and successful school integration requires either a district with enough socioeconomic diversity within its boundaries or a group of neighboring districts which,



when combined, have enough diversity to facilitate an interdistrict integration plan. The availability of these geographic opportunities varies widely in states across the country (Mantil, Perkins, & Aberger, 2012).

Some diverse charter schools were started by first identifying a geographic opportunity for integration that traditional public schools were neglecting. For example, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy serves four adjacent Rhode Island communities, drawing students evenly from two higher-income suburbs and two lower-income cities. Larchmont Charter School in Los Angeles, California, was started by a group of parents from Hollywood who were frustrated that the demographics of their community, one of the most diverse neighborhoods in L.A., were not reflected in the area's schools.

Political opposition to adjusting attendance boundaries is another challenge. In Wake County, North Carolina, frequent student reassignments created controversy over the school district's

long-standing socioeconomic integration plan. Opposition culminated in 2010, when a Tea Party-backed majority on the school board voted to end the plan. This group, however, was replaced in the next election by a prointegration majority. Similar backlash greeted a new school-boundary plan in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, that also balanced students by socioeconomic status.

Some charter schools pursuing socioeconomic integration have shown how systems of school choice can be used to foster diversity as an alternative to redrawing attendance zones. A weighted lottery is the simplest way for schools to ensure that they enroll a diverse student body while still relying on choice-based enrollment. For example, DSST Public Schools, a network of charter middle and high schools in Denver, Colorado, reserves a minimum of 40 percent of seats at the flagship campus for low-

Balancing student enrollment by socioeconomic status is logistically, politically, and operationally difficult.

income students; Blackstone Valley Prep in Rhode Island reserves 60 percent of seats. High Tech High weights admissions lotteries in its elementary, middle, and high schools by students' home zip codes, which creates socioeconomically, racially, and ethnically diverse student bodies because of housing patterns.

Choice-based schools can also maintain a diverse balance by intentionally targeting underrepresented groups of students when publicizing their school. Capital City Public Charter School and E. L. Haynes Public Charter

School are both located in Washington, D.C., where weighted lotteries are not permitted. Both schools maintain socioeconomically diverse enrollment through strategic recruitment for the lottery pool. E. L. Haynes, for example, receives many applications from middle-class families who proactively seek information because of the school's reputation, and it therefore directs all its recruitment efforts—from distributing information outside grocery stores to speaking at neighborhood association meetings—to low-income communities.

Serving a Diverse Student Body

Once an integration strategy is in place, schools and teachers must also adapt to serve a diverse group of students. Mixed-income schools can draw criticism from both directions with respect to how well the school community and individual classrooms are integrated. On the one hand, students in diverse schools are sometimes separated into tracked classes along lines that mirror socioeconomic status, and students may further self-segregate during free time. In that situation, middle-income and low-income students are cheated out of some of the peer interactions and access to broader social networks that diversity can offer. On the other hand, schools that intentionally maintain heterogeneous classes must consider the research suggesting that these classes can negatively affect the academic progress of higher achievers (Brewer, Rees, & Argys, 1995).

Individual success stories and a review of research suggest that it is possible, by offering all students a single challenging curriculum, to reduce the achievement gap without harming the highest achievers (Burriss, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Rui, 2009). However, ability grouping remains a hotly debated topic that is particularly relevant at socioeconomically diverse schools, where students enter school with a wide range of knowledge and skills (see Petrilli, 2012). How can

mixed-income schools best support lower-achieving students without hurting the higher achievers?

High Tech High and City Neighbors Charter School have innovative strategies for blending the benefits of leveled instruction and heterogeneous classrooms. High Tech High is committed to grouping students by mixed ability as much as possible. "It's not just diversity in admissions," said CEO Larry Rosenstock. "It's also integration in practice once they've arrived." Leaders at High Tech High realized they needed to offer honors classes so that students could have the weighted grade point averages that selective colleges look for in admissions, but they did not want to separate the highest-achieving students from their peers. Instead, they offer some classes with an honors option, allowing interested students to take the class at the honors level by completing extra assignments.

At City Neighbors Charter School, a K–8 school in Baltimore, Maryland, teachers regularly adjust student groupings to ensure that all students are appropriately supported and challenged. In the lower grades, students may sometimes be grouped into similar-ability reading circles; but for most assignments, they work in heterogeneous groups chosen for their members' complementary skill sets. Monica O'Gara, a 1st grade teacher and founding faculty member, described the range of student backgrounds as both a challenge and a resource: "There's quite a mix of what children understand and what approaches they're used to or will be effective with them." Although differentiation is a challenge for teachers, students of all backgrounds benefit from hearing about their classmates' experiences and from relating their own experiences to others.

In the middle grades, students at City Neighbors start their day with half an hour of highly specialized, small-group instruction called *intensive*. Intensive provides an opportunity for extra

Socioeconomic integration is a win-win situation.

support or enrichment in different subjects, allowing teachers to meet different students' needs while still teaching most of the academic time in mixed-ability classrooms. For example, some students may spend their intensive time receiving extra writing support while others attend an enrichment intensive on animal dissection. Students cycle through different intensives three times a year, giving teachers multiple opportunities to adjust placements based on individual needs.

Some charter schools are also tackling the more elusive issue of how to encourage students of different backgrounds to interact socially. Community Roots Charter School, an elementary and middle school in Brooklyn, created a staff position—director of community development—to facilitate programs that promote community cohesion and celebrate diversity. Through the school's Play and Learning Squads, for example, small groups of students and their parents go on weekend or afternoon outings. Teachers assign the squads with an eye toward grouping students who would not otherwise spend time together outside school.

A Promising Direction

Academic results from these diverse charter schools are promising, if anecdotal. In our Century Foundation report, Richard Kahlenberg and I (2012) profiled seven diverse charter schools whose low-income students outperformed their low-income peers statewide in mathematics and reading, sometimes by dramatic margins. In all but one case, the schools' low-income students also beat the state proficiency averages for all students.

Many factors are at work in successful

diverse charter schools. As schools of choice, these schools likely benefit from having a more engaged parent community than neighboring traditional public schools do. Still, when combined with the body of research showing the academic advantages of providing mixed-income learning environments, their stories are hopeful. If more schools, charter and otherwise, use creative strategies to tackle the challenges of socioeconomic integration, they can help shift the turnaround discussion from an exclusive focus on how to improve high-poverty schools to a discussion that also looks seriously at how to break up concentrations of poverty and provide more diverse learning environments for all students. ■

¹See Richard Rothstein's article in this issue for a discussion of the societal causes of segregation in U.S. schools.

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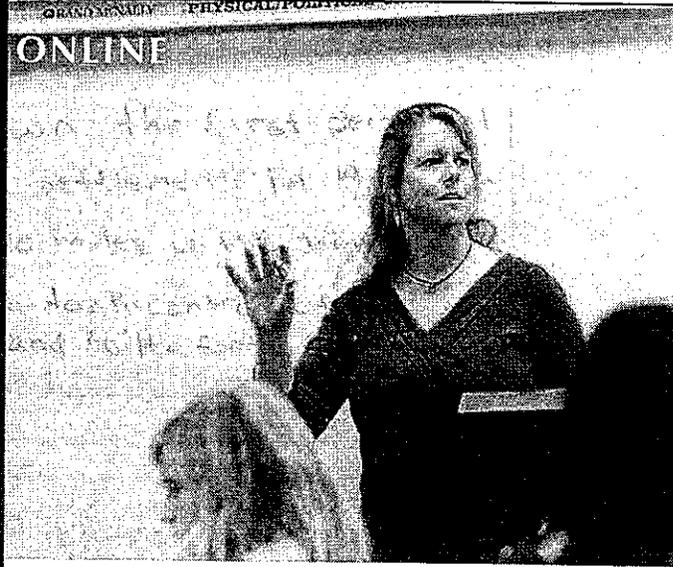
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Diversity Matters

author: [Ayanna Behin](#)

target: The City Council's Education Council

signatures: 132

132

1,000

we've got 132 signatures, help us get to 1,000

Statement from parents at the Arts & Letters K-8 public school in Fort Greene, Brooklyn:

On behalf of the undersigned parents from the A&L community, we would like to share the following with the New York City Council:

- 1) Thank you for undertaking a hearing on the resolutions proposed to address the critical issue of diversity in our city's schools.
- 2) We, the undersigned parents of the A&L community, are extremely eager to see increased movement at the NYC Department of Education to ensure that all NYC schools reflect the diversity of the city in their enrollment, and that our school be supported in efforts to reserve space for Black and Latino students and students eligible for free and reduced price lunch,
- 3) We are eager, as a school community, to educate and engage our families in understanding how such policies can benefit the learning of all the students enrolled in our school.

Sign Petition!

50

First Name Last Name

don't display my name

Email

United States

Street Address City

State Zip

(optional)

For more impact, add a personal comment here

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Having problems signing this? Let us know.

you have the power to create change.

START SHARING AND WATCH YOUR IMPACT GROW

WE SIGNED: DIVERSITY MATTERS

Rob Gerstman, NY	Dec 11, 06:44	# 132
Ryan Enschede, NY	Dec 11, 05:40	# 131
Lisa Lowenstein, NY	Dec 11, 04:37	# 130
Joy Richardson, NY	Dec 11, 04:30	# 129
Audrey Early, GA	Dec 11, 02:59	# 128
Deborah Snyder, NY	Dec 11, 02:51	# 127
Darrell Washington, NJ	Dec 11, 02:20	# 126

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Melanie Lodge, NY	Dec 11, 00:52	# 125
Catrin Solis, NY	Dec 10, 21:50	# 124
Lisa Waltuch, NY I am a parent of 3 A&L students	Dec 10, 20:38	# 123
kristi Parsons, NY	Dec 10, 20:08	# 122
Jessica Sucher (A&L), NY	Dec 10, 19:58	# 121
Yang Wang, NY	Dec 10, 19:53	# 120
Jen Lee, NY Arts and Letters, 3rd grade parent	Dec 10, 19:47	# 119
Kimio Rivera, NC	Dec 10, 14:45	# 118
Emma Colgate, NY A&L 3rd grade parent	Dec 10, 13:33	# 117
Antoinette Miller, NY	Dec 10, 13:30	# 116
Sharryn Kasmir, NY	Dec 10, 12:12	# 115
Dominique Vincent, NY	Dec 10, 12:11	# 114
gerri trunk A&L, NY	Dec 10, 11:34	# 113
Aki Baker, NY	Dec 10, 10:50	# 112
Charles Parham, NY	Dec 10, 10:37	# 111
Marjorie and David Koons, NY	Dec 10, 09:12	# 110
Matt Laszuk, NY School diversity should reflect the diversity of the neighborhood and surrounding areas. I do not want a bussing solution like San Francisco's to artificially create diversity at the expense of community building and environmental concerns.	Dec 10, 08:52	# 109
Danika Laszuk, NY A&L 3rd grade parent and 2015 Kindergarten	Dec 10, 08:47	# 108

Josh Thomases, NY Dec 10, 08:34 # 107
 It is possible to work within the federal, state and local laws and still ensure diversity. It merely requires some time and will. Please work with us on it.

Amanda Pollak, NY Dec 10, 08:05 # 106
 Our family strongly supports this initiative. Please make it happen!

corinne van es (A&L), NY Dec 10, 07:00 # 105

Name not displayed, NY Dec 10, 06:50 # 104

Leslye Leanness, NY Dec 10, 03:47 # 103
 We chose this school for its diversity and sensitivity to social awareness - please help us continue on our path.

Jungwon Kim, NY Dec 09, 23:22 # 102

Amanda Wiss, NY Dec 09, 22:04 # 101

Pamela Sah, NY Dec 09, 19:55 # 100
 Demographics in Fort Greene, Brooklyn are changing and our neighborhood is fast losing racial and socioeconomic diversity. Thus our excellent school will become more and more homogeneous unless we are permitted to take affirmative steps to balance student composition. Please support our efforts to maintain a cherished and rare resource: an unsegregated public K-8 learning environment.

Paul Simpson, IL Dec 09, 19:30 # 99

liz enschede, NY Dec 09, 19:20 # 98

Brona Hatchette, NY Dec 09, 18:44 # 97

leah bassknight, NY Dec 09, 17:41 # 96

Julie Wade, NY Dec 09, 17:27 # 95

Nathan Dudley, NY Dec 09, 17:27 # 94

Patricia Hernandez, NY Dec 09, 17:24 # 93

Sanjit De Silva, NY Dec 09, 16:45 # 92

Concerned Citizen, NY	Dec 09, 15:59	# 91
Brenda Mitchell, NY	Dec 09, 15:15	# 90
Jessica DAmico, NY A&L	Dec 09, 14:18	# 89
Jay Bianchi, A&L, NY	Dec 09, 14:03	# 88
Valerie Killen, Arts and Letters, NY	Dec 09, 13:58	# 87
pamela ordonez, NY Socio economic and racial diversity in our schools guarantees higher cognitive development for ALL our children.	Dec 09, 12:38	# 86
Julyana soelistyo, NY	Dec 09, 11:33	# 85
Jessica Cary, NY	Dec 09, 11:19	# 84
Shannon Forman - Arts & Letters, NY	Dec 09, 11:13	# 83
Kimberly Bliss, NY Public education, and the democracy it serves, reaches its full potential when the diversity it celebrates is reflected in the classrooms and the lives of its students.	Dec 09, 11:00	# 82
Jordana Phokompe, NY	Dec 09, 10:33	# 81
Anna Neusuess, Germany	Dec 09, 10:26	# 80
LAKEESHA MORAVIA, NY	Dec 09, 10:21	# 79
asli ayata, NY	Dec 09, 10:17	# 78
Wanett Clyde, NY	Dec 09, 10:15	# 77
Carrie Larrier, NY I have a 3rd grader at A&L.	Dec 09, 10:12	# 76
Rebecca Woodward A&L, NY	Dec 09, 10:05	# 75
Sean Jacobs, NY	Dec 09, 10:05	# 74

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Maria Spencer, NY Dec 09, 09:52 # 73

Heather Day, NY Dec 09, 09:50 # 72

Nina Dibner, NY Dec 09, 09:47 # 71
 Please allow Arts and Letters to reserve space for Black and Latino students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Diversity benefits all of us!!

Dara Cole, NY Dec 09, 09:38 # 70

Rebecca Paley, NY Dec 09, 09:36 # 69

Monica Christensen, NY Dec 09, 09:23 # 68
 I have had 3 children educated in the New York City public schools. Not only have they learned to be critical thinkers, competent writers and strong mathematicians, they have learned to interact with a diverse world in ways that would not have been available to them in many locations within the United States. Unfortunately, there are also few public schools in New York that reflect this diversity. This needs to be addressed. Being immersed in a diverse community is not painless -- there are challenges -- but it IS enriching and it does have the potential to be transformative for a society badly in need of such transformation.

S Tautz TamuPovi, NM Dec 09, 09:22 # 67

Washington, NY Dec 09, 09:21 # 66

Amy Taylor, NY Dec 09, 09:17 # 65
 NYC DOE parent

John O'Reilly, NY Dec 09, 09:10 # 64

Rosalind Muggeridge, NY Dec 09, 09:09 # 63

Carla Licavoli, NY Dec 09, 09:08 # 62

Hilary Botein, NY Dec 09, 09:07 # 61
 Arts & Letters parent

Stacey Billings, NY Dec 09, 09:04 # 60

Nicole Tu A&L, NY Dec 09, 09:04 # 59

Louise Sloan, NY Dec 09, 09:01 # 58
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Genna Goldsobel, NY	Dec 09, 08:59	# 57
Nikola Dobric, Serbia And Montenegro	Dec 09, 08:57	# 56
Jen Becker, NY Parent of an A&L student	Dec 09, 08:52	# 55
dawn babbush, NY Arts & Letters parent of 2nd & 4th grade children	Dec 09, 08:38	# 54
Liora Cobin, NY One of the blessings of New York City is it's diversity. More of the City's students should enjoy the educational benefits of this!	Dec 09, 08:36	# 53
Bliss Broyard, NY Another Arts & Letters parent in support of diversity in our school and all schools.	Dec 09, 08:34	# 52
Jessica Blatt, NY I have two children at Arts & Letters.	Dec 09, 08:34	# 51
Cristina Balboa, NY I am a parent to an Arts&Letters student. I was drawn to the school in part because of the importance it puts on giving all children a voice and am concerned that without a firm commitment by the DOE, many voices will be lost or drowned out.	Dec 09, 08:25	# 50
Carlos Graupera, NY parent of two at A&L	Dec 09, 08:23	# 49
Marnie Brady, NY NYC DOE Parent, A&L	Dec 09, 08:21	# 48
Letena Lindsay, NY I am a parent of two students at Arts & Letters.	Dec 09, 08:13	# 47
Mieke Janssen, Netherlands	Dec 09, 08:13	# 46
MONICA BERNAL, NY	Dec 09, 08:11	# 45
Elizabeth Agee, NY	Dec 09, 08:09	# 44
Name not displayed, BC	Dec 09, 08:09	# 43
Schanequa Knight, NY care2 petitions start a petition browse petitions care2 home media contact	Dec 09, 07:54	# 42

[more](#)

Mollita , NY	Dec 09, 07:54	# 41
Juliana Elfman, NY I'm a parent of an Arts & Letters student.	Dec 09, 07:47	# 40
Peter Markowitz, NY	Dec 09, 07:20	# 39
Bruce C Dubey, WI	Dec 09, 05:35	# 38
John Brewer, OH	Dec 09, 04:42	# 37
Serdar Murat, Austria	Dec 09, 04:19	# 36
Edo R, Croatia	Dec 09, 01:30	# 35
Name not displayed, AZ	Dec 09, 00:25	# 34
Hugh Smith, United Kingdom	Dec 09, 00:19	# 33
Mary Donnelly, SW	Dec 08, 23:43	# 32
Michael John Smith, Slovenia	Dec 08, 23:31	# 31
Rajeeva Ranjan, India	Dec 08, 22:46	# 30
Patricia Vazquez, Mexico	Dec 08, 21:59	# 29
Truman Gleason, NV	Dec 08, 20:39	# 28
Lucas Cook, IN	Dec 08, 19:27	# 27
Sumit jamadar, India	Dec 08, 18:52	# 26
Name not displayed, China	Dec 08, 18:16	# 25
Laura Larrison, IN	Dec 08, 17:48	# 24
Tresa Elguera, NY	Dec 08, 17:17	# 23

Mireille Helme, QC	Dec 08, 16:21	# 22
Tyra Morris, UT	Dec 08, 15:53	# 21
Maureen Michael, WA	Dec 08, 15:04	# 20
Milena K, Serbia And Montenegro	Dec 08, 14:59	# 19
Nancy W., WA	Dec 08, 14:48	# 18

Ferdinand Puttinger, Austria Dec 08, 14:37 # 17

Up to now science has revealed unimaginable interrelations for deeper Insights into viewable and invisible kinds of Existences in whole Universe. Not only to get amazing Knowledge about these existences, but also to widen our cognition for being able to Perceive our Marginal Role in this Universe. We should learn to be DEVOTED into our marginal being in contrast to overwhelming and generous appearance of unique Universe. Being Thankful and Compassionate to all beings means to recognise our essential Relatedness to all forms of appearances in Universe, but specially to those of our precious Earth. And practising Devotion to our marginal being could make us really Great and being generous to all Nature's Creatures. This devotion could change us to a New Mental existence, feeling Spiritual Kinship to nature's beings, what is finally everything what Universe has created since its Big Bang. To be Honestly Thankful for all being's existence let us feel Pure relationship to all Universe's appearances and creates desire for treating them Carefully. Awareness of Sentient beings evolved in Dialog with Universe's appearances and relies for its education into individual being's Consciousness furthermore on essential Stimulus of ambient outside world. Therefore our relationship to all Universe's appearances is evident. If we are tasting our being with all our precious Senses and being Thankful for this Great Gift, we really practise truthful Devotion and want no more longer ask ourselves how great is our role in the face of boundless Universe. This means being Aware of our Awareness and creates Loving Attitude. Such a mental attitude wants let also disappear borders of Religious Denominations. INDEED whole Humankind belongs to one and Universal Spirit of LOVE and COMPASSION, so Let us Be compassionate and give Love to all Nature's Creatures. Or in other Words & More Clearly: We should Not let RULE our EGO, because Ego based Behavior cannot be satisfied and wants finally destroy its environment only for short moments of feeling Saturated! Thank you for your worthy Attention & All Efforts to improve our precious Earth's Condition. Kindest regards, AUSTRIA / Europe.

Dee Andrews, United Kingdom	Dec 08, 14:28	# 16
Kathleen Mireault, MA	Dec 08, 13:56	# 15
Jason Morris, PA	Dec 08, 13:54	# 14
Gary Butler, QL	Dec 08, 13:25	# 13
Apostle Kontos, Greece	Dec 08, 12:45	# 12
Alexandr Yantselovskiy, Ukraine	Dec 08, 11:51	# 11

Denise Hok, CO	Dec 08, 11:10	# 10
Petra Stefanescu, Romania	Dec 08, 11:08	# 9
Jim Melton, SC	Dec 08, 10:51	# 8
Stardust Noel, AL	Dec 08, 10:00	# 7
Christine U, Romania	Dec 08, 09:57	# 6
shari halvorsen, WA	Dec 08, 09:47	# 5
Parag Vaidya, MD	Dec 08, 09:19	# 4
Carole Hagen, OR	Dec 08, 09:17	# 3
Roberto MARINI, Italy I think it is right to reserve space to Blak and lationo students. all races and cultures must be represented in a school	Dec 08, 08:56	# 2
Michael Criswell, CO	Dec 08, 08:38	# 1

See more petitions:
Education

Deborah Croland
1965 Broadway, Apt. 19A
New York, NY 10023

My name is Deborah Croland, my daughter is a Freshman at Stuyvesant High School, and I urge you to **please vote "NO" on Resolution 442.**

I believe strongly, that using the SHSAT to competitively identify high achieving students is appropriate because it is unbiased, objective, and transparent. The SHSAT allows no subjective or manipulative criteria to taint the test. It does not take into account race, or religion, or ethnic origin, or gender, or nationality or status, or economic background, or sexual orientation. All students, regardless of background can qualify. I further disagree with Reso 0453-2014 as it relates to the specialized high schools admissions, setting diversity as a priority.

Using the SHSAT test as the only entry criteria also ensures that the students will meet the criteria for being successful at the schools that they have chosen, and in which they have enrolled. If the standards are lowered for entry into these schools, and the schools keep the same high standards for their curriculum and testing, then some students may not be able to perform well at these specialized high schools. This would not be good for the students' self-esteem, or success in enrolling in an institution of higher education, or for becoming a confident adult who contributes to society.

The city needs to better prepare students for entry into these specialized high schools if they would like to change the demographics of these schools. They need to make sure that children are receiving a strong academic education in the elementary and middle schools. The city should focus on improving the academic performance at the lower performing elementary and middle schools if they would like a positive change.

There are currently other good public high school choices in New York City besides the specialized high schools. Laguardia High school, Beacon High School, Bard High School, and Millenium High School, just to name a few are all very good schools that do not use the SHSAT for admission. Rather than changing the entry criteria for the specialized high schools, I believe that the city should focus on improving the education at the other high schools to produce more good options for the children in the city. Not all students are mathematicians or scientists, some are writers, some are artists, mechanics, plumbers or electricians. If the city had more vocational high schools, and more good high school choices that can nurture students' diverse talents for both academic and non-academic subjects, then all students in the city could benefit.

By having many types of good school choices in the city, some using the SHSAT as it's only criteria, and some using other criteria such as essays, interviews, portfolios, performances, grades, etc..., it ensures that all types of students can receive a good education, those that are good test takers, and those that are good interviewers, and those that are good artists, etc... This will be a better method to ensure that the city will produce confident adults who can contribute to society in many different ways.

Therefore, I strongly believe that the entry criteria for the specialized high schools should remain the same, SHSAT test alone. **Please vote "NO" on Resolution 442.**

FOR THE RECORD

Good afternoon everyone, my name Melanee Farrah and I am graduate of the Bronx High School of Science class of 1996. I matriculated with quite frankly far more Black and Latino classmates than students at Stuyvesant and Bronx Sci engage with today. But it must be of note that our opposition to Resolution 442 does not fly in the face change and diversity. Quite the contrary - It is more than sad news that only **seven** black students were offered seats at Stuyvesant. Our opposition sounds the alarm that support of Albany's effort to change the current process is an insufficient and insulting bandaid fix to the problem that Blacks and Latinos who deserve the quality elementary and junior high school educations they were promised. Why doesn't the low enrollment of Blacks and Latinos at these specialized high schools shine a light on the imbalanced state of public education in NYC. How does the consideration of amending a merit based process to include subjective criteria, or worse yet state assessment scores with less than 3% of B/L considered passing in 8th grade this year - impact change and increase diversity?

For the last 30+ years, the factor used to determine admission to these schools has been a three-hour exam that critics maintain, **but have not** proven to be unfair to minorities. This claim has not been validated by researchers, only associated with low enrollment by those who do not understand that correlation does not equal causation. The SHSAT as it stands tests skills needed to succeed in these Science and Math focused institutions - I maintain that what is unfair is an aggressive shift to multiple measures for admission that have been proven only to increase access to their Caucasian counterparts. Leaving me to ask what does Diversity really mean to you?

Let me get personal for a minute. I am not the only person in my family to graduate from Bronx Science - I am the third African American. And if it wasn't for an admissions process that is a pure meritocracy, with a standard that is transparent my uncles in the early and late 1970s may not have access to the opportunity without a test was fair, color-blind, and objective.

- It is not okay to state that a test is a barrier to access without proving it
- It is not okay to push a child into an academic situation unprepared
- It is not okay to ignore the inequities among NYCs Middle and Junior High schools -
- It is to tell me that Black and Latino need a variance to access these schools because they cannot accomplish it based on merit.
- It is not okay to punish low-income ESL parents that work extra jobs to afford help for their child
- It is not okay to discriminate against parents taking the time, effort & money to invest in their child.

These things are contrary to what we know:

- All of our children are deserving of improved K-8 opportunities.
- Parent engagement is a necessity for a child's success.
- A top down approach - much like trickle down economics, just will not work.
- *Subjective criteria leads to more bias*

It is my hope today to convince you that a politically expedient solution such as this does not address challenges with performance and diversity appropriately. Proponents of this change hope that the "multiple measures" approach will lead to a more racially diverse student body. It has even been stated that by Mayor DeBlasio that 'We have to determine what combination of measures will be fair.' But tell me... Is it fair to ignore the societal factors that the children face before they ever sit down for the test? How can the test be unfair when Asians perform well, despite the fact that they have the highest poverty rate of any racial group in New York? No matter which way you frame the issue – the current proposal is wrongheaded and insufficient because a more holistic admissions process would actually put poorer kids at an even larger disadvantage than they currently are.

One consideration touted was attendance - how can that be?? It is widely agreed that *poverty* and school absence or truancy often feed each other.

The conditions that *students* living in *poverty* face (poor nutrition, lack of access to healthcare, even a lack bus fare at month's end) exacerbate poor attendance. And slipping school attendance often leads a person back down the poverty path. Let's not go down that road. Let us ask who would be the beneficiary of this new process and who would suffer - let us just

I leave you today urging you to think and work harder to support of our children. Prepare them for the test which is the only truly meritorious and unbiased way of determining who gets offered a seat to the specialized high schools. Preserve the SHSAT. It is possible and our responsibility to increase diversity while maintaining objective admissions criteria.

Thank you for your time.

OPPOSITION TO RESOLUTION 442

PLEASE VOTE NO TO RESOLUTION 442 December 11, 2014

My name is Teresa Uthurralt and I graduated from Stuyvesant in 1985. Like many Stuy alum, my parents were immigrants and my first language was not English. In our home we spoke Spanish. Stuyvesant was a godsend for me, academically and socially. I urge you to vote to vote NO on Resolution 442 so that our school may continue to serve the needs of academically gifted children.

Subjective criteria will merely lower the minimum test scores and not solve our true problem --the appalling quality of K8 education for our city's children. What a terrible message to send a child: we don't think you are able to pass a math and English test (the two most important subjects for academic success) so we are going to lower the bar to give you a shot.

And what exactly would that accomplish? What happens when they apply for college? Are you going to be able to persuade MIT to accept a 500 Math SAT score because of the student's teacher recommendations? And what about when they apply for their first job at Google and they fail to solve a highly analytical problem in one of those famous rigorous interviews. Will you be able to arrange for that job offer with extra stock options just because the candidate will enhance the company's diversity?

Ladies and Gentlemen, I know you wouldn't choose an "easy" fix that really fixes nothing. You wouldn't have chosen to serve on our City Council if you were not committed to fighting hard for your constituents. **WE SHOULD NOT BE LOWERING THE BAR. WE SHOULD BE RAISING THE CHILDREN.** And that's hard work---so much harder than changing the admissions policy of three schools. But it's the single most important challenge that faces our city.

Ask yourself this, if the SHSAT were being offered to lower and middle class kids in Mumbai---don't you think most of them would pass it? Here's what you should be asking Chancellor Farina and Mayor De Blasio: why is it that the majority of our children cannot pass a rigorous math and English test which is a precursor to the SAT?

Consider each year we could fill all of our top colleges with foreign applicants many times over with perfect 800 Math SAT scores. Why is that most of our students cannot meet that bar?

This is the issue you should be pounding the table over. This is the fire that is raging. We are not preparing our children to thrive in the digital economy. We are putting their future at risk.

I work for a large tech company based on the West Coast. I am shocked by what I see in my industry---an enormous amount of unfilled, high paying jobs that Americans do. Lowering the test scores at these schools is like pretending that the whole world is not passing us by in math and science.

Amidst this bleak landscape the specialized high schools nurture deep pockets of math and science talent. The last thing we should be doing is undermining their mission. Instead we should be working to give every child in New York the chance to be proficient in math and science.

PLEASE OPPOSE RESOLUTION 442

VOTE NO!

TERESA UTHURRALT

uthurralt@gmail.com

Stuyvesant High School Parent against 442

I am a parent with a child attending Stuyvesant High School and I am here today to urge the City Council to support Diversity Fairness & Merit by supporting the SHSAT test for Stuyvesant High School, Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science and the other four specialized high schools and by Opposing resolution 442.

We know the numbers that have led to what brings us here today - low percentages of African American and Hispanic students accepted at the specialized high schools.

But there is a story behind the numbers. Let's not misread that story. It not a story of a flawed test. It is not a story of a discriminatory admissions policy.

Instead It is a story of K to 8 problems - unequal access to high quality pre-school, a disparity in academic outcomes even by the end of 1st grade when African American and Latino students score 25 to 30 percent below Asian and White students, a gap that persists through 8th grade.

The story includes higher rates of absenteeism among African American and Latino students, and possibly inadequate health care, higher rates of chronic health problems. Other parts of this story are about closing of private catholic schools over the past decade which had been serving African American and Latino students at or near the poverty level, and about a failure to encourage more African American and Latino 8th graders to prepare sufficiently and then to take the SHSAT test. There is also a part of the story about African American and Latino students being underrepresented in the "feeder" middle schools which account for 85% of the Specialized High School offers made in 2012-2013. Yes these problems must be addressed - but at the source - these are K to 8 problems, not a SHSAT problem.

But there is a part of this story that is a Success story. Stuyvesant and the other specialized high schools are serving thousands of students from disadvantaged backgrounds every year, giving them an education of unparalleled quality and serving as a ladder up and out of poverty for countless young people. At least half of those attending specialized schools are from families living near or below the poverty line. These schools provide a free, first rate education to a remarkable student body - The academic outcomes of NYC's specialized high schools are unsurpassed by any other school in the City's system. The 2014 US News & World Report ranked all 8 of the specialized schools among the top 200 high schools in the nation. You have already noted the 14 Nobel Prize winners among the alumni of Stuyvesant , Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech.

But my part of the story is that of a parent who wants the same thing all parents want - a child who will learn in a high school where they are understood and challenged, that they are in the right place with peers are who share in their interests and aspirations. These high-achieving students, these gifted students who were able to receive offers based on the one criteria - the SHSAT test which does not read gender, does not read race, does not read zip codes, does not read economic status - but only reads the story of academic merit.

If we listen to this story, it will be understood by all - Oppose 442.

-Sylvia Ramos
Parent of Stuyvesant High School 9th grader

Community Education Council 24

P.S. 91 Room 119 68-10 Central Avenue

Glendale, New York 11385

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Department of Education Official:

Ms. Madelene Taub-Chan
Community Superintendent District 24

November 25, 2014

Resolution # 99 Position on Specialized High School Admissions Test

WHEREAS, specialized high schools offer excellent educational opportunities to the children of District 24;

WHEREAS, the SHSAT is a merit based objective exam;

WHEREAS, admission to the specialized high schools is based on a student's achievement on the SHSAT;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Community District Education Council of District 24:

- Requests the New York City Department of Education keep the current admission policy in place for the New York City specialized high schools
- Requests our state legislators not repeal the 1971 law regarding New York City specialized high schools admissions.

My name is Ying-ke Chin-Lee and I'm a junior in Stuyvesant High School. I oppose Resolution 442.

I read what is said by those from the other side. I feel what they said is false, misleading, or irrelevant.

Most offensive to me is when they call us "test robots." I find this racist. Just because I'm Asian, they judge me as having gone to cram school since first grade, and as good at nothing but taking tests. They don't know what they are talking about. I never went to cram school. I borrowed a practice test book from the Public Library, and I did practice tests. That's all.

I am a person. I am alive. I day-dream and have hobbies. I crack jokes and do silly things with friends.

Yet, those who call me test robot de-humanize me just because I am smart, just because I worked hard in my K through 8 education. Is that really what our education leaders want to do?

At Stuyvesant, some of my friends did go to cram school, because their public schools didn't prepare them for a rigorous high school. Some of them are poor; cram school is not expensive. Some test prep is even free! Do our education leaders really want to scorn those who try to catch up on weekends what they are not learning during the week from lousy K through 8 public schools?

When kids practice hard at basketball so they can play professionally, do they get racist epithets? It takes hard work, plus talent, to earn a place at the NBA. It takes hard work, plus talent, to earn a place at Stuyvesant. Neither are entitlements. Every one of us at Stuyvesant earned his place. Just which one of us is to give up his place for someone who did not work as hard or is less talented?

I urge you to vote against Resolution 442.

Thank you.

Testimony of Faye Moore, Brooklyn Technical High School Class of 1976

Good Morning. My name is Faye Moore. I graduated from Brooklyn Technical High School in 1976. I am here to speak in opposition to City Council Resolution 442.

The resolution provides support for bills pending in both the State Senate & Assembly that adds “multiple objective criteria” for admission to the Specialized High Schools. The bill speaks of grade point averages, attendance records, an admission test and state test scores as better criteria.

I submit to you that these additional criteria will not diversify the student body. Grades are by their very nature are subjective measurements and affect different students in different ways. A talkative student may be seen as having poor self control and lose grade points in a final grade. A student that doesn't speak in class may be in crisis at home and be penalized in a class that encourages participation. Attendance can be affected by external pressures like housing, employment and the health of caretakers. State test scores can be impacted simply by the resources available in a school.

The new criteria will place the burdens of an overwhelmed educational

system on the shoulders of 13 year olds. It will hold them responsible for grades obtained in crowded classrooms and attendance based on external factors beyond their control . The addition of these factors does not a guarantee an increase the population of African-American and Latino students. It does guarantee a magnification of the shortfalls in the NYC public school system and the very children you seek to assist will see more barriers, not less.

I should say that I am a Civil Servant and have been for my entire career. I am a firm believer that merit and fitness are best measured by examinations. Additional criteria tend to help those who have more access to resources and encourages bias in criteria that may appear impartial in its language. An example would be a civil servant being promoted based on a political connection and not thru competition on a level playing field. For a middle school student it could mean a student gaining a coveted high school seat because his GPA reflect his extra credit submissions as opposed to a student residing in a shelter with barely enough room or quiet to complete her homework.

Rather than burden children with new admission criteria, I feel the Council's energy is best placed in enhancing the middle school experience. Appropriate allocations to middle schools for math and science help,

enhanced reading comprehension and social service supports will go along way in giving children the tools to not only pass the Specialized High School Admissions Test, but to succeed in any educational setting.

When I took the exam, my family was long time members of the working poor. We were also in complete turmoil for a variety of reasons. When I sat for the test, no one knew what I was going through nor did I know anyone else's circumstances. I took the exam and passed comfortably. I didn't think I was different or special; just a kid running in a race where the START line was the same for everyone. It wasn't about being measured differently. It was about being like everybody else. I strongly urge you to vote against Resolution 442.

Thank you.

December 11, 2014

To: New York City Council

From: Aaron Cheung, Bronx High School of Science '15 <cheungal@bxscience.edu>

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF RES 0442 – FROM A CURRENT STUDENT

My name is Aaron Cheung. I am currently a fourth year Asian American student at Bronx Science. I have served as a class Alternate Senator for two years and an executive Cabinet Officer for one year. I currently serve as a Lt. Governor in Key Club International, leading eight schools, five of which are specialized. I am also a Questbridge Scholarship Finalist, one of the most prestigious scholarships given to only low-income students. The average custodial income of Questbridge Finalists is \$33,468. My custodial income is about half that amount.

As a senior at The Bronx High School of Science and a student organization officer of three years, I urge the City Council to reject Resolution 442. An anonymous in-class survey conducted by the *Science Survey*, Bronx Science's publication, showed that approximately 70% of students believed that the SHSAT should not be changed. In addition, I have obtained almost 3,000 supporters of a petition calling on the Mayor and state legislators not to change the admissions policy at the specialized high schools.

Resolution 442 is a racist proposal. Deborah S. Metrick says it all: "By lowering the standards, the minimum requirements - you are telling these students you have no faith in their ability to learn! How dare you?" Are we to say that black and Latino students cannot rise to the challenge of the SHSAT? No, we are not. I believe educational reform in the elementary and middle school systems in troubled communities will help even the playing field.

Most specialized high school students see above race and regard each other as intellectual equals. **Our opinions and ideas are supported only by the facts that we present instead of our racial heritage or socioeconomic status. We are against ad hominem logical fallacy and you should be too.**

Ask yourself the following questions. How will the introduction of students who were not accepted into the "meritocracy" affect current students? Why fix a system that has nourished so many prominent Nobel Laureates, Pulitzer Prize winners or Emmy and Oscar recipients? If we were to begin accepting less qualified students based on affirmative action, will we have to reduce the academic rigor at our specialized high schools to accommodate the new students? **Should you be spending your time discussing this topic or discovering ways to reform the school system to better prepare students for a high school or collegiate education?**

Leaders, I ask that you find it within yourselves to address a more serious problem in our school system: the poor quality of New York City elementary schools, middle schools and non-specialized high schools. **Our attention should be dedicated towards developing city schools to meet the rigorous academic standards.**

As a low-income first generation American student, I urge you to oppose the resolution 442 in the hopes that another reform, in which elementary, middle school and high school education are improved, can be achieved. If we dodge the problem now, we set an example for officials to dodge it again in the future.

My name is Soo Kim, and I am a proud graduate the NYC public school system. I immigrated here when I was 5 years old, learned English watching television and attended schools across Queens. I graduated from Stuyvesant from 1993. After graduating from Princeton, I came back to live and work in the city. I started my Wall Street career at Bankers Trust, and 7 years ago I start my own investment management firm called Standard General, which directly employs 14 colleagues here in NYC. I currently live on the Upper West Side with my wife and young daughter.

I come to you as the President of the Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association. We appreciate the time we have been given to share with the City Council some thoughts before you vote on Resolution 442.

The SHSAT results, when viewed through a demographic lens, paint an unacceptable picture. The number of Black and Latino students that qualify for the top Specialized High Schools is a travesty. There is clearly a serious achievement gap for certain minority groups and neighborhoods.

But don't shoot the messenger. The results on the Specialized High School Admissions Test is not unlike the results evident in city and statewide tests given at Elementary Schools and Middle Schools. Similar achievement gaps are evident long before students sit for this exam.

The solution cannot be to change the objective measure. Throwing out a thermostat that tells you how cold it is in the room will not heat the room. Even if this effort were to succeed, at some point in one's life you will face objective measures. Perhaps it will be in the process of getting into college, most of whom still require the SAT, or your first steps after graduating from college, many which require testing for admissions to academies and further professional schools. Eventually each student and graduate will be measured objectively.

We citizens of NYC should all be outraged about this demographic achievement gap. But we would suggest tackling the problem directly in the schools and neighborhoods that are failing a large portion of these communities. Instead of spending time debating a State Law in City Council, let's work with the City and the Department of Education to address the root causes and change outcomes.

Thank you.

PLEASE VOTE NO ON RESOLUTION 442

Written testimony for the record at the New York City Council's hearing on resolution 0442-2014 on Thursday, December 11, 2014:

I urge you to vote no on resolution 0442 and keep the SHSAT as the sole criteria for entry into New York's Specialized High Schools. The distinguishing feature of the Specialized Science High Schools is the high mathematical and scientific aptitude of its students. Preserving the current admissions criteria is the best way to maintain what makes these schools so valuable not just for its students, but the overall community.

Studying for the SHSAT when I was in the 7th and 8th grades through the Specialized High School Institute test prep program (known at the time as the Math Science Institute) was an incredibly rewarding experience. It was during this time that I not only accelerated my knowledge of mathematics far past what I was learning in my standard middle school curriculum, but it was also when I first discovered that I enjoyed mathematics enough to want to pursue it as a career. If admissions to the Specialized High Schools had not been based solely on a test, my parents and educators may have instead been content to let me learn at less swift pace.

It is telling that, although the middle school I attended (LAB Middle School) is considered one of the better public middle schools in the city, I still found the pace of my regular math instruction to be slow compared to the SHSAT exam. It is for this reason that I encourage you to consider, as an alternative to resolution 0442, policies to expand and strengthen public test preparation programs like the Specialized High School Institute, not to mention broadly improving middle school math education to match the exacting but fair rigor of the SHSAT.

The best thing about my 4 years at Stuyvesant High School was the fact that all of my classmates had a high aptitude for math and science, which may not have been the case without the SHSAT. Contrary to the stereotype, math and science are collaborative disciplines. Students with strong math skills are most engaged and learn the most when they are surrounded by other similarly strong math students. Moreover, teachers can more easily create an appropriate curriculum if their students meet a minimum basic level.

I loved my time at Stuyvesant. I attribute a big part of my motivation and ability to pursue a career in math to the special character of my alma mater. I eventually went on to earn a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Harvard, and am currently pursuing a PhD in mathematics from NYU's Courant Institute. The gifted friends I made in high school are still some of my closest friends and continue to inspire me.

That I was one of only a small percentage of black students at Stuyvesant is something that concerns me. However, I do not think that changing the SHSAT is the best way to address problems of diversity attendance. Aforementioned alternative measures, such as strengthening existing test preparation outreach efforts, as well as improving middle school education, should be explored first.

*-Romeo Alexander
Stuyvesant High School Alumnus, 2007.
PhD Student at NYU Courant Institute.
e-mail: romeo.pr.alexander@gmail.com*

New York City Council Hearing
Education Committee
11 December 2014
Testimony Urging a Vote AGAINST Resolution 442-2014
by
Wai Wah Chin

My name is Wai Wah Chin. I'm a parent at Stuyvesant and a former Co-President of its Parent's Association.

Our schools are communities built not just by students, alums, and staff. They're also built by parents and families. Stuy's PA supports our kids' academics and extracurriculars in Stuy, just as we parents support them outside. We enjoy this duty.

I oppose Reso 442. Why?

Because keeping to a single, uniform, objective, academic test is the fairest way to admit the brightest and best-prepared students into our Specialized High Schools.

The test covers basic skills needed in our schools. Skills learned over years, not just in a cram course. And if you fail to meet the cut-off in one school, there are plenty others. It's not a one-day high stake, high stress test.

The test is objective, so money or connections don't count. In fact, this objective test created Hecht-Colandra schools where over half the kids are on free or reduced lunch. Many of the parents speak no English, but work multiple jobs. Our schools serve the poor and underprivileged.

The test is objective, ignoring the backgrounds of students, so no ethnic or demographic group is favored. It looks only for the brightest and best prepared. That's why these schools are already extremely diverse, with ethnic and religious groups from all over the world.

These schools are very diverse, but they're not racially representative. So let's talk race. NYS's basic state academic assessments rank kids by 4 Levels. 1 and 2 are fail, 3 is pass, and 4 is high pass. The DOE's figures show that this year, only 2.1% of 8th grade Black students were Level 4. 84% fail, scoring in Levels 1 and 2. Latinos had 2.8% in Level 4. Our schools tap a small percentage from Level 4, so you see what the problem is. It's not the SHSAT. It's a far bigger problem. Too few Level 4s. Solving it helps all Black and Latino kids, while tinkering with the test masks the problem, and helps only a few by comparison.

Solve that bigger problem--with parents in the solution—and because the test is objective, the test will insure that more Blacks and Latinos will be in the specialized high schools. Stuy has students, staff, and alums who actively outreach to them. But outreach isn't enough. It's not the test. Fix K-8. Raise the 2.1. Our whole city would benefit.

I urge you to vote against Reso 442.

December 11, 2014

I, Christina Alfonso (Stuyvesant HS '01, SHSAA Director & Diversity Committee Chair) strongly urge you **to vote AGAINST resolution 442:**

- 1) Changing the admissions criteria to include grades, state test scores and more subjective factors won't necessarily lead to intended racial outcomes, because, "the reality is that disparities in academic outcomes start very early on." The disparities need to be tacked at their inception.**

- 2) There are more effective ways the city can improve diversity at these schools, including, but not limited to, targeted outreach (making sure students are aware of the SHSAT and the specialized schools well before 8th grade), advanced and SP classes in EVERY middle school, free, after school test preparation to anyone who is interested, and a restructuring of the Discovery Program to focus on students in underrepresented zip codes.**

- 3) Having students who are ill-prepared to handle the extremely rigorous courseload will not benefit them or the other students who are academically ready, and can even serve to tarnish the reputation of these schools, which have been the gems and shining light of the NYC Public School System for decades.**

- 4) For many black and latino alums, Stuyvesant and the other specialized schools were a place where diversity and acceptance were intertwined, because everyone overcame the same hurdle for admission.**

FOR THE
RECORD

FOR THE RECORD

December 11, 2014

Honorable Chair and Members of NYC City Council,

Good morning. I am here to urge the members of NYC Council to NOT pass a resolution to support the pending bills in NY State legislature that seek to substantially modify or destroy the SHSAT Exam.

Instead I beg the City Council to pass a resolution and urge the NY Dept of Education to make test preparation material and summer classes starting at the end of 5th grade or at the start of 6th grade.

With effort and resources, I am confident that we will be able to increase the representation of underserved populations at the specialized high schools.

I beg the NY City Council to not take away the opportunities these schools give to hard-working and motivated students across all sections of society, including economically disadvantaged populations.

Thank you.

VISAY AGARWALA, 220 E. 54th St.
New York, NY ^{#7A} 10022



The New York City Charter School Center
Erik Joerss, Deputy for Government Affairs
Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Education Committee
Oversight Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools and
Intro-0511-A-2014 and Resolution 453-2014
Thursday, December 11, 2014

Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education. My name is Erik Joerss and I am the Deputy for Government Affairs at the New York City Charter School Center. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

The New York City Charter School Center is an independent, not-for-profit organization established in 2005 to help new charter schools get started, support existing schools, and build community support so that highly effective schools can flourish. I am pleased to testify this afternoon about Diversity in New York City Schools and Intro 0511-A-2014.

This proposed local law would require the New York City Department of Education to make annual reports about the demographic diversity of students served in district and charter public schools. This is a laudable goal; and one we publicly called for in recent weeks. Insisting on real data about school enrollment is a powerful way of grounding the discussion about a topic where speculation and rumor sometimes run rampant.

While a substantial amount of the data that would be reported under Intro 511-A is eventually available through the New York State Report Cards, an earlier release by the City would benefit the public debate on diversity in public schools. What would be more novel—and more powerful— though is the proposed requirement to join this data with information about the admissions' requirements for each school and program.

We also welcome Resolution 453 and the call to consider diversity in re-zoning decisions. Both Senator Elizabeth Warren and former Labor Secretary Robert Reich have both identified zoning

as a primary impediment to integrated schools. It's long past time that our education debates grapple with a central source of inequity in public education: the combination of formal policies and economic realities that make some public schools inaccessible to large swaths of the public.

What does public school selectivity look like? In elementary school, it looks like enrollment zones and school districts that have the effect of reflecting the racial and economic divides of the private housing market in public school classrooms. If you doubt the link is that clear, just listen to what affluent parents say when the Department of Education proposes a change to zone lines:

"My family bought a place in what we thought was P.S. 321. Now we'd be put into a new school. We played by the rules; we bought in zone because we want to be in that zone."

"We were looking for [P.S.] 321 — and it's priced into the real estate around here."

"I deliberately moved into high-tax Tribeca, where I pay \$25,000 a year in property taxes, because I wanted the amenities of the historic district — and PS 234."

"Yes, we're fortunate in District 2 because we do have more affluent families and we do have some of the political powerhouses here. But nonetheless if parents get together and push for change, I don't see why we couldn't create district priority *schools in other districts*." [Emphasis added.]

What does public school selectivity look like? In middle school, it can mean minimum test scores, minimum report card grades, essays, writing samples, performance tasks, teacher recommendations, preferences for students who ranked the school as a top choice, and even interviews. As one prominent district middle school advertises, "we are looking for socially and emotionally mature students with demonstrated strong academic skills." Keep in mind, this is regarding 11-year-olds seeking to attend a public school.

What does public school selectivity look like? Outside of the exam-only schools, it can look a lot like a college-style admissions process. Such structures could be expected to exclude students who have been failed by public elementary schools while providing an advantage to privileged families with the time and knowledge to negotiate an elaborate and somewhat subjective admissions process.

One in three of the city's middle and high school seats are filled by students who applied through a selective admissions process. These schools enroll a disproportionately low number of students who are Black, Hispanic, or from low-income families.

Charter public schools are included in this transparency legislation, as they should be. As you know, however, state law requires charter school admissions to be conducted by random lottery, without regard for academic record. To use any of the above-mentioned academic admissions criteria in a charter school would be illegal. We welcome scrutiny of the data on this issue, which show charter schools to be among the city's most accessible, high-quality public schools.

Many charter schools are located in residentially and economically segregated areas, which the charter sector serves proudly, and despite the repugnant suggestion by those who have misunderstood, deliberately or otherwise, the UCLA or Economic Policy Institute studies that this makes charter schooling somehow analogous to the racism of the Jim Crow South or Apartheid South Africa. These schools rather are simply reflections of the neighborhoods they were created to serve. Other charter schools, including some with leaders testifying here today, are serving very diverse communities, which we know can yield powerful benefits for student learning.

If this Council is serious about questions of diversity in our public education system, this conversation must not end today, or with the passage of this bill.

The bill should be expanded, to require reporting of 1) policy details about the admissions criteria to individual district and charter schools; 2) the steps NYC DOE is taking to prevent socioeconomic bias or favoritism in subjective admissions decisions; and 3) the total estimated commitment—in time spent and pages submitted—required to participate in the admissions process for any given selective district school.

Even more crucially, the value of diversity in schools must be consistently respected and defended in our policy debates. Charter schools have seen our elected leaders fail, over and over again, to stand up for the value of diversity when it appears in a charter context. If charter schools serving racially segregated neighborhoods are treated as a problem, and charter schools trying to open in racially diverse neighborhoods are also treated as a problem, then this isn't about diversity at all.

Quotes and findings in this testimony are fully documented in the Charter Center's 2014 report,

No Velvet Ropes: How NYC Charter Schools Make Opportunity Accessible, *available online at* <http://www.nyccharterschools.org/resources/novelvetropes>



NO VELVET ROPES

How NYC Charter Schools Make Opportunity Accessible



NEW YORK CITY
CHARTER SCHOOL
CENTER

It's about great public schools.

APRIL 2014

Executive Summary

As New York City begins a new educational era, news accounts still divide our public schools into two categories: charter schools and traditional public schools. Charter schools' critics claim the difference is in the selectivity of "elite charter schools," in contrast to "public schools, which take all comers."¹ Yet parents, and particularly low-income parents, know the truth: not all district-run schools are equally accessible to the public. Between formally selective admissions policies and the economically segregating effect of the private housing market, many district public schools are effectively off-limits to hundreds of thousands of families—as if surrounded by invisible velvet ropes.

Working within this selectively public system, public charter schools play a critical and genuinely *progressive* role: providing disadvantaged families some of the city's most accessible and high-quality school options.

An analysis of publicly available data shows:

- Approximately **one third (32%) of the city's middle and high school seats are filled by students who applied through a selective admissions process.** These schools enroll a disproportionately low number of students who are Black, Hispanic, or from low-income families.
- Most traditional district elementary schools admit students who live in a geographic "zone," but **school zones reflect the same dramatic inequalities of access as the housing market itself, and residents of affluent neighborhoods treat public school assignment as part of their private housing investment.** Many other elementary schools and programs are designated for Gifted & Talented students, as judged by test scores.
- **Charter schools enroll students by random lottery,** without regard to academic record. Most charter schools operate in one of three lower-income areas of New York City: Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx. **In these areas, charter elementary schools were twice as likely as district schools to earn an "A" in Student Progress, an indication of students making academic gains over time,** on the 2012-13 NYC Progress Reports (34% vs. 17%).
- Charter schools also offer accessible opportunity in middle school and high school, when students are more likely to travel from their local neighborhoods. Charter middle and high schools citywide were **more likely to earn an "A" in Student Progress than every type of district school except the most selective,** which admit students strictly by test.

Introduction

“Who’s really leaving children behind? Is it public schools, which take all comers — and get blasted when their test scores aren’t up to par? Or elite charter schools...?”

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION NEWSPAPER NEA TODAY²

“Applicants will be screened based on their academic record, performance on the most recent State Math and ELA tests, results of a math and writing exam at ESMS, and a short interview with a faculty member.”

ADMISSIONS WEB PAGE FOR A DISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOL ON MANHATTAN’S UPPER EAST SIDE³

As New York City begins a new educational era, news accounts still divide our public schools into two categories: charter schools and “traditional” public schools. Charter school critics claim the difference is in the selectivity of “elite charter schools,” in contrast to “public schools, which take all comers.”⁴ Yet parents, and particularly low-income parents, know the truth: not all district-run schools are equally accessible to the public. Between formally selective admissions policies and the economically segregating effect of the private housing market, many district public schools are effectively off-limits to hundreds of thousands of families —as if surrounded by invisible velvet ropes.

New York City’s public charter schools, by contrast, are legally required enroll students by random lottery. While the question of whether charter schools enroll a wide enough cross-section of students is an important one, charter critics’ favored talking point that district schools are “open to all” is simply not true.

In fact, analysis of enrollment policies and achievement data shows that New York City’s public charter schools play a critical and genuinely progressive role: providing disadvantaged families some of the city’s most accessible *and* high-quality school options. Accessibility is critical because not every family can afford to live in an affluent school zone, and not all students qualify for admission to a selective public school.

Yet access is only part of the story; what parents really want is access to an *effective* school.

This paper uses data from the New York City Department of Education to describe the accessibility and academic impact of New York City’s system of public schools, district and charter.

We first describe how New York City’s public school choices and admissions policies fall on a spectrum on which charter schools are among the most accessible to the general public. We use data from the Department of Education *Enrollment Guides* to describe the range of formal admissions policies in district middle and high schools, comparing them to charter school lottery rules. We then explore the realities of school accessibility in expensive neighborhoods, where geographic enrollment zones make the cost of housing just as prohibitive as private school tuition.

We then analyze data from New York City’s School Progress Reports, which make it possible to evaluate the academic progress individual schools’ students make each year, compared to other students with similar test scores the year before. The data show that, for families who reside in low-income neighborhoods and do not have access to selective public schools, a charter school is often their child’s best bet to move toward proficiency, college readiness, and full participation in civic and economic life.

Enrollment Accessibility at District Middle and High Schools

IN NEW YORK CITY'S DISTRICT MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS, ONE IN THREE SEATS IS ONLY AVAILABLE BY SELECTIVE ADMISSION.



A review of the admissions policies of New York City's public middle and high schools reveals a wide spectrum of accessibility, with charter schools among the more accessible.

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) publishes *Enrollment Guides* listing all of its schools and school programs, as well as their respective admissions requirements. Because these *Guides* have been available publicly only in document (.pdf) form, we manually converted selected fields into a database format. By tabulating the schools in each of NYC DOE's admissions categories, we can see the shape of public school selectivity in New York City.⁵ The spectrum of admissions requirements at New York City public schools, district and charter, is summarized in Table 1.

The spectrum is strikingly wide. At the middle school and high school levels, 20 percent of seats are in "Screened" admissions programs, which require minimum test scores and/or grades, and may also require a record of attendance, a work sample, a student interview, a "qualifying assessment," or an "admission activity." Additional selective seats are at schools that admit students by Audition (3% of all seats), by Test (6%), or by a screening policy that includes language spoken and academic record (3%).

Altogether, approximately one third (32%) of all public school seats in middle and high schools are in schools with some level of selective admissions. (A majority of screened middle schools also employ geographic preferences for students who reside in the local Community School District or neighborhood school zone, which adds an additional element of selectivity.)

In addition to the selective-admission schools, 21 percent of middle and high school seats have an admissions preference for students who attend an information session. Unscreened schools, the least selective, offer 10 percent of seats, while an additional 22 percent of seats are in schools that are zoned by residential location.

As a consequence of their admissions policies, selective district middle and high schools also enroll a disproportionately low number of students who are Black or Hispanic (28% vs. 68% in district schools citywide); or eligible for the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch program (57% vs. 72% citywide).

Table 1: THE PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMISSIONS SPECTRUM

New York City public schools are not equally open to all students.

SCHOOL TYPES:	Open			Interest Required		Selective	Most Selective	
	Unscreened Schools	Zoned Schools*	Charter Schools	Limited Unscreened Schools	EdOpt Schools	Screened Schools	Audition Schools	Test Schools
% of Citywide Seats in Middle/High School	9%	22%	5%	21%	11%	23%	3%	6%
ADMISSION BY:								
Random selection 	x	x	x	x				
Indication of Interest 			Apply to lottery***	Attend info session**	Rank choices****	Rank choices****		
Balance Factors 			At-risk preference [optional]		Seats distributed by reading level			
Geographic Residence 		Zone preference	CSD preference	x		x		CSD or Boro preference
Attendance 						x	x	
Reading Scores 					x	x	x	
Math Scores 						x	x	
Grades 						x	x	
Interview, Essay, Other 						x		
Specialized Screen 							Audition	G&T or Specialized HS Exam

X = all schools in category X = some schools in category Excludes D75, D79, Screened Language programs. Sibling preferences not listed.

*Zoned-enrollment schools may be more or less accessible, depending on popularity and affordability of housing in the zone.

**Sign-in required. Info sessions include open houses and schools' tables at school choice fairs.

***Charter schools conduct random admission lotteries each April and may not ask for, or consider, academic qualifications.

****Screened middle schools may consider students' ranked choices. Students are matched to screened and EdOpt high schools through mutual rankings.

Source: NYC Department of Education Enrollment Handbooks, Charter Center analysis

Enrollment Accessibility at District Elementary Schools

ZONED-ENROLLMENT
“NEIGHBORHOOD” SCHOOLS ARE
ONLY AS ACCESSIBLE AS THE
NEIGHBORHOOD.



Admission to public elementary schools follows two different patterns—geographic zoned enrollment, plus test-based Gifted & Talented programs—but both can pose serious barriers to admission for many families of limited means.

At the elementary school level, most enrolled seats are in schools that are fully zoned (78%), while many more are in zoned schools that also contained non-zoned programs (14%). Far fewer seats are at coveted citywide Gifted and Talented schools (1%). Unfortunately, seat counts are not available by program.⁶ Zoned schools, sometimes called “neighborhood schools,” are not formally selective—but the private housing market is a powerful screening mechanism. As a result, the selectivity of zoned schools varies as widely as the “affordability” of housing.

In Manhattan, for example, the lowest-income residential ZIP code is area 10035 in East Harlem. Its nearly 33,000 residents have a median family income of \$14,896.⁷ At the other end of Manhattan, literally and figuratively, is the highest-income ZIP code: 10007, in Tribeca, where the median family income is \$112,947—over seven times higher. Indeed, since that figure includes longtime residents whose income would not allow them to move to the neighborhood today, the real economic divide is even wider. A search of real estate prices in ZIP code 10007 yields few below one million dollars. At Independence Plaza North, a large complex in the neighborhood, rents start at \$2,550 per month—for a studio.

The zoned elementary school for ZIP code 10007 is P.S. 234. In 2010, when NYC DOE proposed a change to that school’s zone boundaries, residents voiced fierce opposition (see table 2: Zone Defense). Having a home in the zone is perceived as a valuable (private) amenity; as one doctor told *New York Magazine* at the time, “We could send the twins

to private school, but for the 60 or 70 thousand dollars that costs there’s [P.S.] 234 instead.”⁸ In other words, the housing prices that are required to live in such zones acts as a *de facto* form of school tuition.

When living in a high-income neighborhood is not financially possible, the local zoned elementary school can only be admired from afar. In that sense, the zoned schools in East Harlem and Tribeca—all of them *public*—might as well be on two different continents.

Physically, such contrasting zoned schools can be very close together. In Brooklyn, for example, 96 percent of students are eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) at PS 67, a zoned elementary school. (Dasani Coates, the homeless student featured in a recent *New York Times* series, once attended this school.) Just over a mile away is another zoned elementary school, PS 8, where only 18 percent are eligible.

Outside of zoned schools, the most common type of non-zoned school or program is Gifted & Talented, an educational option that is offered at the Community School District (CSD), borough, and citywide levels. Gifted & Talented schools and programs select their students based on test scores, but since many more students qualify than there are seats available, lotteries and sibling preferences are used to choose among qualifying students.

The *New York Times* reports that Gifted & Talented schools “tend to be in wealthier districts,”⁹ and the rates at which eligible students take the Gifted & Talented test vary widely—from as high as 70 percent in one CSD, to as low as seven percent in another. When they do take the test, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to pass it.¹⁰

ZONE DEFENSE

What is the private value of a public school enrollment zone? To find out, just try changing it. In affluent areas of NYC, local parents' objections to the idea of re-zoning show an uncomfortable truth: schools with geographic enrollment are only as accessible as the housing market itself.¹¹

P.S. 321 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (PARK SLOPE, BROOKLYN): ZONED ENROLLMENT

Students:

80%	White and Asian
10%	Low-Income
1%	ELL

Threat: In 2012, NYC DOE proposed reducing the PS 321 zone, to reduce crowding and balance enrollment with a new school. **Reaction:**

*"My family bought a place in what we thought was PS. 321. Now we'd be put into a new school. **We played by the rules; we bought in zone because we want to be in that zone.**" ~Parent*

*"We were looking for [P.S.] 321 — and **it's priced into the real estate around here.**" ~Parent*

Source: New York Times¹²

P.S. 234 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (TRIBECA, MANHATTAN): ZONED ENROLLMENT

Students:

83%	White and Asian
6%	Low-Income
1%	ELL

Threat: In 2010, NYC DOE proposed reducing the PS 234 zone, after new residential developments led to waiting lists for the school. **Reaction:**

*"I deliberately moved into high-tax Tribeca, where I pay \$25,000 a year in property taxes, because **I wanted the amenities of the historic district — and PS 234.**" ~Loft owner*

Source: New York Post¹³

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT HS (UPPER E. SIDE, MANHATTAN): SCREENED ENROLLMENT + DISTRICT PRIORITY

Students:

82%	White and Asian
24%	Low-Income
0%	ELL

Threat: Some parents oppose the unusual preference for district residents at many high schools in CSD 2—a "legacy issue" to NYC DOE. **Reaction:**

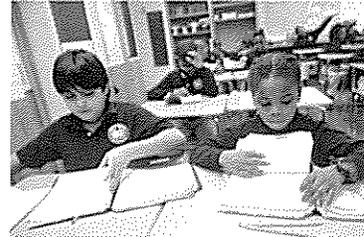
*"Yes, we're fortunate in District 2 because **we do have more affluent families** and we do have some of the political powerhouses here. But nonetheless if parents get together and push for change, **I don't see why we couldn't create district priority schools in other districts.**"*

~District 2 Community Education Council president Shino Tanikawa

Source: WNYC [emphasis added]¹⁴

Enrollment Accessibility at Charter Schools

CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE ON THE MORE ACCESSIBLE END OF THE ENROLLMENT SPECTRUM.



Enrollment at a charter school is always by choice, never by assignment. Charter schools may not consider students' academic qualifications for any admissions purpose—except if they offer an approved preference for students whose past struggles leave them “at-risk for academic failure.”

Instead of screening, charter school enrollment is by random lottery, with a preference for students who live in the local Community School District—a much wider area than a neighborhood school enrollment zone—as well as siblings of enrolled students. (In the rare instance that a charter school is not oversubscribed, enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis.)

Where do charter schools fit on the spectrum of public school admissions policies? Because they require a proactive application, charter school enrollment is effectively less accessible than most unscreened and zoned schools in affordable areas. Immigrant students who arrive in the middle of the school year, for example, are unlikely to gain admission to a charter school whose lottery was held the previous April.

The minimal effort involved in a charter school application is less intensive, however, than the Limited Unscreended district schools' requirement to attend an in-person information session. (For a large majority of charter schools, an application can be completed in a few minutes online.) Charter schools are also more accessible than many zoned schools where residence is prohibitively expensive.

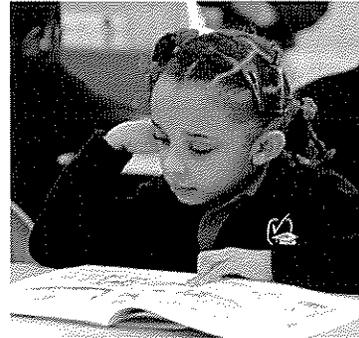
CHARTER TERRITORY

Seven in ten (68%) of NYC charter school students attend schools in three of the city's lower-income areas: Harlem, Central Brooklyn, or the South Bronx.¹⁵ In district schools, the rate is one in four (24%).

CSD	Median Income ¹⁶	Big 3 Area
2	\$104,000	
3	84,800	
26	78,800	
15	71,300	
29	70,600	
31	70,600	
13	63,700	C. Brooklyn
25	63,600	
28	60,200	
22	60,100	
27	59,200	
18	54,700	C. Brooklyn
30	52,500	
11	52,000	
24	51,500	
1	49,700	
20	47,000	
8	44,100	South Bronx
14	42,100	C. Brooklyn
21	41,800	
16	39,200	C. Brooklyn
17	38,200	C. Brooklyn
6	37,900	
19	37,000	C. Brooklyn
10	36,800	
5	34,600	Harlem
23	33,400	C. Brooklyn
4	33,200	Harlem
32	32,400	C. Brooklyn
12	29,300	
9	26,800	South Bronx
7	26,500	South Bronx

Accessibility and Academic Growth in Elementary School

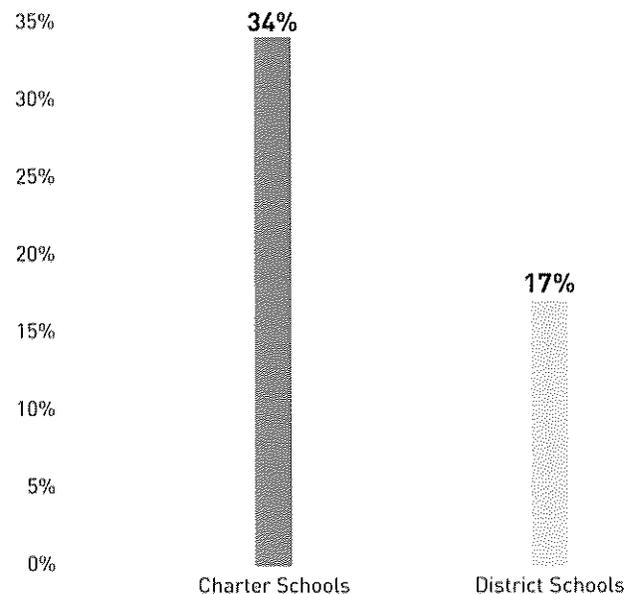
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHOICE HAPPENS LOCALLY. IN THE "BIG 3" CHARTER SCHOOL AREAS, CHARTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WERE TWICE AS LIKELY TO EARN AN "A" IN STUDENT PROGRESS THAN DISTRICT SCHOOLS.



Accessibility is not all parents care about; they want access to *high-quality schools*. NYC DOE's annual Progress Reports offer a measure of academic growth that is common across district and charter schools; this measure is based on state tests in Math and English Language Arts and relative to similar schools and students. Since test proficiency is correlated with student characteristics, schools' letter grades in Student Growth are one useful way to look at the distribution of school quality across a diverse city.

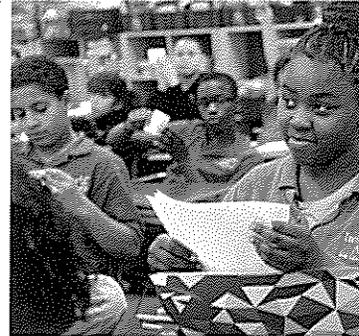
Charter school growth is concentrated in three areas of New York City—Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx—which include six of the eight lowest-income school districts in the city. For elementary school students who would live in these areas and would typically be assigned to the local zoned schools, charter schools offer a vital path to academic achievement. Charter schools in these three areas are twice as likely as other public schools to earn an "A" in Student Progress on the NYC Progress Reports (34% vs. 17%).

STUDENT PROGRESS BY SCHOOL TYPE:
Percentage of Schools with "A" Grades for Student Progress in Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the South Bronx, 2012-13¹⁷



Accessibility and Academic Growth in Middle and High School

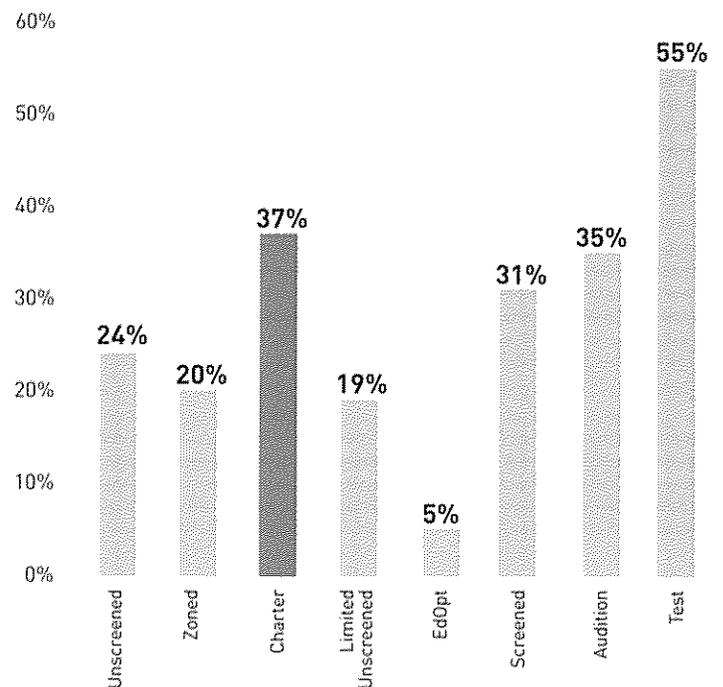
CHARTER MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS EARNED A'S IN STUDENT PROGRESS MORE OFTEN THAN EVERY OTHER TYPE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EXCEPT TEST-IN SCHOOLS.



In middle school and high school, students are more likely to travel from their local neighborhoods and admissions policies include fewer geographic restrictions. Here, too, charter schools offer accessible opportunity. Charter middle and high schools citywide were more likely to earn an "A" in Student Progress than every type of district school except the most selective, which admit students strictly by test.

Such category-level comparisons do not represent every individual school, of course. There are district schools that are widely accessible and highly effective, and there are charter schools that risk being closed by their authorizers if they do not show academic improvement. Still, a pattern is clear: when selective district schools are not available, the school most likely to earn an "A" in Student Progress is a charter school.

STUDENT PROGRESS BY ENROLLMENT SELECTIVITY: Percentage of Seats in Middle and High Schools with "A" Grades for Student Progress, 2012-13¹⁸



Note: To best mimic parents' available choices, middle and high schools are defined as schools with starting grade 5 or later. Schools that admit students in earlier grades, and are unlikely to have open seats in older grades, are excluded.

Conclusion

NYC CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE PROVIDING SOME OF THE MOST ACCESSIBLE, HIGHEST-QUALITY SCHOOLS THAT MANY FAMILIES HAVE AVAILABLE.



New York is a capital city for public school diversity and choice, always balancing values of choice and equity, differentiation and integration. All New Yorkers hope for a day when every public school offers every student a high chance of academic success.

In the meantime, families have to choose public schools for their children. For those with access to selective public schools, or “neighborhood” schools in affluent neighborhoods, choosing a traditional public school is often an easy decision. This sort of selectivity is traditional, after all. It has allowed excellent schools to flourish, but is a far cry from the “taking all comers” ideal to which charter schools are often compared.

For families without access to these options—especially in the city’s most impoverished neighborhoods—the landscape is different. To them, charter schools are some of the most accessible, highest-quality public schools available. This is a progressive, public mission that can make New Yorkers proud.

NOTES

- ¹ Fishman, Steve. "Tribeca Parents Square Off Over P.S. 234." *New York Magazine* web site. 3 Jan 2010. Web. 26 Feb 2014. http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2010/01/tribeca_parents_square_off_ove.html
- ² Jehlen, *Ibid.*
- ³ East Side Middle School web site. Web. 26 Feb 2013. http://www.esms.org/site_res_view_template.aspx?id=973aba25-14e1-40a7-9851-77658e877c0a
- ⁴ Jehlen, *Ibid.*
- ⁵ Enrollment Guides for high schools and middle schools, respectively, are available online at <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Middle/Resources/default.htm> and <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Resources/default.htm>. District 75, District D79, and Screened Language programs were excluded, as were two comparable charter schools (New York Center for Autism Charter School and J.V.L. Wildcat Academy Charter School). In cases where Zoned schools did not have seat values listed in the directory, the number of seats available was estimated from the 2012-13 Preliminary BEDS day enrollment data. Schools that did not have enrollment numbers in the 2012-13 school year, or did not receive a Progress Report, were also excluded from the analysis.
- ⁶ In elementary grades, "seat" counts are enrollment totals from New York State Education Department preliminary State Report Card data for 2012-13.
- ⁷ ZipAtlas: New York, NY report. Web. 26 Feb 2013. <http://zipatlas.com/us/ny/new-york/zip-code-comparison/median-household-income.htm>
- ⁸ Fishman, Steve. "Tribeca Parents Square Off Over P.S. 234." *New York Magazine* web site. 3 Jan 2010. Web. 26 Feb 2014. http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2010/01/tribeca_parents_square_off_ove.html
- ⁹ Baker, Al. "Gifted, Talented and Separated: In One School, Students Are Divided by Gifted Label — and Race." *The New York Times*. 12 Jan 2013. Web. 26 Feb 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/13/education/in-one-school-students-are-divided-by-gifted-label-and-race.html?_r=0&pagewanted=all
- ¹⁰ Holzman, Michael. "A Rotting Apple: Education Redlining in New York City." Schott Foundation for Public Education. 17 April 2012. Web. 26 Feb 2014. <http://schottfoundation.org/drupal/docs/redlining-full-report.pdf>
- ¹¹ Not all parents take this view. Some have sought to emulate the model of a Brooklyn middle school that promotes socioeconomic integration by drawing from two different CSDs.
- ¹² Harris, Elizabeth A. "Anxious Brooklyn Parents See Proposed Redrawn School Boundaries." *The New York Times*. 18 Oct 2012. Web. 26 Feb 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/16/nyregion/proposed-change-to-school-zones-in-park-slope-and-washington-heights-atarm-parents.html>
- ¹³ Vitullo-Martin, Julia. "Tribeca's Civil War Over PS 234." *New York Post*. 13 Jan 2010. Web. 26 Feb 2014. <http://nypost.com/2010/01/13/tribecas-civil-war-over-ps-234/>
- ¹⁴ Fertig, Beth. "In Era of High School Choice, One District Retains Elite Status." WNYC web site audio. 20 Nov 2013. Web. 26 Feb 2014. <http://www.wnyc.org/story/era-high-school-choice-manhattan-district-retains-elite-status/>
- ¹⁵ New York State Education Department, 2012-13 preliminary enrollment figures by request; and Charter Center analysis.
- ¹⁶ Median Household Income, from Charter Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009 5-Year Summary Files; New York City Department of Planning shapefile data for school districts; and Charter Center analysis.
- ¹⁷ Charter Center analysis of New York City Department of Education Progress Report data.
- ¹⁸ Charter Center analysis of New York City Department of Education Progress Report and Enrollment Guide data.

**Benefits of Contact between Racial and Ethnic Groups:
A Summary of Research Findings**

**Testimony in Support of
New York City School Diversity Bills**

**Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
December 11, 2014**

Linda R. Tropp, Ph.D.
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I wish to thank the New York City Council Education Committee for this opportunity to summarize social science evidence *demonstrating the benefits of racial integration* for reducing prejudice and promoting positive relations between racial and ethnic groups.

I am a social psychologist, and using mostly quantitative methods, my work concerns how people relate to each other as members of different groups, and what strategies we can use to encourage positive intergroup relations.

With my colleague Thomas Pettigrew, I have conducted a *meta-analysis* of research on intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). A meta-analysis is essentially a *quantitative integration* of studies, where researchers work to find every study ever conducted on a particular topic; then, they can statistically pool the results of those studies to examine the overall effects, and they can code the research studies for additional factors that might strengthen or weaken those effects (see Johnson & Eagly, 2000).

Our meta-analytic research concerned the effects of intergroup contact, to provide an answer to the question: *What happens when members of different groups interact with each other?* From a six year search, we found a total of 515 studies testing the effects of intergroup contact, where the contact is defined in terms of actual, face-to-face interactions between members of different groups. These studies span from the 1940s through the year 2000 and they include responses from over 250,000 participants in 38 countries.

Our results overwhelmingly show that greater contact between groups predicts lower intergroup prejudice (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; 2011). Approximately 94% of the cases in our analysis show a relationship such that greater contact is associated with lower prejudice. Further analysis (see Rosenthal, 1991) reveals that it would take more than 1,200 additional studies showing no relationship between contact and prejudice to undo the significance of the overall effect we have found.

Findings from our meta-analysis are illustrated in graphs such as Figure 1 below. In this figure, the values on the Y-axis represent mean effects and correspond with values of the correlation coefficient r . A “zero” value on the Y-axis means that there is no meaningful relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice (mean $r = .00$). Positive values would mean that intergroup contact is associated with greater prejudice, and negative values mean that intergroup contact is associated with lower prejudice.

Figure 1

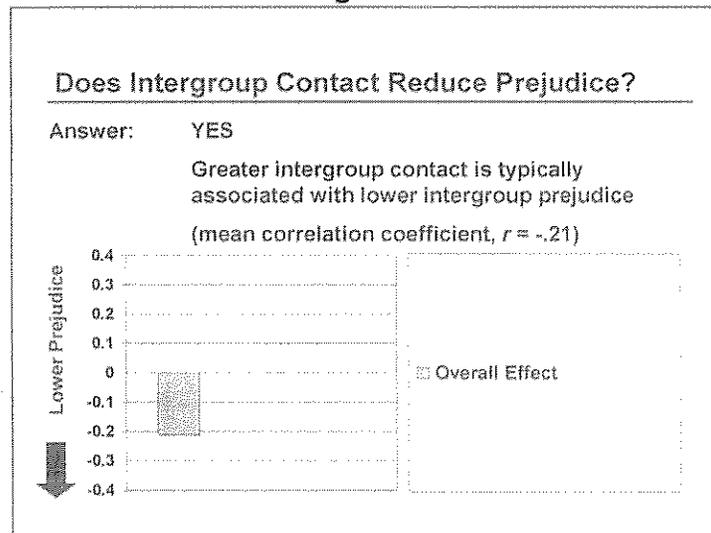
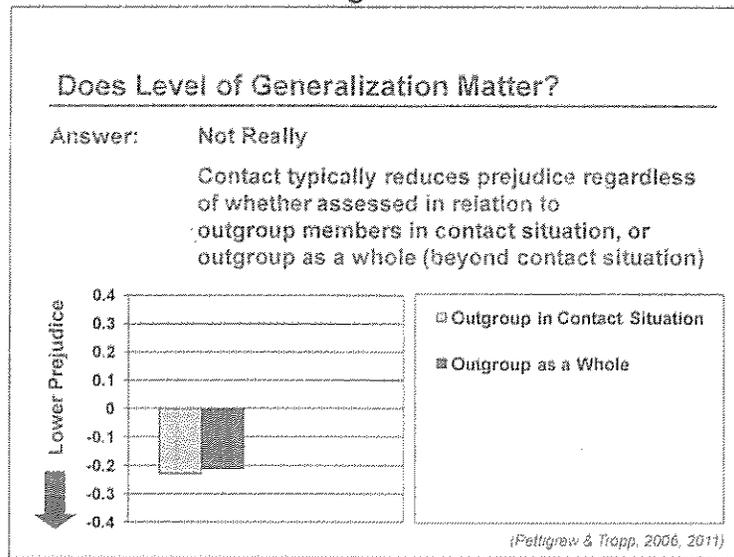


Figure 1 shows the mean contact-prejudice relationship, corresponding to a correlation coefficient r of $-.21$, such that greater intergroup contact is associated with lower prejudice. This mean effect is relatively modest in magnitude, but it is a highly significant effect and a highly consistent effect that becomes only slightly stronger or weaker depending on other characteristics of the studies.

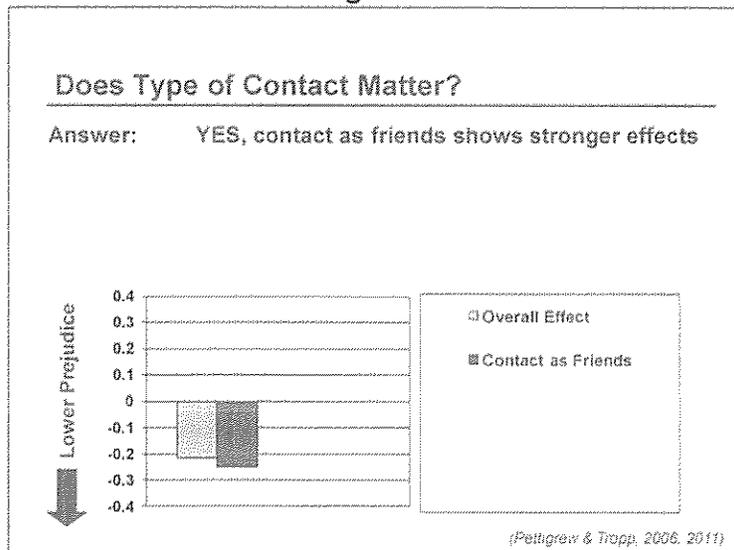
Generalization. For example, we examined whether the effects of contact can *generalize*. Here, we coded whether prejudice was assessed toward the individual outgroup members with whom the contact occurred (in the contact situation) or toward the outgroup as a whole (beyond the contact situation; see Figure 2). We find that the effects of contact on prejudice toward the outgroup as a whole do not significantly differ from the effects of contact toward the individual outgroup members in the contact situation. These results suggest that the effects of contact can generalize from positive experiences with individual members of other groups to more positive attitudes toward those groups as a whole.

Figure 2



Friendship contact. We have also looked closely at the types of contact people have with other groups. We find that, compared to the general contact effect, there are greater reductions in prejudice when the contact involves friendships between members of different groups (see Figure 3). There is also experimental evidence that supports this finding (Page-Gould, Mendoza Denton, & Tropp, 2008), as well as research with children (Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy, 2003) and adults (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011) showing that friendship contact is especially effective for reducing prejudice.

Figure 3

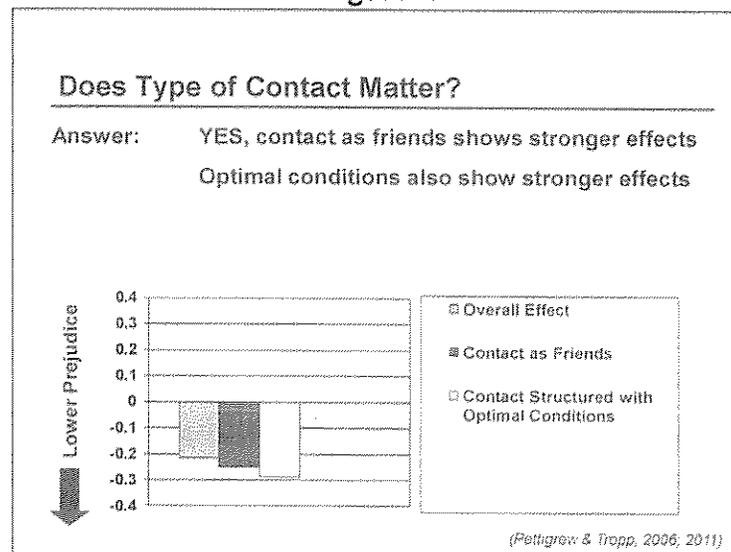


This finding is also an important reminder that not all types of contact are equal, and that superficial forms of contact may be relatively unlikely to change our attitudes. But the more able we are to cultivate meaningful relationships across groups, the more likely it is that the contact will be effective in reducing prejudice.

In order for these cross-group relationships to develop, children must have opportunities to become friends with people from other groups. This issue points to the importance of promoting racial integration in schools and classrooms, because cross-race friendships typically increase with greater racial and ethnic diversity in schools (Quillian & Campbell, 2003). Other work also shows that White children in ethnically diverse schools and classrooms are more likely to perceive that children from different ethnic groups can be friends, and to select children from other ethnic groups as potential friends (Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987; Wright & Tropp, 2005). Additional research suggests that Whites who report having had contact with Blacks during their childhoods report less racial prejudice as adults (Wood & Sonleitner, 1996). Furthermore, longitudinal studies with White children and adolescents indicate that greater numbers of cross-race friendships predict more positive attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities over time (Feddes, Noack, & Rutland, 2009; Binder, Zagefka, Brown, Funke, et al., 2009; Levin, Van Laar, & Sidanius, 2003)

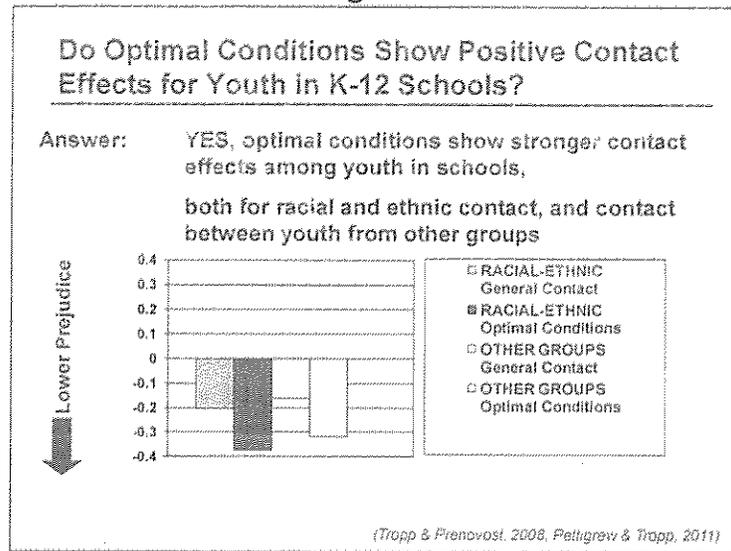
Optimal conditions for contact. Our meta-analytic research also shows that positive effects of contact are found in schools, as well as in other settings. Such positive outcomes of contact are especially likely to occur when the contact situation is structured in terms of *optimal conditions* (Allport, 1954), such as when there are institutional norms that support equality and cooperation between the groups (see Figure 4).

Figure 4



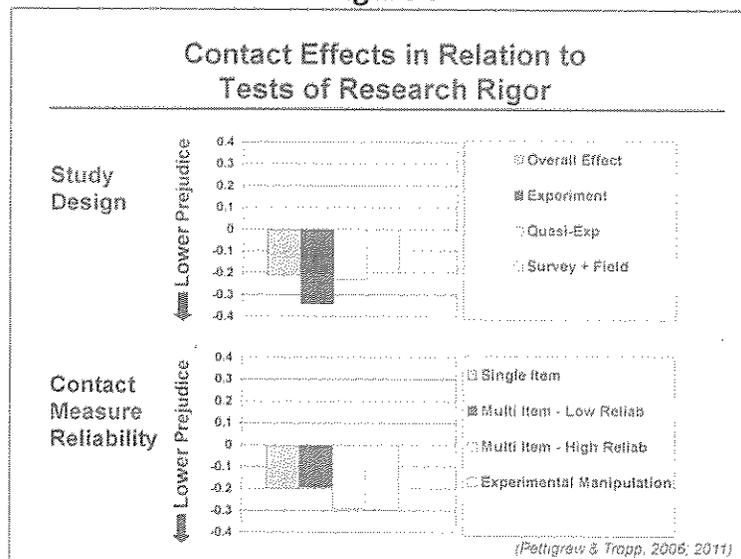
We have conducted a more specialized analysis to look specifically at the effects of optimal contact among children and adolescents in K-12 schools (see Tropp & Prenovost, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). We find that contact structured in line with these optimal conditions yields significantly greater reductions in prejudice among children and adolescents in school settings; this finding is consistent when the contact occurs between youth from different racial and ethnic groups and between youth from other groups (e.g., children with or without physical or mental disabilities; see Figure 5).

Figure 5



Research rigor. Importantly, our research also indicates that the contact studies that use more rigorous research methods are more likely to show that contact reduces prejudice. For example, we observe stronger contact effects when the study design involved a controlled experiment, which allows for testing the causal effects of contact on prejudice, as compared to other kinds of studies (see top of Figure 6). We also find that when intergroup contact was measured using more reliable indicators, stronger relationships between contact and prejudice emerge (see bottom of Figure 6). Across these and other indicators, what we find is that the more rigorous research procedures used in the studies, the more clearly we observe that greater contact predicts reduced prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; 2011).

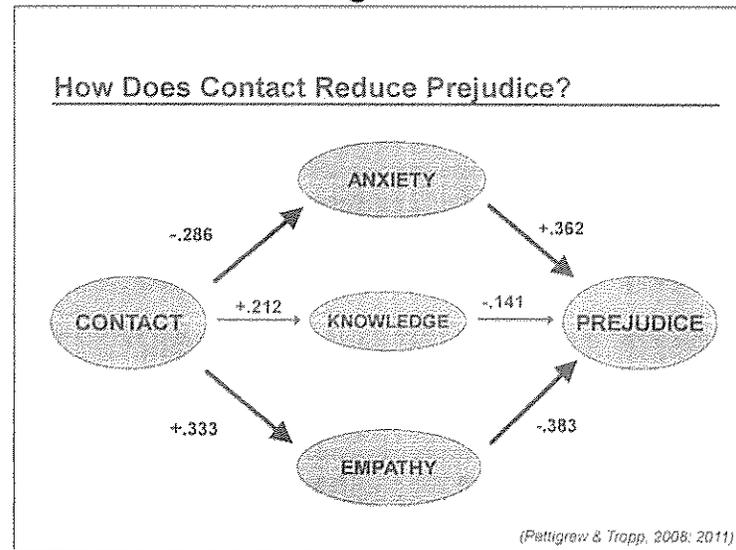
Figure 6



Mediators of contact effects. Through our meta-analytic research, we have also learned more about the *mediators* of contact effects, or the processes through which contact reduces prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; see also Tropp & Page-Gould, 2014). We find some

evidence that contact enhances our knowledge about other groups, and greater knowledge contributes to lower levels of prejudice. But even more strongly, we see that contact reduces our anxiety in relation to other groups and enhances our ability to empathize with other groups, and these in turn predict significant reductions in prejudice (see Figure 7)¹.

Figure 7

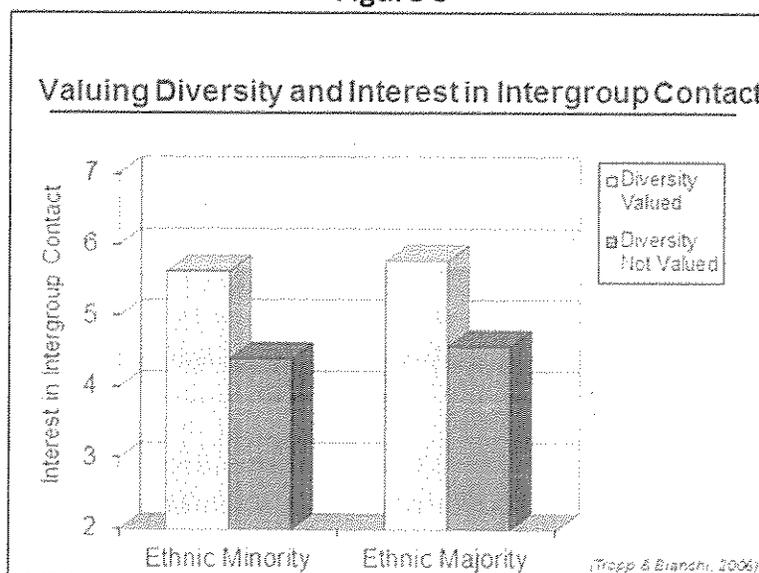


“Extended” effects of contact. Furthermore, a growing body of research with children, adolescents, and adults shows that, even when they do not have direct contact with other groups, simply knowing that members of their group are friends with members of other groups can promote more positive attitudes and a greater willingness to engage in contact (Cameron, Rutland, Brown, & Douch, 2006; Gómez, Tropp, & Fernandez, 2011; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). This finding importantly suggests that benefits of racial integration can be achieved both when children themselves develop cross-race friendships, and when they observe others’ cross-race friendships in their social environments.

Effects of perceived norms for cross-ethnic relations. We also have research evidence from White and Black students in New York City schools, as well as from White and Latino students in Massachusetts, showing that the norms students perceive for cross-ethnic relations among their peers predicts their own interest in developing cross-race friendships (Tropp, O’Brien, & Migacheva, 2014). Specifically, perceiving inclusive norms – that kids from their own racial group would like to become friends with kids from other racial groups – predicts students’ own interest in having cross-race friends. We and other researchers have also found that when students perceive that teachers and principals support positive cross-ethnic relations, they themselves report greater comfort with classmates from different ethnic groups, more positive inter-ethnic attitudes, and a greater willingness to develop cross-ethnic friendships (Green, Adams, & Turner, 1988; Jugert, Noack, & Rutland, 2011; Tropp et al., under review).

Effects of valuing diversity. Our research also indicates that people are more likely to report interest in intergroup contact when they perceive that racial and ethnic diversity is valued (Tropp & Bianchi, 2006). Among both ethnic minority and ethnic majority (White) college students, those who perceive that racial and ethnic diversity is valued report significantly more interest in contact with members of other racial and ethnic groups (see Figure 8). Additionally, perceiving that Whites value diversity is especially important for predicting interest in intergroup contact among ethnic minority students (Tropp & Bianchi, 2006, Studies 2 and 3), who are often attuned to how they will be perceived and received by the ethnic majority (see Gómez et al., 2011; Tropp, 2006).

Figure 8



Conclusions. Overall, the findings from our meta-analysis and other recent work overwhelmingly show that greater contact between groups predicts lower prejudice and many other positive intergroup outcomes. Having racially integrated schools and classrooms can play crucial roles in promoting positive effects of intergroup contact, by providing opportunities for children from different groups to interact and become friends, and by establishing norms that support diversity and inclusion across groups. *Thus, I encourage the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and set it as a priority in decision making, and to amend the administrative code of the city of New York to report annually on progress and efforts toward increasing diversity within its schools.*

Notes

¹ The reader should note that, for ease of presentation, Figure 7 represents summary results from separate analyses testing each of the three mediators.

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When Stuyvesant's former principal, Stan Teitel, asked me to create new student recruitment handouts, one of his primary goals was to attract black and Latino students. His Assistant Principal, Eleanor Archie, made sure we connected with under-represented minorities. **While we focused on minority recruitment:**

- **The press** criticized the 'elitist' SHSAT schools for low minority admissions.
- **The NAACP** sued.
- **The DOE** cut test prep: only selected students could participate in the DREAM program - via lottery. The Discovery Program's parameters changed.
- **5 additional schools**, recently added to the 3 Hecht-Calandra exam schools, complicated 'choice.' Should a student risk choosing Stuyvesant as his #1 school or choose a safer, less selective school?
- **At the HS Fairs**, we learned many middle school counselors weren't identifying or counseling bright students to apply to specialized schools. Often, students weren't even told about the SHSAT.....

Now consider the pro-active, well-informed approach to SHSAT prep and the application process – that's prevalent in white and Asian-dominant middle schools. **Is it equitable? No. Our black and Latino students are being cheated... but not by the SHSAT.**

Before you blame the SHSAT and vote to abolish it - consider this:

The vast majority of predominantly black and Latino lower and middle schools **don't prepare students to qualify for, or survive, 4 excruciatingly challenging years at Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, Stuyvesant, or any SHSAT school.** **The SHSAT schools are not right for everyone.** And when they're the wrong fit, they can be painful. I never could have survived Stuyvesant.

But the SHSAT is not the enemy it's portrayed as.

For measuring whether 8th graders have the skills needed to navigate these highly competitive schools, **the SHSAT is actually quite a successful tool. So why blame the test for the high schools' racial imbalance, rather than fixing schools that don't teach capable 8th graders geometry or algebra or critical thinking?**

If the SHSAT – a test of acquired knowledge and preparedness - is eliminated, if admissions are based on subjective teacher recommendations and GPAs from wildly disparate middle schools - what will these high schools become? Academic levels will have to be lowered for freshmen who haven't adequately been prepared for the newly-intense degree of difficulty. And the specialized schools - as we've known them for decades- for generations - will be history.

Don't eliminate the SHSAT. Improve our middle schools, so our children of color **qualify for the education all our children deserve. Don't cheat the children.**

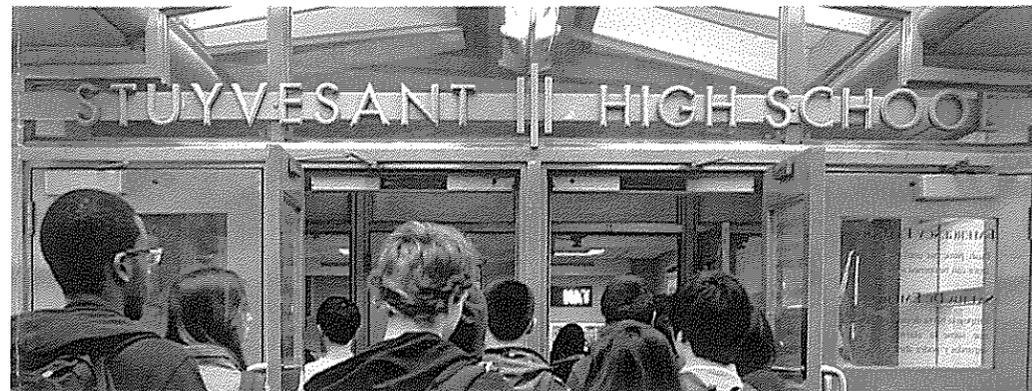
4 years from now, when you're totally comfortable at Stuy, when you have friends of all ethnic backgrounds from all over the city, your current concerns about fitting in will be a distant memory.

Having attended one of the most prestigious high schools in the country, you'll have benefited from college prep that's as good as it gets, helping you separate from the competition so you get into the college of your choice. And the education, skills, and savvy you will have acquired at Stuy will serve you well, broadening your access to the world, preparing you to take on any challenge, and enabling you to stand out.

"Life's not about fitting in, it's about standing out."

Anonymous

**4 years
that will change
your life.**



Go to www.try4stuy.org for updated information or call: Harvey Blumm @ (212) 312-4926 or email: hblumm@schools.nyc.gov

See your Guidance Counselor by **Wed. Oct. 10th** to **SIGN UP FOR THE SHSAT.**

COME TO STUY'S OPEN HOUSE

Wednesday, Oct. 10th: 5-7 p.m. for Manhattan & Brooklyn residents
Thursday, Oct. 11th: 5-7 p.m. for Bronx, Queens & Staten Island residents

BOROUGH H.S. FAIRS: Sat/Sun, Oct 13th & 14th 11-3

For locations: <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Calendar/default.htm>

2012 SHSAT TEST DATE: Weekend of October 27th and 28th.
(See your Guidance Counselor for your assigned test date.)

try4stuy: It will change your life!



"I came to the U.S. from China at age 25, not speaking a word of English, and here I am now... So I can tell you, **anything can happen.**"

Ms. Jie Zhang: Stuyvesant Principal, I.A.

Stuyvesant attracts students from very diverse backgrounds, including a large number of immigrants and first-generation Americans who raise the bar by working exceedingly hard. As diverse as the students may be, all are here for one reason: Stuy's the best!



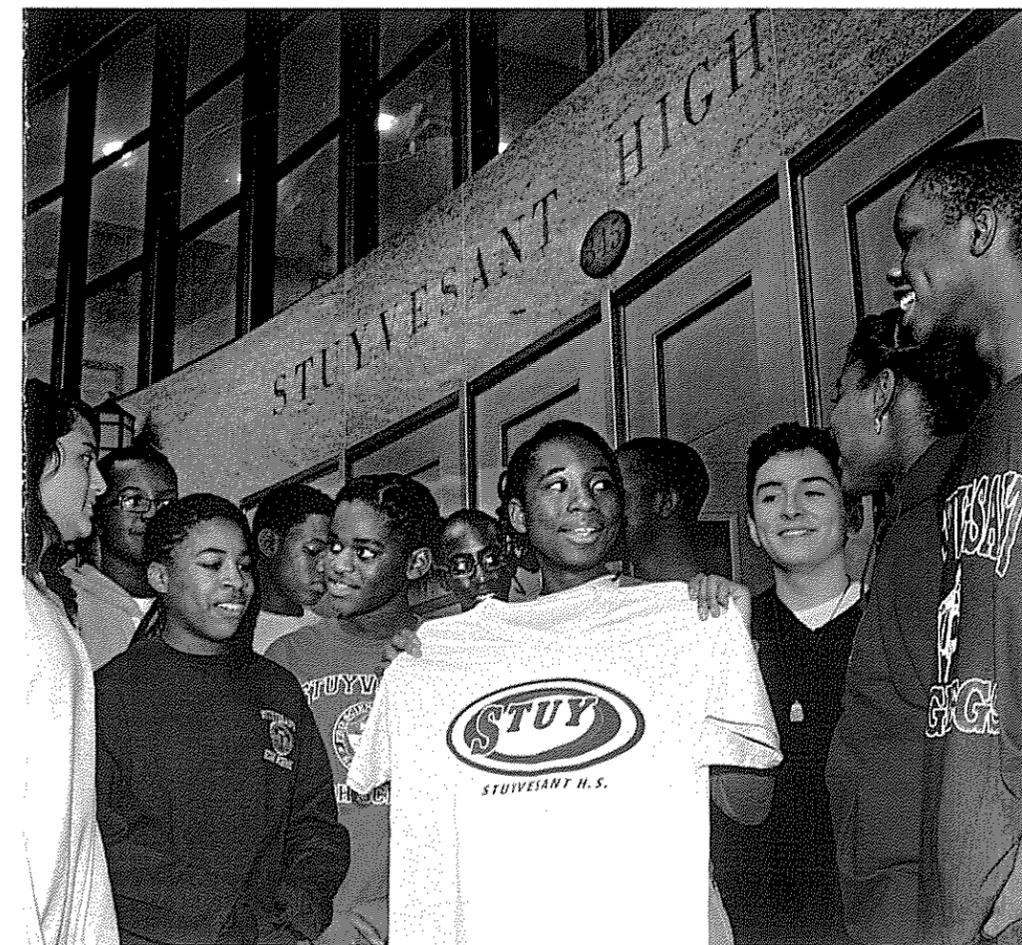
"Whatever your background, by graduation you will be an integral part of Stuyvesant's very unique alumni family, connected all over the world, for life. **"**

Mrs. Eleanor Archie: AP Guidance/Pupil Personnel Services

**Does
Stuy
fit?**

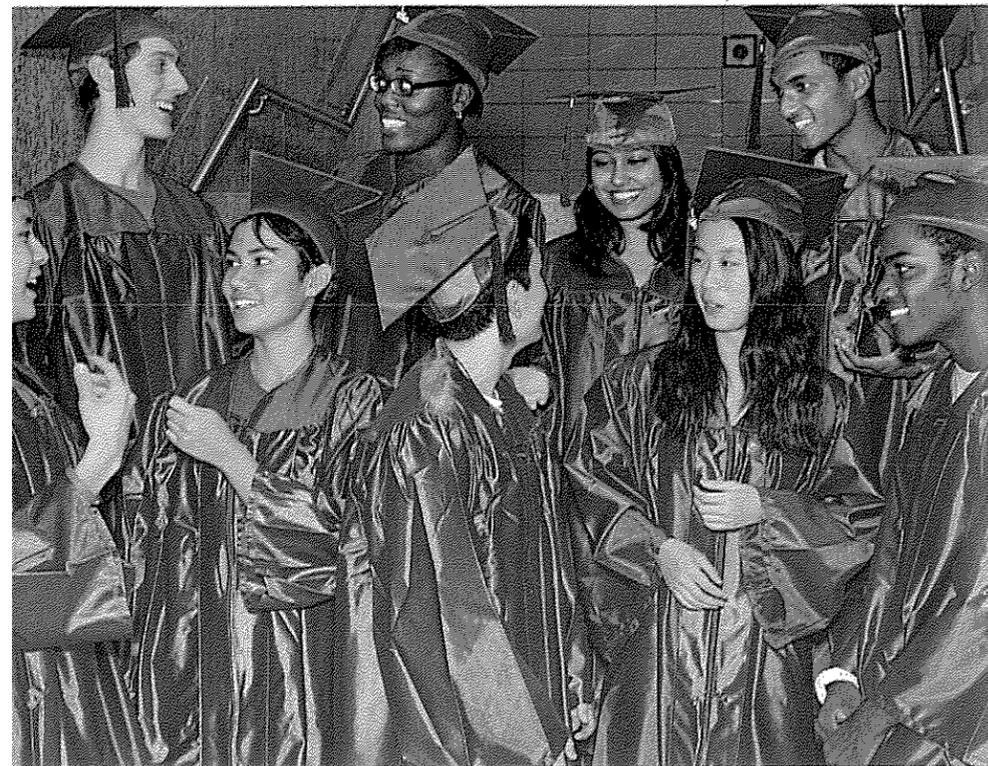
How many high school students don't worry about 'fitting in'? And if you're African-American or Latino you may also be wondering how you'll fit in at a school where so few students look like you. What might surprise you is how many students, from all over NYC, arrive at Stuy feeling they've never actually fit in before. At the top of their class, they were often considered "nerds," but at Stuy, where "smart" is cool, they feel right at home; they fit!

**try4stuy:
It will change your life!**



All 8th grade NYC residents are eligible to take the SHSAT, Specialized High Schools Admissions Test. Admission to the 8 SHSAT schools doesn't depend upon your GPA or an interview or audition. It's not who you know. It's not up to the principal. Admission is based solely upon your test score.

Welcome to Stuyvesant...



If Stuy is your #1 SHSAT choice, if you score high enough on the test to qualify, and if you find the idea of attending a school with 3,300 of the brightest students in NYC challenging and exciting, you'll fit right in.

Speak to students. Do they have Stuy friends? Do they feel connected? Which colleges did alumni attend? What did they do after college?

A Stuyvesant education is so much more than academics. Stuy will expand your horizons. It's the first step toward a successful life at college and beyond, and it will change your life!

try4stuy

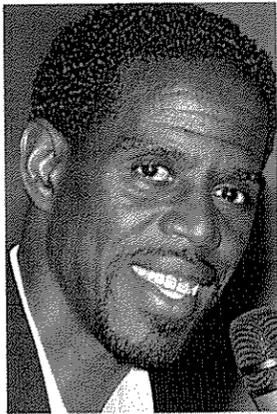
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try4stuy:
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“You are in charge of what you make happen.”

“Ever walk into a room and you’re the smartest one in the room?”
Cosby Smiley, Alumnus



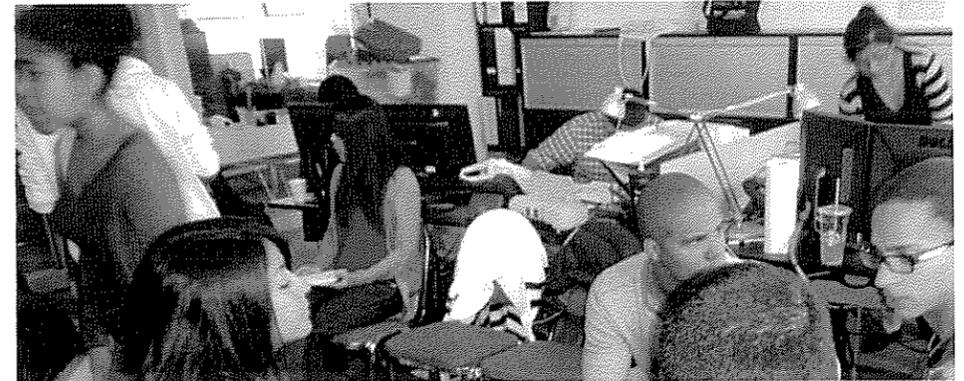
At Stuy “it wasn’t embarrassing to be smart.”
“My old school had a small gifted program. At Stuy, the whole school was like that.”

Crystal Velasquez, Alumna

At Stuy, what matters is your academic contributions, not your ethnic background, your race, or the language your family speaks at home. Stuy is proof that no racial or ethnic group has dibs on intellect.

(Yes, it’s true. U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder is a Stuy ‘69 alumnus!)

ASPIRA brings Latino students together to contribute to the Stuy community, the city, and the world!



At Stuy, by joining Aspira, the Black Students League, or the Muslim Students Association, you get to share your views and celebrate your heritage.

2 “musts” if you really want Stuy:

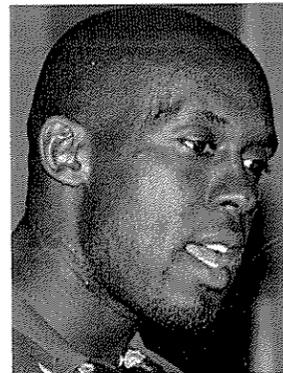
1. You must make Stuy your #1 SHSAT choice.

If you’re confident Stuy is for you, make it your #1 choice on the SHSAT admission ticket.

- Parents, teachers, and counselors sometimes encourage students to choose an SHSAT school with a lower qualifying score as their #1 choice, just in case. But if you do, even if you score above the Stuy cutoff, you will be admitted to the school you marked #1, not to Stuy.

- You can’t change your mind after you take the test, so choose your 1st choice carefully.

- Isn’t it safer to make Stuy #2, in case your score isn’t high enough? Stuy fills up with students who score in the top 3% and make it their first choice, so it’s unlikely that anyone who makes it #2 will be admitted.
- If Stuy feels right to you, go for it. There’s nothing like it!



“Listen to your internal guidance: you have to try.”

Eddy Petit, Jr., Alumnus

One Unanticipated Advantage...

Some students say being a minority at Stuy is actually an advantage because you stand out, so your teachers get to know you right away.

2. Go for test prep. Your competition will.

Test prep familiarizes you with the process, the test format, and strategies that help you do well. Is it worth the expense? Sure, there are students who do well on the SHSAT without test prep. But to some families, getting into Stuy is so important they actually begin prep by 2nd or 3rd grade. They consider the cost worthwhile because Stuy opens doors to the best colleges and careers. They are your competition. So take advantage of as much prep as possible.



Christina Alfonso, Alumna



“You can’t just be smart to get into Stuy... You’ve got to be prepared.”

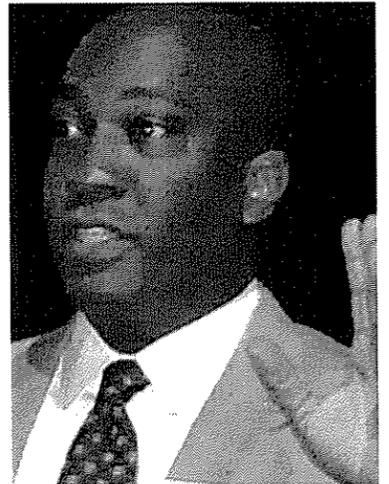
Carole Brown, Alumna

COLLEGE: Competition for the Ivies and top colleges can be intense. But coming from a school as prestigious as Stuy virtually guarantees that your applications will be noticed. Stuy’s college office is an amazing resource not often found in public schools, and seniors are remarkably successful at getting into the colleges they choose. Stuy’s extensive choice of electives, AP or Honors courses, and clubs, pubs, and sports reads like a private school’s - enabling each student to excel and stand out.



Linda Gadsby, Alumna

“It’s great to be in a community that’s proud to be smart... The whole rest of your life is changed by the fact that you go to this school.”



Michael Clarke, Alumnus

“The test is challenging but predictable. Stuy has traditionally had the highest cutoff.”

Ask your guidance counselor about test prep resources. Take the practice tests in the SHSAT handbook and the SHSAT prep books.

Ask your guidance counselor about taking the SHSAT in 9th grade for admission to 10th grade.

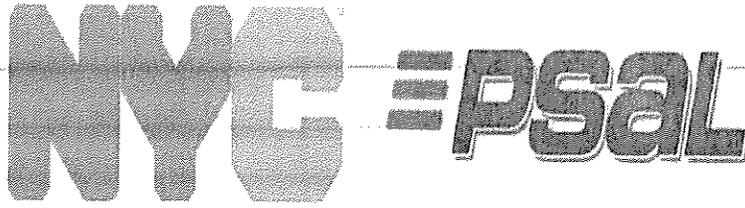
STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL



Pro Scientia Atque Sapientia
For Knowledge And Wisdom

© Copyright 2012 Stuyvesant HS





Department of
Education

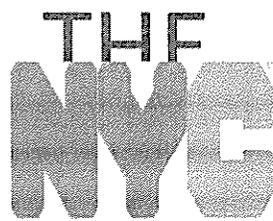
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC LEAGUE

VIOLATIONS OF

TITLE VI

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

**STUDENTS OF COLOR
DO NOT HAVE
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO
HIGH SCHOOL
INTERSCHOLASTIC
SPORTS**



Department of
Education's

POLICY OF FUNDING HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

***IS A "FACIALLY NEUTRAL POLICY "
THAT IS "NOT INTENDED TO
DISCRIMINATE BASED ON RACE,
COLOR, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN" BUT
IS HAVING "AN UNJUSTIFIED,
ADVERSE DISPARATE IMPACT ON
STUDENTS BASED ON RACE,
COLOR, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN"***

***- OCTOBER 1, 2014 "DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER" FROM THE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S OFFICE OF
CIVIL RIGHTS***

SCHOOLS ARE CONTINUING
TO BE DENIED  TEAMS
BASED ON “BUDGETARY
CONSTRAINTS” WHILE THE
SCHOOLS WITH THE MOST
WHITE STUDENTS RECEIVE
A DISPROPORTIONATE
SHARE OF THE FUNDING
THAT DOES EXIST

NYC

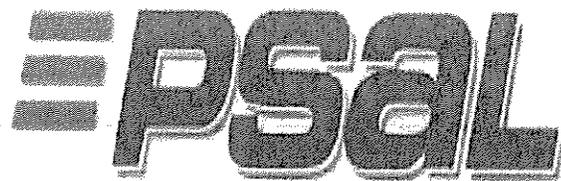
**Department of
Education**

***PROVIDES 100 PERCENT OF
HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS
FUNDING TO THE***

PSAL

***PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC LEAGUE***

**THE ONLY DOE SANCTIONED
PROVIDER OF INTERSCHOLASTIC
SPORTS FOR NYC DOE PUBLIC HIGH
SCHOOLS**



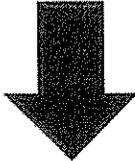
**PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC LEAGUE**

**DISTRIBUTES THIS
FUNDING TO SOME
HIGH SCHOOLS WHO
REQUEST IT
THROUGH A
NON-TRANSPARENT
TEAM GRANTING
PROCESS**

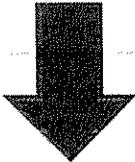


FACIALLY NEUTRAL POLICY
OF DISTRIBUTING INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS
FUNDING TO NYC HIGH SCHOOLS

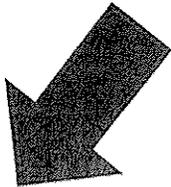
100 PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS FUNDING IS GIVEN TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOL ATHLETIC LEAGUE SUPERVISED BY THE OFFICE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT SERVICES



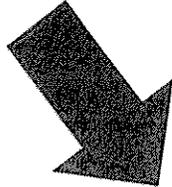
SOME HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS REQUEST SPORTS TEAMS USING AN ONLINE FORM AT PSAL.ORG



PSAL'S NON TRANSPARENT TEAM GRANTING PROCESS



HIGH SCHOOLS THAT GET DENIED TEAMS DO NOT OFFER INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS FOR THEIR STUDENTS



HIGH SCHOOLS THAT GET GRANTED TEAMS HAVE 99% OF THEIR COSTS COVERED BY THE NYC DOE PSAL



PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC LEAGUE

**GENERIC EMAIL SCHOOLS ARE SENT WHEN
DENIED A NYC DOE FUNDED TEAM**

Dear _____,

Thank you for your recent request for a PSAL BASEBALL BOYS VARSITY team. We appreciate the time you took to apply.

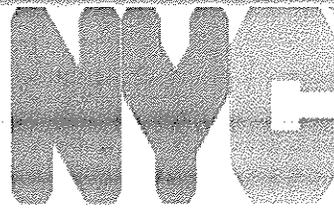
Unfortunately due to budgetary constraints as well as other factors, we are unable to facilitate your team request.

We encourage you to continue to develop your school's capacity to support PSAL teams and consider reapplying in the future.

Please continue to visit the PSAL website at www.psal.org for information about the application timelines for other seasons. Any questions feel free to contact me.

Thank you.

Donald J. Douglas
Executive Director



Department of
Education



PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC LEAGUE

**THIS “FACIALLY NEUTRAL”
TEAM GRANTING POLICY
LEAVES THE STUDENTS AT
THE HIGH SCHOOLS WITH
THE HIGHEST
PERCENTAGES OF
STUDENTS OF COLOR
WITH THE LEAST ACCESS
TO A DIVERSE RANGE OF
INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS**

**THIS VIOLATES TITLE XI OF
THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF
1964 WHICH REQUIRES THAT
“ALL STUDENTS,
REGARDLESS OF RACE,
COLOR, OR NATIONAL
ORIGIN, HAVE
COMPARABLE ACCESS TO
THE DIVERSE RANGE OF ...
EXTRACURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES”**

*- OCTOBER 1, 2014 “DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER” FROM
THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION’S
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS*

THE FOLLOWING CHARTS COMPARE
ACCESS TO A DIVERSE RANGE OF
PSAL SPORTS AT THE

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC LEAGUE**

**101 HIGH SCHOOLS/CAMPUSES
WITH THE
HIGHEST PERCENTAGES OF
STUDENTS OF COLOR
99-100% STUDENTS OF COLOR
71,539 STUDENTS**

WITH THE

**46 HIGH SCHOOLS/CAMPUSES
WITH THE
HIGHEST PERCENTAGES OF
WHITE STUDENTS
21-82% WHITE STUDENTS
68,708 STUDENTS**

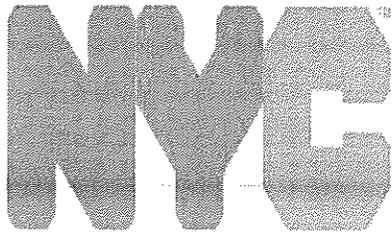
DATA SOURCES



PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATHLETIC LEAGUE

TEAM DATA

Retrieved from PSAL.ORG on 11/3/2014



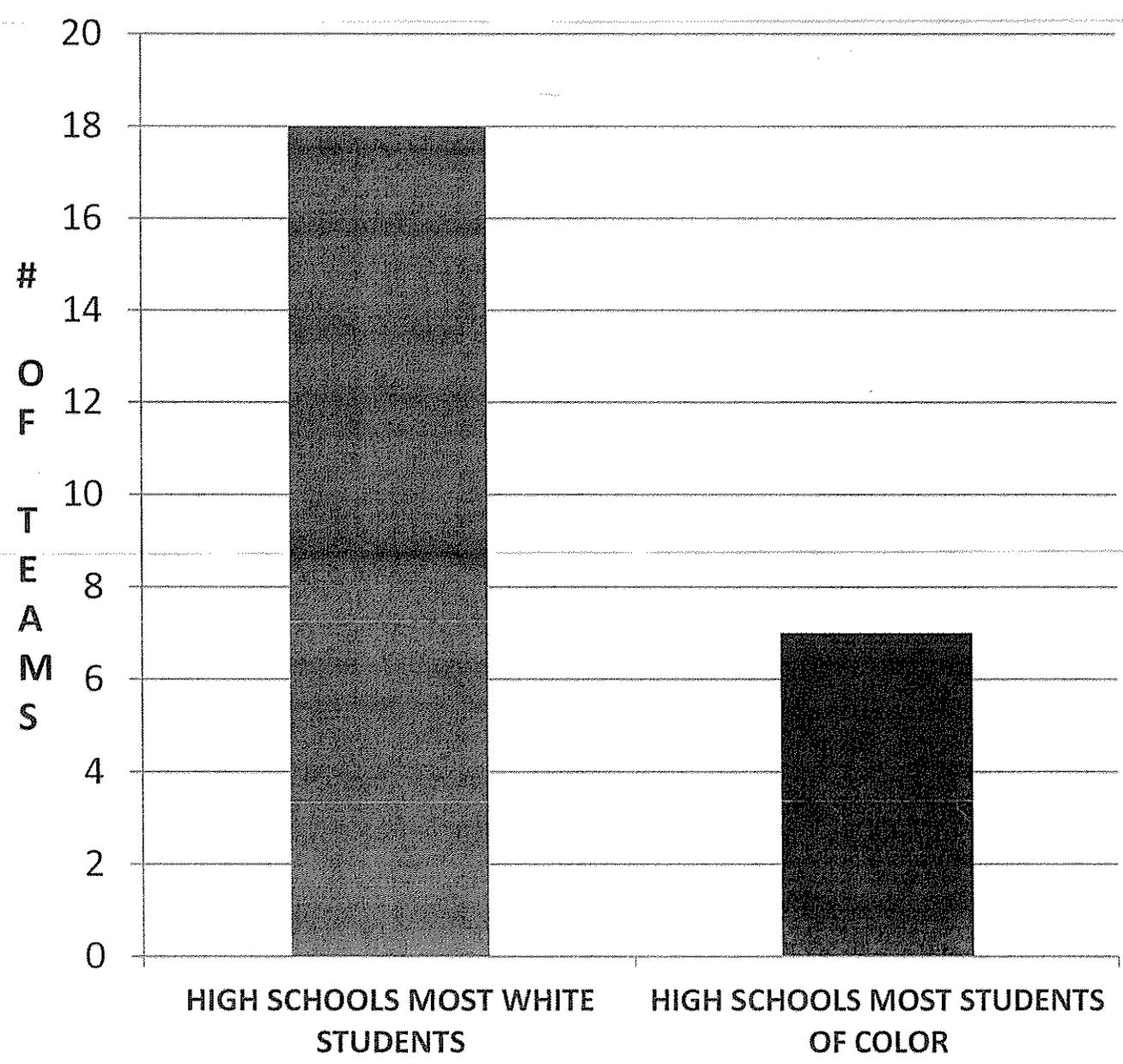
Department of
Education

DEMOGRAPHIC

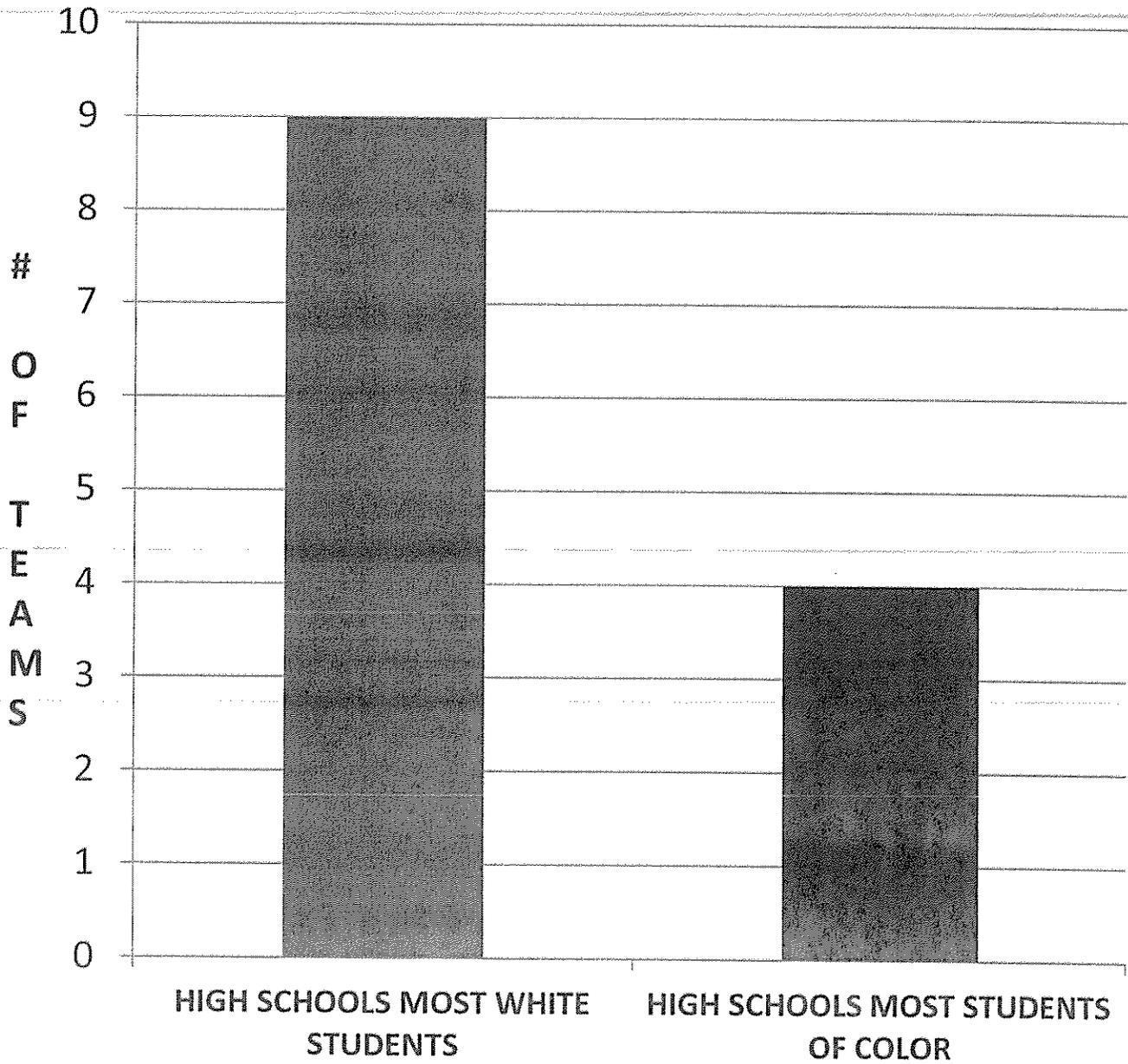
DATA

Retrieved from schools.nyc.gov on 8/1/2014

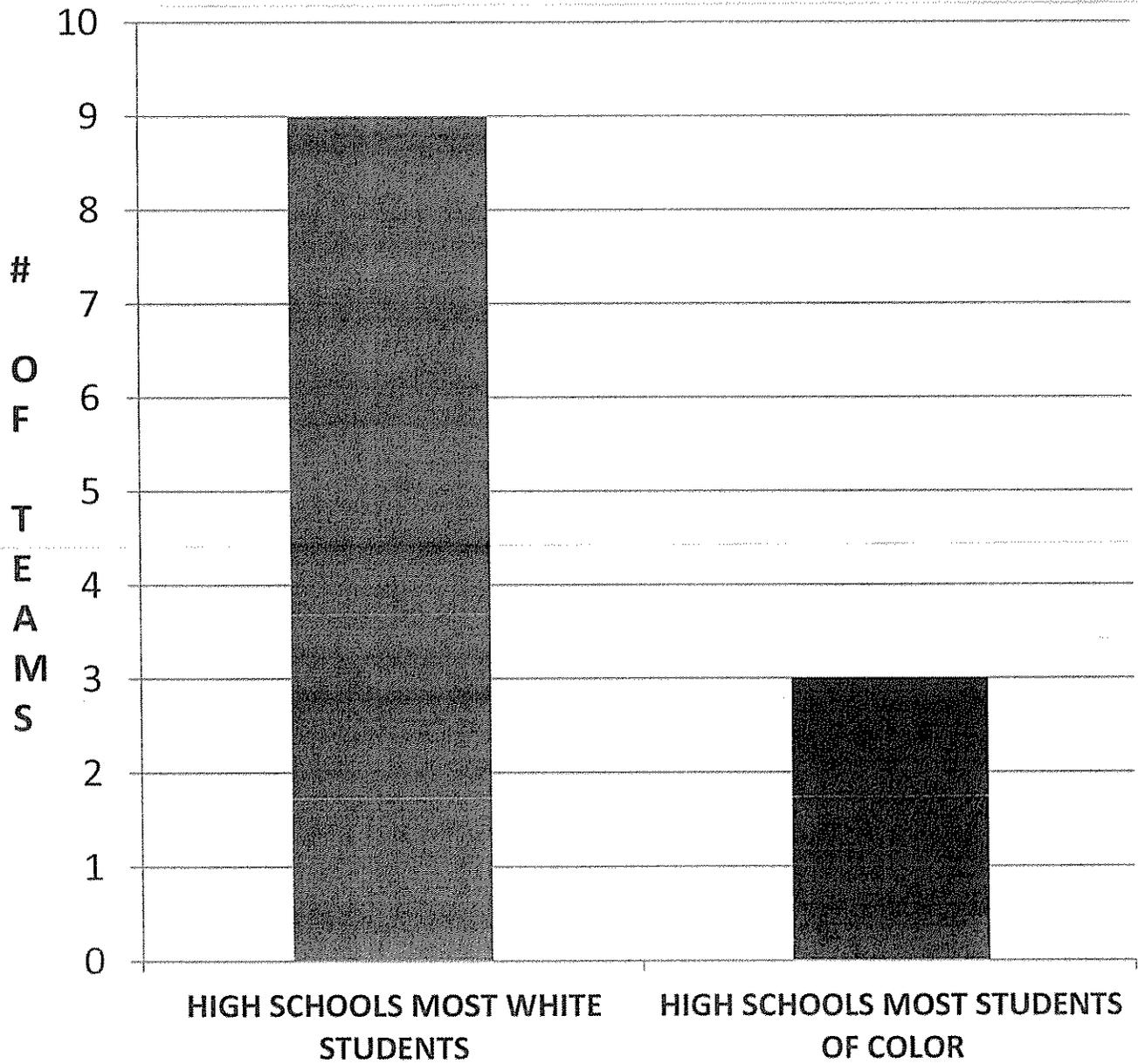
AVERAGE # OF **PSaL** TEAMS



AVERAGE # OF **PSaL** BOYS TEAMS

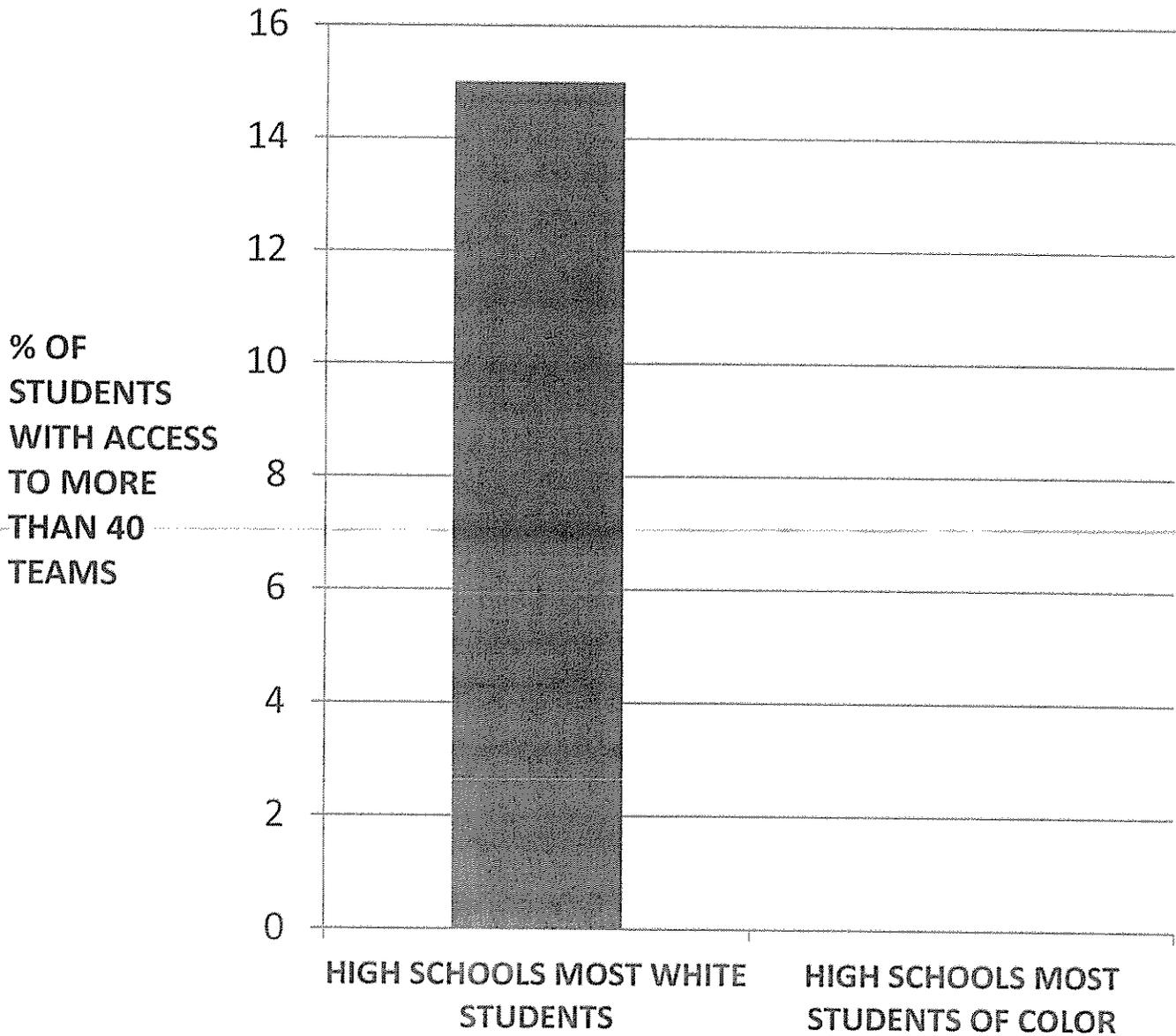


AVERAGE # OF **PSaL** GIRLS TEAMS



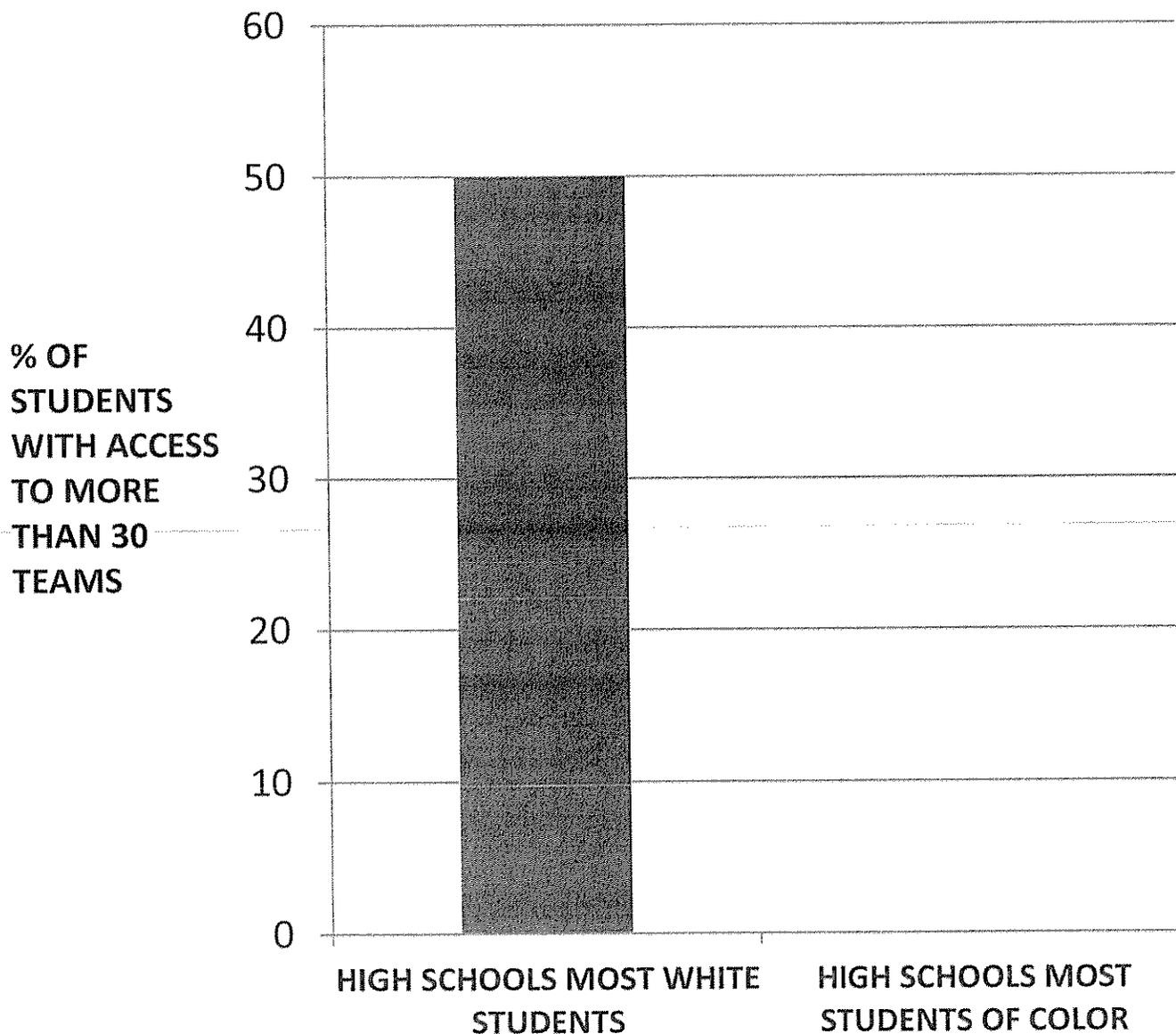
ACCESS TO MORE THAN 40

PSAL TEAMS



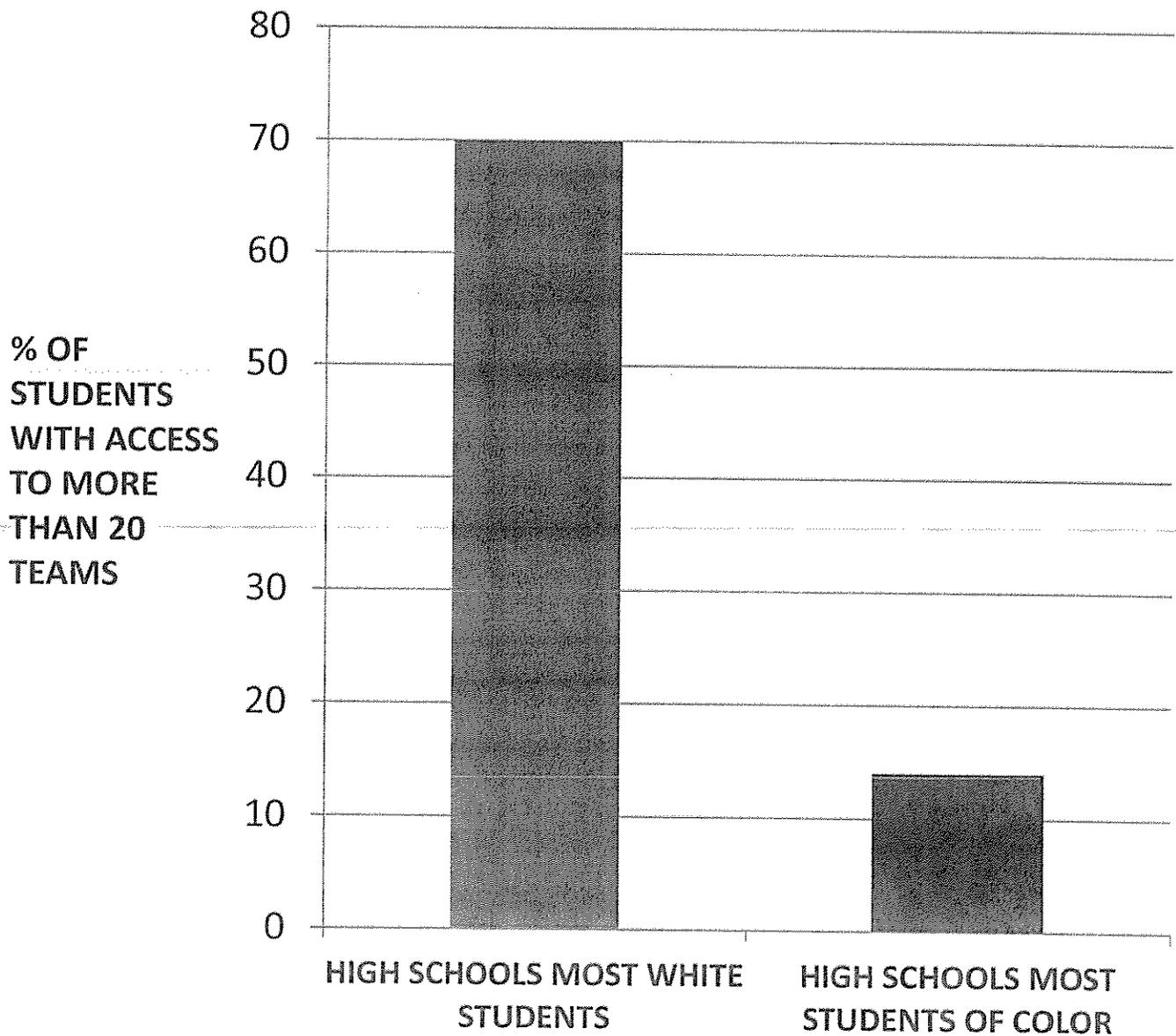
ACCESS TO MORE THAN 30

PSAL TEAMS



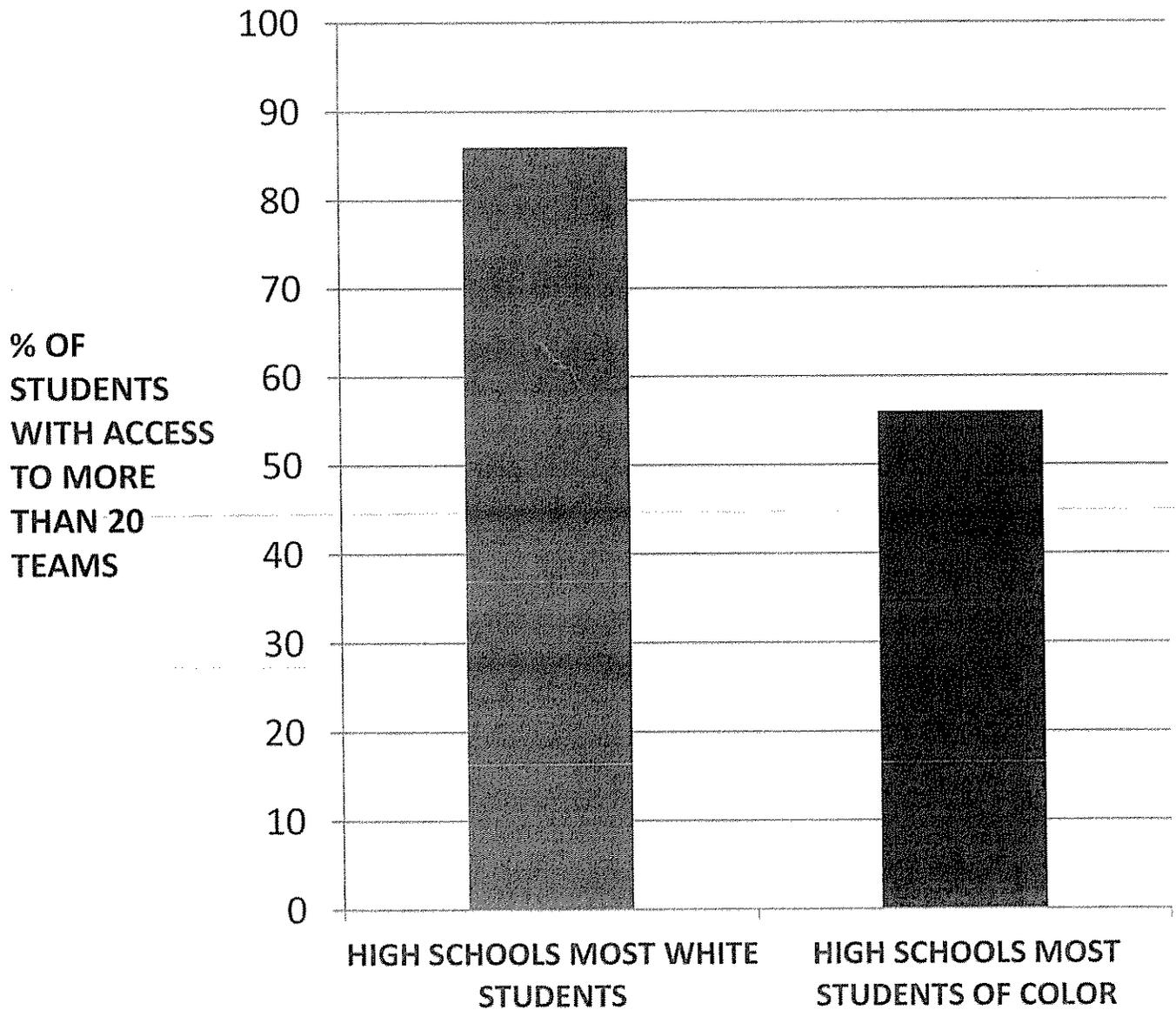
ACCESS TO MORE THAN 20

PSAL TEAMS



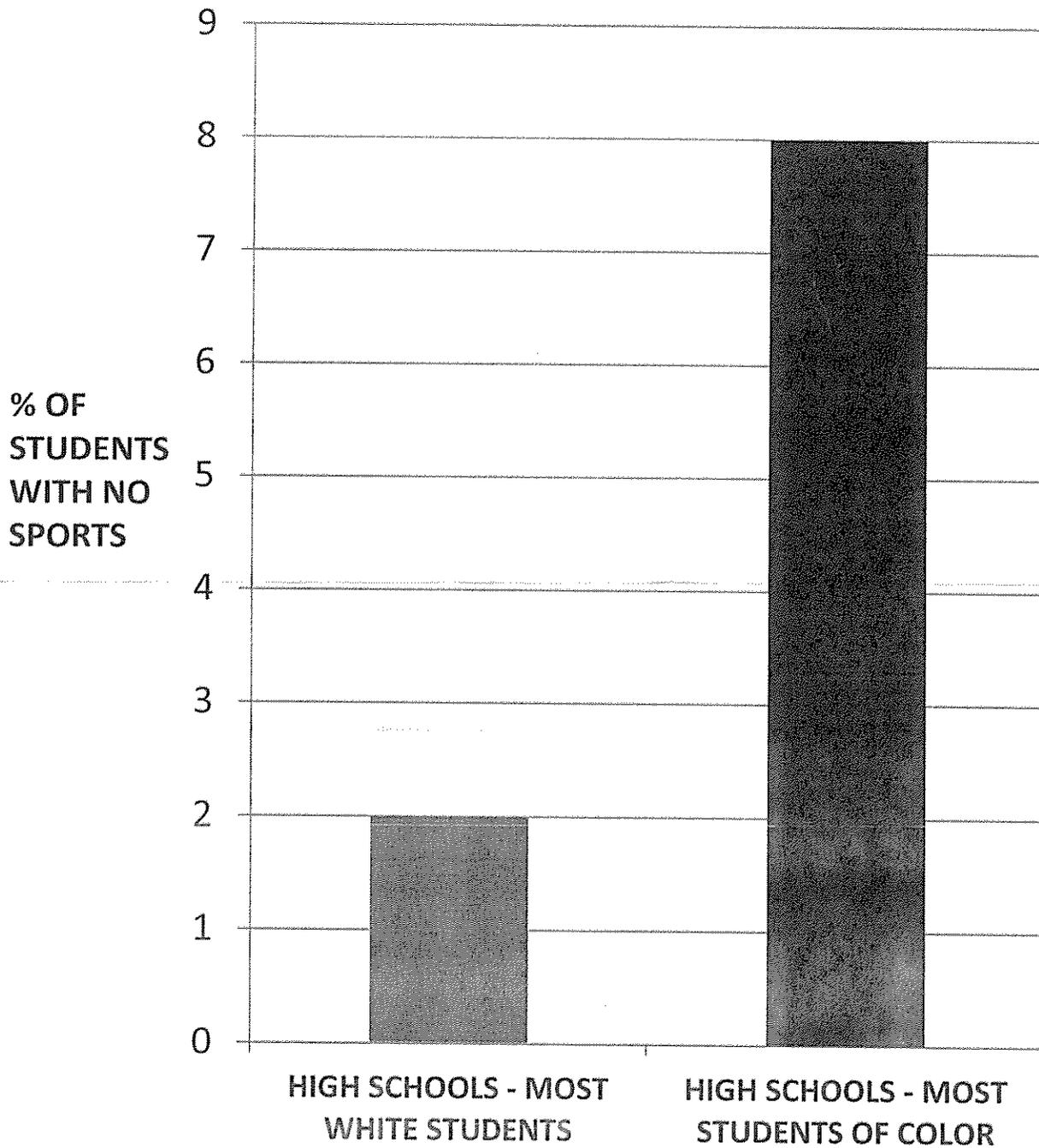
ACCESS TO MORE THAN 10

PSAL TEAMS



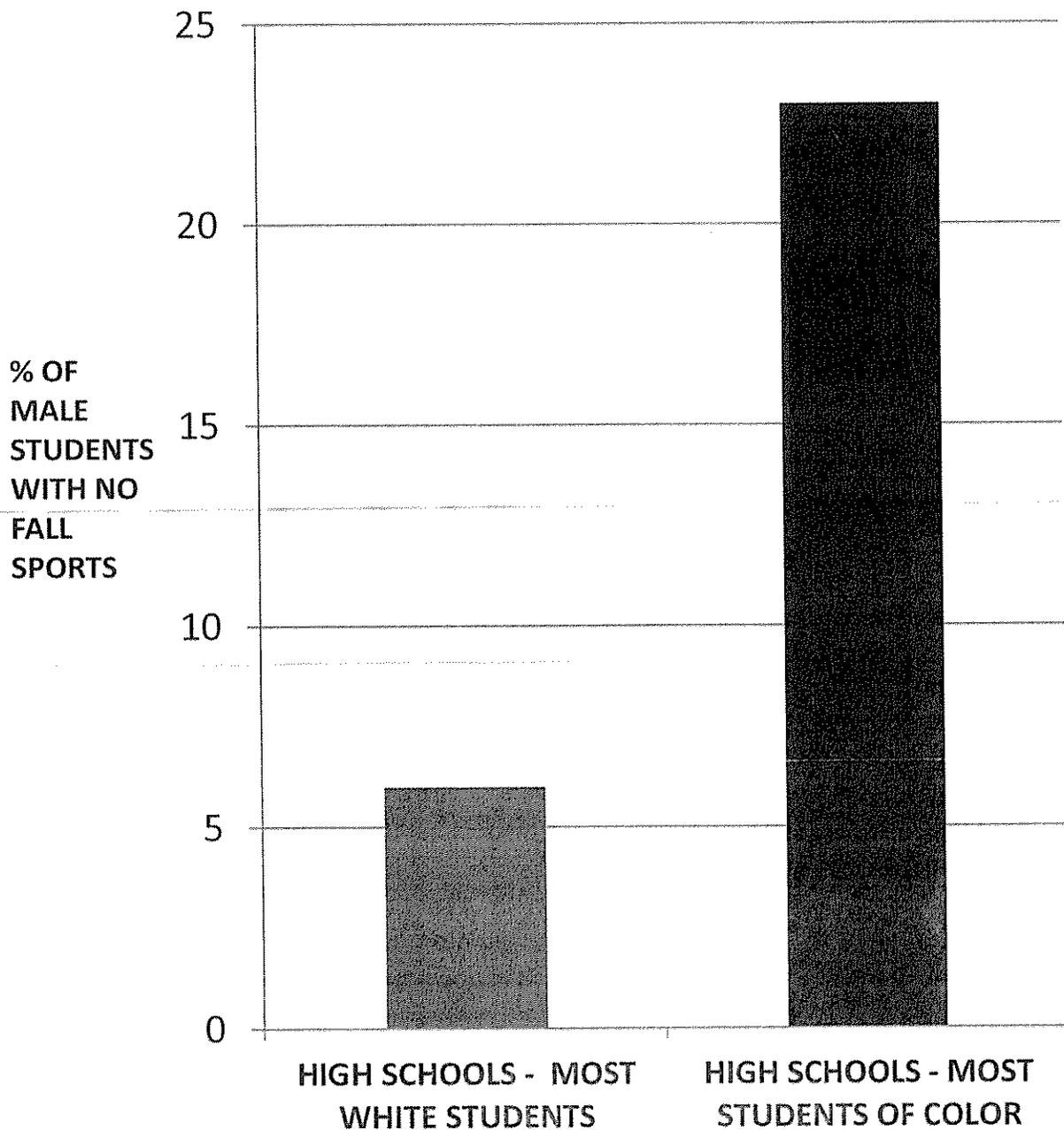
NO *PSAL* SPORTS

% OF STUDENTS WITH NO SPORTS



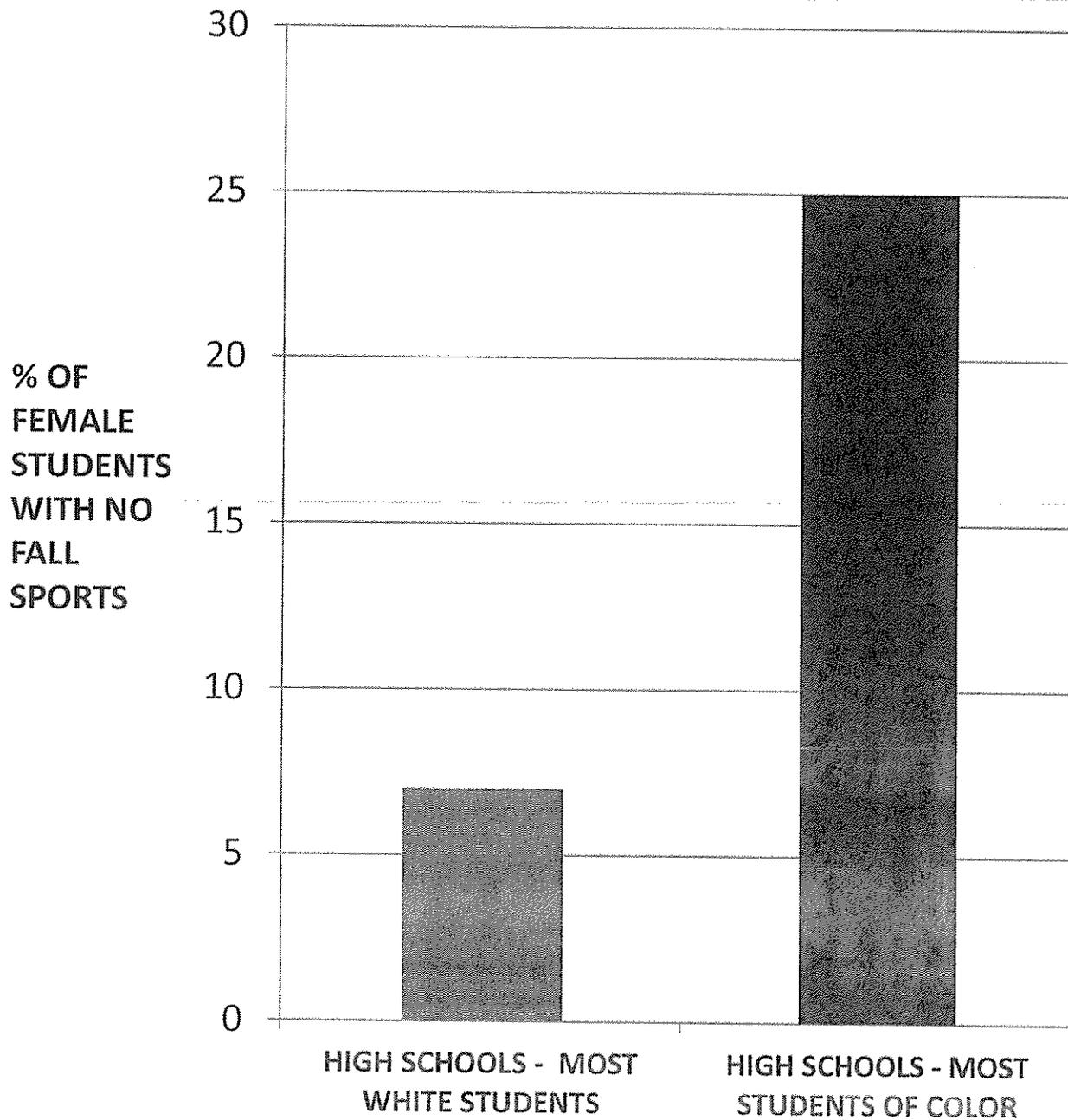
NO PSAL SPORTS FOR BOYS IN THE FALL

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO FALL SPORTS



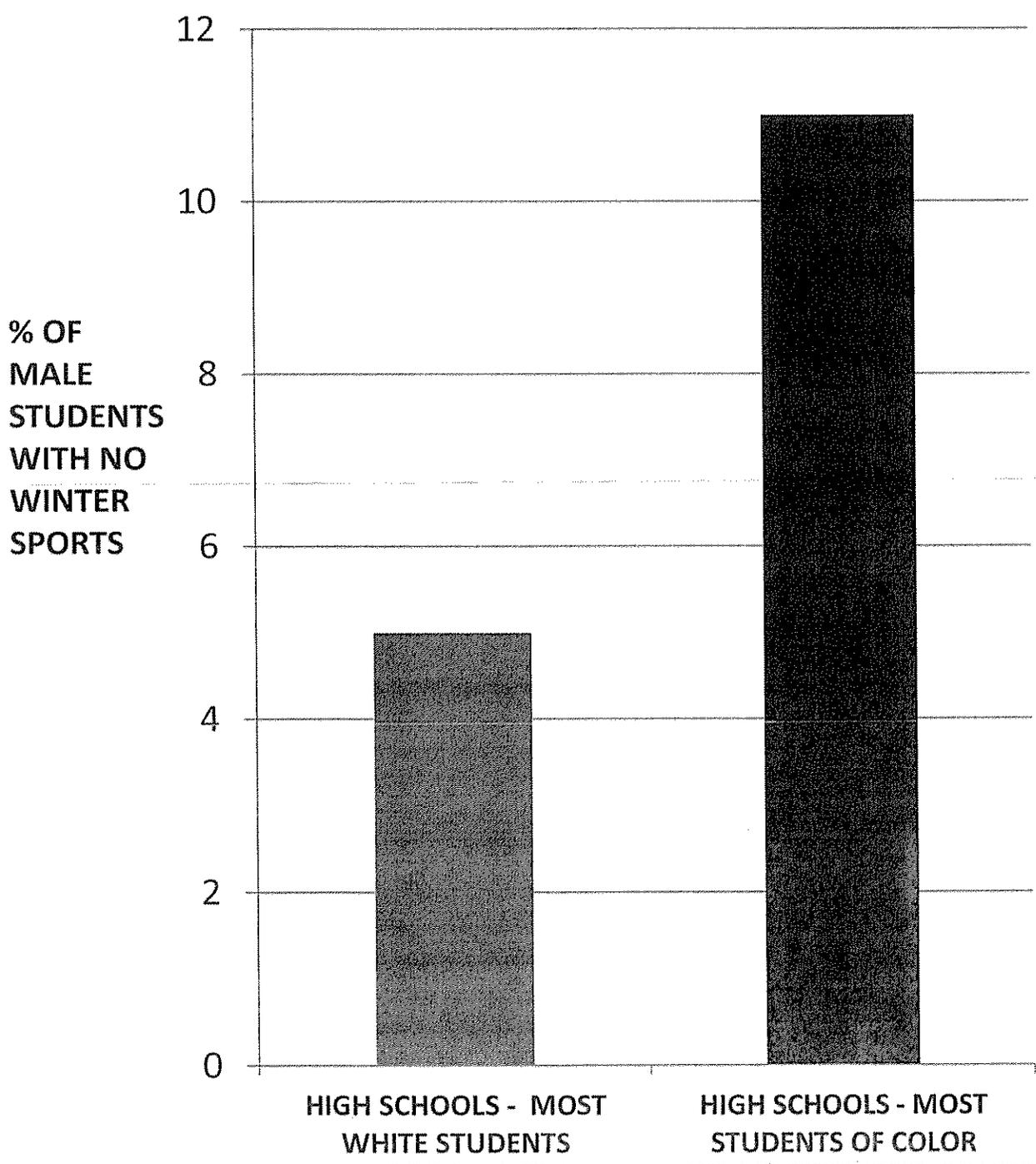
NO PSAL SPORTS FOR GIRLS IN THE FALL

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO FALL SPORTS



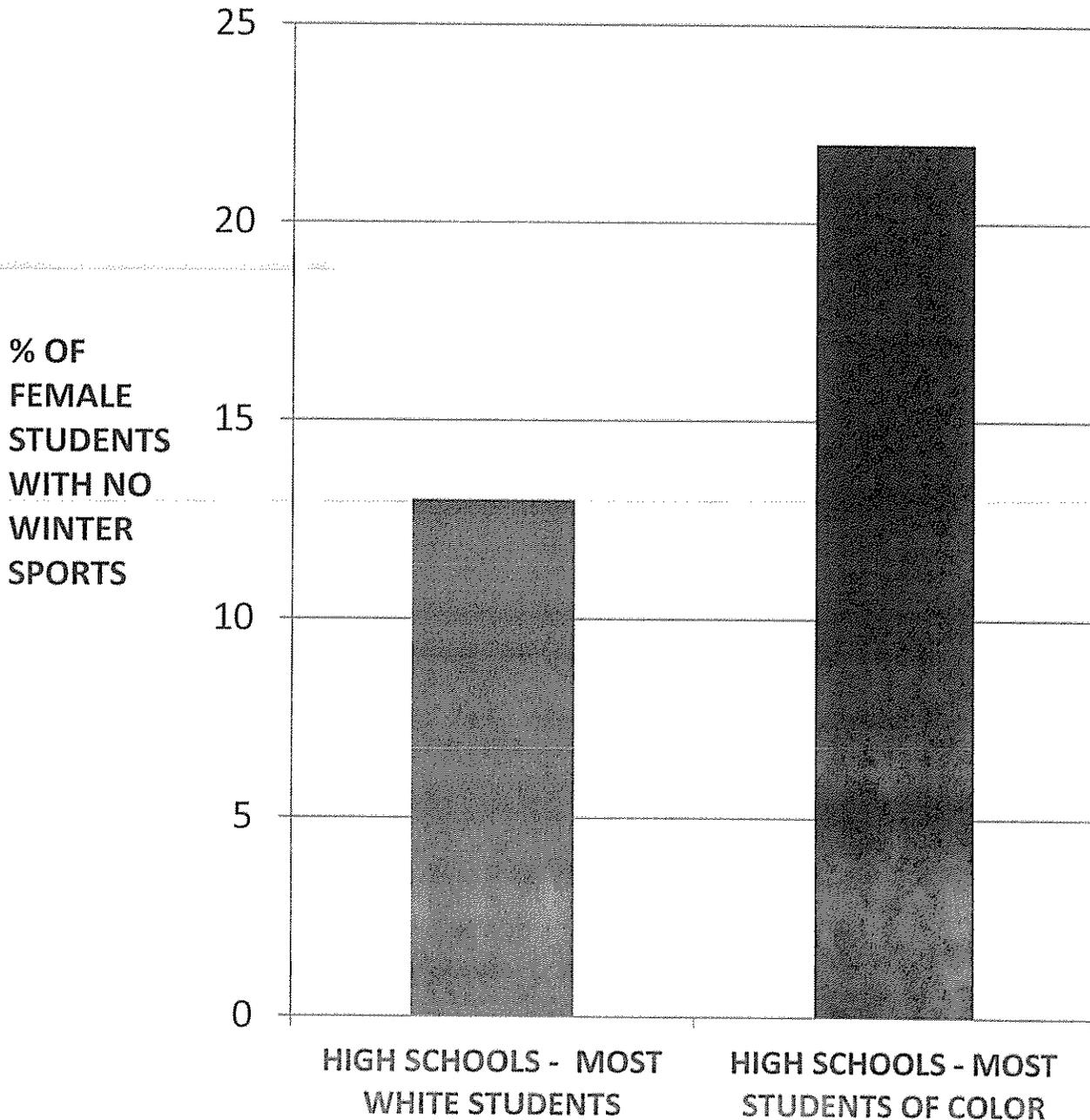
NO **PSAL** SPORTS FOR BOYS IN THE WINTER

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO WINTER SPORTS



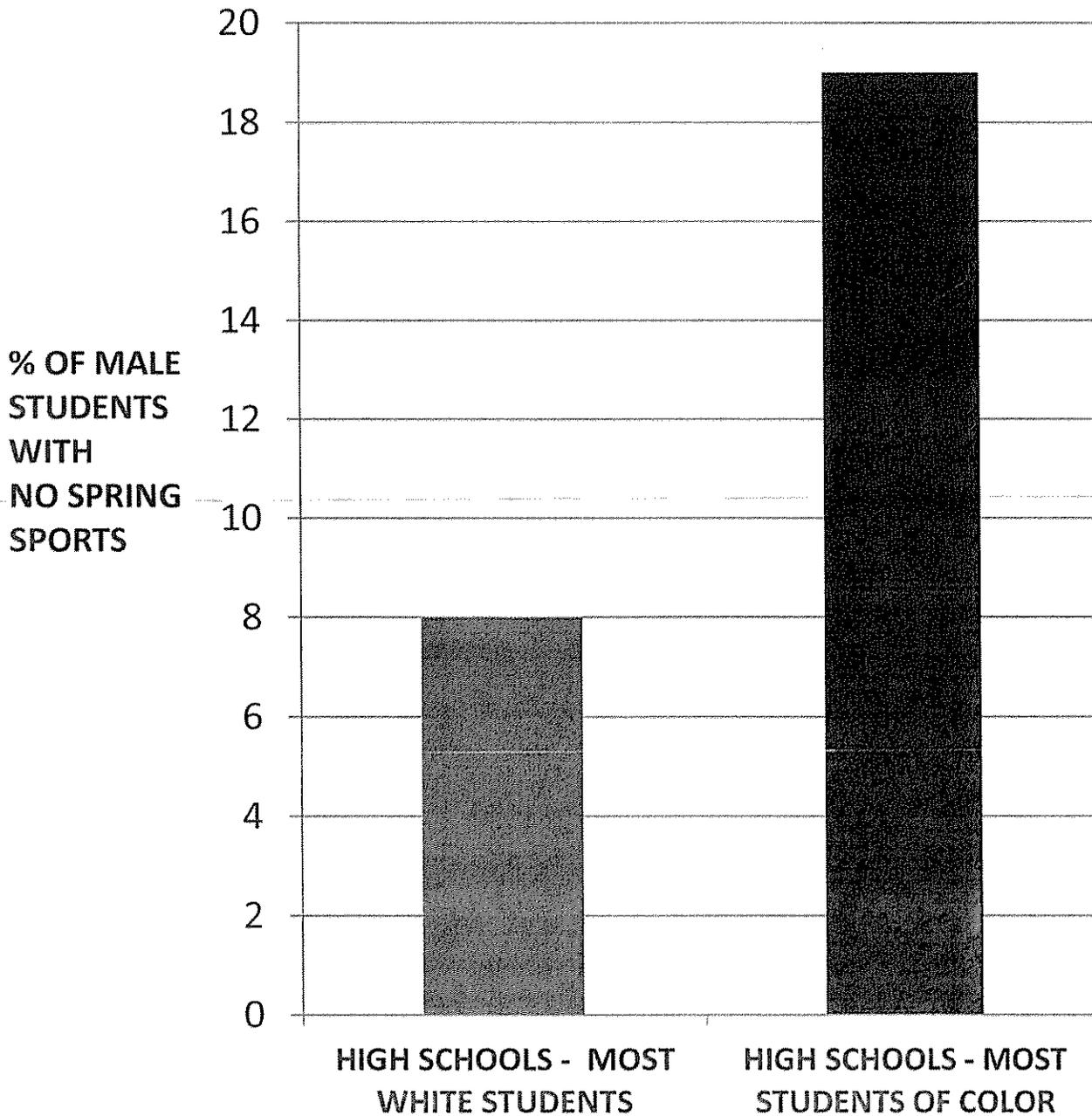
NO PSAL SPORTS FOR GIRLS IN THE WINTER

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO WINTER SPORTS



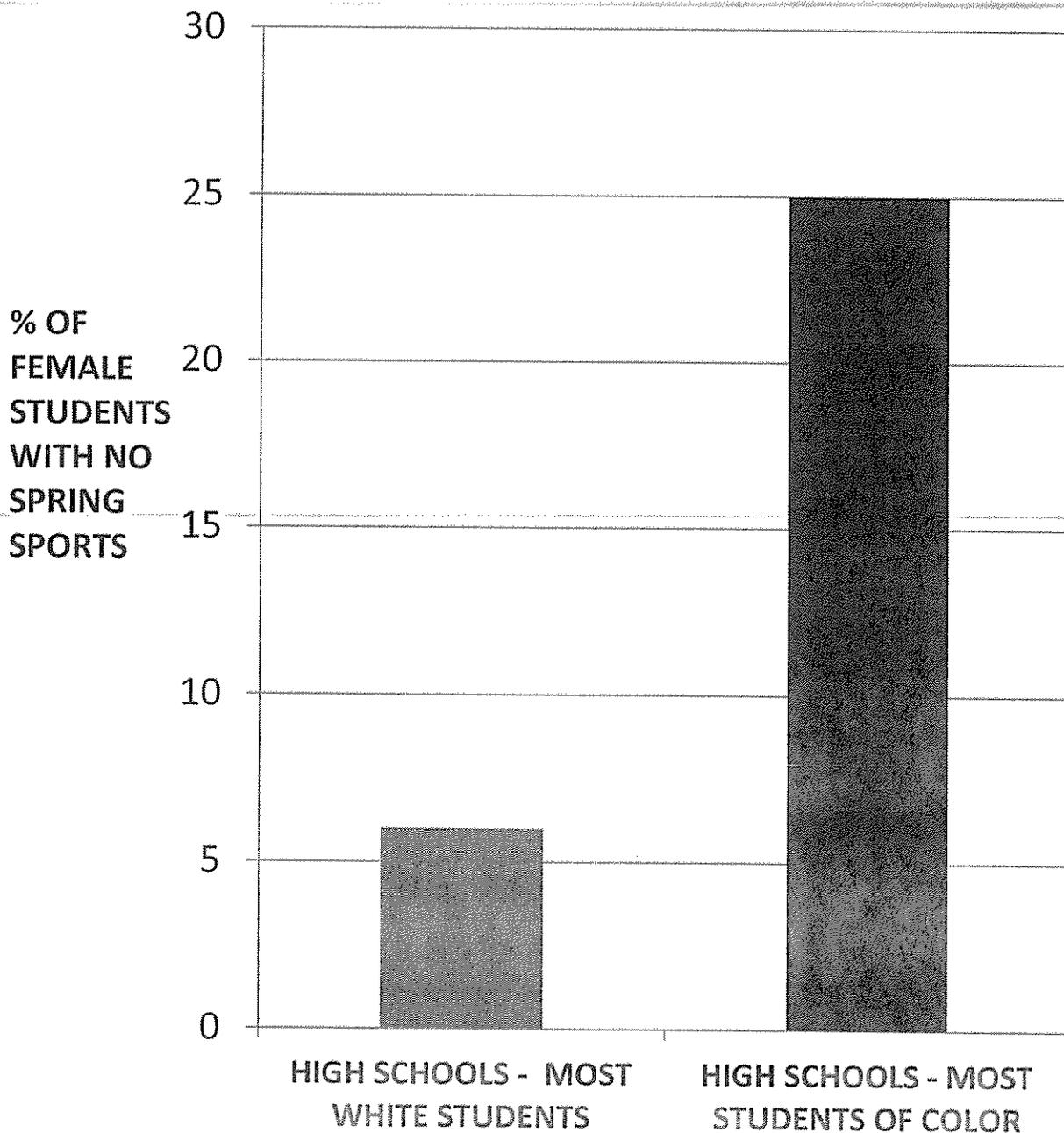
NO PSAL SPORTS FOR BOYS IN THE SPRING

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO SPRING SPORTS



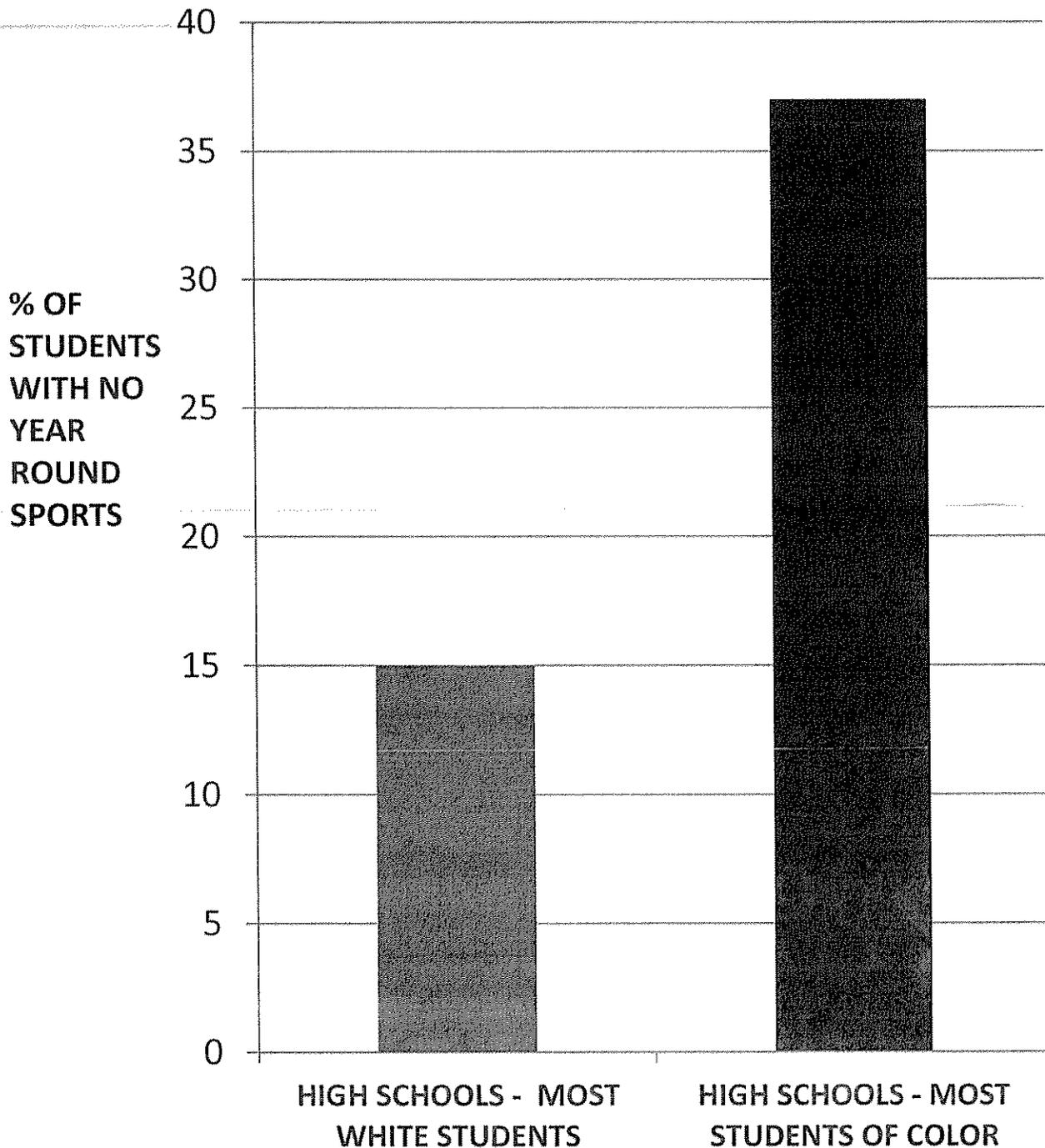
NO PSAL SPORTS FOR GIRLS IN THE SPRING

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO SPRING SPORTS



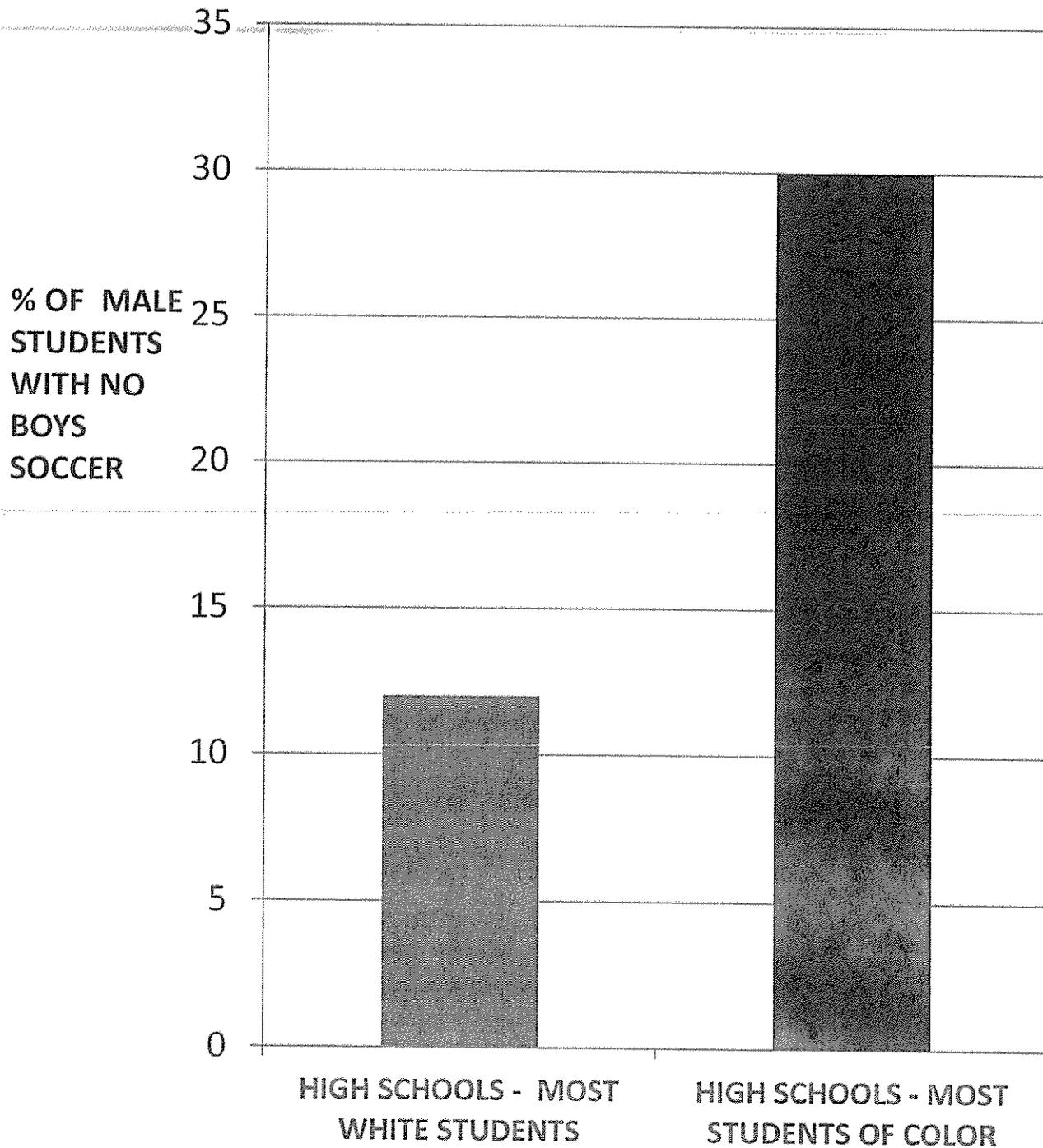
NO YEAR ROUND *PSAL* SPORTS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

% OF STUDENTS WITH NO YEAR ROUND SPORTS



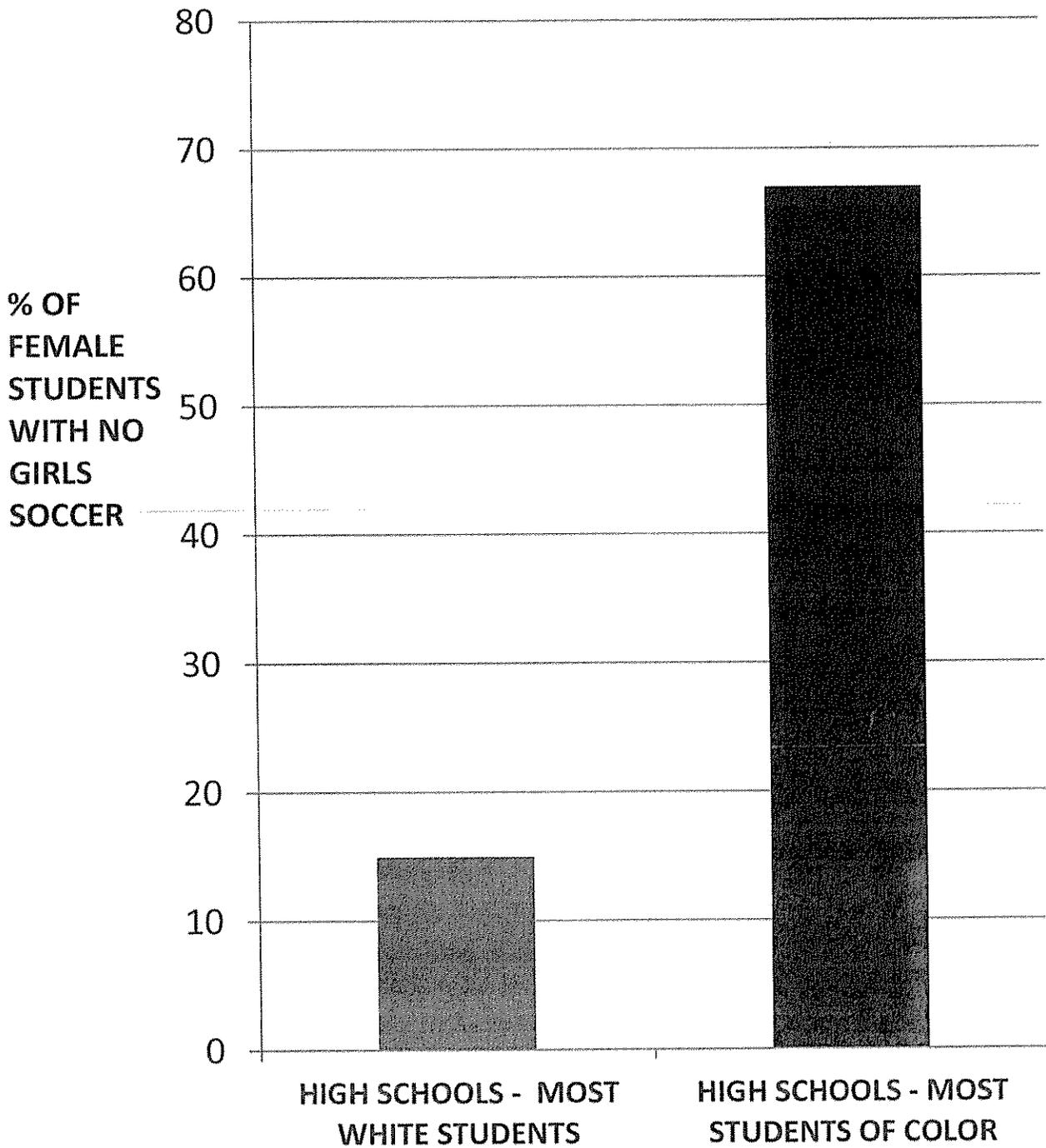
NO PSAL BOYS SOCCER

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO BOYS SOCCER



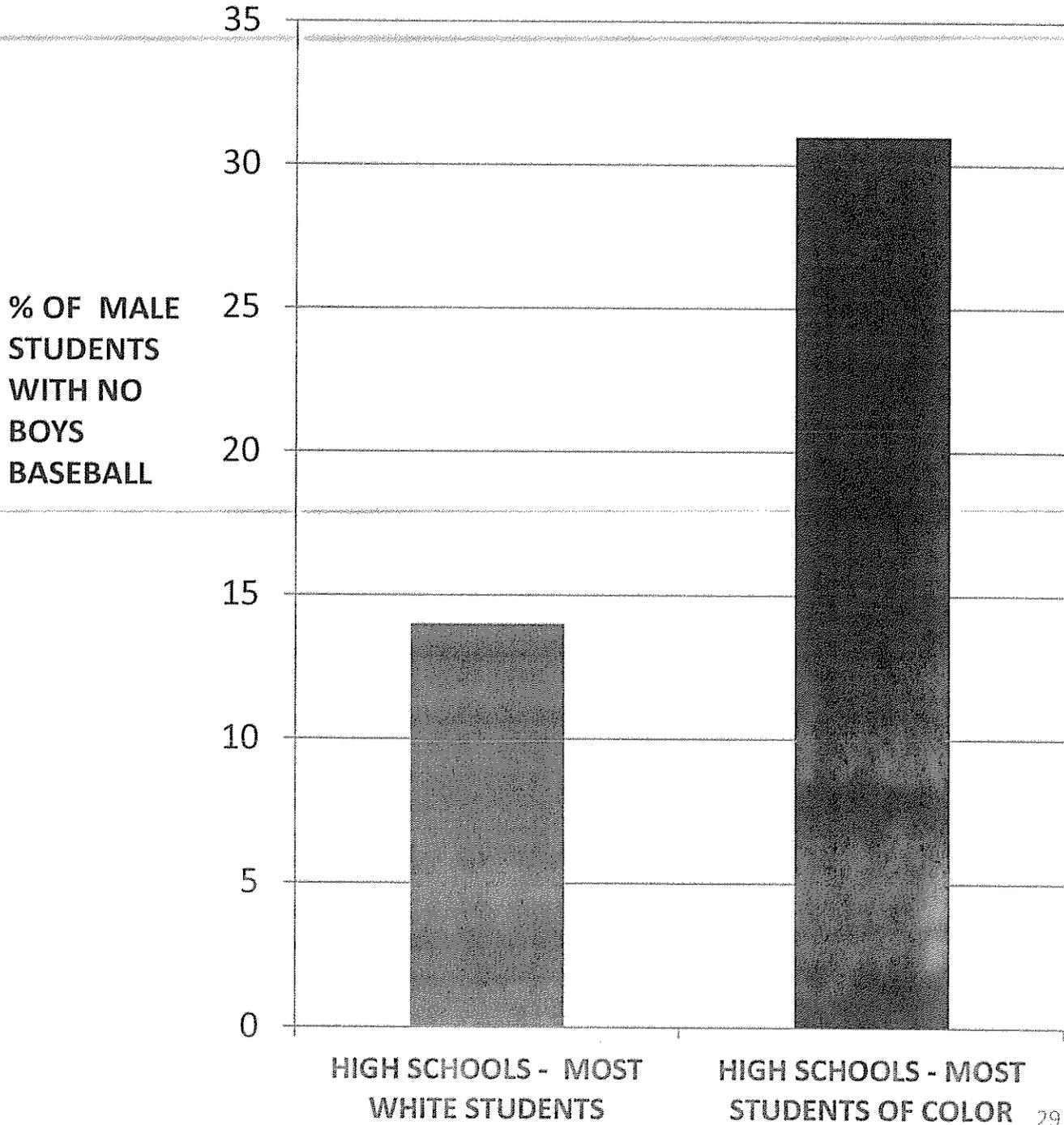
NO PSAL GIRLS SOCCER

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS SOCCER



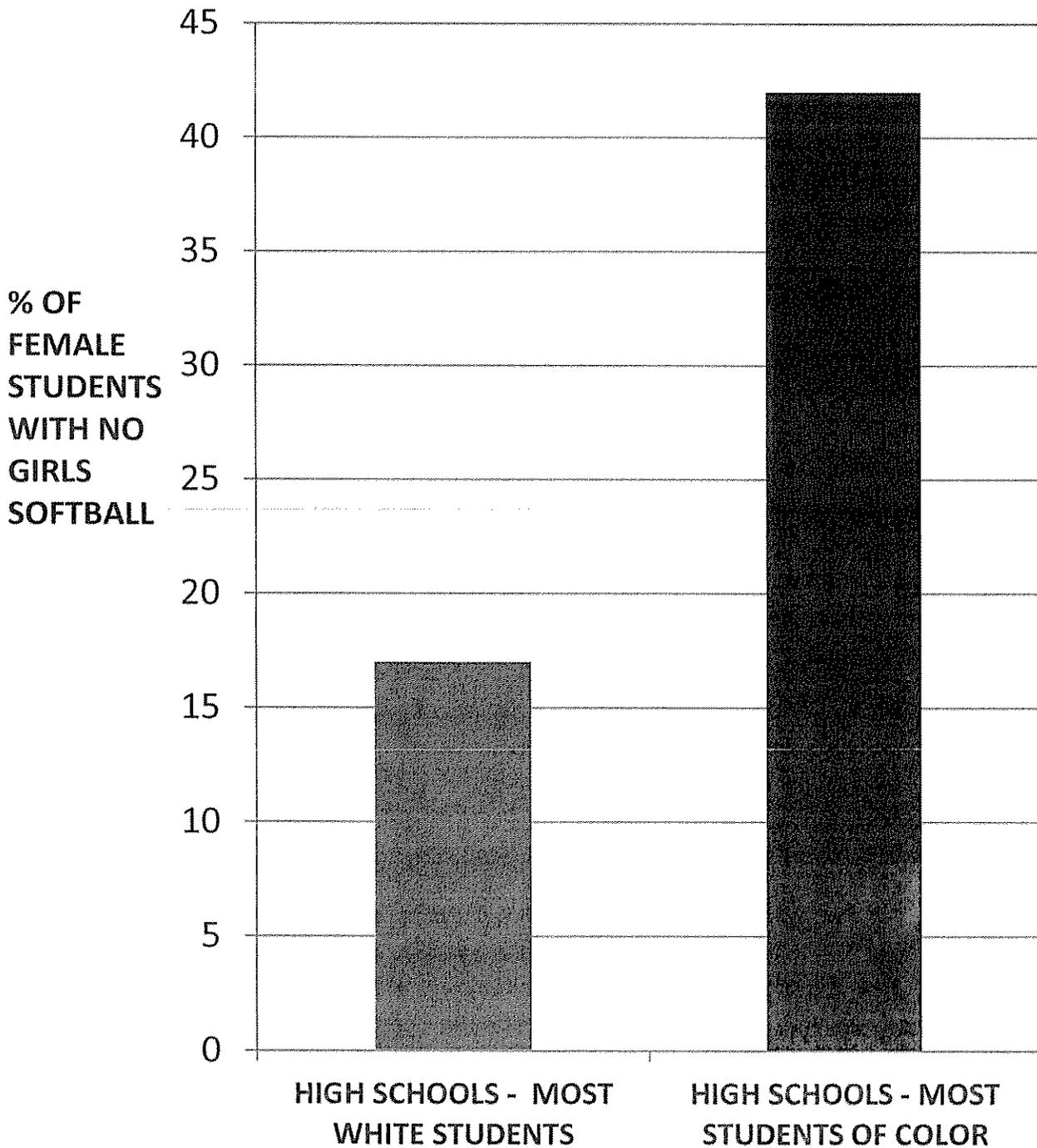
NO PSAL BOYS BASEBALL

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO BOYS BASEBALL



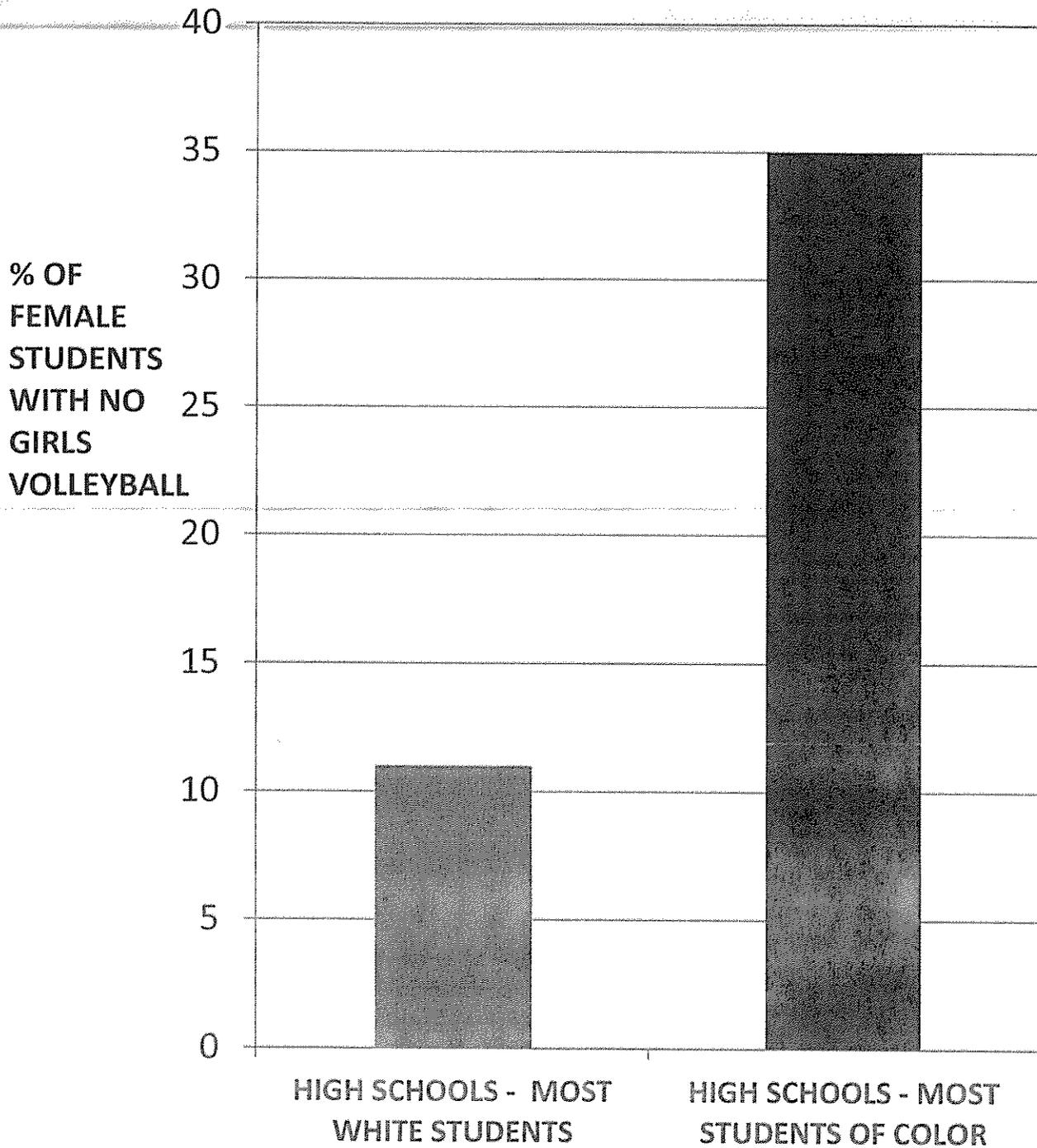
NO PSaL GIRLS SOFTBALL

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS SOFTBALL



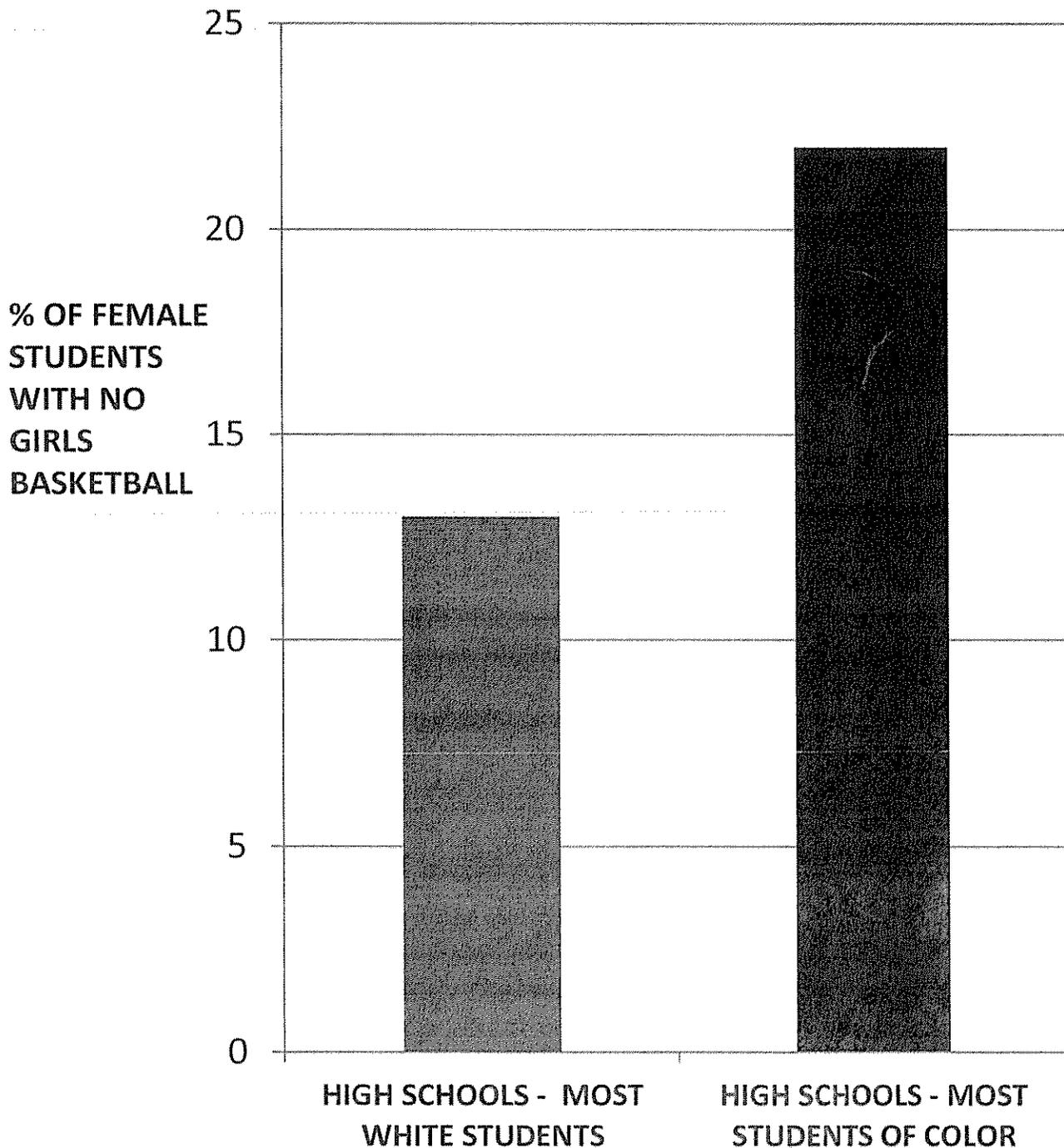
NO PSAL GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS VOLLEYBALL



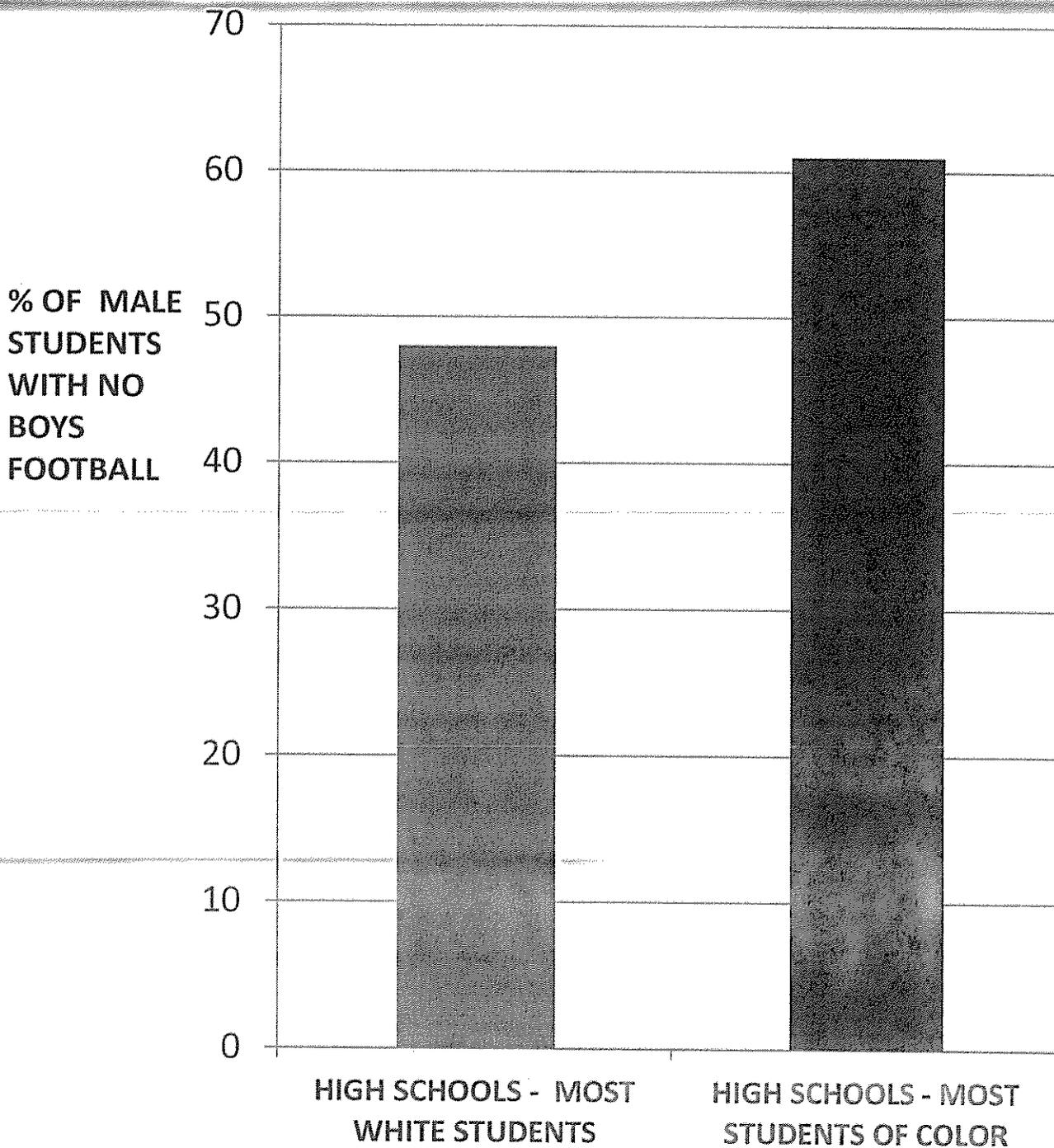
NO PSAL GIRLS BASKETBALL

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS BASKETBALL



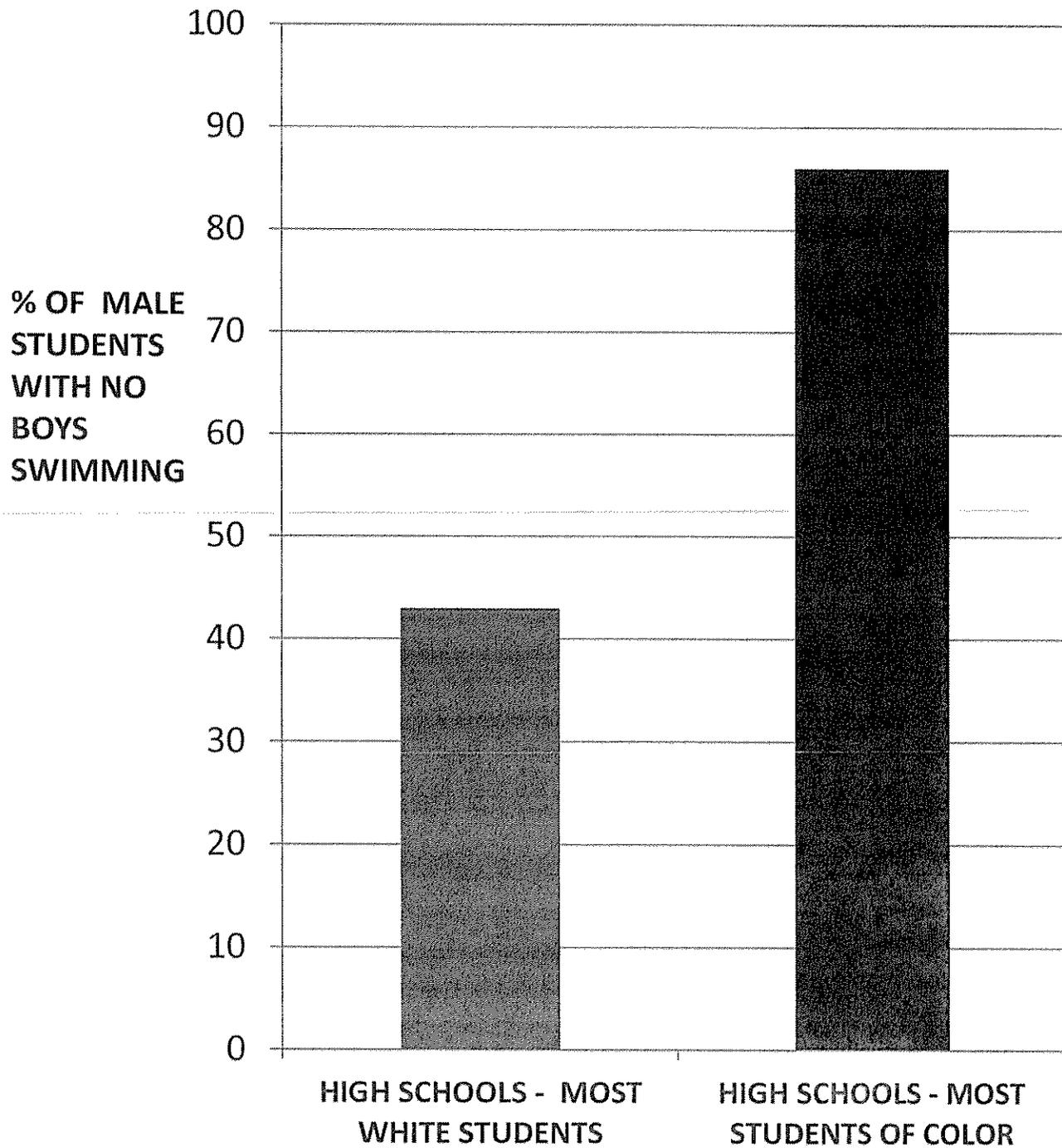
NO PSAL BOYS FOOTBALL

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO BOYS FOOTBALL



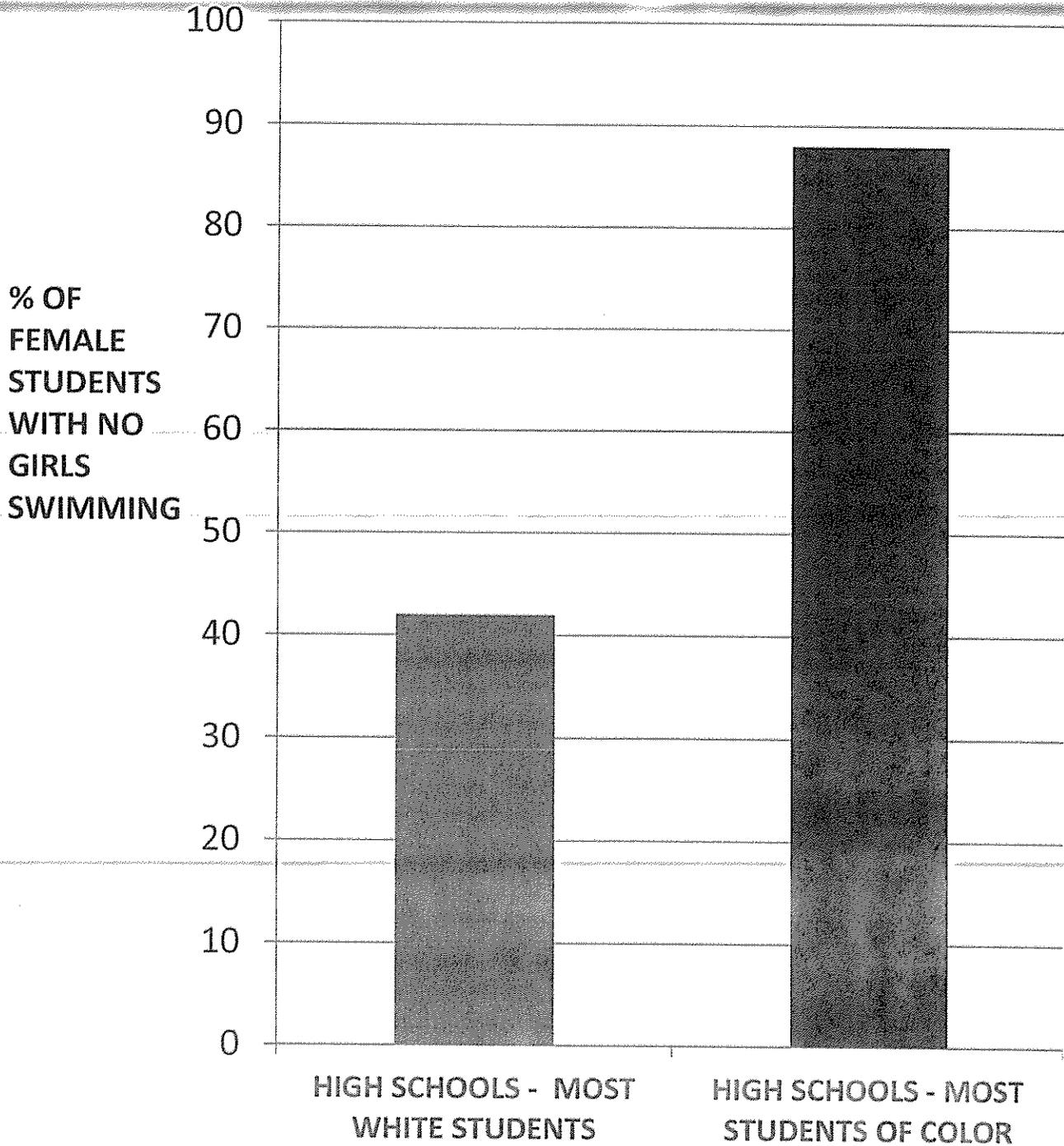
NO PSAL BOYS SWIMMING

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO BOYS SWIMMING



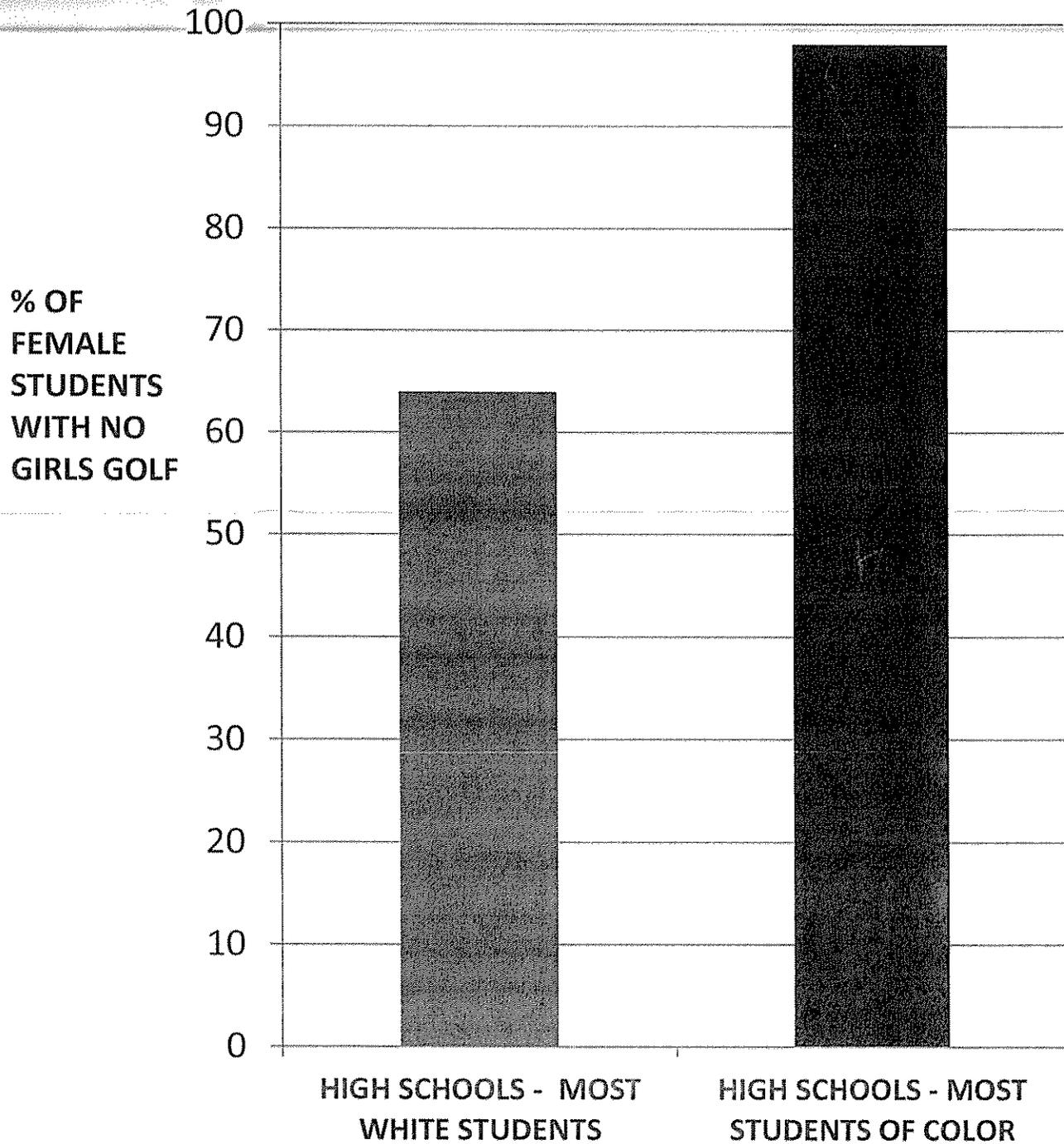
NO PSAL GIRLS SWIMMING

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS SWIMMING



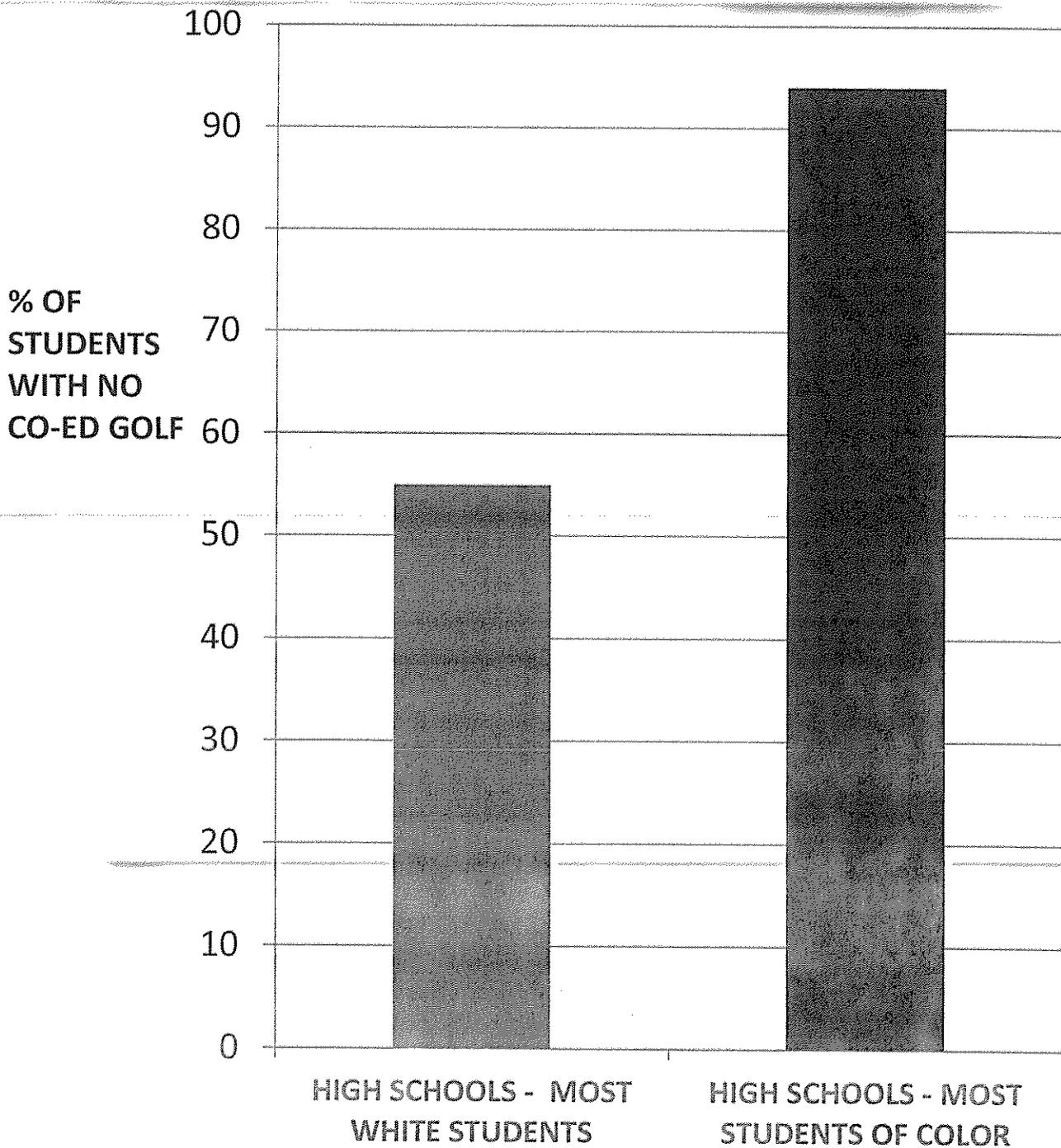
NO PSAL GIRLS GOLF

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS GOLF



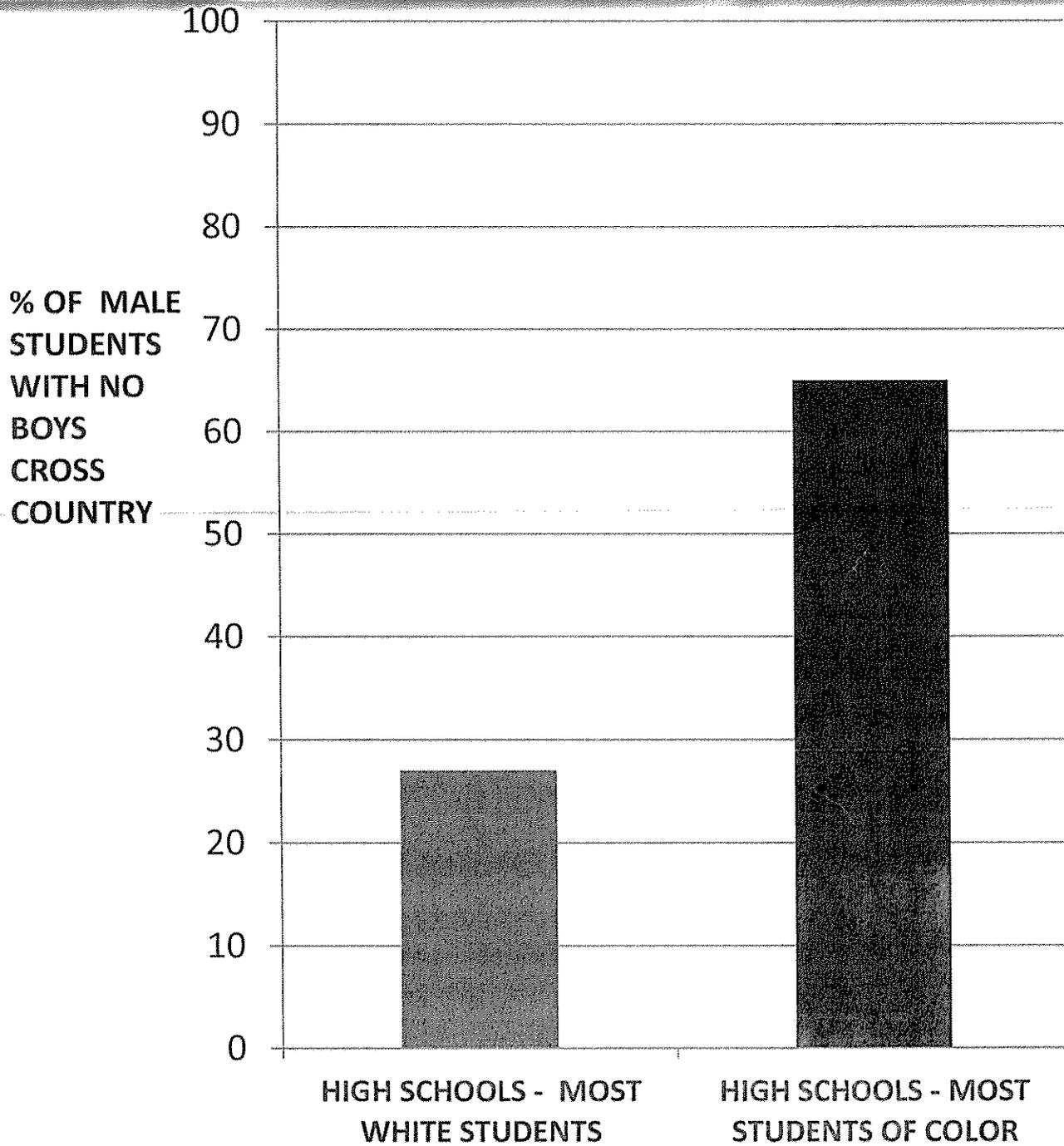
NO PSAL CO-ED GOLF

% OF STUDENTS WITH NO CO-ED GOLF



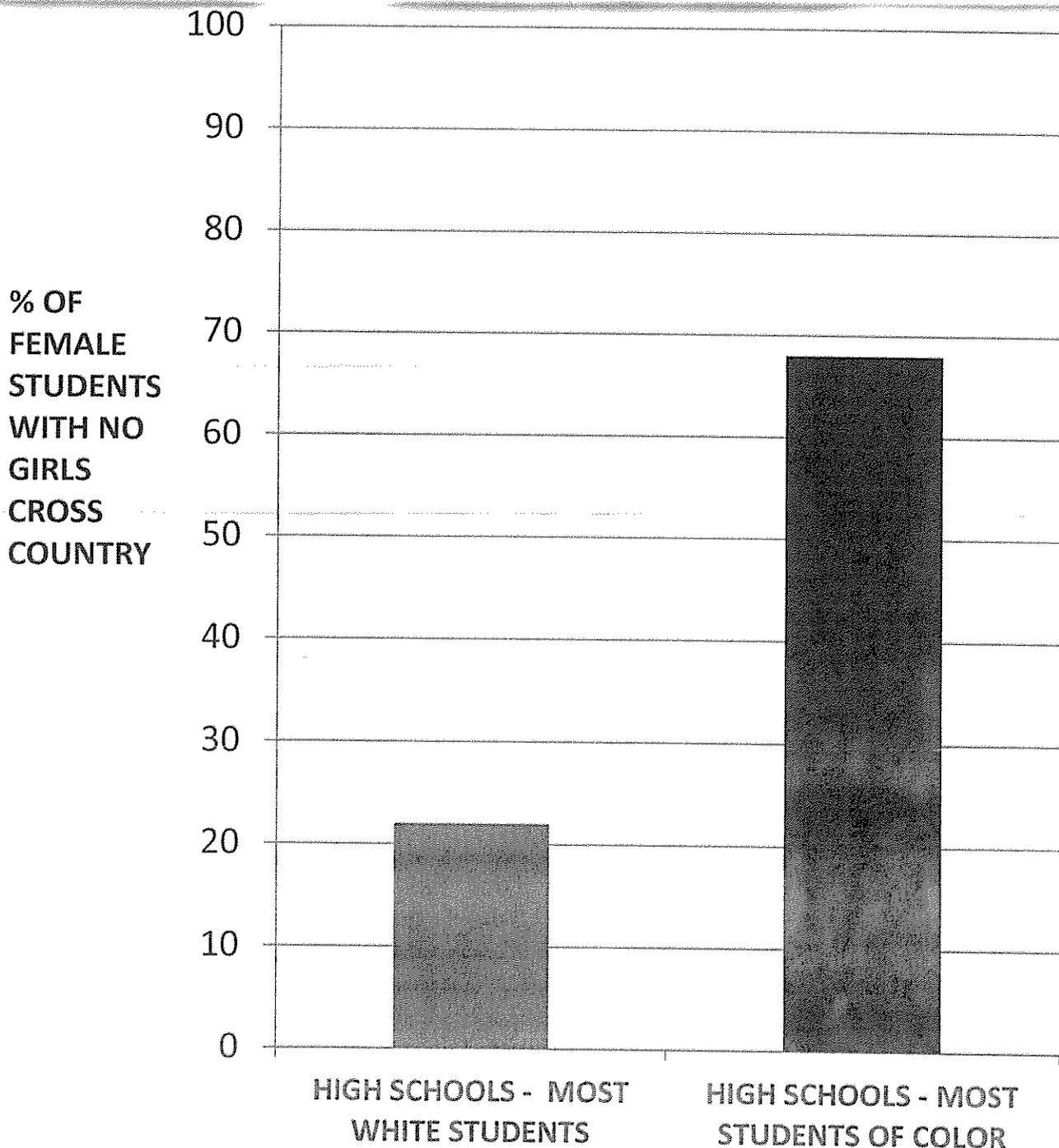
NO PSAL BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO BOYS CROSS COUNTRY



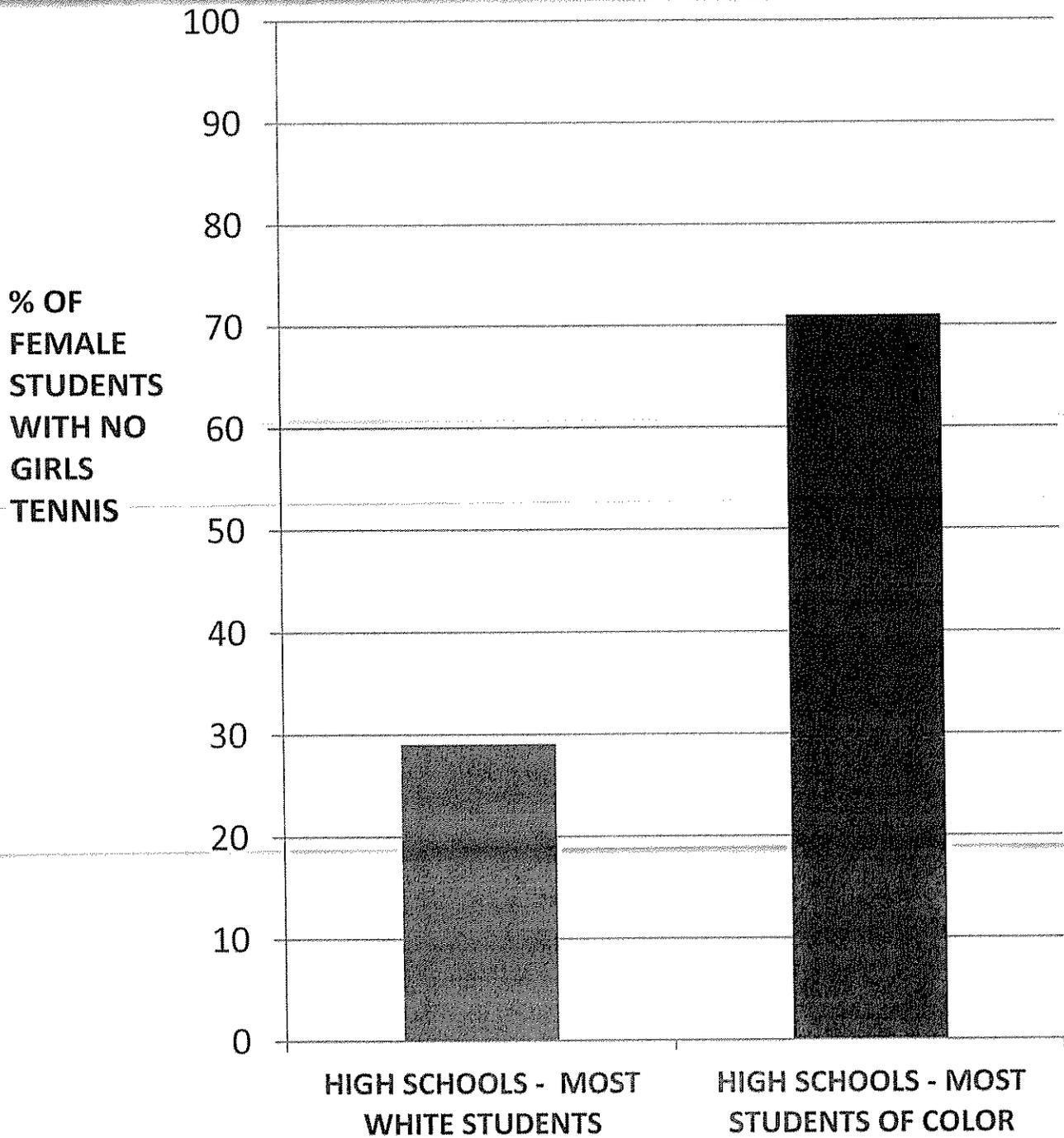
NO PS&L GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY



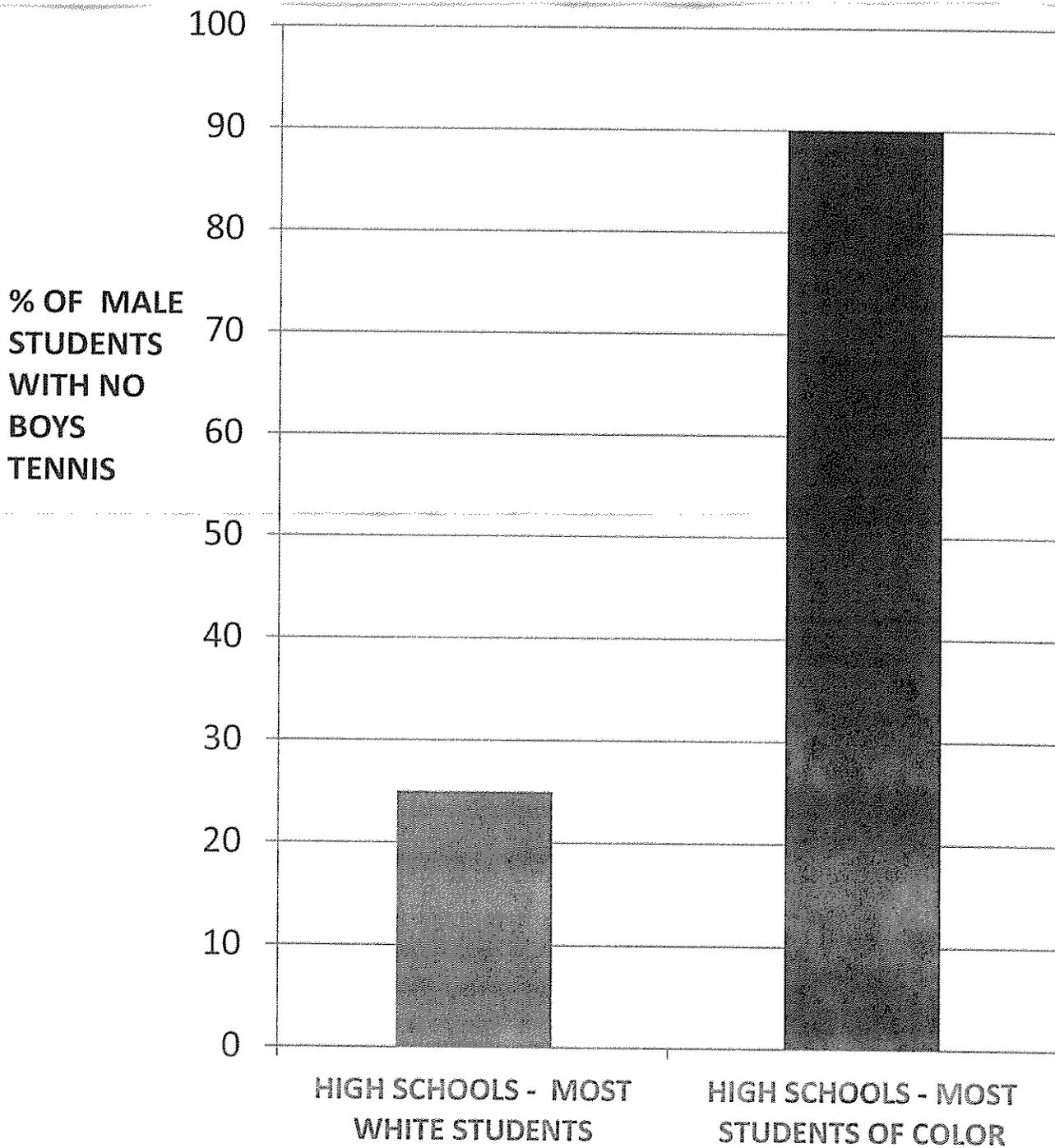
NO PSAL GIRLS TENNIS

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS TENNIS



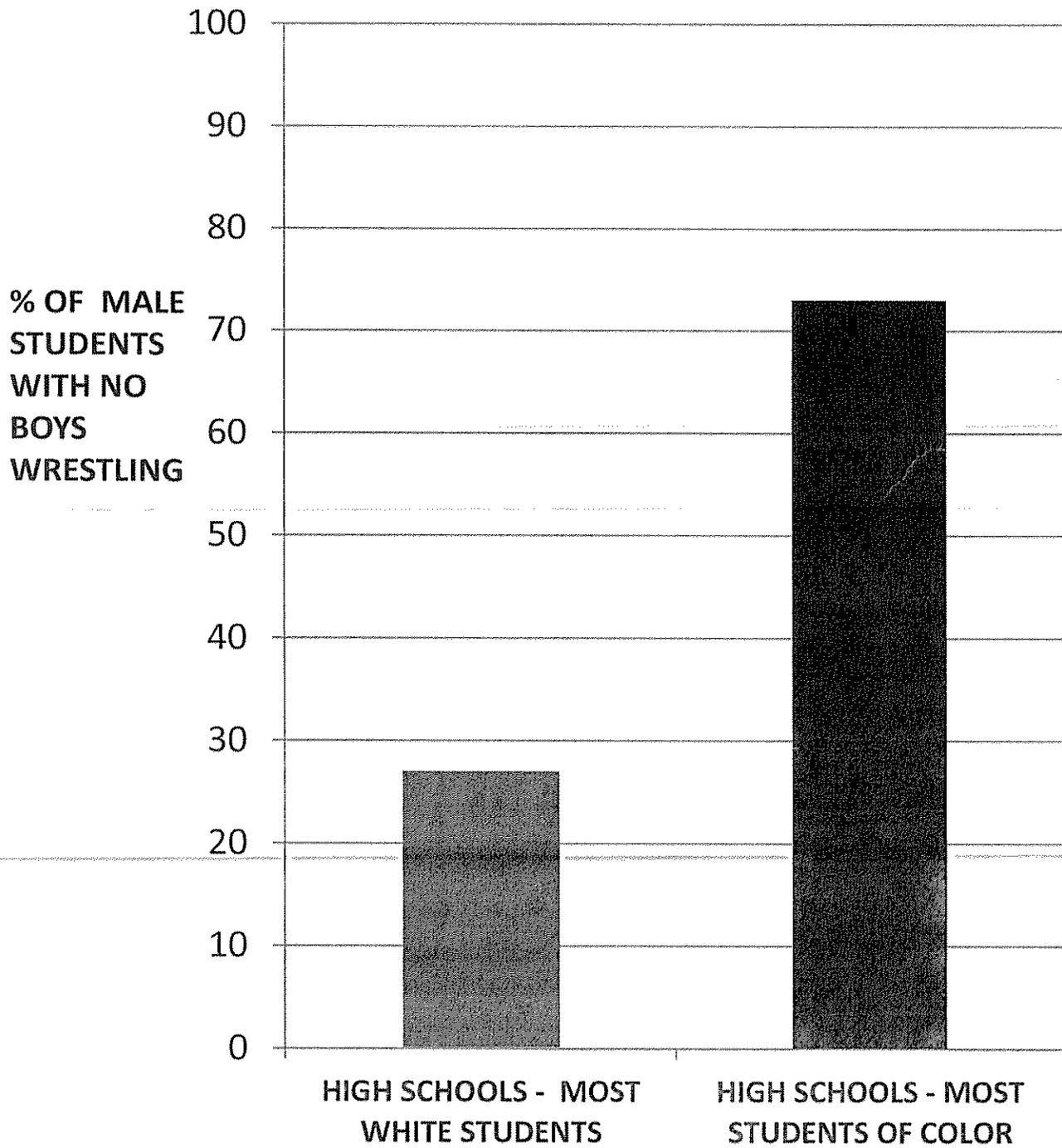
NO PSAL BOYS TENNIS

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO BOYS TENNIS



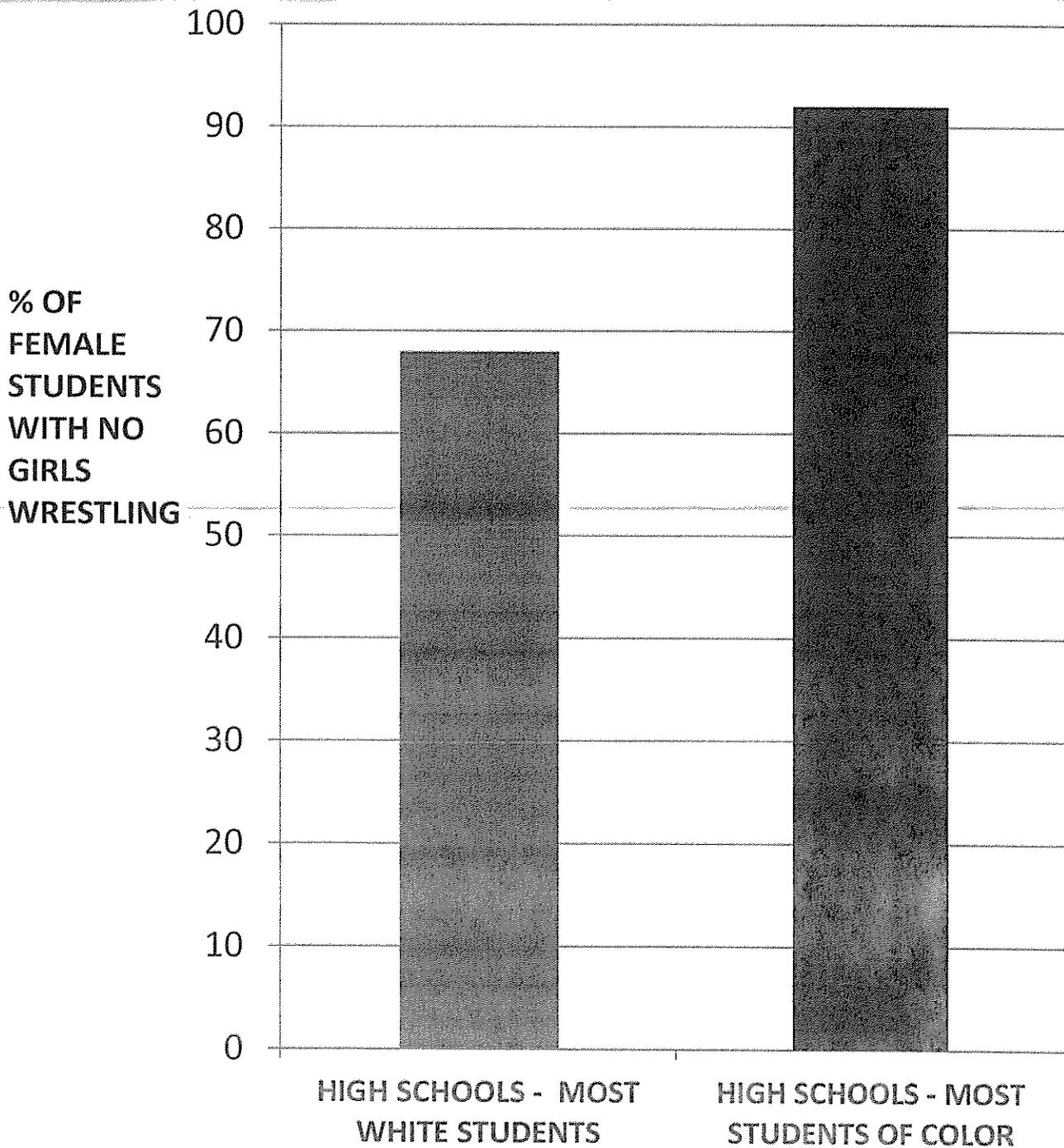
NO PSAL BOYS WRESTLING

% OF MALE STUDENTS WITH NO BOYS WRESTLING



NO PSaL GIRLS WRESTLING

% OF FEMALE STUDENTS WITH NO GIRLS WRESTLING

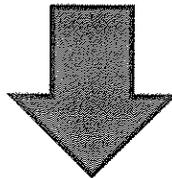


**THERE IS A “COMPARABLY
EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE
POLICY OR PRACTICE” THAT
WOULD HAVE A “LESS
DISCRIMINATORY EFFECT ON
THE DISPROPORTIONATELY
AFFECTED RACIAL GROUP”**

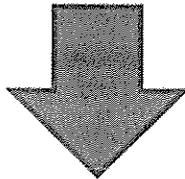
***- OCTOBER 1, 2014 “DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER” FROM THE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION’S OFFICE OF
CIVIL RIGHTS***

**COMPARABLY EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE FUNDING
MODEL THAT WOULD HAVE A LESS
DISCRIMINATORY EFFECT ON STUDENTS OF COLOR**

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION PROVIDES EACH HIGH
SCHOOL WITH AN EQUITABLE
ALLOCATION FOR SPORTS
PROGRAMMING**



**PRINCIPALS CHOOSE HOW TO SPEND THE MONEY TO MEET
THE UNIQUE SPORTS NEEDS OF THEIR STUDENT BODY**

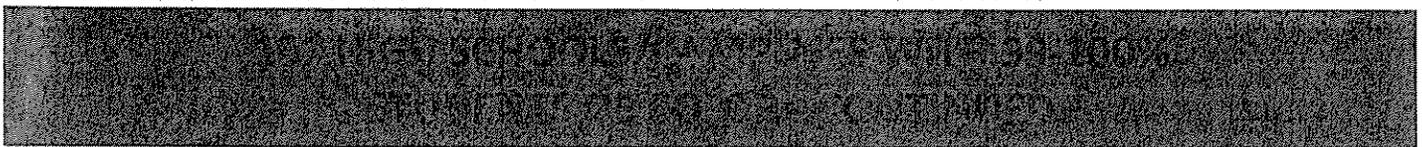


**THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WORKS WITH THE PARKS
DEPARTMENT AND SCHOOLS TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS HAVE
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO DOE AND PUBLIC PARK SPORTS
FACILITIES**

ALL SCHOOLS WITH 100% OF STUDENTS OF COLOR

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% STUDENTS OF COLOR	#PSAL TEAMS
Academy for Language and Technology(09X365)	100	4
Arturo A Schomburg Satellite Academy(12X446)	100	2
Aspirations Diploma Plus(23K646)	100	1
Benjamin Banneker Academy(13K670)	100	19
Bronx Career and College Prep(12X479)	100	0
Taft Campus(09X227)	100	20
Bronx Latin(12X267)	100	0
Bronx Leadership Academy(09X525)	100	7
Bronx Regional High School(12X480)	100	3
Marcy Ave Campus(13K553)	100	2
Brownsville Academy High School(17K568)	100	2
Crotona Academy High School(07X321)	100	0
East New York Family Academy(19K409)	100	6
EBC HS for Public Service – Bushwick(32K545)	100	6
Frederick Douglas Academy IV (16K393)	100	0
Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and Math(06M552)	100	3
Harlem Renaissance High School(05M285)	100	0
High School for Excellence and Innovation(06M423)	100	0

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% STUDENTS OF COLOR	#PSAL TEAMS
Jane Addams Campus(08X650)	100	7
Medgar Evers College Prep (17K590)	100	11
Mott Haven Community HS(07X557)	100	2
Pan American International HS(24Q296)	100	0
Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change(05M670)	100	3
Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School(06M348)	100	11
A. Philip Randolph Campus(06M540)	99	23
South Shore Campus(18K637)	99	21
Academy for Young Writers(19K404)	99	2
ACORN Community High School(13K499)	99	2
Alfred E. Smith Career and Tech Ed(07X600)	99	14
Art and Media Prep Academy(18K589)	99	2
August Martin HS(27Q400)	99	13
Bedford Academy HS(13K595)	99	6
Boys and Girls HS(16K455)	99	22
Bread and Roses Integrated Arts HS(05M685)	99	3
Bronx Arena HS(08X537)	99	0
Morrisania Campus(09X260)	99	7



HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% STUDENTS OF COLOR	#PSAL TEAMS
Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching and Learning(09X324)	99	3
Bronx Guild(Stevenson Campus)(08X452)	99	11
Bronx School for Law, Government, and Justice(09X505)	99	9
Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists(08X269)	99	6
Brooklyn Collegiate(23K493)	99	3
Brooklyn Frontiers(Pacific HS)(15K423)	99	0
Brooklyn HS for Law and Technology(16K498)	99	8
Bushwick Campus(32K549)	99	9
Walton Campus(10X442)	99	17
Choir Academy of Harlem(05M469)	99	0
City College Academy of the Arts(06M293)	99	3
Clara Barton HS(17K600)	99	12
Community Health Academy of the Heights(06M346)	99	10
Comprehensive Model School Project(09X327)	99	2
Dr. Susan S. Mckinney Secondary School of the Arts(13K265)	99	3
Eagle Academy for Young Men(09X231)	99	3
Eagle Academy for Young Men II(23K644)	99	5
East Bronx Academy for the Future(12X271)	99	0

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% STUDENTS OF COLOR	#PSAL TEAMS
East Brooklyn Community High School(18K673)	99	0
El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice(14K685)	99	0
Thomas Jefferson Campus(19K502)	99	18
Foundations Academy(14K322)	99	3
Frederick Douglas Academy(05M499)	99	20
Frederick Douglas Academy III(09X517)	99	2
Gotham Professional Arts Academy(16K594)	99	0
Harry S. Truman HS(11X455)	99	22
Health Opportunities HS(07X670)	99	4
Washington Campus(06M467)	99	16
HS for Law Enforcement and Public Safety(28Q690)	99	10
Erasmus Campus(17K539)	99	22
Evander Childs Campus(11X275)	99	17
Monroe Campus(12X550)	99	9
Holcombe Rucker(08X332)	99	9
Hostos Lincoln academy of Science(07X500)	99	3
Campus Magnet(29Q243)	99	18
International Community HS(07X334)	99	1
Tilden Campus(18K563)	99	18
Leadership Institute(09X276)	99	5

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% STUDENTS OF COLOR	#PSAL TEAMS
Lower East Side Prep HS(01M515)	99	1
The Lab School of Finance and Technology(07X223)	99	0
Thelma Hamilton Campus(23K647)	99	2
The Metropolitan HS(12X248)	99	6
Morris Ed Campus(09X297)	99	7
Olympus Academy(18K635)	99	0
Pathways College Prep School(29Q259)	99	6
Grand Street Campus(14K474)	99	19
Providing Urban Leaders Success in Education HS(10X319)	99	0
Springfield Gardens Campus(29Q248)	99	19
Samuel Gompers Career and Tech Ed HS(07X655)	99	11
Wingate Campus(17K531)	99	17
Teachers Prep HS(FDA VII)(23K697)	99	6
The Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters(07X551)	99	2
The Urban Assembly School for Global Commerce(05M157)	99	0
Theater Arts Production Company(10X225)	99	0
Transit Tech Career and Technical Education HS(19K615)	99	16
South Bronx Campus(07X495)	99	21
Urban Assembly HS of Music and Art(13K350)	99	0

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% STUDENTS OF COLOR	#PSAL TEAMS
Mott Haven Campus(07X548)	99	22
Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts(05M369)	99	0
Bathgate Campus(09X263)	99	10
W.H. Maxwell Career and Technical Education HS(19K660)	99	7
Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing and Visual Arts(03M415)	99	3
Wings Academy(12X684)	99	4
York Early College Academy(28Q284)	99	1
Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn(14K614)	99	0

46 HIGH SCHOOLS/CAMPUSES WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF WHITE STUDENTS

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% WHITE STUDENTS	#PSAL TEAMS
Tottenville HS(31R455)	82	44
Eleanor Roosevelt HS(02M416)	62	12
Leon M. Goldstein HS for the Sciences(22K535)	62	15
McKee/Staten Island Tech(31R605)	57	36
Brooklyn Studio Secondary(21K690)	56	10
CSIHS/McCown(31R047)	55	20
Institute for Collaborative Education(02M407)	54	6
HS for American Studies at Lehman College(10X696)	53	11
World Journalism Prep(25Q285)	53	0
Michael J. Petrides HS(31R080)	52	28
New Dorp HS(31R440)	51	34
Susan Wagner(31R460)	49	36
Bard HS Early College(01M696)	48	11
Beacon HS(03M479)	47	22
Professional Performing Arts(02M408)	47	0
Fiorello H. Laguardia HS Music, Art, Performing Art(03M485)	46	21
James Madison HS(22K425)	46	36
Frank Sinatra School of the Arts(30Q501)	45	7
NEST+M(01M539)	43	10

46 HIGH SCHOOLS WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF WHITE STUDENTS - CONTINUED

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% WHITE STUDENTS	#PSAL TEAMS
Stephen A. Halsey(28Q157)	42	0
Rachel Carson HS for Coastal Studies(21K344)	39	0
Scholars Academy(27Q323)	39	12
School of the Future(02M413)	36	10
Millennium HS(02M418)	35	11
Metropolitan Campus(28Q167)	35	19
Maspeth HS(24Q585)	34	17
Fort Hamilton(20K490)	34	32
Baccalaureate School for Global Education(30Q580)	32	4
Forest Hills HS(28Q440)	32	24
Lab Museum United(02M412)	31	15
Edward R. Murrow (21K525)	28	6
New Utrecht HS(20K445)	28	25
Riverdale/Kingsbridge Academy(10X141)	26	13
Academy of American Studies(30Q575)	25	12
HS for Math, Science, Engineering at City College(05M692)	25	11
Khalil Gibran international Academy(15K592)	24	0
Bronx HS of Science(10X445)	23	43
Lafayette Campus(21K348)	23	24

46 HIGH SCHOOLS WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF WHITE STUDENTS - CONTINUED

HIGH SCHOOL/CAMPUS NAME	% WHITE STUDENTS	#PSAL TEAMS
Midwood HS(22K405)	23	34
Abraham Lincoln HS(21K410)	22	32
Townsend Harris HS(25Q525)	22	31
Queens Satellite HS for Opportunity(28Q338)	22	3
Stuyvesant HS(02M475)	22	41
Queens HS Complex(24Q299)	22	13
Port Richmond HS(31R445)	22	34
Concord HS(31R470)	21	0

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TESTIMONY OF DENNIS SAFFRAN

**IN OPPOSITION TO
RESOLUTION No. 442-2014**

**New York City Council
Committee on Education**

December 11, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Dennis Saffran. I'm a lawyer and public policy writer who has written about the specialized high school test. A copy of my article in *City Journal* is attached to my written testimony.

I'd like to tell you a success story about diversity and progressive values. A racial minority group historically victimized by discrimination begins coming to America in greater numbers in the 1960's due to an immigration reform sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy. Though many remain in poverty, they take advantage of several free, world-class public high schools established by progressive New York City governments to provide smart poor and working-class kids with the kind of education once available only at Andover or Choate. And by dint of hard work they totally best the dominant whites for admission to these schools.

The group of course is Asian-Americans, who now account for 60% of specialized school students. And their story is now the source of liberal discomfort since, while their success at these schools has come overwhelmingly at the expense of more affluent whites, it has also been accompanied by a troubling decrease in the small number of African-Americans and Latinos.

But the bill endorsed by this Resolution would do very little to increase Black and Latino enrollment at these schools. Rather, it would primarily benefit the privileged children of the affluent white elite at the expense of poor and working-class Asian immigrant kids.

The "holistic" admissions standards favored by opponents of the test include such resume builders as extracurricular activities and community service. But, as a parent leader

pointedly noted, “the kids with the best resumes in eighth grade have money.” The Chinese and Korean kids who have to help out at their parents’ stores after school aren’t going on the service trips to Nicaragua with the kids in the fashionable neighborhoods. The winners in this “holistic” system would be the children of privileged parents who can buy their kids the tokens of impressiveness.

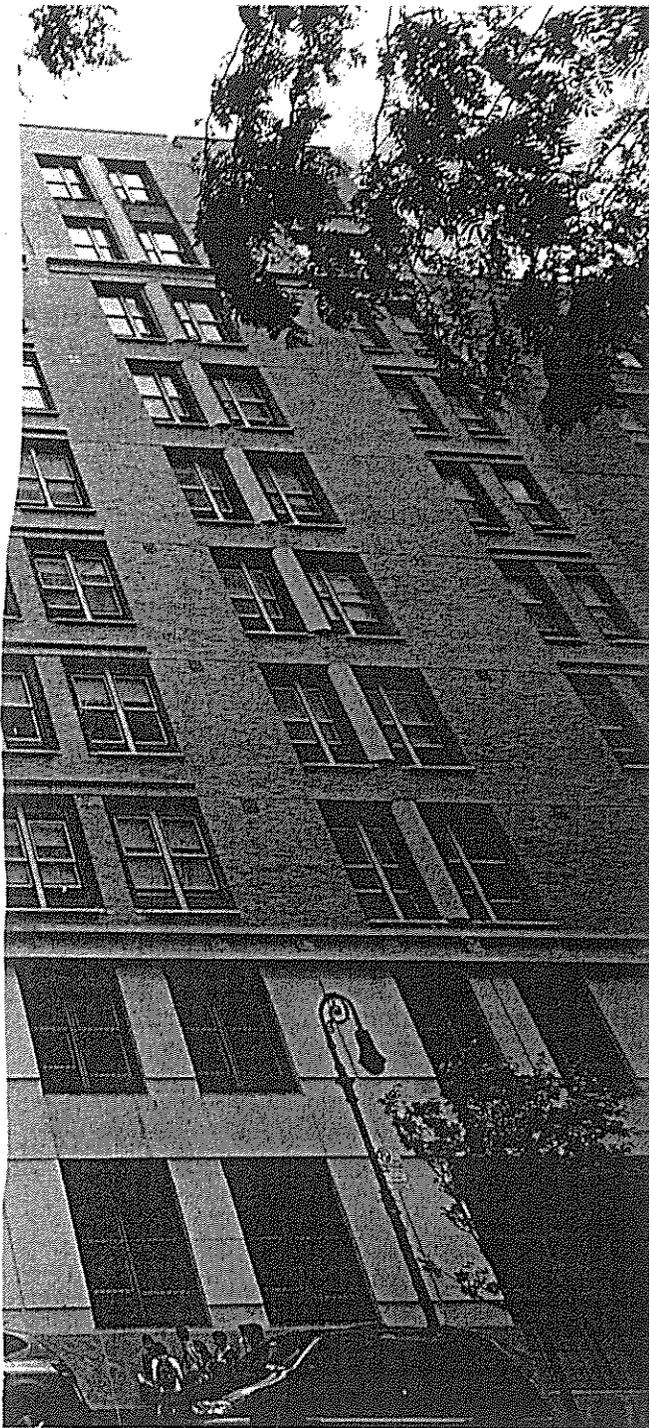
This is borne out by comparing the specialized schools with the “screened” high schools which use multiple admissions criteria. True, the screened schools are somewhat more Black and Latino than the specialized schools – but they are also considerably whiter, considerably wealthier, and substantially less Asian. While the Black and Hispanic share of the population at the top screened school is 14% higher than at the specialized schools, the white population is 22% higher – and the Asian population is an incredible 34% lower.

There’s also a striking class distinction between the two types of schools. The kids at the specialized schools are a lot poorer: 50% qualify for free or reduced price lunch, while only 36% of the students at the top screened schools do.

So this leaves me with two messages for the Council. For those who represent African-American and Latino constituencies, please vote against this Resolution. The bill it backs will not help your constituents; but only pit them against another minority group while benefitting the most privileged children in the city. For those who represent affluent white areas in Manhattan and Brooklyn, I have a more difficult message. This bill will benefit your constituents. But if you support it don’t style yourselves as champions of diversity and progressivism.

The Plot Against Merit





FRANK THAVENIN/AP PHOTO

Seeking racial balance, liberal advocates want to water down admissions standards at New York's elite high schools.

Dennis Saffran

In 2004, seven-year-old Ting Shi arrived in New York from China, speaking almost no English. For two years, he shared a bedroom in a Chinatown apartment with his grandparents—a cook and a factory worker—and a young cousin, while his parents put in 12-hour days at a small Laundromat they had purchased on the Upper East Side. Ting mastered English and eventually set his sights on getting into Stuyvesant High School, the crown jewel of New York City's eight "specialized high schools." When he was in sixth grade, he took the subway downtown from his parents' small apartment to the bustling high

Stuyvesant High School, the crown jewel of New York City's eight "specialized high schools," has produced four Nobel Prize winners.

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school to pick up prep books for its eighth-grade entrance exam. He prepared for the test over the next two years, working through the prep books and taking classes at one of the city's free tutoring programs. His acceptance into Stuyvesant prompted a day of celebration at the Laundromat—an immigrant family's dream beginning to come true. Ting, now a 17-year-old senior starting at NYU in the fall, says of his parents, who never went to college: "They came here for the next generation."

New York's specialized high schools, including Stuyvesant and the equally storied Bronx High School of Science, along with Brooklyn Technical High School and five smaller schools, have produced 14 Nobel Laureates—more than most countries. For more than 70 years, admission to these schools has been based upon a competitive examination of math, verbal, and logical reasoning skills. In 1971, the state legislature, heading off city efforts to scrap the merit selection test as culturally biased against minorities, reaffirmed that admission to the schools be based on the competitive exam. (See "How Gotham's Elite High Schools Escaped the Leveler's Ax," Spring 1999.) But now, troubled by declining black and Hispanic enrollment at the schools, opponents of the exam have resurfaced. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund has filed a civil rights complaint challenging the admissions process. A bill in Albany to eliminate the test requirement has garnered the support of Sheldon Silver, the powerful Assembly Speaker. And new New York City mayor Bill de Blasio, whose son, Dante, attends Brooklyn Tech, has called for changing the admissions criteria. The mayor argues that relying solely on the test creates a "rich-get-richer" dynamic that benefits the wealthy, who can afford expensive test preparation.

As Ting's story illustrates, however, the reality is just the opposite. It's not affluent whites, but rather the city's burgeoning population of Asian-American immigrants—a group that, despite its successes, remains disproportionately poor and working-class—whose children have aced the exam in overwhelming numbers. And, ironically, the more "holistic" and subjective admissions criteria that de Blasio and the NAACP favor would be much more likely to benefit chil-

dren of the city's professional elite than African-American and Latino applicants—while penalizing lower-middle-class Asian-American kids like Ting. The result would not be a specialized high school student body that "looks like New York," but rather one that looks more like Bill de Blasio's upscale Park Slope neighborhood in Brooklyn.

Established in 1904 as "a manual training school for boys," Stuyvesant stressed engineering and other applied sciences. Starting in 1919, the school restricted admissions, based on academic achievement, and it implemented a competitive entrance examination in 1929. Brooklyn Tech was founded in 1922 to prepare boys for engineering or other technical careers, and Bronx Science, conceived as a science and math school for boys, followed in 1938. With assistance from Columbia University, Bronx Science and Stuyvesant devised a common entrance exam; Brooklyn Tech later adopted it. All three schools had gone coed by 1970. Five smaller schools, now comprising 20 percent of the specialized-school population, were added during the administration of Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Admission to these schools is based upon the same exam.

In the early years, Bronx Science, which focused on pure rather than applied science, was the most prestigious of the original three schools. Its graduates have won eight Nobel Prizes, more than any other secondary school in the world, as well as six Pulitzer Prizes, and it also leads all schools in Intel (formerly Westinghouse) Science Talent Competition winners. Over the last two decades, however—especially since its 1992 move from a ramshackle old building on 15th Street to a gleaming new waterfront facility near the financial district—Stuyvesant has overtaken Bronx Science as the most exclusive and coveted of the specialized schools. Stuyvesant graduates have won four Nobels (tied for second in the world); and over the last 16 years, it has led the country in Intel Competition winners. Stuyvesant and Bronx Science have traditionally provided a springboard to success for talented but poor kids, primarily Jews at first, but later including African-Americans as well. Among the notable

Jewish graduates (in addition to 11 of the schools' 12 Nobel laureates) are sociologist Daniel Bell (Stuyvesant '35), teachers' union leader Albert Shanker (Stuyvesant '46), political commentator and Pulitzer Prize winner William Safire and literary critic Harold Bloom (both Bronx Science '47), and novelist E. L. Doctorow (Bronx Science '48). Prominent black graduates include political scientist Thomas Sowell (Stuyvesant '48), former Harvard Medical School dean Alvin Poussaint (Stuyvesant '52), radical activist Stokely Carmichael (Bronx Science '60), astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson (Bronx Science '76), and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder (Stuyvesant '69).

The social upheavals of the late 1960s and early 1970s led to attacks on the specialized high schools and on the entrance exam as racially biased and exclusionary. In 1971, the board of Community School District 3, then a predominantly black and Puerto Rican district on Manhattan's Upper West Side, charged that Bronx Science was, as characterized by the *New York Times*, "a privileged educational center for children of the white middle class because 'culturally' oriented examinations worked to 'screen out' black and Puerto Rican students." Threatening a lawsuit, the board criticized the exam for being "heavily loaded with 'intelligence test' approaches" and proposed that students should instead be admitted solely based on recommendations. Mayor John V. Lindsay, an affluent Upper East Side liberal Republican-turned-Democrat who sent his children to exclusive private schools, moved quickly to placate District 3. Lindsay's leftist schools chancellor, Harvey Scribner, appointed a committee to study the specialized schools' admissions policy, saying that there was "a question as to the extent any test of academic achievement tends to be culturally biased."

Scribner's apparent receptiveness to ending the exam sparked a strong reaction from specialized school alumni, parents, and faculty, and led

to the introduction of a bill in Albany to mandate its continued use. Sponsored by Democratic Assemblyman Burton G. Hecht and Republican Senator John D. Calandra, both of the Bronx, the bill required that admission to the specialized schools—and any others that the city might create in the future—continue to be based "solely and exclusively" on "a competitive, objective and scholastic achievement examination." The bill passed both houses with strong bipartisan support in May 1971 and was signed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller.

“Blacks made up 13 percent of Stuyvesant students in 1979, 5 percent in 1994, and just 1 percent the last few years.”

Criticism of the specialized schools and the admissions test subsided in the four decades following the enactment of the Hecht-Calandra Law. A notable exception was a 1997 report by the radical Acorn group assailing racial

imbalance at Stuyvesant and Bronx Science. But strikingly, the Acorn report focused less on the entrance exam and merit selection than on improved preparation of minority students, and it called for "suspension" of the exam only "until the . . . students of each middle school have had access to curricula and instruction that would prepare them for this test." In a related report, Acorn made this focus more explicit: "The question is not whether the entrance exam is unfair. The question is why students who attend public elementary and middle schools for eight or nine years are so unprepared to do well when they take it."

There is no dispute that black and Latino enrollment at the specialized schools, while always low, has steadily declined since the 1970s. Blacks constituted 13 percent of the student body at Stuyvesant in 1979, 5 percent in 1994, and just 1 percent the last few years, while Hispanics dropped from a high of 4 percent to 2 percent today. Similarly, at Bronx Science, black enrollment has fallen from 12 percent in 1994 to 3 percent currently, and Hispanic enrollment has leveled

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off, from about 10 percent to 6 percent. The figures are even more striking at the less selective Brooklyn Tech, where blacks made up 37 percent of the student body in 1994 but only 8 percent today, while Hispanic numbers plunged from about 15 percent to 8 percent.

These declining minority numbers have not been matched by a corresponding increase in whites, however. In fact, white enrollment at Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech has plummeted as well, dropping from 79 percent, 81 percent, and 77 percent, respectively, in 1971 to just 22 percent, 23 percent, and 20 percent today. Rather, it is New York City's fastest-growing racial minority group, Asian-Americans, who have come to dominate these schools. Asians, while always a presence in New York, didn't begin arriving in the city in large numbers until immigration restrictions were lifted with passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, championed by Senator Edward Kennedy. Since then, their proportion of the city's population has increased from less than 1 percent to about 13 percent, and their share of the specialized school population has skyrocketed. Asian students constituted 6 percent of the enrollment at Stuyvesant in 1970 and 50 percent in 1994; they make up an incredible 73 percent of the student body this year. The story is similar at Bronx Science, where the Asian population has exploded from 5 percent in 1970 to 41 percent in 1994 to 62 percent today, and at Brooklyn Tech, where their presence increased from 6 percent to 33 percent to 61 percent.

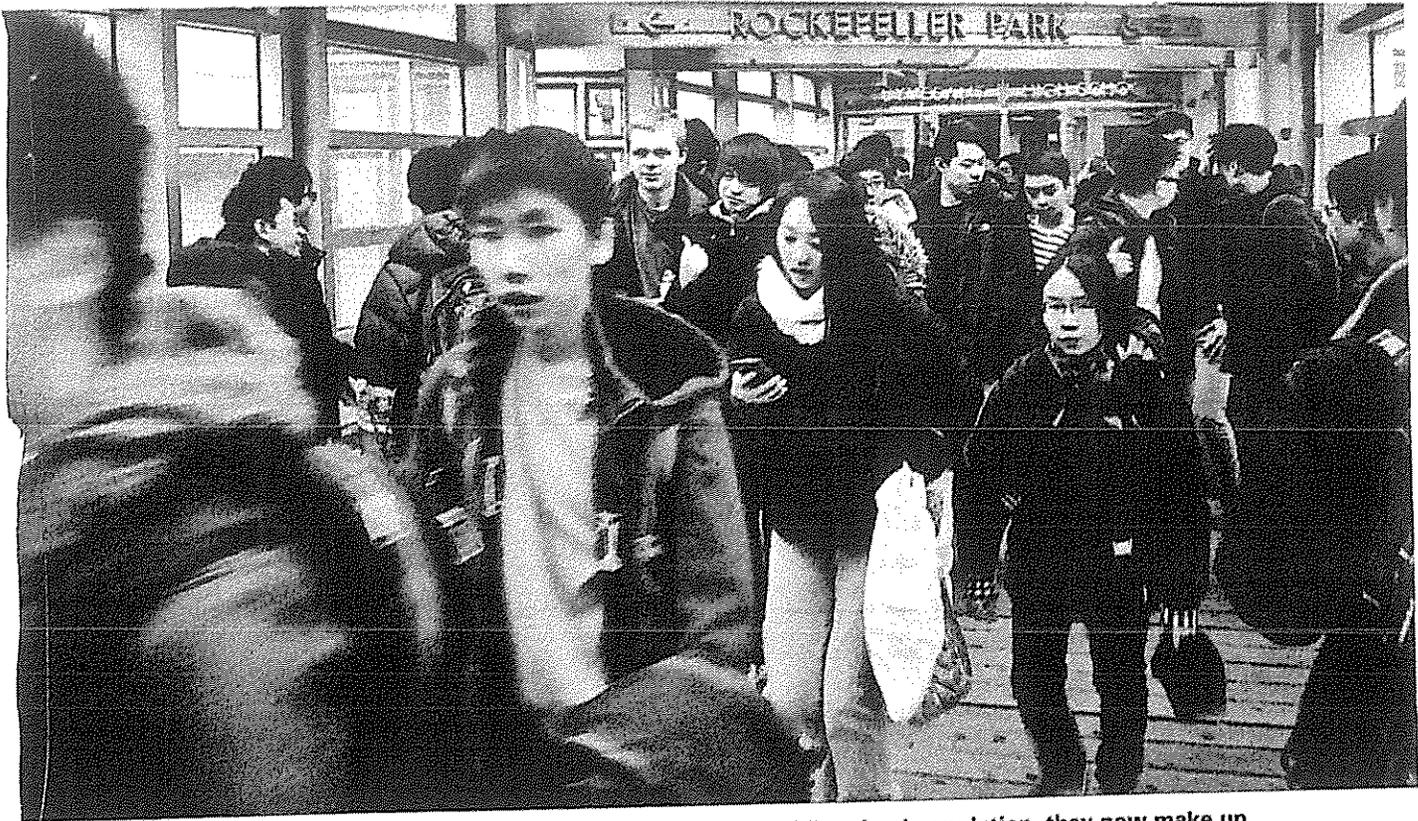
Asians now make up 60 percent of enrollment throughout the specialized schools, though they constitute only 15 percent of New York's public school population. Blacks and Latinos, by contrast, make up 13 percent of the specialized school population but 70 percent of the overall public school enrollment, while whites account for 24 percent of specialized school enrollment and 14 percent of the overall public school population. Passage rates for the exam reflect Asian dominance. Last year, Asians accounted for 30 percent of test takers but 53 percent of admissions offers, whites 17 percent of test takers and 26 percent of offers, and blacks and Latinos 46 percent of test takers but only 12 percent of of-

fers. Looked at another way, 33 percent of Asian test takers and 28 percent of whites, but only 5 percent of blacks and Latinos, gained admission.

Asians in New York are overwhelmingly first- and second-generation; some three-quarters of the students at Stuyvesant are immigrants or the children of immigrants. They're hardly affluent, notwithstanding de Blasio's implication that families who get their kids into the specialized schools are "rich." True, Asians nationally have the highest median income of any racial group, including whites—and in New York City, their median household income ranks second to that of whites and well ahead of blacks and Hispanics. But Asians also have the highest poverty rate of any racial group in New York, with 29 percent living below the poverty level, compared with 26 percent of Hispanics, 23 percent of blacks, and 14 percent of whites. Poor Asians lag far behind whites and are barely ahead of blacks and Latinos. Thus, the income spectrum among Asians in New York ranges from a surprisingly large number in poverty, through a hardworking lower middle class, and on to a more affluent upper middle class.

It might seem reasonable to assume—as de Blasio and others apparently do—that the Asian kids at the specialized schools come largely from families at the top of this pyramid. But this isn't the case. Half the students at the specialized high schools qualify for free or subsidized school lunches, including 47 percent at Stuyvesant and 48 percent at Bronx Science—figures that have increased correspondingly with Asians' rising numbers at these schools. Based upon these figures, Stuyvesant and Bronx Science (as well as four of the other six specialized schools) are eligible for federal Title I funding, given to schools with large numbers of low-income students. Think about that: two public high schools that, along with half their students, are officially classified as poor by the federal government rival the most exclusive prep schools in the world.

The poor students get into such schools through hard work and sacrifice—both their own and that of their parents. The students typically attend local tutoring programs, which proliferate in Asian neighborhoods, starting the summer after sixth grade and for several days a week,



Though Asians constitute only 15 percent of New York's public school population, they now make up 60 percent of enrollment throughout the specialized schools.

including weekends, during the school year prior to the test. The costs are burdensome for poor and working families, but it's a matter of priorities. (See "Brooklyn's Chinese Pioneers," Spring 2014.) As Chinese parent leader Stanley Ng noted in an NPR story last year: "Even the lowest-paid immigrants scrape up enough money for tutoring, because those high schools are seen as the ticket to a better life" for their children. Thus, one immigrant family featured in the NPR story had spent \$5,000 per year, of the parents' combined \$26,000 income as garment workers, to send their three sons to tutoring. Their oldest boy, now a student at Stuyvesant, said of his mother, who did not speak English and, like her husband, did not finish high school in China: "Basically, she just worked every day . . . and saved up the money."

All this once would have been the stuff of liberal dreams: a racial minority group historically victimized by discrimination begins coming to America in greater numbers because of an immigration reform sponsored by Ted Kennedy. Though many in the group remain in poverty, they take advantage of free public schools established by progressive New York City governments. By dint of their own hard work, they earn

admission in increasing numbers to merit-based schools that offer smart working-class kids the kind of education once available only at Andover or Choate.

To modern "progressive" elites, though, the story is intolerable, starting with the hard work. As Charles Murray has observed, while affluent liberals themselves tend to work hard, they seem embarrassed by their own lifestyles and refuse to preach what they practice in an age that frowns on anything bourgeois, self-denying, or judgmental. These liberal elites seem particularly troubled by the Asian-American work ethic and the difficult questions that it raises about the role of culture in group success. While the advancement of Asian students has come overwhelmingly at the expense of more affluent whites, it has also had an undeniable impact on black and Latino students, whose foothold at these schools, small to begin with, has all but vanished.

Alarm at this development has triggered a new wave of assaults upon the entrance exam—now known as the Specialized High School Admissions Test ("SHSAT")—and the Hecht-Calandra Law that mandates its use. In September 2012, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, which dispenses federal educational funding to the city, charging that use of the SHSAT

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as the sole basis for admission violates Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits racial discrimination by federal aid recipients. The complaint does not allege that the exam *intentionally* discriminates against black and Hispanic students. Instead, citing statistics regarding declining black and Latino enrollment and SHSAT pass rates, the LDF bases its argument entirely on the theory of "disparate impact"—that is, that discrimination should be inferred merely from racial differences in test scores.

In the complaint and in a subsequent report released last fall to coincide with Mayor de Blasio's election, the LDF argues for replacement of the SHSAT with a "holistic" admissions process—one that would consider "multiple measures" of academic potential, "both quantitative and qualitative," including not only grades but also such subjective indicators as interviews, recommendations, "portfolio assessments," "proven leadership skills," and "commitment to community service." Other factors could include applicants' "backgrounds and experiences" and the "demographic profile" of their schools and neighborhoods. To the extent that a test would be allowed at all, it would merely "supplement" these other criteria. The LDF also called for guaranteed admission for valedictorians and salutatorians, and perhaps other top students, at each public middle school program—a proposal that sounds modest but would actually require a set-aside of at least 1,000 of the 3,800 seats in each class. Breaking with Acorn's focus in its 1997 report on test preparation, the LDF declared that "more test prep is not the answer" and quoted the president of another civil rights group, who said that "encouraging students to spend weeks and months furiously studying . . . is wrongheaded and clearly hasn't worked."

The Department of Education has not yet acted on the complaint, though it remains to be seen whether this represents bureaucratic lethargy or a political strategy to wait and see if the state legislature will repeal the test requirement. Bills to do so were introduced in the legislature in 2012 but went nowhere at first. However, during last fall's mayoral campaign, de Blasio came out for replacement of the SHSAT with a multiple-factors process. As de Blasio's election became

increasingly certain, Speaker Silver climbed aboard the repeal bandwagon. And in the closing days of the legislative session in June, a new bill to replace the test with "multiple measures of student merit" was introduced with much fanfare and the backing of the powerful United Federation of Teachers (a leading *supporter* of the original Hecht-Calandra bill in 1971). The measures identified in the bill did include some sort of test, as well as grades, but also such soft criteria as attendance and any other factors chosen by the city Board of Education. While the bill did not pass this year, when the legislators are up for reelection, a renewed push is likely in 2015.

Such subjective admissions criteria would be likelier to favor the kids of New York's professional class than children from less affluent backgrounds. De Blasio suggested, for example, that a student's extracurricular activities should be one of the selection factors. But as a past president of the Stuyvesant Parents Association noted, "the kids that have the best résumés in seventh and eighth grades have money." A Chinese student like Ting Shi who has to help out in his parents' Laundromat is not going on "service" trips to Nicaragua with the children in de Blasio's affluent Park Slope neighborhood. The LDF's suggested admissions criteria—student portfolios, leadership skills, and community service—are all subject to privileged parents' ability to buy their children the indicia of impressiveness.

Ironically, eliminating the SHSAT would magnify the role of what progressives call "unconscious bias"—the idea that we have a preference for those who look like us and share our backgrounds. Subjective evaluation measures like interviews and portfolio reviews are much more susceptible to such bias than is an objective examination. Evaluators are inherently predisposed toward applicants who mirror their own lifestyles and values—which, for the teachers and educators who would be doing the evaluating under a "holistic" process, are generally those of a professional elite. The upper-middle-class applicant who volunteers at the food co-op or the AIDS walk and who manifests an air of self-confident irony will have a leg up over the quiet

immigrant kid who works hard and studies. Sure, the decision makers will do their best to admit a few more black and Latino kids (especially those from the same upper-middle-class backgrounds), but the primary beneficiaries will be affluent white students who didn't study hard enough to perform really well on the test but seem more "well-rounded" than those who did. As always, the losers in this top-bottom squeeze will be the lower middle and working classes. Among the applicant pool for the specialized high schools, that means Asians.

Comparing the specialized schools with other selective city high schools that don't use the SHSAT bears this out. These "screened" high schools are, to varying degrees, more selective than regular neighborhood high schools; they choose students using the multiple criteria supported by SHSAT critics. A comparison of the eight most selective screened schools with the eight specialized schools shows that the screened schools, while more heavily black and Latino, are also considerably whiter and more affluent—and considerably less Asian. Remember that the specialized schools are 13 percent black and Hispanic, 24 percent white, and 60 percent Asian. The top screened schools are 27 percent black and Hispanic, 46 percent white, and only 26 percent Asian. And while 50 percent of the students at the specialized schools qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, only 37 percent of the students at the top screened schools do.

Subjective selection criteria also inevitably favor the affluent and connected—as a comptroller's audit of the screened-school admissions process revealed. The study found that most of the schools examined did not follow their stated selection criteria and could not explain the criteria that they actually did use. SHSAT opponents argue that elite colleges use a subjective admissions process rather than relying on a single test. But strong evidence exists suggesting that this process results in "Asian quotas" at the top

colleges, reminiscent of those once imposed on Jews. As Northwestern's Asian-American studies director put it in a 2012 *New York Times* op-ed, after noting that whites were three times as likely as Asians with the same scores to be admitted to elite colleges: "Sound familiar? In the 1920s, as high-achieving Jews began to compete with WASP prep schoolers, Ivy League schools started asking about family background and sought vague qualities like 'character' . . . and 'leadership' to cap Jewish enrollment."

There is also a big difference between evaluating 17-year-old college applicants and 13-year-old high school applicants. The younger candidates have had far less opportunity to distinguish themselves on such vague qualities as "character" and "leadership." A selection

process based on these intangibles can easily fall prey to arbitrariness, prejudice, and parental gamesmanship.

Critics of the SHSAT will reply that *something* must be done about declining black and Hispanic enrollment at the specialized high schools. The answer, however, can never be to lower objective standards. Doing so hurts everyone, including minority students. For all its other faults, Acorn was on the right track in 1997 when it wrote that the "question is not whether the entrance exam is unfair" but why minority students in the city school system "are so unprepared to take it." The LDF and other progressive advocates have gone off course when they declare that "more test prep is not the answer" and dismiss spending long hours "furiously studying" as "wrongheaded" and futile. Adopting this cynical approach would do no favors for black and Latino children, while opening the door to discrimination against Asian kids like Ting. It is not the specialized schools' emphasis on merit, but rather the advocates' defeatist worldview that is truly—and tragically—wrongheaded.

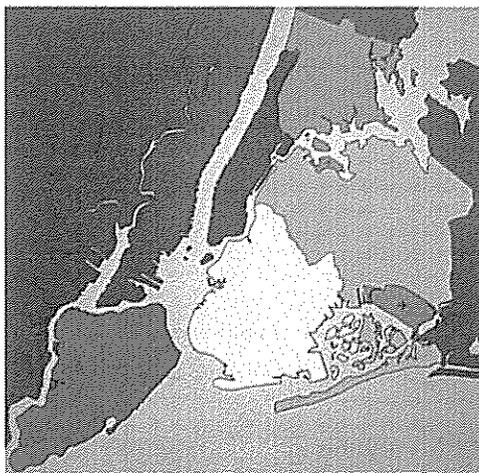
**Subjective criteria
favor the affluent
and connected—as an audit
of the admissions
process revealed.**

Testimony to the New York City Council
on Res. 442-2014 - Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to
pass and the Governor to sign S.7738/ A.9979, to change the admissions
criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools
December 11, 2014



Pamela L. Skinner, LMSW
CEO & Founder - Blacks & Browns of the Big 3, Inc.
Brooklyn Technical High School – Class of 1980

In 2014, seven black students from
ALL OF of NYC “made it” into
Stuyvesant HS



952 seats were available

In 1975, ONE school in NYC sent eleven black students to Stuyvesant HS



Springfield
Gardens
Intermediate
School
(IS 59, Queens)

Ten of them graduated. One was my brother.

- A single test determined their admission.

- How did one school send more black kids to Stuyvesant in 1975 than the entire NYC public school system did in 2014?

1975 vs. 2014

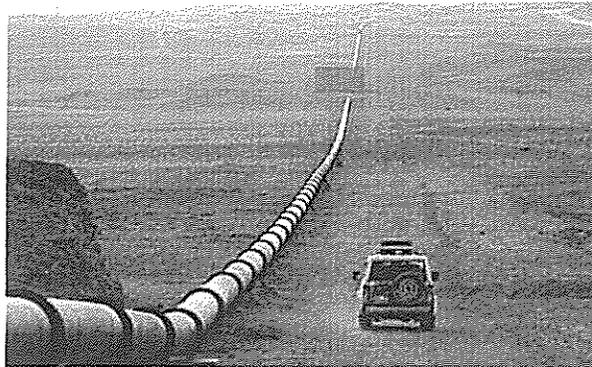
1975

- The black and Hispanic communities were aware of the specialized high schools early on.
- Gifted classes, such as EGC, IGC, SP, and SPE in our communities created a pipeline to the Specialized High Schools.
 - Students were exposed to advanced curricula.
- Test prep was available at IS 59 after school.

2014

- Families have not heard of the specialized high schools .
 - They believe they're for Asian and white students only.
- There aren't enough gifted classes to meet demand, and they are nonexistent in black and Hispanic communities.
 - Students are not exposed to advanced curricula.
- DREAM/SHSI is promising but families don't know about it.

The Pipeline Is Broken



How do we fix it?

- When whole communities are lacking information about school choice, how can they plan a different course of action?
- We have learned from the medical community that early detection is key to successfully treating disease.
- Access to the specialized high schools requires early communications and intervention.

Where do we go from here?

- Don't reinvent the wheel by adding multiple measures before examining the past and learning what worked.
- Let's work together.
- I am happy to offer my services to examine and evaluate proposed solutions.

www.linkedin.com/in/pamelskinner

Pamela L. Skinner

Licensed Master Social Worker
Non-Profit Program Administrator

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Research & Evaluation
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Marketing Communications

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony of Michael Weiss
NYC Council, Committee on Education
Public Hearing, December 11, 2014

Chairman Dromm and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Michael Weiss. I am an alumnus of Brooklyn Tech HS and a former teacher, Guidance Counselor and Assistant Principal as well as a founder, and current Board member, of the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation.

Who are the current students at Brooklyn Tech? Over 60% are eligible for free lunch. Over 50% come from non-English speaking backgrounds. Over 50% are the first in their family who will attend college. I was the first child in my family who graduated from college. And currently, over 16%, or more than 800 students, are Afro-American or Latino.

Are Afro-American and Latino students underrepresented at the City's "test-in" schools? The answer is "yes". Do we need to take action to correct this imbalance? The answer is "yes". But, we need to do something that is proven to work – and, at the same time, does not diminish the quality of the education that all of these youngsters seek and deserve.

Diversity at the City's public schools is a complex issue involving the constantly changing City population, neighborhood demographics, DOE admissions policies and procedures, parental involvement, choice, and the quality of the education delivered at all levels of the system.

The proponents of Reso 442 would like to include "multiple criteria", undefined and unvalidated, in the admissions process, opening up the currently mandated objective standard to a subjective, opaque, system, which is ripe for favoritism, abuse, and even potential fraud. And it will not achieve the desired result! We already know that the most sought after schools utilizing "multiple criteria" are "whiter and wealthier" than the SHSAT schools. This approach is an example of "kicking the can down the road" to take the pressure off making real change that attacks the root causes of this problem.

There is no need to change the law mandating the sole use of the test. The DOE currently has the authority to institute meaningful change, at modest or no cost, by providing a much more robust program in the lower schools including much more aggressive parent and student information programs, Elementary and Middle school enrichment classes, afterschool prep programs, sufficient Discovery and DREAM program seats, and other strategies noted by my colleagues. This will provide a level playing field for our young people who wish to prepare for careers in the STEM fields.

Our Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation, with the support of National Grid, and our alumni, has already initiated a STEM pipeline prep program of middle school outreach and instruction targeted at encouraging underrepresented youth to take the test and to succeed at gaining entry. This effort could be easily, and cost effectively, replicated. And it will work!

To conclude, I would urge the Council to disapprove Reso 442 and immediately partner with all interested parties to achieve a real solution that will result in a more diverse group of youngsters entering, and succeeding, at the Specialized High Schools.

My name is Jonathan Roberts. I'm Vice Chair of the Bronx High School of Science Alumni Association. I am providing this testimony in opposition to Resolution 0442-2014.

Our city faces a crisis of inequity in education in the years before high school. In 2014, about 84% of all of the city's black and Latino 7th graders failed the NY State proficiency standards in math and English. Fixing this is the only reasonable way to increase black and Latino representation at the specialized high schools.

The Bronx High School of Science was created to educate the city's highest academic achievers, especially in science and math. To ensure that the specialized high schools can continue to fulfill their mission, admissions should remain unbiased and immune from corruption and politics. NY State bills S.7738/A.9979 propose to use multiple criteria for specialized high school admissions, suggesting attendance and middle school grades as examples. Middle schools are unequal and so grades aren't comparable, are subjective and susceptible to favoritism. Proponents of S.7738/A.9979 point to Harvard's use of a multiple criteria admissions policy as justification. However, Harvard allegedly gives preference to children of alumni, children of large donors and of their friends, and athletes who keep the donor base happy. This is made possible by the use of subjective criteria, which were originally introduced to keep the number of Jewish students from rising. Harvard also allegedly has hidden quotas that have made them the target of lawsuits and federal investigations for civil rights violations. The opacity of the elite college admissions process fosters favoritism. We don't need this in our education system.

Currently about 67% of specialized high school students are of various Asian ethnicities. Since admission is solely by a test, this majority is not the result of any favoritism given to Asian heritage students. But the goal of S.7738/A.9979 is to change this racial mix of the specialized high schools. **What have these Asian heritage students done wrong to become the target of this proposal?** Have they studied too hard for the admissions test? Have their families made their children's education too high a priority, so their numbers must be reduced? Reject Resolution 442, because hard work should be rewarded!

Black and Latino public school students are underrepresented among high scoring students in NY State tests. In 2014 while about 31% of Asian 7th graders excel in NY State math standards, only about 3% of black and Latino 7th graders do. These tests aren't perfect, but this is so extreme that it can't be the fault of the tests. We must better prepare these students starting long before high school in order to increase their representation in the specialized high schools.

The admissions test shines a spotlight on our unacceptably flawed and inequitable pre-high school education system. The Resolution 442 solution is to shut off that spotlight! Reject Resolution 442 to keep the spotlight on and instead improve educational outcomes for blacks and Latinos. Calling for a change in the admissions standard to increase black and Latino representation sends a message to blacks and Latinos that they cannot ever achieve the current standard. **Don't give up on black and Latino students.** Reject Resolution 442 to keep expectations high and instead let's raise all children up to meet the current standard!

INTRODUCTION

My name is Christopher Robert Owens and I am a public school parent (twice), and a 1990s member of the Community School Board in Brooklyn's District 13. I am also a 1977 graduate of the Bronx High School of Science and someone who attended Brooklyn Technical High School for one year. I took the old SHSAT twice and earned the exact same score each time.

My eldest son, Elijah, a child with an IEP, is currently a senior at The Brooklyn Latin School and is now applying to colleges. My younger son is currently a freshman at the Kurt Hahn Expeditionary High School in East Flatbush.

Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech and Brooklyn Latin are part of New York City's group of nine "specialized high schools" for which the only criteria for admission to eight of them is one's score on a standardized test.

I am submitting this testimony to be heard on the question of whether or not entrance to eight of New York City's specialized high schools should be based upon a different method of selection. Allow me to thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts and knowledge.

SUMMARY

- **Continue to use an entrance examination for all eight academic specialized high schools. Schools selecting students based solely upon a test have a place in a 1.1 million student public school system. In fact, we have plenty of high schools that use other selection methods -- and some of them also have skewed demographics.**
- **Engage in ongoing evaluations of the specialized high school entrance examination to minimize class and cultural biases. Consult the right experts, such as former Princeton Professor Howard Taylor.**
- **While improving the test, possibly implement a system of filtering admissions by an individual's score, school selection preference, and borough of residence. By limiting the number of people from a given borough who can attend a particular specialized high school, we may achieve greater racial, ethnic and class diversity while still respecting test performance.**
- **Focus on the more significant challenges of improving the quality of all New York City high schools, and ensuring that all middle and elementary schools are providing quality learning. The irrational focus on specialized high schools would dissipate if every high school had similar resources to work with.**

THE DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTION

The selection question has been highlighted by the demographic distribution of students attending the specialized high schools – particularly the best known of the group: the Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, and Stuyvesant High School. Since my high school days, the percentage of Black and Latino students attending these schools has fallen

to mind-boggling single digits, and the percentage of Asian students attending these schools has skyrocketed. People are crying “foul” and looking for easy answers.

But there are no easy answers.

This issue needs to be put in perspective. Some 25,000 students take the SHSAT every year, seeking to fill a maximum of approximately 5,500 9th and 10th Grade seats. This means that some 19,500 students are not admitted to a specialized high school annually. Overall, some 92,000 students are looking for high school seats annually – with only some 5,500 entering specialized high schools. No matter how we alter the admissions, some 86,500 students will still need a good high school education. ***So why aren't we focused on the real access and fairness challenge – the quality of high schools serving 94% of our new high school students every year?*** (If you look at the Big 3 alone, the total percentage of high school seats in question is even smaller.)

It is also troubling that the NYCDOE, knowing the controversies that have surrounded the SHSAT for years, has not done a better job of collecting – or releasing -- demographic data to help all of us better understand the patterns. *How do the demographic and score distributions relate to each other? How do the demographic distribution and school selection distribution relate to each other – inclusive and exclusive of the scores? If Asian and white students selected all specialized high schools equally, would we be even having this conversation?*

THE SELECTION PROCESS

In a perfect world, a standardized admission test would accurately and fairly identify the most intelligent and talented students and provide them with that special opportunity. *But we don't live in a perfect world.*

In an even more perfect world, admission to the “specialized” high schools would be the result of a review of the entire academic record of a student. This means that the use of an admissions test, review of the academic record and a portfolio, and recommendations could be combined to identify “worthy” students for these schools. As a result, our perfect world would lead to a demographic distribution of students that accurately reflects the demographic distribution of those who seek admission each year. *But, alas, we do not live in a perfect world.*

And when it comes to our public education system, we are even less perfect. The only way for a blended method of admissions to work is to ensure that every middle school provides a similar and qualitatively comparable education to every child and that an “A” in Riverdale means the same as an “A” in Brownsville, that every middle school child is effectively counseled regarding the existence of the specialized high schools and the entrance requirements, that every teacher and guidance counselor is well-trained to advocate on behalf of every student seeking entrance into these schools, and that every child has equal access to any and all preparatory opportunities that exist. *Yes, we do not live in a perfect world.*

If we cannot do these things and we discard the SHSAT (or a better quality exam), then the relative “objectivity” of a standardized test will have been cast aside for a subjective nightmare like we see with middle school, some high school or even college admissions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

My position, therefore, is that we first should do everything possible to utilize the best standardized test possible and evaluate the impact of that change on the demographics. This will take between five and ten years. I say this because the idea of having some schools whose populations are decided by a test is not and should not be anathema to anyone. Life is a test and a competitive global economy demands people who can perform well on tests – as well as other strengths. Yes, such a method of selection discriminates against bad test takers. Yes, such a method of selection discriminates against those who fail to prep for the tests – either because they can’t or won’t make such preparation a priority. That’s part of life.

Don’t get me wrong. I think standardized tests are definitely biased and can be gamed. My cousin, Professor Howard Taylor of Princeton University (Sociology), is completing a review of decades of research on standardized tests that will illustrate in comprehensive terms how bad we have been with them. As a Black American, I am particularly concerned with the population shift in the Big 3 specialized high schools, and I believe that the test itself is indeed part of the problem. Even Professor Taylor, however, will tell you that it is possible to improve standardized tests and minimize the biases – biases that exist primarily due to socio-economic inequities. I encourage you, therefore, to sit down with Professor Taylor, have a real conversation, and maximize the potential options.

What bothers me even more, however, is the way that students of Asian descent are being maligned due to their success on the tests. It is my hope that if and when Black and Latino students find a way to succeed in such a disproportionate manner that such an outcry would not exist. Before the Asians, Jews were maligned as well. A commitment to continually improve the test will enable ongoing adjustments designed to minimize the impact of biases and extraordinary amounts of prep work. **The SHSAT can and does offset other current inequities in the education system.**

I can say this from personal experience. My son’s middle school experience left much to be desired for many different reasons. Without the opportunity to do some basic prep – which I did with him at home -- and without the opportunity to focus his brain (the test itself), Elijah would have been at the mercy of a very subjective and harsh high school selection system due to poor 7th Grade marks. Despite a bad 7th Grade, Elijah scored high enough on the SHSAT to enter every specialized high school but Stuyvesant and he has done well at Brooklyn Latin. It is doubtful that any portfolio-based assessment would have provided more assurance than the SHSAT of this young Black man’s chance to earn a special opportunity in high school.

It saddens me that some of our parents and leaders are not placing the responsibility for these outcomes where it belongs – as I specify below. I certainly hope that all of us will stop viewing the well-marketed Science, Tech and Stuyvesant as the only paths to great colleges, but until

we do, we cannot condemn those who also invest in their children and who have managed for a time to outperform “us.”

In the end, there is no compelling reason why some high schools in a 1.1 million-student system can't have their student populations decided by tests alone, however imperfect. We have arts-oriented schools that select students based upon auditions and grades; one bad day and years of work can mean nothing. We have special academic schools that make decisions based upon grades and interviews. *Interviews?* (By the way, what are the demographics of the Beacon School, Bard High School and NEST?) We have schools where selection is governed primarily by geography – resulting in a massively segregated system where high schools with high concentrations of Black and Latino students do not have the resources of the specialized high schools and lag far behind when it comes to academic achievement. Accordingly, it can truthfully be said that the SHSAT is not our gravest injustice ... and greater harm may come with eliminating its primacy in the specialized high school selection process than we realize.

Second, we must improve the quality of every high school in the City of New York to ensure that a public school student will get an outstanding education wherever she or he goes. This is very important, because much of the outcry about the Big 3 is really rooted in the fact that parents and politicians rightfully believe that the students at the specialized high schools are getting a better education than would be had in the overwhelming majority of other high schools. And they are correct. This will take at least 10 years, but we have to start somewhere.

Third, we must ensure that every middle school delivers a great education to all of its students and fully prepares its students for the specialized high school test – starting in 6th Grade. This is where a chunk of the real responsibility lies for SHSAT performance. We can take this further and say the same for every elementary school as well – over a longer time period.

Let's reduce the differences between those who prep and those who do not due to financial challenges or simple ignorance of the importance of prepping. Parents of middle school students must be encouraged and, in many cases, strongly pushed, to invest attention and resources in their children during this time period. Honestly speaking, the family unit bears some of the responsibility for SHSAT performance. These aggressive changes must start today, no matter what. If they do, we actually would be able to see important equitable changes in the demographics within three years.

Allow me to close with a controversial suggestion regarding next steps:

Step 1. Keep the SHSAT and start a serious review process with real experts to minimize biases.

Step 2. While working on Step 1, change the admission requirements so that the following takes place:

- **The number of seats allocated to all of the Specialized High Schools using the SHSAT should be distributed based upon a formula blending the individual's test score, the individual's school preference, and the individual's borough of residence.**
- **Specifically, using this example, the maximum number of seats going to Manhattan residents who selected Stuyvesant would be equal to the percentage of Manhattan residents taking the SHSAT in a given year who selected Stuyvesant as their first choice. The same would be true for each borough. Seats would still be awarded based upon test score. But if a greater percentage of Brooklyn residents than Manhattan residents taking the SHSAT in a given year select Stuyvesant as their first choice, for example, then a greater percentage of Brooklynites will be in that particular Stuyvesant class.**
- *Yes, there will no longer be one threshold score for each specialized high school, but five different scores and five different waiting lists for each school. The attendees, however, will still represent the smartest and best-prepared students.*
- *Yes, there will be a higher percentage of students attending specialized high school that they may not have intended to. But that's part of life, too.*
- *Yes, there may or may not be a significant shift in the racial and ethnic demographics. But we won't know until we test this system out.*
- *Yes, there will certainly be a change in geographic demographics, which may drive a change in racial and ethnic demographics as well.*
- *Yes, there will be a greater incentive for more students from all across the City to take the SHSAT – and there will be more hope amongst these students that they will be successful.*
- *Yes, there will be a greater incentive for all students to rank all of the test-utilizing schools, rather than just three or four – which often happens at present.*
- *Yes, this is a very "doable" and worthwhile social experiment that may address many of the concerns that have been articulated.*

Step 3. While the first two steps are being pursued, work can and must proceed on all of the remaining equity issues that exist between the specialized high schools and the rest of the high schools in New York City (as set forth above.)

Thank you for your patience and consideration of this testimony.

Hon. Chris Owens
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SAMPLE PROPOSAL FOR SPECIALIZED HS ADMISSION DISTRIBUTION

Submitted by Hon. Chris Owens -- Page 6 of 6

SCHOOL	BRONX	BROOKLYN	MANHATTAN	QUEENS	STATEN ISLAND	TOTALS	TOTALS
The Bronx High School of Science (Bronx)							
- First Choice %	0.4	0.1	0.25	0.2	0.05		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 968)		387.2	96.8	242	193.6	48.4	968
	968						
The Brooklyn Latin School (Brooklyn)							
- First Choice %	0.1	0.5	0.15	0.2	0.05		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 484)		48.4	242	72.6	96.8	24.2	484
	484						
Brooklyn Technical High School (Brooklyn)							
- First Choice %	0.05	0.5	0.15	0.2	0.1		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 1,845)		92.25	922.5	276.75	369	184.5	1845
	1845						
High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at the City College (Manhattan)							
- First Choice %	0.25	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.05		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 188)		47	18.8	94	18.8	9.4	188
	188						
High School of American Studies at Lehman College (Bronx)							
- First Choice %	0.45	0.15	0.3	0.05	0.05		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 165)		74.25	24.75	49.5	8.25	8.25	165
	165						
Queens High School for the Sciences at York College (Queens)							
- First Choice %	0.05	0.2	0.1	0.6	0.05		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 151)		7.55	30.2	15.1	90.6	7.55	151
	151						
Staten Island Technical High School (Staten Island)							
- First Choice %	0.05	0.05	0.25	0.05	0.6		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 344)		17.2	17.2	86	17.2	206.4	344
	344						
Stuyvesant High School (Manhattan)							
- First Choice %	0.15	0.15	0.5	0.1	0.1		100.0%
- Seats (Total = 952)		142.8	142.8	476	95.2	95.2	952
	952						
TOTALS	AVG. % FOR BRONX IS 18.75	AVG. % FOR BROOKLYN IS 21.875	AVG. % FOR MANHATTAN IS 27.5	AVG. % FOR QUEENS IS 18.75	AVG. % FOR STATEN ISLAND IS 13.125		5097
5097		816.65	1495.05	1311.95	889.45	583.9	5097

From: Al Filippi alf98@comcast.net

I recommend that the NYC Council **NOT** pass Resolution 442 for the following reasons. I was a student at Brooklyn Tech in the 1960s. I was the fifth student academically in my grammar school before entering Brooklyn Tech after taking the entrance exam. At Tech I was not in the top 10%, I was probably around the 50% mark. However, even at that level I was disturbed that the teachers had to deal with students who were not keeping up with the rest of us, delaying our learning.

On the first day of the freshman year, Mr. Pabst, the principal, told us: "Look at the man to the right of you. Look to the man to the left of you. One of you won't graduate." I was shocked, but it was true. The number of students who dropped out in the first year was horrendous.

You are doing a disservice to those students who are not prepared for a rigorous academic course. The color of their skin does not matter. The recommendation of their teacher does not matter. What matters is the rigorous test for admission. To allow alternative entry does a disservice to those students allowed in under an alternate criteria as they will most likely fail. It does a disservice to those students allowed in under the regular admission test, as they will be "held back" as the teachers attempt to bring the underperforming students up to par. It also does a disservice to those students, who passed the test but were not allowed admission, due to students allowed in under the alternative criteria.

Therefore, I recommend that the NYC Council **NOT** pass Resolution 442.

Bx Science was the turning point in my life. It gave me a chance to be with kids like me. In short, I do not know where I'd be today (or if I'd even be alive) if it were not for the teachers and peers with whom I shared my high school years.

There are only a limited number of spaces at Bx Science. Give the place to those youngsters with the most academic potential. It's a formula that has worked for over 70 years. Please don't wreck it.

Al Lippert

Science '56

From: Albina Reydman albina.reydman@gmail.com

Office of Correspondence Services,

Thank you for reaching out. I hope that this email finds you well.

My experience at Brooklyn Tech has helped me understand the value of diversity in the classroom. Having attended a very expensive private university I often look back fondly on different thought provoking discussions that our diverse student population fostered in high school; at one of the same institutions which you now paint as devoid of any diversity. However you fail to recognize the importance of economic, cultural, and social diversity. By introducing an application process involving a resume, recommendations, volunteer work, etc you distance the very students who exhibit this diversity in favor of more privileged students who can receive help building a portfolio.

At Brooklyn Tech 49% of students are eligible for free lunch, 15% are eligible for reduced lunch, nearly 15% more than the state average (<http://www.city-data.com/school/brooklyn-technical-high-school-ny.html>). As I'm sure you recognize, these programs are offered to low-income families, those who often do not have the privilege of sending their children to top tier private institutions. These students also deserve a chance at success, and also bring important things to the table in the classroom, which ALL students will benefit from. Their unique perspectives bring an important form of diversity that should be encouraged rather than systematically crushed.

I understand why the application process seems appealing to an adult council, far removed from the lives of lower/lower middle class students. However, by introducing hoops for low income students to jump through you make it more unlikely that they will apply. As a 13 year old I certainly would not be able to handle such a rigorous application process, with no one to turn to for help. My parents, immigrants, could not help me through college applications, as a 18 year old woman, much less as a 13 year old child. Your resolution will undoubtedly result in students with more knowledgeable parents benefiting and in professionals building portfolios and offering services to get students into specialized schools. This barrier already exists for colleges, do we really need to bring it to public high school?

The solution to increasing racial diversity, as many distinguished social scientists, politicians, and educators agree, is early education programs, not more barriers to deter low income students without family connections and money. By simply dropping unprepared students into high stress, competitive, testing oriented, academic institutions like Brooklyn Tech based on arbitrary factors like recommendation, race, volunteer work, etc you will only alienate them and ensure that they get lost in the shuffle.

I sincerely hope that the council reconsiders using our future leaders' educations as political fodder.

Best,
Albina

My comments below are in reference to Resolution 442 as respects the admission test for the special high schools of NYC.

While I understand the importance of keeping the test questions protected so as not to compromise it's effectiveness; is there any way to obtain a copy of a recent past test or tests to better understand how the test itself is being considered prejudicial to certain groups? I would like this information to help those of us who are very interested in maintaining the integrity and quality of the education offered by these special high schools while also helping us to possibly identify better options than to introduce a student selection process that invites an overweighting of subjective criteria for admission decisions that eventually can dilute the quality of the education and the reputation of the special high schools themselves over time.

I do not see a comprehensive test (which is color blind) as being the real problem, but rather a series of other factors that can disadvantage certain groups and that these factors are not being adequately addressed.

I ask that we recognize the real root causes of the problem as to why the test results are what they are and address those issues to uplift all children who want and are willing to make the effort to be the best and the brightest. We owe that to them. I am definitely a proponent of giving every child that opportunity.

Installing what in essence appears in the end to be a quota system (and we know how that has not worked in other applications) is not the answer in my opinion.

I do not know how long this issue has been on the table; but rather than try to push this matter to the Legislature for approval; can we take a breath and give this issue/challenge over to those who should understand this matter better than any other group; the alumni of these special high schools; and do so via a (racially balanced) committee of volunteers to deliver their findings and recommendations by a certain near future date to the City Council Education Committee. The best team is made up of the best performers; whether it is sports, or business, etc. Why should our special high schools be any different?

I hope to be able to attend the hearing on December 11; but in the event I am not able to attend I would appreciate my comments above being read into the record.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this very important matter for the future of our special high schools in NYC and those who will attend them.

Anthony Tortorella
A Brooklyn Tech Alumni

I do believe that changing the criteria for admission to specialized high-schools to this new one is a terrible idea. The old admissions test guaranteed everyone a fair chance into getting to such an excellent learning institutions, the new criteria of leadership roles and volunteering jobs will only lead to having students of a specific background enter schools and the background is that if privilege kids that have successful parents, while kids of immigrant parents or parents that don't make to much money will never be able to build themselves academically to get out of such statues. As a we all know America is a land of diversity and it is more true of New York City than any other city. So why not let our schools keep their diversity. Also the Specialized High-School test is a fair shot for everyone because it works on the assumption that if you are smart enough to meet the score you deserve and have earned the right to attend Brooklyn Tech or Stuyvesant.

Sincerely; Bremmer Armando Belisario

Dear Council Members,

My name is Brian Delle Donne. I am a Brooklyn Tech graduate from the class of 1974. I live and work in the city and am greatly concerned about the resolution being proposed.

In so far as the resolution is being sponsored and widely advocated by Civil Rights activists whose complaint is the under-representation of black and hispanic students at the specialized schools, are we to believe that these new objective measures are being proposed for anything other than creating more diversity, regardless of absolutely measured merit?

I ask, what will be the measure then of this resolution's effectiveness; increasing percentages of admission of certain ethnic groups? Are we then to believe that no "quotas" will be applied or considered in helping these advocates achieve the measures they consider to be success? Is this bill just an attempt to create admission quotas by another name? I thought that practice was a thing of the past.

Though reliance on a single admission test may appear on the surface to be narrow, it is if nothing else, uniform in its ability to measure capability against a fixed standard. Any resolution it inject other measures, that are not test based, will only serve to create subjectivity in the admissions process. Lets be clear; that is what this resolution is attempting to accomplish. My fear is that the only outcome of such a relaxation of standard admission criteria will diminish the academic standard of the schools as they will now have to cater to students quite possibly less equipped to deal with the rigors of the curriculum and thereby slow down the pace for those who are able to work at the high standards required. At a time we are trying as a country to increase our graduation of STEM students, this method of lowering the bar to admit more into these programs for the sake of diversity alone is wrong minded. We should instead be focusing on attracting the best qualified students, and enabling them to succeed and compete at world class levels.

The notion that the criteria that are being proposed can be administered without subjectivity, is short sighted, if not an outright red herring. The junior high schools that feed into NYC public high schools are many. There are no standards now in place to have teachers and administrators at these precursor institutions be uniformly trained and equipped to prepare objective merit based recommendations. Even the grading systems at these schools are likely to be inconsistent from one school to the next when it comes to aiding one of their own into gaining admission in a prestigious high school. Without a set of uniform, objective measurements that can be consistently administered across the city junior high schools, this resolution will invariably lead only to diversity at the expense of academic excellence.

If the issue is really a single test criteria, then fix that element with administering multiple standardized exams (as the proponents reference in the SAT / ACT paradigm applied in higher education). This is a far more objective means of diversifying the admission process with multiple objective measurement points. The inclusion of any other measures, prone to subjective preparation, or interpretation by the admitting institution, will only create diversity and diminish academic excellence.

I do not support the resolution as proposed and object to the inclusion of measurements that will invariably be subjective. As such I respectfully submit that this resolution be denied as drafted and resubmitted only if it can be redesigned to include additional purely objective, merit based testing criteria.

Brian Delle Donne
307 W 38th Street
NY, NY 10018

I taught undergraduate and graduate chemistry at the University of Connecticut for 46 years, and found that subjective judgments of student achievement was so prone with error as to render such judgments useless (even a single individual's assessment varies over time and between students, and assessments by more than one teacher are an utter absurdity with no sense of real reproducible measurement). If the tests are faulted either by students or parents or whatever, then improve the tests.

Thank you.

Carl David

Professor Emeritus

Department of Chemistry

University of Connecticut

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BzWBS45XWEtRk9yMTgzYnFacTQ&authuser=0>

graduate Brooklyn Technical high School 1954.

The only criterion for admission to specialized schools should be a test of intelligence. As sports teams look only at athletic ability, so the specialized schools should continue to look only at intellectual ability. If minority students want to attend, they should do what countless generations of immigrant children did: study, study, study. My father had only a seventh grade education, but I got into Bronx Science by working my butt off.

Connie Anestis

To the honorable NYC Council:

I am a proud graduate of Stuyvesant High School from 1996. I was very proud to have been accepted into Stuyvesant as I viewed it as a path to a better life. As background, I am the son of first generation Asian immigrants who spoke poor English and had very little money. I grew up in a poor, dangerous section of Jamaica, Queens, and my parents and I were either robbed or assaulted several times while living there. We could not afford any test prep classes - I just studied as hard as I could and hoped for the best. When I entered Stuyvesant, I learned many of the students came from the same background - hard working, high achieving, and mostly poor and working class sons and daughters of first generation immigrants. Stuyvesant allowed me to go on to a great college and a successful career, and most importantly taught me the importance of working hard toward a goal no matter what.

While I agree that Stuyvesant should be more diverse, I WHOLEHEARTEDLY DISAGREE with the notion that the test itself is racially discriminatory or that changing admissions criteria will solve anything. There is nothing about the test that prevents an aspiring and hard-working African American or Latino student from studying and preparing hard for it, even without the help of test-prep courses (which I argue do more harm than good). I had several black and Latino classmates, and all of them got into Stuyvesant the old fashioned way: by studying hard.

I think this short-sighted resolution is a distraction and an attempt to find a short-term solution to a problem that requires a more painful, longer term, and maybe politically unpalatable fix - that problem is the fact that black and Latino students are the ones most impacted by poor and failing schools. However, the City Council is wasting its time by thinking that changing the goal posts might significantly help these students - why isn't the City Council looking more into why so many black and Latino students are in failing schools to begin with? If you fix those schools (which requires fixing neighborhoods and fixing families) and create a safe environment that allows more black and Latino students to nurture their academic ambitions and study hard, more black and Latino students will naturally enter specialized high schools like Stuyesant.

Instead, the City Council is focused on a short term fix that may benefit a small segment of the black and Latino student body, while not addressing the needs of the larger set of failing schools. At the same time, you're punishing the sons and daughters of Asian immigrants for their academic focus.

I urge the City Council to reject this short-sighted resolution and to focus its precious time on the longer term fixes needed to our education system that benefit all of NYC's diverse student body, not patchwork solutions that further degrade the idea of meritocracy.

Thank you for your time,
David Oh

The strength of the entrance exam is that it is based upon common objective criteria...similar to the SAT or other standardized tests. The minute that there are quotas

or subjective standards introduced to the entrance criteria, you will water down the effectiveness of isolating gifted students. There are plenty of other options for

other students if they do not get into Stuyvesant or similar other schools. The history of Stuyvesant (both past and present) shows the success of the current entrance exam

policy and format.

David Schrader

411 East 53rd Street, Apt. 2G

New York, New York 10017

Stuyvesant Alum Class of 1982

From: David Yuen [<mailto:dyuen888@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, November 20, 2014 1:10 PM
To: Mark-Viverito, Melissa
Subject: Please Vote NO on Res. 442

Dear Councilmember Mark-Viverito,

I am your constituent and I urge you to vote NO on Council Resolution 442 - which supports state legislation to scrap the objective Specialized High Schools Admissions Test and substitute other subjective criteria. The current test guarantees that students are selected for admission without favoritism or bias and solely on the basis of merit, that is to say their demonstrated capacity to do the advanced college level coursework required of all students in the specialized high schools.

While I agree that more can be done to improve diversity in the specialized high schools, the proposed legislation (S7738/A9979) is seriously flawed because it fails to tackle the root causes of under representation of African American and Latino students. Please vote NO on Res. 442 and instead work on real solutions that will increase diversity by improving the quality of the education in the Latino and African American communities, improving the Discovery Program for admitting disadvantaged youth as well as providing free test preparation for all who want it.

Simply scrapping the test will not automatically achieve greater diversity at these schools. According to the Daily News the student bodies of NYC's top performing schools using multiple criteria are "whiter and wealthier" than the specialized schools. Moreover, according to the NYC Comptroller, the schools using multiple criteria often fail to follow their stated criteria for selecting students for admission. This means favoritism, bias and fraud in the admissions process cannot be ruled out.

I urge you to vote NO on Res. 442 and instead work to develop a thoughtful solution that these schools - and more importantly, the children of this City - need and deserve.

Sincerely,

David Yuen
8663 26th Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11214

Dear Ms Mark-Viverito,

I cannot attend the hearing since I now live in California. Thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to the record:

I am an alumna of Bronx Science, class of 1961. I was thrilled to attend my 50th reunion a few years ago. I am very proud to be a graduate of this school. I wear my Bx Sci baseball cap and use my Bx Sci coffee mug and even occasionally wear my Bx Sci t-shirt. I contribute annually. Bronx Science is important to me.

I had a marvelous education in a very different era. Back then, most of the students who passed the test were Jewish. Now they are predominantly Asian. Times change, the students change, but the bar is set the same - an exam. I know these exams have changed as the years passed, too, trying to remove an advantage to any group. That's appropriate.

Drastically changing the admission process would be a mistake. Allowing subjective criteria to play a role in admission to Science will lead to the admission of students who are unprepared, and Science will have to aim lower in its teaching. That's not good for anyone. I know in your heart you mean to do well, but this is not the proper way. Educate the gifted students in elementary school so they can thrive in special high schools.

Diane Gabe, MD
class of 1961

To: Speaker Melissa Mark Viverito

December 7, 2014

City Council Speaker

Re Resolution 442-2014 Specialized HS Admissions Criteria

I OPPOSE THE RESOLUTION TO CHANGE THE CURRENT CRITERIA TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE TO THE SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOLS.

I would like to include these remarks into testimony in the event that I cannot attend the hearing on December 11th in person.

I was extremely fortunate to have attended Brooklyn Technical High School. Attending Tech was my ticket from an uneducated working class family to a life as a professional who has been successful and able to also give back to society the opportunities that I was given. My daughter was fortunate as well, she took the Specialized High School Admission Test (SHSAT), passed and attended the Bronx High School of Science. She is now a freshman at MIT. Although my son wanted to attend Brooklyn Tech, he did not score high enough to get in. He did not earn his seat, so it goes.

The real issue is not the admission test, it is the educational system that is not preparing our middle school kids properly. The current system is not giving them the skills to succeed in middle school and ultimately high school. I have met with many of principals and parents from middle schools in the neighborhoods near Brooklyn Tech. The message from them was that so many students and their parents are not aware of the specialized high schools, how and when to apply and what steps are necessary to prepare and pass the entrance exam.

There needs to be greater outreach to these middle schools, parents and kids similar to the pilot outreach program that Tech is currently doing. The pilot has been successful, but it needs to be greatly expanded beyond what one school can achieve.

The current Discovery program helps kids who just missed the cut off score on the entrance exam to get remedial help, retake the test and have another chance to gain entrance to a specialized high school. This program needs to be reintroduced again and expanded to the other high schools.

Certain proposals call for changing the entrance criteria to the eight specialized high schools for conversion to those used by the so called “screened schools”. Audits by the Comptroller’s office of several of the screened schools found that they did not follow their own stated admission criteria. The diversity at these schools is less that that at the Specialized high schools. A very large percentage (over 60%) of the kids at the Specialized high schools are from the lowest economic strata and qualify for free lunches.

The TEST has been the best tool to gauge a students qualifications to succeed at a Specialized high school. Earlier attempts at placing less qualified kids at Brooklyn Tech were a failure. There were two groups of students, those who were qualified and those who were taking remedial courses. The later group did not achieve the graduation rate of the general school population or get into the same level of colleges, if at all.

Keep the test, it is the best indicator of success at the Specialized high schools, but give the middle school kids the opportunity to prepare and then attend.

Sincerely,

Edward T LaGrassa

Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation Board Member

120 Warwick Ave

Douglaston, NY 11363

Edlagrassa@earthlink.net

I know that you want to do what is best for the public schools and the families of NYC. It is appreciated. The concern of parents and students alike are that these so called additional "criteria" that want to be added to determine Specialized High School admissions are mostly biased and very subjective based on the middle school and teacher. Not all 7th and 8th graders are subject to the same grading policy.

Some middle schools weigh classroom tests at 70-80% of a student's report card grade while others only weigh classroom tests at 30%. How is that fair or even comparable? Some teachers give many exams, some give very few. Some give rigorous assignments and some give take home exams.

Some students applying to NYC high school come from private/parochial 7th and 8th grade that do not give the NYS Common Core ELA and Math exam in 7th grade. These students take significantly different exams such as Terra Novas, etc. The only unbiased measure is one exam for all. The same exam for all students is the SHSAT. By adding these criteria you are making the entry process very subjective and quite unreliable.

Using interviews is also subjective? Who will conduct these thousands of interviews? More than 25,000 students take the SHSAT to try to get a seat in one of the NYC Specialized High Schools. Using volunteer hours and/or community service is also not fair since at the young age of 12-13 years old not all students have the same opportunities and home life. Who will judge acceptable volunteer or community service activities? Who will determine this new criteria? What is the motive for these criteria? Some of the other NYC public high schools that do currently use a variety of criteria are very small high schools. They accept much fewer students than the Specialized High Schools of Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech.

I have been a parent of NYC public school students for many years. I am very familiar with what works and what does not work. Please look at the middle schools in NYC and correct what is not working in these schools before changes are made to the city high schools admissions process. Sometimes a realistic look must be taken at what are the problems with the middle schools in NYC. Why not tackle that problem? Please listen to parents of NYC public school students and listen to the students that go to NYC public schools. Don't just listen to politicians. Listen to those that have made NYC public schools an important part of their life.
Thank you for your time.

Georgia Bournias

From: Harry Lopez harryilopez@aol.com

To Whom It May Concern:;

Unfortunately, I could not attend in person because I will be at work. This work, I owe to the education I received at Brooklyn Technical H.S. Before I continue I would like to introduce myself, my name is Harry Lopez class of 1999, where I received a Tech diploma majoring in electrical engineering. Brooklyn Tech was the foundation, of obtaining a first class education, leading me to attend an IVY league institution (Columbia University, B.S. Electrical Engineering 2004). I am saddened by what politics that are trying to disturb the history of Brooklyn Tech, by changing the entrance exam. I understand that everyone wants a spot at this prestigious institution, but changing how students are currently allowed to enter is not a solution but rather a cop-out.

Let me paint a story. I come from the Bushwick, sector of Brooklyn, raised by hard working parents working factory jobs and odd jobs. From time to time, my parents were forced to accept public assistance. Regardless of how a roof over my head was paid for or how food was put on the table, my parents instilled in me a desire for education. Since day 1 at elementary school, I had a desire to excel in education, unfortunately, the elementary schools and intermediate schools (Junior H.S.), lacked the opportunity to match my desire. I was fortunate enough to pass the Brooklyn Tech entrance exam and that is when the journey of becoming an educated man began. Brooklyn Tech was another world filled with teachers, faculty that cared and challenged young minds. The formula for Brooklyn Tech's success was combining the staff with the best and brightest NYC has to offer. Changing the entrance exam is diluting the process and the formula for success. If this law were to pass to modify the entrance process, what is next, forcing all IVY league institutions to lower their standards as well. The focus of the committee discussing Resolution 442 is in the wrong location. Don't ask institutions to lower standards, but what about focusing on elementary and junior H.S. schools to raise their standards to keep up with education.

I can't stress enough that Brooklyn Tech is sacred in the hearts of its Alumni, and everyone you speak to about Brooklyn Tech, only speak wonders, please don't ruin it because of politics

Harry Lopez
(917) 860-0073

From: hh@harvherbertlaw.com

Please do not destroy my alma mata Stuyvesant High School. Subjective admission standards will lead to politics , favoritism and corruption which will not sort out the best and the brightest. There must be a better way to elevate the underprivileged.

NYC Specialized High School Admissions

The push to change the admissions criteria for the NYC specialized high schools may be due in part to a misconception. To some, it appears that the city has worked hard to create eight great high schools, and that to be fair in distributing the seats, the city put an exam in front of them, and they wonder if an exam is the fairest way to distribute the seats. This is in fact backwards. Instead, the city has worked hard to create hundreds of great high schools. It put an exam in front of just eight of them, and those schools became great with national recognition. The exam helped create the greatness, probably by selecting a group of students capable of and interested in moving quickly through an advanced curriculum. The proposal to use a more holistic admissions approach will mimic the many screened high schools that already exist in the city and shift the specialized high schools to be like the others. The schools will become specialized only in name.

There are a number of reasons to continue basing specialized high school admission on the test:

1. **Respect.** At present there are not enough black and Hispanic students at the schools, but those who do attend the Specialized High Schools are treated with respect because they were accepted under the same criteria as everyone else. The black and Hispanic students who go to Specialized High Schools today do very well. Under a different admission system, there will be a presumption, even by well-meaning people, that the black and Hispanic students who get in will have been accepted because of the alternate criteria and not because of their native ability.
2. **Precedent.** Every city election mentions specialized high schools but actually changing the admissions process will create a free-for-all at every future city election, with candidates promising to further change the system to increase seats for whatever racial, ethnic, economic, or geographic group they choose, and inducing further instability into the process.
3. **Transparency.** The specialized high school admissions process is the only transparent one in the city, in which students and parents actually understand what is expected and how students will be selected. Having at least one process that is not at the whim of the administrators is healthy. The regular high school process is opaque. For example, from year to year, high schools make major changes in admissions procedures without an explanation (e.g., what outside students that District 2 schools will accept).
4. **Immigrant and economically disadvantaged groups.** The Specialized High Schools provide a unique opportunity for some immigrant and economically disadvantaged populations that would normally have no access to such high-caliber schools. Currently over half the seats go to economically disadvantaged students. Moving from one qualifying exam may put them at the greatest disadvantage because wealthier, established families will likely adjust to the new policies more quickly than they will.
5. **Second chance.** Having a small number of schools rely solely on one exam gives some students a second chance. For example, those who did poorly in middle school due to family upheaval still have a mechanism to get into a good high school. New admissions policies will likely use the very metrics under which they were judged to fail, leaving them few options.
6. **Rigor.** It is critical for the city to have a place where poor students who are ready to take on the most rigorous curriculum can go. Any admissions process that admits students who are less prepared will require those schools to ease the curriculum. Schools will have a hard time serving

two populations and will either have to resort to tracking or reducing the challenge of the curriculum.

7. Hubris. Administrators must acknowledge that changes in policies like these often produce unexpected and unwanted results, and it can take decades to recover from mistakes.

8. Scale. One cannot fix the NYC school system by altering eight schools that are in many ways working. The purpose of the eight Specialized High Schools is to serve the needs of the small number of students who really need a more advanced curriculum. Even if every seat in the Specialized High School system were given to a student who experienced a disadvantaged educational upbringing, it would not touch the larger population we are really trying to reach. Thus the change is symbolic. Addressing the larger problem of high school education is a much more difficult problem, and focusing on the Specialized High Schools is just a distraction.

9. Testing. Test preparation has been highlighted as an important issue, but in fact, short-term test preparation can only raise a student's score a limited number of points, and most of the benefit can be gotten by simply taking several of the freely available practice exams. It appears that taking 5 to 10 timed tests with someone to go over the wrong answers gets a student about as far as they can go in the short term, and it would be feasible to offer this more broadly. Because short-term test preparation can only raise a score a limited number of points, students who would have gotten into the top (in terms of required score) specialized high school with test preparation should have gotten into the next highest school without that preparation. Instead, groups of students are missing from the entire process. True preparation requires 13 years of educational emphasis; this is a difficult problem, and changing the admissions process will do nothing to address it; it will only mask the problem.

10. New schools. A much more constructive solution would be to create eight new alternative high schools (or modify existing ones) that should be modeled after the Specialized High Schools but offer an alternative admissions process, thus doubling the number of seats.

Thank you.

George Hripcsak, MD, MS
423 W 120 St, Apt 63
New York, NY 10027

As an alumnus of Science, I believe that a test is the appropriate criteria for admission. Look at the results achieved over the years. Diversity is important but not at the expense of excellence. Bright students are going to help the country and the city achieve a better life for all. Figure out a way to improve diversity without trying to change a proven result.

Ira Goldstein

My name is James Izurieta, a third generation New Yorker and a product of our public school system. I'm raising the fourth generation in Brooklyn, who will also be a product of our public schools. Growing up, we had a lot to be grateful for but lived paycheck to paycheck. Neither of my parents had a college education. Very few of our relatives did, and those that did were far away. We had a support structure but no real guidance as to how to go about carving a white collar path for ourselves. What I did have was the city's elementary school IGC program, a love for reading and a grandmother who thought that 'Stuyvesant school on 15th and 1st had smart kids and was safe'.

Back then, I had no teachers mentoring me, no sense for academic rigor when I was 13. Running into minor trouble during junior high school, every high school I applied to wait listed me or turned me down - except one. I took the SHSAT cold, and received an offer of admittance. That offer, and my parents' willingness to let me go into Manhattan on the train in 1986, probably literally saved my life.

All the good things in my life today stemmed from that opportunity back then that that admission criteria presented. I had the raw capability but not the right academic habits nor the right social skills. Opening up admission to more subjective terms means those who have the right background to appreciate early on academic rigor, the favor of teachers and extracurricular activities. I would never have been accepted if I had needed subjective teachers' recommendations, an extroverted nature and an excellent attendance history. Had I not been accepted to Stuyvesant purely on the merits of the impartial examination, my life would have been worse and would have stayed that way throughout. And I reckon the city would not have been better off with that outcome.

And what did the City of New York get in return from me? I am a loyal son of my city, fiercely proud of its accomplishments and concerned with its long term plans. I never left it for long, and took an education in planning and data analysis. I have been fortunate to be part of a prosperous household. I embrace the premise that taxes are the price of civilization, while always expecting more from its servants. I love my city. I teach my children to understand its complexities, and ever-changing joys and sorrows, and to think about the bigger picture when it comes to our urban forest.

Perhaps there was another child in 1986 who was a better student than me that would have gotten better grades while at Stuyvesant. I however know our city almost certainly is getting a better return on investment with me.

I ask that you not take away the opportunity I had from the next smart, socially awkward working-class 13-14 year old that could really use it.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

James Izurieta

PS60Q

JHS210Q

Stuyvesant High School

CUNY - City College

SUNY - Albany

SUNY - Empire State

Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito,

Being a Latina and graduate of one of these specialized HS, I truly hope they do not do away with the entry exam. As the petition states, eliminating this exam will NOT solve the issue. The problem of minorities not getting into these schools does not stem from the entry exam, but the poor job that our elementary and junior high schools are doing in preparing our children for higher education. Thus, changes need to start happening earlier at home and in our communities. I was fortunate enough to have parents that pushed me and encouraged me to be the best that I could be. They understood my true potential and motivated me each and every day to achieve it. I still remember my mom staying up with me at night to help me with my H.W. despite her not understanding the English language. Her love and dedication towards having me achieve that American dream were admirable. With her help, I got into the Alpha program in my junior high. This program was made up of teachers that truly cared about making a difference and seeing students flourish. They facilitated preparatory classes towards this exam and set us up with the foundation and discipline we needed to continue striving to succeed. I have truly been blessed with great parents, teachers, and mentors. At the end of the day, these are our role models and the people that can truly make a difference in our lives. Merely eliminating the exam and ignoring the root causes of minorities academic struggles will only set these students up for failure and lead to further issues.

Jahaira

JARED L. RIFKIN, PH.D.
75-32 185 STREET
FLUSHING, NY 11366

December 5, 2014

Councilman Rory Lancman
78-40 164th Street
Hillcrest, NY 11366

Councilman Mark Weprin
73-03 Bell Boulevard
Oakland Gardens, NY 11364

Dear Rory and Mark,

Although we have met many times, consider my relevant background as prelude to this letter. I am a product of the public education system of our City. In particular for this communication, of the Class of 1953 of The Bronx High School of Science. A bachelor's degree from The City College and a doctorate from The Johns Hopkins University (CUNY did not exist at that time) followed. After a lectureship at Princeton University, I was appointed to the professorial faculty of Queens College where I served for 35 years. During that time, I was elected (twice) Chair of my Biology Department and also Vice-Chair of the entire Faculty. My research papers have been published in international science journals. Upon retiring with Emeritus status, I was greatly honored to be Chief Marshal of the 2006 Commencement.

None, I repeat **NONE!** of those professional efforts would have been possible without the experiences I received at my high school, Bronx Science. May I offer that the the tax payers of our City have not been disappointed in their investment towards my High School education. And that involvement in and at Bronx Science, of education and teaching with students of like needs and capabilities, was only possible because politics and personality was excluded as an entrance factor. Becoming part of the Bronx Science cohort was based only upon an objective candidate-blind test and did NOT involve recommendations or choices from the elementary school level. Please note that my Class of 1953 included students of every color and ethnicity.

I understand that Resolution 442 to change the entrance method is coming to the Council floor on December 11th. I urge and beg you to vote against this ill-conceived and educationally destructive resolution. Given the finite capacity of Bronx Science and the other specialized high schools in the city, the only condition for entrance must be an equal-opportunity objective test that ensures the admission of well-prepared academically-qualified students who will not waste the precious resources supported by the tax payers of our City. Indeed, resources **MUST** be provided and increase across the entire city, reaching into every neighborhood, to ensure that that opportunity is really equal for students of all backgrounds.

Very sincerely yours,

-s-

Jared L. Rifkin

c: J. Donahue, Principal, Bronx Science
S. Manewitz, Chair, Alumni Association

To whom it may concern

Thank you for your email and for inviting me to state my opinion regarding Resolution 442.

It is in my opinion that keeping the admissions process as is is the most effective way to admit students to NYC specialized High Schools free of bias and prejudice. The test reflects the difficult work that will be expected of the students once they are attending the school.

The resolution states that the specialized high schools admit only 5% black students and 7% asian students. Every student has the ability to prep for this exam via the Public High School Handbook which gives testing questions to practice and explains what the test is all about. Asians students make up the majority of the student body because their culture stresses education and they make sure their children are prepared. In addition, all middle schools make available information about Specialized High Schools. The Public School System should focus more on educating the parents of Black and Hispanic students on the importance of education and to encourage those parents to support their children and to help their children obtain whatever goal it is that they seek.

Furtherer more, there are plenty of other options to attend screened schools that offer entrance based on other criteria along with a test. Keeping the entrance exam as is for the Specialized Schools will assure that students who are top performers will be able to study together and gain momentum from each other. It is often said that lower performing students gain a benefit from being with higher performing students. That they will rise to their level. Maybe so. But what about the higher performing students? Should they not have the same opportunity? To gain a benefit from being together with students that will continue to compete with each other? To push each other?

I remain,
Jill Hajjar

There are 405 quality high schools in NYC. Nine of these schools are set aside for attendance by nerds, violinists, geeks, coders, readers, writers- and for any of these overachieving misfits to be placed in this learning environment that is so special to them, they simply have to perform well on a standardized test (or audition in the case for the arts). And by the way, it's not simple, it takes years of dedication to do well on the test.

My daughter earned a spot at Staten Island Tech, she is a freshman there this year, and she loves the school. She attended NYC public schools for 10 years prior to taking the SHS test, and she deserves this specialized refuge.

By invoking non-objective essay-judging and "teacher recommendations" in the admissions process, you are essentially robbing students of this specialized status. Please vote NO on resolution 442; it doesn't "resolve" anything, rather it just makes things more cloudy.

Regards

Joey Lunsford

Brooklyn NY

Dear Melissa Mark-Viverito and the City Council Education Committee,

The specialized admission exam of Brooklyn Technical, Bronx Science & Stuyvesant High Schools examine the preparedness of students to perform to the specialized curriculum the schools provide in preparation for the rigor of college work in the areas of Science, Engineering and Biology. Over time, lowering admissions standards will impact negatively the standard and outcomes that these school have managed to maintain for the exceptional and gifted students of New York City.

I trust the council will give there wise and fair consideration to my comments in deciding the fate of these three schools.

Sincerely,

Horst John Kretschmer

john kretschmer
HJKA industrial design
230 w 79th street
New York NY 10024
212 873 7476

I am a biologist, a Professor Emerita, at Rutgers University. I grew up in a lower middle class family in Manhattan and would have had to go to a very poor high school had I not passed the entrance exam and gotten into Bronx Science in 1954. My parents could never have afforded to send me to a private school. The school was a wonderful place and I delighted in being surrounded by other smart kids. My four years there reinforced my interest in science, which I pursued through college and graduate school to a Ph.D. degree. But when I think about my formative years, it is Science that I think of, not Cornell University, and it is Bronx Science reunions that I enjoy far more than those of Cornell. Science was a major factor in my life, and I have no idea what would have become of me if I had had to go to the local high school, where there were gangs etc.

I urge you to maintain the quality of these special schools in New York City so that future generations of young people can enjoy the advantages and inspiration these schools provide. Thank you.

Yours truly,

Judith S. Weis

Bronx Science 1958

My responsibilities as a professor at SUNY Maritime College in the Bronx preclude my attending in person, but I would like my strong objection to Resolution #442 be read and become part of the record:

Over a forty year career at the college, I have taught many graduates of New York City's specialized high schools.

They were (still are) a diverse group of young men and women, often the first on their families to attend college. What they had in common, Black, Asian, White, was a strong work ethic, and a commitment to succeed. Why mess with success?

I do recall other failed attempts to change the methods to admit students.

They were disastrous, especially when students were admitted who struggled to keep up, and then failed in the attempts.

Last week I was in Washington DC and was introduced to an African -American woman from the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. She was a proud graduate of Bronx Science, and a successful employee of the DC government. There are many others like her, of all races and backgrounds.

Currently, one of my college students is a graduate of Stuyvesant High School. A freshman and an immigrant, he is making his mark at the college as a fine student.

There is nothing elitist about these excellent high schools. Students often come from poor families who inculcate in their children a love of learning. In a test, students demonstrate that they can succeed at these high schools. Why change that?

Not everything in this city that we love works well, but the current method of choosing students does work. Please let it stand.

Thank you.

Professor Karen E.Markoe

> I am your constituent and I urge you to vote NO on Council Resolution 442 - which supports state legislation to scrap the objective Specialized High Schools Admissions Test and substitute other subjective criteria. The current test guarantees that students are selected for admission without favoritism or bias and solely on the basis of merit, that is to say their demonstrated capacity to do the advanced college level coursework required of all students in the specialized high schools.

>

> While I agree that more can be done to improve diversity in the specialized high schools, the proposed legislation (S7738/A9979) is seriously flawed because it fails to tackle the root causes of under representation of African American and Latino students. Please vote NO on Res. 442 and instead work on real solutions that will increase diversity by improving the quality of the education in the Latino and African American communities, improving the Discovery Program for admitting disadvantaged youth as well as providing free test preparation for all who want it.

>

> Simply scrapping the test will not automatically achieve greater diversity at these schools. According to the Daily News the student bodies of NYC's top performing schools using multiple criteria are "whiter and wealthier" than the specialized schools. Moreover, according to the NYC Comptroller, the schools using multiple criteria often fail to follow their stated criteria for selecting students for admission. This means favoritism, bias and fraud in the admissions process cannot be ruled out.

>

> I urge you to vote NO on Res. 442 and instead work to develop a thoughtful solution that these schools - and more importantly, the children of this City - need and deserve.

>

> Sincerely,

>

> Katherine Kim

> 59 Grafe St

> Staten Island, NY 10309

> kkat825@yahoo.com

When I went to Bronx Science a generation ago, I was proud of the incredible diversity of my high school. I am proud of the school's diversity today. I urge the council to vote against resolution #442, and preserve the high standards of a unique institution, which, from its founding until the present, has been a haven for a bright students from working class and middle class homes.

Thank you,

Lauren Markoe, Class of 1986

Dear Mrs. Speaker,

I won't be able to attend hearing with respect to Resolution 442 in person, but I want to submit my reasoning on why I think admission test to standardized schools should stay as the only criteria for admission. I think that the main question that we need to ask ourselves here is what is the purpose of having an academically challenged high schools? I think that it is to give students with advanced background in math and science opportunity to receive additional guidance which is not available in average school. As a nation, we hear a lot about shortage of engineers and scientists. New York City specialized schools achieved a lot in creating a nurturing environment for kids aspiring to succeed in technical field. They need to be among like minded kids in order to be challenged intellectually. If we lower academic standards by eliminating test as the only entrance criteria, then we will destroy everything that was achieved by hard work and efforts of educators, alumni, students and parents over decades. A parallel comparison would be to start accepting students to La Guardia school of Art nbased on teachers recommendations instead of auditions or accept a good kid who volunteers a lot but has no music education to Julliard school of Music. We have lots of "feel good" schools in New York, lots of programs that can be researched, applied and gotten into. Let's leave specialized schools to those who is objectively proved to have an academic merit to study advanced math and science. Let's focus on making diverse crowd of our elementary and middle schoolers to be able to rich higher standards of standardized schools, and not to lower standards for standardized schools instead.

Thank you,

Marina Yakir

While increasing the number of Hispanic and Black students in the specialized high schools is a worthy goal, the fact that they are under-represented does not demonstrate bias or racism in the admissions process. Rather, it indicates the poor preparation these students have due to bias and racism in jobs and housing and the inferior elementary and middle- or junior-high schools they are forced to attend.

The Resolution is based upon an invalid idea: that students who do not do well on the current test would do well in these specialized high schools if the admissions criteria was based on other factors, such as attendance records or creativity. They would not. Unfortunately, parents and politicians do not really understand what a school is. They are under the mistaken notion that a student enters a classroom the same way that a car enters a gas station. And the instructor pours knowledge into the student's brain in the same manner that a car takes gasoline and the only thing stopping this student from achieving in this more rigorous environment is the fact that they weren't admitted in the first place. That is as absurd as if I thought that if the NY Knicks would only let me onto their team in spite of failing the tryouts, it would improve my game and I could succeed on the team, or if only MIT had accepted me instead of Northeastern, I would have done well there. I probably would have flunked out of MIT in a matter of weeks.

The fact is that students who do not do well on the entrance exam will not succeed in the classroom. I am most familiar with Brooklyn Tech, but if a student can't do the math on the exam, they won't be able to do the even more advanced math in the classroom. If a student cannot solve a math word problem that involves dividing long numbers with decimals, how can they solve for the inductive reactance of an electrical circuit? If a student cannot do well on the language section of the exam, how can they absorb the extensive reading material they will be given for homework each and every night? Brooklyn Tech is famous for telling students on the first day, "Look to your left and look to your right. One of you won't be here at graduation time." If a third of the students who do well on the exam can't hack the rigorous program, what makes you think students who don't do well on the current exam can?

The implication that the entrance exams are biased implies that there is not diversity in these schools. But one visit to these schools will reveal amazing diversity.

In order for more students of any race to qualify for these schools, we have to intercede much earlier in the process. We have to improve instruction in the lower grades.

I have a suggestion: in the same way that high school students take the PSAT in their Junior Year, have students take a practice Specialized High School Admissions Test one year before they do today. Then provide extensive remediation for any student who doesn't do well on the test, but still wishes to attend one of the specialized high schools. Hopefully there would be enough improvement that they would qualify when they take the actual admission exam. However, if more students did qualify, we will need more seats. So another part of this process would be to create more specialized high schools that require the exam.

My own daughter was and is brilliant in many ways, but back in the day, she did not gain admission to the old Stuyvesant High School. If there were alternative admission criteria available, she probably would have done quite well in Literature, History and any classes in the creative arts, but she probably would have done quite poorly in advanced mathematics and science courses. So while it was disappointing that she didn't get in, it was appropriate. And in spite of the fact that Stuyvesant happens to have a majority of Asian students, it has nothing to do with race or bias.

I assume that the High School of Music & Art and/or Performing Arts still requires a musical instrument, dance or drama audition. If a student failed the musical instrument audition, but had a perfect attendance record, interviewed well and received an "A" in English, do you think that student should have been admitted anyway? If that doesn't make sense, then admitting students who don't test well in math to a science or engineering program doesn't make sense either.

The specialized high schools of New York City represent true greatness. Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science and Stuyvesant are recognized throughout the country as being among the finest public schools in the U.S. There is so much in the public educational system that is not working. Why would we take something that is working so well and attempt to destroy it by, in essence, making them exactly the same as every other non-specialized high school in the City.

In summary: if you wish a fairer representation of Black and Hispanic students at the specialized high schools, then provide them with a better elementary and junior-high-school education. But the politicians won't do that because it's hard and it costs money. It's far easier to please the parents of underrepresented potential students by manipulating the entrance requirements and it will cost nary a dime. And in the end, if they do succeed in getting more unqualified students into these schools, all you'll be doing is setting these students up for failure at the same time that you'll be lowering the standards and quality of education in these schools.

Thank you.

Contact info:

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cell: 917-887-6450
mbrooks@nyintermedia.com

Esteemed members of the City Council's Education Committee;

I am a graduate of Stuyvesant High School. I do not believe restructuring the admissions criteria will be in the best interests of the New York City public education system. Currently the criteria is through the SHSAT exam, which is blind to race, economic status, or creed. Applicants are judged solely on their performance on an objective examination. Changing this criteria to include additional criteria would only serve to decrease the diversity in these specialized high schools.

Proponents of revising the admissions criteria argue that it would allow for underprivileged and underrepresented minorities to have a better shot at gaining admission into one of these elite high schools; however, the opposite holds true. The children that will have the most impressive resumes will be those that are from wealthier backgrounds. For example, A child from a wealthier background will be able to afford fees and dues for sports teams (and the associated equipment cost), travel opportunities to foreign countries, and other activities that will cause their application to stand out from the norm. An inner-city child from a lower socio-economic background may not have the opportunity to create a resume nearly as impressive - If their parents are struggling to make ends meet, how will they afford to have their children play sports or travel?

The greatest part about these specialized high schools is that anybody can gain admission. I grew up in a single parent household. I studied diligently for the examination, while my mother worked two jobs just to pay the bills and scrape by. I could not afford fancy volunteering missions or summer sessions at universities. I could not justify spending money on sports equipment while my mother was worrying about how to pay rent. On paper, my resume was less than spectacular - I was a student with good grades, but I did not have any notable experiences because I simply could not afford to. Through my own hard work, I was able to gain admission into Stuyvesant. I did not have access to the expensive test prep programs that proponents of Resolution 442 claim to prevent underrepresented minorities from attending these schools. I bought a secondhand test prep book and studied day after day, without any test preparation guidance.

Should the city seek to increase the diversity at these schools, they should not seek to further alienate the underprivileged and underrepresented. They should focus on expanding free test preparation for the SHSAT, so that all students are able to access practice materials and receive guidance on how to improve. Practice SHSAT questions should be made available online and distributed in packets to all middle schools, as well as materials explaining what Specialized Science High Schools are and what they offer. Through raising awareness of the SHSAT and allowing for all children to be able to access prep materials, those without the means to build impressive resumes due to economic hardship will still be able to attend elite high schools.

The existing system is a meritocracy - the examination itself is not the issue. The issue is a need for greater ease of access to preparation materials, as well as fully informing students about what the Specialized Science High Schools have to offer. I urge the committee to reject Resolution 442, and keep these elite high schools open to all, regardless of what their family can or cannot afford.

Best Regards,
Martin Chen

Dear Speaker Mark-Viverito- I appreciate your prompt and thoughtful response but I feel that your answer only raises more questions in what I deem a disturbing attempt to "diversify" the elite high schools in our City.

First, while there seems to be an allusion to "other factors" there is no clarity of what these involve. Is it color, race, national origin. Is it family income, or is it all of these?

Second, all of the specialized high schools suffer from a common problem. The competition is cut throat, the slack that is cut the students is minimal and the amount of work is generally overwhelming. If the admission standards are broadened allowing entry to those who would not have otherwise gained access, are marking standards also to be broadened or relaxed, are individuals who are marginal to be carried in order to preserve diversity and will factors other than performance creep into the school equation in order to justify the changes in access standards.

I again urge you to re-think your position and base your ultimate action not on issues of political expediency but on the honest interest of maintaining the excellence that has taken years to achieve.

As an alumni of CCNY I can relate my own experience of watching what was one of the premier institutions of higher learning in the first part of the twentieth century be sacrificed to immediate political interests. That school, which graduated, all before 1963, eleven Nobel Laureates, is now, according to Forbes Magazine the 92nd ranked college in the Northeast and the 215th in the United States.

Please help avoid the same kind of slide in our wonderful elite high schools.

Thank you for your continued attention to this matter.

Martin Schulman
Stuyvesant H.S. 1959
CCNY 1964

I strongly think that **"A test is the most fair, objective way, that minimizes in maximum subjectivity"**

I understand and really agree with the intent to increase the diversity in the specialized high schools. But we should try **to work with the roots of that situation, not with the result.**

I totally supported the free Kindergarten idea, never thinking how much would this cost the Taxpayers. It is there, were should start. And from there to continue support the low income....so when it comes to the test, the under-represented groups (which for me are not formed by the skin color) will be able to qualify without artificial help.

I see Basketball games (or football, track & field MUSIC etc) and never thought that the whites are under-presented in NYC. I allays thought that black are more talented... Should we add some Chinese and whites in the teams for the sake of diversity then? No, this is not a solution.

Years ago there were **no** Chinese ice scating, now they can win...not by lowering the standards of acceptance...but by training better to rich the requested standard (I am not a Chinese).

There are at least above 1000 schools in NYC, and only 8 that accept only with test. There are a lot of god schools that take into consideration all other factors. Are the results different there?

The selection should be based on the merits and not by other factors...

We live in the free land of America! There are so many choices for the one that is hardworking and wants to succeed.

I really appreciate America for giving me the possibility to give my testimony!

Please vote no for resolution 442!

God Bless America,

Thank you very much!

Dhurata Ohrsell

Speaker Mark-Viverito,

Thank you for your invitation to Thursday's gathering, but I will be unable to attend.

I am a product of the New York City public school system for an era long gone. However, I have four young children going through the system today. Much has changed for the worse. I find the school system does not help out the children that are ahead of their peers. Rather we mix the children of different abilities into the same class. **This is an injustice to all of the children in the class.** My youngest daughter is way ahead of her grade level. The teacher acknowledges this and tries to stimulate her by giving her extra work. But the teacher clearly stated that she could not give my daughter work beyond her current grade.

Concurrently, my third child is behind in her class. I know she is slower and needs help. What does the teacher say? Your daughter is doing fine! Some of her grade are accurate of her abilities; other grades are inflated! Your school system gives open book science tests in the fourth grade and allows the grades to be revised upwards when the students correctly answers the questions that they got wrong the first time. This is grade inflation. This is not helping my daughter. It is also not helping the child/children that did well on the test because the inflated grades of those like my daughter do not show the true ability of the better kids!

I loudly declare that there is a tremendous amount of bias inside the classroom and how kids that need help are being moved along and those that are ahead are stuck in class with slower kids.

Eons ago, when I went to school, a first grade class of 101 or second grade class of 201 meant that your child was in the top class. Now these class numbers are meaningless. Children of all abilities are lumped together for no good reason except to lessen the usefulness of their education.

The SHSAT should be the sole criteria for entry into the specialized high schools. Adding in other criteria is meaningless because the sources are biased! If you do well in school, you will do well on the test and vice versa. Do you think someone with a poor academic track record is going to score well on the SHSAT test?

Please keep the SHSAT as the sole criteria for entry into these truly special schools. Do not fix something that is not broke!

Sincerely,

Phua Young

My name is Phua Young. I reside in New York City and I am providing testimony in opposition to Resolution 442.

I am a product of the New York City public school system from an era long gone. However, I have four young children going through the system today. Much has changed for the worse. I find the school system does not help out the children that are ahead of their peers. Rather we mix the children of different abilities into the same class. This is an injustice to all of the children in the class. My youngest daughter is way ahead of her grade level. The teacher acknowledges this and tries to stimulate her by giving her extra work. But the teacher clearly stated that she could not give my daughter work beyond her current grade.

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Please keep the SHSAT as the sole criteria for entry into these truly special schools.
Do not fix something that is not broke!

Sincerely,

Phua Young

I am unable to attend the hearing this Thursday. I do wish to submit my comments. I am an alumna of Bronx Science, class of 1963. When I began attending there were few girls, as girls had just recently been permitted to be admitted. It is my understanding that at that time there was a quota to limit the number of girls admitted, but in spite of that I passed the exam and attended.

I strongly oppose attempts to dilute the merit-based admissions examination process. NYC can afford to have some High Schools that are intended for the highest level of student performance, achievement and preparedness. For other students who may have numerous other talents, potential, interests and abilities, NYC also has many other types of High Schools to choose from

Competition based on ability to perform on scholastic achievement exams is not unfair to anyone. It is an incentive to some to work hard and excel in order to gain admittance. For those who have been deprived of good lower school education and/or face obstacles based on their background or home life -- let's focus on improving lower school education quality.

I attended PS9 and JHS44 in very rough neighborhoods (at the time). I am the product of an excellent NYC education, and have benefited from that in my adult life. My NYC public school education enabled me to compete for and be admitted to Bronx Science. I would be saddened to see the quality of education at Bronx Science diminished by lowering the scholastic admission standards. I think that the exam alone should be the basis for merit-based admission.

Romola Chrzanowski
315 E. 86th Street, Apt. 10SE
New York, NY 10028

Honorable Council-members:

It's not about the quantity of minorities in a high school, it is about quality of the ones that go there.

One intelligent well educated Black or Latino student who "earned" his way in through the front door, does more for equality of the races that 10 average students who get in through the back door.

I know of one minority student who got into Brooklyn Tech the hard way, and actually got his father elected Mayor of NYC. I for one looked at Bill de Blasio differently once I knew he had a son in Tech. Instant respect. In this case, you know the father by the son.

The students at Brooklyn Tech are the best that NYC has to offer. The entrance exam is color blind. I hold myself in high regard because I made it into Brooklyn Tech on the same terms as everyone else.

There is another factor your resolution does not address. The number of Blacks and Latinos that get in, but decline to go.

In my life I know of three cases where minority students made it into Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech and Bronx Science and declined, not wanting that level of pressure for their high school years. I don't see that circumstance anywhere in your resolution. I know that facts are often couched to support whichever side of the fence you are on, however all facts must be taken into account when judging if a test is fair.

Keep in mind, that if you relax the entrance requirements, then you are admitting students that are less prepared to face the rigorous curriculum that Tech requires. What's next, lowering the standards and getting rid of the weighted averages?

You will water down the very diploma all we Alumni respect above all else.

When I am looking at resumes and I see a Brooklyn Tech graduate, that name goes to the top of the list, without hesitation. I don't care what year that person graduated the consistency and quality of a Tech Graduate is unquestionable and unwavering.

If you move forward with this unnecessary resolution, then that will be the moment when employers will begin to ask, what year did you enter Tech?

Respectfully submitted,

Ronaldo Vega, AIA

Dear council, I agree that more criteria can be introduced in addition to the SHSAT to qualify students for entry. However, it must be objective criteria and must be designated specifically and clearly. In the past, corruption and subjectivity prevented students entry to exceptional schools. The new criteria should be clearly defined and clearly limited to objective means such as: intermediate school grades, State exams and possibly an interview.

The specialized highschool are highly competitive, a student has to be ready to equally partake in that environment which breeds educational excellence, otherwise the standards have to be lowered to accommodate students. We don't want that.

Thanks -Ronit Joseph

Testimony of Sharon Manewitz

I am writing this testimony in opposition to New York City Council Resolution 0442-2014. I oppose changes to the current admission standards for entrance to the Specialized High Schools. Today, entrance is merit based with no opportunity to “game” who is accepted and who is not accepted. The proposed resolution and the legislation it supports represent a dilution of admission standards and would result in an admission process that is corruptible and lacking in transparency.

I reside in the borough of Manhattan in the City of New York. I am a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, Class of 1965 and the parent of a daughter who graduated from the school in 2000. I am currently the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Alumni Association of the Bronx High School of Science, a position I have been honored to hold for several years.

A Specialized High School education is a privilege in that it affords one not just an exemplary education, but an opportunity to study with students who challenge each other and teachers who are experienced motivators of youngsters whose brains are often wired differently because of their extreme intelligence. Many of our best students would not thrive in other schools. Yes, it is true that famous, wealthy and successful people come from many different academic settings, but the opportunity to attend a specialized high school is unique. There is no substitute for being in an environment where your gifts are nurtured, challenged and respected each day you spend in a classroom. There is no substitute for a school that has the resources to take students to a higher level in the study of math, science or other academic endeavor.

To say that Specialized High Schools are elite is incorrect. They are serious places of learning for all who attend. To say that the Specialized High Schools in New York City lack diversity is also wrong. They are melting pots of a most diverse student body of youngsters from every race, ethnic group, gender, sexual preference and any other category diversity can be measured in. If there is a differentiator, it is intellectual ability, but that is why these schools were created. The need to encourage gifted and talented students, especially in math and science, was recognized early on when these schools were established in the 1930s and when the entrance requirements for Bronx Science, Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech were legally protected in the 1970s.

I am saddened that the powers that be choose to ignore the importance of our city’s Specialized High Schools and the need to protect and preserve the long standing and proven standards a youngster must meet to gain entrance.

As an alumna and ardent supporter of my alma mater’s mission, I have a deep interest in ensuring that the school will offer those who come after me the best education possible. I want their learning experience to be as good, if not better, than mine. I do not understand why we are engaged in a discussion that is more about diluting admissions standards than helping youngsters get the education needed to help them rise to those standards if they have the ability to do so.

The test is not the problem. The condition is caused by years of neglect by a weak Board of Education and lack of leadership in public office. That the city has failed to educate students equally from

kindergarten through middle school is indisputable. If a Harlem school gained a reputation for being excellent, I have no doubt that middle class families from other parts of the city would be clamoring to send their children to that school. Let's pledge our time and taxpayer money to making lower and middle schools in all of our neighborhoods desirable schools.

Now, our Mayor and his short sighted allies want to make up for years of neglect by waving a magic wand, offering quick fixes that, quite frankly, are just for show. If your goal is to bring the top performing schools down to the least common denominator, passing the proposed legislation is a sure way to do it. I believe that the passing of New York City Council Resolution 0442-2014 will do more harm than good. It offers solutions that set children up for failure.

If you really aim to make meaningful and long term change, look to the teachers and the classroom experience. Identify children with promise at every school and help them to achieve according to their intellectual gifts and abilities. Train teachers not just how to teach, but also how to inspire. Make every lower and middle school a good school that properly prepares youngsters for high school work and possible entrance into the Specialized High Schools based on their test performance.

Put an end to the root cause of the dilemma. Make every school in our great city a desirable school, but recognize that there is a need for high schools that teach to a higher standard. Make every middle school a viable feeder for the Specialized High Schools

Don't change the test standards. Place the emphasis on where it belongs. Lift the youngsters of our city by improving lower and middle school education.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon F. Manewitz

December 9, 2014

Hello,

I am unable to attend the hearing. However, I would like to enter testimony.

I am against changing admissions criteria to the specialized high schools. My family is Hispanic. I have three children (1) a Sophomore boy currently attending Brooklyn Tech (2) an 8th grader waiting to hear about high school selections and (3) a 5th grader awaiting admission to a middle school. Therefore, I do believe I have a variety of students to base my opinion.

I do NOT agree with changing admissions criteria for the specialized schools. When I look at the specialized schools, I expect that these schools are Elite based on high expectations for its student body. I expect these schools to produce our future engineers, scientists, mathematicians and inventors! I call these the schools for our "Geeks." I'm sorry, but I don't expect these schools to produce our next politicians or great athletes. Therefore, I'm expecting a school of hardworking and highly intelligent individuals that will build and create. I do not believe that adding additional criteria will promote the same type of individuals. These individuals need to be challenged! Example: my sophomore son is extremely intelligent. He is not "book smart" or an "athlete." He is naturally intelligent and at times may even speak above my own intelligence. He can speak to you on most facts and completely understands math. He is one of those individuals who I would believe to be one of our future engineers. His transition to Brooklyn Tech was a bit difficult the first semester because he was not used to doing a lot of homework. However, once he caught on, he's been acing it. Prior to the specialized test, he took a one weekend class review for the test. He said it added no color to the test.

My daughter on the other hand is book smart and an athlete. She is also very involved in school. She did not take a review for the test because Her schedule does not allow for it and I thought that aside from strategy, it added no value. Therefore, she went in to the test cold turkey. She said the test was easy. However, she was unable to finish the test in the time allotted. Now we wait. My daughter has also interviewed at other high schools for admissions that use the criteria other than a test. They are not "specialized" schools, but they are screened schools and appear to be very good, ie. Beacon High School and Bard.

So here's my question- what is the number of black and Hispanic individuals that actually sat for the test and what percentage were accepted to the schools? I did not see any of this information. How a group or groups can claim that an objective test is discriminatory is ludicrous. However, when we add other factors into the criteria suddenly, admissions have more of an opportunity of becoming discriminatory. For example, absences- my daughter had more than 10 absences last year, which is a n admissions criteria for many schools. She missed classes because she attended hockey tournaments. Yet, she has excellent grades and test scores. Should a school discriminate against athletes?

My point is that the test is open to everyone and a test is a measure of intelligence. You don't have to take test prep to do well on the test. You can also find practice tests and answers as well as discussions on the answers online. Everyone has access to this, even if it's at a public library. Also, as I recall financial aid and scholarships are offered to the African-American children for SHSAT Courses. My children were never offered this, hmmm. What I do believe is that we need to put more emphasis on developing our elementary and middle school programs. None of our NYC children are ready for the work that high school entails. Let's work on this to ensure that all our children can pass a high school admissions test!

Sue Rego

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about Resolution 442. Since there are no details concerning how and what changes are proposed, it is quite difficult to comment.

Are you also planning on changing the curriculum at the specialized high schools? If you change the way students are admitted into those high schools, will you also be changing the challenging academic curriculum?

If your thoughts veer towards maintaining the test and using a quota system to take top students from every boro/neighborhood who have the highest grades and/or teacher recommendations, you would still be changing the composition or nature of the specialized high school. Having straight A's, a wonderful resume or character reference is not indicative of the knowledge necessary to sustain an education at a specialized high school.

I understand the need for diversity. However, you demean those students, predominantly Asian and white, who currently do well on the stringent exam. And you demean those who do not do well enough on the exam because you now seek to change the criteria of admission so students of every color can 'fit'. Fixing the system so the student body can be diverse is a temporary measure so a pretty rainbow is seen but depth is missing.

For a deeper and a more meaningful, long term impact: do not change the admissions criteria but put your resources into teaching parents in predominantly African American and Latino neighborhoods how to get their children into the specialized high schools beginning in daycare and Pre-K. Divert funding into those same neighborhoods and use that funding to ensure there are better teachers and higher standard math and english programs, after school math and reading programs and weekend challenges that emphasize education. But first, get parents on board at the day care/pre-K level - understanding their children would do very little socializing after school and weekends on extra curricular activities other than educational ones. There will be time for extra curricular activities when their children are accepted based on merit in a specialized high school.

Vivian Losid

I, Rachel Zizov strongly agree that acceptance to Spec High schools should continue to stay solely based on the SHSAT test results. It's fair, because it's based on kids level of knowledge and not on their back ground, skin color nor race. These schools are special due to kids with certain outstanding academic performance. Editing rules so it will show more diversity, help more Hispanic and African Americans kids to enter is not fair. We should concentrate on prepping all the kids in middle schools to get ready for the test and score high. We have to stop remind minority people that they are minorities, so they will stop expect special treatments. There is a humangous number of kids who eligible for free lunch at these schools, which defiantly say that they are not from wealthy, privilege families that can afford high cost prep courses.

Middle school programs and teachers should be reevaluated all across NYC, that's what Education committee should concentrate on!

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School of Law

Aaron Saiger
Professor of Law

December 10, 2014

New York City Council
c/o Hon. Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito
by electronic mail to <Correspondence@council.nyc.ny.us>

To the Honorable Members of the New York City Council:

I write in reference to Resolution 442, which would urge the New York State Legislature to abandon the policy of basing admission to the City's specialized high schools exclusively upon scores on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT).

I am Professor of Law at Fordham University Law School, where I specialize in and teach Education Law. (I am also the parent of a high school senior who attends the specialized High School for Math, Science, and Engineering at City College. However, I have no personal stake in the Resolution: My daughter will have been graduated before any contemplated changes can take effect.)

The basic facts surrounding the debate over this Resolution are well-known to the Council. On the one hand, the racial demographics of the most hotly competitive specialized high schools, especially Stuyvesant and Bronx Science, differ dramatically from the demographics of the City's school age population. African American and Latino students are barely represented in these schools. On the other hand, there is an overrepresentation of white and especially Asian Americans at these schools, relative to their proportions of the public-school student population. Many of these Asian American students are from modest backgrounds. These students necessarily would have less access to these schools were Black and Latino representation to increase.

Those in support and in opposition to the Resolution all should recognize, I think and hope, that there are strong arguments on both sides as the City considers this kind of trade-off. The current racial patterns in enrollment, especially at Stuyvesant and Bronx Science, are not just disturbing, but egregious. It is also true that supplementing the SHSAT with other measures is likely to increase access to these schools for richer, whiter students along with African Americans and Latinos, and to reduce access for students in certain of the City's immigrant communities.

One critical feature of this dilemma, however, has not gotten the attention it deserves. The City *already* has a system for high school admissions like the one that Resolution 442 urges for the specialized schools. Many high schools in the City that are deeply challenging, prestigious, highly desirable, and generally excellent employ admissions methods that weigh students according to multiple criteria. They examine test scores but also consider middle-school grades, teacher recommendations, interviews, places of residence, and personal backgrounds. As the City's manual for eighth grade parents indicates, different schools in this group use different sets of these and other measures to make admissions decisions.

The practice of the eight schools that use only the SHSAT, therefore, should be understood as only one of several approaches to admissions being used among the City's top high schools. These eight schools use the test only; but dozens of other highly competitive schools, also excellent, use testing along with other factors.

Any choice about how to admit students — which factors to use and how to weight those factors — inevitably advantages some populations and disadvantages others. It is very hard to identify admissions factors that are genuinely “fair” in this context. It is unfair for there to be disparate results by race. For many students, it is unfair for so much to depend on a single, standardized, high-stakes test. But, for other kinds of students, multiple criteria are less fair. Such students may not be in a position to record high grades or to interview well, perhaps because their English is weak or because their parents lack the language skills and cultural capital to navigate the often complex and time-consuming process of arranging for interviews and teacher recommendations. To those students, relying on these factors is also unfair. For them, the single test is their best chance to shine.

Because no single admissions algorithm can be free of bias, the best way to be fair is to have different schools, all excellent, that use different admissions criteria. This is precisely the system the City has now. Resolution 442, on the other hand, creates a less diverse admissions system. It makes admissions processes in all high-demand schools more similar to one another. This locks in certain kind of advantages and certain kinds of disadvantages.

The one terrible mistake, in my view, is to view the eight test schools as the preeminent schools in our system, the ones that are by any standard and for every student the best and the most desirable. Were that the case, it would be unfair to base admission to them only upon a single test. However, I can state both as a scholar of education policy and a parent that the truth is that the City has many excellent, high demand schools. They are diverse in their excellence. Some are better fits for some students than for others; none is inherently the best in the system or the jewel in its crown. This is to the City's great credit and benefits its children extraordinarily.

Just as the City's great high schools are diverse, their admissions methods are, and should be, diverse. Given the diversity of excellence in the City's high schools, there is every reason that some, but not all, of those excellent schools should continue to use only SHSAT scores in making their admissions offers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Saiger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Aaron Saiger
Professor of Law

From: Adjoa Jones de Almeida

Sent: Monday, December 08, 2014 11:25 AM

Subject: My Written Testimony for this Thursday's hearing on Diversity.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a second year parent at BNS- PS 146K and feel so blessed to have been able to join this vibrant and diverse school community. My geographic school district is District 17 and the two schools my child originally was zoned for are both known for violence and for failing students. The one school in my zone known for being successful has no arts programs as it is seen as "non-essential". As an arts educator who has worked to integrate the arts into academic subjects for over 2 decades, this just makes no sense to me.

It seems so unfair that in a country committed to quality public education, that we continue to reproduce segregated schools where working class and low income children of color are still routinely getting the short end of the stick. On the other hand, segregated schools also hurts white and more affluent children since it keeps them from fully developing their humanity by robbing them of the opportunity to understand the strength and vibrancy that comes from difference.

While I recognize that I was lucky (after being placed on a waiting list) to get my child into this school, I also recognize that this is not the case for most families in my situation. I've also been told that while BNS has been able to hold on to some of its diverse student body, this diversity has drastically declined due to recent changes which limit the school's agency in accepting students from outside its zone. I fully support the proposal that BNS submitted which would allow for more diversity in next year's kindergarten class and I hope that the DOE will approve it in time for January's admissions.

Sincerely,

Adjoa Jones de Almeida (3rd grade parent at BNS- PS 146K)

To the Education Committee of the City Council:

I am adamantly opposed to changing the entrance criteria for NYC specialized high schools.

My children's school, Bronx Science, is comprised of children from a variety of ethnic, socio-economic and racial backgrounds who are excelling in all spheres. Their collective successes go beyond the classroom, extending to the athletic and social playing field all of which have enriched my daughters' experience. Their lives are better because of the depth and breadth of their gifted cohort.

There is nothing broken with the specialized schools' system of admitting students. Any changes would tamper with the intellectual integrity of these hubs for learning and harm the many children who have and will continue to pass through their doors. The specialized schools of our city are the envy of this country's and even the world's secondary school education. Let's preserve one of this city's most treasured assets.

Respectfully

Ann Chanler

parent of Bronx H.S. of Science students, current and recently graduated

Ann Chanler, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist/Psychoanalyst
17 Sixth Avenue 2A
New York, New York 10013
T 212.219.9984
www.annchanlerphd.com

Getting notice that I was offered a seat in Stuyvesant High School was one of the best days of my life. I had worked very hard for it. I had studied long hours; I had frantically gone over numerous practice problems. I had one thought in mind: get into Stuy, go on to Harvard or Yale. It was a dream of mine, and one of my family's, for I was likely going to be the first in my immediate family to go to college. Both my mother's family and father's were not from the US. I was a first generation American. With that notice, I felt like my dreams would really come true.

What made me proudest was that I had earned it. Not completely on my own, that is true. I have the city to thank for admitting me into the Specialized High Schools Institute. Admission is random, but invitation to apply is based on merit, high attendance (at least 90%), and being economically disadvantaged, as defined by Title I Free Lunch status. In fact, the first time around, I was not offered admission. I actually cried. I remember. Then someone recommended I write a letter to the Institute (I can't recall exactly to whom it was addressed), making the case as to why I should be admitted. I explained in that letter how much of a hard worker I was, how well I had done in school, how I had perfect attendance, anything that would show I was ready for the expectations of the program, but also that I was worth the investment. Some days later, I received a phone call, and the woman on the phone explained how touched she was by my letter and I was admitted. Being in sixth grade at the time, some details are fuzzy, and how that decision was actually made is beyond my knowledge, but it made me glad to know that I had somehow proven myself. All I did was write a letter. I took the time to write a letter. And then, participating in that program for 22-months, I sat for the SHSAT, and I got into my first choice. I had studied a lot and took the program seriously, considering it was free

and I had tried so hard to get into it. I spent many weekend hours even studying. I then went on to NYU, graduating last May summa cum laude, and with highest honors in Mathematics. Even though NYU was not my dream school by any means, there is some prestige to the name. And the hard work at Stuyvesant prepared me for college *very* well, to the point that I at times sat besides peers from other public high schools and wondered, “how did they get in?” It sounds harsh, but when someone gets into NYU and cannot solve the equation $6 = 3/x$ for x , clearly some earlier education is lacking. But I digress. My main point is, I sought out help for preparing for this important exam as early as sixth grade.

I’m Hispanic. I’m from an area in Queens that has a fair mix of largely Jewish, Hispanic, Asian, and African American residents. I was always aware of the considerably greater Asian population at Stuyvesant. In fact, someone I know who went there in the 90s once explained to me, “There are three populations at Stuy: Asians, Jewish people, and everybody else.” But I was also aware that a lot of them had strict parents who expected them to excel academically, both by getting into a specialized high school, but then also standing out positively once there. Some Stuy kids even call getting below a 90% on something, “Asian-failing.” That’s the sort of view that has developed over years. My parents didn’t push me that much. I was lucky to push myself. I enjoyed school largely, and wanted to do well because I knew that doing well was recognized. Some teachers in my elementary and junior high school years further instilled that and inspired me to want to do well. It was that sort of background that pushed me to work hard. And it was my hard work and my work ethic that got me into Stuyvesant. And I am grateful because had I gone to my local high school, John Bowne, I would have likely still

excelled, but with less effort. Comparatively, I do believe that even a 90% at Stuyvesant, is a higher average at a regular high school like John Bowne. To be fair when comparing schools, after all, you should take into account the school's general population and record for academic achievement. And had I even maintained a 96.7% GPA at John Bowne, I would have done so without being as prepared for college as I was because of Stuyvesant.

Stuyvesant is a school that often filled your week with tests. Each day of the week was assigned to certain subjects for test days, essentially, because they wanted to limit the chances of having an Algebra, Chemistry, and Spanish test on a single day. And at the end of the day, you do need to learn some test-taking strategies to do well. Tests cannot disappear. Even exams like the SAT, which still often seems to not be such a strong indicator of future success in college, have stuck around and are a required part of the college application process. So once in a school like Stuy, you need to already be a strong test-taker. And the implication is, through the SHSAT, you are. That is why that should carry so much weight.

Some might argue that my letter-writing example related to the Specialized High Schools Institute shows the importance, however, of having another component such as an essay in the admission process. However, remember that I had first been invited to apply based solely on merit, attendance, and my economic situation. And furthermore, the actual admission process is random. Again, how exactly I was admitted, I do not know, but it was not because I had done poorly on an exam and was seeking to make up for my own "failure", for lack of a better word. They are two very different scenarios. Furthermore, to the point of other elite high schools using an essay criterion as part of the process, historically this aspect was meant to make universities more exclusive. Through

essays, schools hoped to weed out Jews, who were unwanted, but were scoring well on exams. So in fact, the argument is now to be more inclusive by a means that was inherently exclusive to begin with. I highly recommend you read The Chosen: The Hidden history of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton by Jerome Karamel. You might find that your goal of using the college application model to increase diversity contradicts the actual intent of some components of that model.

Throughout this debate, I have heard that the issue is seen as one of economic struggle, that those who can't afford test prep are at a disadvantage. Yes, if you can afford a Kaplan or Princeton review program to prepare you for the exam, that is likely to help. But I beg to ask what are the statistics for students at Stuyvesant who are eligible for Title I Free Lunch? Does it reflect the general population statistic? If it's higher, then you could argue that from an economic standpoint, too many students from poorer families are being admitted. If we seek accurate reflections of populations in our high school, then should we have a quota for poorer students even if they score high on the SHSAT? From my understanding, there is a fairly large population of such students at Stuy. And the reason is likely because many of the Asian students are actually from less affluent backgrounds. They also didn't have the resources for expensive preparatory programs, but they knew they had to go to a library, and start studying. They had to just go to a library. However, with a new multi-dimension approach to admissions, which again the goal is to significantly raise the percent of Hispanics and African Americans admitted, you are in fact arguing that you should limit the number of Asians admitted. So you are in fact, hoping to put at least some of the poorer, economically disadvantaged,

but high achieving Asian Americans, at a disadvantage. Now, if the issue isn't economic as it is described, but merely racial, then that is another story.

What I believe is the true problem is the preparation of our students at the elementary and junior high school levels. Those were the years when I developed a strong desire to do well and achieve. Family support is also a large factor, and it is understandable that some economically deprived families might find it harder to instill such support for studying, but that is something that then should be worked on. Admission to the specialized high schools should not be used an excuse to make up for those lacking factors. And besides, I have friends who went to less prestigious high schools, who were minorities, and also did not excel as strongly as I did in my grades, and they were able to reach the likes of Harvard or Yale for university. At the end of the day, it is not only where you went that is going to matter, but how much you showed you worked hard and were committed to excelling. They have claimed it also helps going to a high school where you are more likely surrounded by less-achieving students, for you stand out more. That is purely anecdotal, but worth sharing nonetheless. If you really want to fix how Hispanics and African Americans (because remember, it is unlikely that this is an economic issue, it is more likely racial), then focus the attentions of the Department of Education on improving schools and programs at a lower level. Even Townsend Harris, which uses multiple score criteria, including report card grades (which should probably be scaled when comparing schools), has more or less the same distribution of races in its school. If you choose to allow more criteria, such as an essay, if you really believe it is not a race issue and it is about painting a fair, well-rounded picture of a candidate, then it should be necessary to not let the applicant specify their

race. Otherwise, outside pressure might make schools feel they need to reach certain quotas. If you truly believe it is about the single test ruining everything for these students, then the other criteria, independent of any mention of race, should be enough for change, by your view. As we can see, that is not working well for a school like Townsend Harris. Leave the SHSAT as the admission test for the Specialized High Schools, as the component that decides admission. And instead, focus all your efforts on improving education at an earlier stage. *That* is the important issue we should be discussing today.

So what are your thoughts now?

Note to reader: Please pause here for a moment.

Oh, and by the way, I'm not Hispanic. Now ask yourself if that changes how you view the rest of this testimony. Thank you for your time.

Anastasios Bountouvas

From: C Annechino [<mailto:annechinoc@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 2:47 PM
To: Atwell, Jan
Subject: Fwd: Resolution on Specialized High Schools

Concerning the Resolution on Specialized High School Admissions:

Dear Committee Members,

As I am sure it is for most parents, it is difficult to attend a meeting that is held during the day.

The only way to communicate would be through this method.

What do you think this resolution will solve?
Isn't it another way to treat an issue from the top, down?

As a former CEC President of District 3, we have had countless meetings with the DOE on the state of affairs at the elementary school level. The education at that level is where the problems originate from.

Please take a look at this chart.
We have a great deal more information that supports this issue that elementary schools is where you need to work on.

If this resolution moves forward, then how will one child's 95 average from a school that is "under performing" compare to another child's 95 average who is attending an accelerated curriculum-based school? Have you achieved diversity and equity?

No, you would achieve a water-down, ineffective, un-equitable school.

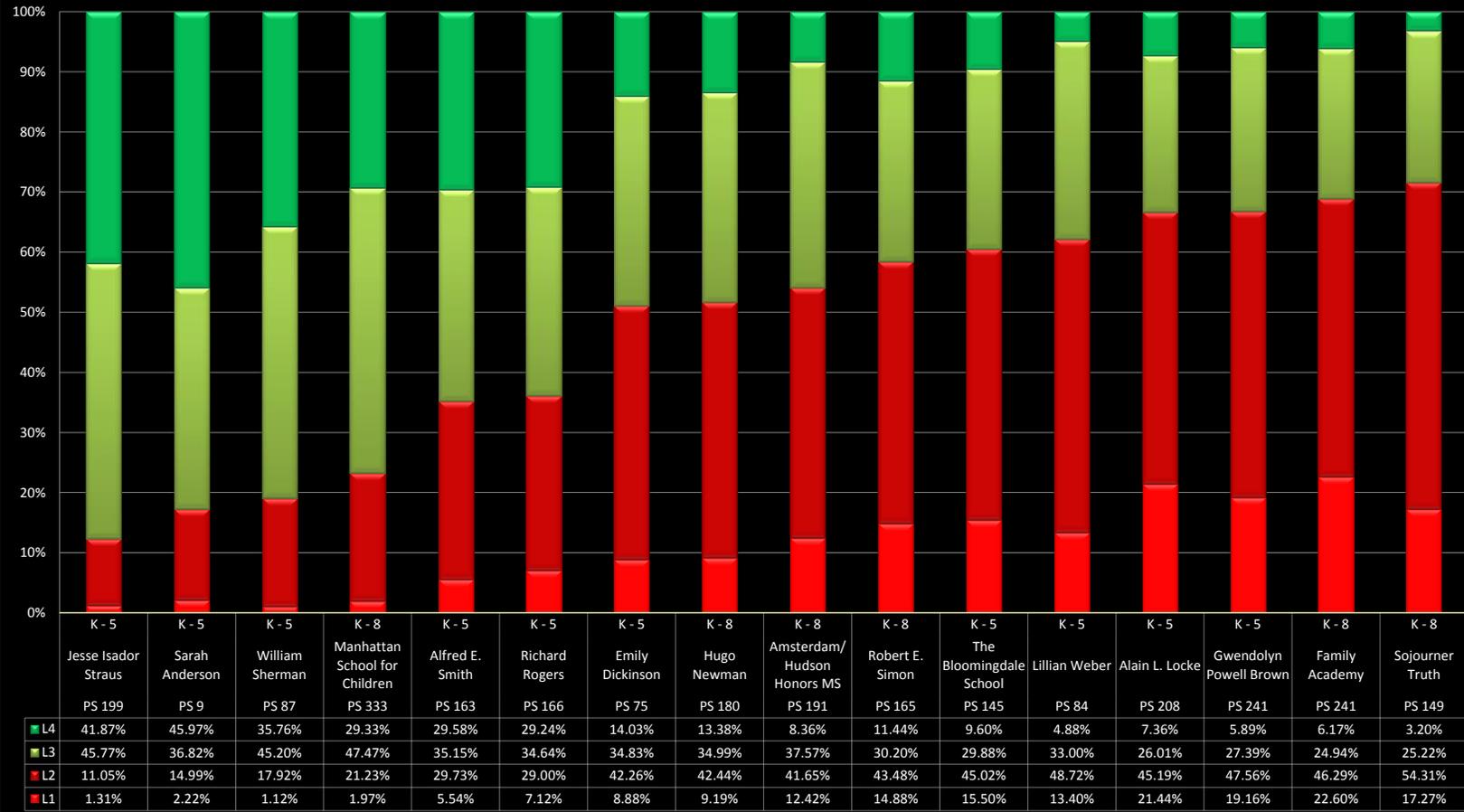
I know the public outcry for diversity, which is totally understandable. There are some that say there is no diversity in District 2, because of its district priority schools.

But solving diversity shouldn't come through starting from the top, down.

Please give this some more thought. This is a headline piece, not a working, respectable city council piece.

Thank you for hearing me on this issue.
Christine Annechino
Parent of a 7th grader
Former CEC President District 3

D3 Elementary Schools - Average Percentages L1 , L2 , L3 & L4 Grades 6 to 8 2009-10 ELA & Math Assessments



Source:
 New York State Education Department, District & School Performance, 2009-10 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts & Mathematics Assessments
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/ela-math/2010/2010-ELAandMathDistrictandBuildingAggregatesmedia.pdf>

From: Lacroix, Etienne [<mailto:etienne.lacroix@jpmorgan.com>]

Sent: Sunday, December 07, 2014 6:25 PM

Subject: Opposed to SHSAT changes

I would like to express my opposition to the Governor's intention to change the SHSAT admission program.

I have a son who is attending High School who studied hard for the test, he didn't go to any prep school but only got material through NY's public libraries.

My daughter who is in middle school will take the test next year and I wouldn't like to see any changes.

The NY educational system is very meritocratic - you study hard and you are smart, you will get into a good school, irrespective of background.

I want this to stay the same!

If any change is needed, it is to provide preparation to study for the SHSAT, and NOT to make it lax.

The proposed change is clearly the wrong political and educational direction to move to.

We are first generation immigrants in new york, with latin american roots.

Regards

Etienne

212 608 8437

Notwithstanding the council's assurance that the legislation will be fair to all applicants, I cannot fathom how a lowering of the standards will be beneficial to the students of the specialized high schools. I would rather see overall improvement in preparing the grade and middle school students to enable them to be more competitive on the exam. We should not change the currently objective process. The standards could be modified to include additional criteria but should stay the same for all students.

Harold Weinberg

Notwithstanding the council's assurance that the legislation will be fair to all applicants, I cannot fathom how a lowering of the standards will be beneficial to the students of the specialized high schools. I would rather see overall improvement in preparing the grade and middle school students to enable them to be more competitive on the exam. We should not change the currently objective process. The standards could be modified to include additional criteria but should stay the same for all students.

Harold Weinberg

Dear Speaker Mark-Viverito,

I think the intention of Resolution 442 is good, but it is the wrong legislation for all of NYC. It is unrealistic to say that this legislation is a means to fix racial inequity when it actually adds racial inequity to the equation. Resolution 442 attempts to change system that is based a test that is not designed with bias and now adds intentional bias to the process.

First of all, it is ridiculous to blame the test for any racial differences in the make-up of the specialized high schools instead of the government itself for not doing its job in preparing all qualify students to achieve the highest score possible. It is the government's job to deliver quality schooling that all children deserved at the lower grades to be prepared for any test. Instead of providing the DOE the necessary money needed to hire highly qualified and motivated teachers and provide merit education programs, it consistently cuts the DOE's funding to ensure that the students are unprepared for tough assessments.

Secondly, this one test rule was designed to remove any intentional discrimination based on human tendencies. In the existing system, everyone is being compared to the same set of standards. If one does better than another in this comparison then one deserves a slot in the specialized high schools. However, under the new system, one could attend one of the specialized high schools if one passes one of the Discovery Programs then one could join whether or not one is truly qualified with the test score. This Discovery Program is merely a veil to introduce intentional discrimination. There is no definition of how these programs are created or administered. This is truly the most disturbing part of the legislature. Basically, the whole reason for this is to take away spots from well qualified students and give it to other students who may or may not be qualified - but you need them to make the numbers look good. This change is not made to make all students better through better education. It is just a way to make numbers look good without doing the work to improve quality of all students. That shows the sickness of this government. It doesn't really care about its people, it only wants to look good to the people. Taking the easy way out is what this teaches our kids. No need to solve the problem, just make the problem look good.

Thirdly, how did this new system get seriously considered at all? If a person can't hit a baseball far enough, allow the person to throw the ball over the dugout and it would equate to hitting a home run. If a person can't shoot at the basket, then lower the basket. If that is happening to any of the sports, there would be a huge outcry for hotheadedness in changing such rules. However, that is what's being proposed here as an improvement to the existing system for entering the specialized high schools. Is that truly the way to improve the education system, by lowering the bar or is that just a way to lower the over-all quality of the education system? If there is any change that should be done is our government seriously consider investing in quality education for all students within NYC. We need to invest in hiring more qualify educators and invest in more modern education equipment for all children. We need to invest more so that all children are capable to take any test and do well on it.

The government cannot just throws up its hands and say "oh well, we failed at preparing our kids, so we will just make the numbers look good to the general public and call it a job done." That is insanity if NYC wants to compete in a world where everyone is trying hard to prepare their children for real life competition in jobs. If this passes, then it would only make our children less competitive in the real world. We didn't land on the moon first because someone says landing in Arizona would be close enough. We landed on the moon first because we invested a lot in our people and the right equipment to enable us to solve that problem ahead of all other nations. Let's invest in our school so that our children are well prepared for any assessment thrown at them and say NO to Resolution 422!

Respectfully,
-James Ng

Equity in Public School Admissions

Jennifer Weiss Friedman
public school parent

This fall our family has had the double task of applying to both middle school and high school in New York City. The middle school process is challenging, but high school is practically mission impossible. By the end of the process:

- My son and I toured more than twenty-five high schools, and he will have missed some school for about a third of those tours. My daughter toured nine middle schools.
- My son sat for the two and a half hour SHSAT exam. My daughter will take a separate exam and/or interview at each of her top school choices.
- My son will have completed different essays for at least four schools, portfolios or a separate application for at least five different schools; and an individual assessment exam and/or interview for at least three different schools. My daughter's 5th grade teacher has diligently been helping her compile a portfolio of her best work, has helped her write an essay to submit to schools, and will conduct practice interviews to prepare her.

All of this was time NOT spent learning the curriculum, playing sports, reading. And keep in mind, we *only* applied to *public* schools. Welcome to "school choice".

I recognize that having options is a privilege. There is a high school for just about every interest a child can have. There are more traditional schools, schools with early college programs, schools where the students develop their own curricula, schools that test students weekly and schools that do not give any standardized testing. *Not* finding the "right fit" for your child is nearly impossible, but to do so assumes that a parent:

- understands the system and the way students are match to schools and each school's separate application process where applicable;
- has the supports of a super-hero school guidance counselor;
- has a child who can easily make up missed school work for those many days they miss due to tours;
- has no job because touring the schools, filling out the separate applications, taking the student to the assessments and interviews, and putting together the portfolios is like a full time job;
- either has no other children or at least a partner who can help out, or has the means for a full time caregiver for the other children in the family.

It is not hard to imagine who this system benefits.

High school admissions has been an overwhelming and daunting process for a part-time working, over-educated parent like me. What of the parents who are single, navigating a new culture, or for whom English is not their first language? How many of their children will have the opportunity to find their "right fit" school? We hear over and over about the achievement gap yet we set in place educational structures and policies that are inherently discriminatory against students who are already at a disadvantage, ensuring that the achievement gap will only widen further.

Elementary school and middle school admissions are more easily fixed than high school and solutions in earlier years will in fact decrease the need for solutions at the high school level.

Elementary schools are zoned in most districts. Enrollment, then, is greatly subject to external factors such as housing policy and the housing market. In an effort to control for overcrowding in some schools, the Office of Enrollment has increased rigidity across the board in following Chancellor's Regulations for admission, limiting access to out-of-district or out-of-zone families. This has only ensured that school zones where housing prices have skyrocketed, and low income housing

has decreased, have seen a rapid digression from representing the district-wide demographics. For years, educators and parent advocates have been discussing some simple yet effective solutions to desegregate District 3 and ensure that all schools in the district become more representative of the demographics of the district as a whole. This push for implementing a policy such as [controlled choice](#) has gained no real momentum despite its effectiveness in other cities. In District 1 there was a golden opportunity to implement controlled choice and yet they opted for open choice which, as [the data now shows](#), just exacerbated socioeconomic, racial, and "academic" segregation. A wasted opportunity.

Middle schools are primarily an open choice system with no zoned schools. Again, despite the ability to set in place policies that may encourage schools that are more representative of each district as a whole, no action has been taken. Open choice has only exacerbated the disparity. It is shameful that in my district there are [four middle schools with 100% of their students qualifying for free or reduced lunch at the same time as there are four schools that have between 9% and 18% of students who qualify](#). There are eight schools with fewer than 30% Black and Hispanic students, and ten with greater than 80%, in a district where 60% of students attending public school are Black or Hispanic. I find it unacceptable that we continue to allow this racial and socio-economic segregation. I question our role as parents in contributing to the problem, choosing schools where there are other kids who "look" like our kids. With the current system of open choice, choosing a middle school based exclusively on the "best fit" may mean your child is an "only" so the problem perpetuates itself. Parents, whether consciously or not, are factoring in the racial and socio-economic background of the other students when picking a school for their child, not focusing solely on what educational philosophy and academic environment truly are the best fit for their student. Conversely, the families who are actively choosing are ensuring that those who do not have the time or resources or knowledge to more actively choose a school are left to a particular set of schools. As with many situations, those who already have an advantage make choices that further disadvantage the others. A controlled choice system, and setting the expectation that every school in a district should be a model of the distribution of the entire population of that district, is essential to ensure that advantages are equally distributed to all students not just to the already advantaged.

High school enrollment is a complex issue, with a large part of the problem being predetermined by what I have just described in elementary and middle school segregation. Yet some simple and obvious steps would help.

Currently there is no one source of information for tours and open houses. A parent has to check each school's website regularly to check their admissions pages. A central database and/or calendar where schools are required to post such information and parents could check that single source would be a huge improvement alone in increasing equity of access for parents (and guidance counselors) to the necessary information.

Just as colleges moved toward the common application, eliminating separate applications, interviews, and individual school portfolios or essays would also be a helpful step towards a more equitable admissions process for high school. It is commendable that schools want to know who a child is beyond their state test scores, but this information could just as easily be gleaned from one common portfolio of work and one essay based on a predetermined prompt each year.

Provide translation at every step. I have been on countless tours for both middle schools and high schools where I see families I know who do not speak English. I have translated or requested translation for them wherever possible but many Spanish-speaking parents would not do this, out of embarrassment, because they do not want to impose, or because they do not know those services may be available to them. On one tour an administrator who I know speaks Spanish heard me translating for families and just smiled at me. Did not offer to translate herself, did not offer to have Spanish-speaking families go on the tour with the student who I know speaks Spanish. The message then is clear, "*No están bienvenidos aquí.*" Or at the very least the message is that you can come to our school but we will not take any extra measures to connect with you. In contrast, my son's middle school offers separate tours in Spanish, provides translation wherever possible, and makes

an effort to reach out to Spanish-speaking families through their elementary school guidance counselors. Not surprisingly, then, my son's middle school, which is one of the most closely aligned to the district averages for all other demographics, is home to 46% Hispanic students (the district average is 35%). *Bienvenidos son.*

School choice is a wonderful thing for being able to offer different kinds of programs for different kinds of kids. However, we need to ensure that by offering choice we are in fact offering these opportunities equally to all of the students in our community not just giving further advantage to the already privileged ones. Now having completed our own high school application process, and again applying to middle schools, I am convinced more than ever that the admissions procedures are inherently discriminatory and greatly favor white, privileged families like mine, and I find that unacceptable. The mission of public school should be to provide *everyone* with a high quality education, not just to those who can pass the test of navigating the admissions process. True representative diversity in the schools must be a priority and it begins with equity in admissions starting before they walk through the door.

Resolution No. 442 Statement from John Kwok

Resolution No. 442 does not address credibly, the reasons why there are substantially few Black and Hispanic students attending Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, Stuyvesant High School and the other five high schools which use the Specialized High School Admissions Test. For this reason alone, it should be rejected, simply because it doesn't address why these students are not getting sufficient education in mathematics, science, as well as the humanities, that would ensure their academic success at these academically rigorous elite New York City public high schools. The New York City Council is wasting time and money by considering seriously Resolution 442. Both would be spent better in addressing the real reasons for sparse Black and Latino student enrollment at the eight elite high schools that use the SHSAT as their sole admissions criterion. If Mayor de Blasio's son Dante and American Museum of Natural History Hayden Planetarium director Dr. Neil de Grasse Tyson could pass the SHSAT to attend respectively, Brooklyn Tech and Bronx Science, then why replace it with less objective admissions criteria for these schools?

Other proposed admissions criteria lack the objectivity which the SHSAT represents, especially those like counting extracurricular activities and class rank, that do not reflect at all, whether the students are sufficiently proficient in mathematics and the sciences to attend Stuyvesant and its peers. While I deplore the pathetically low number of Black and Hispanic students attending these high schools, jettisoning the SHSAT in favor of other, "fairer", admissions criteria isn't the solution; improving the quality of middle school education is, as the best means of correcting this historic imbalance. The New York City Council should demand from both Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Department of Education, substantial attention and credible results pointing to greatly improving middle school education, especially

in the sciences and mathematics, for all New York City public school students, so that everyone – Black, Latino, White and Asian – can pass the SHSAT and excel at Bronx Science, Stuyvesant and the other six schools using the SHSAT for admissions.

This is an issue of special relevance to me as a long-time member of the National Center for Science Education (<http://www.ncse.com>) which is committed to fostering greater public understanding of science with regards to biological evolution – especially when current evolutionary theory is the key unifying theory of biology and remains poorly understood by most Americans – and, most recently, climate science. I am appalled to have heard anecdotal evidence from parents pointing out the abysmal quality of mathematics and science education in primary and middle schools even in such relatively affluent neighborhoods as Mayor de Blasio’s former neighborhood of Park Slope, Brooklyn. Greatly improving mathematics and science education in primary and middle schools, not revising the admissions criteria for the eight elite public high schools using the SHSAT for admission, should be the primary goals of the New York City Council, Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Farina and the New York City Department of Education.

Removing the SHSAT as the sole criterion for admission to my alma mater, Stuyvesant, and the other seven high schools, in favor of other criteria like middle school class rank and Grade Point Average (GPA) is a guaranteed recipe for academic disaster that will decrease the academic rigor of these schools through the likely addition of remedial courses to ensure that students could perform sufficiently well; an “experiment” that exists at Fairfax County, VA’s elite Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-new-thomas-jefferson-it-includes-remedial-math/2012/05/25/gJQAlZRYqU_story.html) and an “experiment” that will be repeated at Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, Stuyvesant and the other schools if the SHSAT is scrapped. It is also an

experiment that may be discriminating against potential students of Asian-American heritage seeking admission to Thomas Jefferson High School (<http://thebullelephant.com/tjhsst-discriminating-asians/>), and one likely to achieve identical results here in New York City if the SHSAT is replaced by other, supposedly “fairer”, means of admission designed to increase Black and Hispanic student enrollment. Although ample money has been spent towards increasing Black and Latino enrollment at Thomas Jefferson High School, little or no improvement has occurred. What seems to be missing is greater parental interest and involvement in their children’s education and demanding high expectations from them by both parents and teachers; traits which former Washington Post reporter – and fellow Stuyvesant High School alumnus - Alec Klein noted in the concluding chapter of his book “A Class Apart: Prodigies, Pressure, and Passion Inside One of America's Best High Schools” as those shared by the best American high schools. Such lack of interest may be major reasons why few Black and Latino students take the SHSAT, since I have heard from others, most notably Stuyvesant High School Parent Coordinator Harvey Blumm, that many parents of these students are ignorant of the SHSAT because teachers and administrative staff of their neighborhood schools - who have low expectations for their students - have failed to inform them.

As someone trained in graduate school in invertebrate paleobiology and other aspects of evolutionary biology, and as someone who has worked in epidemiological research, I find especially compelling, attorney Dennis Saffran’s observation (http://www.city-journal.org/2014/24_3_nyc-specialized-high-schools.html) that white student enrollment at Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech and Stuyvesant has declined almost as precipitously as Black and Latino student enrollment, hovering now around 20% at these three schools:

“There is no dispute that black and Latino enrollment at the specialized schools, while always low, has steadily declined since the 1970s. Blacks constituted 13 percent of the student body at Stuyvesant in 1979, 5 percent in 1994, and just 1 percent the last few years, while Hispanics dropped from a high of 4 percent to 2 percent today. Similarly, at Bronx Science, black enrollment has fallen from 12 percent in 1994 to 3 percent currently, and Hispanic enrollment has leveled off, from about 10 percent to 6 percent. The figures are even more striking at the less selective Brooklyn Tech, where blacks made up 37 percent of the student body in 1994 but only 8 percent today, while Hispanic numbers plunged from about 15 percent to 8 percent.”

Among the reasons for declining enrollment may be lack of parental interest in their children’s education, since Saffran echoes Klein in stressing the importance of hard work and high expectations for their children’s education; traits that most likely account for Asians now comprising 60% of the student populations of elite schools like Bronx Science and Stuyvesant.

Saffran’s essay noting declining student enrollment of Whites, as well as Black and Latinos, at Stuyvesant and the other schools using the SHSAT, remains the most profound, and insightful, examination of this issue. It stands in stark contrast, with the thinking behind proposed Resolution No. 442, as echoed in these remarks that should be viewed as condescending and racist by New York University Professor of Education Pedro Noguera, a fellow Brown University alumnus (<http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/city-hall/2014/07/8548143/how-address-stuyvesant-problem>):

“I don’t think those schools are that great. I would not tell a top African-American student to go to one of those schools, I would tell them to go to Medgar Evers Prep. It’s a much more supportive environment and the quality of education is better.”

“If you graduate from Bronx Science with a C average, what college are you going to go to? It’s a total sink-or-swim environment. That’s not what I would hold up as the model. And then there’s an important issue are equity and access—do kids in poor neighborhoods have access to good schools?”

The school which Professor Noguera praises, Medgar Evers Prep, ranks in the bottom half of US News and World Report’s survey data for the top one thousand American public high schools, whereas Bronx Science and Stuyvesant are in the top one hundred. Clearly Professor Noguera’s rhetoric isn’t supported by data, and yet the New York City Council will be making a similar mistake by adopting Resolution 442, instead of addressing the real reason behind declining Black and Hispanic student enrollment; inadequate academic preparation, especially in the sciences and mathematics, whose vast improvement would ensure for these potential students, academic success at Bronx Science, Stuyvesant and the other high schools.

If Dante de Blasio and Neil de Grasse Tyson can pass the SHSAT entrance exam and attend Brooklyn Tech (de Blasio) and Tyson (Bronx Science), then other Black and Latino students can be admitted via the SHSAT. Yet this won’t occur via the “quick easy fix” which those supporting the passage of Resolution 442 are advocating. Instead, drastic improvement will come only when there is greater parental interest and responsibility in their children’s education, emphasizing both high expectations and hard work, and substantial improvement in the quality of mathematics and science education for all primary and middle school students, not just those who are Black and Latino students. I urge the New York City Council to recognize this by refusing to pass Resolution 442, and work instead towards greatly improving mathematics and science education in primary and middle schools for all students regardless of their ethnicity.

To Whom Ever It May Concern:

I was, unfortunately, unable to make the hearing of New York City Council, Re: Resolution 442. But, in writing this, I hope I am able to make my protest against changing the admissions process for the Bronx High School of Science and the Brooklyn School of Technology clear. I don't believe that removing the SHSAT, or supplementing with additional criteria such as grades, teacher recommendations, and additional writing pieces will overall decrease the "racially discriminatory" nature that the admissions process is being accused of. In direct contradiction to the arguments outlined in Resolution 442, I argue that the SHSAT is one the better admissions processes, being that it is an objective standardized test that does not test the depth or breadth of knowledge (mathematical/logical/etc) but rather an individuals ability to work in order to obtain a goal. This is a far better admissions criteria than anything that can be provided by far more subjective standards such as grades, attendance, teacher recommendations, or state test scores.

First, I would like to address the accusations that the SHSAT is "racially discriminatory". There is nothing inherently racially discriminatory in the exam, no more than any other exam. Every exam, quiz, class, etc. requires extensive effort, time, and dedication on the part of the student. Students who do not have time to devote their skills to their studies or have mitigating factors (socioeconomic, familial, medical, etc.) that prevent this kind of devotion to their coursework will generally not test well, either on the SHSAT or on any other exam. If the percentage of Hispanic and African American students admitted to schools like the Bronx High School of Science is so low (5%), this is not because there is something wrong with the admissions process. Even colleges, especially Ivy League universities, who utilize a wide spectrum of materials (SAT, grade point averages, extra curriculars, essays, types of classes taken, teacher recommendations, and interviews) have very low percentages of African American and Hispanic students¹ *despite keeping an artificially maintained demographic!* Even of these African American and Hispanic students, the majority of them come from wealthy backgrounds or have parents who were born in a different country². Clearly, despite the diversity of their admissions process and their "race-sensitive admissions programs", these universities are no more able to enfranchise low-income African Americans than the New York specialized high schools. Thus, I maintain that merely changing the admissions process to the specialized high schools will ultimately change nothing. The low percentage of African American and Hispanic students speaks to a wider social problem that needs to be resolved by providing African American, Hispanic, and other disenfranchised students with more resources through which to kindle their interest in education as well as means to maintain that interest. While I am opposed to changing the admissions process, I am not opposed to instituting discovery programs that start as early as elementary school to provide disenfranchised students with a greater means to get the most from a New York City public school education.

Secondly, I argue that the inclusion of additional materials such as grade point averages, essays, teacher recommendations, attendance, and state test scores will make the admissions process a highly variable and deeply subjective process. Just looking at the variety of classes, types of teachers, and varying level of difficulty across middle schools, the meaning of a grade changes drastically, even in the same subject. Not all middle schools were created equal. Some are known for being more difficult and keeping a better standard of academics than others, despite being all part of the same public school system. Therefore, it is very possible that an individual who receives a B+ in a particularly difficult class at a competitive and difficult school would receive an A in a much easier middle school with laxer academic standards. Its clearly not the most "standardized" or even fair way through which to grant admissions. Similarly, essays and teacher recommendations are also highly subjective. An admissions

1 For example, at the University of Pennsylvania, about 7% of the student population is of African American origin

2 http://www.jbhe.com/news_views/56_race_sensitive_not_helping.html

officer who reads one essay may not like it, but another person might. Teacher recommendations are entirely dependent on the teacher's preference for the student and the teacher's ability to write a convincing argument that this student is better than another. As mentioned earlier, like grades, attendance and state test scores are dependent on the effort and time the student can or will place on their education. It is entirely possible that a student can be brilliant, but due to other factors, this does not show up in their grade point average, attendance, and state test scores.

In contrast to all these proposed “additions” to the specialized high school admissions process, the current process which selects students based off just their SHSAT scores is the most objective and fair method upon which to base admission into these specialized high schools. Because the SHSAT does not test on material that is learned in the classroom, it puts every student who wants to take that test at the same basic starting level. To succeed and gain admission, each student must face the same struggle to learn the material. It is this ability to devote oneself, this ability to endure in order to achieve a goal that the SHSAT is testing. I understand that this type of devotion to one's studies is not feasible for all students due to a variety of reasons. However, this means that something must change about our society and the city must better provide for its disenfranchised students so that they may have the chance to devote themselves. By adding all these additional unnecessary, and sometimes harmful, excesses and frills to the admissions process, by lowering the standards of admissions to get into schools like the Bronx High School of Science, the city of New York isn't helping anyone – Not the school and definitely not the students.

Finally, I would like to end with a personal story. I am an alumna of the Bronx High School of Science and a current undergraduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, but I would never have gotten here if it wasn't for Bronx Science and the fact that they base their admissions off of the SHSAT. Looking back at my middle school years, I would not have had a teacher who could have given me a particularly singular recommendation, and while my grades were good, they were nowhere near the top. So, looking at my grade point averages and my rapport with my professors at the time, had the admissions process been based off of these things, I would never have gotten in to one of the specialized high schools and I would not be where I am today. But because Bronx Science was not looking for a student who had wide depth of knowledge or an excellent rapport with their teachers per se, but rather a student, who given the chance, will devote themselves to the pursuit of knowledge, I was able to get in, and in many ways thanks to Bronx Science, I was able to turn my life around. Bronx Science was the best four years of my life, being encouraged to explore the world, pursue the fields that interest me, and being surrounded by people who loved to learn as much as me. Reading this, I hope you understand why I want to preserve my school and the admissions process the way that it is, the best way that it can be.

Sincerely,
Kavya Timmireddy

Dear Council Members,

I would be very interested in speaking at the oversight committee meeting, but my job will not allow participation at the time of the meeting. The specialized high schools of New York City have provided the highest level of education to gifted NYC students for many decades. Admission to these schools has always been based purely on merit. This is why these schools have achieved and maintained national recognition as some of the finest schools in the country. Changing the admission requirements for these schools will by definition lower these high standards. The "Crown Jewels" of the educational system of NYC will be destroyed.

It has need so difficult to keep qualified students in the system of public education in NYC. This change will only serve to drive more of these students into the private school system, as well as to the suburbs. And for the families who can't afford these options, you will have dismantled the last remaining option for obtaining this level of education in NYC.

I am completely in favor of creating additional programs to better prepare students of all backgrounds to reach the academic level necessary to EARN admission to these schools in the same way that everyone else does. But to admit less qualified students (and therefore exclude more qualified students), you will only serve to destroy these marvelous schools. Rather than change the admission criteria, efforts should be made to raise the level of education at the middle and high schools throughout the city.

As a proud graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, I implore you to leave the current admission test as the impartial and objective measure of which students truly deserve admission to these specialized schools.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Dr. Kenneth Citak
Bronx HS of Science
Class of 1978

From: Lauren Coleman-Lochner [<mailto:lsclochner@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 12:28 PM
Subject: Testimony urging a vote against Resolution 442-2014

Respected council members:

My name is Lauren Coleman-Lochner. I am a parent of a current senior and a Stuyvesant graduate, and a former co-president of the Stuyvesant Parents' Association. While Stuyvesant certainly has its flaws, I urge legislators not to tamper with the aspect that is so important to the school: The fact that the actor, the athlete, the chess player, and the politician's child all got into the school by the same measure. Stuyvesant is a very particular type of school, with a heavy emphasis on testing. When the school experimented in the past with lowering cutoffs, students admitted under the lower measure struggled. Using one criterion for admission also creates a very special climate of respect at the school. Every student knows his or her peers earned admission in the same manner.

We all share the goal of increasing the number of underrepresented groups in the school, and Stuy has increased its outreach in recent years, and should do more. However, the solution is not in changing the admissions process. It is in making sure that all children get the rigorous pre-k-through-8 education that my kids were so fortunate to have. Students with that foundation can pass the test and thrive at Stuy regardless of their background.

Nor are Stuyvesant and the tested schools the be-all and end-all. We are really fortunate to have seen the opening of numerous excellent public high schools in recent years, and talented students with various learning preferences and styles now have many compelling choices. We should preserve this diversity and not try to homogenize our successful schools.

When Thomas Jefferson High School in northern Virginia, which was probably Stuyvesant's closest peer, changed its admissions process, the number of remedial courses given went from basically nothing to one-third, according to a Washington Post opinion piece by a TJ teacher that chronicled the decline of the school following the changes. The school, always a contender with Stuy as a top math team, has fallen out of the top 20. A change of this nature would devastate Stuyvesant, which already struggles to secure the resources it needs to meet the demand for advanced classes and research for its students.

Please also note that while there are clearly underrepresented groups at Stuy, it is a highly diverse population, both ethnically and economically. And it is by no means affluent -- a significant percentage of the student body qualifies for free lunch. I urge you to preserve a system that has thrived for decades. In closing, I urge you to vote against Resolution 442-2014. Thank you for your attention.

Hi,

I am your constituent and I urge you to vote NO on Council Resolution 442 - which supports state legislation to scrap the objective Specialized High Schools Admissions Test and substitute other subjective criteria. The current test guarantees that students are selected for admission without favoritism or bias and solely on the basis of merit, that is to say their demonstrated capacity to do the advanced college level coursework required of all students in the specialized high schools.

While I agree that more can be done to improve diversity in the specialized high schools, the proposed legislation (S7738/A9979) is seriously flawed because it fails to tackle the root causes of under representation of African American and Latino students. Please vote NO on Res. 442 and instead work on real solutions that will increase diversity by improving the quality of the education in the Latino and African American communities, improving the Discovery Program for admitting disadvantaged youth as well as providing free test preparation for all who want it.

Simply scrapping the test will not automatically achieve greater diversity at these schools. According to the Daily News the student bodies of NYC's top performing schools using multiple criteria are "whiter and wealthier" than the specialized schools. Moreover, according to the NYC Comptroller, the schools using multiple criteria often fail to follow their stated criteria for selecting students for admission. This means favoritism, bias and fraud in the admissions process cannot be ruled out.

I urge you to vote NO on Res. 442 and instead work to develop a thoughtful solution that these schools - and more importantly, the children of this City - need and deserve.

Sincerely,

Lixu Chen
1751 2ND Ave,
New York, 10128

**Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
New York City Council Education Committee,
Chaired by Council Member Daniel Dromm
Thursday, December 11, 2014**

Testimony by: Lizabeth Sostre
Former Middle School Choice Coordinator, CSD 3
Steering Committee member, Broadway Democrats

Res No. 442

How to increase the diversity of the student population of the specialized high schools is an important goal, but the road to achieve the goal is far from easy. The benefit of using one test for admission is that tests are objective. A student either has the score necessary for admission or does not. Everyone applying has an equal opportunity to gain entrance and the admissions procedure is standardized. Or do they?

In April of 2012 Chancellor Walcott launched DREAM-The Specialized High School Institute (<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2011-2012/DREAM-SHSI.htm>) to address the lack of diversity in the student population in the specialized high schools. It is an excellent move in the right direction. We have not seen the impact of this program because the first group to be admitted to DREAM has not yet taken the admissions exam. Professional test prep has always been a significant obstacle to diversity since those who have the means to hire professional tutors have a distinct advantage over those who do not have the financial means to purchase those services. We have to wait to see how significantly the Chancellor's initiative affects the lack of diversity in the student population.

However there are still other serious issues that are at play. Is the information about DREAM being disseminated to all children? Before DREAM, the applicant pool was composed solely of students whose parents knew about the specialized high schools and/or whose middle schools had guidance counselors who counseled students to take the test based on their academic record. It is my concern that many students who do not have "informed" parents or do not attend schools with adequate guidance counselors will miss the opportunity to apply to DREAM. How do we remedy this?

Guidance counselors in all our middle schools must be trained to identify and encourage potential applicants to apply to DREAM if they meet the financial criteria to take the test for the specialized high schools. That means that counselors in the middle schools must be given the time to do high school articulation. Without counselors whose

job it is to do high school articulation, students from “uninformed” parents will remain uninformed and their children deprived of the opportunity to be accepted to DREAM-SHSI and to take the test for admission to the specialized high schools.

It has been suggested that the current test no longer be the sole determinant for admission. Please remember that if we add report cards, that report cards are very subjective. A 95 in one middle school is not equivalent to a 95 in another middle school. Hopefully with the continued commitment to the Common Core Curriculum, in time we will have a uniform curriculum. That is not true at present. The curriculum varies widely from school to school. I like using portfolios of student work as part of admissions processes; however when the number of applicants is as high as it is for specialized high schools, who is going to review and score all those portfolios? Relying only on report cards and portfolios will not work. Those are too subjective or time-consuming.

I strongly believe that students in middle schools that offer high school algebra courses where students take the HS Regents exam at the end of the 8th grade have more qualified applicants for the specialized high school exams. Much of the test is algebra so the students in accelerated math courses have an advantage. The new Common Core Curriculum in Mathematics does address that to some degree because the 7th grade mathematics curriculum is definitely more rigorous, but this is still a problem. More middle schools need to offer students the option to take accelerated mathematics.

Finally we need to look at the test itself to see if it can be reformed without being diluted. The test is 50% verbal and 50% mathematics. The mathematics section is composed of 50 multiple choice questions. The verbal part is more complicated. It starts with five scrambled paragraphs (10%) and ten logical reasoning questions (10%) and then there is standard reading comprehension (30%). The problem here is that it is close to impossible to do well on the scrambled paragraphs and/or logical reasoning without test prep and lots of practice. Perhaps the Verbal section should be completely reading comprehension without the scrambled paragraphs and logical reasoning. If the test is composed solely of multiple choice reading and multiple choice math and reflects the standardized tests that all students are yearly subjected to, it will provide a greater opportunity for a more diverse student population.

So let me review my main points:

---better dissemination of information regarding DREAM-SHSI, which provides test prep for academically able students who are financially needy

--middle school guidance counselors trained in high school articulation and given the time to provide services

--option to take accelerated math courses in all middle schools and a more accelerated math curriculum for all students (Common Core)

--changing the test itself to reading comprehension and mathematics, eliminating the scrambled paragraph and logical reasoning sections.

|

Dear Ms Viverito,

Thank you your email. Unfortunately I will be out of New York City on business tomorrow and am sorry I will not be able to attend the hearing. As an alumnus of the Bronx High School of Science, I firmly believe that the admission policy for the Specialized High Schools should remain the same. With all of the problems that confront our educational system, our attention should be given directly to where the problems exist, rather than to an area that has proven to be so successful. Bronx Science counts 8 Nobel Laureates among its graduates, a remarkable achievement unequalled by most of our finest universities. Historically the school has evolved over time from all male, to male and female, to a majority of lower to middle class Jewish students, and now to a majority of Asian students. These changes have come about naturally, without any outside attempt to diversify the student population. Black and/or Hispanic students may well become the majority in the future.

I whole heartedly encourage every effort to help the potentially academically gifted student to realize his or her maximum ability. We are making huge strides now beginning with pre K schooling. We still need well constructed schools with cracker jack teachers and guidance counselors who recognize the needs of these special students. These young men and women also need free help in test preparation in order to give them that vital leg up. Changing the admission requirements won't do that. Excellent pre K, elementary schools and middle schools are the ones to do the job.

A lot has been said about the fact that 70% of the students in our public school are black or Hispanic and received 5% and 7% admission to the selective schools respectively. What we need to know is how many students in every group actually took the admission test in order to make a reliable comparison.

It is very difficult to level a playing field in any aspect of our lives.....a strictly colorblind gender, ethnic, religious etc policy is about as fair as we can get. Of course a disadvantaged student has a harder job, but not harder than the students I went to school with.... students who had immigrant parents who did not speak English.... students who worked after school and still did the rigorous homework requirements demanded by Science, and students who went on to college, as I did, and paid their own way by scholarships and jobs. Many colleges at that time had finally

just abandoned the quota systems that we battled against. Are we going back to that?

I want to help.....not by changing school admission requirements but by helping those students to get there. There is zero prejudice in the present system, reverse or otherwise. Let's keep it that way.

Thank you for letting me speak my mind. New York should be proud of these schools, they are the jewels in our crown and open to all.

Respectfully,

Marilyn Abrams, a grateful alum

Thank you for keeping me updated on public oversight hearing on diversity in NYC public schools and changing the admission criteria for specialized high schools.

As a parent of 4 alumni of Staten Island Technical High School , a specialized high school, I am strongly against the resolution proposal to change the admission criteria. Admission to the specialized high schools is merit based and the current test is an objective measure of merit. This resolution is open-ended and would allow too much subjective criteria to be added to the current admission criteria (SHSAT). This could result in a measure for admission that may admit students who are not able to succeed at the high academic level of course work in the specilaized high schools. The test alone remains an objective measure of academic ability. The fact that there are already courses offered to "under-represented" minorities is a sufficient "removal of impediments to diversity". The goal of this resolution is to change the admission criteria and thus results in order to increase diversity in the schools. I strongly feel that diversity should not be the goal of admission criteria for a merit based program. In addition, I feel that changing standards to make diversity a priority in admission policies for a merit based school is the very essence of racism.

Please consider voting no on resolution 442.

Mary Koeth

From: mmbauer4 [<mailto:mmbauer4@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2014 2:15 PM

Subject: Written Testimony in Opposition to Res. No. 442, calling to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

Written Testimony in Opposition to Res. No. 442, calling to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

As a New York City public school parent and NYC public school graduate, I am writing to express my opposition to New York City Council Resolution No. 442, calling for the NYS Legislature & Governor to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

I support the position of The Parent's Association of the Bronx High School of Science, which is noted below.

Cordially yours,
Matthew Bauer
68-20 Manse Street
Forest Hills, NY 11375

The Parents' Association of the Bronx High School of Science opposes S 7738 Felder that proposes changing the mandated admissions process of the specialized high schools in the City of New York. We stand for an admissions process that is a pure meritocracy, with one standard that is transparent and incorruptible. The suggested changes to the admissions process do nothing to address the root cause of inequity in elementary and middle school education. Further, the proposed new admissions criteria are deeply flawed. Disparities in academic outcomes start very early on.

- Using multiple criteria such as a student's GPA assumes that all middle schools are equal. By the Department of Education's own school grading system, this is clearly not the case. The Schools are not equal and therefore, GPAs cannot be compared fairly.

Bronx Science has for over seventy-five years been a home for gifted and hard working students of all backgrounds to attain the American Dream. With a population that is a wonderfully diverse as New York City itself, Bronx Science is a home for students across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

- Bronx Science (and its fellow schools Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech) has a long history of serving immigrant and economically disadvantaged communities
- The current admissions process is color blind and immune from corruption and politics.
- Nearly half of the student body at Bronx are eligible for free or reduced lunch, a metric that captures families that live near or below the poverty line in New York City.
- More than half of families currently at Bronx Science do not speak English in the home at all, including 568 students who are immigrants themselves.

- Our students and their families make tremendous sacrifices to attend Bronx Science, most of whom travel more than an hour each way to get to school.

As parents, we believe strongly in exceptional education for all of our children. The SHSAT is not the cause of the problem, but rather a symptom of an unacceptably flawed and inequitable elementary and middle school education system. We agree that the underrepresentation of the African American and Latino populations needs urgent attention. We believe the following proposals would help address the root causes of underrepresentation of African American and Latino students in the specialized schools while maintaining the incorruptible method now in place.

- Dramatically improve middle and elementary school education for all. This is the number one cause of this issue and must be immediately addressed by the Department of Education. Every child, regardless of ethnicity, deserves an education of equal quality that will inspire each to reach his or her potential.
- Offer the SHSAT to all 8th graders during the school day and eliminate the current process where students have to register for the exam on a Saturday.
- Provide access to free tutoring and test prep programs for any interested student to hone their skills and confidence in taking the exam.

The specialized high schools are the jewels in the crown of our education system. With a myriad of problems facing our public schools today, focusing on schools that are thriving fails to address the root causes of educational inequity. In 1971 our wise state legislators realized that the admissions process for the Specialized High Schools needed to be protected by law from the tides of politics, pandering, and poor planning, passing the Hecht-Calandra Act. Changing a meritocracy and already fair admissions procedure deflects from real failure to fairly educate every student equally and only further hurts all of our children.

As a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, I strenuously object to the proposed admittance 'modifications'. It will result in the dumbing down of all the special schools. Address the issue not the results. Improve the education in the lower and middle schools. Provide extra help for 'promising' students so that they can gain admittance the same way other students do who are not disadvantaged by class or race. I also attended the City College of New York before it was dumbed down by an open enrollment plan. Learn from the past. Do not change the current selection process for the special schools.

Nancy Bender
Bx Science 1958

My name is Neil Cohen and I am a 1978 graduate of the Bronx HS of Science. I am unable to attend the City Council meeting of December 11th. I appreciate the offer to have my remarks included in the record.

The academically rigorous program at Bronx Science was a result of the high admission standards of the school and the competitive student body. The admissions test was and is an important equalizer. Everyone took the same test and was admitted to one of the specialized high schools based solely on their abilities. Lowering the admissions standards of these schools will lower the academic level of the student body and diminish the educational experience of academically gifted and talented students competing with their academic peers.

Diversity is a noble goal. New York City is a diverse place. There are 400 high schools in the city allowing for tremendous racial diversity. Socioeconomic diversity is also important. The Specialized High School Admissions Test facilitates socioeconomic diversity at the specialized high schools. There is too much variation in grading at NYC's junior high schools to realistically use class rank, grades or attendance to impact admission to the specialized high schools. There is no racial or ethnic bias to the test. Every admitted student knows that he or she earned their place.

I urge the council to allow Bronx Science, Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Technical to continue to be places where the brightest students in New York receive challenges that other public high schools can't offer. I urge the council to consider why these three high schools have 14 noble prize laureates as graduates. I urge the council to consider that the enriching experience of these schools is dependent on the admissions process and use of the test. I finally urge the council to consider that by lowering the admissions standards they will be diminishing the educational experience.

Thank you.

Neil B. Cohen, D.C.

From: rkohn@cleantechcorridor.org [<mailto:rkohn@cleantechcorridor.org>]

Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2014 11:19 AM

Subject: Proposed Changes to entrance to special high schools.

I agree that there is not enough diversity in the special high schools but the solution is not to lower the bar. The solution is to fix the system. That is, spend a greater effort to educate our children. Of course that means investing in education and in understanding that a large cohort of New York's student body needs a different program; one that addresses the lack of values given to traditional education--reading writing and arithmetic--in their respective communities. We need special programs to raise the status and value of the kind of education that leads to children wanting to excel in school. .

The question has to be asked why did the Jews yesterday constitute such a large component in these schools and why does the Asian community do so today? Its not about race and its not about intelligence but it is about values. Mostly these kids come from homes which stress the power of education. If we want to have more children from Black and Latino families join them we need to inculcate the power and value of this kind of education not merely devalue it and cheapen it by opening the gates or lowering academic standards.

When Mayor Lindsay led the charge to open up the City University by introducing open-enrollment it did not take long for that institution to sink to oblivion and have its degrees devalued. Now after many years of work the City University is coming back--thank goodness.

With all due respect. New York City High schools have combined for some 30 Nobel prizes. Bronx Science alone has 8. What makes anyone think that the system is broken?

I recall standing in line in a snowstorm several years ago with my child then 12 years young with several thousand other parents and children waiting to get into Hunter's testing. Atth etime I thought since all of tehse children were "invited" to take the test because they had done so well in their respective schools how sad that only 180 of them will get to attend Hunter (mine did not). I thought then and I still think now. The demand is there build more Hunters, more Bronx Science. That is the best solution. After all its much cheaper to spend money educating our children then incarcerating them later in life because they got a crummy watered down degree that was good for no job.

Ran Kohn

917 488 5289

Dear Ms. Mark-Viverito,

Thank you for inviting me to the hearing on diversity in NYC public schools tomorrow. Unfortunately, I cannot get off work to attend but I would like to offer my opinion.

I am a parent of very different children. One did only what he had to to maintain his place on school honor rolls. He ended up graduating Tottenville High School. The other has a drive to excel and go further with an insatiable thirst for the challenge and learning experience offered at our specialized high schools.

I have had experience with both the Catholic high schools (for which there is also an entry exam which is also merit based) and the public school systems having had children in both. My son Robert is currently in the 10th grade at Staten Island Tech. He and all the other students that are enrolled there and in other Specialized High Schools have worked very hard to get a seat at one of these fabulous schools.

Using a test for enrollment to one of these Specialized schools ensures an admissions system free of favoritism and bias since the selection is based solely on merit. **Which means that the individual child must adequately display the capacity to do the advanced level course work which is required of ALL students in Specialized high schools.**

If you change the admissions standards for children who may not have the drive or hunger for the learning experience that current students are reveling in, you are essentially forcing the specialized schools to lower the exceptional bar that they have set for these children to maintain. Thus, they no longer will be **SPECIALIZED** high schools. They no longer become your average NYC Public High School.

I believe that even more racial and ethnic diversity can be achieved at all specialized high schools if the New York City Department of Education improved not only the quality of education provided to students in Latino and African American communities but held the **principals of those filter schools accountable for communciating and enrolling** high achievers in programs that provide free test preparation for all who want it.

Take a walk through our halls at Staten Island Tech, you will be surprised at the ethnic diversity alive and thriving in our school. Basically, what I want to say is if you have a system in place for educating and producing near 100% graduation rates, why are you going to mess with it! There is plenty of merit in the saying "**If its not broke, don't fix it**". It would be a travesty to all students currently enrolled in all 8 specialized high schools in New York City. These are exceptional students who worked hard and passed a fair test to get where they are.

I trust the panel will take this all into consideration and come to the only wise decision to **leave the Specialized High School Admissions Test ALONE!!!**

I would greatly appreciate being kept up to date on this matter.

Sandy Nicosia
Staten Island NY 10312

Dear Ms. Mark-Viverito and members of the City Council,

Each time the controversy over the admissions policy to the NYC specialized high schools makes the news I feel as though the worthiness of the students that walk the halls of these schools needs to be defended. Media coverage implies that wealthy parents have bought their child's seat with expensive test prep. It is simply not true, because a summer of test prep prior to the Specialized High School Admissions Test will not earn a child a seat. Instead, preparation for admission to high school begins well before a student enters middle school. Students that earn a seat in one of the 8 specialized high schools have been preparing for the opportunity for most of their young lives. Some students start their educational careers in Gifted and Talented programs in elementary schools. Other students will attend their local zoned school, which offer enriched curriculum and have a proven success record. Each of these schools has their successes and challenges. Our education system in New York is not perfect and has gaps that need to be closed so the success of our schools will no longer be measured by the zip code in which one lives.

While test prep may provide a small edge, it is the years of dedication and hard work in academic studies that prepare students to take the SHSAT. The Department of Education levels the playing field for underprivileged students by offering two opportunities to prepare and earn access to Specialized High Schools. A 22-month extracurricular program known as DREAM - Specialized High School Institute, is available to eligible 6th grade students with free lunch status, providing rigorous coursework to help students prepare for the Specialized High School Admissions Test. The Summer Discovery Program, gives eligible disadvantaged students of demonstrated high-potential an opportunity to participate in the Specialized High School program. Access and opportunity is available, and certainly could benefit more students if more programs like these were created in all neighborhoods throughout each of the 5 boroughs.

Mayor DiBlasio and Chancellor Farina have already taken positive steps in addressing this problem by making Universal Pre-K available to all 4 year olds and by focusing on improvements in middle-schools. It may take some time to see the results of these initiatives, but I believe they will have a favorable impact.

Our city should work to increase the representation of minority groups within the specialized high schools, not by manipulating the admissions criteria to achieve the desired outcome, but instead by providing all students access to a high quality education in their zoned elementary and middle schools. Doing so will not only help to increase the diversity within the specialized schools, but also maintain high standards, and better prepare all NYC public school students for their high school and post-secondary careers.

Should the consensus of the Council be that a change in the admissions criteria to the Specialized High Schools is necessary I still implore you to reject this resolution. Bill S.7738/A.9979 is filled with flaws that jeopardize the future of these schools. First, there is no specific weight assigned to any of the criteria listed. The bill should be rewritten with specific percentages assigned to all admissions criteria, and the SHSAT should have the majority of the weighting. Secondly, subjective criteria should be removed from the bill. A student should not lose points for attendance because access to transportation is not equal throughout the city. Some students who choose to attend magnet programs in schools well beyond their zoned school will be penalized because it is not safe for them to travel to school on days when there is inclement weather. School grade point averages are subjective as well. Even within the same middle school, two different teachers of the same subject can have a different grading standard.

I believe that a better bill can be written with the input of all interested parties that will achieve the desired outcome while maintaining high standards.

Respectfully,

Daniela Schroeder

From: Nachman, Sherrie [<mailto:snachman@kpmg.com>]

Sent: Monday, December 08, 2014 10:11 AM

Subject: diversity resolution hearing on December 11

I am the mother of twin boys in 6th grade in a New York City public middle school. While I do support diversity in our schools, I do not support [S.7738](#) / [A.9979](#), to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools. In my opinion, that resolution would replace an effective and objective criteria with an unpredictable and largely subjective set of criteria. In order to increase diversity in our specialized high schools, it would be much more effective to actively recruit applicants from diverse racial and economic backgrounds and to offer them assistance with test preparation. (Khan Academy is doing this for free for college applicants). I also believe that the new law would be subject to multiple lawsuits and would have a good chance of being found unconstitutional by New York State courts. Thank you for considering my opinion.

Sherrie Nachman

T: 212-954-3952

M: 646 483 7622

F: 212 954 5112

Education committee

To Council Member Dromm and Education Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed Resolution 453-2014.

Having been a product of the civil rights movement that included bussing in NYC to achieve racial diversity during my elementary school years I find it very disheartening that, as progressive as our nation has become, we are now regressing to the conversation of diversity as being a viable solution to the achievement gap in communities of color. Jim Crow laws prohibited Black and Brown children from attending schools of their choice based on the color of their skin. These laws no longer bind us in relation to school choice, but due to steering laws and red lining of communities of color where groups of people of the same ethnicity were, and are relegated to specific areas, producing black and brown neighborhoods hence black and brown schools. These neighborhoods have thriving families that reside within these borders and, quite frankly, are not truly convinced that re-zoning schools to have their children travel far from their neighborhoods for the sole purpose of diversity is the answer to the problems that their zoned schools face. Socio-economic disparities will not be solved by relocating children of color for eight hours a day and placing them in middle to upper income environments then releasing them back into the same poverty stricken environment after three o'clock. This only manifests feelings of inferiority, use education as a means of escape and perpetuate the myth that their inherent culture is one to be shamefully denied and to aspire to become "like" the dominant entitled group in which they will be subjected to daily. The benefit to the white student will be one of learned benevolence and sympathy.

A better plan of action would be to address the root cause that has been allowed to fester and inundate the public school systems in these communities to widen the achievement gap which is poverty. Since there is an expediency to address the decline of graduation rates, college readiness, etc., the community at large cannot wait for the state of poverty to be eliminated on a community level. The issues of jobs, housing, health care and education will take a concerted effort to move away from doctrinaire practices and embrace functional tools needed to solve these problems. We ask for many solutions in our community as far as education, but we are offered diversity.

Waiting for poverty to be eradicated in our community to address the issue of education is unrealistic but if making a change in the lives of the children that live under these conditions is the goal, then there are steps that can be taken to allow them to be well learned, culturally rich, socially conscious, morally upright and producers of strong communities. Increasing culturally relevant social workers and counselors, professional development workshops facilitated by The People's Institute for Undoing Racism, partnering with community organizations, preventative services, drug prevention programs, financial literacy programs, mental health organizations, tutoring, male mentoring programs, juvenile prison prevention and cultural organizations throughout the NYC area when aligned with those at risk

groups of children within the public school system would better serve the community. The time and effort taken for re-zoning, admissions overhaul, etc. would be better served investing in the wealth that the communities themselves have to offer.

Is anyone willing to do the work or is it easier to put a proverbial band aid on a problem that will only reach a few to further alienate them from the communities in which they live.

Respectfully,

Sheryl Davis

345 Clinton Ave 11E

Brooklyn, N.Y 11238

[Suggested Resources:](#)

The Fatherhood Initiative/ Brooklyn Fatherhood

Ifetayo

My Brother's Keeper

Safe In My Brothers/Sisters Arms (SIMBA, SIMSA)

The Blue Nile

Community Partnership of ENY

Crisis Intervention- Henry Street Settlement

Children's Aid Society

Community Service Society

The Bowery Mission

Family Youth Center

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your email. I am sorry that I cannot attend this hearing because I have to work, but please let them know that I support the Staten Island High School's action.

Thanks again.

Sincerely

Xiaozhong Xiong

From: Adele Doyle
Subject: Please stop Resolution 442

Dear Councilman,

Our family is asking for your support to stop Thursday's Resolution 442 from passing. As parents of four children in the New York City Public School system, we feel that dismantling the standardized test admission process for Specialized High Schools is a grievous fault which should not be allowed to occur.

The fallacy of this new leg up model is in that instead of promoting equality, it further segregates our students and links ability or disability to meet a standardized measurement to skin color. Instead of encouraging achievement, it promotes mediocrity.

To claim ethnicity as a qualifying factor for a handicapped admission score is a misconceived notion of productive educational reform. Instead of race, why not claim poverty, but before you do, explain why 60% of my sons' Middle School qualifies for free lunch and yet continues year after year to excel academically. If reform is required, reform the schools. Academic rigor and student accountability are the answer, not breaking the only standardized measure of top academic performance in a DOE which focuses more and more on lack of achievement while denigrating it's highest performers.

The standardized test works best (not perfectly no, but best) because it is standardized and not socially promoting.

The test, despite misconception, is open to all. Educate parents to avail themselves of that opportunity. Do not take from my children the opportunity they have worked so hard to achieve. Do not take from them what they know is within their reach, not because of the color of their skin, but because of hard work; not only hard work but their understanding that they matter as much as anyone else, because they studied, because they learned, and took numerous tests across the curriculum which proved that and prepared them for the one test.

But finally, yes, they know they will be subjected to the same test that everyone else will have had an opportunity to take.

What message do you want to send to our students? High Achievement matters. Send that message. Please stop Resolution 442.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

Adele J. Doyle
Teacher and Mom to
Thomas age 12, William age 11, James age 9 and Angelina age 7

Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Members of the City Council:

I am writing to you to implore you to vote NO on Resolution 442 which will alter the admissions process for the Specialized High Schools for the following reasons:

1) A multiple criteria admissions process may not (and depending on the criteria most certainly will not) alter the under-represented populations that the change in procedure claims seek to enhance. The Comptroller's office report (http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/MH12_053A.pdf) found that nearly 80% of screened schools with multiple criteria could not even explain how they ranked students. Furthermore, there are examples where multiple criteria admission schools results in gender inequity and no tremendous change in ethnic demographics. To illustrate this point, one can look at the demographics of Townsend Harris High School. The current student population is 70% female (which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it does make you wonder why the criteria results are so skewed) and only 6.18% Black and 11.57% Hispanic which is far below the overall NYC DOE demographics of 28.3% Black and 40.2% Hispanic.

In short, where is the data that shows that a multiple criteria admissions process will result in the desired effect of greater diversity?

2) The test is not biased. It is completely objective where answers are either correct or incorrect. Students identities are unknown to the machine that calculates the scores.

While there is no denying that Black and Hispanic students are not performing well on the test, the test itself is not the problem. Lack of preparation is the issue. I have a suggestion to remedy that issue. How about providing resources for middle schools to run SHSAT prep programs in their own buildings? It would be a matter of providing materials, teacher training and funds for principals to pay teacher's for morning or after school programs.

If schools in high Black and Hispanic neighborhoods had the support and resources to properly prepare students for this intense and rigorous exam the number of students in each ethnic group would increase thereby increasing diversity in the Specialized High School.

3) The test does the job it is supposed to do. The goal of the Specialized High Schools is to bring together exceptional students to do exceptional work. The test is the means to that end. Any change to the objectivity of the admissions criteria would diminish the caliber of students at these institutions.

In closing, I would like to state that I have been involved in the DREAM - SHSI program and it's previous iteration, SHSI, since 2007. I have spent many hours prepping students for the exam. I also am the parent of a Brooklyn Tech graduate. I truly feel that testing is the best option for selecting students to attend these prestigious schools. Everyone is troubled by the lack of diversity in these institutions. That being said, we need to ensure that we are not just making changes for the sake of making changes and HOPING that those changes yield the desired results. If the changes being proposed cannot be **guaranteed** to result in more diversity (and they

cannot), then the answer is to bring diversity by better preparing the students. That can be achieved by promoting preparation programs in the middle schools.

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Sincerely,

Aleccia Braithwaite
Physical Educator - IS 220
DREAM - SHSI (Site 10)
Parent of Brooklyn Tech Grad (Class of 2014)

12/11/14

Amy Stuart Wells, Professor Teachers College, Columbia University

Testimony for to the New York City Council Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools and Proposed Int. No. 511-A and Resolution 453.

I am testifying in favor of the proposed legislation, Int. No. 551-A, and the proposed Resolution 453 because of my expertise in areas of school diversity and desegregation.

I argue there are three main reasons why the leadership in New York City – the City Council, the Mayor, and the Chancellor – should support and implement these proposed policies:

- Demographics
- Data
- Doing the Right Thing

1. The changing **U.S. demographics** across urban-suburban boundary lines in many metro areas, including New York, open new possibilities for achieving racially and economically integrated schools that prepare children for the 21st Century

For the first time in our nation’s history, White students no longer constitute a majority of k-12 public school enrollments; in fact, less than half of the total U.S. population will be White, non-Hispanic by 2042.

In the last 30 years both city neighborhoods and suburbs have grown increasingly racially diverse, as more adult White “children of the suburbs” have moved into the cities their grandparents fled decades ago and families of color populate inner-ring suburbs.

The new racial makeup of the country and the city-suburban migration patterns have contributed to changing racial attitudes: opinion poll data reveal that Millennials (ages 18-34) are more accepting of people of multi-racial families, neighborhoods, and schools.

The rapid pace and confluence of these circumstances opens a rare and finite moment of opportunity for fostering school environments that adequately prepare children for the 21st century by providing the educational and social benefits of diversity.

2. **Data** and analysis – basically, reams of social science evidence – support the goal of creating and sustaining more racially diverse public schools and communities

Research evidence on Why Separate is Inherently Unequal in terms of material and structural conditions of public education is ample. Structural Issues examined in this research include Disparities in Access, Opportunities, and Resources across racially isolated educational settings. Inter-generational legacies of unequal educational opportunities, etc. Newer research has examined the self-fulfilling prophecy of high minority and low ses schools as “bad” once they experience white flight, and “good” teachers leave, the local tax base erodes, etc.

We also have a large body of evidence on the Academic and Mobility Outcomes of Desegregation for “Minority” Students, which include strong positive effects of desegregation on black and Hispanic students’ Achievement Levels, Graduation Rates, College Going Rates, Income and Professional Mobility in more racially diverse and predominantly white and more affluent schools

Since the mid- to late-1990s, there is a rapidly growing body of evidence on the Social and Attitudinal Outcomes of Diverse Schools for ALL Students. These include improved Racial Attitudes, Ability to Get Along with Others, Comfort Level with Difference and Cultural Boundary Crossing, Deeper Understanding of Complex Issues, Ability to Examine from Many Perspectives, Reduction in Stereotype Threat related to Critical Mass

A smaller, but interesting and important body of research explores How Diverse Educational Settings Enhance Learning and Pedagogy. This fledgling body of research begins to ask questions too long ignored in research on desegregation and divers schools: What are the conditions and variables that help educators to assure better educational outcomes for all students? What are the cultural as well as instructional dimensions of diverse educational settings in which all students feel valued and thrive? What evidence do we have that of the relationship between institutional and classroom level diversity and cross-racial understanding and the breakdown of stereotypes and microaggressions? What do we know about the relationship between diversity in educational settings and these outcomes? What factors are key for this connection?

3. **Doing the right thing** amid demographic changes is not always easy; schools and communities on the front lines of demographic change face significant obstacles to realizing these benefits. What is needed is a new vision, new

leadership, and a new set of policies to sustain and support schools that are becoming more diverse through community-level migration patterns.

Our twentieth-century civil rights policies developed to address racial segregation in housing and education are not only under attack; they are also outdated in light of the profound demographic and attitudinal changes.

Urban history suggests that when a racial group begins migrating to a new community, the existing population is likely to flee or be pushed out, setting into play a perpetual cycle of segregation and resegregation.

At the heart of these cycles are public schools with educators who are rarely prepared to facilitate the “educational benefits” of a diverse student body – a concept supported by research and the federal courts.

In several local communities within NYC, where demographics are changing, strong public policies to support and sustain vibrant and instructionally strong public schools can make all the difference in the world. Do we have the leadership to find out?

Hello, my name is Ayanna Behin, and among other things, I am a parent of 2 children who attend Arts & Letters public K-8 school in Ft. Greene.

I am here asking that the City Council work with A&L and other schools in the NYC school system to increase diversity in our public schools. First by giving Arts & Letters permission to set aside seats for 40 percent low income students in the incoming K class after sibling and inclusion preferences are taken into account. And second, that you allow the sibling preference to extend to the current A&L middle school students.

Today A&L is one of the most diverse schools in the city and we appreciate what this diversity gives to our children daily in their understanding of themselves and the world, as well as in their accumulation of skills as classroom learners. We do not want to lose this diversity that we value so highly. And we must be able to take steps today to ensure its diversity tomorrow. The rapidly changing demographics of our neighborhood require us to make a conscious effort to keep our school diverse.

A&L is in District 13, we have seen the success of PS133 and our CEC in using this set aside to deal with issues of segregation in our schools. We too want that 40 percent set aside conscious choice and as a K-8 school, we need to make sure that the sibling preference applies to the entire K-8 population.

Thank you.

You already know how important diversity in a school and in the classroom is to boosting achievement for all students.

Exposure to other races, socioeconomic levels, skill levels, physical abilities is the one thing that has always given this city an edge in the world of ideas and problem solving.

A&L has 493 students, or close to 300 families. We sent a petition to our families yesterday and we now have 132 signatures. The petition reads in part:

"1. Thank you for undertaking a hearing on the resolutions proposed to address the critical issue of diversity in our city's schools.

2. We, the undersigned parents of the A&L community, are extremely eager to see increases in movement at the NYC Department of Education to ensure that all NYC schools reflect the diversity of the city in their enrollment, and that our school be supported in efforts to reserve space for Black and Latino students and students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

3. We are eager, as a school community, to educate and engage our families in understanding how such policies can benefit the learning of all students enrolled in our school. "

With your permission, we would like to submit our petition along with a paper by The Century Foundation "Boosting Achievement by Pursuing Diversity. "

Thank you.

I am a constituent of Council Member Levine's and my son is a 9th grader at the High School of American Studies at Lehman College (HSAS). At HSAS, one of the city's tremendous specialized high schools, a conversation has been ongoing throughout the school community for over a year about our regrettable loss of diversity over time.

Generally *and* with regard to increasing school diversity, I strongly support the call for the city to improve our regular public elementary and middle schools so that each child finishes 8th grade having had similarly solid and enriched preparation for high school. In addition, I endorse now-dormant city programs that find middle schoolers who might need a little extra support to excel during the admissions process for selective- and other high schools.

I believe that the above can go hand-in-hand with using the SHSAT to place students in specialized high schools. Increased diversity may even be a result. It has certainly not been adequately demonstrated to me that switching away from the SHSAT to a multiple measures system will get high schools the increased diversity we would like to see.

That said, I can only support ongoing admissions by test if the city begins to make a longer-term investment in young kids in every neighborhood:

- The DOE should undertake intense efforts through networks and superintendents to inform parents and students of the SHS option and should re-train guidance counselors, as needed, on all aspects of exmissions.
- The city should look to identify and replicate best practices at the underperforming middle schools that somehow manage to send a child to a specialized high school every year.
- The city should try automatically signing all 8th graders up to take the SHSAT and giving them practice materials
- SHSAT preparation should be offered in every one of the city's free middle school afterschool programs.
- The city must work with current high school educators and principals to refine the SHSAT to eliminate any potential areas of bias or exclusion and to make its content more reflective of the skills taught in/required at specialized schools.
- The ideas of automatically giving every public middle school valedictorian a specialized seat offer and of setting aside a small percentage of seats for school-based, portfolio admissions should be further explored.

I believe that creating a larger, qualified applicant pool through better K-8 schools, family outreach, guidance counselor training, and targeted student support efforts, would be more beneficial to the kids and ultimately to school diversity than would initiating a more subjective admissions system.

Thank you.

Beth Servetar
219 W. 106th St. #5e NY NY 10025

December 10, 2014

In Defense of the Specialized High School Entrance Examination (Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech). I urge you to vote no on Resolution 0442-2014 and Resolution 0453-2014.

1) Diversity

A recent New York Times article (R. Kahlenberg's op-ed, 6/22/14) shows clearly disproportionate representation of African-Americans and other students of color at Stuyvesant, which many blame on the entrance examination, arguing that it unfairly favors certain verbal traditions and economic echelons. There are two reasons why eliminating or devaluing the test is not the way to promulgate diversity at Stuyvesant. First, if African-Americans and other minorities in New York City public schools are not being prepared for the exam, that is a failing of our school system. Many Harlem and Bronx students, for example, report being surprised by the Stuy test – they realized that they had not been properly warned and prepared. Tutors and teachers in all school districts have a responsibility to accept and embrace opportunity for their students. Stuy alums have also offered to help rectify this unequal preparation.

Secondly and most importantly, elite public schools have always offered an opportunity untarnished by favoritism of any kind, and this has proven a rare find for minority students. The specialized schools test has been unique in its resistance to favoritism, nepotism, and cronyism, offering a shining example of equal opportunity (as Cassavetes' famous film *Shadows* shows). Minorities who have attended Stuyvesant can point to a credential that spells excellence: it is an achievement that cannot be traced to any kind of prejudice, favorable or derogatory.

2) Public School Flight

Private schools have come to recognize diversity as a value in itself as well as a component of comprehensive learning; they have begun to offer scholarships to bright minority students. Although the increased opportunity might have a very slight impact on economic imbalance, it also has a more substantial institutional impact on the public school system. For years, top public schools provided access to quality programs and a diverse peer group – a unique social and intellectual opportunity. As schools like Dalton, Chapin, and Andover skim top minorities, however, our public school system suffers. Elite public schools are the only answer to this weakening of public education's peer discourse.

When top students leave the public school system, they eliminate the intellectual diversity of our melting pot, choosing instead to embrace a culture of economic success. Who can blame them? The unfortunate result is that our public schools prepare students only to join an underclass. As scarcity increases our national dependence on meritocratic educational standards, an intentional move to weaken public schools (by removing the exams that would allow a public-school elite option) exacerbates the cultural, economic, and intellectual chasm between haves and have-nots. Moreover, public school-educated intellectuals offer a perspective that is sorely lacking in other elite institutions. One need look no further than Attorney General Eric Holder and Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan to see how public school testing has fostered the development of individuals who share and understand this perspective. If you do away with top public school choices (and their potential effect on the public school community), a few public school students will still succeed, but only by **escaping** the public system.

3) Fairness to outliers: a commitment to difference

There are other admission criteria that can ensure excellence, some will argue. Grades and

portfolios are oft-cited possibilities for determining entrance; such approaches also rely on teacher recommendations, overtly or implicitly. But this is precisely what the Stuy test circumvents, definitively and effectively. Gaining entrance to Stuyvesant is not like winning a popularity contest or running for office (unlike most awards and privileges in New York City, unfortunately). Accepting criteria that require teacher endorsement undermines the principle of fairness to those who are different.

The first educational reality that Stuy kids know, especially if they have attended public schools (often with up to 35 or more classmates in each grade), is that not every teacher will have the same time to engage intellectually with their unique interests. In many cases, gifted students will have abilities that match their teacher's or the teacher will simply be unprepared to encourage a student's area of strength. How do public school teachers deal with this? It seems clear, both logically and experientially, that the answer depends on whether a certain teacher likes a certain kid.

Think about it. When someone is your intellectual equal (at half your age), it can be intimidating. It takes a leap to accept that kid and push her forward, to encourage her success. Of course, teachers will say: "But that's why I became an educator." Even when this is true, recognizing one's limitations and the boundaries of intellectual authority is a complex personal process. It might be easier with cute kids, nice kids, kids whose success comports with one's social and economic political agenda (prejudices that are different for every teacher, and often unconscious). The fact is that smart kids fight these biases in public school all the time, and public school testing offers a safety valve that rewards achievement despite teacher bias and unacknowledged favoritism. Why remove such a safety valve? A friend of mine from elementary school, for example, always (inadvertently) used words his teachers never knew. He got terrible grades right up until he took the Stuy test, partly because his teachers resented him (perhaps others were slightly better at avoiding his social pitfalls – but why should success in middle school be determined by one's sensitivity to a teacher's emotional eccentricities?). He is now a successful lawyer, despite elementary school report cards full of N's and U's.

4) Difference can lead to excellence

By catching unpopular or strangely socialized kids, testing also adds to the intellectual diversity of an academic discourse. If we trust teacher recommendations and the portfolios teachers choose to help kids build, we could easily create a pool of well-adjusted students devoid of social outliers. But outliers, with their unique perspectives, are famous for scientific innovation. Those whose genius is often difficult to predict (like Einstein's) may include first generation Asian students, culturally isolated Jewish students (like generations before them), or perhaps increasingly, ghetto-bound African-American or Latino/a students with few social influences outside their neighborhoods. Their unique cultural experiences may prejudice people (within their communities, in their schools, and in the larger job market) against them, and may make their social participation awkward. If they receive equal preparation however, and their strengths show up on the entrance exams, these outliers may offer unpredictable contributions, the kinds of insights science schools are designed to produce.

Bill Kroeger
Stuyvesant HS, 1992
Carleton College, 1996
SUNY New Paltz, (MA) 2014

From: Binmei Moses

Dear City Council Members,

I am living in Staten Island as a parent of an S.I Tech school student. I strongly oppose this act. The reason being that this is actually discrimination in itself- certain people can get in with lower grades than others. These Specialized High Schools are the pearl of the city, and the pride of the city. With the new act, it will tarnish these schools. In fact, the minority students of these schools think that it's a good idea to admit a student based solely on the test because it's a fair game for everybody who has the ability. Thanks.

Sincerely,

M. Moses

Dear Speaker Mark-Viverito:

I am a graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School.

For many years, Brooklyn Tech has admitted students solely on the basis of the Specialized High School Admissions Test.

This test is color-blind, race-blind, ethnicity-blind and now, gender-blind as well. There are no other criteria for admission, nor should there be.

Brooklyn Tech had a New York City championship football team, but the test didn't care if you could play football or not. The test only cared about the quality of your brain.

Sabotage this test with "other criteria" and you will eviscerate the best public high schools in the country.

Sincerely yours,

Bruce P. Reiter, M.D.

From: claire bienen

Subject: Proposed Changes to the Specialized High Schools Admissions

As a parent of a student at Bronx Science, I would like to submit my strong opposition to the proposal to change from a single objective test for admission criteria to the SHS. I don't disagree that the current statistics of racial breakdowns at the Specialized High Schools is very disturbing but changing the admissions criteria won't fix this problem and will rid NYC of basically the only purely transparent high school admission process that now exists.

Coming from a District 2 middle school, I was appalled at the process of admission to the selective screened schools. Those schools used multiple criteria and none of it was transparent. As the recent Controller's audit showed the process was rife with corruption. Who did the parents know, did the parents serve on the PA. etc... I could go on and on. It was not always about the strongest student by any means. GPAs are not objective. Grades vary hugely from school to school. There is much subjectivity in teacher grading unfortunately- even something that seems harmless such as giving extra credit for helping a teacher clean up a room actually is unfair when the GPA is then used for admissions to selective high schools. That is no longer a fair assessment of a students academic abilities. Essays are not objective nor are interviews. As a parent having gone through the high school application process there was at least some comfort in knowing that there was one set of schools where whatever the outcome was the process was transparent and everyone was subjected to the same admission standard. The Specialized schools are highly successful and something to be proud of on many levels. The truth is the NYC public school system overall is failing many, many children by not providing a quality education from K-12. This is the hard truth- prepare all the students well enough to compete for admission to selective high schools. Have more excellent schools available to all children. These are the hard fixes. Changing a test or an admission procedure is an easy fix and a smokescreen for the huge problems that are really at the core of this issue.

Respectfully,
Claire Bienen

Claire Bienen

From: Crystal Velasquez

Subject: Written testimony for the record at Thursday's hearing on 0442

Please Vote NO on Resolution 442

I graduated from Stuyvesant High School in 1993, and even then I was one of not very many Latinos at the school. But more than two decades later, the number of black and Latino students is even lower, which concerns me. Although I have considered the alternatives, I no longer believe that getting rid of the admissions test as the sole criteria of admission is the answer to creating more diverse specialized schools. After all, based on the requirements the bill proposes, I don't think I would have made the grade, and I would have missed out on an educational experience that proved to be transformative. Especially for students who come from disadvantaged areas or who are facing tremendous personal challenges, there are any number of reasons why their grade point averages may not be the highest in the class, or why their attendance record may not be perfect. And speaking only for myself, there is no way my family could have afforded to hire private tutors for me. In fact, had my family remained in the Bronx, where I had been living prior to fourth grade, I doubt I would have even heard of Stuyvesant or the admissions test. It was my good fortune to have moved to Flushing, Queens, where many of my classmates had been preparing for the test for years, and where the school curriculum supported our chances for admission. I believe if that were the case in every neighborhood, if awareness of and free preparation for the test were increased, and if things like the Discovery program were reinstated, the numbers of black and Latino students at specialized schools like Stuyvesant would rise once again. The requirements the bill proposes assumes that all things are equal at the middle school level, and that all students have the same circumstances and opportunities to succeed, which, unfortunately, is simply untrue. I now work at one of the largest book publishing companies in the world and have published books of my own. I can honestly say that Stuyvesant played a big role in my future success, and I would hate to see generations of black and Latino students miss out on that experience.

Thank you,
Crystal Velasquez

Delphina Feige
December 11, 2014

SHSAT Testimony

As a 2013 graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School, the proposed legislation to revise the admission process into an elite Specialized High School is a personal matter. Any individual — current student, faculty, or those who have graduated as myself and my father have — can attest that the Tech community is a family. From the moment we step through those doors, to walking through the hall of distinguished alumni, to the final goodbyes at graduation, the message that we are walking in the footsteps of legends is ingrained in our minds.

Tech is a school unlike any other. Despite the rigorous curriculum and demanding academics, the real lessons went beyond the classroom. At my four years at Tech I learned more than just the quadratic equation, how to describe hydrogen bonding, what year the Roman Empire fell, and the various forces of evolution. Tech has given each of its graduates more than anything the opportunity to make connections and meet people from all walks of life. The four years I had at that school have taught me more about who I am in the world around me than any guru could. The opportunity to broaden my horizons and recognize the world from a different perspective has been a huge part of my maturity. Even more so, a fundamental part of Tech is the Alumni Foundation. Each year thousands of dollars are donated in providing the current and future students with the necessary resources to not just learn in a 21st century classroom, but to extend that learning into the real world. Countless times there have been internship opportunities and job fairs. These fiscal and personal responsibilities are what make those four years special.

I talk about all of this to say that a successful school depends not only on the types of students but the community supporting them. To have a great Alumni Foundation, you first need great students. But even before the students we need great parents. Schools need parents who are educated, involved, and active in their child's success. It is imperative that parents are educated about the types of schools available and ultimately choose one that best fits their child's needs. We have the New York City high school handbook as well as the various high school fairs. These resources are indeed helpful but now parents face the dilemma of whether or not to send their kid to (a) the zoned school and get mediocre grades (b) the zoned school and rigorously compete for honors and advanced courses (c) pay for private education or (d) take the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). Parents know full-well that if there is a red line to get into that school they should do anything in their power to prepare. For those parents that are just as engaged as their children are about learning, they have the power to access and even advocate for tutoring centers, online programs, workbooks and other helpful resources to achieve academic success.

It is not the exam itself but what parents and students are doing to prepare for it. The SHSAT is a test of endurance and it effectively screens out those who did not put in the proper dedication and effort. If one did not try hard to get into the school in the first place, it is simply impossible to do well academically once he or she is enrolled. Congratulations on getting good grades and having enthusiasm in the classroom. Now envision five thousand students just as passionate. Grades, behavior, and interest are in no way an indicator of how well you can adapt

to an accelerated and competitive environment where everyone is just as smart and passionate about learning as you are.

Point blank the SHSAT prepares you for the real world. In other words, get ready to prepare and compete if you want the golden ticket. Metaphorically speaking, every child should have the opportunity to purchase the chocolate bar and win the golden ticket whether or not they purchase one, twenty, or none at all; however, certain kids should not be given the golden ticket just because they could not afford to purchase the candy.

The students, graduates and alumni who are part of the Tech family are there because they put in the work before, during, and after walking through those doors. The two hour train obstacles just to get to class on time, the informative lectures, the heated discussions, the active club meetings, the intense sports rivalries, the sleepless nights doing homework, and challenging exams did not choose us. We chose them.

Testimony of Dennis D. Parker

Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools and

Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res.453 and Res. 442

City Council's Education Committee

December 11, 2014

Good morning Chairman Dromm and members of the City Council's Education Committee. My name is Dennis Parker and I am the Director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Racial Justice Program. I speak today on behalf of the ACLU and the New York Civil Liberties Union in support of proposed legislation designed to promote diversity in education in New York City.

I have for the last twenty-five years litigated school desegregation cases throughout the United States. During that period, I have been puzzled and embarrassed by the fact that, despite their history of legally mandated racial segregation, the schools in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and other southern states are far less segregated than the schools in my own native New York.

One school desegregation from another state in the north holds lessons which may be relevant to New York City as it considers way to address the extremely high level of segregation in its schools. In *Sheff v. O'Neill*, a group of lawyers including ones from the ACLU and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund challenged racial and ethnic isolation in schools in Hartford, Connecticut, whose schools were over 90% Latino and Black while in the immediately surrounding suburbs many of schools were overwhelmingly white. Connecticut's highest court found that the maintenance of segregated schools violated that state's constitutional guarantee of equal education opportunity stating "[i]n order to provide an adequate or proper education, our children must be educated in a non-segregated environment." In so holding, the Court specifically cited the importance of preparing children to live and work in an increasingly diverse society and global economy. In the years following the decision, many of the concerns raised about New York City were raised as explanations for segregation in the Hartford Metropolitan region. Housing segregation, the strong preference for neighborhood schools by parents and the fact that there were numerous political entities involved were factors invoked as barriers to achieving substantial levels of desegregation. Despite these barriers, there has been some success in breaking down the racial and ethnic isolation and poverty concentration that characterized the region. Although progress has been slow since the Court's decision in 1996, today nearly fifty percent of the Hartford-resident school children of color attend desegregated schools. Significantly, changes in the degree of racial segregation only occurred when a comprehensive plan was implemented that clearly stated a goal of creating diverse schools, that sought to coordinate efforts between the twenty-three wholly separate

municipalities, that carefully examined all programs to determine how different programs and policies contribute to racial and ethnic isolation and, perhaps most importantly, created clear goals and timetables for changing long entrenched segregation. Issues in the implementation of desegregation efforts continue to be raised and much remains to be done. But without those important first steps, which resemble in some ways the proposals being considered today by New York City, even the limited progress which has occurred thus far would have been impossible.

For the Connecticut students who were affected by efforts to reduce racial and ethnic isolation, the benefits associated with attending diverse schools are, for the first time, a reality. Significantly, these students performed extremely well when compared with the state average for all students and particularly well in relation to the Hartford students of color who are not yet in diverse school children. The students show higher test scores in every subject, including reading, writing, math, and science, significantly exceeding state proficiency standards (and with a substantial number of students meeting or exceeding state academic “goals”). New York City’s students are no less deserving of the opportunity to reach their potential in diverse schools of every kind, including in the city’s specialized high school).

New York City has long prided itself on its racial and ethnic diversity. That diversity has led to the economic progress, artistic innovation and overall high quality of life that makes New York City one of the greatest, most exciting cities in the world. That same diversity is a potential educational resource which has, sadly, been squandered for far too long. We can and must use that resource to prepare our city’s children to reach the highest level of achievement of which they are capable and, by doing so, benefit themselves, this great city and the country as a whole. For these reasons, we fully support these three resolutions.

Hello

. This is further to my letter to the Speaker regarding Resolution 442. Diversity should not be the focal point of any activity. We do not seek it out in sporting activities, whether the sport is golf, basketball, football, tennis or even yachting. We seek to obtain the “best” for each sport. We want our teams to win. We want to root for their success. Why should not the same rules apply to academia? Those more qualified should be given the opportunity to find ways to cure cancer or improve life in general for all of us on earth. Let us continue to test to get the best.

Sincerely

Douglas Buck

Douglas Buck, C.P.A.

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December 11, 2014 NYC Education Committee Hearing regarding short-sighted and imprudent
Resolution 442-to support eliminating the SHSAT as the sole admissions criteria for NYC
Specialized High Schools

Chair Dromm, ~~Members of the Committee~~, Councilmember Lander, Good ~~Morning~~ Afternoon,
evening. I am Elizabeth Eilender and am here on behalf of my grandfather, Stuyvesant Class of
1938, my father, Brooklyn Tech Class of 1960 and my daughter, who is currently a senior at
Council Member Chin's alma mater, Bronx Science. Chair Dromm and Councilman Lander,
thank you for being here so late in the day. I am disappointed that other committee members are
not present to hear my testimony and testimony of others in the community, but nonetheless,
thank you both.

The proposed bill in the state legislature creates more problems than it
solves. Notably there is scant input here from any current administrators or
faculty from the specialized high schools clamoring for change in the admissions
process. In fact, they have been conspicuously silent.

The proposed changes to the admissions process fail to address the root of
the problem which is a systematic failure in K-8, particularly in the middle
schools. Changing the admission process to include multiple measures in an
attempt to correct the low numbers of Black and Hispanic students is attacking
the issue from the wrong end and in doing so, discriminates against Asian students
and may in fact be illegal.

As I have been told by guidance counselors in the specialized high schools,
the problem is in the elementary and middle schools. They ask, "what is going on
in K-8?" Why is it that the black and Hispanic children in many communities
cannot perform well on the SHSAT?

I have also been told that enrichment programs are non-existent in many
schools and even in those that have so-called programs, the smarter kids are put to
work "teaching" the other kids and are even bullied as it's "not cool to be smart."

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I was stunned to learn this morning from Councilmember Rose that she has ZERO enrichment or gifted programs in her entire district. How is that possible? That has to change. More must be done for enrichment and test preparation in these underserved communities.

The effect of changing the admissions requirements without first addressing the failures in the elementary and middle schools will have a ripple effect. It will not only stigmatize those students who are accepted as it may be questioned why or how they got in but also college admissions offices will take notice. I have been told that they would likely no longer consider a NYC specialized high school diploma with the same regard or value. Now, a diploma from one the NYC specialized schools is a badge of honor. Professionals, CEO's, Nobel Prize winners, all have their specialized high schools on their resumes. As my daughter says, "it's a thing, mom."

In addition, the proposed process is woefully vulnerable to manipulation, cronyism and fraud. Can't you imagine, Chair Dromm, getting a call from a friend or neighbor or a campaign donor to "make a call" to get someone in?

What could be more fair than a single test, blind to race, religion and gender?

What the current admissions policy does is expose a systematic injustice served to Black and Latino students by this administration and the UFT that is a violation of their civil rights. Don't destroy something that

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Resolution 442-to support eliminating the SHSAT as the sole admissions criteria for NYC
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**exposes an injustice so as to keep it hidden. Instead, demand that this
injustice is righted. Demand that this administration and the UFT provide an
equal and equitable education, and a superb one for all children, regardless of
race so all can excel in whatever path they take. If they finally provide Black
and Latino children with a high quality and inspiring education starting when
they enter the system, the halls of our specialized high schools will soon
reflect the make up our City and everyone there will be there because they
deserve to be.**¹

The decision whether or not to dismantle the crown jewels of the NYC
Public school system is not even a close call. I urge this committee and the entire
council to vote “NO” on the resolution and to not support the current bills in the
state legislature.

Law Office of Elizabeth Eilender PC
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New York, New York 10007
Tel (212) 227-2174
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¹ This paragraph in **bold** is an excerpt from the written submitted testimony of Adam Stern, former Co-President of the Bronx Science Parents Association who was present at 9:30 am at City Hall but unable to stay until he was called to testify very late into the early evening. At Mr. Stern’s request, an excerpt from his written testimony was incorporated by Elizabeth Eilender in her verbal remarks at approximately 5:45 pm on December 11, 2014.

From: Ellen Chan

Subject: DO NOT CHANGE THE STANDARDS FOR SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOLS IN NYC

Good Morning,

We are asking that you do not change the standards and requirements for future interested students to enter the specialized high schools. Current and past students of specialized high schools studied hard to get into these prestigious public schools. And they all deserve to be in there. I am a parent of two teenage boys who were fortunate enough to get into Bronx Science. They did not sit on their behinds and play video games all day to get into Bronx Science. It took at least 1 1/2 years of preparation of studying for this. Yes, they deserve to be there and yes it was fair. I am personally a product of public education. I did not get into a specialized high school. My husband, however, made it into Stuyvesant H.S.. I am perfectly okay with this. I am not less successful because I did not make it into a specialized high school.

Let's focus on fixing and improving the standards of underachieving high schools rather than changing the standards and requirements for students to get into specialized high schools. Please do not lower the standards of these specialized high schools. This is what you will be doing if just any student can walk into Bronx Science, Stuyvesant or Brooklyn Tech.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ellen and Thomas Chan

I am an alumni of Brooklyn Tech Class of 1976. The tech education was the foundation to a wonderful career at both Hewlett Packard and Merrill Lynch.

The entrance exam is the foundation to maintaining these high schools as the merit based avenues for people from all races and social economic backgrounds.

Our family's roots go very deep into NYC history to when my Grandfather came here and as a laborer (undocumented) built the IRT. He and the others from all over we're proud that anyone could come to NYC, work and study hard and be successful. You did not have to be rich, have connections or come from any particular Ethnic background to be successful in NYC. Civil Service exams took the politics out of civil service and made it the merit based. The high school entrance exams serve a similar purpose.

53 percent of the students entering these high schools are Asian, 5 percent African American and 7 percent Hispanic, and this does not look like NYC, which has many concerned.

Destroying the meritocracy of the system is not the answer to that problem.

Efforts to scrap the test or add a variety of subjective criteria is very much subject to the sort of politics that for so long discriminates against those that do not have special political access and will be ripe for abuse.

Instead of tearing down a system that for 70 years enabled people from all races, backgrounds to climb into the middle class, let's fix the root cause. Actions such as expanding the head start programs and a greater focus on preparing the middle school students in under represented areas is the solution government can affect.

Best Regards

Frank Robertazzi
Brooklyn Tech 1976
201-819-1383

From: Gabrielle Garcia

Hello. I'd like to say that we are all proud of our specialized highschools and consider it an achievement to pass the test and be accepted into these schools. The fact that the test does not know what race you are, your past grades, or your social status proves that if you got accepted, it was based solely on the test and your ability to complete it. Once you add in other factors, specifically your race and wealth, then theoretically, anyone can be accepted into these schools. Therefore, it will no longer be an accomplishment to be accepted into the specialized highschools because it will not be based on pure abilities, but on factors that should not matter anymore. People of all ethnic backgrounds are fully capable of learning and passing the specialized highschool admissions test and we see proof of it in our halls every day. If there is such a strong belief in racial diversity, then educate the minority races better. However, even that may not do the trick. In the end, it all comes down to the individual student themselves and whether or not they are willing to learn, study and work hard. By doing those three things, every student is fully capable of passing the test. Resolution 442 promotes favoritism to minority races and hands them what is now considered an accomplishment, instead of encouraging them to work towards it. How do you think this will make the students that worked hard and actually passed the test, knowing that someone else was accepted for other reasons than intelligence? They may not be as proud and the reputation of the schools themselves may not be as great as they once were. Less and less people will congratulate or compliment someone who is accepted into a specialized highschool and will not associate every student there as really intelligent people. Everything these schools worked for in increasing their standards and making them become some of the top-rated schools in the country will slowly begin to diminish. All of this work will be lost over pointless statistics and will only hurt the progress of specialized highschools.

***Testimony Submitted for the Public Hearing on Resolution 442
December 11, 2014***

My name is George Lee. I live on 311 Greenwich Street, New York, NY 10013.

I oppose Resolution 442.

I believe that the SHSAT, which is the single, uniform, transparent, objective, meritocratic academic test, brings the best motivated and best prepared students into the Specialized High School, in the fairest possible way. I believe that an opaque, corruptible, unaccountable holistic admission process leads to manipulation, abuse, patronage, and erosion of excellence.

In my testimony I address three common arguments against the SHSAT single-test process that are blatantly false.

1) **“Stuyvesant is not diverse”**

The SHSAT is blind to socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. It is therefore not surprising that Stuyvesant draws from a variety of socio-economic strata, races, ethnicities, religions and, based on opinion pages in the student newspaper (The Spectator), sexual orientations, or at least sexual orientation sympathies. The dictionary definition of diversity being “showing a great deal of variety”, *Stuyvesant is diverse*.

Rebuttal 1: Socio-economic Diversity

Critics of the SHSAT like to lie that Stuyvesant is an elite school for the rich and privileged.

Stuyvesant certainly has rich kids. Rich kids can be smart and work hard too. But the rich do not have a monopoly on brains or the work ethic, and about *half* the students at Stuyvesant come from Title 1 families – families with income low enough to qualify for free or reduced lunch. Many of the parents are immigrants, do not speak English, and work at one or more minimum-wage (or lower-paying) jobs. Some of them are undocumented.

Why this false narrative of wealth and privilege at Stuyvesant? Because critics of the SHSAT then claim, falsely, that kids get into Stuyvesant thanks to expensive test-prepping that only the rich can afford. But the immigrant poor also can, and do, send their kids to cram schools: their local K-8 public schools do a bad job preparing kids for rigorous high school programs, and cram schools are not expensive (some programs are even free).

That poor kids, through hard work and smarts, are getting into Stuyvesant in large numbers is the inconvenient truth that critics of the SHSAT don’t want people to know.

Rebuttal 2: Ethnic Diversity

Take a walk around the halls of Stuyvesant around parent-teacher conference time, and you will eventually hear Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, and of course English.

Anyone who thinks this does not fit the dictionary definition of diversity needs to take English lessons.

Rebuttal 3: Racial Diversity, or “Diverse” vs “Racially Representative”

There are also African-Americans in Stuyvesant: they are about 1% of the students. This adds another group to the great variety of students at Stuyvesant, thus making Stuyvesant even more diverse.

But when critics of the SHSAT say that Stuyvesant is not diverse, what they really mean is that Stuyvesant is *not racially representative*. The two characterizations are very different. It is evident that Stuyvesant is diverse. There is a great variety of peoples, including African-Americans. Let’s now look at the separate question of whether Stuyvesant is racially representative.

But first: why don’t the critics use the correct terminology and say what they mean? There are two reasons.

First: if Stuyvesant is *not* racially representative, then how many Black and Latinos *would* make Stuyvesant racially representative? The SHSAT critics must know that number, if roughly, for them to make the accusation. When Mayor DeBlasio said “Stuyvesant doesn’t look like New York City”, he has some idea how many more Blacks it takes to make him say: “Now it does!” But having those numbers in mind takes them perilously close to quotas, and quotas are worth a trip to the Supreme Court. So, even though they mean to say that Stuyvesant is not racially representative, and do have in mind a quota against which Stuyvesant falls short, they dare not say the words. They will only say that Stuyvesant is not diverse – which isn’t true.

Secondly: racially representative relative to *what reference population*? Critics of the SHSAT want you to take, unthinkingly, the entire population of African-American 8th graders in New York City. If you fall into that trap, you will of course think that Stuyvesant’s 1% Black is not racially representative, since Blacks are far more than 1% of New York City 8th graders.

But that is downright stupid. The relevant reference population to consider, for admissions into a top STEM high school like Stuyvesant, is the population of top-performing 8th graders, not all 8th graders.

Here are the facts, for 2014. Of all Blacks in 8th grade, nearly 98% -- that is, almost all of them – just pass, or worse, fail, the New York State assessment (that’s Level 3, just passing, or below). Only 2.1% attained Level 4, which is “better than passing.” (The proportion for Latinos is about the same, at 2.8%.) Now, Level 4 is just above passing; this is still not the population of top performing students, which is the valid reference population for Stuyvesant. Although I do not have access to further breakdown, it is more than generous to assume that not more than a third, and certainly under half, of Level 4 is top performing, since in the top always has fewer people than the middle plus bottom.

Now, if only 2.1% of Blacks attain Level 4, isn’t Stuyvesant at 1% Black racially representative already? There’s even a chance of over-representation!

So when SHSAT critics cry outrage over the lack of “diversity” at Stuyvesant, they are engaged in subterfuge and equivocation. They want to demand that Stuyvesant be racially representative, but they can’t say they want to apply quotas -- which trample on other people’s right to equal protection under the law – and they don’t want to point you in the direction of catching them using the wrong reference

population – which makes them look stupid – so they bastardize the word “diversity” and hope to fool you.

But among us honest, plain-talking folks who use words for what they mean, Stuyvesant is diverse. Furthermore, Stuyvesant is arguably racially representative, when the relevant reference population is used to determine what “representative” means.

It is a separate question why only 2% - 3% of Black and Latino 8th graders in New York City public schools attain the “better than average” level. The critics of the SHSAT, who profess such concern for Black and Latino educational challenges, and many of whom are responsible for K – 9 education themselves – why don't they propose something constructive to fix the problem? That is the far bigger, worse, and more urgent, problem!

Rebuttal 4: The Mystery of the Disappearing Blacks, or Help where Help is Needed

To critics of the SHSAT: would you be satisfied if every year, 500 Black and Latino kids excel in the SHSAT and take their seats at Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech?

I think their answer should be a resounding “yes.” The problem is to find these kids.

Here is a suggestion. Go to the online magazine DNAinfo for Amy Zimmer’s article “Minority Kids Get Intensive Test Prep to Win Spots in Elite High Schools,” dated October 27, 2014. At the bottom, you will find the story of an African-American kid who tested into Stuyvesant, but chose to go to Northfield Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts, where he will join the crew and ski teams. He says it is a thrill to turn down Stuyvesant.

This is not an isolated case. Every year, Prep for Prep, A Better Chance, Oliver Scholars, and other programs quietly whisk the best of the brightest Black and Latino students off to tony, \$45,000/year private and boarding schools in New York City and New England, at \$0 cost to them. This happens at the end of 8th grade, but starts as early as 4th grade. These programs are very secretive about their numbers; the 500 figure is just an educated guess.

Critics of the SHSAT do not want you to hear about these programs because they demonstrate an inconvenient truth: Black and Latinos who are motivated and bright have an abundance of attractive options. These high performance kids do not need help. It is the rest of the Black and Latino kids who need help. The vast majority of Blacks and Latinos – 84% of them – in 8th grade aren’t academically prepared for even their neighborhood high schools, and these schools themselves are often failing schools by New York State Regents standards. What does the grand-stand on abolishing the SHSAT do for these Blacks and Latinos who really need help? Exactly nothing.

The rebuttal here, then, is that the agitation of critics against the SHSAT under the false pretense of diversity does not help the vast majority of Blacks and Latinos who urgently need substantive educational help just to attain basic literacy and numeracy, while the Blacks and Latinos who are already motivated and smart, who can actually benefit from a rigorous, fast-paced Stuyvesant STEM education are already well taken-care of.

2) “If holistic admissions is good enough for Harvard, it is good enough for Stuyvesant”

Critics of the SHSAT like UFT President Michael Mulgrew and Councilman Ritchie Torres tried to justify their support for holistic admissions over the SHSAT by citing Harvard as an example.

Rebuttal 1: Holistic admissions is not good for Harvard – Pinker

On September 4, 2014, world-renowned Harvard Psychology professor Steven Pinker published an article in *The New Republic* titled “The Trouble with Harvard.” Professor Pinker specializes in cognitive science, or the study of the mind and its processes, including how intelligence works.

In this article, Professor Pinker argues that holistic admissions is not good for Harvard, that Harvard should instead use results from a uniform, transparent, objective, meritocratic academic test, like the SAT, as the *single* admission criterion. This is exactly the opposite of what Mulgrew and Torres are pushing for.

Professor Pinker offers the usual and familiar critique of holistic admissions. What is interesting is his scientific rebuttal of the usual demagoguery against standardized, objective tests like the SAT.

To critics who say that the SAT doesn’t test anything other than test-taking abilities, Professor Pinker states:

Camilla Benbow and David Lubinski have tracked a large sample of precocious teenagers identified solely by high performance on the SAT, and found that when they grew up, they not only excelled in academia, technology, medicine, and business, but won outsize recognition for their novels, plays, poems, paintings, sculptures, and productions in dance, music, and theater.

So by testing, not just classroom material, but also general cognitive skills such as logical thinking and sentence ordering, a standardized objective tests can predict success in a wide range of endeavors – exactly what Stuyvesant needs.

To critics who say that the SAT is just a redundant measure of parental socio-economic status (SES), presumably because a privileged upbringing “buys” high SAT scores, Professor Pinker states:

Paul Sackett and his collaborators have shown that SAT scores predict future university grades, holding all else constant, whereas parental SES does not. Matt McGue has shown, moreover, that adolescents’ test scores track the SES only of their biological parents, not (for adopted kids) of their adoptive parents, suggesting that the tracking reflects shared genes, not economic privilege.

That is, SAT scores and parental SES are not equivalent, because one predicts grades while the other does not. Furthermore, when children are adopted, the wealth circumstance of the child's upbringing has nothing to do with his SAT scores – a privileged upbringing does not “buy” high SAT scores -- but the wealth circumstance of his biological parents do, suggesting the role of innate, genetic attributes in SAT scores.

Given the empirically evidenced validity of objective, standardized testing against the known vulnerabilities of holistic admissions, Professor Pinker says: holistic admissions is NOT good for Harvard.

Rebuttal 2: Holistic admissions is not good for Harvard – Blum

On November 17, 2014, holistic admissions got Harvard into legal trouble. Students for Fair Admissions, representing one or more Asian plaintiffs, filed suit against Harvard College alleging that it applied numerical quotas to suppress Asian enrollment.

It would be interesting to see how Harvard defends itself. Since holistic admissions leaves no tracks – one of its attractive features -- Harvard will not find it easy to document how its 3-minutes-per-applicant admissions review can somehow engender such complete understanding of applicants that they end up with the same lopsided outcomes against Asians year after year.

There is no question that critics of the SHSAT want to perform racial “mischief”, as Professor Pinker called it, with holistic admissions. This lawsuit points to the perils to such an approach.

What is not good for Harvard is not good for the NYC Department of Education.

Rebuttal 3: Even if holistic admissions were good enough for Harvard, it would still be a bad idea for Stuyvesant.

Finally, much as Mulgrew and Torres fancy otherwise, Stuyvesant is no Harvard.

As discussed earlier, bright and motivated Blacks and Latinos – the ones that make sense for Stuyvesant -- are in scarce supply but high demand. Everyone fights over them. In this fight, the Harvards are the \$45,000/year private schools in New York City, or the similarly priced boarding schools in New England. They are the ones with the shiny buildings, bright lawns, exotic athletics, accommodating administrators – and all that at an irresistible price of \$0.

Stuyvesant has the broken escalators, the Department of Education bureaucracy, and one of the lowest expenditures per student in the system. In this analogy, Stuyvesant is more like UC Berkeley or U Michigan. They get the leftovers, after the Harvards, Yales, and Princetons of the world have had their pick. That’s Stuyvesant's current 1% - 2% Blacks and Latinos.

Holistic admissions at Stuyvesant will not change the hard reality of these numbers, because Stuyvesant will never be Harvard. Holistic admissions will only give Stuyvesant its known ills: patronage, corruption, and now, legal risk.

A warning: both UC Berkeley and U Michigan now operate under state ban from using race in admissions. See Proposition 209 for California and Proposition 2 for Michigan.

Rebuttal 4: Holistic admissions reduces socio-economic diversity

New York City has several good high schools – Townsend Harris, Beacon -- that use holistic admissions already. The Department of Education's numbers, widely quoted in news articles and blogs, show that these schools are “richer and whiter” than the SHSAT schools. This makes very good sense.

Packaging a kid for holistic admissions is very expensive. The application advisors, the essay tutors, the sports coaches, the art instructors, the purchased summer community services – all that cost money and requires parental savvy. It's a setup that plays to the strengths of the wealthy.

Switching Stuyvesant from SHSAT to holistic admissions will be a huge blow to the poor, immigrant communities, whose children thrive at Stuyvesant – without helping the multitude of Blacks and Latinos who languish in an atrocious educational system and really need advocacy.

3) “The SHSAT is another stressful high-stakes test”

This is a “first world problem.”

Rebuttal 1: The SHSAT is not stressful

Preparing for the SHSAT need not be stressful, because it is spread out over K – 8. On no one given day need one freak out, because the contribution of any one day is too small. By the time test date comes, what matters is not how well you memorized dates, names or formulas in the past week or month, but what have you done with your mind in the past 10 years, so it’s futile to stress out. And then, the whole thing is over in one morning. The kids are not stressed if the parents are not.

Yes, there are over-protective helicopter parents, and their immense stress is contagious. To them I say: the SHSAT is not an impossibly hard test. Thousands of students do well in the SHSAT – enough to fill up all the available seat at the eight Specialized High Schools. These “gifted parents” just need to deal realistically with the possibility that their special snowflake may not be one of those thousands of kids.

Rebuttal 2: Holistic admissions is even more stressful

It’s a fantasy that holistic admissions is the stress antidote to objective testing. Students and parents are so stressed by the uncertainty, capriciousness and corruption in college holistic admissions that they now “apply by the dozen” (New York Times headline), and this fall, November 2014, Common Application reported a student applying to a record 86 colleges!

Similarly, newspaper articles document that admission – all holistic -- into New York City private schools, even at the kindergarten level, is turning out to be extremely stressful, mostly to parents.

It would be a giant step towards more stress, not less stress, to replace the single SHSAT by holistic admissions.

In conclusion, I oppose Resolution 442.

Thank you.

From: Heather Higgins

Subject: OPPOSING resolution 422

Please vote NO on Resolution 422. Objective, blind admissions to specialized high schools, that permit any student of any race or income level to attain entrance to a specialized high school is democracy made flesh: 60% of the students at Stuyvesant (where we have two sons attending presently), Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech qualify as economically disadvantaged. "Holistic" entrance standards are subjective, and will yield over time to political pressure and a diminished level of academic achievement in these schools, thereby hurting ALL the students who attend, much as was done to the CUNY system decades ago.

There are real problems, but the problems are not with the tests, but with the educational system which ill-prepares students to take not only the SHSAT, but even to adequately pass the State Assessment. To support Resolution 422 is to take the cheap, harmful, and selfish political route that ignores the real problem, harms hard-working students and their families, and will hurt students who are admitted to a school where they aren't prepared adequately to succeed.

Those members who care about real students and real outcomes more than cheap grandstanding should vote NO on Resolution 422.

Sincerely,
Heather R. Higgins
35 N. Moore St.
NY, NY 10013

iCOPE
Independent Commission on Public Education
Testimony
City Council Hearing on Diversity
Dec, 11, 2014

If we are to have an education system grounded in diversity and equity, we must ensure that all children learn about cultures and life experiences other than their own. This is the only way we can develop a citizenry that values the stories and historical experiences of us all and understands the hardships and oppressions so many of us have faced and struggled against, historically and today. This is a prerequisite to working together as equals.

It is in this spirit that we, iCOPE, submit a recent paper we developed for broad publication which links the tragedies of Ferguson and Staten Island to the failures of our education system and calls for fundamental change in how we organize and run our schools

Education In the Age of Ferguson

***An ICOPE (Independent Commission On Public Education)
Op-Ed Statement
www.icope.org***

What happened in Ferguson, Missouri –*and most recently right here in New York City with the Eric Garner police killing*– is evidence of massive failures in many sectors of our society, from the policing of communities of color, the criminal justice and the court systems, to the very way this country educates its youngest and most impressionable citizens and residents.

In this article we present some thoughts on how transforming our education system through a human rights framework could, over time, positively change our social system.

The Mis-education of The American Citizen Breeds Racism

Like so many in deadly positions of authority, Darren Wilson lacked the intellectual and emotional tools to navigate an encounter with a Black teenager. For their part, Black youth are also unprepared to navigate their way in a racist society that condemns them for everything from the color of their skin, to their dress, music, language, behavior and mere presence, when no crime has been committed. The pervasive mindset that permits the racist hostility, beatings and, too often, loss of life at

the hands of the police indicates the extent of the problem. The violation of human rights is completely unacceptable.

We must act swiftly to rid the nation of the terrorism enacted upon Black/Brown people. The frustration of living in a police state, rather than a democracy is compounded by our president repeating as he did recently, the myth that we are a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. This completely distorts the true nature of the United States by erasing the millions of indigenous Native Americans and tens of millions of us who were forced to endure the horrors of the Middle Passage and slavery.

It is the nation's education system with its lack of cultural knowledge, understanding of history, empathy, human caring and concern that ought to be on trial. Its failure to teach the historical realities of this nation along with the capacities for self-awareness and critical thinking is what produces individuals like Darren Wilson, NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo (who used the illegal chokehold to kill Eric Garner) and those who sat on both grand juries.

We need only to reflect upon the nature of lies told to children about Christopher Columbus discovering America, the erasure or glossing over in our history books of the genocide committed upon Native Americans, the omission of the barbaric Middle Passage and enslavement over hundreds of years and generations of kidnapping human beings from Africa, to understand where we are today. We need only to see the historic connection between the blood, sweat and tears of Black men, women and children held captive in the past- *and still trapped today by poverty, foster care, homelessness, ghettos, unemployment, miseducation and prisons* -to understand that this nation's racist foundation of oppression and supremacy remains intact.

The Mis-education of The American Citizen Breeds Ignorance of Our Human Rights and Our Power

Our schools have failed miserably to teach and practice human rights and democracy so that young people are prepared to live, work, and thrive in a multicultural and antiracist society.

Racism is historically imbedded and perpetuated in the societal fabric of this land. It is with this lens and along with the failure to properly educate the next generation that we view the situation in Ferguson-- a city like many in this country, where white people police, judge, incarcerate and execute young Black/Brown men (and women) in alarming numbers and get away with it. Ferguson is also like many other cities where Black children go to substandard, severely under-resourced schools, white children go to private schools, parochial schools or

schools outside the district, and families whose children attend the public schools have little or no voice in how these schools are run or financed.

What and How We Teach *and* Who Has the Power Are Key For Educational Excellence

If we are committed to racial justice, equity, and democracy over the long haul, we need to be making radical changes in *what* we teach our children, *how* we teach our children, how we structure the system, and *who* has power to make these decisions.

We have to learn about each other and each other's histories. We need to understand and find pleasure in each other's music, art, literature, and other cultural ways. We need to appreciate the contributions and understand each other's struggles against oppression and for dignity and respect. We should all understand the conflicts and struggles which have contributed to the advances that have ever so slowly so far been 'bending' this nation towards equity and justice.

We need to teach our young people more civics so they can learn how to access the levers of power; the arts so they can find comfort and express themselves in positive ways as well as appreciate different styles; social/emotional education so they can manage their emotions and handle conflicts nonviolently; history so they can understand the forces at work around them; and health and physical education so they can learn habits of health, teamwork, and good sportsmanship. When education is limited to math and reading, as it is currently in our test-driven education environment, our young people are stunted.

Teachers need to know their students and their cultures well if they are going to teach them well. This is because students connecting what they already know to something new is the richest form of learning. A teacher who doesn't understand his or her students can't help them make these connections. This is a clear finding in education research.

Black scholars such as Lisa Delpit, Joyce King, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Theresa Perry, provide more than ample evidence that if you want to teach Black students well, you need to know about their lives and interests, their families, and their culture. You need to understand them and truly respect them. As Gloria Ladson-Billing says, "culturally responsive teaching is just good teaching."

Research has also found that teachers generally have lower expectations of Black and Brown students. There is much work to do, especially when so many of our teachers are white while an increasing majority of students in our cities are of color.

But the problem of mis-education can't be solved purely at the classroom level. The education system as a whole needs to be transformed so that education actually empowers the children and their communities. It matters to an education system who has voice and who makes the decisions regarding who gets to be a teacher, and what they need to know to be able to teach young people well, particularly those different from themselves. It matters who makes decisions about the curriculum and how these decisions take place.

Since Mayor Bloomberg took control of the NYC schools in 2002, the people of this city, particularly parents, have been outside the decision making process. There has been little dialogue, little working together, as decisions are simply handed down from on high. Parents are treated like consumers while the children are treated like products. It has been dehumanizing and undemocratic.

Mayoral control ushered in changes centering around privatization, high stakes tests, common core standards and curriculum developed mainly by the private sector, in this case, Pearson. Legislators and state and city departments of education have been lobbied and bought off, in the interests of maximizing private profit.

What Can We Learn and Do About These Tragedies?

One of the things we can learn from Ferguson and the Eric Garner travesties of justice is that ***we the people must take charge***. Our schools and the education of our children must fundamentally change so we have police who respect the humanity of Black teenagers and Black teenagers who feel connected and proud of their cultural roots. Ultimately we need a shift of ***power*** that will allow us to work across race, culture, and class to develop a common vision for our schools that include the full human development of each one of us within a framework of dignity and respect for all of us. This is what a human rights approach to education means.

The tragedy and horrors of both the killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner along with the twisted and biased work of both the Ferguson and Staten Island grand juries SHOULD BE a wake up call for deep reflection, antiracist education, increased organizing, and action for racial justice in the United States. We need to take control of our schools and our school systems so their potential for transforming our society can be realized.

Hello,

My apologies for the late reply, but I still would like to present my standpoint. As an alumni of Bronx High School of Science (2010), I believe that the Specialized High School Exam is not biased to a particular race or gender. Instead, I believe that it stems from cultural values. I grew up with parents who spoke little or no English and worked tirelessly to pay the bills. One important value they have emphasized was to excel in school. Therefore, I have always wanted to be admitted to one of the prestigious Specialized High Schools. I prepared myself through borrowing text preparation books in the library and attended the free "SHSI" program that was held in Townsend Harris High School for at least a year and a half before taking the exam in November of my 8th grade.

I believe that we should keep the test since it is merit-based and does not favor the rich or privileged. If that was the case, then why are at least half of the students under the reduced or free lunch program in these schools? These same students also get their Advance Placement exams and some college application fees waived. If the Specialized High School Exam were removed, then the application process would be changed to personal essays, interviews, extracurricular activities, and recommendations. With the new process, each school will have to hire its own admissions committee and allocate a budget for it. This change will not only increase the workload, but will also increase the stress level for middle-school students. How could one expect a middle school student to apply to a high school that has a similar process as applying to college? Is it reasonable to have this expectation from them? With the increasing numbers of students who take the exam each year, how would each school have the sufficient time to effectively review each student's application? I urge the council to reconsider as this meeting will affect generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this crucial matter.

Best,
Irene Li

Isolde Blum 77 7th Ave. NYC 917-620-1014

FOR THE RECORD

My name is Isolde Sommer Blum..

white, Jewish, widowed, still working at what I love.

I am 81 years old and I am a Holocaust refugee and a graduate of the first class of women at the Bronx High School of Science.

I know my remarks will be politically incorrect but they are my right

When I came to the United States in 1938, I was 5 years old. We were allowed to come into the US, and escape the Nazis, as long as my father had a guaranteed job here..Thankfully, that had been arranged.

*to say
but this*

*is a country of
Free Speech*

My 84 year old grandparents were not allowed in ..They might have been what was called 'on the dole'..on welfare or some form of public assistance..and so they were denied entry, taken to Theresienstadt concentration camp, gassed to death and their bodies then burned in the ovens..

*is what
aspect of
Free Speech
is politically
correct or
incorrect
??*

I went to P.S. 190 on east 82nd street, JHS 96 on York Ave and 80th street.. My parents did not speak one word of English when we arrived here..but both of them worked as many jobs as they could, in order to pay rent of \$32 a month in a walk up tenement..and put food on the table..

Were we what you would call 'disadvantaged'???

We never thought so and never felt that. And absolutely NEVER, EVER asked anyone for financial or any other kind of help..

This was a country of opportunity as long as you worked for it. - *The opportunity to work for what you want - not to be handed it.*

When I started kindergarten at P.S. 190, I did not speak one word of English.. My American teachers made fun of my foreign name which they could not pronounce.. And I figured out, at that early age, that I would not get help from anyone but myself..that no one would give me a special pass to get something that I, myself, did not earn,..did not work for.

When I was in 8th grade in JHS 96, a supportive teacher told me I was bright enough to take the test for the Bronx H.S. of Science. My parents did not even know I was taking that test. They were too busy working day shifts and night

shifts just to pay rent and buy food. I, myself, had no idea what this high school was.

I took the test without ever telling my parents. Sometime later, that lovely teacher told me I had been accepted..the only student from my JHS to make it...in 1947.. into the first class of women at the Bx HS of Science.

When I was accepted to the Bx H.S. of Science, my parents did not even know where I was going to high school or why..but I did know, from inspirational public school teachers, that education..striving for a good education, was my way of insuring my future in this land of opportunity.. Opportunity for anyone who WORKS for it.

In my high school class, we have 3 Nobel prize winners, the CEO of Payne-Whitney, the CEO of a major cosmetics company, a Hollywood screen writer, a Hollywood producer, doctors, teachers, judges, a famous landscape photographer, and so many successful people of ALL ethnicities, it is hard to recount them all.

My question to the Council today is: What defines 'disadvantaged'? .Who is disadvantaged when students of all colors and ethnicity are given the same opportunities to get a free, good public school education pre-high school?

No one called me 'disadvantaged' and no one made one special concession for me. I went to the school that became the pivotal influence in my life, that gave me the pride and the inspiration to go on to college..a city college , and then on to graduate school ..also at city college.

Who was more disadvantaged than the immigrants who came here from all corners of the world..in the 1920's and 30's..who worked in factories for pennies an hour..and yet emphasized striving and education as the way to rise out of their disadvantaged status.

Again..I need to ask..What does 'disadvantaged' mean?

Why are only black and latino children being referred to as 'disadvantaged'? If ethnicity is an issue, why are children of Asian descent not also so labelled? Asian children succeed beyond measure in all the special high schools..and a great many of them come from families that reside in walk-up tenements and live below the average income level in NY.

Can you explain that to me?

What are we teaching our children..those you want to give a special pass to ..to go to a special high school that others had to strive and struggle to attend?

Are we telling them that if your skin is a certain color , you get special treatment? Can you explain that to me or to the Asian children who work so hard in school and do so well?

That if you speak Spanish at home, you get special treatment ?

What is the lesson in that logic?

And yes, I am fully aware of how politically incorrect these questions are.

Are we teaching the American Way?? That hard work, a drive to succeed, a vision of a promising future as a reward for that hard work are the way to live? Or are we teaching them that external features of our personal culture determine where we go and how we get there? And I have not even mentioned the concept of reverse discrimination..

I am 81 years old..and thankful for the public education I received. I still work as a psychotherapist, helping persons with cancer or with cancer in their families. My life is rich and full of great gratification because of the education I received..free, from kindergarten to graduate school..but not without hard work and my EARNING it..all the way through.

I have a quote from a classmate who is 83 next Saturday, a doctor, a radiologist, in Colorado, who still flies in small airplanes to outer regions in the West to

provide free medical care for Native Americans and other communities that need his help..

From Dr. Rober Kahn: with his permission..

Thanks for doing this. Of course I feel removed physically from all this, but emotionally I am still with it. Interesting that many of us "disadvantaged" by being Holocaust refugees gained so much from our education at Bronx Science, and with our hard work continue to serve humanity in our way, at age almost 83{this Saturday} I continue to work part time in the health field also.

I remember the test that I struggled to qualify for scholastically, as I had just recovered from Rheumatic Fever which had limited my school involvement while I had to make up the time

Bob

END: what defines 'disadvantaged' when children of all colors and ethnicities are given the same opportunities to get a free public school education? and are given the same right to apply to a special high school ..along with ANY other child who strives for good grades and who passes the entrance exam? Who is the judge of what defines 'disadvantaged' ..and why are some children considered that and others not? Who decided that color and ethnicity give children an entitlement to get something that others do not get? Who decided that color and ethnicity override hard work, good grades, and passing a universally applied entrance exam that has worked for decades in selecting the brilliant students who attend our spcialized high schools? ?

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From: Jim Protos

Subject: Parent Testimony - Opposition to Resolution 442

Dear Ms. Atwell,

I am writing as a parent of a 9th grade student at the Bronx High School of Science, one of New York's globally heralded Specialized High Schools, to submit testimony on behalf of the current testing and admissions protocol and in opposition to proposed City Council Resolution 442.

The current system of testing has been in place for generations and has produced some of the country's and the world's greatest minds and leaders. It is a merit-based approach that recognizes the hard work and commitment of the city's best and brightest. It advances diversity. It is egalitarian. It is fair.

What is not fair is the current state of education in New York, which does a poor job of supporting the most underserved communities. Instead of changing the current SHSAT-based admissions process, I support efforts to improve our city's schools to engage a wide range of students of varied ethnic and racial backgrounds, particularly the underserved, such as free test prep and programs such as Discovery, which was abandoned by the Bloomberg Administration.

Don't replace these rare and great places of achievement with the misguided and unproven model that 442 represents.

Jim Protos
238 President Street
Brooklyn, NY 11231

From: Wang, Jingyu

Subject: The admissions criteria for NYC Specialized High Schools

I'm strongly against the change of The admissions criteria for NYC Specialized High Schools for the following reasons.

1. Thought not perfect, the SHSAT is the only standard fair for everyone.
2. NYC Specialized High Schools are proud of their high academic standard. People who could not meet the cut off scores of SHSAT are not ready for these schools.
3. Even now, a lot of students have dropped off from the schools because of academic weakness.
4. If you let more academically not strong enough students get admitted into these schools, eventually, you either lower the standard of the schools or let people drop off.

New York public schools education is already at the bottom nationwide, you don't want to tank it further more.

Thank you,

From: **John Lupiano**

Subject: SHSAT testimony-excellent as is

To: Bronx Science Parents' Association <president@bxsciencepa.org>

Greetings:

Reso 0442-2014 calls on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S07738 / A09979 to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools. I disagree. I believe strongly, that using the **SHSAT** to competitively identify high achieving students is appropriate because it is unbiased, objective, and transparent. I further disagree with Reso 0453-2014 as it relates to the specialized high schools admissions, setting diversity as a priority.

The dismally low enrollment of Blacks and Latinos at these specialized high schools can be blamed on the abysmal state of public education in NYC and negligence—in 2014 only a paltry 2.1% of Blacks and 2.8% Hispanics in eighth grade scored high enough on the State Assessment[1] to be considered better than just passing!

Don't hurt our students and schools. Don't change the objective test as the single admissions criterion to New York City's Specialized High Schools.

The **SHSAT** tests needed skills: The **SHSAT** tests eighth graders on basic math, verbal and reasoning skills needed to succeed in the Specialized High Schools.

The **SHSAT** is fair and objective: The **SHSAT** allows no subjective or manipulable criteria to taint the test. Everyone takes the same test. No bias in grading happens. Who a student's parents are, how wealthy or poor, what religion, race, or jobs are in a student's background don't count.

Changing the single objective test hurts the poor: About 60% of the students at Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech are economically disadvantaged, qualifying for reduced or free lunch. Many of these Title I students are from poor immigrant families, whose parents work in minimum wage jobs and don't speak English. Holistic admissions would penalize the poor student and family who must often work all hours to survive and cannot afford time or money for extracurriculars.

Changing the single objective test hurts successful hard-working STEM students: Currently there is a high percentage of Asian-Americans; formerly the largest percentage was Jewish. Now the Bangladeshis are the fastest growing group. Over time, the students' backgrounds change, but the students all share academic achievement and interest in the STEM areas that allow them to succeed at these STEM schools. Students not interested or able in STEM have many other options.

Changing the admissions criterion and focusing on diversity only hides problems.

K-8 education is failing large groups in the city: Black students used to attend the Specialized High Schools in higher numbers. But now, when 88% of 8th grade Black

students in NYC fail basic state academic requirements,[2] the pool of Black students who can pass the SHSAT test and then succeed at the Specialized High Schools is small. Only 2.1% of Black and 2.8% Hispanic eighth grade students do better than passing basic state math requirements. The pool is made even smaller when many of the best Black students choose other options such as private prep schools. Fix the K-8 schools. That would increase the pool of Blacks and other underrepresented groups who pass state academic requirements, and better yet, exceed the state requirements.

Diversity as a simplistic end only harms: To force diversity without considering the wide range of issues involved would only further mask the root problems that need to be addressed. It does not solve the main problem that some schools are producing only students who are not high-performing. It does not address the question of merit. Diversity without improving K-8 only perpetuates and worsen the problem of failing students and schools. Thus, Resolution 0453 is short-sighted as written and should not be passed.

Using a single, objective test admissions criterion for nearly a hundred years is the successful process that produced generations of contributors to STEM and fourteen Nobel Prize winners – it in fact gave New York two high schools that have graduated both the greatest and the second greatest number of Nobel Prize Winners from individual high schools around the world. By changing the test for reasons outside academic skills, you risk destroying the best schools in the city.

Fix the K-8 problem to help the under-represented groups; don't destroy the test which reveals the problem.

Thank you.
John D. Lupiano
Parent

From: Kevantae Slade
Subject: Diversity at BNS

This email is written in support of diversifying the students admitted to BNS. As a child, I was never exposed to different nationalities and as a result feel that I have been cheated! This has caused me to feel intimidated and uncomfortable around other races- why should any child go through life feeling as if they can not relate to another human being?

The world is a melting pot and our public schools should reflect the world that we live in. I'm sad to see that in within the last 2 years, our school has become less and less diverse.

I am a result of living in a cultural bubble and do not intend to have my child or any other for that matter, miss out on the experience of living, learning and loving people for their differences.

From Kevantae,

From: lai lai <lailailand@yahoo.com>

Unfortunately I will not be able to attend but would to have the following remarks included in the record for Thursday's meeting:

Resolution# 442 seeks to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools in the belief that black and Hispanic students are disproportionately excluded from New York City's most selective high schools because of a single-test admittance policy that is racially discriminatory.

The following statistics are offered to back up this premise: 2013-14 school year black students were offered only 5% of the seats at the eight schools and Hispanics 7%, even though 70% of the city's public school students are black or Hispanic; Asians were offered 53% of the seats, while whites were offered 26%, therefore the single-test admittance policy is racially discriminatory.

Now, I could use the above mentioned statistic to make the argument that black students were only offered 5% of the seats at the eight schools and Hispanics 7% because they not as smart as Asians and whites; and the test results would bear out my argument. If you find this argument offensive and subjective; it is no more offensive or subjective that the one that the poor entrance rate must be due to racial discrimination.

Let the present criteria stand. The single-test admittance policy is one that is unbiased, transparent and objective. Let us all be judged by our hard work and drive to succeed, and not by your misguided attempt at "diversity" through quotas.

I ask you to vote NO to Resolution 442.

Thank you.

Thank you so much for your attention for that matter. I believe the system we have now, which is based only on the test results, is fair and equal for all the students. All you need to do is studying and public libraries

Provide all the books you need for that exam for free. It is not true that tutoring and money would make a difference. I am talking from my own experience. I have two kids and my oldest one is in college now. She went to private elementary school and to Mark Twain middle school. We were paying for private tutoring for SAT exam and guess what, she didn't pass it, however her friend who was going to public school and didn't have money for tutoring pass and was accepted to Brooklyn Tech. All that girl did was studying using books from library. I believe it's great that all it takes to get to these amazing schools is knowledge. The school entrance need to be base on the score and nothing else. If your score is not high enough to get into school that means you would not be able to upkeep with the workflow of the school. I believe we are all equal and the skin color or minority status should not have anything to do with test scores, otherwise it's discrimination. How you would explain to the child that he/she got higher score but the child who got the lower score would be accepted to school base on minority/skin color criteria. Don't you think it's discrimination. I would love to see our schools entrance exam being judge strictly on scores and nothing else. That is the only fair option.

Truly yours,

Lana Yuffe

From: Ling Anderson
Subject: Vote AGAINST Res. 442!

I urge you to vote AGAINST Res. 442

Recently, there has been discussion within the city as to whether the current system of entrance exams for New York's great specialized high schools actually discriminates against disadvantaged students who can't afford the expensive preparatory classes that are regarded as necessary these days in order to obtain a passing grade sufficient for entrance into Stuyvesant and the other specialized high schools. In the case of Stuyvesant, however, the opposite is true: Because a large % of Stuyvesant families receive some form of public assistance, the SHSAT is viewed as an equal opportunity gateway that allows hardworking, high-achieving students from any background to attend a great public school.

Another important fact to keep in mind is that, for most of the last 100 years of Stuyvesant's history, it is precisely the entrance exam that has made Stuyvesant the great place that it is: Stuyvesant does not receive special budgets or dispensation from the City. Stuyvesant is the special place that it is precisely because the entrance exam has selected out those students who have shown they can handle the rigorous courses and heavy workload necessary for success. This student body, in turn, has often drawn highly motivated teachers who want to work with such talented and hardworking students. Removing the entrance exam means dismantling the very mechanism by which Stuyvesant has become special.

On the other hand, it is clear that Stuyvesant has become more ethnically homogeneous in recent years, with an increasing majority of students originating from East or Southeast Asia. However If we wish to increase the diversity of Stuyvesant's student population, the answer isn't in removing the open and equal pathway that the entrance exam represents. Rather, opportunities should become more widely available for disadvantaged students from every background to receive better education at an earlier stage of their lives. let's not inadvertently dismantle the great system that is the very cause of the historic excellence of Stuyvesant and its students. I urge you to vote AGAINST Res. 442.

Regards,
Ling Anderson

LISA H. JONES

11214 Huston St #3 • North Hollywood, CA 91601
917.676.3594 • jones.lisa.h@gmail.com

December 10, 2014

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker, The New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1856
New York, NY 10007

Re: Opposition to Resolution 442 / NYS S.7738/A.9979
Specialized High School Admissions Test

Dear Speaker Mark-Viverito:

As a proud graduate of Stuyvesant High School, the current lack of diversity truly breaks my heart. What made Stuyvesant special, like nothing I've experienced since, was the diversity coupled with our acceptance of one another as equals precisely because we all cleared the same hurdle for admission. No one was treated with disdain because of the assumption that the bar was lowered to accommodate them. As an African American and as a woman, this has been my experience from the halls of my Ivy League alma mater to every elite institution of which I've been a part. And this is not my experience alone. The recent, "I, Too, Am Harvard" campaign, along with the dozens of subsequent similar projects at universities on at least four continents, bears witness to this all too common alienation of minorities.

The diversity of Stuyvesant is clearly not what it was when I attended in the eighties and I this definitely needs to be addressed, but adding more subjective criteria to the admissions process would change the very thing which made it special. It would become like every other selective institution where minorities and often women are made to feel like they are less qualified, less entitled or just plain less than. Diversity without that acceptance breeds resentment on every side - resentment that you don't deserve to be here as much as I do - resentment of the assumption that I'm less qualified. And you know what? It sucks!

My Stuyvesant experience let me know that something better is possible. The experience of diversity with acceptance has caused me and all of my fellow alums to show up carrying that possibility into the world and I think it's important that the next generation of leaders be able to experience the same.

Respectfully,



Lisa H. Jones
Stuyvesant Class of 1986

My name is Lisandra Ortiz (maiden name Feliciano) and I am a proud member of the Stuyvesant H.S. Class of 2000. I wanted to share my journey to Stuyvesant as a student of color.

I grew up in the South Bronx to a single mother of 4 who was struggling to make ends meet. It was difficult for her, having only completed 4th grade before being taken out of school to clean houses as well as only having a rudimentary grasp of the English language. Needless to say, when it came to educational matters, she relied on my school to take the lead.

In eighth grade, I was fortunate enough to have a math teacher who gave prep classes for the Specialized High School Exam every morning before school started. I was exposed to logical reasoning, among other topics, for the first time. The material looked completely foreign to me as it was not part of the standard curriculum. I had always been bright and diligent so I was able to obtain a firm handle on the new concepts and ultimately master them in a few weeks. I was able to use what I learned to receive a great score and gain admission to Stuyvesant. Had the admissions criteria not been the exam, but a combination of interviews, portfolios and recommendations, I would not have been accepted to Stuyvesant. How can I be so certain of this? Hunter College High School and Prep for Prep had admissions processes similar to the one that is being proposed for the Specialized High School and I didn't get into either of the two. The reason was simple, I was very intelligent, but had no idea how I was supposed to answer interview questions. I was very honest and when I revealed things about myself like watching a lot of television or enjoying time away from school, I gave the impression that I was not a good candidate. This was despite being at the top of my class.

I know that many poor minority students would be in a similar situation. Changing the admissions criteria to include interviews and portfolios would merely replace poor Asian students with affluent white students who will have professional portfolios and will have been prepped in giving great interviews.

I commend the push to increase diversity at the Specialized High Schools, especially in light of the continued decline in enrollment of minority students. However, I strongly feel that the restructuring of the Admissions Process is not how we will get there. I believe that access to free Test Prep for promising minority students as well as the reinstatement and expansion of the Discovery Program will serve to increase diversity.

Thank you for your time.

Cordially,
Lisandra Ortiz

Madeline Martinez
Diversity Committee Member
Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association
345 Chambers St.
New York, NY 10282

December 10, 2014

Chairman Daniel Dromm
Committee on Education
New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1826
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Dromm:

I am writing today as an alumna of Stuyvesant High School in hopes of convincing you to reject Resolution 442 before the City Council Committee on Education. I grew up in the Bronx and as one of the handful of Bronx students in my class, one of another handful of Latinos, and the *only* student from my middle school. Nonetheless, I cherish the inclusion in a tradition of over 100 years of exceptional public instruction, and as the doors of opportunity for this education are opened further to other Latino and African American students, it is pressing to ensure these new Stuyvesant students have access to the same high quality of education I had the benefit of obtaining. There is a way to preserve the legacy of the school, while also increasing underrepresented student enrollment—and both these objectives should be met when proposing a reform to the admissions criteria. Thus, I hope you may consider points on why hastily introducing an expensive, subjective, and otherwise ill-timed multiple measure component to the Specialized High School admissions process in NYC, as proposed by the language of Resolution 442 before the Education Committee today, is not the proper solution to the problem at hand. And instead, I hope your office considers the alternative solutions I suggest throughout this correspondence.

Firstly, Resolution 442, S.7738/A.9979 are unfunded mandates to introduce qualitative measures to the SHS admissions procedure, that may overwhelm an already understaffed Department of Education. Uniform quantitative benchmarks like a single score on the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHAT) not only lend themselves more readily to generating the uniform outcomes sought by advocates of Res.442., a sole criteria for admission is also less expensive for NYC to deploy over the long-term. *At the very least, it is important to proceed cautiously in supporting Resolution 442, until funding at the state-level can be secured in to facilitate the implementation of S.7738/A7798.*

Secondly, I urge the committee not to support Resolution 442 as the **first shortcoming of our S.H.A.T. is the fact that material being tested on this exam is out-of-synch with that taught to the majority of NYC's public middle schoolers, a fact unaddressed by**

Resolution 442, or S.7738/A7798. Algebra, geometry, and logic may be taught in the Dream Institute as well as Gifted & Talented classrooms, but it is not a part of the core curriculum for all 6th and 7th graders in NYC public middle schools. As such the lack of complete overlap between *content* on the exam and standard 6th and 7th grade curricula--not the fact that scores on *an* exam are used for admission--has been the systematic error eclipsing the opportunity for a majority of NYC's middle school population to attend these prized secondary institutions. However, if the SHAT were meant to test *only* that material which is taught across every public 6th and 7th grade classroom, high achievers in every public middle school classroom, irrespective of whether they were in a gifted and talent program or not, could train to excel on the exam without excessive amounts of supplementary test prep. In such a scenario it would be more likely that the socio-economic spread of all NYC public middle schoolers would be reflected in the student body of the SHs. Rationally-speaking, then, a modification of the content on the SHS should be the first remedy sought by the Committee on Education *before* supporting the addition of new burdens on the Department of Education.

Thirdly, **the admissions test has not changed in the last decade, yet, minority enrollment in the 3 most coveted high schools has dropped.** Tellingly, reductions in the budget to the publically-funded test preparation program—the Math Science Institute and its successor The Dream Institute--have occurred while fewer African American and Latino students enrolled in SHSs.¹ At the present, participants in the DREAM Institute can be selected out of the lottery because demand for a seat in the DREAM Institute can exceed number of seats available for high-achieving, low-income middle-schoolers who might benefit from public test preparation.² Accordingly, **the Committee on Education should be advocating for additional funding to the DREAM Institute that can provide seats to the public SHAT test-prep program to all students eligible under current guidelines.** This too would be a less contentious solution to the problem of under-enrollment of African American and Latino at SHSs *than supporting* Resolution 442 at this time.

Last but not least, I urge your Committee not to pass Resolution 442 because S.7738 and A.9979 include an overly ambitious and counterproductive timeline for implementing changes to the S.H.A.T. Under these State bills, the NYC Department of Education may have less than one year to craft, vet, and introduce a multiple measure admissions process across the city. More problematic still, 5 years after this multiple measure admissions is rolled-out, the legal basis for multiple measures expires. **A 5-year sunset clause of the SHAT reform in S.7738 and A.7798 make little sense in the legislation, and for that reason alone I urge the members of the City Council's Education Committee to withhold their support for Resolution 442.**

¹ Shakarian, Katrina. "The History of New York City's Special High Schools." *Gotham Gazette* 23 Oct. 2014. Web. 10 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/government/5392-the-history-of-new-york-citys-special-high-schools-timeline>>.

² Department of Education, NYC. "DREAM: Specialized High School Institute." *Specialized High School Institute*. 1 Jan. 2014. Web. 10 Dec. 2014. <<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/SHSI/default.htm>>.

All in all my message as a minority alumna of Stuyvesant High School, is: Table Resolution 442 today, and instead work transparently and collectively over the coming months with a coalition of concerned alumni, parents, students and legislators to outline a judicious reform to an admissions process that can ensure the best public secondary school education this nation has to offer, not anything less, is what is made increasingly accessible to New York City's underrepresented youth.

Yours sincerely,
Madeline Martinez

Madeline Martinez
Diversity Committee Member
Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association
345 Chambers St.
New York, NY 10282

December 11, 2014

Chairman Daniel Dromm
Committee on Education
New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1826
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Dromm:

I am writing today as an alumna of Stuyvesant High School in hopes of convincing you to reject Resolution 442 before the City Council Committee on Education. I grew up in the Bronx and as one of the handful of students from the borough in my class of more than 700 students; one of another handful of Latinos that year; and the *only* student from my middle school to attend Stuyvesant between 2000 and 2004. Although I felt some of the isolation other students of color are calling attention to in this effort to make the admissions procedures apt to capture a cross section of New York City's talented middle schoolers, I believe it is equally important to ensure that as new and deserving students are admitted into the Specialized High Schools (SHSs), they benefit from the same high caliber of education that has set apart schools like Stuyvesant High School for over a century. There is a way to preserve the legacy of the school, while also increasing underrepresented student enrollment—and both these objectives should be met when proposing a reform to the admissions criteria. Thus, I hope you may consider the following points on why hastily introducing an expensive, subjective, and otherwise ill-timed multiple measure component to the Specialized High School admissions process in NYC as proposed by the language of Resolution 442 before the Education Committee, is not the proper solution to the problem at hand. Instead, I hope your office considers the following alternatives.

Firstly, Resolution 442, S.7738/A.9979 are unfunded mandates to introduce qualitative measures to the SHS admissions procedure, that may overwhelm an already understaffed Department of Education. Uniform quantitative benchmarks like a single score on the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) not only lend themselves more readily to generating and measuring the uniformity in outcome sought by advocates of Res.442., a sole criteria for admission is also less expensive for NYC to deploy over the long-term. *As such, at the very least, it is important to proceed cautiously in supporting Resolution 442, until funding at the state-level can be secured in to facilitate the implementation of S.7738/A7798.*

Secondly, I urge the committee not to support Resolution 442 as the **first shortcoming of**

our SHSAT is the fact that material being tested on this exam is out-of-synch with that taught to the majority of NYC's public middle school classrooms, a fact unaddressed by Resolution 442, or S.7738/A7798. Algebra, geometry, and logic may be taught in the Dream Institute as well as Gifted & Talented classrooms in NYC, but it is not a part of the core curriculum for all 6th and 7th graders in NYC public schools. The lack of complete overlap between *content* on the exam and standard 6th and 7th grade curricula has been the systematic error eclipsing the opportunity for a majority of NYC's middle school population to attend these prized secondary institutions. *If the SHSAT were meant to test only that material which is taught across every public 6th and 7th grade classroom, high achievers in every public middle school classroom, irrespective of whether they were in a gifted and talent program or not, could train to excel on the exam without excessive amounts of supplementary test prep.* In such a scenario it would be more likely that the socio-economic spread of all NYC public middle schoolers would be reflected in the student body of the SHSs. Rationally-speaking, a modification of the content on the SHS should be the first remedy sought by the Committee on Education before supporting the addition of new burdens on the Department of Education.

Thirdly, **the admissions test has not changed in the last decade, yet, minority enrollment in the 3 oldest SHSs has dropped.** Tellingly, reductions in the budget to the publically-funded test preparation program—the Math Science Institute and its successor The Dream Institute—have occurred while fewer African American and Latino students enrolled in SHSs.¹ At the present, participants in the DREAM Institute can be selected out of the lottery because demand for a seat in the DREAM Institute can exceed number of seats NYC Dept. of Education makes available for high-achieving, low-income middle-schoolers who might benefit from public test prep.² Accordingly, **the Committee on Education should be advocating for additional funding to the DREAM Institute that can provide seats to the public SHSAT test-prep program to all students eligible under current guidelines before advocating on behalf of Resolution 442 at this time--the former is a lower hanging fruit.**

Last but not least, I urge your Committee not to pass Resolution 442 because S.7738 and A.9979 include an overly ambitious and counterproductive timeline for implementing changes to the SHSAT. Under these State bills, the NYC Department of Education may have less than one year to craft, vet, and introduce a multiple measure admissions process across the city. More problematic still, 5 years after this multiple measure admissions is rolled-out, the legal basis for multiple measures expires. **A 5-year sunset clause of the SHSAT reform in S.7738 and A.7798 make little sense in the legislation, and for that reason alone members of the City Council's Education Committee ought withhold their support for Resolution 442.**

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² Department of Education, NYC. "DREAM: Specialized High School Institute." *Specialized High School Institute*. 1 Jan. 2014. Web. 10 Dec. 2014. <<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/SHSI/default.htm>>.

All in all my message as a minority alumnus of Stuyvesant High School, is: Table Resolution 442 this Winter, and instead work transparently and collectively over the coming months with a coalition of concerned alumni, parents, students and legislators to outline a judicious reform to an admissions process that can ensure the best public secondary school education this nation has to offer, not anything less, is what is made increasingly accessible to New York City's underrepresented youth.

Yours sincerely,

Madeline Martinez

Class of 2004-Stuyvesant High School

Diversity Committee Member-Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association

From: Maggie Spillane

Subject: Testimony concerning School Diversity

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on today's hearing and the proposed bills.

I fully support the Council's attempts to obtain more transparency from the Department of Education concerning diversity, and to encourage the DOE to adopt school diversity as a formal goal in its planning for new schools, admissions policies and preferences, and school rezonings.

I would strongly encourage the Council to consider amending its proposed bill to encompass the following points:

- The DOE must be encouraged to take into account school diversity in its Fair Student Funding calculations and, to the extent permissible by law, its Title I funding allocations. My children attend our diverse local public school - PS 9 in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, in District 13. Our school has 800 students, almost 50% of whom are eligible for free lunch, and another 10% eligible for reduced price lunch. Due to increased diversity, the school lost its Title 1 funding in 2012. Yet, our enrollment has grown, leaving us with a school that is both *more diverse*, but also *servicing 400 low income students -- more than in 2011!-- with far less federal funding and only receiving 83% our Fair Student Funding allocations*. The resultant financial gaps are passed on to the parents, who want to keep the high quality education their kids have been receiving. This creates pressure for a school to become filled with more affluent and privileged parents, and to become more focused on raising money and less focused on supporting a community of diverse families. Once a school has reached maximum enrollment, this phenomenon can only reduce diversity.
- The DOE's strategy for diversity must not be limited to "in each district." The DOE must also have a strategy that addresses geographic regions holistically, which is how they operate in the real world, and is how families view them when it comes to school choice. Especially where so many residents are renters, with high levels of mobility, families do not feel constrained by porous borders of Districts, and will often exercise school choice across borders. This is especially the case where school segregation between District 15 and District 13 have caused stark inequities - resulting in a school that is 80% white with a \$1.3 million dollar PTA budget mere blocks from one that is 80% black with a budget of \$20,000. For the same reason, the DOE needs to consider the effects of charter school co-locations and sitings - many of which are rapidly declining in diversity and "draining" the more affluent and privileged families from district schools. For example, Brooklyn Prospect Charter school opened an elementary school in District 13 and immediately became one of the most affluent schools available to District 13, pulling kindergarten students not from the other affluent schools like PS 8 or Community Roots, but instead from diverse and diversifying schools such as PS 11, PS 282 and PS 20. Although I understand that the DOE has limited power with respect to charter schools, it can and should create strategies to support diversity in

district schools that are faced with the "competition" of new, affluent charter schools that result in increased segregation of district schools.

- I would also urge the Council to specifically request that the DOE consider the effect of choice imbalances on diversity. For example, children from affluent K-8 schools in District 13 have first priority at ongoing middle school seats yet equal priority for other district, borough- and city-wide middle schools. This structural advantage attracts disproportionately privileged families to the K-8 schools. Similarly, a system that affords broader middle school choice to an elementary school student attending school outside of her district also contributes to consolidation of affluent and privileged students at certain schools and in certain districts. There is not a logical reason to afford certain children with more choices than others, and the DOE should closely examine how doing so negatively affects diversity system-wide.

Thank you.

Maggie Spillane
159 St. Marks Ave
Brooklyn

From: Michael Ricci mrmorse1@yahoo.com

Thank you for allowing me to have some input into your decision regarding Resolution 442 which you will be discussing this morning.

I have read the Legislation Text of Res. 442 and agree that although it may be possible to have other criteria used in harmony with the SHSAT exam, race should not be included as one of them.

I have a child that has attended one of the specialized high schools in NYC and have experienced firsthand how important it is for a student to be able to perform well academically. This key ingredient for success is reflected on the SHSAT exam for admission. Typically, students are required to develop beyond the standard of average and most students over their four years at a specialized high school take not only several AP courses but have academic achievement in the 90 plus range and up. The ability to perform well academically and the willingness to do 2 to 6 hours of homework every night and part of your weekends is essential for a student to do well and succeed alongside their classmates.

If other criteria is used in the selection of students that criteria must in some way support the child's ability and willingness to perform successfully within a specialized school environment. To place students in these schools who do not have that ability or true desire would be a disaster for the student and also bring down the standards of teaching at these schools.

The specialized schools in NYC have served as a true resource in allowing students with ability to develop into some of the brightest graduates this country has to offer. The SHSAT exam is not discriminatory as you infer in your text by reference to the New York Times article because all students are allowed to take the SHSAT test and more importantly all students can get the inexpensive study guide and study for the test.

I urge your committee to think long and hard about any decision made in changing any legislation with regard to the way admission to the specialized high schools is made. These schools are perhaps one of NYC's most valuable and productive educational assets our city has to offer and most importantly one of the few educational avenues to academic success.

Thank you,

M.R.

**NYC Council Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
Testimony Submission: Nan Eileen Mead**

Good Morning. My name is Nan Eileen Mead and I am an active public school parent leader and public education advocate; currently I serve as First Vice Chair on the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC); Co-President of District 3 Presidents' Council; and PTA Vice President at my son's school, PS/IS 180 in Harlem. I graduated from the Bronx High School of Science and served as the only African American on its Alumni Board of Trustees for nine years. The opinions expressed today are mine and do not necessarily reflect those of the aforementioned organizations.

In speaking with other African American alumni of specialized high schools, there is a sense of pride among us that each of us had earned our place to be in that highly competitive environment. We did not get there because of quotas or special circumstances. We got there simply because we achieved the baseline raw score applied to everyone in order to gain admission.

I ask that before the Council considers amending the specialized high schools admissions process itself – which I am sure others will testify is a costly endeavor - that you consider other alternatives. The DREAM –SHSI (Specialized High Schools Institute) test preparation program for low-income students is one avenue that requires closer examination. The program is administered by DOE's Office of Equity and Access. The program begins for 6th graders and runs for 22 months until those students take the SHSAT. It meets at least weekly during the school year and several times a week during the summer months.

The DOE website states that “offer letters to students for placement ...will be generated through a **random selection process**... Should the number of eligible applicants exceed the number of available seats...participants will be **randomly selected** from the pool of eligible candidates. Students who are offered a placement in the program must attend a mandatory orientation with a parent or guardian to finalize acceptance of the offer...**DREAM – SHSI will be offered at 20 locations throughout the five boroughs.** Students who are offered a placement in the program will be advised of program locations in their offer letter from the Division of Equity and Access.” The implication here, of course, is that the DREAM program levels the playing field through its “random” selection process and 20 locations.

What it doesn't say is that Stuyvesant High School in lower Manhattan is **only** DREAM-SHSI location offered to students at my son's Harlem based school who are accepted into the program each year. We do not know whether there are other sites in Manhattan that may be more convenient, because the DOE does not publish the list of sites. It is 9 miles between my son's school and Stuyvesant and takes about an hour on

**NYC Council Hearing on Diversity in New York City Schools
and Proposed Int. No. 511-A, Res. 453 & Res. 442
Testimony Submission: Nan Eileen Mead**

the subway each way. I would argue that it is onerous to expect a 12 year old to travel 9 or more miles on the subway several times a month for the better part of 2 years. Is this equitable if we are looking to boost participation of underrepresented minorities? If there are 20 test sites across the city, why do none of them service upper Manhattan?

To date the DOE has not released a breakdown of demographic data based on ethnicity of student applicants vs. those accepted vs those who actually attend. So I will offer my own data points. The first is that in 2013, East-West School of International Studies in Flushing proudly boasted that 28 of its 6th graders were accepted in to the DREAM program. Middle school enrollment is 272, so approximately 90 students in each grade. While acknowledging that there are “feeder” schools, I question whether the admission of a full third of one school’s 6th grade cohort could be called truly random. Compare that with the 5 students at my son’s Harlem based school (out of the 6 who qualified and applied out of a cohort of 60) who were accepted to the DREAM-SHSI program this year. It is unclear as yet whether the 5 students will accept; **the primary reason why they wouldn’t is the travel time involved.**

I respectfully ask that the council consider measures to encourage expansion of the DREAM-SHSI program, to provide full transparency on the demographic breakdown of students accepted into the program, the locations offered to the students and their geographic proximity to the communities in which they serve. Thank you for your time.

Thank you for the invitation to the public oversight hearing on diversity and NYS Resolution 442. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend this hearing; however, I'd like to testify via email.

My testimony concerns NYS Resolution 442, which seeks to change the admissions criteria for the Specialized High Schools. I am against this resolution.

The resolution seeks to add grades, attendance, and state test scores to admissions criteria in an attempt to promote diversity. However, diversity should not come at the expense of standards.

That racial/ethnic disparities in specialized high school admissions exist does not mean that the SHSAT is flawed. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that racial/ethnic "gaps" exist in the Advanced Placement, SAT, and ACT exams, as well as the TIMSS and the "Nation's Report Card," the NAEP. Incidentally, the gaps also exist in state test scores. Are all of these tests "flawed?"

A secondary risk of modifying the specialized school admissions process for diversity's sake is cheating. As the high-profile Atlanta Public School system cheating scandal shows, placing emphasis on closing so-called "achievement gaps" between racial/ethnic groups may worsen educational outcomes rather than improve them.

Lastly, given that large proportions of specialized school student bodies are of Asian descent, one can argue that the current admissions process already promotes diversity, to a degree.

As a Brooklyn Tech alumnus of Hispanic descent (class of 2003; part Dominican part Puerto Rican), I understand the difficulty of gaining admission to a specialized school (I made it in by only 2 points); however, I graduated with an 88.95 cumulative average. As such, I believe the SHSAT works as a measure of merit - and the specialized school admission process should remain merit-based. I maintain my opposition to Res. 442 on these grounds.

Sincerely,
Nelson Beltran



**Testimony Submitted on behalf of Rhea Wong
Executive Director
Breakthrough New York**

**Hearing before the City Council Education Committee
250 Broadway, New York
December 11, 2014**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Breakthrough New York (BTNY) is a six-year college access program committed to getting high-potential, low-income students to four-year colleges. We provide after-school tutoring and summer enrichment programs to New York City public middle school students, providing them with the academic preparation and guidance they need to be able to attend selective four-year colleges.

It's worth noting, since diversity is a focus of this hearing, that out of BTNY's 275 students, 38% are Black and 25% are Latino/Hispanic.

A crucial step in our program is helping students get into high schools that meet our "college prep" standard, which is based on criteria such as curriculum rigor, SAT scores, number of graduates who enroll in four-year colleges, and counselor-to-student ratio.

Last year, all 52 of our eighth-graders were accepted at college prep high schools, including 21 who were accepted at a Specialized High School.

Tragically, however, 421 of the city's 452 public high schools are *not* college prep, so the vast majority of students attend a school that doesn't adequately prepare them for college admission and success.

As a result, all students suffer. According to a 2010 Alliance for New York City Schools study, only 9% of Black males and 11% of Latino males graduated "college ready." Meanwhile, students at college prep schools miss out on the diversity and broad spectrum of perspectives that would enrich their learning environments.

The most impactful solution would be large-scale improvements to the city's high schools, and increased academic rigor at the middle schools. But most immediately, the city's 31 college prep high schools must adopt and engage in admissions policies and practices that increase their number of qualified Black and Latino students.

For the Specialized High Schools, we support Resolution 0442. The admissions criteria should be reevaluated – as long as it's done thoughtfully, and changes do not dilute the quality of student or quality of education. I would like to reiterate this point: the Specialized schools are jewels of our school system, and I oppose any action that would weaken them.

However, it is possible to alter the admissions criteria, keeping the test as a central part of the process, while also considering other factors like grade point average, attendance, and leadership potential. Such measures represent an opportunity to strengthen the Specialized schools, not weaken them.

At BTNY, for example, we have many students who don't score high enough on the test to be admitted to a Specialized school, yet would have excelled at those schools and enriched their learning communities. We have other students who do score high enough but turn down Specialized schools because of their lack of diversity. Last year, a BTNY student was one of only seven Black students offered admission at Stuyvesant, but he opted to go to a Massachusetts boarding school instead, partly because the student body was more diverse there.

With the test remaining a crucial part of the process, affordable test prep must be made more available, particularly in Black and Latino communities. We provide test prep to students whose families otherwise wouldn't be able to afford it, which is why so many of our students get into the Specialized schools.

Beyond the Specialized schools, there are 22 other college prep high schools in the city. But many of these schools' admissions processes are downright secretive, with tours, application passwords, and interview dates that aren't publicized in many Black and Latino communities. These are *public* schools that should be accessible to all who meet the admissions standards. Administrators must increase – or in many cases begin – outreach to communities where families haven't traditionally considered college-prep high schools.

The City Department of Education deserves credit for expanding high school admissions resources, but it can do more to help students identify which schools will truly prepare their child for college. The DOE's directory, for example, lists the percentage of each school's students who "enroll in college or career programs after graduating," but it doesn't list the percentage of students who enroll in *four-year* colleges, a better indicator of success. Average SAT scores and counselor-to-student ratios also should be added.

The failure of most of the city's high schools to prepare students for college should alarm parents, educators and policymakers. Large-scale improvements will require bold ideas and a long-term vision. The least we can do now is ensure that admissions policies and practices allow more qualified Black and Latino students to attend our city's few college prep high schools.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Education Committee,

I am testifying in opposition to resolution 442. While increasing diversity is laudable, altering the schools' entrance requirements will prove damaging to both future students and the advanced educational programs at Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, and Brooklyn Tech (hereafter "Specialized High Schools").

To be fair, I should introduce myself. After attending public schools in Queens; I sat for the SHSAT in the 1973/4 academic year, I was accepted at Bronx Science, from which I graduated in 1977. As a senior, I was recruited to New York University by the late Professor Jacob T. Schwartz (an alumnus of both City College and Stuyvesant). I received my B.A. in Computer Science in 1981 and my M.S. in 1983 en route to my still uncompleted Ph.D. Since then, I have published 10 book chapters and over 100 articles in the field. I have also spoken internationally over 100 times. In 2004, the IEEE Computer Society appointed me to a three-year term with its Distinguished Visitors Program. During that appointment, I spoke at over thirty locations through North America, including the Los Alamos National Laboratory and Canada's National Research Council.

I am certainly not a fan of high-stakes testing. I seriously doubt that anyone is. That said, the SHSAT, PSAT, SAT, ACH, AP, GRE, Written and Oral comprehensive graduate examinations have been a backdrop to my academic life for over 40 years. Gateway examinations are a fact of academic life.

We must be careful to distinguish between equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes. An examination such as the SHSAT is the only non-discriminatory, totally objective mechanism to create a ranked list of candidates. The examination is blind to race, gender, income, orientation, and political influence. If there are identifiable biases, we must carefully consider their source. If the source is cultural, the test should be fixed. Biases that spotlight educational gaps (e.g., difficulties with fractions), are not a problem with the examination; but rather expose problems (and needed corrections) far earlier in the educational pipeline.

Assessing bias is complicated. The often cited statistics are gross enrollment rates. However, a more accurate assessment would be to compare the passing rates of students with comparable backgrounds. If the SHSAT produces results distributed similarly to those for the mandatory NY State Competency tests. I seriously

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doubt that students who achieve high scores on other tests find the SHSAT difficult.

Other criteria (e.g., attendance, grades, and portfolios) are far more subjective. Attendance speaks to dedication and good luck; it says nothing about academic skills. Grading varies tremendously between different schools and different teachers and classes within schools. Portfolio evaluation is notoriously subject to the biases of reviewers, something I regrettably have encountered first-hand in my post-graduate career. I have seen reviewers rate the same piece of work across the spectrum, from brilliant to junk.

Other high schools have used other criteria for ranking candidates for admission. If these methods yielded superior results, these other schools would be out achieving the strict exam schools. However, no one has suggested that this is the case.

There is also no proof that changing the admissions process would produce the desired diversity. The decision to attend a Specialized High School is based upon many factors. It is a commitment to undertake an extended daily commute (in my case, 1¼ hours each way), a course-load heavier than at local schools, and the corresponding extra homework.

My experience is illustrative. I attended IS 25 in Bayside/Flushing, which at the time fed from Districts 25 and 26, some of better school districts in our City. Approximately 25% of the 600 students in my grade were enrolled in classes for intellectually advanced students, designated SPE. Of those 125 students, only a handful opted to take the SHSAT, and, to the best of my knowledge, only **TWO** elected to attend Bronx Science. I well remember the discussion at the time. Most students considered the extra work and long commute not worth the effort.

The perception that attending a Specialized High School is significantly more work than a standard high school program is often correct. Had I not dropped one of my three AP courses in my senior year, I would have had a nine-period day each and every day for 10th, 11th, and 12th grades (not including extra curricular activities). My program was not unusual.

There has been much discussion about the impact of test preparation programs. The belief that an expensive test preparation class is necessary is, I believe, unfounded. I took the SHSAT with no special preparation or study, as did many of my

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fellow Science alumni. However, at that time all of us were routinely achieving high marks on similar examinations.

My perspective on preparation has recently changed. Recently, I had to sit for the GRE. Not having sat for a similar test in over 30 years, the experience was illuminating. I was surprised by how much better I did on practice examinations after spending several weeks taking practice examinations. Looking solely at scores conflates at least two distinct issues. There are at least two components to test preparation; familiarity with the types of problems/test formats; and the requisite underlying knowledge. Lack of familiarity with the test problems and their formats can be quickly learned; gaps in fundamental knowledge are harder to overcome.

Intervention in the 8th grade is far too late. Preparation for intense academics is an extended, cumulative process. To improve diversity, it is necessary to improve the foundation, starting at elementary school-level. I remember reading The NY Times when in 1st grade.

Diversity changes over time. When I attended Bronx Science, the Discovery program allowed disadvantaged students who almost made the cutoff score to gain admittance. Anecdotally, I heard mixed results. I surmise that those students closer to the cutoff did better than those whose scores were lower in the band. I also heard stories of some students who elected to transfer out of Science due to the workload. This program was in effect for an extended period, and the student's records exist. Before undertaking any changes, we should examine this data. The data exists; there is no need to turn future students into guinea pigs.

The Specialized High Schools represent a unique resource. They are one of the greatest achievements of public education in our city. These schools have, and will hopefully continue, to produce Nobel Prize winners, leading researchers, and other professionals.

I would not be where I am professionally had I not attended Science. As I noted earlier, I was brought to NYU by a Stuyvesant alumnus. Several of my professors at NYU were Science alumni. My classmates are researchers, professors, physicians, attorneys, teachers, and other professionals. One of the members of my graduating class, Jean Donohue, Ph.D., is presently the Principal at Bronx Science.

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In closing, the Specialized High Schools should retain their present admissions criteria, with a revitalization of the Discovery program in some form. Information about the opportunities for advanced study at these schools should be made available to **ALL** New York students, beginning at the elementary school level. Enrichment and preparation should be available for those who desire it. In their present form, with their present entrance requirements, Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, and Brooklyn Tech are vital resources for our City.

Robert Gezelter <Gezelter@rlgsc.com>

Honorable Members of the City Council:

As a graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School and as a son of this city, I respectfully ask that each of you, as our legislative leaders, preserve Brooklyn Tech's entrance exam, upholding my alma mater's high standards. I believe this will afford future generations a continued assurance of unparalleled educational excellence, all while promoting the true fairness and diversity that accompanies true merit standards.

The City Council vote on Resolution 442, calling on the State Legislature and Governor to scrap the Specialized High School Admissions Test and substitute subjective criteria for gaining admission to the eight test-in specialized high schools in New York City, deserves a NO vote for a simple reason: it will deprive future students of the knowledge that their own academic achievement is inspired and measured against the best and most deserving students in the city, and that each and every student among them — regardless of race, creed, origin, sexual orientation — is unquestionably in that group based on merit. This is especially so in the case of Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science, and Stuyvesant, which have long been held to this standard. Earlier generations of Tech students, and the other schools' alumni, are all aware of this. Don't taint my school's legacy and our future graduates with a degree based on a watered-down, second-class, less rigorous standard.

The education at Tech provided us who experienced it with a foundation in and a profound respect for mathematics, science and technology that we've incorporated into our professional lives, which, in turn, has benefited New York City and the region every day. The aptitude of those with whom we studied and their abilities had a profound effect on our educational experience, along with our teachers' knowledge that they were holding a select group of students from every neighborhood, ethnic group, and socioeconomic class to the highest standards. Using a test guarantees an admissions system free of favoritism and bias because it bases selection for admission solely on merit, and on an objectively demonstrated capacity to do advanced college level course work required of all students. An education at Tech was, to my mind, better than any education at any private or prep school. And that's a public school-availability standard to able kids from all walks of life that we don't want to lose.

Robert M. McGee
7714 11th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11228
Graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School, 1970

From: Shanai Watson

Subject: Written testimony for the record at Thursday's hearing on 0442

Dear City Council Members,

Please vote no on Resolution 0442. As a black female alumnae of Stuyvesant High School, class of 2003, I write to ask you, the City Council's Committee on Education, not to give up on the idea of black students gaining admission to Stuyvesant through the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). I know that, with good intentions, you are currently considering a measure to change the current admissions criterion to a new system consisting of multiple "objective" measures of student merit. However, those measures – including grade point averages, school attendance records, school admission test scores and state test scores – are no more guaranteed to be objective than the SHSAT itself, and will not solve the true problem.

While I applaud your efforts to encourage diversity, I must ask that you change the methods to one more precisely aimed at the problem. Please focus on efforts to increase the number of black and Latino students who are sufficiently prepared to pass the admissions test.

I personally benefited from a public test prep program known as the Math Science Institute (MSI). I was selected based on promising standardized test scores in junior high, and subsequently spent over a year preparing to take the SHSAT. During that time I went from minimal familiarity with the type of mathematics on the admissions test to someone who not only learned to "beat the test," but a student who also genuinely improved her math skills to a more grade-appropriate level.

I know that, for various legal and financial reasons, MSI no longer exists. But please focus on creating an updated equivalent. Do not abandon hope that there is a way to give black and Latino NYC students the skills needed for admission to the Specialized High Schools.

I cannot say that the current SHSAT is unbiased and completely objective – it should still be verified, questioned, and perfected as needed. However, I do not think that eliminating the test as the sole admissions criterion will do anything but distract from the most important issue: black and Latino student preparation.

Attending Stuyvesant H.S. was one of the best experiences of my young life, and has helped me become the person I am today. Please do not deny other black and Latino students the opportunity to gain admission to a school that is partially considered elite based on its current admissions criterion. If you change how students are admitted and ignore the need for test prep programs for black and Latino students, the heart of the problem will remain unaddressed. Diversity may or may not increase, but our communities will be no better off if our children are not caught up and prepared for that test.

Please, vote NO on Resolution 0442-2014.

Sincerely,

Ms. Watson, Esq.

Stuyvesant H.S., 2003

Harvard University, 2007

Stanford University, 2011

Stanford Law School, 2011

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Ms. Watson, Esq.

Stanford Law School, J.D., 2011

Stanford University, M.A.P.P., 2011

Harvard University, B.A., 2007

**REMARKS OF SHERYL E. REICH TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION - HEARING ON RESOLUTION 442/2014
DECEMBER 11, 2014**

I am a parent of a junior at Stuyvesant High School. We encouraged him to go to Stuyvesant because we believed that Stuyvesant was a meritocracy, where students from diverse backgrounds, all sharing a singular ability to focus and to work very hard, would come together to form a stimulating learning environment.

We have learned that it is extraordinarily difficult to succeed academically at Stuyvesant. It takes not just a bright and capable student, but a particular kind of student. Each student has to want to be there and be willing to work hard every day – at the expense of his or her social and cultural life. And also often at the expense of his or her participation in family events.

In our view, the SHSAT is the best measure currently under consideration for predicting the likelihood of success at Stuyvesant. It is possible that there are additional criteria that would refine the prediction of success, such as attendance history and grades. But the fuzzy criteria that have been bandied about, including interviews, essays and teacher recommendations, are not measures of success at Stuyvesant. Criteria that are intended simply to push more blacks and Hispanics into the school are not appropriate academically and are, in my view, an insult to those groups.

Make no mistake – it is a scandal that blacks and Hispanics are so profoundly under-represented in the student body. But changing the criteria for admission for the purpose of increasing the numbers is simply kicking the failure ball down the road. Or, worse, pressuring Stuyvesant to dilute its standards when it finds it has enrolled students who not only have no demonstrated ability to do the work demanded of them but in fact cannot do the work.

Moreover, I have seen no data on how many blacks, Hispanics or students identified with other under-represented groups put Stuyvesant as their first choice. Until we know that the rate of failure to be selected for Stuyvesant is disproportional it seems to me that the focus is on the wrong end of the process. If they are not applying, then it is not the SHSAT that is keeping them out.

Finally, even if it were, the problem would not be that the SHSAT, which is a successful predictor of success, results in under-representation. The problem is that blacks and Hispanics are doing poorly on the test or not taking the test at all. Stuyvesant is not for everyone. But for those who want to go there, or who are encouraged to go there, the answer is preparing them for the test, not doing away with the test.

We are at a moment where we can either face the fact that the elementary and middle schools are themselves failing blacks and Hispanics, or we can take the destructive route of blaming it on the test and letting the result be someone else's problem to deal with later.

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Testimony re:resolution 442.

Thanks so much for the opportunity to weight in on the resolution to change the admissions criteria for the City's specialized high schools.

I understand that the changes have been requested due to the low number of blacks and Hispanics in these schools. These two groups make up 70% of the population but only 12% of students enrolled in the specialized high schools.

I am opposed to trying to level out the makeup of the student population. These schools were designed for the cream of the crop, the best of the best, and to separate them out from the general population. Why would we wish to undo this by making the population more homogeneous. Those students who succeed in being invited to attend a specialized high school work very, very hard to achieve this goal. Lets not take anything away from these students, whether they be naturally gifted or extremely driven to achieve high levels of academic performance.

Vote no on resolution 442.

Thanks,
Steve Minkoff

From: Tanya Khotin
Subject: SHSAT testimony

Thank you in advance for reviewing this.

Unfortunately, i'm unable to make the hearing, but i wanted to provide my testimony. This is what i sent to a number of public officials:

All,

as a parent of a 9th grader and a 6th grader in NYC public schools, I urge you to Vote NO to Resolution 0442-2014 and Resolution 0453-2014.

Reso 0442-2014 calls on the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S07738 / A09979 to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools. I disagree. I believe strongly, that using the SHSAT to competitively identify high achieving students is appropriate because it is unbiased, objective, and transparent. I further disagree with Reso 0453-2014 as it relates to the specialized high schools admissions, setting diversity as a priority.

The dismally low enrollment of Blacks and Latinos at these specialized high schools can be blamed on the abysmal state of public education in NYC and negligence—in 2014 only a paltry 2.1% of Blacks and 2.8% Hispanics in eighth grade scored high enough on the State Assessment[1] to be considered better than just passing!

Don't hurt our students and schools. Don't change the objective test as the single admissions criterion to New York City's Specialized High Schools.

The SHSAT tests needed skills: The SHSAT tests eighth graders on basic math, verbal and reasoning skills needed to succeed in the Specialized High Schools.

The SHSAT is fair and objective: The SHSAT allows no subjective or manipulable criteria to taint the test. Everyone takes the same test.

No bias in grading happens. Who a student's parents are, how wealthy or poor, what religion, race, or jobs are in a student's background don't count.

Changing the single objective test hurts the poor: About 60% of the students at Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech are economically disadvantaged, qualifying for reduced or free lunch. Many of these Title I students are from poor immigrant families, whose parents work in minimum wage jobs and don't speak English. So-called holistic admissions would penalize the poor student and family who must often all hours to survive and cannot afford time or money for extracurriculars.

Changing the single objective test hurts successful hard-working STEM

students: Currently there is a high percentage of Asian-Americans; formerly the largest percentage was Jewish. Now the Bangladeshis are the fastest growing group. Over time, the students' backgrounds change, but the students all share academic achievement and interest in the STEM areas that allow them to succeed at these STEM schools. Students not interested or able in STEM have many other options.

Changing the admissions criterion and focusing on diversity, defined in terms of African American and Hispanic students... clearly, there are a great many diverse ethnicities in the Asian population, only hides problems.

K-8 education is failing large groups in the city: Black students used to attend the Specialized High Schools in higher numbers. But now, when 88% of 8th grade Black students in NYC fail basic state academic requirements,[2] the pool of Black students who can pass the SHSAT test and then succeed at the Specialized High Schools is small. Only 2.1% of Black and 2.8% Hispanic eighth grade students do better than passing basic state math requirements. The pool is made even smaller when many of the best Black students choose other options such as private prep schools. Fix the K-8 schools. That would increase the pool of Blacks and other underrepresented groups who pass state academic requirements, and better yet, exceed the state requirements.

Diversity as a simplistic end only harms: To force diversity without considering the wide range of issues involved would only further mask the root problems that need to be addressed. It does not solve the main problem that some schools are producing only students who are not high-performing. It does not address the question of merit. Diversity without improving K-8 only perpetuates and worsens the problem of failing students and schools. Thus, Resolution 0453 is short-sighted as written and should not be passed.

Using a single, objective test admissions criterion for nearly a hundred years is the successful process that produced generations of contributors to STEM and fourteen Nobel Prize winners (including African Americans)— it in fact gave New York two high schools that have graduated both the greatest and the second greatest number of Nobel Prize Winners from individual high schools around the world. By changing the test for reasons outside academic skills, you risk destroying the best schools in the city.

Fix the K-8 problem to help the under-represented groups; don't destroy the test which reveals the problem.

And while you're at it, eliminate the priority status that District 2 non-specialized high schools have currently in terms of admissions. D2 is double the size of the second largest district in the city, making it the most politically powerful. Perhaps it's not a coincidence that it is also home to 5 of the most selective non-specialized high schools in NYC. Students who live in D2 or attend middle schools in D2 are the only students in the city that have the privilege and advantage of having priority access to so many sought-after seats. By retaining the priority for D2 students, these schools are simply off limits to students elsewhere in the city, regardless of those

students' qualifications, as the algorithm that's used puts Districts and Boroughs in different buckets, whereby D2 is first, followed by Manhattan residents and then the rest of the boroughs -- I have personally been witness to a school administrator telling a Queens and a Brooklyn family not even bother applying (because D2 is top category, following by the student's Borough). Given the geographic convenience of D2 schools (vs most of the specialized high schools), it adds insult to injury.

This is the most egregious, unequal access opportunity situation we have in the city, not the SHSAT. The D2 priority puts zip code above any other criteria. Focusing on the SHSAT, the only completely objective system that exists in the city, while not even raising the D2 priority situation, just underscores how politicized decisions are. Nobody is thinking about students, just the next elections. Prove us wrong - prove that you're putting students first.

Vote NO to Reso 0442 and Reso 0453.

Thank you.

Theresa Leary

There are quite a few reasons that I do not feel admissions criteria should be changed.

1. The specialized schools are for the "gifted & talented", if a student cannot pass a test, they are not gifted. If a student is a high achieving student and does not get accepted, they will still do well wherever they go and may end up being the valedictorian at their second choice school, something that has a slim chance of happening at a specialized high school.
2. Not all students who are regarded as academically talented in their middle school will perform at a high level at a specialized high school. It is an adjustment going from middle school straight to college level work.
3. Adding more supplemental portions to the application can make admissions skewed. For example, at my brother's middle school only the PTA members' children were in the "honors" classes, leaving my brother boxed out as my parents work, despite him achieving perfect scores on all city wide exams in elementary and middle school. My parents made numerous complaints to the DOE and to the Chancellor of Schools only to have everyone they spoke to tell them it is up to the administrators and Principal to choose which students are in certain classes.
4. Despite my brother having an overall 100% average GPA in middle school and achieving PERFECT scores on his standardized exams, not receiving prep besides studying at the library or receiving any resources from his school to take the SHSAT, he was admitted to SI Technical HS. If he had to get a letter of rec. from his Principal or AP they wouldn't have written it because they only favored the PTA children and believe it or not were upset when my brother and all his friends in the regular classes were accepted into the Specialized High Schools and not one of their precious honors kids. If it were based on transcripts and level of challenging courses, my brother and his classmates from IS 7 wouldn't have been accepted since they were not given the proper opportunity.
5. One test is the only fair way to gain admissions to the specialized high schools for the gifted and talented so no other criteria or political nonsense of NYC may skew the admissions process.

Thank you so much for the invitation to testify concerning Resolution 442. However, at this late hour I find myself unable to escape work obligations. I hope that you will not construe my absence to mean I do not recognize the significance of Resolution 442. I certainly do.

I know that passing such legislation will reintroduce subjectivity to the Specialized High School admissions process. As a result, bright students with little academic ambition as well as ambitious students with little academic ability will crowd the halls of the Specialized High Schools and dilute what had once been a scholarly environment. A place where students were driven by each other as much, or more, than their teachers. The test provides a means to this environment for any student who possesses the ability to pass it. Meritocracy. It isn't a bad idea, really. The end of the meritocracy. That is a bad idea.

Subjectivity had been eliminated by the test that Resolution 442 now seeks to eliminate. Admission by testing is not only straightforward, it is a competitive approach. In a sense, this means some kids "win" while others "lose". My daughter spent hundreds of after school hours studying in the years leading to her exam in 2013. She stressed for the weeks following the exam and in the weeks prior to the announcement of results. We all found this experience to be extremely stressful. Her effort was not passive. Her effort was intense. Her effort was focused. To say that I am proud of her is an understatement. To say that another kid deserves her seat more than she does is unconscionable.

The test nets a pool of individuals who are both talented AND motivated. They are the catalysts for each others academic achievement. Do all kids deserve an opportunity for admission into this environment? Yes, they do. Are they owed admission? No, they are not. Is this opportunity denied by the exam? No, it is not. The opportunity is denied to many of these children, repeatedly, before they reach middle school. They are failed by their elementary education that never stimulated their interest. They are failed by the various incarnations of the Department of Education, all of which seemed bent on striving for sameness. They are failed by the politicians of this city, state and country who misplace fault then waste time, energy and money fixing things that aren't broken and ignoring those things that are but are too difficult to fix. Most of all, they are failed by their parents and guardians, who do not adequately instill the importance of education but rather instill a sense of entitlement. The opportunity to take an exam is guaranteed while the ability to pass it is must be mustered by the student. It is not the fault of the exam that it can not be passed by every student who takes it. Any student can take the exam. In fact, any fair student can pass the exam. However, only those who are diligent in their studies will.

If we continue to strive for mediocrity, how can we expect to ever achieve excellence? I know that you all recognize this fact. I believe some council members find the notion that some get and some do not is not congruent with the platform of equality. (I noted the post script on the council's email... 'P.S. If you would like to stay up-to-date and involved in the Council's efforts to help make New York a more equal and just city, please click [here](#) or visit us online at www.council.nyc.gov.') Mediocrity is not the same as equality. The council would better serve this city by developing programs to captivate and motivate children who are seen as left behind by these exams. Promote academic excellence, do not condemn an institution which does so. Please consider these thoughts when voting on Resolution 442.

Many Thanks,
Thomas Malloy

To whom it may concern,

I would like to take a moment now to stress the importance of the specialized high school exam. I believe that it is possible to get an unbiased measure of a child's ability from a single exam, from this single exam. This is an unbiased exam that is solely based on their academic ability. In this case the test specifically addresses, the knowledge the child has learned up to this point which will lead them into their high school years and will evaluate them on their level of preparedness for an accelerated program. Exams like this are utilized for effectiveness to measure such qualities of a child.

To integrate subjective measures like GPA and teacher recommendations is not necessarily fair because it makes the admissions process appear biased. Middle schools do not share curricula or testing practices so this would allow biased information and singular opinions into this process. A 4.0 in one school does not necessarily equate to one in another school. Grading and evaluation techniques vary from teacher to teacher and across schools. It is for these reasons that STANDARDIZED exams and evaluations have been created as valid measures of a child's ability and projected future competencies.

The easiest remedy to this issue is to continue with the specialized high school exam and to provide opportunities to children who do not have the ability to access "outside" resources for exam practice. I am however having a hard time believing that any teacher anywhere would refuse a student extra help if they asked! Perhaps it would be possible for the Council or the NAACP to fund some programs in middle schools during school hours with exam practice, study guides and additional tutoring for those who perhaps would have difficulties acquiring additional help on their own. The make-up of the school has to remain consistent with students who want and deserve to be there because of their hard work! The machines that grade these tests are not discriminatory or biased and therefore very objective!

Thank You,
Tina Tedesco
Parent and Educator

From: Tresa

Subject: Demand that the Mayor Support Diversity in City Schools: Testimony for the City Council Hearing

My name is Tresa Elguera and I am a parent at Arts and Letters in Clinton Hill. I am also a teacher and understand the value of having a heterogenous classroom. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, as was my mother, and I've watched the neighborhoods change and and the incredible influx of money in the last period of time.

There is a problem growing in our neighborhoods, which is the increasing desegregation of our schools. That is good for no one. The Mayor and the Chancellor have the power to fix this. It is within their authority to organize enrollment preferences that control for poverty. What Arts and Letters has asked for is that 40 percent of the seats we have AFTER granting sibling preference be reserved for lower income students. This is not even a large number of seats. We would also like sibling preference to be extended to include younger siblings of those already in our middle school, something which would have increased the diversity in the current Kindergarten class by a significant percentage.

Given the domestic events of the recent period, it is ever clearer that black boys and white boys need to be in the same classes, that people with little or no access to financial resources need to be in the same classes as people who have those resources. We need to learn from very early that we are all human, with strengths and struggles and that we all have something to offer and something to learn.

The research on the value of diversity in the classroom is clear and you don't need me to repeat it. The statistics on diversity in our city schools are also clear and do not require repeating. What we ask is that you lead with your conscience, that you set an example and demand that the Mayor and the Chancellor stand by their commitments to diverse communities that serve all New Yorkers.

Leadership positions provide opportunities to make real differences. Let's use those opportunities in ways that demonstrate our values and principles and that can make a lasting difference in the lives of children and our city for generations.

To the members of the City Council of New York,

My name is Yusef Johnson. At the present, I am employed as a trajectory analyst at the Kennedy Space Center, supporting NASA's Launch Services Program. I have been here for two years, coming here after the end of the Space Shuttle Program, where I supported 27 Space Shuttle missions as a flight controller in NASA's Mission Control Center. And I am proud to say that I am a product of the New York City Public School System.

I write this letter in response after seeing an article in the Daily News, regarding the proposed changes to admissions to the Specialized High Schools, which includes my alma mater, Brooklyn Tech. I ask that you reconsider your proposal. In the opinion of many alumni, including those like me who are Black and Latino, doing so would do a disservice to those schools, and the students that have attended them throughout the years. Ask any of us, and you will get a resounding NO to your proposal. Doing so would cut to the very heart of the schools, and the excellence that they represent.

We see the drop in Black and Latino students at the school. All of us will tell you that the lack of Black and Latino students is the first thing that we notice when we visit our schools. It pains all of us. But changing the admissions process is not the answer.

The test is color-blind. The test is gender-blind. And from what I understand, great care is taken in the preparation of the test to insure that questions are not unfavorable to those in lower economic strata. To the contrary of what many on the outside believe, the test has provided an opportunity to many children, who like myself, hailed from very low places on the economic scale of New York City. I spent my early years in Crown Heights (living in Albany Projects) and

spent my teenage years in Section 8 housing on the Lower East Side. Yet I was able to meet the standard for admission to Brooklyn Tech.

How was I able to meet this standard, but yet so many children today cannot? It is indeed a multi-faceted problem that needs to be attacked from many vectors. I will discuss only a couple here.

First off, so many children who come from majority Black and Latino neighborhoods are trapped in schools that do not adequately prepare them. This is fact. What truly saddens me is how schools that were traditional pipelines of Black and Latino students to the Specialized High Schools, such as Phillippa Schuyler, have been in serious decline in recent years. I'm not an educator, but there are more than enough studies detailing the deficiencies in schools in Brownsville, Bed-Stuy, the Lower East Side, the South Bronx, and similar neighborhoods. A change to the admissions process will not change this. To the contrary, it will do the student more of a disservice to admit them to a Specialized High School when they are ill prepared to perform the rigorous work.

Second, I'm sure that we could have a long discussion regarding parental priorities. The sad truth is that too many Black and Latino parents do not take a proactive approach to the education of their children. I'll let others discuss the various socio-economic reasons for this, but the sad truth is the truth. I personally can tell you about my working single mom went up at the school on a regular basis, making her presence felt. Heck, I can tell you a story about how a guidance counselor at JHS 104 tried to tell me that I would've been better off at a vocational high school than Brooklyn Tech. The police had to be called when my mother went up there the next day. How many parents would have just taken that guidance counselor's words and just accepted it?

Or even worse, how many teachers will tell you about the lack of Black and Latino parents on open school night, or the lack of participation in PTA activities? This has nothing to do with the admissions process.

I could go on and on about the reasons why Black and Latino kids are not getting into the Specialized High Schools. I would suggest that you read a white paper drafted by Larry Cary, president of the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation. In it, Mr. Cary details steps that the Department of Education should take in order to increase the Black and Latino population at the schools. You can read it at www.bths.edu. Tech alumni are already at the forefront trying to address the issue, by hosting free test preparation at points around the city.

Scrapping the test is but a cosmetic solution to the bigger problem of failing elementary and middle schools, and lack of parental involvement. I respectfully ask that you reconsider your proposal and spend your resources on fixing the true problems.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Yusef Johnson

Flight Design Engineer

Launch Services Program

Kennedy Space Center

Yusef.johnson@nasa.gov

W.L."Zev" <wlzev@aol.com>

The admissions test for Stuyvesant provides fair and impartial admissions criteria. What is needed is both better education at the elementary, middle and junior high levels for those students showing academic promise. It is at those lower levels that more subjective criteria can, and should, be used to identify gifted children and place them in programs that will prepare them to take the entrance exams for the various specialized high schools. Just as a music student must practice a candidate for Stuyvesant must read and read while also taking the math and science courses available. These courses, together with widely accessible libraries should be made available to all lower as school students throughout NYC.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ursulina Ramirez

Address: 52 Chambers

I represent: DOE

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ainsley Rudolph

Address: 52 Chambers St.

I represent: DOE

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rob Sanft

Address: 52 Chambers St

I represent: DOE

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: Dec 11, 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eric Aron

Address: 100 Bleeker St. Apt. 14E

I represent: Myself (alumnus)

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442-2014

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-11-2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Pamela L. Skinner, LMSW

Address: 35-24 78th St. Apt A59

I represent: Blacks + Browns of the Big 3, Inc.

Address: same as above.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: Dec 11, 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: STANLEY BLUMENSTEIN

Address: 1550 MOFFITT Avenue Hempst, NY

I represent: TL BRONX High School of Science

Address: 205 street BRONX NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Trapp

Address: 37 William St Northampton MA

I represent: self

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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ~~Lara Treschan~~ Lazar Treschan

Address: _____

I represent: Community Service Society of New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 511-A Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Randi Levine

Address: _____

I represent: Advocates for Children of New York

Address: 151 W 30th St, 5th Fl, NY, NY 10001

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dennis Parker

Address: 125 Broad Street

I represent: ACLU + NYCLU

Address: 125 Broad Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/10/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Liat Silbermann

Address: 150 Chambers St #4E

I represent: parent at Stuyvesant High School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

group of 4 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Valerie Boss (Science Schools Initiative)

Address: 442 Seaman Ave.

I represent: Amanda Boss (Science Schools Initiative)

Address: Washington Heights

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

group of 4 in favor in opposition

Executive Director Date: December 11, 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Michael Mascetta (Science Schools Initiative)

Address: 121-09 14th Rd., College Point, NY 11356

I represent: Science Schools Initiative (hang)
group of 4 destituting
Address: Fort Washington Ave & W. 168th St

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

group of 4 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: CARLOS J. GUZMAN (SCIENCE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE)

Address: 40-05 59th St

I represent: GABRIEL A GUZMAN AT THE PRESENT TIME

Address: AT BROOKLYN TECH H.S.

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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Lisa Dorian

Address: 141 E 3rd St NY NY 10009

I represent: CEC I

Address: 166 Essex Street NY NY 10009

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JANNA POPOVIC

Address: 233 E 69th St. Apt. 7G

I represent: Parent of a student student NYC 1021

Address: Chambers West Sts 10292

**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: 12/11/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Esmeralda SIMMONO

Address: 1150 Carroll St, BK 11225

I represent: Center for Law + Social Justice

Address: 1150 Carroll St BK 11225

**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: ELLEN RAIDER

Address: 1205 8th Ave

I represent: ICOPF

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 492

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/18/2014

Name: Michael Benjamin (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 256 E 166 St

I represent: self & Coalition Edu

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Rosalie Friend, Ph.D. (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 440 Fifth Street, Bklyn, NY 11215

I represent: Save Our Schools, national grassroots

Address: organization

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 511-A Res. No. 453

in favor in opposition

Date: Dec 11 2014

Name: Michael Hilton (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 414 E. 120th St, New York NY 10035

I represent: Poverty + Race Research Action Council

Address: 1200 18th St NW Washington DC 20036

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Assemblyman William Co Ho
Address: 208 Van Sicken St BRX NY
I represent: 47 Assembly District
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12-11-14

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: State Committee Woman NANCY TONG
Address: 1575 W 8 St.
I represent: 47 AD
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____
State Sen.

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Toby Ann Stavisky
Address: 142-29 37th Ave. Flushing, NY
I represent: 16th Senate District
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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ayanna Behin

Address: 130 Washington Ave Bklyn 11205

I represent: families at Arts & Letters K-8

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rong Cao

Address: 158-70 75 Ave, Fresh Meadow

I represent: Sanya Popovic

Address: 233 E 69th St 10021

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura Hamilton

Address: 212 E 3rd St, Bklyn, NY 11218

I represent: Myself + Parents of D20

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: Yasmin Secada

Address: 90 Pinehurst Avenue

I represent: Parent Leadership Project / D3 Equity

Address: 125 W. 109th St Education Trust for LE

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12-11-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dennis Saffran With Coalition Edu Panel

Address: 3818 West Dr. Douglasson NY 11363

I represent: Coalition Edu

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. 453
 in favor in opposition

Date: 10/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jory Oberg-Pierel

Address: 327 West 100th St

I represent: myself as a parent of a former

Address: specialized HS student

and as a parent in District 3

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms segregation

**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: Janella Hinds, Vice President for High Schools

Address: 52 B'way

I represent: United Federation of Teachers

Address: 52 B'way-1

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Caro Barbanel

Address: 101 W 28th St, 7W 10001

I represent: Sanya Popovic

Address: 233 E 69th St

**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: Vijin Aggarwal

Address: _____

I represent: Parent Leadership

Address: Project + D1 / D3 / D3
collaborative

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: George Lee

Address: 311 Greenwich St

I represent: Deborah Goland

Address: 1965 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 511 Res. No. 453

in favor in opposition

Qualified for Res 442 Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Prof. David Bloomfield

Address: Brooklyn College, CUNY Grad Center

I represent: SELF

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 0442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/1/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melanee Farrah

Address: 315 E. 68th St NY NY 10065

I represent: Coalition Edu / Bx Science Alumni

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Pamilla Malik

Address: 304 E 8th St

I represent: Patent

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 453

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melissa Moskowitz

Address: _____

I represent: Myself Park Slope Collegiate

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. 453

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Liz Rosenberg

Address: _____

I represent: Myself + NYC public.org

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 453

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kemala Karmen

Address: _____

I represent: myself + NYC public

Address: NYC public org 159 20th street

**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: Timothy Martinez

Address: 747 east 182nd

I represent: Intergrate NYC 4me

Address: 339 morris Ave, NY.

**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: 12/11/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Francisco Corrao

Address: 510E 1565th Bronx NY 10455

I represent: Intergrate NYC 4me

Address: 339 Morris Ave Bronx, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: 12/11/14

Name: Sarah Camiscoli (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 3434 APT 107 JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY 11372

I represent: Integrate NYC 4 Me

Address: 339 Morris Ave Bronx, NY

**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: JULISSA CRUZ (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 440 JACKSON AVE APT 4B

I represent: Integrate NYC 4 Me

Address: 339 MORRIS AVE

**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: 12/11/2014

Name: Samantha Ramos (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 340 Alexander Avenue

I represent: Integrate NYC 4 Me

Address: 399 Morris Avenue

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: 12/11/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Garcia-Rosen

Address: 4445 POST ROAD BX NY 10471

I represent: NYC Let Em Play

Address: 345 brook Ave Bx ny

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 11-DEC-2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ROBERT GEZELER

Address: 3522 167th ST, FLUSHING, NY 11358

I represent: self

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442 AND

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-11-2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jane Lee Delgado

Address: 330 E. 38th St., 37E, NY, NY

I represent: NYCpublic

Address: nycpublic.org 159 20th street

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID GOLDSMITH

Address: 464 Willoughby Ave. Bklyn NY

I represent: CEC 13 / District 13 Task Force for Diversity

Address: 11206

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 453 Res. No. 453

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID TIRSON

Address: 549 7th St - BROOKLYN

I represent: ADP - 1st NY

Address: 549 7th St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 453 Res. No. 511A

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Amy Stuart Wells

Address: Tedlow's College Columbia

I represent: IC, CU

Address: 525 W 125th St NY NY 10027

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carin Borbanel

Address: 151 W. 28th St., 7w

I represent: Save the SHSAT - I represent kids!

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: Dec 11, 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Zeshan Gondal

Address: 2768 Harway Avenue Brooklyn NY 11214

I represent: Brooklyn Tech

Address: 29 Fort Greene Place Brooklyn NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 511-2014 Res. No. 0453 +

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Triana D'Orazio

Address: _____

I represent: Committee for Hispanic Children +

Address: 110 William St Families
NY NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: MITCHEL WU

Address: 50 Broad St - NY NY 10004

I represent: Coalition for Asian American Children & Families

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

Better Resolution Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sam Devo

Address: 118 2nd place Bklyn 11231

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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dan Rubenstein

Address: _____

I represent: Brooklyn Prospect Charter School

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Halley Potter

Address: _____

I represent: Century Foundation

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: 12/17/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: EMK Jones

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Charter School Center

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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Miriam Numberg

Address: _____

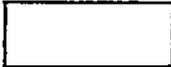
I represent: Brooklyn Urban Gardens Charter School

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

group 4 in favor in opposition
Date: _____

Name: Tendai Watkins (PLEASE PRINT) Science Schools Initiative

Address: 1605 Fulton Street, A403 Brooklyn NY 11213

I represent: Taricai Watkins & Science Schools Initiative

Address: 1605 Fulton Street, A403, BKLYN NY 11213

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition
Date: 12-11-14

Name: Marc Williams (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 710 6th Avenue Apt 3C, BKlyn, NY 11215

I represent: Brooklyn Technical High School

Address: 29 Fort Greene place, BKlyn, NY 11217

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition
Date: 12/17/14

Name: Teresa Wthurrall (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 25 E 4th St #3, NY NY 10003

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. 453

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jiang Hua Li

Address: 1161 39th St BK 11218

I represent: Brooklyn Asian Community Empowerment

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

442

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HORACE H. DAVIS

Address: 138-32 227th STREET

I represent: BTHS ALUMNI FOUNDATION - CARIBBEAN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ELISSA STEIN

Address: 79 WEST 12TH ST #10D

I represent: BROOKLYN TECH

Address: 29 FRI GREEN PLCE

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: EDWARD La GRASSA (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 122 WARWICK AVE, DOUGLASETON, NY 11363

I represent: BROOKLYN TECH ALUMNI

Address: 29 FT GREENE PL, BROOKLYN NY

**THE COUNCIL W
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

Name: Christina Alfonso (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 2715 Newtown Ave, Apt 2

I represent: Stuyvesant HS Alumni Association

Address: 345 Chambers St

**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: Joseph Levie (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 131 Riverside Ave NY 10025

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Roy Feige

Address: 47-21 245th St Douglaston NY

I represent: Brooklyn Tech Alumni

Address: 29 Ft Greene Place

**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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sue Schneider

Address: 1619 Third Ave, 7J

I represent: Stuyvesant, my daughter

Address: Chambers St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-11-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Kruger

Address: 169 89th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11209

I represent: Public School Students as a parent and PIA rep.

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 511 Res. No. 453
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Megan Fisk
Address: 208 W 13th Street NY, NY 10011

I represent: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender
Community Center
Address:

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Glyn Caddell
Address: 38 Genesee St, Staten Island, NY 10301

I represent: Staten Island Technical HS Alumni Association
Address: 485 Clawson St, Staten Island, NY 10306

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: Dec 11, 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deborah Croland
Address: 1965 Broadway Apt. 19A NY, NY

I represent: Stuyvesant High School
Address: Chambers St. NY, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: 11 DECEMBER 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DR KAREN S. DAMARA

Address: 303 W 66 ST. NY, NY 10023

I represent: FORMER HEMP DIRECTOR

Address: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FAYE MOORE

Address: 345 MONTGOMERY ST. BROOKLYN 11225

I represent: BROOKLYN TECH H.S. ALUM

Address: 24 74 GREENPARK

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rones Alexander

Address: _____

I represent: Student

Address: 345 Chambers St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ~~442~~ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: LISA CANGRO TEPPERBERG

Address: 49 8th Ave. Apt. 2D

I represent: STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL

Address: 345 Chambers Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 511 Res. No. 442-453

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Heidi Reich

Address: 1851 7th Ave NYC 10026

I represent: Stuyvesant Black Alum Div Init

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 0442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: STEVE CHUNG

Address: 2158 E. 35th St Brooklyn ny 11234

I represent: United Chinese Association of Brooklyn & BRACE

Address: 78 Quentin Rd Brooklyn ny 11223

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 0442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-11-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PHIL GIM

Address: 21-36 FRANCIS LEWIS BLVD

I represent: COALITION EDU

Address: 66-11A SAUNDERS ST

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID LEE

Address: 51-21 69 Place

I represent: Coalition Edu

Address: 66-11 A Saunders St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tendai Watkins

Address: 1605 Fulton St., A403 Bklyn NY 11213

I represent: Tarisai Watkins NYC 8th grader

Address: 1605 Fulton St, A403 Bklyn NY 11213

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**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: Eero Arum

Address: 100 Bleeker Street Apt. 14E 10012

I represent: Self

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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VJAY AGARWALA

Address: 220 E. 54th St, #17A, NY 10022

I represent: self

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0442 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz

Address: 3107 Kingsbridge Ave, Bronx, NY 10463

I represent: 81st Assembly District (Bronx)

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VINCENT GALASSO

Address: 9368 RIVER ROCK LANE, RIVERVIEW FL

I represent: SPECIALIZED H.S.S.

Address: BY L/S. of Science

**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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARK SCHULTZ

Address: 25 SURF ROAD, Westport, NY 06880

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12 11 14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CAROLE BROWN

Address: 115 ASHLAND PL # BROOKLYN 11201

I represent: MYSELF & STUYVESANT BLACK ACADEMY DIVERSITY INITIATIVE (group of 4 speakers)

Address: SHSBADI@YAHOO.COM

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ~~0-0-0~~ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Phillip Li

Address: 26 W. Chas. Loop SJ NY 10301

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-11-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Frank Robertz

Address: 19 Hillside Drive East Avenor NJ 07536

I represent: Brooklyn Tech Alumni / Frank Robertz

Address: 52-57 83 St Middle Village NY 11375

**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: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SAMI RABB

Address: 148-45 Hillside Ave, QUEENS, NY 11426

I represent: Khan's Tutorial / COALITION NYC

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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shanti Knack

Address: 3890 Sedgwick Ave

I represent: PA Bronx Science

Address: Bronx NY 10462

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 0442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RICHARD YOUNG

Address: 203 E 72 ST SE NY NY 10021

I represent: AARON CHEUNG

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jonathan Roberts

Address: 90 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10024

I represent: myself

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL WEISS

Address: 15 WADSWORTH CT BROOKLYN NY

I represent: BROOKLYN TECH ALUMNI FOUND. 11230

Address: 29 FT GREEN PLAZA 11217

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Santiago Munoz

Address: Brooklyn, New York

I represent: Bronx Science student body

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Eilender

Address: 1235 Park Ave #5D NY NY 10129

I represent: myself + my family

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____

Res. No. 442

in favor

in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Larry Cary

Address: 1350 Bklyn NY NY 10018

I represent: (PANEL) Bklyn Tech Alumni & Alumni Coalition

Address: same as above

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____

Res. No. 442

in favor

in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Iran Khan

Address: 82 Lords Way

I represent: Khan's Tutorial & NYC South Asians

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____

Res. No. 442

in favor

in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Keiran Carpen

Address: 135-06 107th ave. South Ozone Pk. Queens, NY, 11419

I represent: Stuyvesant Panel

Address: 345 Chambers St., 10282, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 0442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SHERYL REICH
Address: 300 RIVERSIDE DR (13E) NY, NY 10025
I represent: interested student parent
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: Dec 11 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sylvia RAMOS
Address: 3026 Bronx Park EAST
I represent: myself
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ying-ke Chin-Lee
Address: 311 Greenwich Street
I represent: myself
Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

Stuyvesant **THE COUNCIL**
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wai Wah Chin

Address: 311 Greenwich St

I represent: self Stuyvesant

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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Charles Vavruska

Address: 70-11 Caldwell Ave Maspeth NY
11370

I represent: My daughter

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 0442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adam Freilich

Address: _____

I represent: A concerned alumnus

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 0442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ADAM STERN

Address: 41 W. 83 ST NY, NY 10024

I represent: THE CHILDREN OF NEW YORK CITY

Address: NYC

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HEDDI CHAPPELLE

Address: PO BOX 674, NY NY 10028

I represent: BKLYN TECH 1981 GRADUATE

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/11/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TANYA MESSADO

Address: 519 PARK PLACE BROOKLYN 11238

I represent: SELF & STUYVESANT BLACK ALUMNI DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

Address: SHSBADIE@ yahoo.com

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: 12 11 14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KIMBERLY

Address: 373 Parkside Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11226

I represent: Stuyvesant High School Black Alumni Diversity

Address: Initiator

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 442

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Soo Kim

Address: _____

I represent: Stuyvesant HS Alumni Association

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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Kleinman

Address: 40 Recto St. NYC 10006

I represent: NAACP LDF

Address: 40 Recto Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 51-A Res. No. 442+450

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/1/10

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOSE PEREZ
Address: 99 HUDSON ST - 14TH FL, NYC NY 10013

I represent: LATINO JUSTICE PRUDF

Address: CAW 2250

**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: 12/1/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael ALVES
Address: 414 Canton Ave, Mt Vernon, NY 10586

I represent: Self

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 442 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/19/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SWEN FERNANDES
Address: 66 EAST 7TH ST

I represent: Coalition for Asian American Children's Families

Address: 50 BROAD ST NYC NY 10004

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms