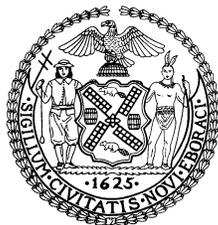


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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Youth, Education, and Libraries Committee
Monday, October 22, 6:30 PM
Marymount Manhattan College
221 East 71st Street, Regina Peruggi Room

Session: The Specialized High School Admissions Process and the DOE Proposal
Co-Sponsored by CB8 and Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly

Introductory Comments: Rebecca Seawright

The Assembly member expressed her appreciation to those who put together the forum, the CB8 Youth & Education Co-Chairs, Teitelbaum and Patch, the CB8 Chair, Alida Camp, the presenters from the DOE and the panelists.

Assembly member Seawright then pointed out that she Voted ‘No’ on the proposed legislation, that the legislation was offered 2 days before a vote, and that represented insufficient time to give the legislation thoughtful consideration or community input.

Introductory Comments: Debbie Teitelbaum, Moderator

The moderator, Debbie Teitelbaum, explained that the purpose of the evening session was to be an informational session – with an information presentation by the speakers from the DOE – and an informed discussion, not a debate.

NYC Dept. of Education – The presenters from the NYC Department of Education were:

- (1) Sarah Kleinhandler, Senior Executive Director, Office of Student Enrollment, DOE
- (2) Nadiya Chadha, Director of Enrollment Research, DOE

Note: These minutes will not replicate the full presentation, but will summarize the central points that were presented. (The entire presentation can be requested from DOE.)

DOE Presentation:

Specialized High Schools – Proposal:
Making Admissions to the Specialized High Schools More Equitable for all Students

Recap of Key Points from the DOE Presentation, the Panelists and the ensuing Q&A:

- The Specialized High Schools are:
 - Bronx High School of Science
 - Brooklyn Latin School
 - Brooklyn Technical High School
 - High School of Math, Science and Engineering at City College of NY

- High School of American Studies at Lehman College
- Queens High School for the Sciences at York College
- Staten Island Technical High School
- Stuyvesant High School
- The Goals of the Proposal: A better and fairer admissions process
 - To use multiple factors – not the Specialized High Schools Admission Test (SHSAT) – to make offers to students.
 - Maintain the Academic rigor of the Specialized High Schools (SHS).
 - Increase diversity at the Specialized High Schools.
- The proposal: Part 1
 - Expand the Discovery Program to 20% of the seats at each SHS.
 - The Discovery Program is a summer enrichment program that helps high-performing, disadvantaged students gain admission to a SHS.
 - Students will be eligible if they meet all the following criteria:
 - Score right below the cutoff score on the SHSAT.
 - Are disadvantaged based on household income, housing situation, or English Language Learner status.
 - Attend a high-poverty school.
- The Proposal: Part 2
 - Phase out the SHSAT over three years.
 - Make SHS offers to the top 7% of students from each DOE public middle school.
 - Students will be ranked based on (1) their 7th grade Math and ELA exam scores, and (2) their 7th grade English, math, social studies and science course grades compared to other students in their school.
 - Students would be ordered by their rank to determine top performers at each school.
 - To receive a SHS offer, top-performing student's ranks would also need to be in the top 25% of the city.
- The Proposal: Part 2 – Phase-out Proposal
 - Offers would be made
 - Year 1: First, to top 3% of students from each middle school (=25% of offers).
 - Then, to students who qualify through the SHSAT (=75% of offers).
 - Year 2: First, to top 5% of students from each middle school (=50% of offers).
 - Then, to students who qualify through the SHSAT (=50% of offers).
 - Year 3: First, to top 7% of students from each middle school (=90% of offers).
 - Then, to Non-public students, students new to New York City, and any other student interested in applying to the SHS with a minimum course grade average of 93% (A-). These students would participate in a lottery for any remaining seats (=10% of offers).
 - The DOE would calculate each student's middle school rank. Schools and students would not need to provide any additional information.
- What would this proposal accomplish?
 - Academics: The top 7% of middle schoolers have similar academic records to students who receive SHSAT offers.
 - Students with current offers:
 - Average GPA 94%
 - Average State exam proficiency level: 4.1
 - Top 7% of middle schoolers
 - Average GPA 94%
 - Average State exam proficiency level: 3.9

- Geography:
 - 2x increase in middle school representation.
 - More than 2x increase in number of Brooklyn schools represented.
- Demographics: SHS demographics will mirror NYC demographics more closely
 - 36% increase in offers to Black and Latino students.
 - 18% increase in offers to female students.
- Poverty:
 - 21% increase in offers to low-income students.
 - All groups will see an increase in offers to students in poverty.
- Home Language:
 - More diversity of home languages represented at the SHS.
 - The non-English home languages represented under this model more closely reflect the home languages of 8th grade students across the city.
- What else are we doing? ‘Equity & Excellence for All’
 - Expanding early education; Offering more challenging coursework, and increasing school funding.
 - The ‘Equity and Excellence for All’ agenda is building a pathway to success in college and careers for all students.
 - Our students are starting school earlier, with free, full-day, high-quality education for three-year-olds and four-year-olds through 3-K for All and Pre-K for All.
 - Our schools are strengthening foundational skills and instruction earlier, with Universal Literacy for All and Algebra for All.
 - Our schools are offering more challenging, hands-on, college and career-aligned coursework with Computer Science for All and AP for ALL.
 - We are investing \$350 million annually in ‘Fair Student Funding’ for NYC public schools.
 - What progress are we making?
 - The highest ever graduation rate – 74.3% of the Class of 2017.
 - The highest ever postsecondary enrollment rate – 57% of the Class of 2016.
 - The highest ever college readiness rate – 64% of the graduates of the Class of 2017.
 - City students continue to improve on the ELA and Math State exams, and outperformed their New York State peers on ELA exams for the first time in 2016. Since 2013, the percentage of students proficient in English in New York City has increased by 54%.
- What’s Next:
 - DOE is engaging with communities, advocacy groups and alumni groups across the City to better understand their needs, hear any concerns, and gather their feedback on this proposal.
 - The New York State legislature must vote and approve changes to SHS admissions in the upcoming legislative session.
 - Regardless of any changes to state law, DOE will launch Part 1 of the plan – expanding the Discovery program – in summer 2019.
- **Question and Answer Session regarding the DOE SHS Admissions Process Proposal**
 - The key issues and concerns raised in the Q&A session were
 - (a) What happens to the students who would have qualified to apply for the SHS under the SHSAT, but will not qualify under the new process?
 - (b) Will those students who will qualify to apply to the SHS under the new program – but would not qualify under the existing process using the SHSAT – be

- prepared to succeed at the SHS and be interested in applying to the SHS – or will some students be at risk of being ‘set up to fail?’
- (c) Will the new process adversely impact the character and quality of education at the SHS?
 - The response from the DOE representatives to these questions made the following points:
 - (a) There are other high-quality high schools in the city to which the students not qualifying for the SHS can apply.
 - (b) The academic performance of those students who will now qualify to apply for the SHS – but would not under the current SHSAT process – demonstrate academic performance that is comparable to those currently qualifying to apply for the SHS – and the demographic profile of these students more closely resembles that of students in the city as a whole.
 - (c) The SHS have support programs for those students who qualify to apply under the new criteria, in addition to the Discovery program.
 - Specific questions posed to the DOE Presenters. To provide a sense of the specific concerns expressed by the parents attending the session, examples are the following:
 - Parent: Currently, 60 out of 120 students qualify for the SHS using the SHSAT. Under the proposal, 7% of the graduating class [about 8 students] will be qualified to apply for admission to the SHS. Where should the other 50+ students who would qualify using the SHSAT go?
 - Parent: We tell students from an early age to do well, to get into a good middle school, and to a good high school. What should we tell them, now that the admission process would change under this proposal?
 - Parent: Not all students want 4-5 hours of homework and the one hour of travel time to go to a SHS. (One parent described how her child had made a different choice with regard to applying to high school.)
 - Parent: A Wall Street Journal article reports 300 students who did not pass 7th grade tests would be qualified to apply for the SHS under the proposed process. If these students are qualified, why are they not acing the SHSAT?
 - Parent: If these students would be admitted to the SHS how is that ‘maintaining academic rigor?’
 - Parent: Consider the worst performing middle school, with students getting 0s and 1s on the state test. With grade inflation, they get high marks in that school. How can you argue they are prepared to perform well at the SHS?

Panel Discussion: The Specialized High Schools Admissions and the DOE Proposal

Panelists:

- Larry Cary, President, Brooklyn Technical Alumni Foundation
- Amy Hsin, Professor of Sociology, Queens College & member of the NYC School Diversity Advisory Board
- David Bloomfield, Professor of Education Leadership, Law & Policy – Brooklyn College & The CUNY Graduate Center
- Moderator: Debbie Teitelbaum, Co-Chair, Youth & Education Committee, CB8

Panelist Remarks:

- Larry Cary
 - We have 6000 students – there is no more room.
 - We are firmly 100% against this bill.

- We believe there is and should be room for a test, and students who can pass that test.
 - When the Comptroller did an audit – of the criteria applied by schools re their admissions process – 4 schools could not clearly explain their criteria for admission.
 - We believe there are black and Hispanic kids who can pass this test.
 - There needs to be a serious re-examination of the Schools.
 - We have produced a report, which is available on City and State, to address the issues we see with the school system.
 - It has gotten much harder to get into these schools. In Queens, there are 2000 kids who get an offer. In Brooklyn, there will be 600 kids looking at where to go. In Manhattan, there will be 1000 kids looking where to go.
 - This bill [outcome] will be determined by politics and the legislature.
 - The Chancellor has mandated the use of the test, and grades – and anything else he wants to use.
 - The Chancellor could allow attendance – which would work against black and Hispanics, due to health issues. The Chancellor has the authority to do what they want. This can change overnight.
- Professor Hsin
 - Professor of Sociology, Queens College & Member of NYC School Diversity Advisory Board.
 - I am Asian American. I serve on the XYZ Committee.
 - We did not work on the Mayor’s Proposal.
 - We support efforts to move away from a single measure, and to increase diversity in city High Schools.
 - There are significant issues with regard to deficiency in reading and math. We must address these issues with regard to primary and middle schools.
 - There are many black, Latino and Asian students who could ‘hack it’ at these (SHS) schools.
 - The Mayor’s proposal addresses the second issue [regarding race and ethnic diversity] but does not address the first issue [deficiency in reading & math].
 - Where I come out: We care about diversity, but it is not our priority.
 - We care about identifying the most talented students for these schools.
 - The [admissions process] would not look like what we do now [re testing]. It would [include] a neighborhood measure of performance.
 - How to identify the most excellent students: The most predictive measure is grades, as they measure academic proficiency, across different subject areas - And they measure effort and motivation, drive and doing homework. Those are also relevant measures.
 - Note: Grades in one school – an ‘A’ in my school – does not measure [or necessarily equal] an ‘A’ in another school.
 - State tests are better. They measure performance across subjects. This uses a test that kids are obliged to take. We should also use grades.
- Professor Bloomfield.
 - We are here because of a state law passed in 1970, for Tech, Stuyvesant and Bronx Science.
 - The [5] Bloomberg Schools could be separated from those controlled by state law.
 - No educator believes that a single test on a given day should determine a student’s educational future.
 - We need to change the metrics, not just for educational purposes. Unless we change the metrics, we won’t get diversity.

- The [SHSAT] test is an English and Math Test, not even a science test. It does not necessarily identify who are the most talented students in the city.
- We should look at what can be changed within the statute and what can be done [only] through a change in the statute.
- Many good kids, bright kids, will not have an opportunity [to go to the SHS]. Some not so bright will get in through the test.
- The 1970 law was a reaction to community control. These three schools [Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science, and Stuyvesant] were supposed to be beyond community control. It was an arbitrary decision in the 1970s, because many schools were failing. Now we have many good schools in the Upper East Side.

Response to the Panel: Participants Comments

- Moderator: What are we saying if the schools don't look like the population mix in the city?
 - Prof. Hsin: It is stigmatizing.
- Parent: This [country] is a meritocracy. Here, everyone has a chance. So – this [proposal] is an attack on excellence in these schools.
- Parent: The 7% guarantee works against religious schools – catholic, or Jewish, or Muslim students. They [only] get to register and backfill – if space is available.
- Parent: If you are in a school with a lot of high-performing students, you won't be able to get in.
- Parent: I would be proud if 7% of every middle school would be prepared to work at this level, but it is not the case.
- Parent: My kid gets a great education. And his friend gets a [poor] education. Let's fix that.
- Parent: How is the 7% calculated?
- Parent: Does the Mayor's bill positively impact meritocracy? Professor Bloomfield: What is your measure of merit? IQ score? Your GPA? Your score on an SAT exam?
- Parent: I graduated from Stuyvesant. I am the daughter of refugees. Having attended these [SHS] schools, many [students come from] the lower class.
 - The test is an objective measure that everyone understands. With grades, it is not necessarily equally clear what they measure. There are cultural biases in what the test measures. Grades are not an entirely objective measure either. I believe the test is easier to understand.
 - Prof. Hsin: I understand the allure of a test. It is objective...and it may have some issue about bias, but so can a grade. No one measure is perfect. Two or three measures can be better than one.
 - The proposal does not abandon tests. Tests do correlate to performance. In combination with grades, they are a better measure.

Addendum: Notice

A Message from the NYC Bar Association Regarding a Forum on Thursday, November 8th:

'Pilots, Plans & Promises: Is Desegregation Possible in New York City's Schools?'

Whether you are an education advocate, parent, lawyer, public official, student, or concerned citizen, this program will provide important insights into desegregation, integration, and diversity pilots and plans in New York City's schools. Register here for the November 8 program: <http://bit.ly/2PZkO9q>

Debbie Teitelbaum and Peter Patch, Co-Chairs