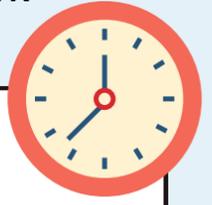


FOCUS ON FAIRNESS

Recommendations to Support Under-Resourced and Historically Marginalized Students and Families in New York City's Middle and High School Admissions Process



TIMING

Information must be timely and students need ample time to digest and use it.

- A minimum of 10 full weeks are provided for students to complete applications beginning on the date NYCDOE announces applications are open.
- Admissions criteria are set prior to the open application period. Admissions criteria are made public two weeks prior to the opening of the application period.
- Admissions criteria are fixed once they are made public. Neither individual schools nor NYCDOE should make any changes to admissions criteria after this time.



MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Middle school admissions: Make the elimination of MS screens permanent and encourage initiatives to support diversity.

- There is no justification for bringing back an exclusionary process that made the application process to attend a public middle school burdensome and stressful. It is wrong to measure the "worthiness" of a 9 year-old student to attend a public middle school by judging their capacity to learn on their academic record up to that age.
- Encourage middle school programs that previously screened to implement a Diversity in Admissions program.
- Provide professional development and other supports to school communities experiencing demographic shifts to ensure their school climate is inclusive and uplifting for students and families from all races, ethnicities and backgrounds.
- Talent tests at the MS level for admissions can be exclusionary. MSs focused on the arts provide students with an opportunity to discover and nurture their talents prior to HS. If NYCDOE permits schools to require a talent test, audition requirements and evaluation must be inclusive of students who have not had the means to attend private lessons in such subjects such as drawing, painting, dance, music, etc.



TRANSPARENCY

Information is a key component of successfully navigating the application process. The policy recommendations below are not new, but should be in place by the 2022-2023 admissions cycle.

- NYCDOE should collect all information from schools regarding open houses, both in-person and virtual, and make that information accessible online immediately via a central open house calendar, which is kept up-to-date on an ongoing basis.
- NYCDOE must ensure that open houses are happening once families can access selection criteria by school and that families can access those open houses fairly, especially those that are in person.
- Schools and NYCDOE must provide accurate and clear information about selection criteria that is accessible to ALL families, including in multiple languages, in MySchools, school websites, through guidance counselors, in Family Welcome Centers, and by telephone as needed. Schools should provide selection criteria to anyone who requests it, whether students, families, or members of the public, upon request by email or telephone.
- Selection criteria must be made available in print to provide alternate avenues of information for those who are unable to access digital platforms.



HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Sustain changes made during the pandemic to HS admissions that increased equity and transparency and continue to urge high schools to end exclusionary screening practices.

- HS admissions must remain centralized and standardized by NYCDOE for all HS programs that utilize screens to prevent a reversion to the opaque ranking process by individual schools that was widespread prior to the pandemic.
- Make unscreened admissions the default and require every program that wishes to screen to opt in to screens standardized by NYCDOE. Any schools that insist upon additional screens outside the standard must provide an educational purpose to justify the screens to be approved by NYCDOE.
- If student grades remain part of NYCDOE's standardized screening rubric, sustain the cut-off score from last year that allows students with a grade point average of 85 or above to receive first priority to academically screened programs.
- Inequitable selection criteria such as state test scores and attendance must remain eliminated.
- Provide professional development and other supports to school communities experiencing demographic shifts to ensure their school climate is inclusive and uplifting for students and families from all races, ethnicities and backgrounds.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

As long as the HS application process continues to be complex, New York City government and NYCDOE need to prioritize funding to support and co-create programming that supports students, families as well as DOE employees critical to supporting navigation of admissions.

- Develop a standardized curriculum to be integrated into middle schools, after-school enrichment programs, and community based organizations to strengthen students' and family's ability to participate meaningfully in the HS admissions process. Current organizations that run HS admissions programs can serve as partners in developing this curriculum.
- Mandate and fund in all NYC after-school enrichment programs the skills, knowledge, and expert supports students, families and service providers need to effectively navigate the process.
- Invest in guidance counselors, professional development, and community-based programs like the Middle School Student Success centers that work to close access gaps for families and students.
- Revise College Access For All (CAFA) to include a standardized curriculum that focuses on the HS admissions process.