

Equity and Excellence for All: Diversity in New York City Public Schools

EQUITY & EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

Diversity in New York City Public Schools

The New York City Department of Education is committed to supporting learning environments that reflect the diversity of New York City. We believe all students benefit from diverse and inclusive schools and classrooms where all students, families and school staff are supported and welcomed. This work is essential to our vision of Equity and Excellence for all NYC students.

We believe in Equity and Excellence for all our students. While our schools are as strong as they've ever been, we know our vision is not yet a reality.

The work to address inequity and transform our school system is underway, from Pre-K for All through College Access for All. The Equity and Excellence for All agenda is already improving the quality of our schools, making them more attractive to a broader range of students. At the same time, we have made more and better information available to families so they can make informed choices about which school they attend. Through the Equity and Excellence for All agenda, we have worked to fulfill the promise of school choice for more families and students.

But our efforts are incomplete without more community conversations and concrete actions that result in greater school diversity. We know that diversity comes in many forms – racial background, socioeconomic status, home language, country of origin, immigration status, ability, special needs, religion, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, housing status and cultural background and experience.



We believe – and the research is clear – that all students benefit from diverse, inclusive schools and classrooms. But, currently, our public schools do not always reflect the diversity of our City, or, the diversity of the communities in which they are located.

We know that New York City is the largest school system in the country with 32 community school districts and approximately 1,800 schools. In our system, a simple one-size-fits-all solution is neither realistic nor desirable.

The work of making our schools more diverse is complex, challenging and critical to our goal of providing an equitable and excellent education for all of our students.

This plan begins to lay out our approach, as a City, to increasing diversity in the public school system.

What is our approach?

While we cannot do this work alone or overnight, we have already taken several steps forward at the local and citywide levels. The DOE has launched Diversity in Admissions pilots to create socioeconomic diversity among incoming classes in participating schools, increased the number of Dual Language programs that bring together English and non-native speakers across the City and expanded access for Students with Disabilities in many school settings.

This diversity plan is our next step.

It defines diversity as a priority for the DOE and part of our Equity and Excellence for All agenda, lays out a vision for working together with schools and communities towards meaningful and sustainable progress, and includes several policy changes that we can and must make now.

This document has four sections:

- 1 Set Priorities and Goals
- 2 Convene and Collaborate
- 3 Act
- 4 Inform

1 Set Priorities and Goals

While we understand that the larger, long-term work of making our schools more diverse must be driven by meaningful community discourse and debate, it is also important to put forward DOE's policy statement and initial goals around school diversity. This will foster a shared vocabulary and meaningful and productive conversations with communities across the City, as well as with researchers and practitioners.

First, with the launch of this report, the Department is reinforcing school diversity as a priority. This policy statement reflects our commitment and will inform our work as a Department going forward:

The New York City Department of Education is committed to supporting learning environments that reflect the diversity of New York City. We believe all students benefit from diverse and inclusive schools and classrooms where all students, families and school staff are supported and welcomed. This work is essential to our vision of Equity and Excellence for all NYC students.

Second, we are proposing several initial goals for the community to review, help us work towards and build on. While longer-term goals will grow out of our collaboration, these goals demonstrate the many ways we measure diversity and provide an important yardstick for our progress as a City in making our schools more diverse.



Our goals:

1. Increase the number of students in a racially representative school by 50,000 over the next five years;
2. Decrease the number of economically stratified schools by 10% (150 schools) in the next five years; and
3. Increase the number of inclusive schools that serve English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities

Racially Representative

How do we define racially representative?

Given that black and Hispanic children make up 70% of our students citywide, we consider a school racially representative if black and Hispanic students combined make up at least 50% of the student population but no more than 90% of the student population.

30.7% of our schools are racially representative today.

ECONOMICALLY STRATIFIED

How do we define economically stratified?

We consider a school to be economically stratified if its economic need as measured by the Economic Need Index¹ is more than 10 percentage points from the citywide average. A school can be stratified in either direction – by serving more low-income or more high-income children.

70.6% of schools are economically stratified today.



¹ A school's Economic Need is defined by its Economic Need Index (ENI), which determines the likelihood that students at the school are in poverty. The ENI is calculated as follows: If the student is HRA-eligible or living in temporary housing, the student's Economic Need Value is 1.0. For high school students, if the student has a home language other than English and entered the NYC DOE for the first time within the last four years, the student's ENI value is 1.0. Otherwise, the student's Economic Need Value is based on the percentage of families (with school-age children) in the student's census tract whose income is below the poverty level, as estimated by the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate. The student's Economic Need Value equals the decimal value of this percentage (e.g., if 62% of families in the census tract have income below the poverty line, the student's Economic Need Value is 0.62). The school's Economic Need Index is the average of its students' Economic Need Values.

² Rate equivalent to the borough population for high school and the district population for middle school.

INCLUSIVE

How do we define inclusive?

- Schools where a significant, representative number of students who speak a language other than English at home are welcomed and served effectively.
- Schools where a significant, representative number of Students with Disabilities are welcomed and served effectively².

② Convene and Collaborate

Collaboration with communities – as well as locally and nationally respected researchers and practitioners – will be the primary driver of citywide and district-level diversity plans.

DOE is committing to this community collaboration over the course of the next four years with annual updates, to ensure that this process results in changes to policy and practices that are codified in the Chancellor's Regulations and other guiding resources for our schools and families.

First, we are forming a School Diversity Advisory Group that will tackle citywide policies and practices such as admissions and program planning.

- The School Diversity Advisory Group will be chaired by José Calderón, President, Hispanic Federation; Maya Wiley, chair of Civilian Complaint Review Board and Professor of Urban Policy and Management at the New School; and Hazel Dukes, President of the NAACP New York State Conference. The Advisory Group will include city government stakeholders, local and national experts on school diversity, parents, advocates, students, and other community leaders.



- Over the next year, the School Diversity Advisory Group will be tasked with evaluating the initial goals and policies laid out in this report and adjusting them or putting forward additional measures.
- Based on their findings – especially around the objectives we have set around racial representation, economic stratification and inclusion – the School Diversity Advisory Group will make formal recommendations on citywide policy and practice to the Mayor and Chancellor by June 2018.
- The School Diversity Advisory Group will also be tasked with providing recommendations for the long-term governance structure for this work within the DOE.

Second, starting this fall, DOE will kick off community stakeholder engagement processes in several districts that have already engaged in conversations about fostering school diversity.

- DOE will work alongside school leaders, parents, community and elected leaders in each of those districts to develop diversity plans.
- The DOE will act as a technical advisor to the process in order to support stakeholders in accessing the resources and expertise they will

need to develop and implement the plan.

- Districts will be prioritized based on a variety of factors including need, demand, and capacity for diversity initiatives.
- Several on-the-ground, district-driven efforts are already underway. Some (notably Districts 1 and 13) have made substantial progress towards their own diversity plans. We will look to this work as part of both the School Diversity Advisory Group and the community stakeholder processes and are also committed to providing more formal support and guidance to these communities.

The Chancellor's Office, with the support of the Division of Family and Community Engagement, will work as the primary technical advisor and internal support for the School Diversity Advisory Group and district-based planning efforts.

3 Act

We are already taking steps, as further described below, to make our schools more diverse and representative of our city and our communities. They will have a significant – and immediate – impact for thousands of students and families. We also expect that the work of the Advisory Group will be informed by these efforts and will in turn impact how these efforts evolve going forward.



These initial actions largely address key admissions practices with the goal of fostering greater diversity and equity. Just as important, we are taking steps to create more inclusive, welcoming school climates. As admissions reforms take effect, students who benefit from these changes will be welcomed into all schools and empowered to thrive wherever they choose to learn.

Below are twelve proposals to address policies and practices that pose challenges to school diversity. Work toward these solutions is already underway, with timelines outlined for each.

1. Eliminate “limited unscreened” as a high school admissions method and replace with admissions methods that will promote greater diversity.

Limited unscreened high school programs give priority in admissions to students who demonstrate interest in the school by attending a school’s information session or open house event or visit the school’s table at a High School Fair. For Fall 2017 admissions, there are 245 high school programs and 94 middle schools using this admissions method.

Time is an often-unacknowledged obstacle for families applying to New York City schools. A study

of the NYC high school process found that the high school application process requires a time investment of, at minimum, 25 to 72 hours. For parents who work long work hours or multiple jobs, or who have significant care-taking responsibilities, dedicating time to the limited unscreened application process may not be feasible.

Our most high-needs students receive priority to limited unscreened programs at lower rates than other students. This means that these students are less likely to receive a match to high-performing, high-demand limited unscreened programs. Removing this barrier to admissions can help level the playing field, especially for families with limited resources and time.

TIMELINE: Starting this summer, the DOE will engage superintendents, school leaders and school communities to collaborate on a plan to transition away from Limited Unscrened programs. We will complete this transition in time for the admissions process for students entering high school in fall 2019.

We will work with schools to identify alternate admissions methods, including Educational Option, which fosters academic diversity by admitting students from a wide range of academic levels.

2. Develop strategies to increase access to screened schools for all students, especially high-needs students

a. Eliminate Revealed Middle School Ranking

At the middle school level, 25% of programs rank students using a set of admissions criteria, or a “screen.” Nearly half of these screened programs – ones located in districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13 and 14 – maintain revealed ranking, which means that schools can also see where a student ranked them on their middle school application.

Some screened schools in districts with revealed ranking only select students who placed them first or second on their applications. When revealed ranking is in place, the application process becomes strategic and inequitable. Families tend to make safe first and second choices; families and children who want to apply to a highly competitive program but who are uncertain that they will be admitted may not do so for fear of wasting their first choices.

Implementing “blind” ranking for all screened middle schools will create a more equitable process and help foster more diverse classes of qualified students. Twenty-five of the city’s community school districts already have blind ranking for screened middle school seats.

TIMELINE: Starting this summer, the DOE will engage superintendents and school leaders to develop plans to implement blind ranking for all screened middle school programs by the admissions process for students entering middle school in fall 2019.

b. Increase access to Screened High Schools and Middle Schools for Students with Disabilities (SWDs), English Language Learners (ELLs), and Students in Temporary Housing (STHs)

Through the DOE’s *Shared Path to Success* initiative, we have shifted enrollment processes – starting in

2012 – to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the same schools, instruction and high expectations as their non-disabled peers. As a result, the number of SWDs receiving offers to screened high school programs has more than tripled over the past five years. The next step is continuing to increase access to these programs for SWDs and ELLs.

The DOE will continue to work with superintendents and schools, per *Shared Path to Success* policy, to ensure screened schools and programs are accepting SWDs at a rate equivalent to the borough population for high school and the district population for middle school, and the Special Education Office will support schools to serve these students. As part of this effort, the DOE will support the 21 middle schools that currently manage their own admissions process both in setting and meeting goals for admitting SWDs. Finally, the DOE will begin the process of supporting screened schools in developing specific plans to recruit, rank, welcome and support other students with specific instructional or support needs, including SWDs, ELLs and STHs.

TIMELINE: Starting this fall, the DOE will engage middle and high schools with the goal of increasing access, beginning with the admissions process for students entering middle and high school in fall 2018.

3. Streamline the formal mechanisms for families to learn about school options and apply

a. Create online applications for middle and high school admissions

New, online, mobile-ready applications for middle and high schools will help families without the time and resources to navigate the current complex paper processes. This will build on the Kindergarten Connect online application rolled out in 2014 and will:

- Allow us to create a personalized process for each student, including a complete set of recommended options based on interest, geography, and other factors;
- Save time for families by reducing the amount of information for them to sift through;
- Allow “one stop shopping,” including registration for the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test, and any school-based assessment for screened and audition schools;
- Ease the burden of data entry on middle and high school staff members, allowing them to spend that time on providing guidance to students; and
- Create access to online support.

TIMELINE: The new system will be in place in fall 2018, for the admissions process for students entering middle and high school in fall 2019.

b. Expand the NYC School Finder tool to all admissions processes

The NYC School Finder tool (schoolfinder.nyc.gov) was built to help families more easily and, quickly, learn about and access New York City's high schools. This interactive tool is online, mobile-ready, and currently available in Spanish and English. In the short time since NYC School Finder was launched, over 85,000 people have used it.

The DOE is collecting feedback from school counselors, students, and families to refine the tool so that it serves as an effective resource for learning more about programs that best fit each student's needs and interests. The DOE will continue to build new features for NYC School Finder and expand the tool to include pre-K through middle school programs, as well as translate it into additional DOE languages.

TIMELINE: We aim to have an improved School Finder by the beginning of the admissions cycle for the admissions process in fall 2018.

c. Work with schools to streamline school tours, open houses, and registration for school-based assessments and auditions

As the DOE works to eliminate the limited unscreened admissions method and expand access to screened schools, we will help alleviate some of the stress and anxiety of signing up for and attending school tours and open houses, as well as registering for school-based assessments, interviews and auditions. This will involve several strategies, such as:

- Hold well-publicized open houses in the spring for seventh grade families who will participate in high school admissions in the fall;
- Hold building-wide open houses, so families do not have to return multiple evenings to schools that are co-located;
- Design fall open houses and tours to accommodate the maximum number of attendees. We will estimate this number using previous years' application numbers;
- Create telephone “office hours” so families and student can call schools for information;
- Hold fall open houses and tours on at least two days every week from mid-September through application due dates and on no fewer than two weekend days;
- Work with schools to develop new solutions to provide information to families who cannot visit in person (i.e. creation of virtual school tours);
- Implement a common registration process for screened programs that require an interview or additional assessment; and
- Improve the central portal where families can access information for all open houses.



While these improvements will help all students and families, they will especially help those who lack the time and resources to navigate the current complex processes. In addition, this will help schools recruit talented students from a broader group that includes students who might not otherwise have been able to learn about the school.

TIMELINE: Starting this summer, the DOE will engage superintendents and school leaders to begin implementing changes this fall. We will complete these changes in time for the admissions process for students entering high school in fall 2019.

4. Expand Diversity in Admissions pilots

Currently, 21 elementary, middle, and high schools have created Diversity in Admissions targets for specific student groups – including students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, English Language Learners – and students whose families were impacted by incarceration. Many of these schools have also developed holistic diversity plans that build on the changes to their admissions programs

through the Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE) program.

The DOE continues to accept applications for implementation in the 2017-18 admissions cycle. In future cycles, the DOE will engage contracted pre-K providers (New York City Early Education Centers, or NYCEECs) and will allow middle schools to propose opening their admissions to be borough-wide. As schools complete multiple years in the pilot program, DOE will work with pilot schools to identify lessons learned, including support needed to ensure that the goals of the pilot are met, and will refine the initiative accordingly.

TIMELINE: Additional outreach to superintendents, principals, and school communities about the Diversity in Admissions application process is launching this spring. The next set of approved schools will be announced in time for the admissions process for students entering in fall 2018. We will expand to NYCEECs for the admissions process for students entering pre-K in fall 2018.

5. Evaluate efforts from the Students in Temporary Housing admissions pilot and propose a revised plan

This school year, DOE has partnered with the Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration to create and implement a comprehensive strategy to increase access to Pre-K to 12 admissions processes for STH and their families.

The admissions supports piloted last year – including training for over 300 shelter-based staff; shelter-based workshops; shelter “Days of Action” to support families in completing applications; texting campaigns; allowing families to complete a Gifted and Talented Request for Testing at their shelter; and direct invitation, transportation, and individualized counseling for information sessions and fairs – have shown encouraging results.

This year, the percentage of eligible students in shelter applying to Pre-K increased to 47 percent, up from 38 percent last year; 41 percent of students in shelter applied for kindergarten, up from 36 percent last year; and 32 percent of students in shelter listed 12 choices on their high school application – up from 27 percent last year, and higher than the citywide average.

TIMELINE: We have begun reviewing the data from the first year of this pilot and will propose a revised plan during summer 2017.

6. Analyze and expand the Specialized High Schools diversity initiatives

In 2014 and 2015, just 5 percent of offers to Specialized High Schools went to black students and 7 percent went to Hispanic students — though those two groups make up 70 percent of the city's eighth graders.

In response, in SY 2016-17 the DOE implemented a 6-point plan focused on increasing outreach and

preparation programs for students traditionally underrepresented in Specialized High Schools to boost their application, acceptance and attendance.

This spring and summer, we are expanding several of these initiatives, based on early positive results:

- Because of SHSAT School Day, a program in which we offered the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) during the school day at 7 middle schools, the number of students testing at these sites increased over 50 percent. This fall, we will expand the SHSAT School Day to 15 middle schools.
- Participants in the DREAM program – a free afterschool program that prepares students for the SHSAT that we expanded in summer 2016 – comprised 6 percent of black and Hispanic testers, but 26 percent of SHSAT offers to black and Hispanic testers. We have added 30 afterschool programs using the DREAM model this spring.
- Beginning in summer 2017, the DOE will also implement the Discovery Program – a summer program for high-needs students who have achieved a score on the SHSAT that is within a certain range below the minimum cut off score for admission to that school – at seven specialized high schools, including Bronx High School of Science. Last year, we expanded the program at Brooklyn Technical High School and added a new program at the High School of American Studies at Lehman College. We will continue to work with the school community to implement a Discovery program at Stuyvesant High school in summer 2018. Implementing Discovery Programs at these schools will increase opportunities for a broader range of students to attend a greater number of specialized high schools.

TIMELINE: These expansions started in spring 2017 and will continue in the coming years.



7. Plan for diversity when opening new, high-quality schools and programs.

The DOE will create new programs – and when possible, new schools – that will work to foster diverse classrooms in underutilized space. With input and support from the School Diversity Advisory Group and communities, we will intentionally build and maintain diverse school communities by engaging with local stakeholders to understand their needs, opening new unscreened schools and creating opportunities for students from different schools to learn together in specialized programs, especially where schools already share a campus.

These may include bilingual programs – building on the 88 programs that this administration has opened since September 2014, bringing together students who speak different languages into one classroom. They may also include Arts, STEAM, STEM or career/technical programs. Co-located schools could open programs to students from across the campus or multiple schools in close proximity could take advantage of a single hub site.

TIMELINE: We aim to open 15 new schools or programs over the next three years that have specific plans to serve diverse populations beginning with schools or programs opening in 2018.

8. Ensure diversity is a factor in school rezoning and improve the rezoning process to deepen engagement with communities

To alleviate overcrowding, the DOE proposed and Community Education Councils approved 18 re-zonings since 2014, including one in District 3 and one in District 13 where diversity was a critical part of the conversation. As part of these efforts, the DOE took into consideration the existing diversity of the affected schools.

Wherever possible, given the constraints of housing patterns and travel, when going through a rezoning process DOE will make creating equitable and diverse school zones a priority. We will also seek to create even more inclusive, collaborative planning processes for all our rezonings.

TIMELINE: The School Diversity Advisory Group will make recommendations on practices to employ in future proposals in order to prioritize school diversity and further engage community members.

9. Target funding, including magnet grant funding, to foster diversity

The DOE has a record of creating and maintaining magnet schools. Magnet schools offer a wide range of distinctive programs and partnerships to attract substantial numbers of students of different

backgrounds. The DOE is implementing four new magnet grants, received in October 2016, for 19 schools across Queens and Brooklyn districts. Under the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program for 2015-16, the DOE was also awarded supplemental funds to maintain seven magnet elementary schools in Districts 13, 15 and 28. Going forward, the DOE is committed to ensuring that magnet grants are awarded to schools that will use the strategy to create a more diverse school community.

TIMELINE: Superintendents, supported by central DOE, will meet with these 19 schools during summer 2017 to review plans and identify supports to ensure that grant objectives regarding increased diversity are met.

10. Foster welcoming school climates for all students by continuing and expanding school discipline reform

The DOE has implemented school climate and school safety reforms based on a commitment to creating schools that fairly and safely put all students on the path to success. Changes in school climate interventions seek to address disparities that have adversely affected black students with disabilities, who have been four times more likely to be suspended than their peers. This work will be especially critical to ensure that school climates are inclusive and welcoming for all students and families, building on the admissions changes described above.

Part of this strategy is the implementation of restorative approaches in our schools to give students, teachers and school leaders a new set of tools to respond to incidents. To date, over 400 schools have implemented restorative justice approaches, and 2,453 staff members have been trained.

TIMELINE: We are expanding the number of trainings, and we have hired more restorative justice coordinators targeted in high-needs schools.

11. Increase participation of underrepresented students in STEM and rigorous courses

National and local data show that, even within individual schools, students with disabilities, black and Hispanic students, low-income students, English Language Learners and girls may be underrepresented in science and engineering courses, as well as college-level and rigorous coursework.

As part of the AP for All initiative, the DOE has partnered with Equal Opportunity Schools as part of the national Lead Higher Initiative to specifically increase AP participation and success at 24 high schools among students of color and low-income students who are not currently enrolled in AP courses. The 98 elementary, middle and high schools participating in year-long Computer Science for All programs have been required to develop plans to engage female and black and Hispanic students in their courses as part of their application.

The 24 Lead Higher schools will enroll an additional 1,400 students of color and low-income students in AP courses this fall. The AP for All team will use the same strategies with an additional 7 schools to enroll underrepresented students in AP courses by Fall 2019 and also develop a set of findings and strategies from Lead Higher schools that may be shared and expanded to other high schools. As we expand Computer Science for All, additional schools will take on specific plans to increase access of underrepresented students.

TIMELINE: Starting this fall, over 50 additional high schools – including the 24 Lead Higher schools – will support underrepresented students in accessing STEM and college-level coursework through AP for All and Computer Science for All. Additional schools will continue to take on this work through 2025.

12. Equity and Excellence for All agenda

School and classroom diversity goes hand-in-hand with school quality. As we take steps to increase diversity in partnership with the School Diversity Advisory Group and districts, as well as through the 12 proposals above, it is imperative that we improve every school in every neighborhood and ensure high-quality options for all students. This diversity plan is part of our Equity and Excellence for All agenda, and it cannot be successful without the other components of that agenda.

Along with the specific diversity efforts through AP for All and Computer Science for All, the broader Equity and Excellence for All agenda – announced by Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña in September 2015 – works to create an earlier foundation for student success, expand rigorous coursework to every school and provide more socio-emotional supports and college-awareness and planning supports for all students.

TIMELINE: Through this agenda, by 2026, 80% of students will graduate high school on time and at least two-thirds of graduates will be college ready.

4 Inform

In fall 2017 the DOE is launching a new webpage that will share information and resources related to our diversity efforts.

The website will:

- Include details on forthcoming DOE diversity-focused initiatives
- Be a resource where families, educators and other members of school communities may find summaries, links to the latest research on the benefits of diverse schools and classrooms, data related to diversity in New York City schools and information about practices that have been used here and in other cities to promote diversity.



- Include updated information on the School Diversity Advisory Group and community school district processes described above, including opportunities for participation.

These resources will be translated into all DOE languages, so families can access them regardless of the language they speak. More broadly, the DOE is working to ensure all web resources are accessible to all families, including those with disabilities and visual impairments.

Our hope is that this resource will foster better collaboration and inform more productive action on the path to more diverse schools.

CONCLUSION

The plans and strategies described above outline our citywide approach to work with the community and leading researchers and practitioners to create, maintain and support diverse classrooms.

This plan is only a first step. These problems and discussions are among the most difficult in our school system but yield some of the most promising ideas for how to achieve equity and excellence for all. You can learn about how to get involved at our website at schools.nyc.gov/diversity or by emailing diversity@schools.nyc.gov.