



# Community District Education Council 26

## New York City Department of Education

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### Resolution Urging for Merit-Based Admissions Policies for Screened High School Programs Aug 11, 2022

**WHEREAS**, a Feb 16, 2022, Department of Education (DOE) press release states: “Every child deserves to attend a great school that will prepare them to succeed in college, their career and beyond, and that starts with expanding access to high-quality learning opportunities for our young people through the admissions process”<sup>i</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the random selection admissions method (also known as lottery admissions), an initiative designed by the previous administration, was intended to “expand opportunities for accelerated learning this year, particularly for high-achieving students who have been underrepresented historically”<sup>ii</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the unintended result of using a random selection method is that high-achieving students, whether from underrepresented groups or not, were systematically penalized and placed at a significant and discriminatory disadvantage to compete for admissions at screened programs that in the past would have guaranteed them admissions offers; and

**WHEREAS**, for the Fall 2022 admissions cycle, an excessive number of the high-achieving students, including those from underrepresented groups, did not receive offers to any screened programs due to receiving an unfavorable randomly assigned number, thereby conflicting with the DOE goal that “Every child deserves to attend a great school”<sup>iii</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, upon receiving such devastating and unjust results under a dishonest admissions process, District 26 parents have summarily removed their children from DOE schools to attend private schools or moved their residences to neighboring Long Island, Westchester, and to other states; and

**WHEREAS**, in implementing a policy goal to increase opportunities for students in underrepresented groups, due care should have been taken to ensure that high-achieving students are not arbitrarily excluded from the opportunities that they rightly deserve, having all of their hard work in school completely nullified by a randomly assigned number; and

**WHEREAS**, a random selection method unquestionably discourages students’ motivation to excel. Using game theory for a scenario in which random selection does not guarantee rewards for high achievement, rational students will naturally conclude that the optimal path to pursue is not to excel in school but rather to perform at the level of mediocrity; and

**WHEREAS**, another unintended and disastrous effect of a random selection admissions method is that it increases enrollment of students with unexceptional grades who are NOT even of those in the targeted underrepresented groups; and

**WHEREAS**, admissions based on random selection is a clearly flawed policy instrument, it must be replaced with targeted policy that directly increases opportunities for high-achieving students in underrepresented groups and does not inadvertently benefit underachieving students of any group; and

**WHEREAS**, “Diversity in Admissions” is an existing DOE admissions priority that can achieve such a policy goal<sup>iv</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, a Mar 9, 2022 DOE press release states<sup>v</sup>, “All future enrollment and admissions processes will be decided in lockstep with communities in order to develop policies that best meet the needs of New York City students.”; and also states “Acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution [that] benefits all types of learners while expanding high-quality and rigorous programs.”; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, CEC 26 urges the Chancellor to eliminate the random selection admissions methods for screened programs, intended to increase opportunities for students in underrepresented groups, and instead to permit high school administrators to participate in the existing Department of Education “Diversity in Admissions” initiative by setting aside specific numbers or a proportion of seats for students in underrepresented groups, such as those who are low-income, English Language Learners (ELLs), are in the child welfare system or live in temporary housing; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that CEC 26 urges the Chancellor to ensure that high-achieving students are rewarded for their hard work, such that admissions is based on rank-order of a student’s composite scores, both within the group of seats set aside for students in underrepresented groups and for those within the group of all other students; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that CEC 26 urges the Chancellor to grant high school administrators the prerogative to determine the specific screening criteria (course grades, state exam scores, essays, online assessments, interviews, student portfolios, etc.) and the weights of such criteria to best serve the students enrolled in the unique, screened programs in their schools and also to customize such criteria to increase enrollment of students from underrepresented groups.

*Community Education Council District 26 approved this resolution on August 11, 2022, at the monthly meeting by unanimous vote. Members Present: Yes: Norman Cohn, Albert Suhu, Dennis Chan, Sulinda Hong, Jennifer Catherall, Todd Friedman, and Cassandra Louie.*

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/news/announcements/contentdetails/2022/02/16/chancellor-banks-announces-extension-for-high-school-application>

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs/diversity-in-admissions>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/news/announcements/contentdetails/2022/03/09/chancellor-banks-announces-updates-on-the-future-of-enrollment-and-admissions-in-nyc-schools>