



Community District Education Council 26

New York City Department of Education

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Norman Cohn	Sulinda Hong	Athena Gavros	Community Superintendent	
Dennis Chan	Dilip Nath		District 26	
Jennifer Catherall	Taeho Hwang			

“Resolution to Restore an Academically Rigorous Selection Process for Screened High School Programs.”
Approved February 15, 2022

WHEREAS, on January 27, 2022, without any prior engagement with the parent community as promised by the previous Mayor and Chancellor, the Department of Education released new selection criteria and an admissions process for screened high school programs, significantly departing from the methods used last year and in years past ¹; and

WHEREAS, the new point system introduced by the Department of Education significantly reduces the granularity of a student’s ranking, i.e. - students with grades that are between 85 to 100 will receive the same number of points (400 points) to be used in the selection process; and

WHEREAS, conversion of course grades from a range as wide as 85 to 100 for the 400-point level creates a situation in which there is a significant disparity in academic preparedness between the students with a grade of 85 versus a student with a grade in the high 90’s; and

WHEREAS, the point system used to divide applicants into four selection groups, with the “high-achieving” Group 1 requiring a minimum point average of 350 for the four courses (ELA, math, science, and social studies), makes it possible for students to receive low grades (between 75 to 84, which is equivalent to 300 points) in two of the four classes and still be placed into priority Group 1; and further

WHEREAS, a student with barely passing grades (65-74) in a single subject (200 points) can be offset with grades as low as 85 in three other subjects (400 points each) and be placed into Group 1; and

WHEREAS, in years past the actual grade ranges of middle school students receiving offers to screened programs was typically between 90 to 100 and generally would not overlap within the range 65-84; ²and

WHEREAS, in years past, although the total number of applicants applying to screened programs far exceeded available seats (around 40 applicants per seat), offers were made by rank order, e.g. - students with the highest grades received offers ³; and

WHEREAS, under the new point system and associated selection method, with eligible applicants also far exceeding available seats, e.g. - likely thousands of applicants in Group 1 vying for a seat in a screened program with only 60 seats, offers will be required to be made using random selection: and

WHEREAS, the distribution of grades can be approximated using statistical analysis (logit-normal distribution), which appears similar to a bell curve, and it stands to reason that the frequency of student grades around 85 will far exceed the frequency of student grades in the high 90’s ⁴; and

WHEREAS, the distribution of the randomly selected students will be similar to the distribution of the underlying Group 1 population, e.g. - many students with grades around 85 and relatively few students with grades in the high 90’s, and as a

¹ <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/high-school/screened-admissions>

² “2019 NYC High School Directory” published by the NYC Department of Education

³ <https://www.myschools.nyc/en/schools/high-school/>

⁴ <https://stanford.edu/~cpiech/bio/papers/gradesAreNotNormal.pdf>

result, screened programs will largely be populated with students having grades around 85 and very few students with grades in the high 90's: and

WHEREAS, policymakers at the Department of Education apparently failed to understand characteristics of the probability distribution in course grades of the students placed into Group 1, and failed to understand that random selection will not draw from a uniform probability distribution but from a right-skewed distribution, likely leading to screened programs experiencing unintended and potentially disastrous effects in the makeup of the students accepted and in the quality of the programs; and

WHEREAS, the new point system is patently unsound, leading to large numbers of high-performing students having grades in the high 90's unfairly excluded from screened programs; and

WHEREAS, 548 seats in District 26 screened high school programs will be affected by the new admissions criteria ⁵; and

WHEREAS, on December 16, 2021, Community Education Council District 26 (CEC26) unanimously passed a resolution demanding that academic screening for rigorous middle school programs be reinstated; and therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, Community Education Council District 26 (CEC26) firmly urges the New York City Schools Chancellor to terminate the deeply flawed point system and selection process introduced in late January 2022; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, until a fair selection process is designed with input through engagement with the parent community, CEC 26 firmly urges the Chancellor to restore the screening process to be similar to the method used in last year's high school admissions process, except for use of test scores unavailable for most students, specifically by calculating an average of actual grades (math, ELA, science, and social studies), ranking the students, and selecting the highest ranked students for acceptance.

*This Resolution was approved at a CEC26 Calendar Meeting held on February 15, 2022 by a vote of members present including: Dilip Nath, Todd Friedman, Adriana Aviles, Albert Suhu, Dennis Chan, Sulinda Hong, Taeho Hwang, Cassandra Louie, and Jennifer Catherall.
No: Norman Cohn*

⁵ <https://www.myschools.nyc/en/schools/high-school/>