

FORDHAM LAW SCHOOL
FEERICK CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

SCREENED OUT:

The Lack of Access to NYC Screened Program Admissions Criteria

A POLICY BRIEF



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Introduction

Fordham Law School’s Feerick Center for Social Justice (“Feerick Center”) has prepared this policy brief, which examines highly selective and competitive New York City public high school screened programs and their use of “rubrics,” the documents containing admissions criteria. Its findings and recommendations aim to assist school officials and policy makers to make high school admissions more transparent and navigable. As has been widely demonstrated in social science research, discussed in the media, acknowledged by the New York City School Diversity Advisory Group, and noted in this policy brief, New York City’s public schools are

among the most segregated in the nation.¹ Targeted reforms related to rubrics would make admissions more equitable for more students. The policy brief comprises an executive summary, brief overviews of the high school admissions process and the Feerick Center’s work in the field, and the center’s fact-finding efforts and results.

1 See, e.g., Kfir Mordechay & Jennifer B. Ayscue, The Civil Rights Project, *School Integration in Gentrifying Neighborhoods: Evidence from New York City* (Mar. 2019), <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/school-integration-in-gentrifying-neighborhoods-evidence-from-new-york-city/NYC-031019.pdf> (“As the largest city in America, NYC operates the largest public-school district in the country[.] [i]t is also one of the most segregated school systems in the nation.” (citation omitted)); NEW YORK APPLESEED, IBO DATA ON SCHOOL SEGREGATION 2001-2010, <https://www.nyappleseed.org/work/ibo-data-school-segregation-2001-2010/> (last visited Sept. 19, 2019) (for that period of time, noting that “[t]he New York City’s Independent Budget Office’s analysis and charts] show[ed] little change from the city’s unacceptably high levels of school segregation at the beginning of the decade”); Eliza Shapiro, *Desegregating N.Y. Schools Was His Top Priority. What Happened?* N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 23, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/23/nyregion/nyc-schools-chancellor-carranza-.html> (“New York [City] is home to one of the most segregated school systems in the country.”); SCHOOL DIVERSITY ADVISORY GROUP, MAKING THE GRADE II: NEW PROGRAMS FOR BETTER SCHOOLS, 19 (Aug. 2019), https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1c478c_067f0c0a893c45a38620735f11e1dd43.pdf (“The schools of New York City are as segregated as the schools of Mississippi and Alabama.” (citation omitted)).

Executive Summary

New York City's public high school admissions process is confusing and complex. Among other factors, it requires applicants to master an understanding of varying admissions criteria and requirements (such as interviews, written applications, tests, etc.) and distinct academic programming.² Every December, nearly 80,000 eighth graders submit a ranked list of up to twelve discrete high school "programs"—selected from a pool of over 700—to receive one match in March of that school year.³ An algorithm similar to the one used for medical residency programs generates these application matches.⁴

The 700+ programs in the broader match process use one of eight different admissions methods. One of those admissions methods is the "screened" method. The screened method is highly selective, but is distinct from the one that applies to the eight high-profile, test-only Specialized High Schools. Students and families often regard screened programs as the crown jewels and, in fact, screened programs rank among the most selective and highest performing of New York City high school programs.⁵ In 2013, the New York City Office of the Comptroller ("Comptroller's Office") conducted an audit focused on screened high school admissions, found irregularities in the administration of the admissions process, and made

recommendations for improvements.⁶ The New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") agreed to adopt the recommendations and make the suggested improvements.⁷

In the same way that students rank high school programs, screened programs also rank student applicants. Rubrics dictate how screened programs evaluate and rank student applicants. Rubrics set out the criteria used to evaluate students and the weight afforded to each criterion. Criteria can include grades, standardized test scores, attendance, punctuality, admissions tests, and other requirements such as auditions and interviews. Applicants and others working with them need access to rubrics to understand how screened programs evaluate applicants and to assess whether the students are competitive when applying to a particular screened program.⁸ To ensure greater transparency in the system and equity in admissions, the Comptroller's Office 2013 Audit Report recommended that NYCDOE make rubrics publicly available and easily accessible to families.⁹ New York City Local Law 59 further requires that the NYCDOE report annually on student demographics, including "[f]or each high school . . . whether the admissions process used by such school is based on a lottery, a geographic zone, a screening of candidates for such

2 N.Y.C. DEP'T OF EDUC., 2019 NYC HIGH SCH. DIRECTORY, 1-28 (2019).

3 A physical high school building may contain several high school programs—some of which are administered by one school administration and others of which are standalone schools with distinct school administrations. Elizabeth A. Harris & Ford Fessenden, *The Broken Promises of Choice in New York City Schools*, N.Y. TIMES (May 5, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/05/nyregion/school-choice-new-york-city-high-school-admissions.html>.

4 Atila Abdulkadiroğlu et al., *Practical Market Design; Four Matches: The New York City High School Match*, 95 AM. ECON. REV. 364, 365 (May 2005), <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/000282805774670167>; see also Tracy Tullis, *How Game Theory Helped Improve New York City's High School Application Process*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 5, 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/07/nyregion/how-game-theory-helped-improve-new-york-city-high-school-application-process.html>.

5 See N.Y.C. INDEP. BUDGET OFF., SCHOOLS BRIEF; PREFERENCES AND OUTCOMES: A LOOK AT NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL CHOICE PROCESS, 3 (Oct. 2016), <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/preferences-and-outcomes-a-look-at-new-york-citys-public-high-school-choice-process.pdf> (noting that "audition and screened programs are considered the most selective"); Winnie Hu & Elizabeth A. Harris, *A Shadow System Feeds Segregation in New York City Schools*, N.Y. TIMES (June 17, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/17/nyregion/public-schools-screening-admission.html>.

6 CITY OF NEW YORK OFF. OF THE COMPTROLLER, AUDIT REP. ON THE N.Y.C. DEP'T OF EDUC.'S HIGH SCH. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR SCREENED PROGRAMS (June 13, 2013) (on file with authors) [hereinafter N.Y.C. COMPTROLLER'S OFF. 2013 AUDIT REPORT]. Irregularities included the fact that sampled high schools did not rank students in accordance with stated policy, did not maintain sufficient evidence to support final rankings, did not formally document the criteria used for their ranking process, and did not maintain high school application forms as required. *Id.* at 6-12.

7 *Id.* (Addendum).

8 According to NYCDOE officials, admissions personnel can exercise some discretion beyond the parameters outlined in a rubric. Additionally, the availability of seats, selectivity, and demand for a particular screened program can influence a student's chances of admission further. Thus, for highly competitive screened programs, the number of eligible applicants may far exceed the number of available seats.

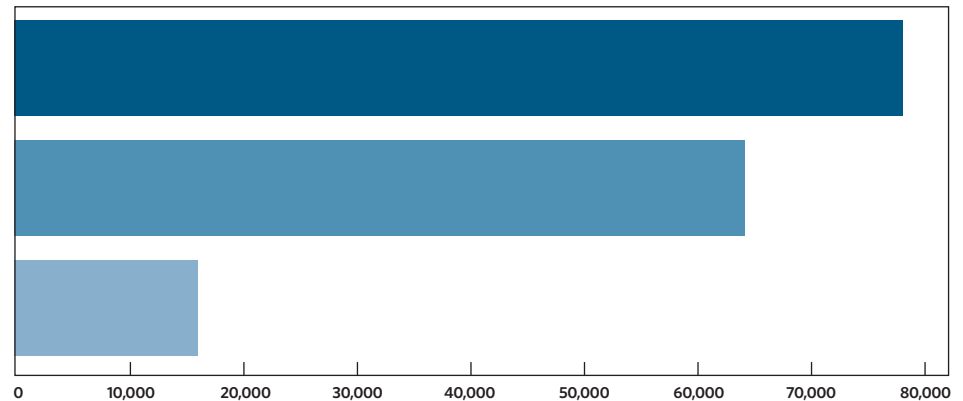
9 N.Y.C. COMPTROLLER'S OFF. 2013 AUDIT REP., *supra* note 6 at (Addendum at 4). The NYCDOE in its response to the N.Y.C. Comptroller's Office 2013 Audit Report indicated that it "agree[d] that all screened and audition programs should maintain documented rubrics that can be shared with families." *Id.*; see also *id.* (Addendum at 3) (stating that "NYCDOE will issue guidance to schools regarding documentation and publication requirements for ranking rubrics and processes" and that "NYCDOE is committed to including more precise language to reflect school screening methodologies in the high school directory and/or through a website").

NYCDOE 2016-2017 School Year Data

Total number of applicants NYC high schools: **77,223**

Number of applicants applying to at least 1 screened program: **64,388**

Number of screened program seats: **15,692**



school, or a standardized test; and whether other criteria or methods are used for admissions including, but not limited to, over the counter admissions, waitlists, or a principal's discretion."¹⁰

METHODS

This policy brief describes fact finding for rubrics of the 157 screened high school programs identified for the 2018-2019 school year.¹¹ Efforts included the following:

- July 2018 request pursuant to the New York State Freedom of Information Law ("FOIL") to NYCDOE seeking copies of the rubrics utilized by screened high school programs for the school years from 2012-2013 through 2018-2019 and of the written guidance provided to administrators in connection with all aspects of the rubrics;¹²
- Letter requests to principals of screened programs for copies of the rubrics and the contact person at the high school for admissions;

- Two rounds of telephone outreach to high schools with screened programs to request copies of the rubrics; and
- Three rounds of online research to determine whether high schools with screened programs had posted rubrics online.

Letter and phone outreach took place from June 2018 through August 2018. Online research began in June 2018 and continued into the school year through February 2019. NYCDOE produced partial responses to the FOIL request in July 2019 and September 2019.

FINDINGS

In total, out of the 157 screened programs identified by the Feerick Center, fact-finding efforts yielded only 20 rubrics.

- The FOIL request is partially outstanding as of September 2019. In July 2019, NYCDOE produced documents prepared for high school principals by the Office of Student Enrollment ("OSE") in connection with high school admissions. As of this date, the agency has not yet produced any rubrics for high school programs.
- Two screened schools provided rubrics following letter outreach and one school provided its rubric following two rounds of phone outreach.
- Three rounds of online searches uncovered an additional 17 rubrics from school websites.

Some screened programs distribute copies of rubrics during open houses. However, the opportunity to obtain rubrics in this way advantages those who are

10 N.Y.C. Local Law No. 59, Admin. Code § 21-958(d). In April 2019, members of the New York City High School Application Advisory Committee, a working group convened by Fordham Law School's Feerick Center for Social Justice, wrote to NYCDOE Chancellor Richard A. Carranza regarding NYCDOE's persistent failure to issue reports that complied with the requirement that admission criteria and methods be included.

11 In total, there were 109 screened schools in the 2018-2019 school year—some of which had more than one screened program within the school. In addition, some high schools had multiple programs, one or more of which utilized the screened method for admissions. Each unique "screened program" should have its own rubric. A review of available screened programs during the 2018-2019 school year by the Feerick Center identified 157 discrete screened programs. NYCDOE OSE reported to the center that during the 2018-2019 school year there were actually 158 screened programs.

12 The study sought rubrics from 2012-2013 as a baseline and subsequent school years to examine how rubrics changed, if at all, in the aftermath of the N.Y.C. Comptroller's Office 2013 Audit Report.

In total, out of the 157 screened programs identified by the Feerick Center, fact-finding efforts yielded only 20 rubrics.

able to register immediately and attend these events.¹³ Moreover, in September 2019, in its partial response to the center’s FOIL, NYCDOE stated that “individual school rubrics are generally maintained at the individual school and are not centralized,” indicating that the agency does not collect the rubrics.

We conclude that rubrics for screened programs are not widely available and are not easily accessible to students, students’ families, the community-based service providers who support students and families in the high school admissions process, or members of the public. The absence of a centralized repository of rubrics for high school screened programs suggests a need for significantly increased focus and attention to this area.

We further note that NYCDOE has not made publicly available any guidance for screened schools on what information should or must be contained in the rubrics, how that information should be presented, or how it should be made available and accessible.¹⁴ A review and comparison of the 20 rubrics obtained through the fact-finding efforts described above revealed a lack of standardized information and formats. Although NYCDOE links a video explaining the admissions process for screened programs, including rubrics, on its website, the video does not encourage students or families to obtain copies of rubrics or explain how to do so. Instead, the video refers the viewer back to the NYCDOE website for more information.¹⁵

13 Service providers working in the field report that signing up students for open houses for the most selective and popular screened programs is extremely difficult and that registrations to those events sometimes close within minutes. Registration to open houses often occurs only online, further limiting access to these important events to families and students.

14 The FOIL submitted to NYCDOE also requested documents that provided guidance to screened schools regarding rubrics.

15 N.Y.C. DEP’T OF EDUC., MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: HOW STUDENTS GET OFFERS TO SCREENED SCHOOLS AND THE SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOLS, <https://vimeo.com/288797789>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NYCDOE should make rubrics for screened and other programs easily and publicly accessible to families, students, and service providers by:

- Replicating some of the policies and practices used for middle schools, including standardizing the rubrics for screened programs by using a common composite score (i.e., same criteria, different weight),¹⁶ calculating the score for applicants, and programming the online directory and application to show users where students stand based on their academic record;
- Including a link to the rubric on the online directory and application for screened and other programs that utilize rubrics;
- Providing a prompt to families and students utilizing the online application when selecting a program that uses rubrics to review the rubric, with an explanation about rubrics;
- Including an explanation of rubrics for all of the admissions methods that utilize rubrics and guidance on how to obtain copies of rubrics in the online directory, the printed directory, or through Family Welcome Centers and any other available sources;

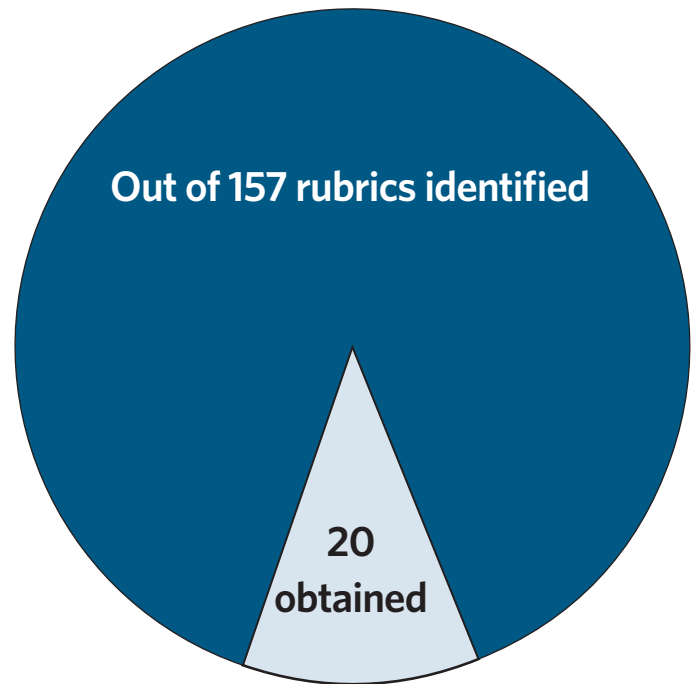
We conclude that rubrics for screened programs are not widely available and are not easily accessible to students, students’ families, the community-based service providers who support students and families in the high school admissions process, or members of the public.

- Including an explanation of rubrics for all of the admissions methods that utilize rubrics in oral presentations and written materials disseminated during the high school family workshops, high school fairs, and open houses at schools utilizing rubrics;

16 For example, NYCDOE instituted a new admissions policy for middle school programs that previously admitted students by test score that involves a composite score based on the applicant’s attendance, final 4th grade report card, New York State ELA Exam, New York State Math Exam, and punctuality.

Fact-Finding Efforts

Number of call attempts	214
Number of calls that made contact	187
Number of mailings	109
Number of rounds of website research	3
Number of Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests	1
Number of rubrics obtained as a result of websites visited	17
Number of rubrics obtained as a result of mailings	2
Number of rubrics obtained as a result of calls	1
Number of rubrics obtained as a result of the FOIL request	0



- Requiring that all high schools utilizing rubrics post the rubric on the high schools' websites with any updates or changes to the rubric finalized and posted as early in the summer as possible, with a standardized explanation of them and a link to the rubric prominently visible on the home page of the websites;

These modest measures would improve fairness and transparency. They are the minimum required to make high school admissions more equitable for high-performing, selective, and competitive programs—screened and otherwise.

- Ensuring that publicly-facing staff members at Family Welcome Centers explain rubrics well and make copies available to students, families, service providers, and members of the public through training, oversight, and any other means necessary; and

- Ensuring that publicly-facing and other high school personnel explain rubrics well and make copies available to students, families, service providers, and members of the public.

Furthermore, NYCDOE should include on its website the written policies and guidance governing rubrics for screened programs and other admissions methods.

These modest measures would improve fairness and transparency. They are the minimum required to make high school admissions more equitable for high-performing, selective, and competitive programs—screened and otherwise. Given the stakes for students and their families and the relative ease with which these steps could be taken, NYCDOE should fully implement these recommendations for the 2019-2020 admissions cycle.

Finally, supports for students and families in connection with the high school admissions process are severely underfunded within schools and in the community. This time-intensive, complex, high-stakes process warrants significantly enhanced capacity and resources.

1. Overview Of New York City Public High School Admissions

New York City's public school system is the largest in the nation:¹⁷ 1.1 million students were enrolled in the 2018-2019 school year¹⁸ and as many as 80,000 eighth graders go through the high school admissions process each year. New York State has had the most racially segregated schools in the United States,¹⁹ with a persistent racial "achievement gap"²⁰ notwithstanding improvements in graduation rates since 2005.²¹ Both the mammoth size of the school system and its staggering segregation factor into the inequities of high school admissions.

In 2004, then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg transformed high school admissions, shifting from a primarily zone-based system to the current one, in which students submit a ranked list of high school programs and receive one match. In theory, eliminating school assignment based on geography would enable middle-school students to avoid low-performing high schools in their own communities and seek entry into higher-performing schools throughout the city. New York City's "choice system" was intended to promote greater educational equity and student choice. However, various structural and systemic factors—including admissions methods such as screened programs—thwart racial and socioeconomic diversity in schools.²²

As described previously, New York City's public high school admissions process tasks students with submitting a ranked list of up to twelve high school programs during the fall of eighth grade. The process

generally requires students and families to research schools on their own, attend open houses and high school fairs if possible, comply with additional admissions requirements as necessary, and then develop the ranked list from a pool of over 700 programs. Many students and families find this process stressful, confusing, and overwhelming. To develop a considered ranked list, they must devote tens of hours, if not hundreds, to collect, evaluate, and track a significant amount of information. This does not include the hours needed to prepare for any additional requirements from specific screened programs.

Students and families can list programs according to admissions method, which, in addition to screened programs, includes test, audition, Educational Option, screened language, transfer, zoned, and open.²³ Applicants, their parents, and service providers widely consider screened programs to be among the highest-performing and most selective of programs, outside of the Specialized High Schools.²⁴ Data from 2018 show that the average four-year graduation rate for screened schools surpassed the city's average by 10.1%.²⁵ Participants in the process almost universally regard Specialized High Schools as New York City's most prestigious and competitive schools; with a 15% difference in graduation rate, they would likely regard screened schools and programs the next most prestigious and competitive in New York City.²⁶

Screened programs consider application criteria such as grades, standardized test scores, attendance, and punctuality in order to admit students into their screened high school programs. In 2013, the Comptroller's Office conducted an audit report

17 See N.Y.C. DEP'T OF EDUC., *DOE Data at a Glance*, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/doe-data-at-a-glance> (click on "Students," last visited Sep. 20, 2019) ("There are 1,135,334 students in the NYC school system, the largest school district in the United States").

18 *Id.*

19 John Kucsera & Gary Orfield, *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction and a Damaged Future*, THE C.R. PROJECT, vi, (Mar. 2014), <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/ny-norfler-report-placeholder/Kucsera-New-York-Extreme-Segregation-2014.pdf>.

20 Kristen Lewis & Sarah Burd-Sharps, *High School Graduation In New York City: Is Neighborhood Still Destiny?*, MEASURE OF AMERICA, 2 (May 2016), https://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/27121634/MOA_HS_Brief.pdf. While progress has been made, the discrepancies in graduation rates between white students as compared to African-American and Latino students remain persistent. *Id.*

21 "The high school graduation rate is up more than 20 points since 2005 . . ." Harris & Fessenden, *supra* note 3.

22 Hu & Harris, *supra* note 5.

23 See N.Y.C. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note 2 at 25.

24 Hu & Harris, *supra* note 5.

25 The graduation rate for screened schools was lower than the four-year graduation rate of Specialized High Schools by 14.3%. The four-year graduation rate can function as a proxy for success of New York City public high schools.

26 The Feerick Center derived this percentage from data made publicly available by NYCDOE on its website in June 2018. See N.Y.C. DEP'T OF EDUC., INFOHUB GRADUATION RESULTS, <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports-and-policies/citywide-information-and-data/graduation-results>. The combined graduation rate of screened programs is 84.48% compared to the citywide graduation rate of 74.3%. *Id.*

of screened program admissions.²⁷ The audit examined compliance by screened programs with controls established by NYCDOE to ensure a fair admissions process into screened programs. It found noncompliance with the controls in place at the time and recommended additional reforms to improve

fairness in the admissions process.²⁸ NYCDOE agreed to adopt numerous improvements, including making rubrics more readily available, a reform which has not been effectuated.²⁹

27 N.Y.C. COMPTROLLER'S OFF. 2013 AUDIT REP., *supra* note 6, at 13.

28 *Id.* at 1-2 (finding that "DOE lacks adequate controls over the high school application process to ensure an accurate screening and ranking of the students who apply for admission to a screened program"); see also *id.* at 6-8.

29 See *id.* (Addendum).

Eleanor Roosevelt High School Admissions Rubric Fall 2017

RANKED (QE)	MAY BE RANKED (QE)	RANKED (SPED)	MAY BE RANKED (SPED)
Meets all published directory 7th Grade Report Card Grade selection criteria: • 90 or above in any core subject class (English, math, science, and social studies) • 85 or above in all other classes May have one outlier grade* less than 2 points away (90 for core, 85 for other) and is within the first 1150 candidates.	Meets all published directory 7th Grade Report Card Grade selection criteria. -OR- Does not meet published directory selection criteria but there are fewer than 1150 candidates to rank.	Meets 75%-relaxed published directory 7th Grade Report Card Grade selection criteria. • 87 or above in any core subject class (English, math, science, and social studies) • 81 or above in all other classes	Meets 75%-relaxed published directory 7th Grade Report Card Grade selection criteria. -OR- Does not meet 75%-relaxed published directory selection criteria but there are less than 4 times the match target candidates to rank.
Meets all published directory attendance selection criteria: • 10 or less days late • 10 or less days absent May exceed the minimum number of days late/absent* if valid medical documentation is provided and is within the first 1150 candidates.	Meets all published directory attendance selection criteria. -OR- Does not meet published directory selection criteria but there are fewer than 1150 candidates to rank.	Meets 75%-relaxed published directory attendance selection criteria: • 13 or less days late • 13 or less days absent	Meets 75%-relaxed published directory attendance selection criteria. -OR- Does not meet 75%-relaxed published directory selection criteria but there are less than 4 times the match target candidates to rank.
Meets all published directory standardized examination score selection criteria: • Math Level(s): 3-4 • English Language Arts Level(s): 3-4 May have one outlier score* less than 0.20 points away (2.80) and is within the first 1150 candidates.	Meets all published directory standardized examination score selection criteria. -OR- Does not meet published directory selection criteria but there are fewer than 1150 candidates to rank.	Meets 75%-relaxed published directory standardized examination score selection criteria: • Math Level(s): 2.75-4 • English Language Arts Level(s): 2.75-4	Meets 75%-relaxed published directory standardized examination score selection criteria. -OR- Does not meet 75%-relaxed published directory selection criteria but there are less than 4 times the match target candidates to rank.

* Each applicant will be allowed ONLY one exception to the published selection criteria, but is not a criterion for ranking.
* Geographic priority is in District 2, but is not a criterion for ranking.
* Each applicant is assigned a Composite 7th Grade Report Card Core Course Grades Rank, based on the average of the grades from the four core courses.
* Any honors or accelerated course(s) grade items weighted with an additional point.
* Any situation where a student's current school uses grades inconsistent with our admissions rubric, the grades shall be converted utilizing the DOE convention Academic Policy.
* State standardized examination scores, will be considered if they submit documentation of nationally-normed standardized test scores.
* Composite Standardized Test Score Rank, based on the average of the grades from the two subject tests.
* Composite 7th Grade Report Card Core Course Grades Rank (55%) and (Composite Standardized Test Score Rank) are ranked relative to other applicants of their academic program, as indicated on their current IEP, are ranked relative to other applicants of their academic program, as indicated on their current IEP.

Feel free to check back here to get the latest information regarding admissions into Aviation High School. Final placement decisions are made by the Family Welcome Centers. If you have any questions regarding placement, or if you feel you would like to appeal the decision, you must contact them directly at 718-990-3500 or visit them in person at 28-11 Queens Plaza North, 3rd Floor


Entrance Requirements

For more information click here: Entrance Requirements.pdf (<https://echalk-slate-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/private/groups/15803/resources/4411c84b-c611-41aa-862a-181b58414de5?control=private%2C%20max-age%3D31536000&response-cache-disposition=%3Bfilename%3D%22Entrance%25Requirements.pdf%22&response-content-type=application%2Fpdf&Signature=wg0FeDnitF0jGcmxUt7ihXoXPs%3D>)

Aerospace Engineering Technology - Q60A is an academic screened program. The following selection criteria components are used during the admissions process for Aviation Career and Technical Education High School - Aerospace Engineering Technology - Q60A.

Aviation Maintenance Technology - Q60Q is an academic screened program. The following selection criteria components are used during the admissions process for Aviation Career and Technical Education High School - Aviation Maintenance Technology - Q60Q.

Both of our programs are screened programs and both of our programs utilize the same rubric below. We review & rank each student's data as follows:


 Department of Education of the City of New York
Queens Vocational and Technical High School
 3702 47th Ave, Long Island City, NY 11101 • (718) 937-3010 • FAX (718) 392-8397 • www.queensvoc.org
 George S. Alikakos, Assistant Principal
 Organization/Security
 Melissa Burg, Principal
 Lisseth Salas-Ocampo, Assistant Pupil Personnel

Component	Weight (#points)
7th grade Ranking Components:	40
High School Admissions Ranking Rubric	75%

Q68N: Computer Technology and Information Systems
Screened Program Rubric

Selection Criteria Component	Total Points	Points Given	Rationale for scale
Attendance	10	0 pts for 10+ absences 5 pts for 5 to 10 absences 10 pts for less than 5 absences	Since students in this program need to acquire a lot of different industry standard skills, it is imperative that they are in school to acquire these skills. In addition, punctuality is an extremely important part of the Computer program. Since students in this program need to acquire a lot of different industry are in school to acquire these skills. In addition, punctuality is an extremely important part of the Computer program. It is important for students to have a very good understanding of Math for computer Technology.
Punctuality	10	0 pts for 10+ latenesses 5 pts for 5 to 10 latenesses 10 pts for less than 5 latenesses	
CCLS Math	40	Available grades are turned into points. 65-79 = 5pts 80-84 = 10pts 85-89 = 30pts 90+ = 40pts	
CCLS ELA	40	Available grades are turned into points. 60-79 = 5pts 80-84 = 10pts 85-89 = 30pts 91+ = 40pts	It is important for students to have a very good comprehending skills for computer Technology
Total:	100		

High School Admissions Ranking Rubric

O2M412

Screened Program- M74A

Applicants with overall grade point averages of 85 or higher in the core subject areas (ELA, social studies, science & math- extenuating circumstances will be considered)

Applicants with Level 2.25 - 4 on 7th grade standardized math & ELA exams will be given priority. Students from private schools with different standardized testing scores will be converted based on percentiles. Students without scores will be ranked based on final 7th grade core subject area averages

Applicants with 10 or fewer absences (extenuating circumstances will be considered)

Applicants with 10 or fewer lates (extenuating circumstances will be considered)

Utilizing Excel formula, 60% weight will be applied to student overall averages and 40% weight will be applied to student standardized test scores. Applicants will be ranked using sequential numbering

Brooke Jackson
Principal

2. Feerick Center For Social Justice's LEEAP Education Project

The Corporation for National and Community Service has awarded Fordham Law School's Feerick Center for Social Justice an AmeriCorps VISTA grant to support the LEEAP Education Project ("LEEAP Ed. Project"). AmeriCorps VISTA members recruit volunteers to build capacity in communities to fight poverty.³⁰ VISTA members serve as LEEAP Ed. Project coordinators and recruit, train, and place volunteers with school- and community-based partners to help students and families navigate New York City's complex public high school admissions process.

The Project launched in 2012 and, over time, has partnered with over ten host organizations and placed volunteers at sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan. Each school year, volunteers assist dozens of students and families to develop better-informed and considered applications. The LEEAP Ed. Project also convenes the New York City High School

Application Advisory Committee ("HSAAC"), which is comprised of a broad array of stakeholders. Members include service providers, school administrators, researchers, academics, advocates, LEEAP Ed. volunteers, and occasionally student activists. HSAAC convenes on a bi-monthly basis and facilitates information sharing related to high school admissions policy and practice. Staff members of the NYCDOE's Office for Student Enrollment attend these meetings on a regular basis, during which they provide updates and receive feedback from practitioners and others in the field.³¹

While the Project's main focus centers on recruiting, training, and supporting volunteers to assist students and families through the high school application process, this work has afforded LEEAP Ed. Project volunteers and staff with a close-up view of the admissions process in New York City.

30 See *VISTA History and Mission*, VISTACAMPUS, <https://www.vistacampus.gov/about/vista-history-and-mission>.

31 The Feerick Center for Social Justice thanks the NYCDOE Office of Student Enrollment officials and staff members who have participated in HSAAC meetings for sharing their expertise and for their willingness to dialogue with stakeholders. The center also expresses its deep appreciation for NYCDOE staff members' support of the LEEAP Ed. Project.

3. Fact-Finding Efforts and Results

We note at the outset, that virtually everyone involved in the process—students, parents, educators, guidance counselors, school administrators, and community-based service providers—face significant challenges and barriers in connection with high school admissions. This process is severely underfunded at every level—in schools, at the NYCDOE, and in the community. Middle school success centers present a rare exception: they use a peer counseling and youth leadership development approach to support students and families with high school admissions. These programs utilize expert staff and have shown marked success at improving access to high-performing programs. Currently, however, NYCDOE funding helps support only two middle school success centers in the entire city.

Fact-finding efforts involved four strategies to obtain copies of the rubrics from the 157 screened programs and screened high schools identified for the 2018-2019 school year. These efforts included a FOIL request; letter outreach; phone outreach; and internet research.

As of the publication of this briefing, NYCDOE has partially produced documents in response to a July 2018 FOIL request. The FOIL request sought copies of the rubrics utilized by high schools and programs utilizing the screened admissions method; it also sought copies of any and all written instructions and guidance provided by NYCDOE to its employees regarding rubrics. The FOIL request sought these documents starting in the 2012-2013 school year and for all subsequent school years in order to use the Comptroller's 2013 Audit Report as a benchmark. On July 3, 2019, NYCDOE produced copies of memoranda sent by NYCDOE OSE to high school principals regarding the application process from the 2013-2014 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. As noted previously, NYCDOE has not yet produced copies of high school rubrics for screened programs.

Letter outreach began in mid-June 2018 with mailings to 109 principals of screened schools and high schools with screened programs. The letters requested copies of the rubrics used to admit incoming ninth graders. The letters also requested contact information for admissions point persons. Letter outreach yielded two rubrics.

The most time-intensive outreach method (and one of the methods most likely to be used by students and parents)—phone outreach—proved to be the least effective.³² The first round of phone outreach yielded few results. Callers reached 14 administrators, 18 admissions office staff members, 10 assistant principals, 18 guidance counselors, 15 parent coordinators, 5 principals, 10 school secretaries, and an additional 14 school staff members who were not identified by title or role. This first round of calls yielded only one rubric.

The second round of calls led to direct contact with 7 admissions directors, 13 assistant principals, 17 guidance counselors, 23 main office staff members, 18 parent coordinators, and 5 principals. However, these calls did not yield any additional rubrics. In general, contacting screened schools and schools with screened programs by telephone routinely involved interactions with school personnel who were either unaware of the rubric, misdirected the caller on how they could obtain the rubric, or ultimately unhelpful.

The Feerick Center conducted three rounds of online searches for rubrics starting in June 2018 and ending in February 2019. From this effort, 17 rubrics were located on school websites, either under “Admissions” tabs or “Prospective Student” tabs. Some rubrics, however, were not readily found and required persistent searches through many webpages to locate. Additionally, dozens of high school websites did not have any information on admissions, let alone copies of the rubrics.

³² Following letter outreach, fact-finding efforts shifted to phone outreach. The first round of phone outreach took place between June 25, 2018 and June 27, 2018. Calls were made between 10am and 3pm. Callers conducted a second round of outreach calls between July 16, 2018 and July 18, 2018 between 9:30am and 3pm. Callers noted whether they reached a staff member and / or left a voicemail message requesting a call back.

On July 3, 2019, NYCDOE produced eight documents from the 2013-2014 school year through the 2018-2019 school year related to the ranking of incoming high school students. The documents included a 2012-2013 presentation to high school principals and memoranda from OSE to all high school principals regarding the process for ranking students entering high school for each of the school years during that time period. Almost every year, the memoranda included a statement that “[a] core goal of the Department of Education is to maximize access to high quality schools and programs for all students.”³³ The 2013-2014 memorandum further noted that “[t]his includes ensuring access to screened and audition programs, many of which are the most highly demanded by students across the city.”³⁴

From the 2013-2014 school year through the 2018-2019 school year, the memoranda included discussion of the Comptroller’s 2013 Audit and noted that high schools are required to keep records of student selection criteria for ranking students.³⁵ The memorandum immediately following the Comptroller’s June 2013 audit stated that “every school with programs that require candidates to be ranked must

have a clear rubric on record and available for public review.”³⁶ The express directive to have the rubric available for public review was included in subsequent memoranda through and including the 2016-2017 school year.³⁷

Starting in the 2017-2018 school year, however, the requirement to make rubrics public is only alluded to.³⁸ The memorandum states that, as part of OSE’s audit of six to ten randomly selected screened and/or audition programs, which was instituted as a result of the Comptroller’s June 2013 audit as of 2013, “[s]elected schools must be ready to share the admissions rubric and related school-based policies followed in the ranking process” and that they “will be required to explain any admissions decisions that deviate from *published selection criteria*.”³⁹

The Feerick Center staff and summer interns involved with this fact-finding effort together spent hundreds of hours engaged in outreach. After four search methods, including a FOIL request, letter outreach, phone outreach, and online research, we obtained only 20 rubrics out of a total of 157 screened programs in New York City identified through the NYCDOE website.

33 Memorandum from Hussham Khan, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals of schools with screened and/or audition programs (Dec. 6, 2013) (on file with authors).

34 *Id.*

35 *Id.* at 3. The 2013-2014 memorandum stated that “[t]hese records must be kept permanently and should be available for review upon request.” *Id.* This instruction was changed in subsequent years. See, e.g., Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 3 (Dec. 1, 2014) (“All materials pertaining to admissions, including copies of applications and rubrics for ranking, must be retained for six years.”) (on file with authors); Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 1, 2015) (“All materials pertaining to admissions, including copies of applications and rubrics for ranking, must be retained for multiple years: 3 years for students who do not enroll[;] 6 years for student who do enroll[;] [and] [l]onger than the above retention period for students who are the subject of pending litigation or FOIL requests.”) (on file with authors); Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 6, 2016) (same) (on file with authors); Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 5, 2017) (same) (on file with authors); Memorandum from Samuel Daunt, Acting Senior Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Jan. 14, 2019) (same) (on file with authors).

36 Memorandum from Hussham Khan, *supra* note 33.

37 Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 3 (Dec., 2014) (same); Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 1, 2015) (same); Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 6, 2016) (same).

38 Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 3 (Dec., 2014) (same); Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 1, 2015) (same); Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 6, 2016) (same).

39 Memorandum from Amy Basile, Exec. Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Dec. 5, 2017) (emphasis added); see also Memorandum from Samuel Daunt, Acting Senior Dir. of High Sch. Admissions, Office of Student Enrollment, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ. to All high sch. principals, 4 (Jan. 14, 2019).

Conclusion

Structural and systemic factors have contributed to New York City schools' persisting segregation during the past decade. While addressing root causes and potential cures are beyond the scope of this policy briefing, NYCDOE could greatly improve equity and transparency in high school admissions by focusing on modest, fiscally-neutral reforms with likely far-reaching impacts in the area of rubrics. The recommendations outlined in the Executive Summary would further

goals and reforms that NYCDOE agreed in 2013 were needed: greater accountability for screened schools and schools with screened programs; improved transparency in the selection process; and accessibility of critically needed information for students, families, and other stakeholders involved in the high school admissions process. New York City's students and families—and all those involved in serving them—should expect and deserve no less.

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