

# **SHSAT - The Canary in the Coal Mine:**

**An analysis of the issues around New York City's famous specialized STEM high schools, how things came to be, and what to do.**



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## What are specialized high schools?

**Stuyvesant High School, Bronx Science** and **Brooklyn Tech** are three public “specialized” high schools in NYC founded to offer an extremely rigorous math and science education to hard working and talented students who sought a career in science and engineering.

The renowned and competitive schools have been free and open to all who obtain top scores on the **SHSAT**, a single objective multiple choice entrance exam on math and English proficiency which designed to assess the student’s ability to handle the coursework – which can be rigorous as advanced college math courses like Differential Equations and Multivariable Calculus given to ambitious students at schools like Stuyvesant.

These schools:

- Have produced 14 Nobel Prize winners combined since their inception, more than most countries.
- today have **1/3 to more than half of their student body come from low-income households** (based on number of students who receive free or subsidized lunch, a federal measure of poverty).
- Have students who consistently outperform wealthier, private schools on academics - the average SAT score at Stuyvesant in 2018 was 1470 out of 1600, compared to 1430 at Dalton, a private school in Manhattan that costs \$40,000 a year for tuition to attend.
- 94%-99% Advanced Placement Exam participation rate.
- Have near perfect graduation rates.

Over the last few decades, as the demographics of the schools have become increasingly of Asian descent, the **NYC DOE has sought to eliminate the SHSAT** as admissions criteria to increase racial diversity at the specialized high schools.

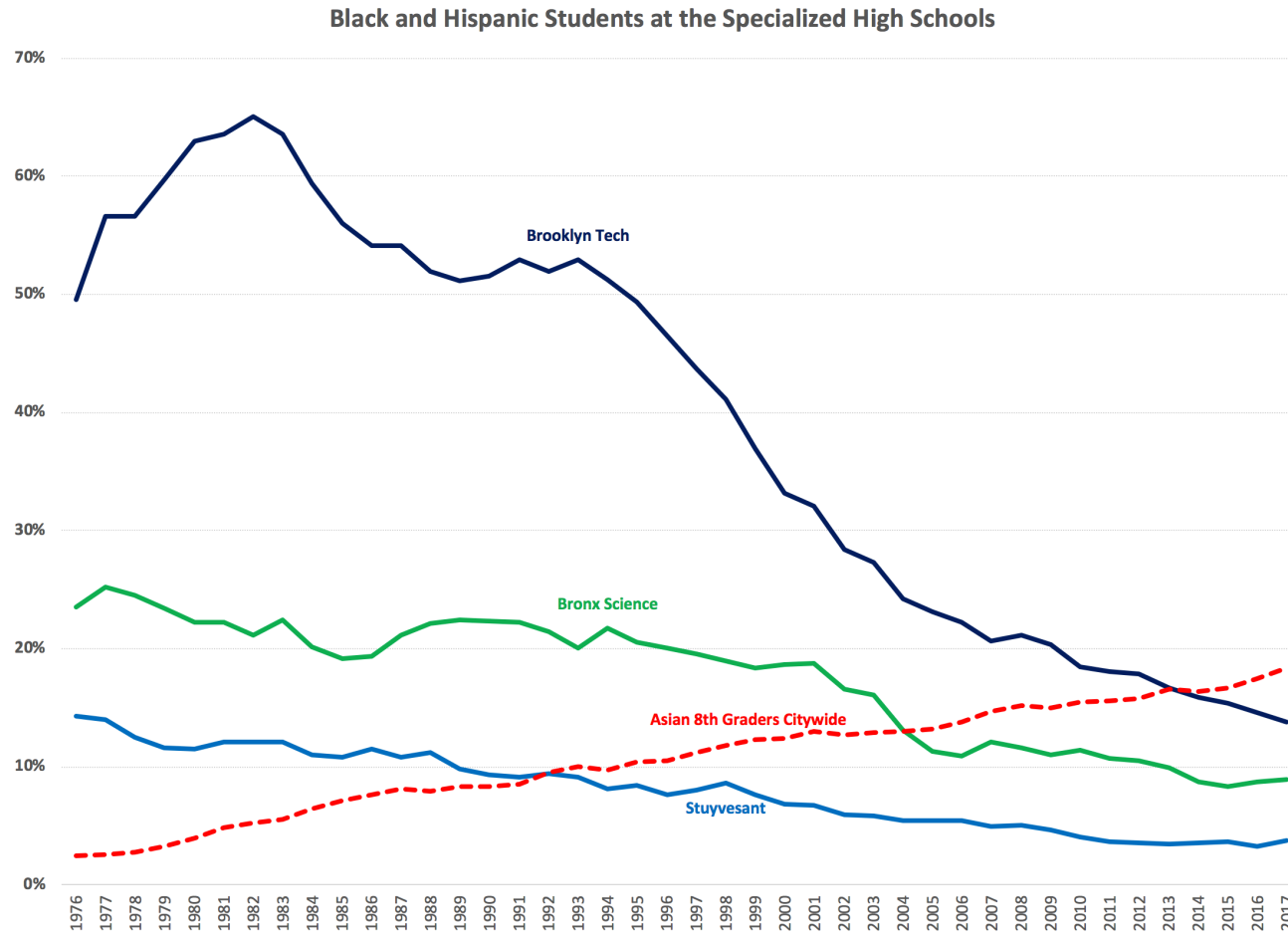
Sources:

- <https://www.city-journal.org/html/plot-against-merit-13667.html> (Nobel Laureate statistics)
- <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/new-york/districts/new-york-city-public-schools/stuyvesant-high-school-13092> (AP participation rates)
- <https://www.niche.com/> (average SAT scores)
- <https://projects.propublica.org/> (free/reduced lunch rates)

## What is the issue today?

Over the past two decades (1994-now), black and Hispanic enrollment at these schools have continuously declined from a peak of >50% black and Hispanic under the SHSAT at schools like Brooklyn Technical High School to around 10% today.

To address this, Mayor de Blasio proposes replacing the entrance exam by taking students in top 7% of every public middle school in NYC by school GPA and 7<sup>th</sup> grade state exam performance.





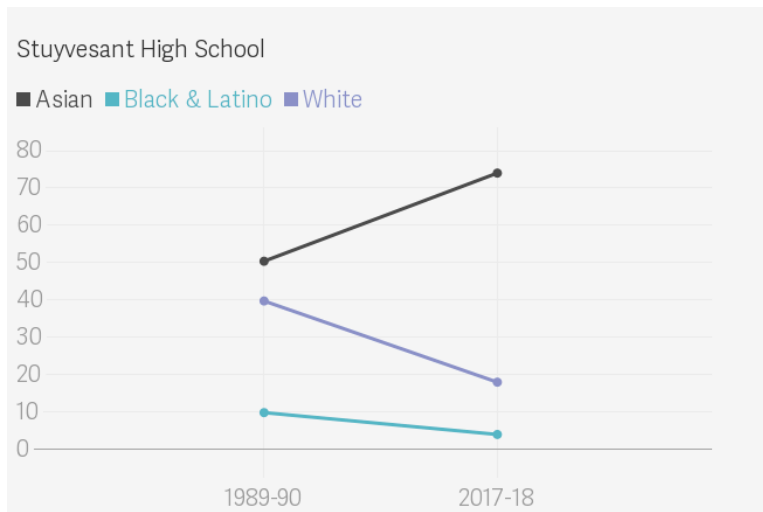
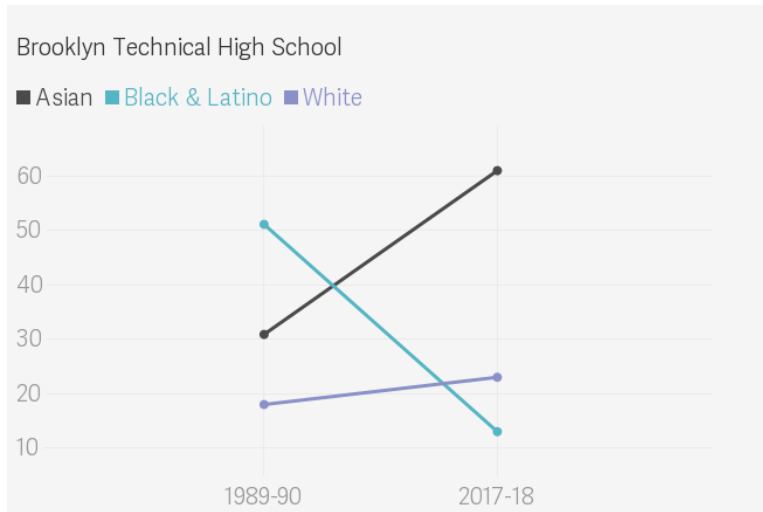
## Why did black and Hispanic representation at the specialized high schools decline?

Answer: a combination of factors, primarily:

1. In the early 1990s NYC DOE eliminated gifted/honors classes in poor, black and Hispanic neighborhoods.
2. Systemic grade inflation at majority black and Hispanic public middle schools under the NYC DOE's watch to cover up their failure to provide a rigorous K-8 education to all.
3. Refusal to satisfy overwhelming demand from NYC parents who want their children to have a rigorous STEM HS education that prepares them for college and technical careers by constructing new large size (4000+ seats) specialized high schools and disparities in who applies for admission to a specialized high school.
4. Severe school overcrowding in Asian communities in areas like Queens and Brooklyn and policies like the District 2 preference create a situation where Asian students are forced out of their boroughs unwillingly yet locked out of schools like Eleanor Roosevelt, making the specialized schools their only viable option for attending a rigorous public high school.

## Fact: Removal of honors and gifted classes in middle schools in all neighborhoods in the 1990s created a decline in black and Latino representation at the specialized high schools from historic highs.

The Racial and Ethnic Composition of Specialized New York Public High Schools, by School Year



“What changed? One of the reasons there are so few black and Latino students in these schools today is because of a change that took place in the early 1990s that limited the opportunities available to high-achieving black and Latino students. New York’s elementary and middle schools are highly segregated, and until roughly **three decades ago, nearly every middle school in New York City had an honors program. Kids in these programs got a great education. While black and Latino students in segregated schools may have missed out on certain educational and cultural benefits of learning alongside more white and Asian peers, these honors classes had the benefit of putting all the smart kids together so they could push each other. Many of them tested well and then ended up at a specialized high school.**”

**But by the mid-’80s, tracking—separating students into different classes by academic ability—had fallen out of favor nationally, especially when it came to isolating students of lower ability.** In the early ’90s, New York City largely did away with its tracks, including those honors programs. (There are still some honors classes offered here and there, but not nearly to the extent that they once were.) As a result, the top students at many of today’s segregated schools aren’t getting the kinds of opportunities that could launch them into a specialized high school.”

**“The white population at Stuyvesant hovered around 40 percent from the late 1980s until the early 2000s, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Around 2003, when Bloomberg became mayor, the number of white kids at these schools dropped as the number of schools that screen for academic criteria like grades or exams, or require an audition or interview, more than doubled.\*\* This selectivity increased the pool of schools that were considered “good,” which diverted many white students away from the specialized schools and into these newly prestigious schools.”**

“Indeed, dozens of school systems around the country are considering students’ household income when assigning them to schools. To get rid of the SHSAT, de Blasio would have to win a change in state law, but he could easily reform screened schools on a large scale in a way that wouldn’t require such a change—just the resolve to stand up to the richer, typically white parents of kids in popular screened schools. **Perhaps his proposal represents a recognition that it’s easier to fight state lawmakers and immigrant Asian parents than to fight rich white parents.**”

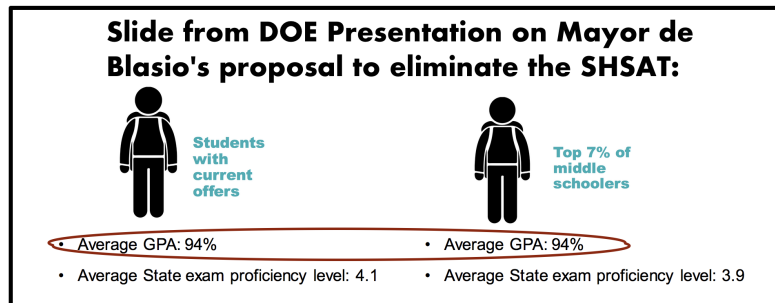
- SYED ALI, a professor of sociology at Long Island University-Brooklyn and MARGARET M. CHIN, a professor of sociology at Hunter College and the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/06/new-york-high-schools-stuyvesant-brooklyn-bronx/562772/>

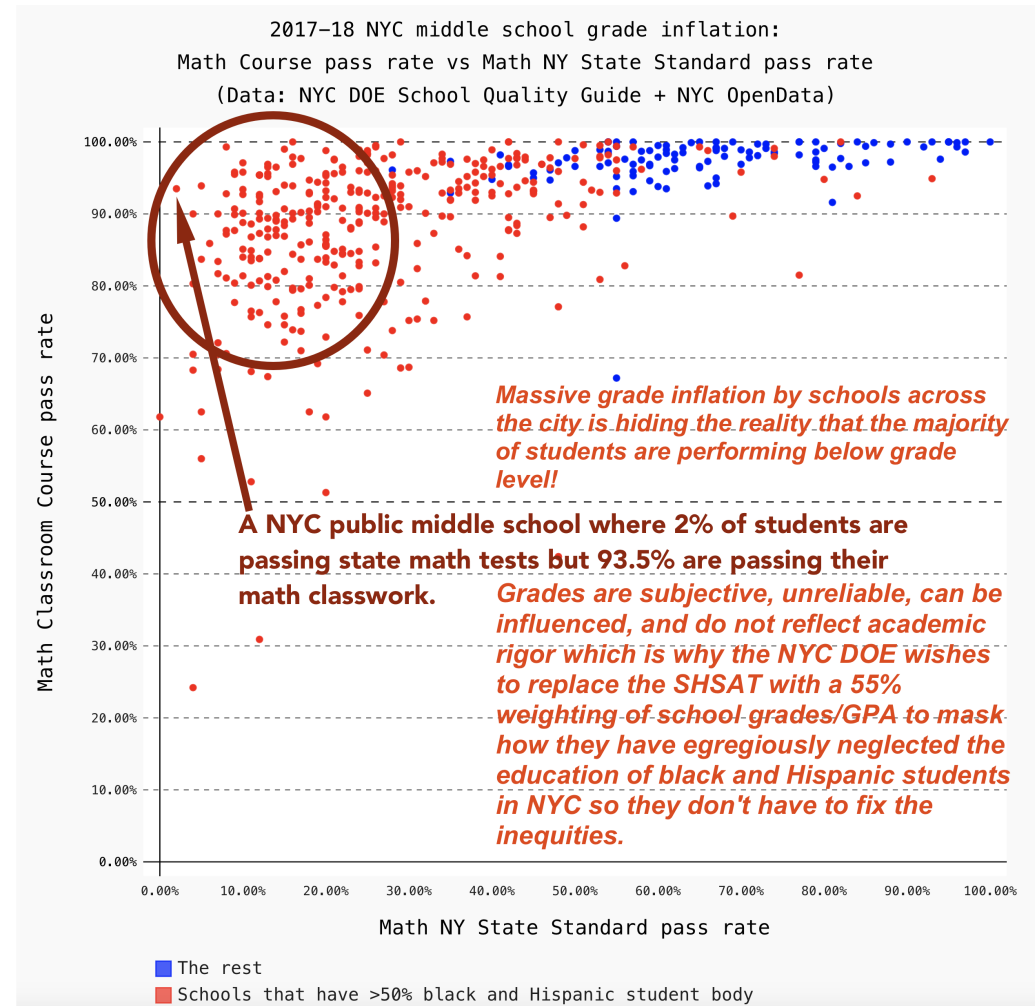
Fact: Currently, the NYC DOE is failing to provide an adequate K-8 education to tens of thousands of children and systemic grade inflation is encouraged to cover up their failures:

# The Truth:

Mayor Bill de Blasio and the NYC DOE claim the students admitted to the city's specialized STEM high schools under the 7% quota plan will be no different from those that are currently admitted in terms of academic preparedness.



Are they telling the truth?:



## Fact: The SHSAT is the Canary in the Coal Mine - the disparities measured by SHSAT reflect real performance deficits in public education today.

The disparities in test scores that de Blasio considers such an injustice are the result of decades of policy decisions by city officials that have failed to cultivate academic excellence in most of the city's middle schools, and have failed to prepare black and Latino students to compete with whites and Asians for selective admissions to specialized high schools or to selective colleges.

*Chalkbeat*, the same outlet where de Blasio announced his proposal, published an essay in 2017 by a black student named Yacine Fall, who was then a senior at Beacon High School, a selective and predominantly white public school in Manhattan. Beacon picks a class of 350 students out of more than 6000 eighth graders who list it among their top choices in the citywide high school selection process. It does not use the SHSAT, which is only for the eight specialized high schools, but, instead, it assesses students on the basis of their grades, state test scores, a portfolio of submitted work and an interview. But, while Beacon is selective, the median SAT scores of its graduating seniors are a full standard deviation lower than those at Bronx Science or Stuyvesant.

Fall explained that she undertook the task of selecting a top high school out of the phone book-sized catalog and navigating the city's complicated high-school matching system on her own, at age 13, because her parents were immigrants who did not understand New York's education system. If she had not participated in the high school application process, which many black students do not, she would have been zoned into a neighborhood school where only 7 percent of students graduated ready to do college work. And even though she was apparently a top student at her middle school, there was nobody there to help make sure Fall got to go to a high school that would cultivate her talents.

But, despite being hardworking and highly motivated, Fall was shocked by the academic demands placed on her at Beacon. "I didn't realize that an A in Harlem was not the same as an A in a majority-white high school on the Upper West Side," she wrote. She said her "black and brown peers [at Beacon] struggled to stay afloat and were barely passing their classes."

They were having such a hard time because policymakers like Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza and their predecessors failed. In the 1980s and 1990s, black and Latino representation at the specialized schools was much higher. But then, the city scaled back tracking in its schools, arguing that honors and college-prep classes were much whiter than the school system overall, and many minority students were segregated into the lower tracks.

Source: <https://quillette.com/2018/06/27/bill-de-blasios-plan-to-purge-asians-from-new-yorks-top-schools/>

**Fact: There is tremendous demand from NYC parents and children for a rigorous STEM high school education (~30,000 students competing for 5000 seats each year), this is an artificial scarcity imposed by the NYC DOE; Bloomberg created new specialized high schools but de Blasio does not want to.**

**Also, there are disparities in specialized high school application rates by demographic.**

Percentage of public school 8<sup>th</sup> graders who take the SHSAT by race, 2013-2014, NYC IBO:

|  | Asian | Hispanic | Black  | White  |
|--|-------|----------|--------|--------|
| Estimated # of 8 <sup>th</sup> graders in public school. | 12204 | 29766    | 20836  | 10790  |
| SHSAT takers   | 7335  | 5759     | 5826   | 4129   |
| % of demographic who took SHSAT                          | 60.1% | 19.34%   | 27.96% | 38.26% |

Note: Asian students choose to take the SHSAT at 1.6x-3x the rate of any other demographic. If quantity of white students is adjusted for private school demographics\*\*, their test taking rates would be even lower.

\*\* ~5000 SHS seats are available each year. ~25,000-30,000 students take the SHSAT exam. ~3000 are from private schools.

Data source: <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/new-york-city-public-school-indicators-demographics-resources-outcomes-october-2015.pdf> and NYC DOE.

## Investigating the issue of disproportionate geographic DEMAND 2017-2018 SHS offers by district and borough:

Why is it that Asian students disproportionately choose to apply to attend the specialized high schools?

Note the large number - 34% of offers which go to students in Queens.

Data source: <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2018/06/14/where-specialized-high-school-students-come-from-and-where-they-dont/>

| School District.....      | # of Offers..... | Accepted |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------|
| <b>Manhattan 22.0%</b>    |                  |          |
| .....1.....               | 51.....          | 1.0%     |
| .....2.....               | 655.....         | 12.9%    |
| .....3.....               | 295.....         | 5.8%     |
| .....4.....               | 26.....          | 0.5%     |
| .....5.....               | 38.....          | 0.7%     |
| .....6.....               | 55.....          | 1.1%     |
| <b>Bronx 5.6%</b>         |                  |          |
| .....7.....               | 12.....          | 0.2%     |
| .....8.....               | 53.....          | 1.0%     |
| .....9.....               | 17.....          | 0.3%     |
| .....10.....              | 92.....          | 1.8%     |
| .....11.....              | 97.....          | 1.9%     |
| .....12.....              | 19.....          | 0.4%     |
| <b>Brooklyn 23.3%</b>     |                  |          |
| .....13.....              | 104.....         | 2.1%     |
| .....14.....              | 48.....          | 0.9%     |
| .....15.....              | 365.....         | 7.2%     |
| .....16.....              | 21.....          | 0.4%     |
| .....17.....              | 33.....          | 0.7%     |
| .....18.....              | 21.....          | 0.4%     |
| .....19.....              | 32.....          | 0.6%     |
| .....20.....              | 527.....         | 10.4%    |
| .....21.....              | 251.....         | 5.1%     |
| .....22.....              | 202.....         | 4.0%     |
| .....23.....              | 13.....          | 0.3%     |
| .....32.....              | 10.....          | 0.2%     |
| <b>Queens 34.1%</b>       |                  |          |
| .....24.....              | 324.....         | 6.4%     |
| .....25.....              | 358.....         | 7.1%     |
| .....26.....              | 382.....         | 7.5%     |
| .....27.....              | 124.....         | 2.4%     |
| .....28.....              | 229.....         | 4.5%     |
| .....29.....              | 96.....          | 1.9%     |
| .....30.....              | 220.....         | 4.3%     |
| <b>Staten Island 6.0%</b> |                  |          |
| .....31.....              | 305.....         | 6.0%     |



# Answer: Massive high school overcrowding in Queens (which has the largest population of Asian students) causes disproportionate demand for SHS seats - In 2017, 34% of SHS offers went to Queens students) since 1000+ students are forced to leave the borough each year.

A 7% quota system will cause considerable backflow and potentially force academically qualified and exceptional students to be ejected from the borough to attend underperforming schools:

2014 article: "A second bill was introduced last Monday, which posits using a proportional allocation of seats based on the population of each borough. Stanley Ng, a parent from Brooklyn, brought data to the meeting which demonstrates that Queens would be harmed by the proposal. **Currently 1,919 students from Queens attend specialized high schools, or 36 percent of the enrollment. A proportional allocation would only afford Queens 27 percent, a reduction of about 500 seats.**

That could mean even more overcrowding in schools here. Ng added the shortages for each district and found that **Queens is short 7,111 seats, or roughly 1,777 freshman seats. "If they change the criteria, your kids may not even be able to stay in Queens anymore," he said. "This is not about race, it's about data. The Queens area will be impacted the most."**

Townsend Harris, which uses multiple admissions criteria, receives about 5,000 applications a year, but only extends 500 offers."

Source: [http://www.qchron.com/editions/queenswide/crowd-defends-elite-hs-admissions/article\\_7a548e46-532e-5e59-bf17-267c41c76192.html](http://www.qchron.com/editions/queenswide/crowd-defends-elite-hs-admissions/article_7a548e46-532e-5e59-bf17-267c41c76192.html)

**Forest Hills High School** 67-01 110th Street  
 Grades: 9-12 Forest Hills NY 11375  
 Staff Pick PHONE: 718-268-3137

## Our Insights

### What's Special

Selective science program; wide variety of extracurriculars

### The Downside

Severe overcrowding

Forest Hills High School is a large, high-achieving yet severely overcrowded neighborhood school. Attendance is great, and most students graduate on time and go on to college. It offers more than 20 Advanced Placement courses, half a dozen foreign languages (including Mandarin, Hebrew, Latin and American Sign Language), and dozens of clubs and sports teams.

Forest Hills offers special programs that include a Law Academy featuring mock trials and moot court, in which students stage trials and argue appeals. The Carl Sagan Program for high achievers provides student with four years of research classes in addition to science and math. Other options include a small Academy of Chinese Studies, a Dual Language Spanish program, and drama and music academies.

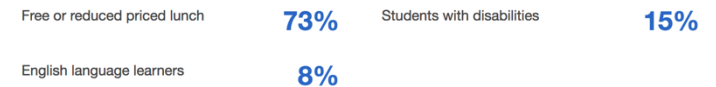
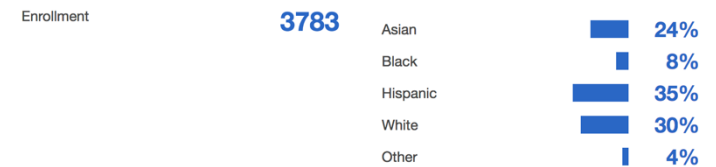
Source: <https://insideschools.org/school/28Q440>

Expectations are consistently high. Students must keep up their grades if they want to go to the prom or be on an athletic team. In the majority of the school's Advanced Placement classes, enrollment is open to all and encouraged, according to the yearly plan, but anyone who signs up for an AP class should count on finishing it.

Forest Hills wants its low-performing students to graduate—whether it takes after-school tutoring, Saturday classes or pestering parents. The graduation rate far outpaces the citywide average, and most graduates are prepared for college work.

None of these achievements, though, mitigate the severe overcrowding. Designed to serve 2,500 students, the building has close to 4,000. Students attend school in three overlapping sessions, with some arriving as early as 7:20 a.m. and the last class ending after 5 p.m. The building stays open until 8 p.m. in an effort to provide extracurricular activities and instill school spirit.

From 2017-18 Demographic Snapshot



From 2016-17 School Quality Guide



**Fact: The massive high school overcrowding in Queens (which has the largest population of Asian students) forces those students to find an outlet outside the borough. Result? 60+% of Bronx Science's students come from Queens.**

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## Where are all the Bronx kids in the Bronx High School of Science?

Posted on 14 December 2011. Tags: [bedford park](#), [Bronx High School of Science](#), [diversity](#), [Education](#), [Queens](#), [race](#), [SHSAT](#), [SHSI](#), [specialized high schools](#)

by Jasmeet Sidhu



*As Bronx residents, Farhana Begum (left) and Ashmera Mohamed (right) are outnumbered by their classmates from Queens at the Bronx High School of Science. (JASMEET SIDHU/The Bronx Ink)*

Every weekday when school is out, the quiet streets surrounding the prestigious Bronx High School of Science are crammed with dozens of privately operated school buses, hired to transport hundreds of the school's 3,000 students out of the Bronx.

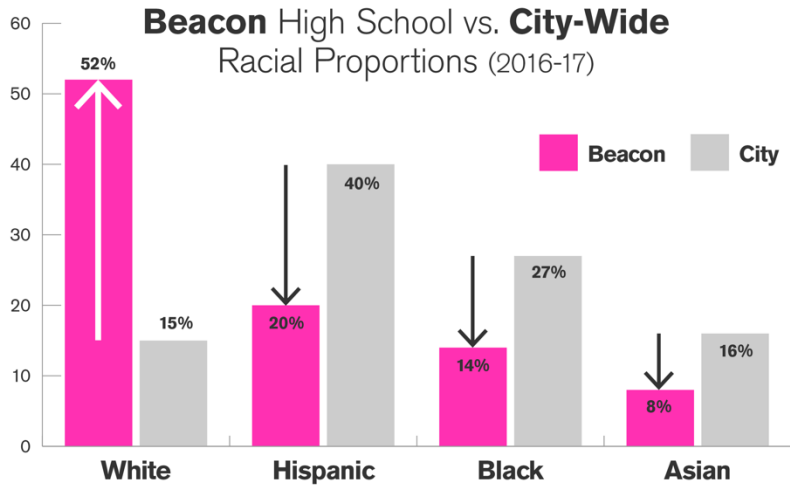
"Those are the buses that take everyone back to Queens and Manhattan," said Farhana Begum, a senior from Parkchester, as she watched the bus fleets depart.

Nearly two-thirds of the school's students come from Queens, according to a Department of Education spokesperson, while only 14 percent come from the Bronx.

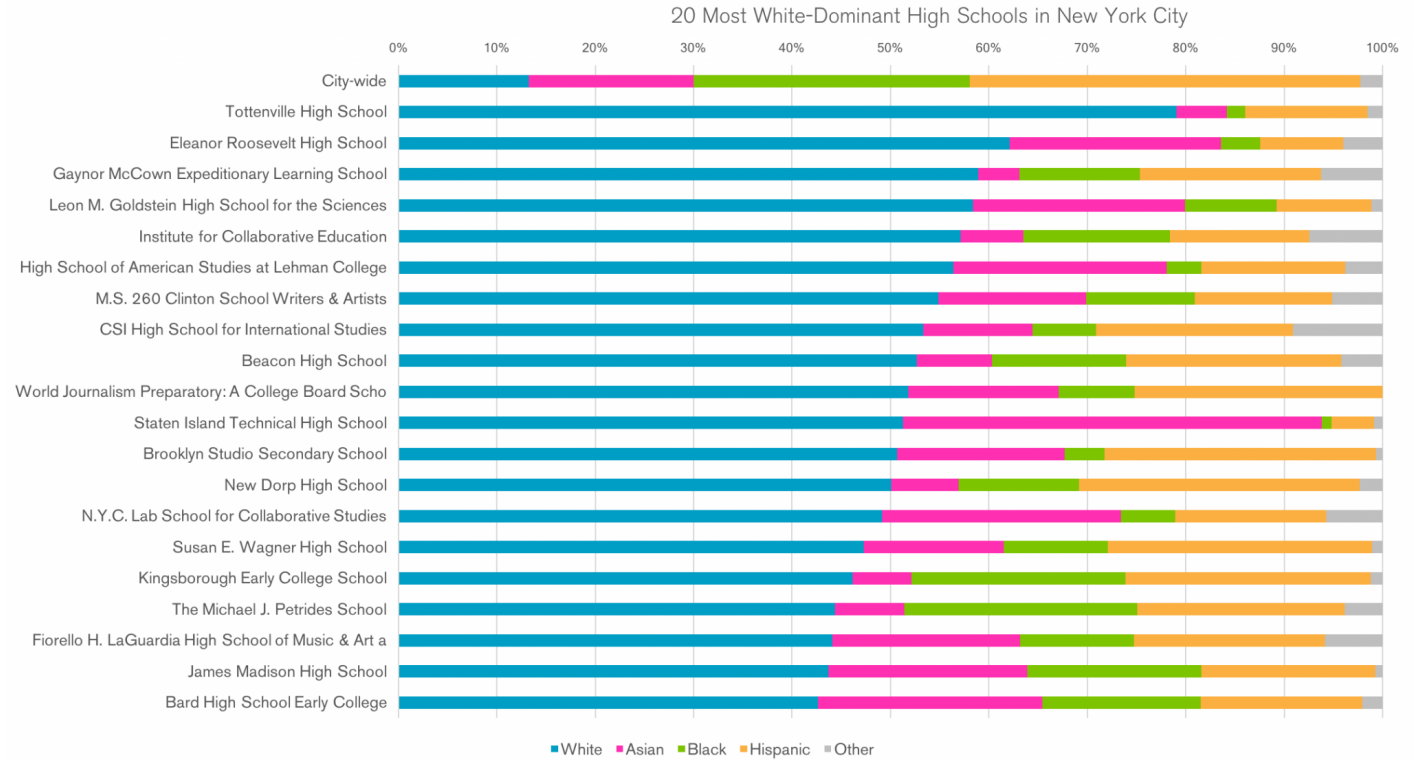
"The joke is that the school should be called 'the Queens High School of Science,'" said Begum. "A lot of the kids think Bronx Science should just move to Queens."



**Fact: Admissions for non-specialized selective screened schools is stacked against poor minorities, especially Asian students not from Manhattan. Especially if they involve “holistic” admissions or District 2 geographic preferences\*.**



Graph source: <https://dyske.com/>



\* - “But critics say the rule Ruiz encountered in Manhattan’s District 2 is particularly frustrating because it excludes large swaths of students, even if they have excellent academic records. The district, which spans the wealthy neighborhoods of the Upper East Side, SoHo, and TriBeCa, is home to six sought-after and highly selective high schools, all of which have near-perfect graduation rates.

But while most of the schools receive thousands of applicants a year, they give preference to students who live or attend school inside the relatively affluent district, meaning the most popular options rarely have room for students from surrounding, less wealthy neighborhoods. **For instance, at Eleanor Roosevelt, 100 percent of offers last year went to students or residents from District 2 and at Baruch, 98 percent of offers did. The rule, critics say, seriously undermines the idea that students can apply to any high school in the city regardless of their ZIP code.**

Chalkbeat – “How one Manhattan district has preserved its own set of elite high schools”, <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2018/06/07/how-one-manhattan-district-has-preserved-its-own-set-of-elite-high-schools/>

**Myth: Asians students are “gaming the test” with afterschool prep courses - admission rates for Asian students are in line with admission rates for white students even after “test prep”.**

2017 Specialized High School offers by race (notice “Percent of Testers who Received an Offer, by Ethnicity”) - they do not have a significant advantage in pass rates (31.9% vs 28.1% compared to whites and 31.9% vs 34.8% compared to multi-racial students):

| 2017  | Native American | Asian        | Black        | Latino       | White        | Multi-racial | Unknown      | Total         |
|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Tester Summary</b>   |                 |              |              |              |              |              |              |               |
| <b>Total Testers</b>  | <b>263</b>      | <b>8,345</b> | <b>5,847</b> | <b>6,614</b> | <b>5,070</b> | <b>187</b>   | <b>1,527</b> | <b>27,853</b> |
| <b>Distribution of Testers, by Ethnicity</b>                          | <b>0.9%</b>     | <b>30.0%</b> | <b>21.0%</b> | <b>23.7%</b> | <b>18.2%</b> | <b>0.7%</b>  | <b>5.5%</b>  | <b>100.0%</b> |
| <b>Offer Summary</b>  |                 |              |              |              |              |              |              |               |
| Bronx High School of Science (10X445)                                 | 7               | 558          | 21           | 55           | 210          | 16           | 74           | 941           |
| Brooklyn Technical High School (13K430)                               | 6               | 949          | 90           | 142          | 597          | 24           | 115          | 1,923         |
| HS for Mathematics, Science, and Engineering at City College (05M692) | 1               | 64           | 14           | 32           | 71           | 6            | 11           | 199           |
| High School of American Studies at Lehman College (10X696)            | 1               | 24           | 7            | 14           | 71           | 1            | 28           | 146           |
| Queens High School for the Sciences at York College (28Q687)          | 1               | 123          | 11           | 10           | 21           | 0            | 13           | 179           |
| Staten Island Technical High School (31R605)                          | 2               | 156          | 1            | 8            | 149          | 1            | 22           | 339           |
| Stuyvesant High School (02M475)                                       | 6               | 598          | 13           | 28           | 204          | 10           | 67           | 926           |
| The Brooklyn Latin School (14K449)                                    | 1               | 192          | 37           | 41           | 101          | 7            | 46           | 425           |
| <b>Total Offers, by Ethnicity</b>                                     | <b>25</b>       | <b>2,664</b> | <b>194</b>   | <b>330</b>   | <b>1,424</b> | <b>65</b>    | <b>376</b>   | <b>5,078</b>  |
| <b>Distribution of Offers, by Ethnicity</b>                           | <b>0.5%</b>     | <b>52.5%</b> | <b>3.8%</b>  | <b>6.5%</b>  | <b>28.0%</b> | <b>1.3%</b>  | <b>7.4%</b>  | <b>100.0%</b> |
| <b>Percent of Testers who Received an Offer, by Ethnicity</b>         | <b>9.5%</b>     | <b>31.9%</b> | <b>3.3%</b>  | <b>5.0%</b>  | <b>28.1%</b> | <b>34.8%</b> | <b>24.6%</b> | <b>18.2%</b>  |

Also, to keep things in perspective, **more than 2 out of every 3 Asian students who take the SHSAT do not receive an offer** and has to navigate a high school admissions process set up against them if they are poor. Remember, the high percentage of Asians at specialized schools is caused by disproportionate demand caused by school overcrowding and subsequently, disparities in SHSAT signup rates.

Source: <https://www.chalkbeat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Screen-Shot-2017-03-08-at-2.21.38-PM.png>

## **Question: should we get rid of the SHSAT?**

Answer: No.

First, the exam assesses the capabilities of NYC students in an independent manner that the NYC DOE can't fudge the numbers like state exam scores and Regents scores.

Second, the taxpayer funded Metis study that was covered up by 5 years by the NYC DOE showed that the SHSAT does predict whether students are academically prepared enough to succeed at the rigorous specialized high schools.

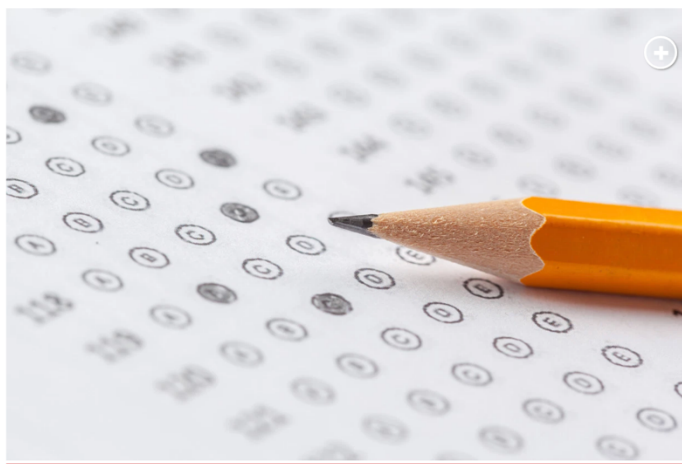
Third, using GPA as an admissions factor while grade inflation is still in effect, even if it is limited to the top 7% of each school will cause the specialized schools to admit hundreds of students who have not even passed basic grade NY state level math and ELA standards.

# Fact: NYC DOE and state politicians can and have been manipulating state exam curves and lowering Regents grading standards to give the impression that public education quality has been improving. The SAME state exams de Blasio wants to use as admissions criteria instead of the SHSAT.

## Scoring 30% on a test is enough to graduate high school in NYC

By Selim Algar

June 22, 2018 | 11:29pm | Updated



Shutterstock

The bar keeps dropping on state math exams — and critics are saying it's because officials are desperate for high graduation rates.

Kids only need to score a measly 30 percent on this month's Algebra 1 Regents test to pass, according to new state guidelines.

Students who manage just 26 out of 86 total points will get a heavily weighted score of 65 — the minimum required for passage.

That's the lowest standard since the state introduced the test four years ago.

Students must pass at least one math Regents exam in order to graduate with a conventional Regents diploma that is required by most colleges.

In 2014, it took 31 points — or 34.6 percent — to pass the test. That number dipped to 30 points in 2015 and 27 last year, according to state records.

Source: <https://nypost.com/2018/06/22/scoring-30-on-a-test-is-enough-to-graduate-high-school-in-nyc/>

“Last year, [NYSED declared they would not alter cut scores](#). This was refreshing to hear, since New York State constantly changed the scores needed to pass (cut scores) on ELA and Math tests. (Only AFTER the tests are graded, a score needed to pass is established and that score has never been the same since testing began.) [NY's cut scores for all the previous years resemble a roller coaster ride](#). For example, in 2009 students only had to answer 53% of the questions to pass compared with the 87% needed to pass in 2010. Here is the historical data since 2006:” =>

Source: <https://lacetothetop.wordpress.com/2015/03/17/nys-corrupt-common-core-test-scores/>

“New York State constantly changes the score needed to pass on ELA and Math tests. Only AFTER the tests are graded, a score needed to pass is established. All questions go through extensive field-testing before the tests go live. The question remains why this practice is needed? Perhaps it might have something to do with matching the NYSED Commissioner's failure rate prediction given 4 months before the test was administered...

From 2006 to 2013 the score needed to pass went on a wild ride. One year, a 63% was needed to pass. In another year, students had to score 87% in order to pass.

In 2013, the score needed to pass the NYS ELA dropped to a record low 63%. While we are not able to see the actual test, we were informed about the make-up of the test. The 3rd grade practice set contained items that proved to be on readability levels above

8th grade: <http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/ela-grade-3-sample-questions.pdf>”

The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade ELA also contained some of the same exact questions/passages as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade test. NYSED called the items “calibration items”. They were affectionately known as “dummy items” by everyone else: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/new-tests-dummy-questions-opt-out-policies-stress-parents-article-1.1318781>

What will the scores need to be in order to pass the 2014 ELA and Math tests? That can only be answered by a few select members of the NYSED and will be done AFTER the test is graded. They have already guaranteed scores will go up next year.

No matter what they decide, we know that our children are more than predetermined test scores.”

Source: <https://lacetothetop.wordpress.com/2013/11/11/the-ever-changing-cut-score/>

NYS 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade  
Scores Needed to Pass 2006-2013

| Year    | ELA | Math |
|---------|-----|------|
| 2006    | 72% | 64%  |
| 2007    | 72% | 61%  |
| 2008    | 75% | 58%  |
| 2009    | 72% | 53%  |
| 2010    | 87% | 87%  |
| *2011   | 76% | 70%  |
| **2012  | 76% | 70%  |
| ***2013 | 63% | 73%  |

\* 1<sup>st</sup> year of extended test  
\*\* 6 days of 90 minutes per day  
\*\*\* 1<sup>st</sup> year of Common Core Test



## Fact: NYC DOE covered up from the public for 5 years a taxpayer funded study which showed the SHSAT is predictive.

In August 2018, it was discovered that the NYC DOE **suppressed** an internal Metis study from 2013 that they commissioned which showed the entrance exam was **STRONGLY** predictive of academic performance though they had been publicly claiming since 2012 that it was not.

The New York Times

### *SHSAT Predicts Whether Students Will Succeed in School, Study Finds*



Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed during his first mayoral campaign in 2013 to overhaul the admissions process for New York City's specialized schools. After years of inaction, Mr. de Blasio announced in June his plans to scrap the SHSAT. Holly Pickett for The New York Times

In the [debate over the test for New York City's elite high schools](#), one question had seemed to be unanswered: Whether there was evidence that the exam was a good predictor of how well students would do at the schools.

But on Friday, the city's Education Department released for the first time a study it had commissioned in 2013 that showed a strong positive relationship between doing well on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test and high school academic performance.

Metis Associates, a research firm, studied five groups of eighth graders who took the test from 2005 to 2009 through their first two years of high school, using metrics such as grade point average and scores on the Regents examinations and Advanced Placement tests to measure performance.

The study found the mean G.P.A. for students who scored high enough on the test to be accepted to one of the specialized high schools was 3.036 in their first year compared with 2.387 for students who were not accepted to the specialized schools. Similarly, the mean scores for accepted students on Regents examinations ranged between 82.59 and 93.41 across various subjects. The mean scores for students not admitted ranged from 68.69 and 79.16.

A spokesman for the city's Education Department said the study was commissioned after the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. and other groups filed a civil rights complaint in 2012 saying the city lacked evidence showing the SHSAT was "a valid test of skills and knowledge."

While it shared the results of the study with the Office of Civil Rights and with city officials, it was not given to the legal defense fund or made public, the spokesman said.

The schools chancellor, Richard A. Carranza, had questioned the test's validity in a recent interview, saying that the exam "is not necessarily valid or reliable in terms of identifying student competencies to be successful in the specialized high school environment."

On Friday, Toya Holness, a spokeswoman for the city's Education Department, said in a statement, "It's not at all surprising that a kid who did well on the test turns out to be good high school student. What the validity study misses is the kid who didn't do as well on the test, or didn't take it, but still stands an excellent chance of being successful in these high schools if they had the opportunity?"

However, Larry Cary, the president of the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation board, disagreed, saying the study demonstrates the test is a good metric for admission. Mr. Cary strongly opposed the mayor's proposal to eliminate the SHSAT.

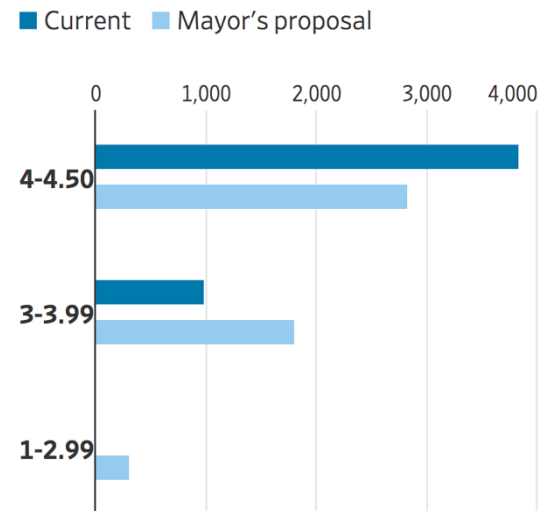
"I think it's a scandal that the City of New York sat on a predictive study for four or five years and hid it from the public as part of an effort to insist that the test has no value and should be eliminated," he said.

**Fact: Under the SHSAT, admitted students all have a score of 3 (meets proficiency level) or 4 (exceeds proficiency level) on one of their 7<sup>th</sup> grade state exams.**

Under the new plan, 300+ students with a 2 (failing/does not meet proficiency standard) will be admitted while 1000+ students who are academically advanced and prepared to handle rigorous coursework will be rejected under the new system.

### Getting In

New York City averaged each student's scores on seventh-grade state tests in math and English. Here are the numbers of students, by range, for those offered spots in specialized high schools for 2018 under the current system and those who would get in under the mayor's proposal. Scoring 3 means proficient.



Source: New York City Department of Education

From the 2013-2017 NYSED Math and ELA Citywide Test results dataset:

- A 4 out of 4 score means a student is at **~85<sup>th</sup>+ percentile.**
- A 3 out of 4 score means a student is only at **~65<sup>th</sup>+ percentile.**
- A 2 out of 4 score means a student is only at **<65<sup>th</sup> percentile.**
- Students at schools like Stuyvesant and Bronx Science are usually at the **95<sup>th</sup>-98<sup>th</sup> percentile** in at either math or ELA proficiency or both on the more rigorous SHSAT exam.

Data source: <http://www.nysed.gov>

# Conclusion

- The de Blasio 7% proposal is a policy that fails to address the issue of severe HS overcrowding and insists on maintaining an artificial scarcity of rigorous STEM high school educational options for New York City's children.
- The choice to use middle school grades for admissions is intentional to cover up the NYC DOE's failure to give black and Hispanic students a rigorous K-8 education and the systemic grade inflation that exists under their watch.
- The proposal is engineered to enact a de facto racial quota on Asian American students in NYC by abusing geography with their concentration in historically redlined neighborhoods and ethnic enclaves (i.e. Chinatown, Koreatown, Sunset Park East, Jackson Heights, Flushing, etc.) This is clearly intentional, immoral, and pernicious racial discrimination.
- There is a clear and negative educational impact on the specialized schools and academic preparedness of admitted students.
- Lack of consideration of the numerous minority students who will be displaced and where else they can go to get a rigorous high school education.
- **Policy Recommendation #1:** make the SHSAT opt-out instead of opt-in which will reduce the test-taking disparities.
- **Policy Recommendation #2:** there is a **great demand for additional rigorous STEM schools**. Building satellite campuses for schools like Stuyvesant and Bronx Science in Queens and Brooklyn would ameliorate the current severe lack of seats and opportunities for accelerated, college-preparing coursework. Construction of satellite campuses has been done before with Bard HS and Bard High School Early College Queens. Also, Bloomberg created new specialized schools under his tenure. Both of these actions would benefit a greater number of students instead of insisting admissions and STEM education must be a zero sum game.
- **Policy Recommendation #3:** restore non-selective honors/SP programs to middle school schools in every neighborhood so underrepresented minority students can get a rigorous education that would not only have them prepare for the rigor of the material on the SHSAT again, but also make them better prepared for high school and college.

## Appendix: The history of NYC's specialized high schools

### The American dream for poor working class and immigrant New Yorkers

“During the nineteenth century, elite high schools, many modeled on the colonial-era Boston Latin School, sprang up across the nation. As part of this movement, within the first three decades of the twentieth century, New York created Stuyvesant on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Brooklyn Tech in Fort Greene, Townsend Harris Hall on the campus of the City College of New York, and Bronx Science in the northwest Bronx—all to provide unlimited educational opportunity to any New York pupil qualified to take advantage of it, including the most talented children of the city's multitudinous new immigrants.

These new schools were intensely disciplined and highly selective, with admission based on a written exam of math and reading skills. **Townsend Harris, the most elite of all, and the only one not focused on math and science, condensed four years of high school into three, after which its students automatically gained admission to City College. The workload was huge. Author and journalist Dan Seligman, a 1941 Townsend Harris grad, recalls having to get up at midnight to work on his homework till 4 AM.** "Adding to my despair," he has written, "was an observation that some of the adjacent geniuses seemed to be racing through their homework during the lunch hour." The workload at the schools today is not much lighter. At Stuyvesant, the saying goes that you can choose any two of the following three items: grades, friends, or sleep.

**The curriculum was inflexible: students at the science schools took math and science every year.** Psychoanalyst Yale Kramer, a 1947 graduate of Brooklyn Tech, says of the rigid requirements, "You went to Brooklyn Tech and didn't ask questions." The intense focus quickly paid off—one of the boys in Bronx Science's first graduating class in 1941, Roy Glauber, went directly to work on the Manhattan Project, without an intervening spell at college. Within its first 12 years, **Bronx Science would graduate four of its five Nobel prizewinners; by 1993, it had produced 50 percent more Westinghouse Science Talent Search winners than any other school in the country.**"

- Heather Mac Donald, City Journal.

**“Stuyvesant and Bronx Science have traditionally provided a springboard to success for talented but poor kids, primarily Jews at first, but later including African-Americans as well... The social upheavals of the late 1960s and early 1970s led to attacks on the specialized high schools and on the entrance exam as racially biased and exclusionary. In 1971, the board of Community School District 3, then a predominantly black and Puerto Rican district on Manhattan's Upper West Side, charged that Bronx Science was, as characterized by the *New York Times*, “a privileged educational center for children of the white middle class because ‘culturally’ oriented examinations worked to ‘screen out’ black and Puerto Rican students.” Threatening a lawsuit, the board criticized the exam for being “heavily loaded with ‘intelligence test’ approaches” and proposed that students should instead be admitted solely based on recommendations. Mayor John V. Lindsay, an affluent Upper East Side liberal Republican-turned-Democrat who sent his children to exclusive private schools, moved quickly to placate District 3. Lindsay's leftist schools chancellor, Harvey Scribner, appointed a committee to study the specialized schools' admissions policy, saying that there was “a question as to the extent any test of academic achievement tends to be culturally biased.”**

**Scribner's apparent receptiveness to ending the exam sparked a strong reaction from specialized school alumni, parents, and faculty, and led to the introduction of a bill in Albany to mandate its continued use. Sponsored by Democratic Assemblyman Burton G. Hecht and Republican Senator John D. Calandra, both of the Bronx, the bill required that admission to the specialized schools—and any others that the city might create in the future—continue to be based “solely and exclusively” on “a competitive, objective and scholastic achievement examination.” The bill passed both houses with strong bipartisan support in May 1971 and was signed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller.”**

- Dennis Saffran, City Journal.



# Appendix: The history of the specialized high schools

## A refuge from "Jewish Quotas" in education

### "Too many Jewish students – cut down that number. 'a matter of racial fairness'"

"Young Eileen Ford, nee Ottensoser, who was later to be founder and CEO of the trailblazing and spectacularly successful Ford Modeling Agency of New York, wanted to attend Barnard College in the 1940's. **The problem, however, was that Barnard had a so-called Jewish Quota, which limited the number of Jewish applicants who would be accepted.** The solution was simple—she changed her last name...

**The problem for Eileen Ottensoser was that, like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and all the Ivy League schools in the 1930's, Columbia and Barnard imposed the so-called Jewish Quota. The colleges felt they had too many Jewish students, and systematically tried to cut down that number.** In 1935, for example, in his final year at high school, the future Nobel Prize winner Richard Feynman won the new York University Math Championship by a huge margin that shocked the judges. Yet he was of Ashkenazi Jewish descent, and though his high school grades were perfect or near perfect in math and science, he was not accepted when he applied to Columbia. (He went to MIT instead.)

**Many American colleges in the 1920's were quite open about implementing the quota, which they regarded as a matter of racial fairness, not prejudice.** 'Never admit more than 6 Jews, take only 2 Italian Catholics; and take no blacks at all', was the maxim of the Yale School of medicine, according to David Oshinsky, the biographer of Jonas Salk, the inventor of the Salk polio vaccine, who ended up at New York University rather than at any Ivy League school. **In 1935, Yale accepted just 5 out of 200 Jewish applicants...**

**... 'We limit the number of Jews admitted to each class to roughly the proportion of Jews in the population of the state,' said the dean of Cornell's medical college as late as 1940.** At the Yale School of Medicine, applications by Jewish students were marked with an H, for 'Hebrew,' while Harvard requested passport-size photos to help identify Semitic facial features."

Source: <https://pachofaunfinished.wordpress.com/2015/10/16/the-jewish-quota/>

### The introduction of the "geographic quota" at Harvard.

Lowell received a great deal of public criticism, particularly in the Boston press. Harvard's overseers appointed a 13-member committee, which included three Jews, to study the university's "Jewish problem." The committee rejected a Jewish quota but agreed that "geographic diversity" in the student body was desirable. **Harvard had been using a competitive exam to determine who was admitted, and urban Jewish students were scoring highly on the exam. Urban public schools such as Boston Latin Academy intensely prepared their students, many of whom were Jewish, to pass Harvard's admissions test. The special committee recommended that the competitive exam be replaced by an admissions policy that accepted top-ranking students from around the nation, regardless of exam scores.** By 1931, because students from urban states were replaced by students from Wyoming and North Dakota who ranked in the top of their high school classes, Harvard's Jewish ranks were cut back to 15% of the student body.

Source: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/harvard-s-jewish-problem>

### Jewish overrepresentation at City College as refuge from restrictive quotas.

**"You don't find many German, Irish, or Italian children in City College. About 90 per cent of the boys there are Jews, and most of them children of Jewish workers."** What the *Forward* neglected to mention was that, according to one early report, "as the percentage of Russian-Jewish boys in attendance increased, the families of Anglo-Saxon, Dutch, German, and Huguenot descent, who had been accustomed to register their boys in the College in the old days, sent them elsewhere for a college education."

**As more and more Jews enrolled in City College, it acquired a reputation for being a "Jewish school." Indeed, by 1920 both City College and Hunter College had become between 80 and 90 per cent Jewish. A number of other Eastern colleges showed rapid increases in their Jewish enrollment. Before Columbia instituted restrictive quotas after World War I, it had a Jewish enrollment of 40 per cent. The figure for New York University was probably higher; the figure for Harvard was 20 per cent.**

Source: "How Jewish Quotas Began" - Stephen Steinberg, September 1971  
<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/how-jewish-quotas-began/>

### Geographic racial quotas and denying further academic opportunities.

"Under public pressure the Big Three (Harvard, Yale, and Princeton) were forced to disguise their prejudices, but each designed its admissions policy to prevent Jews from taking all the spots that intellectual ability alone would have earned them. Harvard and Yale each offered scholarships to students from the South and West, for example, with the evident purpose of educating the nation. **But they also hoped that by pursuing "geographic diversity" in predominantly Protestant areas of the country they could offer merit scholarships for which Jewish boys from Bronx Science would not be eligible.**"

Source: [http://archive.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2005/10/30/in\\_and\\_out/](http://archive.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2005/10/30/in_and_out/)

### Specialized High Schools as refuge from Jewish discrimination in higher education.

"[Bronx Science] is still considered a center of excellence, with a selection process that weeded out all but 510 of 25,000 applicants this year.

**But the student body, which in 1950 was about 85 percent Jewish and almost all white, now reflects the city's diversity. And when visitors were told of the ratio of girls to boys today, 51 percent to 49 percent, they broke into applause."**

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/08/nyregion/50-years-later-special-class-bronx-science-still-has-fond-memories-special.html>