

December 18, 2020

Dear Families,

This has been a year of new challenges and difficult choices, testing our collective strength and endurance as we have faced the unknown together. We have had to reinvent the building blocks of public education in the nation's largest school system, from how to "go to class," to grading policy, attendance, and everything in between.

Today I am writing with an update on another fundamental pillar of your child's education: the high school application and enrollment process this year, which will open the week of January 18. I want to thank you for your patience as we have worked for months to talk to families and conduct careful analysis to develop a new high school admissions policy that meets this challenging moment. This new policy will better support your child's learning journey, and that of their fellow 69,000 eighth graders, as we look ahead to Fall 2021.

New York City is home to approximately 250 total high schools that have geographic priorities in place, limiting opportunity for hard-working students to attend some of our most in-demand schools based on where they live. Additionally, there are 126 high schools that "screen" students for admission using academic records, auditions, attendance, special assessments, interviews, or other measures. They've historically used a student's academic records to determine if they're suitable for entry to the school. The changes we are sharing with you today relate to all of these schools.

[How will my student's place of residence affect their high school applications this year?](#)

- In the interest of a more equitable process for all families, geographic admissions priorities for high schools will be phased out over the next two years. This means that, after next year, the location of a student's home cannot alone determine their chances of getting into a certain school.
- District priorities for high school admissions will be permanently eliminated this year, and all other geographic priorities—like borough residence requirements— will be eliminated next year.

[How will my student's academic performance affect their high school applications this year?](#)

- For remaining screens at high schools, schools can choose to remove or alter their screens in the year ahead, or they may maintain them.
- Schools that maintain academic screens are encouraged to make a concerted effort towards greater equity in their processes, either by electing to remove additional screens now, or implementing a Diversity in Admissions priority.
  - Approximately 100 NYC public schools currently prioritize targeted groups of students including, but not limited to, low-income students, English Language Learners, and students in temporary housing. We invite more schools to expand access to students of all backgrounds.
- For those high schools that maintain academic screens, a combination of 2018-2019 state tests, the previous years' grades, and/or other measures will be used depending on school-established criteria.
- Schools will be required to publicly publish their academic screening criteria on MySchools.

Beyond geographic priorities and academically screened schools, the city is also home to the Specialized High Schools. The DOE is required by State law to administer the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) for admissions to these schools. To ensure health and safety of our staff and students, the SHSAT exam will be administered in students' own middle schools to reduce travel and different cohorts of students. Registration for the test opens on Monday, December 21, 2020 and ends on January 15, 2021. Test administration will begin in late January.

## Why we are making changes?

As Chancellor, it is my responsibility to deliver the highest-quality education possible to each of your children, so that they are prepared for a successful, productive life, and empowered with the skills they need to chase their dreams. We must continue this work against the backdrop of inequities in our City and in our school system that have been exacerbated this year by the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 health crisis has had on communities of color, immigrant families, and on students whose parents never had the option to work from home.

While there is more to do to keep driving toward their mission, these adjustments to admissions respond to the challenges we face as a system. They address the concerns of families, students, and leaders of screened schools the ways screens are an obstacle for many students to an education that would serve them well. So we are taking action.

We will provide guidance and a variety of new resources in our schools and offices to help you navigate the process and find an excellent high school for your student. You can get started by visiting [schools.nyc.gov/high](https://schools.nyc.gov/high) to learn more about the process, and [myschools.nyc](https://myschools.nyc) to set up your MySchools account to be ready when the application period opens. Do not hesitate to reach out to your child's school counselor—they will be your guide throughout the process. You can also contact a Family Welcome Center (learn how at [schools.nyc.gov/welcomecenters](https://schools.nyc.gov/welcomecenters)) or call **718-935-2009**.

These changes show that our values can become action, and that no policy, or way of doing things, is so entrenched that it cannot be revised in the name of serving all our children. We believe in schools that deliver equal opportunity to all students to the best education possible. We know there's more to do, so we will initiate further talks with school communities to help inform the use of screens past September 2021.

I want to thank all of you for your collaboration. We are united in our mission to make sure your child—and every one of their 1.1 million peers—receives the best education possible in the greatest city in the world.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Carranza  
Chancellor  
New York City Department of Education



**Department of  
Education**

Chancellor Richard A. Carranza

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