



Final Recommendations - DRAFT

20 June 2018

Integration: Admissions Policies & Access to Information

The following admissions proposal seeks to:

- *Ensure that all admissions criteria, processes and mechanisms are transparent, easy to navigate and equitable for students of all demographic, racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.*
- *Remove barriers to access for students of color and low-income students*
- *Implement mechanisms to develop middle schools that are more representative of the district as whole*
- *Provide support to middle schools which have historically been ranked lower by applicants so as to develop a uniform baseline of teacher quality, resources and programmatic offerings at all D15 schools.*
- *Ensure that the challenge of integrating schools does not require students and families of color to travel further from their homes to middle schools; more than other students.*
- *Provide a provide a phasing strategy over the next five years*

Equitable Admissions & Integration in D15

Year 1: Remove all screens* and utilize a district-wide admissions priority.

- Remove all screens. (These screens include: lateness, attendance, student behavior, admissions exams/tests, standardized test scores, report card grades, and auditions.)
- Create an admissions priority for students who qualify as low-income*, are English Language Learners (ELLs) and/or are Students in Temporary Housing for 51.6%% of all seats at all District 15 middle schools.
 - **A more specific and accurate metric will be developed and used to identify low-income students status. For example, using the DOE's economic need index and median income data from the US Census.*
 - *The admissions priority would be adjusted yearly to match the previous year's district average for low-income* students.*
- Allow elementary students who have completed a dual language program to be automatically eligible for middle school dual language programs. Utilize a transparent and objective assessment to determine bi-literacy for new students entering a middle school dual language program.
 - Encourage the citywide School Diversity Advisory Group to research and explore the impacts of Dual Language programs as they relate to school diversity and integration.

- Improve support and funding for existing programs in middle schools which have historically been ranked lower by applicants. Explore, implement and fund specialized programs in middle schools which have historically been ranked lower by applicants, such as Spanish and/or Chinese dual language programs and specialized STEM programs.
 - Strengthen relationships between elementary schools and middle schools which have historically been ranked lower by applicants.
 - Ensure that any new specialized programs serve the entire school population (no tracking).
 - Ensure that any new dual language programs serve the immediate surrounding community of English language learners.
- Conduct an assessment of all middle schools to identify inequities with respect to resources and program offerings. Use the results of the assessment to develop strategies to address inequities between schools, including the development of programs needed to support and challenge a range of learners at all middle schools in D15. Make the assessment and action plan publically available.
- Allow students with physical disabilities the option to be prioritized for barrier free schools within their local school district.
- Once students are matched to a middle school, create an optional opportunity to identify and connect “cohorts” or clusters of students from the same elementary school to facilitate familiarity for incoming 6th graders.
- Align mid-year enrollment policies and mechanisms with district wide admissions priority. Ensure that the middle school appeals process is clear and easy-to-navigate.

Year 2 & 3: Evaluate the effectiveness of the district-wide admissions priority & continue the implementation and support of specialized programs at schools which have historically been ranked lower by applicants.

- Assess whether all D15 middle schools have the required applicants to fill the 51.6% district wide admission priority for FRL students by the end of Year 2. Conduct a district wide survey to better understand student and parent choices.
- Provide funding and support to develop strategies with D15 middle schools who do not have the required applicant pool to fill the 51.6% district wide admission priority for low-income students in partnership with parents, students, and community partners.
- Continue to support and fund existing and specialized programs, such as Spanish and/or Chinese dual language programs and STEM programs. Strengthen relationships between elementary schools and middle schools which have historically been ranked lower by applicants. Ensure that any new specialized programs serve the entire school population (no tracking).

Year 4: Evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing integration initiatives; engage in a community planning process to explore and implement other options, if targets are not being met.

- Assess whether all D15 middle schools fall within 40% - 75% for low-income students by the end of Year 4. Current FRL averages for the two Sunset Park middle schools are 96% and 97%, and the higher range above the 51.6% district average has been set to ensure that the challenge of integration does not fall disproportionately on the students of Sunset Park. Conduct a district wide survey to better understand student and parent choices.

- Engage in a community planning process to explore and implement other options such as an academic diversity approach, limited choice approach, or other options, if all D15 schools have not met this target by the end of Year 4.

Year 5: Utilize the outcomes of the community planning process to implement new admissions approaches and to set appropriate goals and benchmarks.

Access to Information

- Create a centrally-funded full-time District 15 Middle School Admissions Coordinator position to facilitate access to information on the middle schools admission process and middle school offerings. Their responsibilities would include overseeing the equitable and culturally responsive distribution of information, coordinating partnerships between elementary and middle schools and connecting D15 families to language services.
- Develop a D15 Language Access Action Plan to address information access district-wide. Ensure middle school open houses and tours are offered in multiple languages, with funding provided for translation.
- Create targeted information sessions between middle schools and the elementary schools that currently don't have many students applying to them, based on analysis of the previous year's applications and with assurance that DOE provides funds and resources to support this process (e.g. through the D15 Middle School Admissions Coordinator).
- Ensure that parents receive real-time, complete, and accurate information in the language of the family's home choice regarding their rights, their individual student's needs and abilities, and school choice.
- Embed a multi-lingual informational component into the online middle school application process highlighting the unique programmatic offerings of each middle school (not including standardized test scores).
- Standardize all the D15 middle schools distribution materials in terms of length and graphic formatting so that there is equity in school marketing materials and resources. Ensure that the distribution materials uses language accessible across educational backgrounds.
- Provide training and support to Guidance Counselors and Parent Coordinators to ensure the non-biased distribution of information on all District 15 middle schools to parents and students.

Monitoring, Transparency & Coordination

- Execute targeted promotion of new admissions changes (and the larger D15 Diversity Plan) across District 15. Ensure the D15 school community is informed about and understands admissions policies. Conduct personal, direct outreach to all parent coordinators in underserved communities.
- Conduct an audit on enrollment results to ensure that equitable numbers of students from the admissions priority are chosen for each D15 middle school. Ensure that the results of the audit are made publicly accessible and are easily understood by all D15 school community members. Use modeling and data simulation to illustrate how other admissions models would impact integration.

- Create an annual review of the D15 Diversity Plan that is publicized by the D15 Superintendent’s Office and CEC15, including a checklist of what has been accomplished, an update on inclusion initiatives, what items are outstanding and a comparison of the year-by-year demographic information contained in the DOE Demographic Snapshot of the individual middle schools and overall district. This would also monitor the number of students attending the D15 middle schools relative to previous years and the latest census data. Host a district wide forum for stakeholders to review and discuss the results.
- Create a centrally-funded full-time D15 Diversity, Equity and Integration Coordinator that partners with D15 administrators, educators, staff, parents and students on diversity and integration initiatives. The coordinator would track integration initiatives in District 15 and solicit feedback to inform future plans and other NYC integration efforts. This coordinator would work in collaboration with the D15 Restorative Justice Coordinator and D15 Admissions Coordinator.

Transportation & Transportation-related

- Update the DOE’s existing policy (with new and clearer publicity) to provide 6th, 7th and 8th graders who qualify as “low-income” or travel beyond 1 mile to their middle schools with free unlimited-use MetroCards.
- Encourage the citywide School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG) to explore citywide transit solutions for middle school students.
- Pilot a busing program for 6th grade students traveling beyond 1 mile to their middle schools. Ensure bus routes provide access for students with limited subway and bus access.
- Utilize the D15 Diversity, Equity and Integration Team to help establish travel groups and networks between middle school parents and guardians with children going to the same school. In collaboration with school leaders, teachers and parents, work with elementary schools to hold students with siblings 30-minutes longer to allow middle school siblings to pick them up.

Inclusion: School Environment & Activities

Supporting Diverse Integrated School Communities

- Expand and incentivize opportunities for anti-racist, anti-bias, cultural sensitivity and disability bias trainings for District 15 administrators, teachers, parents and students.
- Provide support for District 15 educators in adopting best practices for academically, racially and socioeconomically mixed classrooms.
- Support short-term and long-term hiring practices, funding and incentives to hire more teachers of color.
- Identify an “equity team”, including the principal and a cohort of teachers and staff, who serve as in house support to coach teachers, develop curriculum, and guide Culturally Responsive practices at each middle school. Provide training opportunities on Culturally Responsive practices to “equity team.” Ensure opportunity to join cohort is open to all teachers and staff.

Inclusive Classrooms & School Communities

- Provide training and support for the implementation of anti-racist and Culturally Responsive Education across all District 15 middle schools.
 - Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) is a method of rigorous, student-centered education that cultivates critical thinking instead of just test-taking skills; relates academic study to contemporary issues and students’ experiences; fosters positive academic, racial and cultural identities; develops students’ ability to connect across cultures; empowers students as agents of social change; and inspires students to fall in love with learning.
- Require a plan on how to incorporate a cultural and ethnic studies curriculum through existing classes and advisory programs; providing opportunities for students to learn about different social and cultural topics relevant to NYC students for all D15 middle school students. The curriculum should focus on African, Latinx, Asian, Middle Eastern and Native heritage people in NYC schools as well as the intersections with gender, LGBTQ/GNC, religious, disability diversity, while highlighting their contributions to society. Additionally, the curriculum will highlight the vast historical contributions of non-white groups and seek to dispel the many non-truths/lies related to American and World History.
- Expand academic and social emotional programs which create safer spaces and strengthen connectedness through student-led conversations and exploration around race, culture, identity and ability such as middle school advisory programs.
- Expand healthy food access for middle school students throughout the day, while working collaboratively with school communities to create culturally responsive lunch menus which celebrate the cultures of students in schools.
- Provide support for English Language Learners in all D15 middle schools consistent with state and federal requirements and guidelines. Ensure that there is a point person who is multilingual and fluent in the predominant language of the school community at every D15 middle school.
- Engage with students and families to understand their language dialects to avoid penalizing alternate language interpretations for multilingual students. Create spaces and opportunities that allow multilingual students to express themselves in languages other than English outside of dual language programs.

- Explore and create opportunities for school staff to build authentic relationships with surrounding neighborhoods and communities in partnership with local neighborhood partners and community-based organizations.
- Develop a set of district wide guidelines and resources to promote inclusivity, diversity and equity within Parent Teacher Associations. The district wide guidelines should seek to address the inclusion of all parents across diverse educational backgrounds, socio-economic status, English language proficiency, nationality and immigration status.
- Partner with community based organizations and partners to implement middle school student success programs designed to support middle school participants in navigating the NYC high school admissions process and in making informed choices.

Restorative Practices (School Discipline)

- Address the racial disparities in student discipline by investing, supporting, and incentivizing restorative justice circles and best practices to support student-centered, healing and restorative approaches to discipline, conflict, and community-building.
- Create a Restorative Justice Coordinator (full-time DOE) position tasked with implementing, supporting and tracking a district-wide approach to restorative practices at all D15 middle schools. Designate a Restorative Justice leader at every D15 middle school to lead restorative practices within each school. Track, monitor and report disciplinary data by race, gender and ethnicity.
- Increase investment for multilingual social-emotional and mental health supports in D15 middle schools; such as guidance counselors and social workers. Add investments in trainings for students in conflict and peer mediation. Ensure access to services for English Language Learners.
- Encourage the citywide School Diversity Advisory Group to address the disparate impact and use of metal detectors on students of color.

Intra-District Collaboration & Community Engagement

- Create mechanisms and develop ongoing opportunities for intra-district family, parent, and student engagement and collaboration (i.e. District-wide after school programming, including sports, language, technology, music and arts programs). Partner with local community-based organizations to build on existing community programs.
- Bolster and strengthen community engagement and invest in parent networks in historically marginalized communities and communities of color in collaboration with local community-based organizations and partners.
- Pair intra-district PTAs to encourage collaboration and cross-cultural community building (this should be paired with support and trainings to ensure meaningful and productive engagement).
- Conduct an internal review of PTA guidelines in order to better understand and encourage opportunities for intra-district fundraising.

Resource Inequity

- Track and monitor D15 middle school resources such as arts, music, technology, sports and PTA contributions across all D15 middle schools; develop an action plan to reduce inequities between schools. Provide clear, accessible and transparent information on school funding.

- Develop an equitable baseline of funding to support school supplies, arts, music, technology and sports at all D15 middle schools.
- Work to decrease class sizes across all D15 middle schools. Create equity between middle schools for classroom student-teacher ratios and ensure class sizes of historically disadvantaged students do not increase. Support the resources required (physical space, teachers) to decrease class sizes.
- Ensure that individual schools do not lose out Title I funding if a school drops below the 60% free and reduced lunch threshold.
 - Encourage the citywide School Diversity Advisory Group to research and explore new Title I funding models.
- Create middle schools seats (grades 6-8) in Red Hook.

Physical Access & Students with Disabilities

- Ensure that all D15 middle school students with disabilities have equitable access to all school programming while also receiving the additional support services. Measure and evaluate schools on their social and programmatic inclusion approaches.
- Ensure that all D15 middle school students with disabilities have equitable physical access to school sites and programming (including access to art classes, gymnasiums, lunch rooms, and recess areas). Measure and evaluate schools on their physical inclusion approaches.
- Encourage principals, teachers and staff to work together to create opportunities for meaningful partnership and interaction among students with and without special needs (within schools and between co-located schools).
- Create clear, easy-to navigate pathways within the DOE for families of students with disabilities seeking support to address unmet needs and to request physical access improvements.
- Develop Building Accessibility Profiles for all (D15 Middle) schools.
- Appropriate funding for improvements to the physical accessibility of buildings.