

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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Vol. 21 (P) No. 4 Resolution on High School Admissions

(Approved at the May 19, 2021 Calendar Meeting by Roll Call Vote of all CEC3 members present (7) at the time of the vote: K Berger, L Byrd, N Hasan, L Liu, D Morgan, K Watkins, E Wright)

WHEREAS, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) has made unprecedented changes to its system of High School Admissions for the 2021-2022 school year; and

WHEREAS, the learning environment for the 2020-2021 school year has been far from ideal, State tests were offered on an opt-in basis and were not offered on a remote basis; and

WHEREAS, attendance records for the 2020-2021 school year have been affected by extended illnesses, quarantines, and schedule changes; and

WHEREAS, even choosing a small set of schools to evaluate in depth is burdensome; and

WHEREAS, incorrect data about course offerings and screening mechanisms appeared in the myschools website used by families to select schools for application; and

WHEREAS, inconsistencies in high school admissions and programming information were rampant among myschools, school websites, and school virtual tour presentations; and

WHEREAS, schools themselves were uncertain during the application process about admissions methodology implemented by DOE; and

WHEREAS, shifting information was hard to follow in English but even harder for non-English speakers; and

WHEREAS, changes to admissions criteria were not tracked in a transparent manner; and

WHEREAS, availability of virtual tours was inconsistent, with some schools available only in December and others only in January or February; and

WHEREAS, some schools took a punitive approach to families desiring open houses or virtual tours, excluding late arrivals without regard for the realities of technical difficulties or other chaos introduced by the pandemic of 2020-2021; and

WHEREAS, there was no single place to check tour availability, requiring visits to multiple websites in order to track new dates; and

WHEREAS, the new virtual open house for Arts schools was large and overwhelming; and

WHEREAS, search capabilities for the myschools website work well for some features (e.g. PSAL sports) but not for others (e.g. Special Ed programs); and

WHEREAS, response time for the myschools website on the day that Specialized admissions closed and the day that regular admissions opened was extremely poor; and

WHEREAS, schools with supplemental application requirements set their own due dates for supplemental materials, creating confusion when system-wide due dates for applications were changed; and

WHEREAS, due dates for applications were changed and updates to websites with those due dates was inconsistent; and

WHEREAS, many families did not receive timely acknowledgement of receipt of applications or virtual auditions; and

WHEREAS, Arts high school auditions submitted through the common application process were not received by schools in some cases; and

WHEREAS, students' level of anxiety increases with each day between submission of application and release of results; and

WHEREAS, Specialized High School admission results were released poorly, first with an encrypted email that was difficult or impossible for some families to access, then unencrypted; and

WHEREAS, improvements have been made to the high school admission process that should continue, namely the consolidation of the Arts audition process and the increased prevalence of virtual tours;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the DOE shall state definitively that State test scores and attendance will not be used as admissions criteria for the fall 2021 admissions process for the 2022-2023 school year; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall release changes to admissions criteria for 2022-2023 by October 1, 2021; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall assist families in narrowing their choice of schools by providing information regarding likelihood of admission, e.g. what rank in the lottery has been required for admission in the past; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall ensure consistency among: myschools, school websites, and stand-alone presentations, with immediate translation into supported languages; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall include an accurate date of the last update on each page of school information on the myschools website; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall provide a single reference point for tour dates and consistent methodology for signup and confirmation; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall maximize opportunities for families to learn about schools by increasing tour capacities and allowing for late entrance to meetings or other methods of accommodating challenging family circumstances; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall make prior-year virtual tours and open houses consistently available on school websites for families that prefer to start their research process as early as possible; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall revise the Arts open house to have several shorter, more focused sessions; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall extend search capabilities on myschools to include:

- Special Ed and ELL support, including number of learning specialists per grade and the availability of a full time special education coordinator
- Filter by travel time from more than one location
- Search specifically identified classes or programming rather than general text search; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall enhance its testing processes for application websites to ensure timely responses on the days with most demand; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall create a system-wide due date for all supplemental application materials one week after the main application deadline, extending what was done with Arts auditions this year; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall gather public opinion regarding the timeline for high school applications such as whether a greater number of spring tours or a later application deadline would relieve pressure by allowing research to be spread out over time or exacerbate anxiety by prolonging the process; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall Publicly state the reasons for malfunctions in the Arts audition process and how they have been corrected for next year; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall release admissions results in a matter of weeks after the application deadline instead of months; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall release admissions results using tested methods such as the myschools website rather than through new, untested methods; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall determine which parts of the high school application must remain private and communicated through secure methods; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall ensure appropriate training of employees so that private or confidential information is communicated quickly and reliably through secure methods and not through insecure methods; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall continue to use the new consolidated method for Arts auditions and pursue further methods to simplify the application process; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DOE shall continue offering virtual tours (including an interactive component) once in-person tours have resumed.