



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jordan Miller, jmiller@groupgordon.com, 212-784-5703

New York City High School Admissions Methods Associated with Vastly Different Graduation Rates

“Who Graduates? New Findings on NYC High School Admissions and Graduation Rates” explores persistent gaps in graduation rates by admissions method, borough, neighborhood, and race and ethnicity

NEW YORK — A striking 97.4 percent of New York City students admitted to high school based on the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) graduated on time in 2015, compared to only 59.8 percent of those admitted to educational option programs and 68.1 percent of those admitted to limited unscreened programs, according to [“Who Graduates? New Findings on NYC High School Admissions and Graduation Rates,”](#) released today by [Measure of America, a project of the Social Science Research Council.](#)

The data indicate that the universal high school choice admissions program is hugely consequential for students and families, with the most common admissions methods, educational option and limited unscreened, associated with the lowest on-time graduation rates. Together, these two programs educate nearly 35,000 New York City teenagers, or 45 percent of eighth graders admitted to New York City high schools.

The study provides an in-depth analysis of on-time high school graduation rates in the city by the types of high school programs students are admitted to through the six admissions methods that are part of the mandatory universal school choice process; a mandatory program of this scale is unique to New York City. It presents graduation rates for students admitted to different types of high school programs; for students living in different boroughs and community districts; for students of different racial and ethnic groups; and for students from poor and non-poor families in the city as a whole as well as in the different types of high school programs.

“New York City’s universal high school choice program has been very successful for some students – specialized high schools succeed in educating nearly all admitted students,” said Kristen Lewis, co-director, Measure of America. “But these schools enjoy a recipe for success that is difficult to scale, including some of the city’s most academically able students, excellent teachers, engaging curricula, and more resources than other public high schools.”

According to Measure of America’s analysis, disparities in graduation rates between racial and ethnic groups, neighborhoods, and income levels continue to plague the city’s public school system:

- Fewer than seven in ten black, Latino, or Native American students; students who live in the Bronx and Manhattan overall; and students living in 23 community districts graduated on time in 2015.
- The overall graduation rate gap between the top (Queens, 77.3 percent) and bottom (Bronx, 63.7 percent) boroughs is 13.6 percentage points. Yet there is little difference in graduation rates for SHSAT schools among the five boroughs.
- Asian American students had the highest on-time graduation rate overall (85.4 percent), followed by white, multi-racial, Native American, and black students. Latino students had the lowest on-time graduation rate (64.4 percent).
- Black and Latino students are less likely to have been admitted to the most competitive high school programs. For example, while black students make up roughly 30 percent and Latino students make up roughly 40 percent of the public high school class of 2015, only one in sixteen students admitted to high school on the basis of the SHSAT was black and only one in twelve was Latino. Though Asian Americans only make up 16.8 percent of the NYC public high school class of 2015, well over half of students in SHSAT programs were Asian.

“The NYC Department of Education deserves credit for boosting the graduation rate in the face of difficult challenges, including residential segregation in city neighborhoods, poverty, language barriers, and a chronic shortage of funds,” added Lewis. “We hope that the analysis in ‘Who Graduates?’ will contribute to efforts to ensure that the system truly works for all students and families.”

The report concludes with recommendations for improving the New York City public high school system, including targeting more support to black, Latino, and poor students who attend both zoned and educational option programs.

“Who Graduates?” builds on [High School Graduation in New York City: Is Neighborhood Still Destiny?](#) which Measure of America released in May 2016; it examined public high school graduation rates by the neighborhoods in which students lived, regardless of where they went to high school.

About Measure of America

An initiative of the **Social Science Research Council**, [Measure of America](#) provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding the distribution of well-being and opportunity in America and stimulating fact-based dialogue about issues we all care about: health, education, and living standards.

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