



**CITYWIDE COUNCIL ON HIGH SCHOOLS  
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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**CITYWIDE COUNCIL  
ON HIGH SCHOOLS**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013**

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*This Report is dedicated to the memory  
of our friend and colleague, former  
Council member and President*

***Valerie Armstrong-Barrows***

*whose untimely death robbed the city of  
one of its strongest parent advocates.*



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### **President's Message**

This is the fifth Annual Report of the Citywide Council on High Schools. As we await a new administration that is widely perceived as committed to a new beginning on many policy fronts, it is particularly fitting that this report looks back on the twelve-year history of the Bloomberg administration as well as focus on issues and initiatives that dominated the 2012-13 school year. We hope that the information in this report will highlight the accomplishments as well as provide insight into ongoing problems.

While there is almost universal agreement that New York City has made progress in graduating more students, there is a deepening concern about what a high school diploma represents, as shockingly large numbers of students graduate without the skills to succeed in college or careers. While the administration has made great efforts to tackle the problem of "dropout factories," the preferred solution-- closing large comprehensive high schools and opening small, themed schools as well as charter schools -- has dislocated communities and pitted parents against parents. This strategy, coupled with the failure to involve parent leaders in a meaningful way in major decisions and policy initiatives has left a legacy of deep distrust of the Department of Education. We hope that the new administration will act swiftly to repair the relationship with parents and work on engaging parents at all levels.

The Council would like to thank the Annual Report Committee, Constance Asiedu, Neyda Franco, Martin Krongold, Monique Lindsay and Marianne Russo for their editorial work on this report. Our heartfelt thanks are given to Gail Robinson, researcher and writer, for her spectacular work and patience. CCHS also thanks the staff of the Division of Family and Community Engagement and our Superintendent Liaison Karen Watts for their support.

My heartfelt thanks to my current and former colleagues on the Council for the passion, time and energy they put into the work of the Council and representing the concerns of high school parents. I would also like to thank the countless parents and parent leaders all over the city who over the years have taught me so much and inspired me to advocate for high schools.

Finally, while this report strives to give as full a picture of the current state of high schools as our resources permit, we are well aware that some important topics—notably, the transition to common core standards; the implementation of the special education reforms; and the co-locations approved by the PEP in October 2013—deserve more detailed treatment. We intend to include these in the 2013-14 report.

Paola de Kock, President  
December 11, 2013

## **Introducing the Citywide Council on High Schools (“CCHS”)**

### **Structure and Powers of CCHS**

CCHS is among the 32 community education councils (CECs) and 4 citywide councils (CCHS, the Citywide Council on Special Education (CCSE), the Citywide Council on English-Language Learners (CCELL), and the Citywide District 75 Council) created by the New York State Legislature to replace the local community boards when it enacted mayoral control (in that scheme, the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) is the successor to the central NYC Board of Education).

Like the CECs, CCHS is a body created by state law (Art. 52-A, §2590-b of NYS Education Law). However, whereas CECs have retained a few of the powers and functions of the community boards (notably, with respect to school zoning lines), CCHS’s can only 1) “advise and comment on any educational or instructional policy involving high schools”; 2) “issue an annual report on the effectiveness of [DOE] in providing services to high school students” and make recommendations on improvements; and 3) hold at least one meeting per month where the public may discuss issues facing high schools (CCHS meets on the second Wednesday of every month).

The structure of CCHS is different from that of the CECs or even of the other citywide councils. CCHS is the only council that has borough-based representation: two elected representatives for each borough are joined by three members appointed by the Public Advocate, CCSE and CCELL, respectively (like other councils, CCHS also has a non-voting student member).

Although official actions (such as resolutions) must be voted upon and approved by at least seven members, much of the Council's work is carried on through the borough representatives—with almost 500 high schools, it is the only practical way for the Council to have a meaningful relationship with individual schools. Further, since each borough (with the exception of Staten Island) has about 100 schools, CCHS representatives have divided responsibilities along district or geographic lines within each borough they represent. This splitting of responsibilities is only a function of the large number of schools the representatives need to cover; it is in no way required since CCHS members are elected borough-wide. In general, the representatives work in concert and should both be copied on any important communications concerning borough high schools. Finally, the three appointed members are not restricted to any geographic area.

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## Introduction

This annual report of the Citywide Council on High Schools (CCHS) attempts to provide a snapshot of the state of New York City's high schools. The report comes after a decade of unprecedented change in the city's public high schools. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his school chancellors, Joel Klein and Dennis Walcott, have dramatically altered the entire system but particularly high schools.

They have closed big high schools and opened small ones. Schools now share buildings in many areas across the city. The administration has greatly expanded school choice, eliminating the system of neighborhood high schools in much of the city. Principals have gained more control over what goes on in their buildings. Meanwhile, the state has tightened graduation requirements and begun tracking how many students leave high school equipped to do college work.

The end of the Bloomberg administration presents a particularly opportune time to look at the state of the city's high schools, and this report strives to assess the state of the city's high schools and outline some of the basic issues that confronted the schools during the 2012-13 school year.

As of the 2012-2013 school year, New York City has more than 400 public high schools -- both regular district schools and charter schools<sup>1</sup> -- serving about 340,000 students in grades 9 through 12. About 18 percent of these children are Asian, 39 percent Hispanic, 32 percent black and 13 percent are white. Thirteen percent are English language learners. Slightly less than three quarters of the students come from low-income families, enabling the student to get a free or reduced-price lunch. About a third of city high school students are over age for their grades. On an average day, about 83 percent of all of these students actually show up for school.<sup>2</sup>

The schools these children attend range from Brooklyn Tech with more than more than 5,000 students to some, such as the Essex Street Academy, with just a few hundred. There are schools for students with an array of talents, for those wanting to pursue careers -- including some New York-centric ones like working for the transit authority -- and many general education high schools. There are specialized high schools for academically high performing students and transfer schools for students who have fallen behind. Some high schools are combined with middle schools; a few will add years at the end, awarding students an associate's degree at the end of grade 14. There are schools that help most of their student shine; others where students do little more than mark time until they graduate or drop out and many that fall somewhere in between. And while this system -- with all of its choices -- serves some of its student very well, it also fails some of them.

Together these high schools have about 19,200 teachers who on average have worked in the city school system for just shy of 10 years. The average class in academic core subjects has 25 to 27 students.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charter high schools represent a very small fraction of the total number of high schools or of charter schools.

<sup>2</sup> Figures adapted from *New York City Public School Indicators, Demographics, Resources Outcomes*, New York City Budget Office, May 2013.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

No discussion of New York's high schools can take place without reviewing the enormous transformation of the past 10 years. These changes, implemented after the state legislature in 2002 transferred control of the schools from an appointed school board to the mayor, were intended largely to keep students in school, improve their chances of graduating and better prepare them for college and career. According to the city administration, they also would help free children, particularly those living in poor and primarily black or Latino neighborhoods, from being forced to attend their often low-performing neighborhood schools.

The old New York City Board of Education had made a few attempts to close struggling high schools and replace them with smaller schools. Erasmus Hall in Flatbush, for example, was broken into three schools in 1994, and the board closed George Washington High School in Washington Heights 1999 and then opened four small schools in the building. But with the Bloomberg administration, the policy became a juggernaut. Between 2002 and the 2012-13 school year, the Department of Education closed or began phasing out 63 high schools and, with the help of funding from the Gates Foundation and other philanthropies, opened 337 new ones.<sup>4</sup>

To put it another way, as the Research Alliance for New York City Schools did in a report<sup>5</sup> released in March, in the 1999-2000 school year, New York City had 212 schools that admitted approximately 73,000 first-time 9th grade students, but "as of the 2010-2011 school year, there were 409 schools that admitted 72,600 first-time 9th graders."

The average enrollment in New York City high schools, the *New York Times* reported<sup>6</sup>, fell from 1,437 in 2001 to 713 in 2011. While the city had 60 schools with more than 2,000 students in 2001, it had 36 in 2011. On the other end, only 21 schools had fewer than 300 students in 2001 compared to 94 such small schools in 2011.

## **Graduation Rates**

In breaking up big schools into small ones, the administration hoped to boost the graduation rate. Many of the large schools, critics argued, had become dropout factories -- the term Dr. Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University coined to describe high schools from which fewer than 60 percent of the students graduate in four years. The numbers<sup>7</sup> indicate the administration has made progress:

- The percentage of New York City high school students graduating after four years increased by about 39 percent from 2005 (the first year for which comparable figures are

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<sup>4</sup> Liz Robins and Theodore Meyer, "Nine High Schools, One Roof," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> James J. Kemple, *The Condition of New York City High Schools: Examining Trends and Looking Toward the Future*, Research Alliance for New York City Schools, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Liz Robins and Theodore Meyer, "Nine High Schools, One Roof," *Op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Except as otherwise noted, the figures below reflect the city's calculations, which include those who graduated in August after their senior years. The state's graduation rates are lower because they include only June graduates.

available) to 2012. In 2005, 46.5 percent of the class graduated on time, compared to 64.7 percent of the class of 2012.<sup>8</sup>

- The increases have been particularly striking among black and Hispanic students with 57.5 percent of Hispanics graduating in four years in 2011 compared to 37.4 percent in 2005. For blacks, the percentage increased from 40.1 percent in 2005 to 59.8 percent in 2012. (The 2012 figure includes students who graduated in August and June; the 2005 figure counts only June graduates.) The 2012 graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics, though, remain far below the percentage for whites and Asians, who had 2011 graduation rates of 78.1 percent and 82.1 percent respectively. "The black-white achievement gap in graduation rates has closed by 23 percent since 2005, while the Hispanic-white gap has closed 23 percent," the Department of Education said in a June 2013 press release.<sup>9</sup>
- An increasing percentage of students receive Regents or Advanced Regents diplomas, from 30 percent of members of the class of 2010 to 61.5 percent of the members of the class of 2012, according to the city Department of Education.
- The number of New York City high school students going on to the City University has risen sharply -- from 16,254 in 2002 to 25,589 in 2009. At community colleges, the number of city high school graduates enrolling as freshman increased 90 percent over that period.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, concerns remain:

- Despite the increases among black and Hispanic students, their graduation rates remains well below those for white and Asian students. The United Federation of Teachers has calculated the white/Asian vs. black/Hispanic achievement graduation gap in 2012 at more than 35 percentage points.
- Students with disabilities in the class of 2012 were far less likely to graduate in June 2012 than other students. Only 27.6 percent graduated on time, up from 27.2 in 2011, and of those graduates 48.9 percent received a local diploma instead of the more demanding Regents diploma.
- With the stricter standards in 2012, the four-year graduation rate for English language learners dropped by about 5 percent from the previous year.<sup>11</sup> Statewide numbers showed a similar drop.
- Although the city has narrowed the gap between itself and the state overall, a sizable difference still exists. According to state figures, 64.7 percent of New York City students who started 9th grade in 2008 got their diplomas in June or August of 2012, compared to 76.7 percent for the state as a whole. Among the state's major cities, New York City had the second highest graduation rate, trailing only Yonkers, which saw 72.1 percent of the

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<sup>8</sup> New York City Department of Education, Mayor Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Walcott Outline New York City's Historic Education Gains and Announce 2012 Graduation Rates," June 17, 2013 ([http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2012-2013/Grad\\_Rates\\_2012\\_20130617.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2012-2013/Grad_Rates_2012_20130617.htm)).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> --, *Creating College-Ready Communities*," Center for New York City Affairs, June 2012.

<sup>11</sup> New York City Department of Education, Mayor Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Walcott Outline New York City's Historic Education Gains and Announce 2012 Graduation Rates," June 17, 2013.



members of the class of 2012 graduate on time and, unlike the other cities, did not show any decline in graduation from 2011 to 2012.<sup>12</sup>

There also are indications that the rapid improvement may be leveling off. Using the state's calculation (which does not include the August graduates), the graduation rate for the class of 2011 was a tenth of a percent lower than the rate for the class of 2010. And in 2012, the graduation rate according to the state's numbers dipped slightly -- from 60.9 percent to 60.4 percent. Using the city's method, which includes August graduates, the rate dipped from 65.5 percent for the class of 2011 to 64.7 percent from the class of 2012.

Bloomberg and Walcott, though, expressed relief that rate, in their view, "held steady" in light of tighter standards.<sup>13</sup> The state has begun phasing out the non-Regents -- or local -- diplomas and has also raised the passing score on the Regents exam from 55 to 65. Almost 10 percent of graduates got one of the easier diplomas in 2011, that number declined to 2.7 percent of on-time graduates in 2012. (The number of Advanced Regents diplomas earned by city students has remained relatively stable at a bit more than 16 percent.)<sup>14</sup>

Under requirements that became effective in 2012, student have to pass five Regents exams -- English, a math, a science, global studies and U.S. history -- with a grade of at least 65 on each to get a regular high school diploma. The state Board of Regents reportedly has been weighing whether to loosen those requirements to allow students to substitute either an additional math or science test or a Career and Technical Education assessment for the global history Regents. The state also has eliminated the so-called IEP diploma for students with disabilities and, beginning with students who entered 9th grade in September 2011, will no longer recognize the Regents Competency Test for meeting graduation requirements. While the less rigorous Local Diploma has been eliminated for most students, students with disabilities can receive a Local Diploma if they score at least 55 on the required Regents exams.<sup>15</sup>

## **College Readiness**

As the graduation numbers have improved, many educators and public officials have questioned what graduation means in the real world and whether standards for getting a diploma may be easier than they once were. Some members of the CCHS, for example, have noted that in its Race to the Top Application, the state Department of Education took responsibility for grade inflation of approximately 33 percent on the standardized English language and math tests for students in grade 3 through 8. If this reduction were applied to Regents tests, graduation rates would be significantly lower or flat.

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<sup>12</sup> New York State Department of Education, *2008 Graduation Cohort Summary Slides*, slide 6, June 17, 2013. (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20130617/GradRateSlides.ppt>).

<sup>13</sup> New York City Department of Education, "Mayor Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Walcott Outline New York City's Historic Education Gains and Announce 2012 Graduation Rates," June 17, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> New York State Department of Education, *2008 Graduation Cohort Summary Slides*, slide 10, June 17, 2013. (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20130617/GradRateSlides.ppt>).

<sup>15</sup> New York State Department of Education, "Local Diploma Safety Net Options for Students with Disabilities who Enter Grade 9 in September 2011 and Thereafter," May 2011 (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/localdiplomaoptions-may2011.htm>).

Others have raised concerns about credit recovery, which allows students who fail a course to make up credits by engaging in what is supposed to be targeted, intensive instruction. Although a city audit found misuse of credit recovery was rare, the investigation did discover instances where it had been misused; in 2011-12, almost 10 per cent of high schools used some form of credit recovery, with some giving as many as 46 or their total credits through credit recovery.<sup>16</sup> In 2012, the Department of Education tightened its rules in several ways, including allowing student to earn no more than three credits through credit recovery and limiting credit recovery to students who had attended two thirds of the course in question.<sup>17</sup> Whether these measures will succeed in curtailing the misuse of credit recovery to inflate graduation rates or credit accumulation on the Progress Reports remains to be seen.

Fueling concerns about the value of a New York State diploma, the City University of New York began reporting that an increasing number of students at the system's two-year community colleges were not prepared for college work. "Three quarters of the 17,500 freshmen at the community colleges this year have needed remedial instruction in reading, writing or math, and nearly a quarter of the freshmen have required such instruction in all three subjects," the *Times* reported<sup>18</sup> in 2011. Just 14 percent passed the CUNY algebra placement exam. The number of students needing remedial instruction in the three areas -- dubbed triple low remedial -- doubled in the five years between 2005 and 2010.

In addition to what it may say about the quality of the city's high schools, the need for remediation has practical results. Students do not get financial aid for remedial classes, community colleges are not geared to teaching high-school courses, and many students do not complete the remedial work and so never attend college. "CUNY's remedial students graduate at a far lower rate than non-remedial students — 26.1 percent after six years compared to 40.3 percent," a 2011 report found.<sup>19</sup>

The city has attributed the high number of poorly prepared students at CUNY to the sharp rise in the number of public school graduates attending CUNY schools.<sup>20</sup> City officials also have said that, while the college readiness figure is low, they believe more students leave high school ready for college than did in 2005. Schools, they say, are held to a higher standard now than they once were.

A number of ways exist for incoming CUNY students to indicate they are ready for college work. In reading, students must have an SAT I verbal score of 480 or higher or critical reading score of 480 or higher; an ACT English score of 20 or higher; or an English Regents exam score of 75 or higher. Students who do not meet at least one of those requirements must take and pass a

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<sup>16</sup> School-by-school data for 2011-12 were made publicly available only in September 2013. Yoav Gonen, "Students Earning Credit through Dubious Make-up Work," *New York Post*, Sept. 24, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> New York City Department of Education, "New York City Department of Education Announces New Data Protections," Feb. 23, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Lisa W. Foderaro, "CUNY Adjusts Amid Tide of Remedial Students," *New York Times*, March 3, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Working Group on Remediation, *Proposal to Improve Success Rates for Students in Developmental Education at CUNY*, CUNY Office of Academic Affairs, August 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Yoav Gonen, "'Community' Crisis," *New York Post*, Jan. 20, 2012.

CUNY assessment test in reading and in writing. Standards for math vary from college to college but the system is similar: Students who do not meet certain thresholds on previous tests must pass a CUNY assessment.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, New York State in 2011 began releasing its own college readiness measure. Its ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measure is the percentage of all graduates in a class, regardless of diploma type, who scored 75 or higher on the English Regents examination and 80 or higher on a mathematics Regents. The state also sees an Advanced Regents Diploma, requiring that a student earn 22 units of course credit; pass at least nine Regents exams with a score of 65 or above; and take advanced course sequences in Career and Technical Education, the arts or foreign language, as indicative of college readiness.<sup>22</sup>

Under the state standard, 21.9 percent of the city's class of 2012 left high school college ready, an increase from the 2011 rate of 20.7 percent. Although New York City fared better on this than any other big city in the state except Yonkers -- only 5.8 percent of Rochester graduates met the standard-- it lagged far behind the whole state, which had a college readiness rate for public school graduates of 35.3 percent. As with the graduation rate, substantial disparities exist in the college readiness rate. While 56 percent of Asians and 48.5 percent of white students met the standard, only 12.5 percent of black students and 15.7 percent of Hispanic students in the state were seen to be college ready.

For its part, the city added a college and career readiness section to its School Progress Reports released in fall 2012 and covering the 2011-12 school year. This new section counts for 10 percent of a school's overall grade. It consists of five metrics: the number of students passing rigorous college preparatory courses, such as Advanced Placement, college credit classes and other courses DOE determines to be college-ready; students graduating in four years who would not need remediation under the standards set by CUNY; students graduating in six years who met that CUNY standard; students enrolling in college, a vocational program or public service within six months of graduation; and students enrolling in such institutions within 18 months of graduation.<sup>23</sup> Schools also earn points for helping students with low proficiency become college and career ready. Under the city's measure, 43.6 percent of the students were college ready.

The city's measurement of college readiness shows huge disparities. In the 2011-12 progress reports, three schools -- Bronx High School of Science, Townsend Harris and Academy for Careers in Television and Film -- got perfect scores for college readiness, 10 points out of a possible 10. At the other end of the scale, three schools -- Academy for Conservation and the Environment, Multicultural High School and New York City Charter High School for

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<sup>21</sup> City University of New York, "Testing FAQs: What are CUNY's Skill Requirements?" (<http://www.cuny.edu/academics/testing/cuny-assessment-tests/faqs.html>).

<sup>22</sup> New York State Department of Education, "Education Department Releases High School Graduation Rates; Overall Rates Improve Slightly, But Are Still Too Low For Our Students To Be Competitive," June 11, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> New York City Department of Education, "Final Changes to High School Progress Reports for 2011-12," May 7, 2012 ([http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B4D1BD81-1E62-4FAA-B22A-061AF1372235/0/201112FinalChangesHS2012\\_05\\_07.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B4D1BD81-1E62-4FAA-B22A-061AF1372235/0/201112FinalChangesHS2012_05_07.pdf)).

Architecture, Engineering and Construction Trades -- got less than 2 points out of the possible 10. One hundred thirteen schools scored an A in this area, and 31 schools got an F.<sup>24</sup>

### **Remaking the System: School Phase Outs and Closings**

Continuing its policy of phasing out and closing what it considers failing schools, the Bloomberg administration in 2012-13 took steps to shut or begin phasing out eight high schools. They are: Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications in the Bronx; Sheepshead Bay High School and Freedom Academy High School in Brooklyn; High School of Graphic Communication Arts, Choir Academy of Harlem (a combined middle and high school) and Bread & Roses Integrated Arts High School in Manhattan; Law, Government and Community Service High School, and Business, Computer Applications & Entrepreneurship High School in Queens. Notable also were some well-known schools that narrowly escaped death.

- Herbert Lehman in the Bronx, which had been proposed for phase out in 2012 and 2011, was removed from the 2013 closure list several days before the Policy for Education Policy vote. However, DOE said it would dramatically shrink Lehman -- from its current size of about 2,700 students to 1,000 students. It also will place three more schools in Lehman's building, for a total of six schools there.<sup>25</sup>
- DeWitt Clinton, also in the Bronx, will see its enrollment drop by about 1,500 to around 2,200 students. To accomplish that, three programs will be eliminated: Public and Community Service, Animal Professions and Future Teachers. In September 2013, the department opened two new small high schools on the Clinton campus, each of which is projected to eventually have between 420 and 460 students.
- Boys and Girls High School in Brooklyn has a 39 percent graduation rate, plummeting enrollment and a 72 percent attendance rate. But the school will remain open. Principal Bernard Gassaway and others in the community have attributed this at least partly to an influential board of advisers and supporters in Bedford Stuyvesant, where the school is located.<sup>26</sup> The city also has not co-located other schools in the building, half of which is reportedly unused, except for a small transfer school opening in 2013.

This latest round of closings, part of what has become an annual process, were announced by the administration in December and January and approved by the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), which the mayor controls, in March following hearings at the schools. Since winning control of the schools in 2002, the administration has closed or started to phase out 63 high schools, many of them large comprehensive high schools. It has also begun to close a few of the smaller schools it opened to replace the failing schools.

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<sup>24</sup> New York City Department of Education, "Progress Report Citywide Results 2011-12" ([http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/2BC9C0E7-E44F-4E4F-9999-CB5D8128ABC1/0/2011\\_2012\\_HS\\_PR\\_Results\\_2013\\_4\\_11.xlsx](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/2BC9C0E7-E44F-4E4F-9999-CB5D8128ABC1/0/2011_2012_HS_PR_Results_2013_4_11.xlsx)).

<sup>25</sup> Philissa Cramer, "Lehman Removed from Closure Roster, Again, But Will Shrink," *Gotham Schools*, March 7, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Geoff Decker and Philissa Cramer, "Aiding Boys and Girls High's Survival are Powerful Political Allies," *Gotham Schools*, Jan. 11, 2013.

In 2011-12, the department won approval to begin shutting or phasing out nine high schools: Washington Irving High School, Legacy School for Integrated Studies and Manhattan Theater Lab High School in Manhattan; Samuel Gompers Career and Technical Education High School, Grace Dodge Career and Technical Education High School, Jane Addams High School for Academic Careers and Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology in the Bronx; and International Arts Business School and Academy of Business and Community Development in Brooklyn. (For more see "New Schools" below.)

During the 2011-12 year the department also moved to close 17 high schools that had been participating in a federal government program aimed at improving struggling schools. The administration hoped to shut the schools in June 2012 and reopen them with new names, some new programs and, perhaps most importantly, a significant number of new teachers in September.<sup>27</sup> In June 2012, an arbiter, acting on a complaint from the United Federation of Teachers and the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, ruled that the city's plan violated union contracts. The courts upheld the arbiter's decision, saving the schools.<sup>28</sup>

In 2012-13 the administration set about closing a few of the schools slated for turnaround through its usual phase-out process, rather than the federal government program. But many more saw their metrics improve sufficiently and so avoided closure. These include: Alfred E. Smith Career and Technical High School and Banana Kelly High School, in the Bronx; Automotive High School and John Dewey High School in Brooklyn; and August Martin High School, Long Island City High School, William Cullen Bryant High School, John Adams High School, Newtown High School and Richmond Hill High School in Queens. A number of these schools, though, have seen their enrollments decline, partly as result of the turmoil and their being designated failing schools, and also will be home to new co-located schools in September 2013.

Whatever the successes of the school closing policy --and the failings of many of the schools slated for closure -- the experience has been overwhelming for many students, families and communities. Protests were loud and passionate, although by 2013 school closings attracted relatively little attention as it became clear that no amount of protest and opposing testimony before the Panel for Educational Policy would derail a proposal once it was up for a vote.

Under modifications to mayoral control approved by the legislature in 2009, the Department of Education must issue an educational impact statement and hold a public hearing on each proposed closing before the issue comes to the PEP for a vote. People also can speak at the PEP meeting. Even though the mayor controls the PEP and it has never voted against one of the Department of Education's proposals, its meetings became a magnet for many angered by the closing policy. So, in 2011, for example, more than 2,000 people came to the PEP meeting on closures, which went on for six hours.<sup>29</sup> The meeting in 2010 went on for eight hours, with people fighting over whether to turn microphones on or off and one student at Paul Robeson High School standing up with her newborn baby to declare, "I am not a failure and I will never be a failure. ... And neither will my daughter."

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<sup>27</sup> Philissa Cramer, "Bloomberg's Turnaround Switch Would Cause 33 School Closures," *Gotham Schools*, Jan. 12, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Philissa Cramer and Rachel Cromidas, "Judge Ends Year's Turnaround Saga with a Fast, Firm 'No' to the City," *Gotham Schools*, July 24, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Fernanda Santos, "Panel Votes to Close 10 City High Schools," *New York Times*, Feb. 2, 2011.

Some closed schools, such as Jamaica High School, had long histories in their communities and enthusiastic supporters. In many cases, students spoke passionately on behalf of their closing high school, recalling the teachers there who had made a difference in their lives.

Critics have repeatedly assailed the administration for not doing more to help struggling schools and for penalizing schools that have high percentages of challenging students -- low-income students, the homeless, students with disabilities, poorly performing students and English language learners. The department has repeatedly denied this, saying that, in making its decisions, it compares schools to those with similar student populations. In its impact statements, it usually lists schools with similarly challenging student bodies that have performed better than the school facing closure.

In January 2010, the city's Independent Budget Office (IBO), at the request of the City Council, studied the schools slated for closure that year and found that, on average, they performed poorly according to graduation rates and other measures. They also found higher rates of black and Hispanic students at those schools; of the 15 high school slated for closure that year, 11 had student bodies that were at least 95 percent black and Hispanic. At almost all the schools, the percentage of English language-learners, special education students, low-income students and students in temporary housing exceeded the average for their borough as a whole. The IBO concluded, "Closing high schools usually had greater concentrations of high needs students, students from low-income households and students living in temporary housing compared to the medians for non- closing schools in the same borough. The closing high schools also had more over-age students than non- closing schools."<sup>30</sup>

A similar study by the IBO in 2013 found that the schools slated for phase out or closure this year had somewhat higher percentages of low-income students, students with disabilities, blacks and Hispanics than city high schools as a whole. Particularly striking was the difference in very over-aged students: Those entering 9th grade at age 16 or older accounted for 11.9 percent of students at high schools slated for closure compared to 7.9 percent for all other high schools. However, the IBO also found that the city spent an average of \$1,412 more per pupil at the high schools on the 2013 closing list than it did on other high schools.<sup>31</sup>

Critics say that the effects of closing fall heavily on the students left behind -- those that remain in the school after it has been tagged for eventual closing. In most cases, the city allows students already enrolled to remain in the phase-out school, meaning that when a school is tagged for phase-out, many 9th graders still face spending the next three years in that school. As the school stops accepting new students, enrollment declines, inevitably forcing the school to cut back on class offerings and activities.<sup>32</sup>

In February 2013, the Department of Education announced that it would make it easier for students in these schools to transfer to other high schools. Deputy Chancellor Marc Sternberg

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<sup>30</sup> Independent Budget Office, *Comparisons Between Schools Slated for Closing and All Other Schools*, Jan. 25, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Independent Budget Office, *Statistical Profile of School on DOE's 2013 Closure List*, February 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Beth Fertig, "Last Students at Phase-Out Schools Face Limited Choices," *School Book*, May 30, 2013.

said students in phase-out schools would receive an application that would enable them to apply to higher-performing schools, along with a list of those schools, and would give them priority at the schools regardless of the student's academic record. He admitted, though, that students were not guaranteed a place in whatever school they selected. The transfer policy would affect an estimated 16,000 students in 61 schools at all grade levels.<sup>33</sup>

As more details became known, it seemed this policy's effect would be limited at best, largely because of a shortage of seats at schools that are eligible to take the transfers. Schools deemed low performing, for example, cannot accept transfers under this program. Although numbers are not yet available on how many students applied for transfers, *Gotham Schools* reported that families were disappointed when they saw the application and list of schools. "They presented it to families as an alternative to protect their children," Emma Hulse, a community organizer in the South Bronx families told *Gotham Schools*. "But when the package actually hit people's mailboxes, we realized it's not a meaningful alternative."<sup>34</sup>

The closings and phase-outs have taken a particularly heavy toll among large comprehensive high schools. In the Bronx, most of the large general high schools have been closed or, as in the case of Lehman, scaled back. As schools have shut, critics charge, increasing numbers of challenging students, including over-age students, those recently arrived from other countries and those who have been incarcerated, attend the remaining large schools. This has tended to adversely affect those schools. For example, after Martin Luther King Jr., Seward Park and Park West High Schools in Manhattan closed between 2001 and 2003, enrollment increased at Norman Thomas, Washington Irving, Murray Bergtraum and Brandeis High Schools. All except Murray Bergtraum were closed or were being phased out as of the end of the 2012-13 school year. A 2009 analysis by the Center for New York City Affairs found that 26 out of 34 large schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan had seen their enrollments increase by 150 to 1,100 students as other school closed between fall 2002 and spring 2007. Fifteen saw their graduations rates drop.<sup>35</sup>

### **Remaking the System: New Schools**

The flip side of the administration's school closings is its opening of schools, many with a theme, most of them small. Altogether the administration says it has created 656 schools -- conventional public and charter schools and schools at all level -- since taking office, of which about 337 are small high schools.

In April 2013, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Walcott announced that 27 new high schools would open in September 2013. These include six charter high schools (for more see below), seven career and technical education schools (for more see below); three transfer high schools

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<sup>33</sup> Yasmeen Khan, "DOE Expands Transfer Option to Students in all Phase-Out Schools," *School Book*, Feb. 13, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Anika Anand, "Exit Strategy for Students at Closing Schools Hard to Navigate," *Gotham Schools*, May 1, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Clara Hemphill and Kim Nauer, *The New Marketplace: How High School Reforms Have Reshaped New York City's High Schools*, Center for New York City Affairs, June 2009.

for students who have left school or fallen behind in credit accumulation and one District 75 combined middle and high school for students with disabilities.<sup>36</sup>

Two of the schools will go through grade 14, enabling students to get an associate's degree as well as a high school diploma. This approach is modeled on Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-Tech) at the Paul Robeson Campus in Brooklyn, which already has received wide acclaim -- including a mention in President Obama's 2013 State of the Union address -- despite having been open for less than two years and so only having students in grades 9 and 10. One of the new six-year high schools is Health Education and Research Occupations (HERO), which will open in the Samuel Gompers High School building in the Bronx. Through a partnership with CUNY's Hostos Community College, it will enable students to earn an associate's degree in community health work or nursing, the minimum requirement needed to become a registered nurse. The other, Energy Tech in Long Island City, will prepare students for energy fields and offer internships at National Grid and Con Edison.

While plans for some of the schools seem vague, other new notable or unusual schools include:

- Bronx Academy for Software Engineering will be located in Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School, which is being phased out. It will seek to prepare students for college work and careers in the computer field through internships and classes in software design, computer programming and app development, and is patterned on the Academy of Software Engineering in Manhattan. That school has been criticized by the Stuyvesant High School teacher who originally proposed the idea, but who now says the school is too small, not selective enough and too narrowly focused.<sup>37</sup> Like its Manhattan forebear, the Bronx school will be unscreened.
- Westchester Square Academy, one of the schools slated for the Lehman campus, will have a liberal arts focus designed to help students become "readers, writers and speakers." It will have both an honors and an unscreened program.
- Stephen T. Mather Building Arts & Craftsmanship High School will share a building in lower Manhattan with Murray Bergtraum High School, a business oriented school that has declined sharply during the Bloomberg administration.<sup>38</sup> The new school will offer CTE programs in historic preservation and carpentry, masonry, decorative finishes and landscaping. Some have questioned why the city has decided to teach landscaping in a school surrounded by concrete next to the Brooklyn Bridge and the FDR Drive.
- International High School for Health Sciences, to be co-located with Newtown High School, will aim to prepare student with limited English proficiency for college work and careers in the medical field. The school is part of the International Network for Public Schools, which has 14 other high schools in the city, as well as a few elsewhere in the country, for students who have been in the United States for four years or less.

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<sup>36</sup> New York City Department of Education, "Mayor Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Walcott Announce 78 New Schools to Open Next Fall," April 2, 2013 ([http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2012-2013/040213\\_administrationincityhistory.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2012-2013/040213_administrationincityhistory.htm)).

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer Miller, "Teacher's Visions but Done New York City's Way," *New York Times*, March 31, 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Susan Edelman, "Just Steps Away from City Hall, Murray Bergtraum HS is Abandoned to Failure," *New York Post*, Nov. 25, 2012.



- Queens High School for Language Studies, modeled on the highly rated High School for Dual Language School and Asian Studies in Manhattan, will offer a bilingual English-Mandarin program, seeking to make Mandarin speaking students fluent in English and English speaking students fluent in Mandarin. It will be co-located with Flushing High School.
- Veritas Academy, also in Flushing High School, extends the program of the successful BELL Academy Middle School into high school. The program seeks "serious learners," regardless of ability and says it will provide classes geared to students' interests.

The other high schools set to open in September 2013 are: Pelham Lab High School, Schuylerville Preparatory High School, Bronx River High School, Bronx Collaborative High School, World View High School, Icahn Charter School 7 (an elementary through high school), all in the Bronx; Origins High School, New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science III, New Visions High School for the Humanities III, Research and Service High School (transfer school), Professional Pathways High School (transfer school) and Achievement First Central Brooklyn Charter School in Brooklyn; Eagle Academy for Young Men of Harlem (middle and high school), Great Oaks Charter School (middle and high), Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management, Urban Assembly School for Global Commerce in Manhattan; and Riverview School (a District 75 middle and high school), Institute for Health Professions at Cambria Heights, Energy Tech High School and Voyages Prep - South Queens (transfer school).

This follows another round of new high schools that opened in September 2012. These were Bronx Compass High School, High School for Energy and Technology and Claremont International High School in the Bronx; Brooklyn Institute for Liberal Arts and Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School (middle and high) in Brooklyn; and Academy for Software Engineering, Democracy Prep 3 (middle and high) and Harvest Collegiate High School in Manhattan.

The mayor clearly hopes the new school movement will continue after he leaves office. In his final State of the City Speech, delivered in January 2013, Bloomberg announced a year-long fellowship that would enable 12 to 15 people to design eight new high schools that would incorporate promising college readiness strategies. The schools would be targeted at students from high-poverty neighborhoods.

Despite some criticism of the program -- particularly of some of the school closings -- the city believes the new schools, especially at the high school level, have been a great success. It points to a number of studies that endorse its position:

- A report released by private research firm MRDC in January 2012 found students attending the small schools had a nearly 67.9 percent graduation rate, compared to 59.3 percent rate for similar students who attended other public schools. The report found these gains benefit virtually all groups of students, including low-achieving students, blacks, Hispanics and student from low-income families. These findings, the report concluded, "provide highly credible evidence that in a relatively short period of time, with sufficient organization and resources, an existing school district can implement a

complex high school reform that markedly improves graduation rates for a large population of low-income, disadvantaged students of color."<sup>39</sup>

- The 2012 MRDC echoed a 2010 report by the same firm that found substantially more students at the “Small Schools of Choice” were on track to graduate than their counterparts at other schools. They reported this gain was seen for a wide range of students, including "male high school students of color, whose educational prospects have been historically difficult to improve."<sup>40</sup>
- A 2012 New York University study found that most measures of high school achievement -- graduation rates, number of students taking Regents exams, percentage of students passing Regent exams -- improved between 2001 and 2008 as the city implemented its small school program. Interestingly, though, the study found graduation rates increased at all schools during this period, including schools that had closed. The figures "provide some support for the notion that small school reform works as systemic reform," the authors concluded, adding that other changes, including improvements in elementary and middle schools and increased spending on education, probably also played a role.<sup>41</sup>
- The report released in spring 2013 by the Research Alliance for New York City Schools also found improvement in key indicators between 1999 and 2011, including the college readiness rate, which, it said, increased from 13 percent of those entering high school in 2001 to 21 percent of those entering high school in 2007. Like the NYU researchers, the Research Alliance's James Kemple attributes the improvement at least in part to a wide array of reforms, including increased accountability and efforts to improve the quality of education in lower grades. The report concludes that more study is needed into the effects of specific reforms: "For example, how has the phasing out of the city's lowest performing high schools affected students who would most likely have attended those schools had they remained open? How has this process affected existing schools?"<sup>42</sup>

While other studies have seen positives in the high school changes, they have seen drawbacks as well.

- A 2012 report issued by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform said the system of small schools and choice had not done enough to erase huge disparities in the city. It found, "The college readiness of New York City high school graduates is still very highly correlated with the neighborhood they come from. In particular the racial composition and average income of a student's neighborhood are very strong predictors of a student's chance of graduating from high school ready for college." Of the 21 city neighborhoods with the lowest college readiness rates, all but two were at least 93 percent black and

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<sup>39</sup> Howard Bloom and Rebecca Unterman. *Sustained Positive Effects on Graduation Rates Produced by New York City's Small Public High Schools of Choice*, MRDC, Jan. 20, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Howard Bloom, Saskia Levy Thompson, Rebecca Unterman, *Transforming the High School Experience*, MRDC, June 20, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Amy Ellen Schwartz, Matthew Wiswall, Leanna Stiefel, Elizabeth Debraggio, *Does High School Reform Lift Urban Districts?*, Institute for Education and Social Policy, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, NYU, June 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Kemple, Op. cit.

Latino. On the other hand of the 16 neighborhoods with the highest college readiness rate, none were more than 16 percent black or Latino.<sup>43</sup>

- In an analysis of the above-referenced MDRC reports, blogger (and Stuyvesant HS math teacher) Gary Rubinstein said that, rather than comparing students at small schools to those overall, the researchers should have compared them only to those students who entered the lottery to get into a small school. That would leave out students who opt for a zoned program or so-called over-the-counter students, including students who have just arrived from another country, had to leave their previous school or been in a juvenile justice facility. Using his method, Rubinstein found much smaller gains for the small schools than the MRDC study did.<sup>44</sup>
- A 2009 report by the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School found the small schools have had considerable success: "A substantial number of students who might otherwise have dropped out of large, dysfunctional high schools have instead remained in school thanks to the more personalized settings of the new small schools," it concluded. But the center faulted the city for steering many of its neediest students to the remaining large high schools, which, it said were not able to deal with them. "In some cases, barely functioning schools became failing schools and were subsequently closed. Any gains of the small school movement must be weighed against this collateral damage," the report said.<sup>45</sup>
- A 2011 analysis by the Daily News found the unscreened small schools created under Bloomberg did better at graduating students on time than older city schools. However, it also found that these students were less likely to be college ready than their counterparts at the older schools: "On average, the new schools graduate roughly 70 percent of students in four years. But just 12 percent of students who graduate are prepared for college. In contrast, similar schools founded before Mayor Bloomberg assumed office graduate on average 64 percent of students, but 17 percent are college-ready," the paper noted.<sup>46</sup> Part of this may be because many small schools do not offer rigorous classes, such as physics, intermediate foreign language, or Advanced Placement classes.
- A review of graduation rates shows that some schools find it difficult to maintain their gains. The Urban Assembly Academy for History and Citizenship for Young Men, which opened in 2004, is closing after its on-time graduation fell from 52.9 percent for its first full class in 2008 to 36.1 percent in 2012. As the size of its graduation class rose from 58 students in 2007 to 152 students in 2012, the Gateway School for Environmental research and Technology saw its four-year graduation rate drop from 63.8 percent to 34.9 percent. These and other less dramatic fall-offs have some to wonder whether the small schools are intrinsically a better model for high school education or whether the initial success of these schools has been due at least in part to enthusiasm for a new venture, initial funding and small class size, which has increased at the small schools over the years.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> --, *Is Demography Still Destiny?* Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2012

<sup>44</sup> Gary Rubenstein, "Examining NYC DOE's Only Egg Basket," *Gary Rubinstein's Blog*, May 1, 2012 (<http://garyrubinstein.teachforus.org/2012/05/01/examining-nyc-does-only-egg-basket/>).

<sup>45</sup> Clara Hemphill and Kim Nauer, *Op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Rachel Monahan, "Mayor Bloomberg's Schools Set Students Up for Failure When It Come to College Preparation, but More Graduate," *New York Daily News*, Oct. 27, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Figures from the New York City Department of Education ([http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/6412E73E-8B7D-4831-A487-D0A8DFEC1750/0/Graduation\\_Rates\\_Public\\_School.xlsx](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/6412E73E-8B7D-4831-A487-D0A8DFEC1750/0/Graduation_Rates_Public_School.xlsx)).

- While not discounting the statistics on graduation rates at the small schools, some critics have charged that the newer schools do not serve the same student body as the big schools they supposedly replaced. Originally new schools were not required to serve special education and English language learners for their first two years. Now, though, DOE says the small schools serve the same number of those students as other city high schools.<sup>48</sup> The Coalition for Educational Justice, which opposes the closing policy, has questioned the city on this, saying that, while small schools serve special education students, they may not accept the most challenging of these students. For example, the coalition has said, while Rockaway High School had 12 percent of its students in self-contained special education classes, these students accounted for only 2 percent of enrollment at the schools that replaced it.<sup>49</sup>

### **Remaking the System: Case Studies<sup>50</sup>**

A closer look at individual campuses and schools provides evidence of the difficulty of shutting and opening schools. It also clearly reflects that short-term successes are not guaranteed to continue over a longer timeframe. Reviews of some of the campuses indicate that in many if not most of them, some of the new schools are thriving; other are failing and most are somewhere in between. A large number of the new schools still grapple with the problems that caused their predecessors to fail: poorly prepared students, security issues and inadequate facilities

In the cases below, the new schools have existed long enough to have a track record.

**Evander Childs:** This school became the poster child for the small school policy in a 2007 Bloomberg administration ad campaign. Closed in 2008, the school had a 34 percent graduation rate for the class of 2005, with only about a quarter of those students earning Regents diplomas. It also had a reputation for violence and disorder, which continued even after it closed.

Today, six schools occupy the Bronx campus. The most popular, the High School of Computers and Technology, is a CTE school, overwhelmingly male and had an 81.9 percent four-year (including August) graduation rate for 2011. The graduation rates at the other schools -- Bronx Lab School, High School for Contemporary Arts, Bronx Academy of Health Careers, Bronx High School for Writing and Communication and Bronx Aerospace -- ranged from 57.4 percent to 76.7 percent, all well above the level at the old Evander Childs. Some of the schools have interesting and attractive programs: outdoor projects, arts facilities, a partnership with a professional theater group.

Yet problems persist. At none of the schools did more than 16 percent of students graduate college ready in 2011 -- and at Computers and Technology and the High School for Contemporary Arts, that figure was only 10 percent. At least one school, Bronx Aerospace,

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<sup>48</sup> --, *New York City's Strategy for Improving High Schools: An Overview*, Alliance for Quality Education, January 2010.

<sup>49</sup> --, *School Closures: A Shell Game with Students*, NYC Coalition for Educational Justice and NYC Communities for Change, January 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Information for these case studies from Department of Education statistics and *Inside Schools*.

seems to be having trouble maintaining its program; it has "lost much of its prestige along with its partnership with the Air Force and its JROTC status," *Inside Schools* reported.

**William H. Taft High School:** The administration began putting small schools at Taft in 2003, and Taft High School ceased to exist in June 2008. In the 2000s, it had graduation rates of around 20 percent, and almost no student received a Regents diploma. Today, the Bronx High School for Medical Science is seen as a successful school, with new labs and opportunities for students at nearby hospitals. Seventy-seven percent graduated in four years in 2011, and while the college readiness rate was below the city average, 45 percent of students took and passed a college course while at the school.

But, the picture at Taft Educational Campus is spotty. In 2011, the city decided to shut the Urban Assembly Academy for History and Citizenship for Young Men. This spring, the city began phasing out another new school, Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications, which had a 2011 graduation rate of 30.9 percent, among the lowest in the city. The school, opened in 2002, got off to a promising start, with good attendance levels and acceptances to prestigious colleges, principal Nasib Hoxha, told the *New York Times*. Over the years, though, it had an increasing number of English language learners, and graduation slumped, causing enrollment to decline. As with Aerospace, the unusual aspects of the school program also fell in disrepair: "Money for a college scholarship ... dried up. A ball field that a Mets official helped pay for fell into disrepair. Computers sat untouched," the *Times* reported.<sup>51</sup>

The other schools at Taft have had problems as well. At Bronx High School of Business many students arrive with poor skills, only half the students graduate in four years, and teachers say discipline is a problem. Bronx Collegiate Academy also struggles with poor attendance and poorly prepared students. In 2011, DreamYard Prep, with an arts focus, graduated only 8 percent of its student ready to do college work. Meanwhile, another school, Claremont International High School, which is for new immigrants, opened at Taft in 2012, replacing the Academy for History and Citizenship.

**Seward Park High School:** This is by many accounts one of the more successful campuses in the city. In 2001, the Lower East Side School had a four-year graduation rate of 32 percent. The building now houses five schools. One, the High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies, which offers a Mandarin and English program, differs from many of the new small schools in that it screens its students. In 2012 it had a 92.5 percent four-year (including August) graduation rate. Seward Park also houses two arts oriented schools: New Design High School (79.1 percent graduation rate) and Lower Manhattan Arts Academy (80 percent). Essex Street Academy, which takes a progressive, informal approach to high school, had a 76.5 percent graduation rate, with Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law at 78.3 percent in 2012. The schools all benefit from shared facilities, including a skate park on the roof, although *Inside Schools* reports that course offerings at some of the schools are very limited.

**Lafayette High School:** The Bensonhurst school closed in 2010 after grappling with safety concerns and a graduation rate in the high 30s. In 2010, *Gotham School* ran a story citing a litany

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<sup>51</sup> Al Baker, "Born as a Tribute but Faltering, a Bronx School Nears Its End," *New York Times*, March 1, 2013.

of problems at the campus, including at some of its new schools -- lawsuits over the bullying of Asian students and alleged financial improprieties by a principal.<sup>52</sup>

The campus is now home to five small schools. Kingsborough Early College School, for grades 6 to 12, lets students take classes at Kingsborough Community College, enabling some to graduate with as many as two years of college credits. It attracts some fairly good students and has a high attendance rate. International High School is aimed at new immigrants. While its four-year graduation rate was 48.5 percent in 2012, 66.7 percent of students graduate in six years. The High School of Sports Management moved to Lafayette from another location in 2007. Although it had a graduation rate of 68.6 percent in 2012, discipline seems to be problem. Expeditionary School for Community Leaders features hands-on learning, trips and a campus kitchen. The graduation rate has been steadily improving and reached 56 percent in 2012. Life Academy High School for Film and Music had a 2011 graduation rate in the high 70s, but attendance is fairly low, and only 4 percent were considered college ready in 2011.

In looking at the patchwork of successful and struggling schools, one key issue is the school's partners and themes. Some schools have long-term commitments from dedicated partners who really work with the students. Outward Bound, for example has been a staunch partner with a number of city schools, including Bronx Guild, recently highlighted for being the only school in the Stevenson Campus in the Bronx to get an A on its Progress Reports. But others are not as involved. Goldman Sachs, for example, was supposed to offer internships to students at the Metropolitan Corporate Academy High School in downtown Brooklyn. For whatever reason, few students took internships, and the school now is being phased out.<sup>53</sup>

Many of the schools have themes. Students may opt for the school thinking it is going to let them take classes in the field or prepare for a certain career. Sometimes, particularly with CTE schools, their expectations are met. Students at the High School for Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture, a new, but not small, school in Queens, praise the school for providing them with a lot of hands-on work in those fields -- from designing models to actually building a house. At the New York Harbor School on Governor's Island, students build underwater robots, change boat gears and breed oysters. The program drew a visit -- and praise -- from U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

But other themes have little substance. Officials at a small Bronx school, Sports Professions High School, told *Inside Schools* "Because of our name we were getting a bunch of kids who wanted to play football and basketball, but we only offer lacrosse and handball." The school changed its name to Bronxwood Preparatory High School in 2008. For years the Secondary School for Journalism offered no journalism class for students after 9th grade, and Bronx Latin reportedly no longer teaches Latin. "It's tough to stick to the theme when you have all the standards to meet," Eugene Mazzola, principal of the Academy for Conservation and the Academy," told *Inside Schools*.

As was apparently the case with Jonathan Levin and Aerospace, maintaining a good school program is challenging for small schools as well as large ones. In its 2009 report, the Center for

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<sup>52</sup> Anna Phillip, "The Curse of Lafayette High School? A Brief History of Scandal," *Inside Schools*, Aug. 17, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> *Inside Schools*, writeup of Metropolitan Corporate Academy High School, September 2012 (<http://insideschools.org/high/browse/school/696>).

New York City Affairs said that key indicators at many small schools, such as graduation rates and attendance, flagged after the first year or two and that teacher turnover was a problem.<sup>54</sup>

### **Remaking the System: School Choice**

The element of school choice is a key part of the city's high school strategy. Not only does choice free students from having to attend their neighborhood school, regardless of its quality or focus, but it also provides incentives for schools to take steps to improve and attract students. Since funding is tied to enrollment, more students mean more money. On the other hand, schools that lack applicants can see their enrollments drop, the quality of their students decline and face eventual closure.

Each fall, 8th graders across the city choose what school they would like to attend the following September. This amounts to some 80,000 12, 13 and 14-year-olds (for the most part) selecting from about 700 programs in 400 schools.<sup>55</sup> Students must fill out a high school application, listing up to 12 schools in order of preference. The goal is to have as many students as possible matched with a school high on their list. For all schools other than the nine specialized high schools (see below) the city ranks the applicants to each school without taking into consideration how the student ranked the school. A computer then matches the rankings and places the student accordingly. The system is similar to that used to place medical residents in hospitals.<sup>56</sup>

Students are normally notified of the results in late February; in 2013, the city extended the high school application process by one week in December due to Hurricane Sandy and, as a result, it also notified students of their choices on March 15 this year.

While all students are guaranteed a place somewhere, only those who live in an area that still has a zoned high school are guaranteed admission to any particular high school -- and even they must apply to lock in their slot. The Department of Education lets schools use a variety of methods for selecting students, although many principals say the final decision on these matters rests with DOE. Some screen or select students using a test, middle school records, an audition or some combination of those. Others are considered unselective: These schools may choose students completely at random, or they may give preference to students from their borough or to those who attend an information or high school students. Some zoned schools admit all applicants in their designated geographic area or zone. Still others use the so-called Educational Option method, which is designed to ensure a high school has students with a range of abilities -- 16 percent of those admitted must have high reading level, 68 percent middle reading level and 16 percent below reading level. Since 2005, the city has increased the number of the so-called limited unscreened schools while decreasing the percentage of educational option schools.<sup>57</sup>

Some 75,690 eight graders applied to be admitted to a New York City public high schools in September 2013. Of those, 84 percent were matched with one of their top five choices, with 47 percent getting their top pick. In 2012, 80 percent of students were accepted at one of their top five choices. About 9 percent -- 7,225 students -- did not receive a match in Round 1, about the

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<sup>54</sup> Hemphill and Nauer, *Op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> Nathanson et al, *Op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Liz Robbins, "Lost in the School Choice Maze," *New York Times*, May 6, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Nathanson et al, *Op. cit.*

same percentage as last year. These students then enter a second round where they can choose among other, often less desirable, schools that still have vacancies as well as the new schools the city announced that spring.

Aside from the specialized schools, for the third year in a row, the most popular high school in terms of applicants is Baruch College Campus High School in Manhattan, which received almost 7,500 applicants for about 104 seats. It was followed by Pace High School, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Townsend Harris High School and Beacon High School.

Privately, principals often complain that they do not have as much control over the selection of their students as they would like and that the system lacks transparency. In 2012, for example, DOE, without any public notification, began placing some students in selective high schools who had not met the usual criteria for admission to those schools. The policy, which the department expanded this year, assigns some general and special education students to selective schools that have not admitted enough students under the usual procedures. Previously, screened schools with empty seats had been allowed to fill them themselves, choosing children who met the entrance requirements by auditioning or through some measure of academic achievement.

Reporters caught on to the policy as the city expanded it this year. The *New York Post* found that the department assigned 1,300 students to enter 71 audition and academically selective schools for the 2013-14 academic year. This includes 51 students assigned to Frank Sinatra School of the Arts who had poor auditions or no auditions and 43 students assigned to Talent Unlimited High School, who did not audition at all.<sup>58</sup>

The department has said a large part of the reason for these assignments is the apparent reluctance of some selective high schools to admit students with special needs (see Special Education). However, a majority of students placed under this system are not special education students.<sup>59</sup> Department of Education officials also have said the new policy expands access to high-quality programs. Critics have countered that any student can apply to these schools through the usual channels and that admitting students who did not go through the sometimes rigorous admissions process for these schools could affect the quality of programs and is unfair to students who met the requirements.

In addition, in spring 2013, City Comptroller John Liu released an audit finding that some students were admitted to selective city high schools even though they did not meet the purported criteria for those schools -- and even though the schools had many more applicants than they had seats. These decisions were apparently made at the school level and were no part of any over-arching policy move. "Our audit confirmed what many frustrated parents and students have long suspected: the city's high-school placement process is often unfair and deeply flawed," Liu said. "Applying to high school is an important and stressful enough experience for students and parents, and it must not be left to a sloppy and random system."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Yoav Gonen, "'Free Pass' Furor at City's Top Schools," *New York Post*, April 24, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Lindsey Christ, "Selective High Schools Forced to Accept Some Students Who Bypass Admissions Process," NY1, April 25, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller, "Liu: High School Student Selection Often Unfair and Arbitrary," June 13, 2013. ([http://comptroller.nyc.gov/press/2013\\_releases/pr13-06-086.shtm](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/press/2013_releases/pr13-06-086.shtm))



The audit looked at five selective high schools -- one in each borough. While many eligible students were not ranked, the first step toward being considered for admission to one of the schools, about 8 percent of the students who were ranked for consideration did not meet the schools' standards. Liu also found that the schools did not keep adequate records documenting their admissions decisions, that DOE did not require them to have their admission procedures in writing and that the department did not adequately oversee the process. While DOE defended its admission process and accused the audit of being one-sided, it said it would take steps to address some of the concerns by increasing oversight, auditing a sample of schools and intervening when schools don't conform to their admissions criteria.<sup>61</sup>

The high school choice process can be taxing for parents and students, with many beginning their hunt when the student is in 7th grade. An array of fairs and open houses fill much of the fall and can be hard for single parent or parents who work long hours to attend. While parents and student gripe about the stress of applying to high school and many principals complain about the way students have been assigned to them, the Brookings Institution gave New York's choice system for all education levels a B plus -- the highest grade given any school district in the country. Brookings ranked the systems on such factors as the amount of choice, the selection process, funding and availability of transportation.<sup>62</sup>

Despite all the effort that goes into choice, a study found that many students end up attending schools that are not all that different from their middle schools, which are more likely to be in their neighborhoods.<sup>63</sup> The co-author of the study, Henry Levin, conceded the system did not level the playing field. Information is key to the process and, he has said, "The upper-middle-class families have more of it; they can look at mavens who have gone through the process and can tell others how to game the system."

A more recent student found that low-performing middle school students were as likely to be matched with their first choice high school as other students -- about 53 percent of the 8th graders are admitted to their top choice. The low-achieving students, though, were less like to select a school with an A on its progress report than higher achieving students (28.8 percent of the low achievers compared to 39.3 for all other students). Almost 9 percent of low-achievers chose a school that had a D or an F, while only 3.6 percent of other 8th graders did. Geography plays a big role in this. Students and their families tend to prefer schools near their homes, and low-performing students are more likely to live in areas with poorly performing schools. As a result, the report concluded, "Low-achieving students were matched to schools that were lower performing, on average, than those of all other students."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Philissa Cramer, "City to Monitor Selective Schools' Student Choices After Liu Audit," *Gotham Schools*, June 13, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst with Sarah Whitfield, *The Education Choice and Competition Index: Background and Results 2012*, The Brown Center in Education Policy at Brookings, December 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Sean Corcoran and Henry Levin, *School Choice and Competition in New York City Schools*, NYC Education Reform Retrospective, Nov. 10, 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Lori Nathanson, Sean Corcoran and Christine Baker-Smith, *High School Choice in New York City: A Report on the School Choices and Placements of Low-Achieving Students*, the Research Alliance for New York City Schools, April 2013.

One problem is that there are not enough seats in desirable schools for all the students who want them. "The big gap is in good schools for the average student," Clara Hemphill, founder of *Inside Schools*, has said.

### **Specialized High School Admissions**

In March, 5,229 students were accepted to attend one of the city's nine Specialized High Schools in September. The Specialized High Schools that admit students based solely on the results of the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test are: Bronx High School of Science; Brooklyn Latin School; Brooklyn Technical High School; High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at the City College; High School of American Studies at Lehman College; Queens High School for the Sciences at York College; Staten Island Technical High School; and Stuyvesant High School. Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts also is classified as a Specialized High School, but students are admitted on the basis of an audition and their academic record.

Of the students accepted for 2013-14, 618 are black or Hispanic, compared to 733 in 2012. Only 12 percent of admissions to the test schools went to blacks and Hispanics. And while 35 percent of Asians and 30 percent of whites who took the test got admitted to one of the schools, only 7 percent of Hispanics and 4 percent of blacks were admitted. Fewer blacks and Hispanics took the test this year than last.<sup>65</sup>

This year's numbers followed a slight increase in the number of blacks and Hispanics admitted for 2012. Last year's admissions were viewed as an indication that the city's new test prep program for lower income students -- the DREAM Specialized High School Institute -- might have been helping more black and Hispanics get into the selective schools. Students who participated were more likely to be admitted to a specialized high school than other students not in the program. The city expanded the DREAM program to 20 locations, serving 2,600 students.

Although the system does not explicitly consider the student's middle school, 15 percent of the middle schools accounted for 85 percent of offers. Students in poverty account for half of those taking the test but only 35 percent of admissions. However Stanley Ng, a member of the Citywide Council on High Schools, notes some low-income students are admitted, and that the number of Title 1 (low-income) students has increased 29 percent to 51 percent at Brooklyn Tech and from 18 percent at Stuyvesant to 30 percent. "The low income kids are getting in," he told *School Book*.

This year's results came amid criticism by some civil rights advocates of using the test as the sole means of determining who gets into the schools. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund has filed a complaint with the federal Office of Civil Rights, challenging relying solely on the test. It notes that selective colleges and other selective high schools do not base all admissions on a single test and that many education experts say no important decision should ever ride on a single score. Such a system, critics charge, favors students who prepare for the test. "It's the test prep that helps them get in not what they're learning in school," Damon Hewitt, director of education

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<sup>65</sup> Philissa Cramer, "Fewer Black and Hispanic Students Admitted to Top High Schools," *Gotham Schools*, March 15, 2013.

practice at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, has said. "The test isn't even proven to be related or aligned to the curriculum the kids are supposed to be learning in middle school." <sup>66</sup>

The rules for admission to the specialized school were established by the state. State Assemblymember Karim Camara of Brooklyn has proposed legislation that would expand the criteria to include other measures, such as grades and recommendations. The city Department of Education, though, has defended the Specialized High School Admissions Test. <sup>67</sup>

## Progress Reports

In November 2012, DOE released its Progress Reports for 495 high schools, transfer schools and young adult borough centers. For the first time, this year's reports take into account the number of students who take advanced courses and how they perform in those courses, as well as the college readiness rate and how many students enroll in college after graduation. Those measures were reported in 2011-12 but did not figure into a school's letter grade that year.

Despite predictions that this could cause school grades to drop overall, they did not. The department called the grades "generally stable," while noting that 7 percent more high schools earned A's and B's and 4 percent fewer schools received D's and F's compared to last year. The average score increased by 1.8 points.

The value of the progress reports continues to be debated. A report <sup>68</sup> by New Visions has found that schools with more black, Hispanic and special education students are likely to get lower scores than those with fewer of those students. Despite that, the report said the progress reports represent "an important step toward an accountability system." An Independent Budget Office report released in 2012 found that, while flawed, the reports represent a significant improvement over simply using student test scores to evaluate schools.

## Test Scores

The key test for New York City high schools are the statewide Regents exams, given in a range of subjects in January and at the end of the school year. To graduate, students must get a score of at least 65 in a minimum of five tests in different subjects, including English, math, history and science. An analysis of 2009 scores by the *Wall Street Journal* found that many students who passed did so just barely. For example, more than five times as many students got a 65 on the exam -- so passed it -- than got a 64, which would have meant failing. "In the U.S. History and Government Regents, students were 14 times more likely to get a 65 than one point lower," the paper reported. <sup>69</sup> In addition, the farther along students were in their high school careers -- and the closer they were to needing a particular test to graduate -- the more likely they were to receive a 65 score,

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<sup>66</sup> Beth Fertig, "Debate of Single-Test Admissions Policy Divides on Access and Race," *School Book*, March 13, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Philissa Cramer, "Fewer Black and Hispanic Students Admitted to Top Schools," *Gotham Schools*, March 15, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Sean Corcoran and Grace Pai, *Unlocking New York City's High School Progress Report*, New Visions for Public Schools, March 28, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Martinez and Tim McGinty, "Students' Regents Test Scores Bulge at 65," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 2, 2011.

A few months after these findings were announced, the State Department of Education said that teachers would no longer be able to change scores on the Regents. Previously, teachers were supposed to rescore essay questions when a student came within 5 points of passing, apparently leading some to boost students over the passing line.<sup>70</sup>

In October 2011, the state moved to bar teachers from grading their own students' exams. Although the policy was not set to go into effect until June 2013, the city began phasing it in in January 2012, expanding it to 160 schools in June. Some teachers did grade their schools' students on the global history Regents, however, because not enough teachers signed up to grade the exams.<sup>71</sup> The city also launched a pilot program to evaluate the efficacy of grading exams online.<sup>72</sup>

Whether or not it was in response to the change, the number of students scoring 65 dropped sharply from 2010 to 2012. In 2010, 7 percent of all Regents exams taken in the city got the lowest possible passing grade of 65; two years later, that had dropped to 3 percent. City education department officials have said they expect the number of 65s to decline further this year when the policy barring teachers from grading students in their school goes fully into effect.<sup>73</sup>

An analysis found that scores in the five basic Regents tests fell more sharply at the 150 schools that were not able to grade their own students' exams than in city high schools as a whole. For example, on the Living Environment test, schools whose exams were centrally scored saw their scores drop an average of 6.7 percentage points; self-grading schools recorded a decline of only 2 percentage points. In addition, all five schools with the biggest drops had their exams graded centrally. City officials, though, said that some of the decline could be because a disproportionate percentage of schools using the centralized scoring system had high rates of lower income students.<sup>74</sup>

About three quarters of students taking the English Regents passed it with a 65 or higher in 2011-12, with a substantially lower percentage passing a math Regents. Results vary widely, from group to group. While 90 percent of white, non-Hispanic females passed the English, only 66 percent of black males did. In math, 83 percent of Asians passed compared to 51 percent of blacks. Not surprisingly, English language learners lagged on the English exams, with 46 percent passing and only 17 percent passing with a "college ready" score of 75 or above.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Barbara Martinez, "No More Second Chances for Regents," *Wall Street Journal*, May 26, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Philissa Cramer, "Efforts to Curb Regents Exam Score Inflation Hit a Road Bump," *Gotham Schools*, Jan.9, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Grace Tatter, "Teachers Give New Regents Exam Scoring System Mixed Reviews," *Gotham Schools*, July 11, 2012.

<sup>73</sup> Philissa Cramer, "Rate of Just-Passing Regents Scores Has Dropped by Half," *Gotham Schools*, Oct. 25, 2012.

<sup>74</sup> Yoav Gonen, "High Schools that Didn't Grade Their Own Regents Exams Last Year Fared Worse Than Those That Did," *New York Post*, June 8, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Independent Budget Office, *Op. cit.*

Following the pilot program in 2012, the city decided that in June 2013 it would grade the four most common Regents exams -- Living Environment, Global Studies, U.S. History and English -- using an electronic system administered by McGraw Hill. Teachers still grade individual questions but the exams are scanned for grading at a site in Connecticut with questions then transmitted to teachers at grading stations in the city. This June, the system reportedly experienced a number of problems, resulting in a delay in test scores. The glitches meant that some students needing one or more of their test scores to get their diplomas would not know if they were graduating or not. Teachers also expressed concern that the system mistakenly blocked out some answers or penalized students for writing an essay in the wrong place in the booklet and so could result in more students flunking the test.<sup>76</sup>

More New York City high school students took Advanced Placement tests in 2012, according to figures released by the city, but scores remained relatively constant. Despite the increasing participation, which often tends to bring down scores, the percentage of students passing the exams, which can enable them to get college credit, increased. The number of students taking at least one AP exam increased by 9 percent to 32,471 from 2011 to 2012, and the number of those passing at least one test -- a grade of 3, 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 -- rose by 12.7 percent.

The number of students taking the SAT increased as well, with 2.3 percent more student taking the college admissions tests in 2012 than in 2011. The average local score remained relatively flat, falling 2 points out of 2,400, less than the four-point decline nationally. Despite that, city students score well below the national average with an average total score of 1,325, while the national average is 1,477.<sup>77</sup>

## Special Education

Overall, about 16 percent of all city high school students in 2011-12 are special education students.<sup>78</sup> Graduation rates for students with disabilities continue to lag behind those for other students. For the class of 2012, 30.5 percent of students with special needs graduated in four years (in June or August). Of those graduating, 48.7 percent got Regents diplomas. This compared with a 71.4 percent graduation rate for students without disabilities, 98.9 percent of whom got Regents diplomas. Students with disabilities were twice as likely to drop out as students without disabilities -- 19.8 percent versus 9.9 percent.<sup>79</sup>

Students with disabilities also score lower on Regents exams than other students. In 2011-12, 43 percent of special education students passed the English Regents, compared to 79 percent of general education students. For math, the pass rates were 30 percent and 65 percent respectively.

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<sup>76</sup> Philissa Cramer, "Serious Glitches with Electronic Grading Delay Regents Scores," *Gotham Schools*, June 18, 2013.

<sup>77</sup> New York City Department of Education, Chancellor Walcott Announces New York City Students Make Gains in Advanced Placement and Increased Participations in SATs," Sept. 25, 2012. ([http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2012-2013/NYC\\_Students\\_Gain.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2012-2013/NYC_Students_Gain.htm)).

<sup>78</sup> New York City Independent Budget Office, *New York City Public School Indicators: Demographics, Resources, Outcomes*, May 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Figures from the New York City Department of Education ([http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F97C84CD-40C7-4DB0-92F8-5EF749BDE757/0/Graduation\\_Rates\\_Public\\_Citywide.xlsx](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F97C84CD-40C7-4DB0-92F8-5EF749BDE757/0/Graduation_Rates_Public_Citywide.xlsx)).

Particularly striking is the relatively low numbers of special education students who scored 75 or above on the Regents, the threshold for college readiness. Only 17 percent of special education students met this standard in English and only 4 percent in math.<sup>80</sup>

The city's chief academic officer, Deputy Chancellor Shael Polakow-Suransky, testified before the City Council in June 2012 that an entire academic career in self-contained classes can be "an academic death-sentence." Only about 5 percent of student in self-contained special education classes from second grade through high school receive a diploma.<sup>81</sup>

In an effort to improve outcomes and bring New York's policy more into line with that in much of the rest of the country, the city in September 2012 began implementing a Special Education reform policy aimed at having all schools provide special education services and implement teaching in the least restrictive environment so that special education students can attend classes and other activities alongside all other students. While many advocates have applauded the plan in principle, they worry that the city did not adequately prepare for it. The city had tested the program at 260 pilot schools.

Experts expect it will result in fewer self-contained special education classes, and more team-teaching classes, which have two teachers and a mix of special education and general education students. Many high schools already offer such classes.

The range of services -- and of inclusion of special education students -- varies widely from school to school. While about 16 percent of high school students overall have special needs, only 1 percent of students at Brooklyn Tech and Bard Early College High School do. According to an analysis by the Daily News in 2011, 11 of the city's 103 screened high schools had fewer than three students with special needs, and less than half the schools had as many as neighboring schools that do not screen applicants. A number of selective schools, though, do have substantial numbers of special needs students.

As of September 2012, the city's screened high school were supposed to admit as many special needs students as nearby, less selective schools. Twenty-seven of the schools received a waiver for a year and were then to comply during the 2013 admissions process. Some apparently did not. In response, the city assigned about 300 special education students to selective schools, even though they may not have met the criteria for the schools of, in the case of arts schools, auditioned. (The nine specialized high schools, also very selective, are exempt under state law, since they are mandated to admit students solely on the basis of a test.)

Some of the schools have expressed qualms about the policy. "We don't want to take in students who we don't think will flourish here. We want to make sure we don't have them drowning here," Olga Carmona, admissions director of Bard High School Early College in Queens has said. "It's not that we don't want special education students. We want students who will do well here."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Independent Budget Office, *Op. cit.*

<sup>81</sup> Kyle Spencer, "City Urged to Slow Down on Special Ed Plans," *School Book*, June 12, 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Anna Schneider, "Selective Schools Forced to Take Special Ed Kids," *Inside Schools*, April 23, 2013.

## Career Education

In March 2012, the city announced it was creating seven new Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools. At the same time, several long-established CTE high schools, including Samuel Gompers, Jane Addams and Grace Dodge, have been closed in the last year or two. Some of the new schools are seen as replacements for those programs. Overall, though, the administration has strongly endorsed expansion of CTE education. The mayor called for it in his 2008 State of the City speech and soon after formed a task force to strengthen career and technical education in the city.<sup>83</sup>

Despite such efforts and new programs, critics say CTE still is a kind of stepchild in the city schools. In a 2012 report, city Public Advocate Bill de Blasio faulted the city's CTE schools for poor performance. He also said too many programs are in fields, such as the arts, with poor employment prospects and faulted the city for not tracking the academic performance of students in specific programs or their success at finding jobs.<sup>84</sup>

According to the Department of Education, New York City currently has about 420 CTE programs in 140 schools. This includes 38 designated Career and Technical Education schools with a total of about 26,000 students as well as other schools that have a CTE offering as one or more of their programs. About 140,000 students enroll in at least one CTE class every year. Of the programs, only about 110 have received the necessary approval from the state.

The programs -- both those approved by the state and those under development -- encompass a wide range of areas including several construction and computer fields, hospitality management, health careers, finance and even agriculture. DOE has said it seeks to launch new schools that "align with labor market trends, preparing students for careers in growth fields such as information technology, culinary arts, green careers, advertising and media."

Traditionally a CTE program was designed to enable a student to find a job directly after high school or to help them gain entrance to a union apprenticeship program. Some programs such as the one at Transit Tech still do that, but newer CTE programs see students taking a variety of paths. Many, such as the architecture program at the High School of Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture, are geared to students going on to college. At Bayside High School the sports medicine program anticipates that students completing it might want to work as trainers while they pursue more advanced health studies in college. And the CTE programs also include the three 14-year schools, run in partnership with CUNY, preparing students for a trade while enabling them to earn an Associate's degree.

These new schools have gone through the same process as other new high schools in the city. In addition, for a new CTE school or program to be approved, the department says, the applicants also must show that the school meets a projected employer demand; that industry and other postsecondary partner have made a commitment to support the program; and the program is likely to be approved by the state education department, which has final say.

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<sup>83</sup> Mayoral Task Force on Career and Technical Education Innovation, "Next-Generation Career and Technical Education in New York City," New York City government, July 2008.

<sup>84</sup> Bill de Blasio, *Path to the Future: Strengthening Career and Technical Education to Prepare Today's Students for the Jobs of Tomorrow*, Office of the Public Advocate, January 2012.

Students getting CTE certification are required to take and pass the Regents classes required of other students. They must also take a sequence of courses in their career field. To receive a CTE designation on their diploma, they must also pass an industry-recognized assessment indicating they have met standards for employment in the specific field.

## **Discipline**

In the first four months of the 2012-13 school year, suspensions of students in city schools declined by more than a third from the comparable period in 2011-2013. The system handed out 16,068 suspensions from September through December 2012. While the figure could be somewhat deceptive -- it includes the period when schools were shut because of Hurricane Sandy -- it also reflects effort to reduce suspensions, which disrupt a students' education, and efforts to use alternatives, such student-teacher conferences, to address minor infractions.

In the 2011-2012 school year, schools gave out 69,643 suspensions, down from 73,441 in 2010-2011. This reverses a trend of rising suspensions but was still 40 percent higher than the number in the 2005-06 school year. Susan E. Wagner High School topped the list, handing out 700 suspensions.<sup>85</sup>

Advocates have continued to press for changes in the discipline code to reduce the number of suspensions, particularly for what they view as minor infractions. In 2012, DOE revised the code, removing suspension as the punishment for offenses such as lateness, being absent without an excuse, talking back or having a banned electronic device.<sup>86</sup> Some advocates, such as the Dignity in Schools Campaign, had hoped for major changes this year, such as following Los Angeles' example and banning suspensions for most nonviolent actions. Instead, the DOE has put forth more modest proposals, many of which revolve around suspension for special education students.<sup>87</sup> Between 1999-2000 and 2008-09 special education students accounted for about a third of all suspensions, even though they make up about 16.2 percent of student enrollment.<sup>88</sup>

## **Charter Schools**

After years of focusing on elementary schools, charter school operators are increasingly looking to the upper grades. Some of this arises from the creation of freestanding charter high schools, but much of it is occurring as networks that operate elementary and middle schools now seek to provide a full k-to-12 education. Achievement First opened a second high school in Brooklyn in September 2013, and Success Academy will open its first high school in 2014.

The city currently has 159 charter schools, including 16 charter high schools, thirteen K-12 schools, and eleven 6-12 schools. September 2013 will see the opening of two K-12, one 6-12 and three charter high schools.

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<sup>85</sup> Rachel Cromidas, "Suspension Rates Continue to Raise Concerns Even as They Drop," *Gotham Schools*, Nov. 16, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Al Baker, New Code Aims to Ease Suspensions of Students, *New York Times*, Aug. 28, 2012.

<sup>87</sup> Emma Sokoloff-Robin, "Advocates Say Draft Discipline Code is a Letdown After Last Year," *Gotham Schools*, May 24, 2013.

<sup>88</sup> Fernanda Santos, "Sharp Rise in Suspensions at City's Schools s Cited," *New York Times*, Jan 27, 2011.



The state's method of chartering schools can create confusion about how to count charter high schools. In many cases, a charter operator, such as Success Academy or Achievement First, simply asks the state to authorize additional grades for the charter it received for an elementary school even if the high school will operate in a separate building. Further complicating the picture, sometimes students from two or more different charters attend high school with one another in the same building which bears its own name. So, for example, Achievement First has a charter for Achievement First Endeavor and Achievement First Crown Height. Students from both go on to Achievement First Brooklyn High School but no separate charter exists for that school.

By any measure the number of high school students attending charters is likely to grow in the coming years. The first group of Success Academy students will enter high school in 2014, and DOE has already allocated space for some Success Academy grades 9 through 12. Achievement First and Success are among the charters that see themselves as offering a seamless K-12 education. Currently, the schools do not plan on opening high school admissions to students who have not attend the networks' schools prior to 9th grade.

It's relatively difficult to find data on the charter high schools since most have not been around long enough to have progress reports or graduation rates. While 24 charter high schools operated in the five boroughs during the 2011-12 school year, only 10 had had a graduating class and so qualified for a Progress Report last fall. Of the nine reporting (one school did not have its numbers because of Hurricane Sandy), four got an A, three a B, one a C and one a D.<sup>89</sup>

"At the few charter high schools that have existed long enough to graduate students, rates of college readiness and college enrollment lag those of district high schools," a report by the New York City Charter School Center<sup>90</sup> found. However, the center says, trends in Regents completion suggest that high school outcomes will improve as a larger and more representative number of these schools start to graduate students. In 2010-11, 74.9 percent of charter school student graduated in four years but only 10.2 percent were considered college ready. Charter school student had higher attendance rates than student in district schools, 92.2 percent as opposed to 86.4 percent.

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<sup>89</sup> New York City Charter School Center, " More Progress Reports: 4 A's, 3 B's, 1 C and 1 D for Charter High Schools," Nov. 27, 2012 (<http://www.nyccharterschools.org/blog/more-progress-reports-4-3-bs-1-c-and-1-d-charter-high-schools>)

<sup>90</sup> --, *The State of the NYC Charter Schools Sector*, New York City Charter School Sector, 2012

## THE NEW HIGH SCHOOLS

This includes schools that have some high school grades, such as 6 to 12 schools.

<b>OPENED IN 2001-2002</b>	
Bard Early College HS	Manhattan
Fordham HS for the Arts	Bronx
Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology	Bronx
HS for Math Science and Engineering at City College	Manhattan
HS of American Studies at Lehman College	Bronx
Queens HS for the Sciences at York College	Queens
Secondary School for Research, Journalism and Law	Brooklyn
<b>OPENED IN 2002-2003</b>	
Belmont Preparatory HS	Bronx
Bronx Guild	Bronx
Bronx HS for the Visual Arts	Bronx
Bronx International HS	Bronx
Bronx Leadership Academy II	Bronx
Community Prep HS	Manhattan
Frederick Douglass Academy IV Secondary School	Brooklyn
HS of Arts and Technology	Manhattan
HS for Law, Advocacy and Community Justice	Manhattan
HS for Teaching and the Professions	Bronx
Jonathan Levin HS for Media and Communications*	Bronx
Marble Hill School for International Studies	Bronx
Millennium High School	Manhattan
Mott Haven Village Preparatory HS	Bronx
Queens HS for Science at York College	Queens
School for Excellence	Bronx
South Brooklyn Community HS	Brooklyn
<b>OPENED IN 2003-2004</b>	
Academy of Urban Planning	Brooklyn
All City Leadership Secondary School	Brooklyn
Bedford Academy	Brooklyn
Bronx Academy HS*	Bronx
Bronx Aerospace Academy	Bronx
Bronx Theatre HS	Bronx
Brooklyn Academy for Science and the Environment	Brooklyn

Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre	Brooklyn
Bushwick Leaders HS for Academic Excellent	Brooklyn
Bushwick School for Social Justice	Brooklyn
Celia Cruz Bronx HS of Music	Bronx
Discovery HS	Bronx
Global Enterprise Academy*	Bronx
HS for Contemporary Arts	Bronx
HS for Public Service: Heroes of Tomorrow	Brooklyn
HS for Violin and Dance	Bronx
Manhattan Bridges HS	Manhattan
Manhattan/Hunter Science HS	Manhattan
New Design HS	Manhattan
New Explorers HS	Bronx
International Arts Business School	Brooklyn
New York Harbor School	Manhattan
Pelham Preparatory Academy	Bronx
School for Community Research and Learning*	Bronx
Science Tech and Research at Erasmus	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters	Bronx
Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports	Bronx
<b>OPENED IN 2004-2005</b>	
Astor Collegiate HS	Bronx
Bronx Academy of Health Careers	Bronx
Bronx Engineering and Technology Academy	Bronx
Bronx Health Sciences High School	Bronx
Bronx HS of Performance and Stagecraft*	Bronx
Bronx HS for Writing and Communication Arts	Bronx
Bronx Lab School	Bronx
Bronx Latin	Bronx
Bronx School of Expeditionary Learning**	Bronx
Bronx School of Law and Finance	Bronx
Brooklyn Collegiate: A College Board School	Brooklyn
Brooklyn Preparatory HS	Brooklyn
Brownsville Diploma Plus HS	Brooklyn
Bushwick Community HS	Brooklyn
Collegiate Institute for Math and Science	Bronx
Crotona Academy HS	Bronx
Eagle Academy for Young Men	Bronx
East Bronx Academy for the Future	Bronx
Essex Street Academy	Manhattan
Excelsior Preparatory HS	Queens
FDNY HS for Fire and Life Safety	Brooklyn
Flushing International HS	Queens

Food and Finance HS	Manhattan
Frederick Douglass Academy II Secondary School	Manhattan
Frederick Douglass Academy III Secondary School	Bronx
Frederick Douglass	Queens
Frederick Douglass Academy VII HS	Brooklyn
Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology *	Bronx
Harlem Renaissance High School	Manhattan
Henry Street School for International Studies	Manhattan
HS for Civil Rights	Brooklyn
HS of Computers and Technology	Bronx
HS for Global Citizenship	Brooklyn
HS of Hospitality Management	Manhattan
HS for Youth and Community Development at Erasmus	Brooklyn
International HS at Prospect Heights	Brooklyn
Manhattan Theatre Lab HS*	Manhattan
Marie Curie HS. for Nursing, Medicine and Allied Health Professions	Bronx
Millennium Art Academy	Bronx
Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies	Bronx
Mott Hall HS	Bronx
Mott Hall IV	Brooklyn
Opportunity Charter School	Manhattan
Pace HS	Manhattan
Pablo Neruda Academy for Architecture and World Study	Bronx
Peace and Diversity Academy	Bronx
Performing Arts and Technology HS	Brooklyn
PULSE High School	Bronx
Renaissance HS for Musical Theater and Technology	Bronx
School for Democracy and Leadership	Brooklyn
School for Human Rights	Brooklyn
South Bronx Preparatory: A College Board School	Manhattan
Urban Assembly Academy for History and Citizenship for Young Men*	Bronx
Urban Assembly Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists	Bronx
Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science	Bronx
Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction	Manhattan
Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly School for Media Studies	Manhattan
WATCH HS	Brooklyn
West Bronx Academy for the Future	Bronx
Williamsburg HS for Architecture and Design	Brooklyn
Williamsburg Preparatory School	Brooklyn
Williamsburg Charter HS	Brooklyn
Women's Academy of Excellence	Bronx
<b>OPENED IN 2005-2006</b>	

Academy of Business and Community Development*	Brooklyn
Academy of Finance and Enterprise	Queens
Academy for Scholarship and Entrepreneurship: A College Board School	Bronx
Bronx Ctr. For Science and Mathematics	Bronx
City College Academy of the Arts	Manhattan
CSI HS for International Studies	Staten Island
Eximius College Prep. Academy: A College Board School	Bronx
Explorations Academy	Bronx
Facing History School	Manhattan
Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public Policy	Bronx
Foundations Academy	Brooklyn
George Washington Carver High School for the Sciences	Queens
HS of Applied Communication	Queens
High School for the Arts, Imagination and Inquiry	Manhattan
High School of Sports Management	Brooklyn
International High School at Lafayette	Brooklyn
International School for Liberal Arts	Bronx
James Baldwin School: A School for Expeditionary Learning	Manhattan
Kingsbridge International HS	Bronx
Leadership Institute	Bronx
Lower Manhattan Arts Academy	Manhattan
Mott Hall V	Bronx
Mott Hall Bronx High School	Bronx
New Day Academy *	Bronx
New World HS	Bronx
Pathways College Preparatory School: A College Board School	Queens
Queens Preparatory Academy	Queens
Queens School of Inquiry	Queens
Rachel Carson HS for Coastal Studies	Brooklyn
Scholars Academy	Queens
Sports Profession HS (now Bronxwood Prep. HS)	Bronx
The Metropolitan HS	Bronx
Theater Arts Production Company School	Bronx
UFT Charter School	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law	Manhattan
Urban Assembly HS of Music and Art	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly School of Business for Young Women	Manhattan
Validus Prep. Academy: An Expeditionary Learning School	Bronx
Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School	Brooklyn
X723	Bronx
Young Women's Leadership School, Queens	Queens
<b>OPENED IN 2006-2007</b>	
Acad. for College Prep. and Career Development: A College Bd. School	Brooklyn

Academy for Environmental Leadership	Brooklyn
Academy for Hospitality and Tourism	Brooklyn
Academy of Young Writers	Brooklyn
Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching and Learning	Bronx
Brooklyn Community HS of Communication, Arts and Media	Bronx
Brooklyn Latin School	Brooklyn
Community Health Academy of the Heights	Manhattan
DreamYard Preparatory Academy	Bronx
East-West School of International Studies	Queens
Green School: An Academy for Environmental Careers	Brooklyn
HS for Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture	Queens
Holcombe L. Rucker School of Community Research	Bronx
Hyde Leadership Charter School	Bronx
International Community HS	Bronx
International Leadership Charter School	Bronx
Kingsborough Early College School	Brooklyn
New Heights Academy Charter School	Manhattan
Preparatory Academy for Writers: A College Board School	Queens
Urban Assembly Institute of Math and science for Young Women	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts	Manhattan
Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning	Manhattan
West Brooklyn Community HS School	Brooklyn
World Journalism Preparatory: A College Board School	Queens
York Early College Academy	Queens
Young Women's Leadership School, Astoria	Queens
<b>OPENED IN 2007-2008</b>	
Academy for Language and Technology	Bronx
Academy for Social Action: A College Board School	Manhattan
Antonia Pantoja Prep. Acad.: A College Board School	Bronx
Archimedes Acad. for Math, Science and Tech. Applications	Bronx
Arts and Media Preparatory Academy	Brooklyn
Brooklyn Bridge Academy	Brooklyn
Bronx Community HS	Bronx
Brooklyn Generation School	Brooklyn
Brooklyn Theatre Arts HS	Brooklyn
Columbia Secondary School	Manhattan
Expeditionary Learning School for Community Leaders	Brooklyn
Gotham Professional Arts Academy	Brooklyn
It Takes a Village Academy	Brooklyn
Jill Chaifetz Transfer HS	Bronx
Khalil Gibran International Academy	Brooklyn
Kings Collegiate Charter School	Brooklyn
KAPPA International HS	Bronx

Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School	Brooklyn
Liberation Diploma Plus	Brooklyn
Life Academy HS for Film and Music	Brooklyn
Lyons Community School	Brooklyn
Multicultural High School	Brooklyn
North Queens Community HS	Queens
Pan American International HS	Queens
Urban Assembly School for Criminal Justice	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation	Bronx
Victory Collegiate HS	Brooklyn
<b>OPENED IN 2008-2009</b>	
Academy for Careers in Television and Film	Queens
Academy for Conservation and the Environment	Brooklyn
Academy of Innovative Technology	Brooklyn
Academy of Medical Technology: A College Board School	Queens
Aspirations Diploma Plus HS	Brooklyn
Bard HS Early College II	Queens
Bronx Haven HS	Bronx
Brooklyn Democracy Academy	Brooklyn
Brooklyn HS for Leadership and Community Service	Brooklyn
Brooklyn Lab School	Brooklyn
Civic Leadership Academy	Queens
Cultural Academy for the Arts and Sciences	Brooklyn
Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School	Brooklyn
Eagle Academy for Young Men II	Brooklyn
English Language Learners and International Support Preparatory Acad.	Bronx
Esperanza Preparatory Academy	Manhattan
Francis Perkins Academy	Brooklyn
Gaynor McCown Expeditionary Learning School	Staten Island
Global Neighborhood Secondary School	Manhattan
Grammercy Arts High School	Manhattan
Green Dot New York Charter School	Bronx
NYC Charter HS for Architecture, Engineering and Construction Industries	Bronx
Promise Academy I HS	Manhattan
HS for Innovation in Advertising and Media	Brooklyn
HS for Medical Professions	Brooklyn
Metropolitan Diploma Plus High School	Brooklyn
NYC iSchool	Manhattan
Olympus Academy	Brooklyn
Queens Collegiate: A College Board School	Queens
Queens HS for Information, Research and Technology	Queens
Pan American International HS at Monroe	Bronx
Robert H. Goddard HS of Communication Arts and Technology	Queens

Urban Action Academy	Brooklyn
VOYAGES Prep	Queens
Young Women's Leadership School, of Brooklyn	Brooklyn
<b>OPENED IN 2009-2010</b>	
Achievement First Brooklyn High School	Brooklyn
Believe Northside Charter School	Brooklyn
Believe Southside Charter School*	Brooklyn
Bronx Career and College Preparatory HS	Bronx
Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance	Brooklyn
Brooklyn Prospect Charter	Brooklyn
Business of Sports School	Manhattan
pan American	Bronx
City Polytechnic HS of Engineering, Architecture and Technology	Brooklyn
Coney Island Preparatory Public Charter School	Brooklyn
Democracy Prep Charter High School	Manhattan
East Brooklyn Community HS	Brooklyn
Emma Lazarus HS	Manhattan
Ethical Community Charter School	Brooklyn
Global Learning Collaborative	Manhattan
HS for Excellence and Innovation	Manhattan
HS for Language and Diplomacy	Manhattan
Innovation Diploma Plus	Manhattan
Manhattan Business Academy	Manhattan
Quest to Learn	Manhattan
School for Classics: An Acad. Of Thinkers, Writers and Performers	Brooklyn
Special Music School	Manhattan
Sunset Park HS	Brooklyn
Uncommon Charter HS	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly School for Green Careers	Manhattan
Academy for Health Careers	Brooklyn
<b>OPENED IN 2010-2011</b>	
Arturo Schomburg Satellite Academy Bronx	Bronx
Bronx Bridges HS	Bronx
Cambria Heights Academy	Queens
Eagle Academy for Young Men III	Queens
Forsyth Satellite Academy	Manhattan
Frank McCourt HS	Manhattan
HS for Community Leadership	Queens
Hillside Arts and Letters Academy	Queens
Hudson HS of Learning Technologies	Manhattan
International HS at Union Square	Manhattan
KIPP NYC College Prep HS	Manhattan
Manhattan Academy for Arts & Language	Manhattan



Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School	Queens
Murray Hill Academy	Manhattan
Queens Metropolitan HS	Queens
Queens Satellite HS	Queens
Rockaway Park HS for Environmental Sustainability	Queens
<b>OPENED IN 2011-2012</b>	<b>OPENED</b>
Bronx Arena HS	Bronx
Bronx Envision Academy	Bronx
Bronxdale HS	Bronx
Bronx Design and Construction	Bronx
Brooklyn Frontiers HS	Brooklyn
Brooklyn School for Math and Research	Brooklyn
Crotona International HS	Bronx
GED Plus	Queens
High School for Language and Innovation	Bronx
Jamaica Gateway to the Sciences	Queens
Maspeth HS	Queens
Mott Hall V	Bronx
Millennium Brooklyn HS	Brooklyn
New Visions Charter HS for Advanced Math and Science	Bronx
New Visions Charter HS for the Humanities	Bronx
Pathways in Technology Early College HS (P-Tech)	Brooklyn
Renaissance Charter HS for Innovation	Manhattan
Rockaway Collegiate HS	Queens
Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology	Manhattan
<b>OPENED IN 2012-2013</b>	
Academy for Software Engineering	Manhattan
Bedford Stuyvesant Collegiate Charter School	Brooklyn
Bronx Compass HS	Bronx
Brooklyn Institute for Liberal Arts	Brooklyn
Claremont International HS	Bronx
Harvest Collegiate HS	Manhattan
HS for Energy and Technology	Bronx
Icahn Charter School 6	Bronx
Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School	Brooklyn
Mott Haven HS	Bronx
New Dawn Charter HS	Brooklyn
New Visions Charter HS for Advanced Math and Science II	Bronx
New Visions Charter HS for the Humanities II	Bronx
ROADS Charter HS I	Brooklyn
ROADS Charter HS II	Bronx
<b>OPENING IN 2013-2014</b>	
Achievement First Central Brooklyn Charter School	Brooklyn

Bronx Academy for Software Engineering	Bronx
Bronx Collaborative HS	Bronx
Bronx River HS	Bronx
Eagle Academy for Young Men of Harlem	Manhattan
Energy Tech HS	Queens
Great Oaks Charter School	Manhattan
Health, Education and Research Occupations HS	Bronx
Icahn Charter School 7	Bronx
Institute for Health Professions at Cambria Heights	Queens
International HS for Health Sciences	Queens
Math, Engineering and Science Academy Charter School	Brooklyn
New Directions Secondary School	Bronx
New Visions Charter HS for Advanced Math and Science III	Brooklyn
New Visions Charter HS for the Humanities III	Brooklyn
Origins HS	Brooklyn
Pelham Lab HS	Bronx
Professional Pathways HS	Brooklyn
Queens HS for Learning Studies	Queens
Research and Service HS	Brooklyn
Riverview School	Queens
Schuylerville Preparatory HS	Bronx
Stephen T. Mather Building Arts and Craftsmanship HS	Manhattan
Unity Prep Charter School	Brooklyn
Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management	Manhattan
Urban Assembly School for Global Commerce	Manhattan
Veritas Academy	Queens
VOYAGES Prep - South Queens	Queens
World View HS	Bronx
Based on information from the Independent Budget Office, the NYC Department of Education and Inside Schools	