

Community Education Council District 20

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D20 Resolution #5

In Support of Expanding Access to Gifted and Talented Education & Academically Rigorous Programs for High Performing Students of All Backgrounds Citywide and/or in District 20.

Sponsor: Yi Fang Chen

Co-sponsors: Mauricia Cadillo, Vito LaBella

WHEREAS, more than 80% of schools in District 20 have non-screened admissions.

WHEREAS, more than 2/3 of NYC children eligible for Gifted and Talented programs are denied access. There are only around 2,000 G&T seats for the 8,000 students who qualify from the 28,000 tested. The current capacity is based on the number of students entering in Kindergarten. Capacity in later grades is dependent on whether the original students stay in or leave the program. It does not provide seats for increased numbers of students who demonstrate high ability in later grades and does not have a formal consistent process to admit identified students after third grade.

WHEREAS, less than 50% of all students are at grade level.

WHEREAS, only 30-35% of Black and Hispanic students are at grade level.

WHEREAS, students in a rigorous academic program within screen schools or G&T programs do very well.

WHEREAS, mixed ability classes with grade level differences as much as 4 years have proven unsuccessful in improving outcomes for at risk children.

WHEREAS, decades of research and documented outcomes have demonstrated the benefits of supporting all students across the learning spectrum from those with learning disabilities and those with high learning abilities. High ability students also have their own unique needs that require support for them to reach their full potential.

WHEREAS, a student who has been identified as having the potential to achieve at a high level also has other learning or behavioral needs that need to be supported. Today, the DOE has either the IEP program or G&T program. Twice-exceptional students can currently only choose one or the other and are not adequately supported.

WHEREAS, ten New York City school districts that are predominantly black or Hispanic with a high proportion of low income families have only one G&T program or none at all. The Bronx has few such programs for a large number of students across the borough. Currently too many current G&T students must commute long distances, often out of their home boroughs, to attend a school with a G&T program. Parents need to be highly engaged to find out about the G&T program and understand the complex process of application, testing and program selection.

WHEREAS, from the 1970s to mid-1990s, there were honors and gifted programs in every elementary and middle school supporting high ability students regardless of their zip code or socio-economic background.

Parents didn't need to be engaged to learn about the existence of these programs or to sign up their children. This led to many low-income, minority and immigrant children having high quality rigorous education in their local communities and contributed to future academic, career and economic success. This included thousands of black and Hispanic students enrolling in the Specialized High Schools annually for over 20 years. When NYC started to close down most of these academic programs in the mid-90s, culminating in today's incarnation of the G&T program, the numbers of black and Hispanic students at these rigorous academic institutions have steadily declined to the abysmal level that currently exists.

WHEREAS, there are state and city lawmakers who recognize the need for universal screening and expanding G&T programs to all school districts and have introduced or sponsored bills to provide increased opportunities and support to all our students (e.g. Assembly Bill A2240, Assembly Bill A4818, City Council Resolution #417A).

WHEREAS, increasing numbers of school districts across our country have implemented universal screening programs to assure that all children are given the opportunity to receive the support they need and deserve.

WHEREAS, in light of the recent protests here in NYC and across the country, when looking for ways to bring people together and bridge the chasm that divide us as a society, we implore you to consider ensuring that all children have access to a high quality, challenging, academically rigorous education, which has a long track history of success.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED AND DECREED that the District 20 Community Education Council calls upon the Chancellor and Mayor to make significant and urgent improvements in the New York City Department of Education Gifted & Talented program in the areas of access, identification, capacity, enrollment, curriculum and multi-exceptional.

District 20 Community Education Council calls upon our state and city lawmakers to pass and for the Governor and Mayor to sign respective legislation that will screen all school children for high ability and expand G&T programs to all schools or districts.

District 20 Community Education Council calls upon DOE to expand programs supporting students who have demonstrated an ability to perform at a high level. The DOE needs to market and promote its program with high intensity. It must change the program's design to make it easy for busy parents to enroll their children into the program.

District 20 Community Education Council calls upon DOE to have all students be assessed for their potential to achieve at a high level, with an option for parents or guardians to opt out of such testing. The DOE must ensure that all children who have been identified as having the ability to achieve at a high level have a seat in the program. This must include the possibility of entry at different grade levels, as children develop at different rates.

District 20 Community Education Council calls upon DOE to make it easy for students to be enrolled with as little need for parental involvement as possible. With sufficient capacity, a child can be automatically enrolled in their local school or parents can be notified and shown where there are available seats in a transparent manner.

District 20 Community Education Council calls upon the Superintendent to implement the above policies within District 20 if the government can not legislate these policies and/or DOE refuses to implement them Citywide.