



PREDICTIONS FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOTTERY PLAN FOR THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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BY COALITION FOR TJ

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Underlying [data analysis](#)

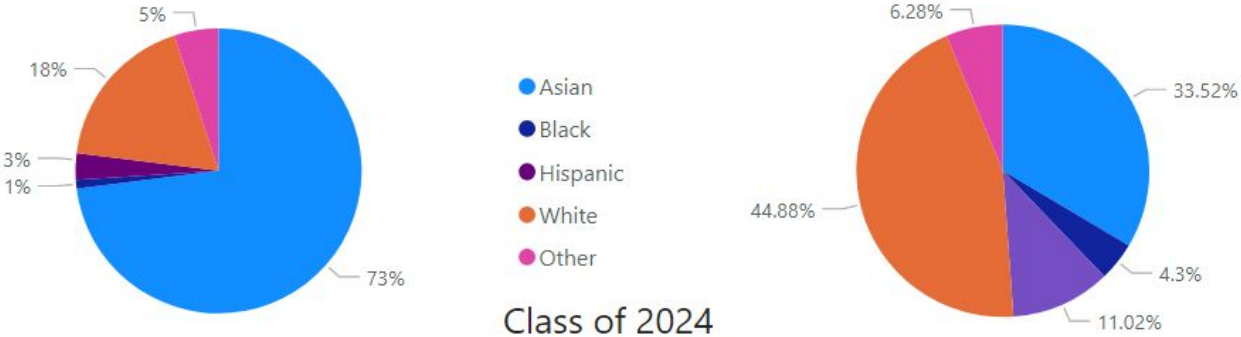


KEY PREDICTIONS FOR PROPOSED FCPS LOTTERY

1. All racial minorities will lose in the new lottery system proposed by FCPS. Whites will be the biggest winners. TJ will go from being a mostly minority school to becoming a mostly white school. The lottery plan gets an “F” grade for substance and implementation.

Twenty years ago, [70 percent](#) of TJ students were white; today, 79 percent are minority, most from Asian immigrant families. The proposed lottery plan would decimate the representation of minorities at TJ, with the school soon becoming predominately white. Assuming that all of the students who qualify for the lottery will apply for admissions to TJ, the percentage of Asian students gaining admission to TJ will be slashed by more than half from 73% admitted in the Class of 2024 to 33.52%. In contrast, the percentage of white students gaining admission to TJ will more than double from 18% admitted in the Class of 2024 to 44.88%, making white families the plan’s greatest beneficiaries and dramatically shrinking the school’s overall percentage of minorities. Here is the underlying [data analysis](#) by Coalition for TJ.

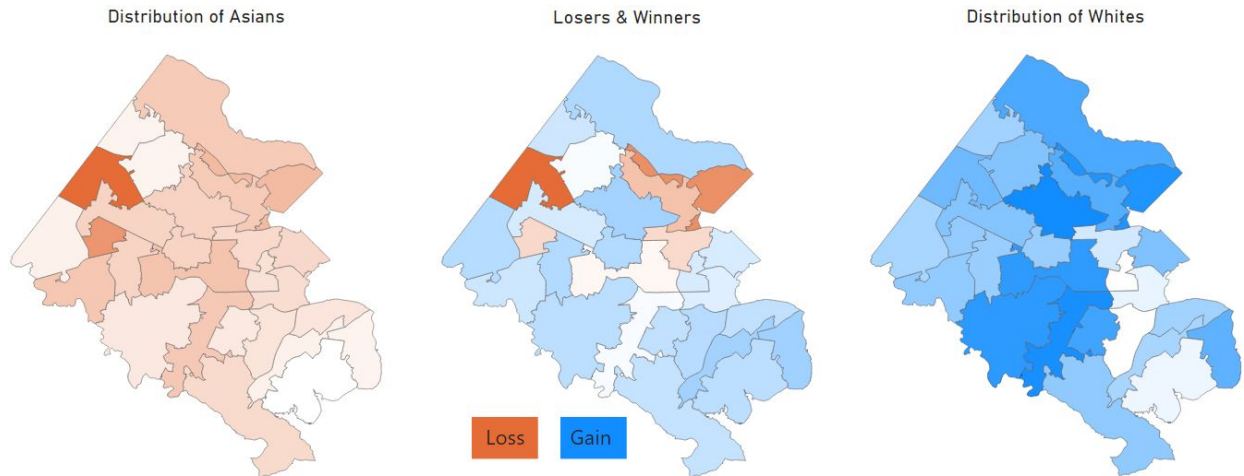
Race Distribution with Current Merit-Based Admissions Race Distribution with Lottery and Successful Outreach



2. In a best-case scenario with successful outreach, the proposed lottery plan will only minimally increase representation of Black and Hispanic students.

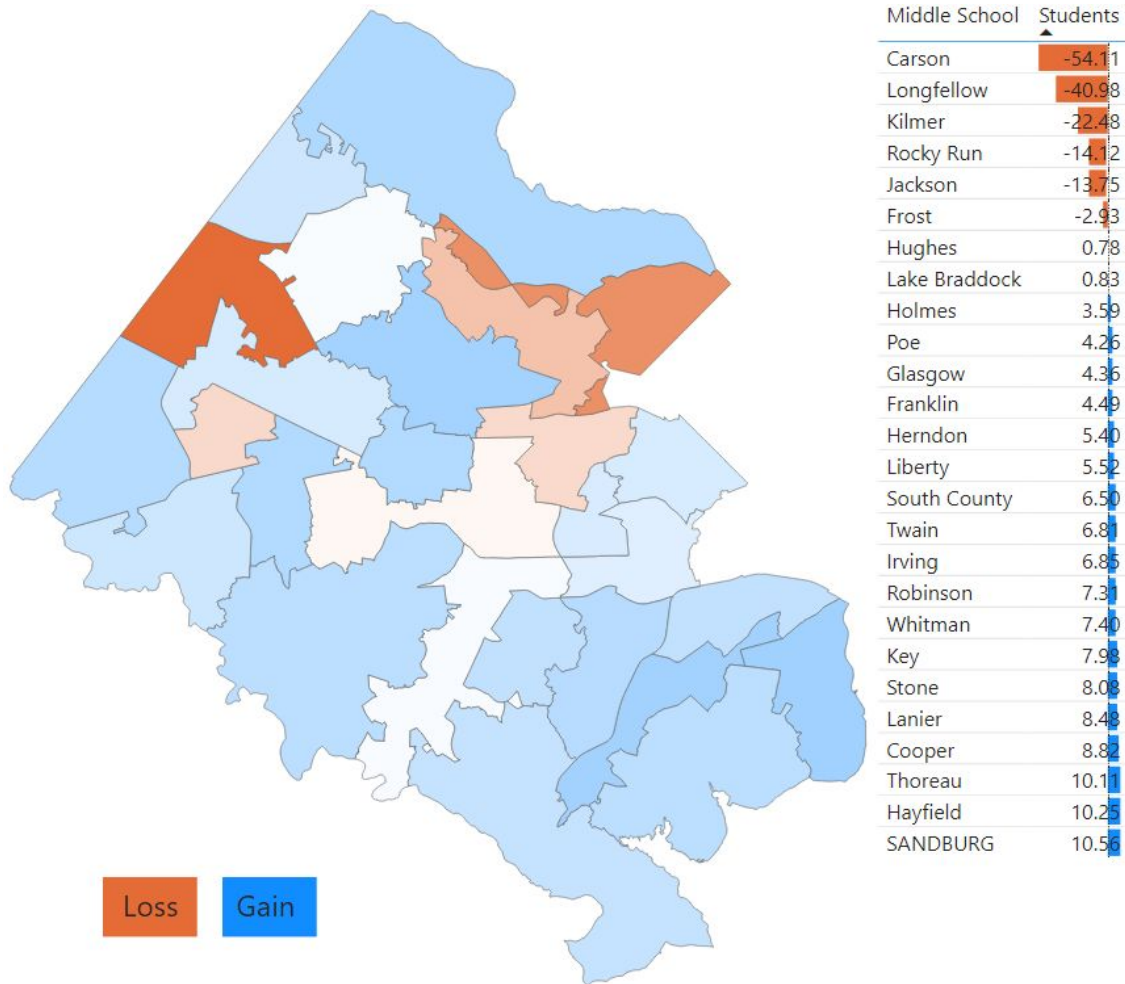
While the percentage gain for Black and Hispanic students appears material, it is misleading because the number of Black students who gain admission to TJ will only increase to approximately 17 Black students from six black students admitted in the Class of 2024. Meanwhile, the number of Hispanic students will increase to

about 43 students from 16 Hispanic students admitted in the Class of 2024. This increase likely will be temporary as Asian families start to move to increase the odds of students in their families gaining admission to TJ under the lottery system.



3. The lottery plan amounts to a targeted attack on three middle schools -- Rachel Carson Middle School in Herndon, Va., Longfellow Middle School in Falls Church, Va., and Kilmer Middle School in Vienna -- with a large number of Asian students who have traditionally gained admission to TJ.

As a result, FCPS is grossly overestimating the percentage of Asians who will be able to get selected for admission to TJ. The number of students who gain admission to TJ from Rachel Carson Middle School will decrease by 70% and the number of students who gain admission to TJ from Longfellow Middle School will decrease by 66%. Admissions from Kilmer Middle School in Vienna, Va., will decrease by an estimated 22%. This bias against Asian students from these schools is reflected in 2018 testimony in the Virginia General Assembly by a retired Rachel Carson Middle School school teacher, who called the parents of these students “ravenous,” saying they immigrate to the United States “however they get here” from India. (In a secondary impact, the lottery will also impact home values in the communities with these three schools, because they will no longer be considered strong feeder schools to TJ.)



4. FCPS has said that it will include essays in its proposed lottery plan as part of its evaluation of student merit, but it is not realistic to expect that FCPS will evaluate essays from the flood of students who will qualify to apply for admissions to TJ under the new lottery plan. The pool to be evaluated will increase by five times to an estimated 4,405 students who will qualify for the lottery, compared to the 822 FCPS students who submitted essays as semifinalists for the Class of 2022 admissions process. (That number was reduced from 2,052 FCPS students who applied with a GPA of over 3.0 and 1,825 students with a GPA of over 3.5 GPA.)
5. Waiving the application fee for all applicants will also benefit people who can afford the fee, with FCPS losing at least \$300,000 in revenues, the salary of 6 entry-level teachers, paid at a base salary of \$50,000. That money could be used to increase the number of students from underrepresented minorities, for example, through additional outreach.

POLICY POSITION ON LOTTERY PLAN

The lottery plan by Fairfax County Public Schools to overhaul admissions to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology gets an “F” grade for substance and implementation.

Based on data analysis, the Coalition for TJ opposes the lottery plan announced by Fairfax County Public Schools for admission to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science Technology as a flawed proposal that will diminish the representation of minorities at the school and, in fact, do the exact *opposite* of its stated objective by significantly increasing the representation of white students at the school.

The Coalition for TJ recommends that Fairfax County Public Schools and the Commonwealth of Virginia invest in STEM education in communities with Black, Hispanic and lower socioeconomic students, as well as their success in its Advanced Academics Program, the single key element common to most students gaining successful admission to TJ, based on the current admissions process.

Furthermore, the Coalition for TJ strongly opposes the process by which the Commonwealth of Virginia and Fairfax County Public Schools have blindsided the community, educators and students in the county, with no community engagement in particular with minority communities, including the Black, Hispanic and Asian communities.

The Coalition for TJ recommends tabling this flawed lottery plan and engaging the community in a thorough, complete and serious discussion with transparency, engagement and outreach. The data clearly shows that any changes to TJ admissions will change not only the tapestry of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology but also the community and the country for years to come.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. According to FCPS data, about 95%, or 331 students, of the 350 students selected in the TJ Class of 2022 were enrolled in the FCPS Advanced Academic Program. The best way to increase the enrollment of Hispanic and Black students at TJ would be to increase their enrollment in Advanced Academic Programs, which starts in third grade.

2. Early intervention would be the most effective way to increase admission for both the current merit-based system and the proposed lottery system. Fairfax County should consider creating additional magnet high schools and more magnet middle schools. Northern Virginia has grown tremendously over the last 25 years while TJ has stayed roughly the same size. The increasing competition for TJ seats and the current conflict is the result of the increasing demand versus a limited supply. Rather than allocate TJ seats by blind luck, FCPS and the Commonwealth of Virginia should create more specialized schools rather than disrupt and jeopardize the ones it has.
3. FCPS should identify promising elementary / middle school students from economically disadvantaged families. TJ students & Alumni should mentor these students for service learning hours.

QUESTIONS

1. Is FCPS going to conduct the lottery for admission after submission of the Student Information Sheet and the submission of an essay?
2. Using the Freedom of Information Act or other means, can we get the ammonized list of eighth grade students with a GPA of 3.5 or greater who were enrolled in Algebra 1 by middle school, race and economically disadvantaged status? We are seeking the following information: school, county, enrollment in Advanced Academics Program (or lack of enrollment); math level in eighth grade, including: eighth-grade math, geometry, Algebra I, Algebra II/trigonometry, other, calculus, pre-calculus; GPA; math percentile, reading percentile and science percentile; race; socio-economic status.
3. Will students be asked to fill out both a questionnaire and an essay? Will this be done remotely? Or will this be done in an examination center?
4. Will the topics for these essays and questionnaires be generated at random? Will students be aware of the topics and questions in advance?
5. Using the Freedom of Information Act or other means, can we get the responsibilities of outreach coordinators? How were their performances measured? Can we get copies of email communication by outreach coordinators?

METHODOLOGY

1. [FCPS Middle School Data](#) identifies racial demographics by middle schools. We used half of the middle school count to extrapolate estimates for eighth graders who would qualify to apply for a lottery for admissions to TJ, including expectation

of a GPA of 3.5 or higher and performance on the math Standard of Learning exam.

2. Using research from the [Journal of Blacks in Higher Education](#), we assumed two of every five white students graduates and less than one in five Black graduates achieved a GPA greater than 3.5.
3. According to FCPS data published in the [Washington Post](#), in 2018, 92% of Asian students passed state math tests, compared to 89% of white students. Meanwhile, 69% of Black students passed state math tests, compared to 69% of Hispanic students passed.
4. We adjusted the number of eligible students for the lottery based on middle school rankings by [Great Schools Ratings](#). We assumed a 10% positive/negative adjustment for each school's count for every point difference from the weighted mean rating of all FCPS middle schools.

Please contact the Coalition for TJ at CoalitionForTJ@gmail.com to discuss these findings.

