



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 15

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CEC15 STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR 2020-21 ADMISSIONS CHANGES FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

CEC15 believes that all children, irrespective of race, socioeconomic status, religion, immigration status, or disability have the right to a great education in a safe environment. The recent announcement by the Mayor and Chancellor on the implementation of more equitable admissions policies will help fulfill those objectives. Sixty-six years after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, in which the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools are unconstitutional, New York City public schools are still separate and unequal. So much so that in 2014, the UCLA Civil Rights project revealed that New York's public schools are the most segregated in the country. Specifically, District 15 was identified as the most racially segregated school district in New York City.

In the Fall of 2017, the Department of Education, in collaboration with District 15 Superintendent Anita Skop, CEC 15, and numerous school community stakeholders embarked on a plan to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in District 15's middle schools as outlined by the NYC Department of Education in its *Equity and Excellence for All: Diversity in New York City Public Schools*¹ initiative. The D15 Diversity Plan was created through engaging community members, using their input to help shape the plan, and making data related to school diversity more transparent. In its second year, this plan has been shown to promote diversity in District 15's middle schools.

CEC15 applauds the Mayor and Chancellor's changes to admissions policies for Middle and High School. The announcement draws on the D15 plan as a model for integration work across New York City. The recommendations in the D15 Diversity Plan were based on months of research and community discussions highlighting the root causes and possible solutions to some of the inequities observed in D15 middle schools. The Diversity Plan was extremely successful, not only in its desegregation of the Middle Schools, but in that the majority of families were placed in a school of their choice. The D15 Plan allows students opportunities for academic achievement while bringing together students and families from all over the district, creating understanding, and encouraging inclusive and welcoming environments.

¹ <http://onenyc.cityofnewyork.us/strategies/equity-and-excellence-in-education/>



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Earlier this year, in our RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE REMOVAL OF MIDDLE SCHOOL SCREENS², CEC15 urged Chancellor Carranza and the DOE to adopt middle school admissions policies citywide that reflect the D15 Diversity Plan which maintains school choice, removes all school screens, and creates an admissions priority for low-income students, multilingual learners, and students in temporary housing, and one that is reflective of each district's population average. We also asked the DOE to apply the same rigorous equity lens to high school admissions.

The DOE's announcement doesn't entirely follow the recommendations of the D15 Plan. While all middle school screens will be removed for one year, there is no mandate to enroll based on district demographics. Nevertheless, this improved policy approach begins to acknowledge the trauma brought on by the pandemic and the legacy of systemically racist education policies. We hope this announcement marks a shift toward centering the social emotional well-being of our students and putting equity at the forefront of decision making.

CEC15 would like to see an increase in diversity, inclusion, and equity in all NYC schools, as research shows, students at socio-economically and racially integrated schools benefit from improved test scores, improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills, lower dropout rates, reduction of racial bias, enhanced leadership skills, and better preparedness for success in the global economy. The removal of screens in admissions and programming not only benefits the middle school community but the elementary one as well. We are hopeful that the Mayor and Chancellor will implement similar policy changes to Gifted & Talented admission because this program systematically segregates students and disproportionately enrolls white and Asian students, creating a false sense of diversity at the schools where G&T programs exist, which are mostly schools with BIPOC students.

We've all got a lot of work to do. The DOE is taking a significant step toward a more equitable school system. It took D15 over 9 years to entirely remove middle school screens. Addressing institutional racism and desegregating schools doesn't happen overnight. School communities have to come together in order to create thoughtful and equitable change.

Approved unanimously at a Special Session on January 7, 2021. Members present included Camille Casaretti, Antonia Ferraro, Bess Abrahams, Kimmerly Scott, Mark Bisard, Ivan Banda and Claudia Lechuga.

² CEC15 Resolution to Support the Removal of Middle School Screens , June 1, 2020.

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/951dd9a1-96ac-438b-8642-d89cc6651997/downloads/2020%2006%2001%20CEC15%20Resolution%20to%20Support%20Removal.pdf?ver=1608252875634>