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Resolution 7 (SY22-23)

Resolution Requesting Changes to Gifted & Talented Admissions and Curriculum

Resolution Approved by vote on February 8, 2023 with 8 Yes; 2 Excused and 1 Unexcused

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Steve Stowe - Yes | 7. Jona Isufi - Yes |
| 2. Jennifer Hu - Excused | 8. Li Ping Jiang - Yes |
| 3. Elizabeth Chan - Yes | 9. Maya Rozenblat - Yes |
| 4. Vito LaBella - Yes | 10. Joyce Xie - Yes |
| 5. Marie Brugueras - Excused | 11. Kevin Zhao - Yes |
| 6. Ghada Amin - Unexcused | |

Sponsors: Maya Rozenblat, Stephen Stowe, Vito LaBella

Co-sponsors: Kevin Zhao, Joyce Xie, Liping Jiang, Marie Brugueras

WHEREAS, the Community Education Council in District 20 (CEC 20) thanks Chancellor Banks and the Department of Education (DOE) for reinstating Gifted & Talented programs. There are a number of improvements we would like to recommend and present in this resolution.

WHEREAS, the current procedure for Kindergarten admission to Gifted and Talented (G&T) programs is based on teacher evaluations. For children in Department of Education (DOE) schools, the evaluation is conducted by the child's current DOE pre-K teacher. For children not in DOE schools at the time of application, the evaluation is supposed to be conducted by the DOE's Division of Early Childhood Education¹.

WHEREAS, the current Kindergarten application procedure requires a parent to proactively apply to a G&T program on Myschools. Children will only be evaluated if their parent has applied. This will naturally favor children whose parents are aware of the programs and motivated. It is biased against those children whose parents are too busy or otherwise unaware of the programs. And like any online application, it may be challenging for some parents to navigate, particularly those with a limited technology background or who are non-English speaking.

WHEREAS, teachers have been given a DOE training video for the Kindergarten process to identify behaviors that are supposedly demonstrated by gifted learners. In the video, these behaviors are grouped by 3 categories - curiosity and initiative, approach to learning, and social perceptiveness and self direction. Within these categories there are dozens of behaviors teachers are asked to identify in children and record on a nomination form. The first 2 categories (Curiosity and initiative, Approach to Learning) are focused on verbal expression and demonstration of interest in subject matter. However, the 3rd category (Social perceptiveness

¹ New York City, Department of Education, Gifted & Talented;
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/gifted-talented/#FALL2023> (hereafter referred to as DOE G&T Admission)

and self direction) is simply a personality test with little obvious connection to a student's academic ability. Furthermore, the entire assessment is inherently subjective and vulnerable to the biases of teachers or school administration. The nomination form is available [here](#). There have been first hand reports of teachers just looking at the nomination form, not actually filling out the individual behavior checkboxes and subsequently nominating the child for approval.

WHEREAS, These evaluations were supposed to have been conducted between the date a parent applies for admission to a program and January 27th. Nominations were due on January 31st. This is a relatively short time frame to evaluate a child, especially a child who is less verbally expressive and who may not yet have found an area of deep interest. In District 20, 22% of our students are English Language Learners (ELL) and they may be especially disadvantaged by this evaluation criteria. For example, children may have been raised in cultures which discourage speaking out, asking questions, expressing curiosity and generally being "playful". In addition, identifying children who are gifted academically and possess a learning disability ("twice exceptional" or 2E) can often require more time.

WHEREAS, parents have the right to request their child's nomination form and appeal the decision. But no clear policy for requesting the form and appealing a decision has been published online.

WHEREAS, as of the writing of this resolution, there are currently no published guidelines online for G&T entry in grades 1-3. The relevant webpage is linked [here](#).

WHEREAS, the current procedure for admission to the newly announced 3rd grade entry point G&T program is based on grades. Grade 2 students whose grades are in the top 10% at their school are invited to apply². Grades are a good measure of evaluating a student's performance but are inherently subject to variation and subjectivity based on different teachers grading policies. In other words, some teachers may be stricter graders than others. In a school in which one teacher was an easier grader, this would favor students in that teacher's class. This is demonstrated in Appendix A.

WHEREAS, a lottery is currently used to determine offers in situations for all G&T programs when there are more applicants than available seats. This is a remedy to allocate scarce resources, in this case a shortage of G&T program capacity. However it introduces an element of luck into the process.

WHEREAS, schools currently have independence to design curriculum for G&T programs. This invariably leads to significant variation among schools. While some school independence is warranted, there should be a minimum standard of quality in these programs.

WHEREAS, the City has previously explored the idea of establishing virtual academies or programs, some of which have been piloted at the High School level.

WHEREAS, funding may be required to support specialized programming that is part of a G&T program. For example training, instruction or materials. Funding availability could vary depending on a school's particular budget. In particular schools with high per student funding will have more budget resources. Supporting students of all abilities requires funding be made available for G&T students at each school. A similar example is the portfolio academic high schools which receive targeted funding under the Fair Student Funding formula to support their specialized services. In addition, there may be a shortage of instructors for certain specialized subjects. Finally, teacher participation and belief in G&T, as well as training in teaching accelerated learners is critical for ensuring program success.

² DOE G&T Admission

THEREFORE, the Community Education Council for District 20 calls upon Chancellor David Banks, Deputy Chancellor Carolyn Quintana and Chief Enrollment Officer Sarah Kleinhandler to:

- Utilize a nationally recognized standardized screener (hereafter “Screener”) for giftedness in admissions for all G&T programs beginning in School Year 2023-2024. This will reduce the subjectivity and bias in the process.
- Admission to the program should be made using the criteria described below.
 - For admission to the program before grade 3, initial eligibility would be determined by administering a Screener. And final approval would be determined by teacher evaluations. This is beneficial since course grades for younger students are typically less meaningful. But the universal Screener would improve identification of children whose parents may not be aware of the program or for whom sufficient grade-based evaluation has not yet occurred. In addition, teachers would not be asked to evaluate every child whose family requests it, a reduction in teacher time from the current process.
 - Attempt to ensure the Screener is oriented toward a child’s natural learning abilities as opposed to content-based. The Screener should be appropriately focused on the child’s own learning ability and ability to handle accelerated learning. Characteristics relating to personality which are not directly relevant to academic learning ability should not be considered.
 - If a student achieves a certain threshold on the Screener, that student’s parents would be notified and asked for permission to have their child evaluated by a teacher.
 - Students receiving a sufficient evaluation by the teacher would be admitted to the program.
 - Publish guidelines for parents who wish to request their nomination forms and appeal the decision.
 - For admission to the program in grades 3-5, initial eligibility would be determined by grades. And final approval would be determined by a Screener. This is beneficial since it makes use of already available information (grades) for the preliminary screening and then limits the number of students tested to those who meet the grade cutoff.
 - The grade eligibility requirement should be to select students who are in the top 10% of each class, as opposed to the top 10% in each school, thereby adjusting for variation in teacher grading policies. These qualifying students would be invited to take the Screener for admission to the program.
 - The threshold for qualification on the Screener could be determined using local norms at the City or District level to ensure appropriate inclusion of gifted children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Create procedures to remove students from the program if appropriate. Some situations in which this could be considered are if a student is falling behind academically or displaying negative social or emotional behaviors. The process to remove a student from the program should be done in conjunction with an evaluation team including the student’s parents, teacher (s), guidance counselor, social worker and school administration. Removal should occur in the subsequent year by assigning a student to a new class at the start of the next school year.
- Create a standardized minimum curriculum which any school program using the label of G&T must implement. This curriculum should focus on accelerated learning. G&T students should be grouped in classes together for core academic subjects. Any additional program enrichment could be at the discretion of the school but should be appropriately linked to academic learning. Schools offering specialized programming for G&T programs could offer such programming to general education classes as well (ie - art, music) and non-core academic classes could be composed of mixed learning abilities.
- Include a weight in the FSF formula to support G&T programs

- Create a centralized database of G&T programs and the specialized resources each program requires in order to foster schools' ability to share program ideas, and human and technical resources. School administration should be able to clearly define and communicate their particular program. In particular, schools should ensure that programs serving twice exceptional (2E) children are clearly identified.
- Ensure that a minimum number of seats are available in each District with a goal of creating enough capacity to meet demand and thereby eliminating the need for a lottery. For each school with 4 or more classes per grade, create at least one G&T class.
- Ensure that all schools employing the G&T program have administration and teachers committed to the practice of accelerated learning and that teachers are properly trained.
- Recognizing that there may be unavoidable gaps in student access or program availability, consider a virtual learning program which could be implemented Citywide. This could offer pre-recorded instruction combined with scheduled access to a live online (or in-person) teacher who is available to answer questions on assignments and grades. All learning materials would be posted online and are more or less self-paced. The child would just have to begin and end the program for a particular grade within the school year. One of the advantages of this would be that many of the materials can be translated into other languages and it can be universally offered.
- Create parent groups to conduct user acceptance testing for future admission website designs or virtual learning applications.

Appendix A

Chart 1 - the current Grade 3 G&T entry point admissions eligibility favors students in a class with an easier overall grading policy. The chart below shows grades for a hypothetical school with three 2nd grade classes and 20 students in each class. The top 10% of students in the school are shown in green on the chart. This shows that Class A would have an unfairly high number of students qualified which could possibly be the result of the teacher in Class A having an easier grading policy than the teachers in Class B and Class C.

	Class A	Class B	Class C
Student 1	99	98	97
Student 2	99	97	95
Student 3	99	95	95
Student 4	98	95	94
Student 5	98	95	94
Student 6	98	95	94
Student 7	97	95	94
Student 8	97	94	93
Student 9	97	94	93
Student 10	97	94	93
Student 11	97	93	90
Student 12	96	93	90
Student 13	96	93	89
Student 14	96	92	87
Student 15	96	92	87
Student 16	95	91	85
Student 17	95	91	85
Student 18	95	90	85
Student 19	95	90	84
Student 20	95	90	80

Average Grade	96.8	93.4	90.2
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Chart 2 - instead, students should be deemed eligible if they are in the top percentile or standard deviation in their respective class. The chart below shows the students who would be eligible if the Top 10% of students in each class are determined eligible. Likewise, the results are the same if selecting students based on grades 1 standard deviation above the average.

	Class A	Class B	Class C
Student 1	99	98	97
Student 2	99	97	95
Student 3	99	95	95
Student 4	98	95	94
Student 5	98	95	94
Student 6	98	95	94
Student 7	97	95	94
Student 8	97	94	93
Student 9	97	94	93
Student 10	97	94	93
Student 11	97	93	90
Student 12	96	93	90
Student 13	96	93	89
Student 14	96	92	87
Student 15	96	92	87
Student 16	95	91	85
Student 17	95	91	85
Student 18	95	90	85
Student 19	95	90	84
Student 20	95	90	80

Average Grade	96.8	93.4	90.2
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