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Gonzalez: Advocates for poor see H.S. bias, want Bill de Blasio to discard elite exam



[Joe Marino/New York Daily News](#)

The Community Service Society wants Bill de Blasio to discard the exam that determines admission to elite high schools.

The city's oldest anti-poverty organization wants Mayor de Blasio to discard the exam that has long determined admission to the city's elite high schools.

In a report to be released Wednesday, the Community Service Society will argue that future admissions to the city's top eight schools should be based on student test scores on state-mandated seventh-grade math and English exams.

The proposal — of which the Daily News obtained a copy — is based on extensive reviews of test scores and academic histories of individual students which the city Department of Education made available for the first time.

The Community Service Society has claimed the current entrance exam, the [Specialized High Schools Admission Test](#), excludes far too many African-American and Latino students. In 2012, it joined a handful of groups to file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, noting that nearly 75% of the city's public school pupils are black and Hispanic, yet only 12% of students admitted to the elite schools are from those minority groups.



Jeremy Bales/for New York Daily News

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While campaigning for mayor, de Blasio vowed to improve racial diversity at those schools, but has done nothing so far.

BILL DE BLASIO, ANDREW CUOMO BOTH WANT TO TURN AROUND STRUGGLING PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BUT CANNOT AGREE ON HOW: INFOGRAPHIC

The entire issue is a hot potato, especially since the Legislature must approve any admissions changes for the three biggest elite schools, Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech.

Defenders of the current test say it maintains high standards at those schools.

“We believe that we have found a way, using real data, to address the inequalities and disparities at the specialized high schools without lowering standards,” said Lazar Treschan, director for youth policy at the Community Service Society.



Louis Lanzano/for New York Daily News

“In the long run, the best way to improve diversity at these schools is to significantly improve the quality of educational instruction in every neighborhood,” Larry Cary said.

That study found that only 15% of the more than 500 middle schools account for an astonishing 85% of students admitted to the elite high schools — and most of those middle schools also have select admissions tests.

In other words, by the fourth or fifth grade, [the system has already determined](#) where the future Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech grads will come from.

At the Christa McAuliffe School in South Brooklyn, for example, 246 students were offered seats at the specialized high schools for the 2013-14 school year.

[NYC SCORES 9 OUT OF 10 BEST HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK STATE](#)



A proposal by the group is based on extensive reviews of test scores and academic histories of individual students which the city Department of Education made available.

That change would help nearly double the current percentage of Hispanic and black students, the report claims, while still maintaining the same average test scores for all students admitted.

Larry Cary, head of the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Association Foundation, was not impressed.

“In the long run, the best way to improve diversity at these schools is to significantly improve the quality of educational instruction in every neighborhood,” Cary said.

At City Hall, though, they welcomed the new proposal.

“We believe our top-tier schools can and should become more diverse, while maintaining rigorous standards,” said mayoral spokesman Wiley Norvell. “We’ll review this analysis along with other perspectives we’re gathering . . . about how we can achieve this objective.”