

Resolution Urging the Panel for Educational Policy to Ensure Continuity in the Administration of the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test by Approving the Pearson Assessment Contract

Sponsor: Yael Denbo, Sharon Meiri Fox, Jill Rackmill, Kristin Savov

WHEREAS, on November 20, 2024 the Panel for Education Policy (“PEP”) will consider a vote to approve a new five-year contract with NCS Pearson, Inc. (“Pearson”) to provide a standardized testing program for the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (“SHSAT”).

WHEREAS, as per the Hecht-Calandra Act, admission to New York City Public Schools (“NYCPS”)’ Specialized High Schools (“SHS”) must be determined “solely and exclusively by taking a competitive, objective, and scholastic achievement examination.” Failure to enter into a new contract with a vendor would put Specialized High Schools in a position of not having the legally required test to admit their Freshmen class for the fall of 2026.

WHEREAS, the Hecht-Calandra Act was codified by New York State in 1971 to mandate the admissions process for New York City’s Specialized High Schools, now including 8 SHS enrolling over 16,000 students: Bronx High School of Science (enrollment ~3,000), Brooklyn Latin School (enrollment ~800), Brooklyn Technical High School (enrollment ~6,000), High School for Math, Science and Engineering at City College (enrollment ~500), High School of American Studies at Lehman College (enrollment ~400), Queens High School for the Sciences at York College (enrollment ~700), Staten Island Technical High School (enrollment ~1,400), and Stuyvesant High School (enrollment ~3,300).

WHEREAS, NYCPS conducted a Request for Proposal in the fall of 2023 seeking vendors for the test, which yielded two submissions: Pearson and Educational Testing Services. Upon review and further negotiation, NYCPS determined that Pearson’s proposal was the most attractive from a pricing and quality perspective.

WHEREAS, since the COVID-19 pandemic, NYCPS’ families have endured annual changes to high school admissions, introducing considerable uncertainty into an already stressful process for parents. Throughout this time period, the semi-permanence of a multi-year contract for administering the SHSAT provided parents interested in the Specialized High Schools with a valuable source of stability, continuity, and comfort in their otherwise busy lives.

WHEREAS, of the approximately 30,000 eighth and ninth grade students taking the SHSAT annually, many begin preparing years in advance, expending a significant investment in time, energy, and resources. Student efforts should be acknowledged and entrance exams must be honored.

WHEREAS colleges and universities nationwide have moved to reinstate standardized testing as a component of their admissions process.¹ Testing is viewed by higher education institutions as an excellent way to predict students' readiness for college-level academics. This helps students and higher education institutions to create the most appropriate placements and improve the likelihood that students will achieve academic success in their post-secondary education. The preparation for and experience of taking the SHSAT prepares students for standardized testing in the college application process.

WHEREAS, the new SHSAT format proposed by Pearson is computerized and adaptive, in line with the recent changes in other standardized tests including the SAT.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Community Education Council D3 (CEC3) demands the Panel for Educational Policy approve the Pearson Assessments contract, thereby avoiding any material disruption to future admissions cycles and avoiding direct harm to students who have been studying for the SHSAT.

THEREFORE, be it further resolved that CEC3 urges NYCPS to work with Pearson to ensure that families interested in reviewing their child's SHSAT test still can do so with the new computerized format.

Yael Denbo - Yes
Sharon Collins - Yes
Jill Rackmill - Yes
Noah Odabashian - No
Kristin Savov - Yes
Noah Strote - Abstain
Sharon Meiri Fox - Not Present
Ting Yuan - Yes
Ramata Sachko - Yes
Jon Nassami - Yes

¹ [Score Required: Colleges Reinstate Testing Policies](https://kdcollegeprep.com/sat-act-score-required-colleges-change-testing-policies/)
<https://kdcollegeprep.com/sat-act-score-required-colleges-change-testing-policies/> VOTING