

President Steve Stowe
First Vice President Jennifer Hu
Second Vice President/IEP Rep Elizabeth Chan
Recording Secretary Vito LaBella
Treasurer/ BBP Appointee Marie Brugueras



Council Members

Ghada Amin Maya Rozenblat- ELL Rep
Jona Isufi Joyce Xie
Li Ping Jiang Kevin Zhao- BBP Appointee

Administrative Assistant: Natalia Mondesir

Resolution 10 (SY21-22)

Expand or Eliminate Sibling Preference in Middle School Admissions

Resolution approved 2/9/22 with 8 Yes; 1 Abstain, and 2 Excused

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

Sponsors: Vito LaBella, Stephen Stowe

WHEREAS, on January 12, 2022, the DOE has instituted a Middle School Admissions Sibling Priority Policy that extends to current 6th grade students, but not current 7th grade students. Students currently in 7th grade who were admitted to middle schools via academic merit are thereby excluded from providing priority placement for their siblings.

WHEREAS, DOE made this policy change without community engagement (again).

WHEREAS, in response to parent questions over the policy, DOE Chief Enrollment Officer, Sarah Kleinhandler, responded in an email to the Recording Secretary of CECD20: "As you may be aware, a sibling priority was first piloted in District 15, following a community-driven districtwide diversity initiative the year before. To help preserve the goals of the diversity plan, sibling priority was phased in so that applicants with siblings in sixth grade (admitted through the random selection process) received priority to their sibling's school. Similarly, we are now phasing in sibling priority across all DOE middle schools a year after the initial pause on academic screening: this allows for sibling priority to be implemented in an equitable manner. Many current students who are in seventh grade or older were admitted to their middle school based on their academic record, through the previous screening process. Implementing a priority for these students would give applicants access to a school based on their older sibling's academic performance."¹

WHEREAS, CECD20 disagrees that either the District 15 diversity in-admissions program or the sibling priority add-on can be considered a success thus far as the DOE has not in any quantifiable way demonstrated improved educational outcomes via the aforementioned D15 program, a purported benefit behind the initiative.

¹ Email to CECD20 Recording Secretary Vito LaBella, January 13, 2022

In addition, it is impossible thus far to prove the success of the lottery admissions program at previously academically screened schools given the delay in enrollment data.

WHEREAS, such programs have led to increased travel times for many students which is a primary consideration for parents when selecting a middle school. CECD20 suggests that diversity may have become markedly worse if families preferentially chose schools based on neighborhood proximity.

WHEREAS, CECD20 disagrees with the widespread extension of such unproven programs to all other districts, and as a Council representing District 20, specifically objects to such a blunt extension in this district.

WHEREAS, prior to the Covid pandemic, students of Asian descent represented a large proportion of students at academically screened schools. These students are now in 7th grade. Excluding families of these 7th grade students from sibling priority will by definition disproportionately exclude Asian students from these schools.

WHEREAS, CECD20 is deeply concerned that this is a continuation of DOE's past policies which seek to reduce the number of Asian students in high-performing schools. For example, former Chancellor Richard Carranza was quoted as saying: "I just don't buy into the narrative that any one ethnic group owns admission to these schools"². Many D20 families were hopeful that Mayor Eric Adams and Chancellor Banks would honor their commitments to hear all voices and end discrimination against any ethnic group.

WHEREAS, CECD20 reminds the DOE and the Division of Enrollment specifically, that the Middle School pause in academic screens and lottery replacement were, as stated at the time, intended to be a temporary pause for Covid, not to expand an unproven program. This justification was reiterated directly to the President and Recording Secretary of CECD20 in a meeting with Chief Enrollment Officer Sarah Kleinhandler on January 21st. In this same meeting, Kleinhandler indicated openness to the idea that different Districts might want different education policies.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT CECD20 strongly recommends the DOE immediately revise its Sibling Priority policy (before Mar 1) and adopt ONE of the following two policy positions:

1. **EITHER** the DOE believes that families do in fact have hardship in sending children to different middle schools (especially during Covid), and sibling preference should be extended to the brothers and sisters of 6th graders and 7th graders, regardless of the older child's admissions method.
2. **OR** the DOE believes that the majority of middle-school students are capable and expected to transport themselves to schools, and there should be NO sibling preference beyond a possible adjustment for siblings born on the same day (i.e., twins, triplets, etc.).

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT CECD20 further reminds the DOE that it is still not too late to reverse its Middle School Admissions policy to include academic screens as per CEC 20 Resolution #5 dated 12/20/2021.

² "Chancellor Carranza to desegregation plan foes: you don't own these classrooms", New York Daily News, June 5, 2018

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT CECD20 requests that the DOE release raw enrollment data inclusive of geographic data and/or travel times/distances (if available) to CECD20 and the public to draw its own conclusions from last school year's middle school lottery at formerly academically screened schools.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT CECD20 requests that the new DOE administration adhere to its promise to engage the community more robustly before policy decisions.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT CECD20 suggests to the new DOE administration that such community engagement begin with CECs themselves as they are designed expressly for such purposes and further those policies can be adapted by district to fit community needs.