



## BLACK AND HISPANIC CHARTER STUDENTS MORE LIKELY TO GAIN ADMISSION TO SELECTIVE NYC HIGH SCHOOLS

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A recent review of data provided by the New York City Department of Education reveals that African-American charter school students were 60 percent more likely than their public school counterparts to earn a seat in one of New York City's specialized high schools in 2009. For Hispanics, the rate of acceptance was twice as high for charter school graduates than for students from traditional public schools.

There are eight highly selective public high schools in New York City that diligent eighth graders dream of attending.<sup>1</sup> A diploma from a school with a national reputation like Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, or Brooklyn Tech, can open the door to prestigious universities and professional success. But admission to these schools depends entirely on the applicant's score on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test. Because of the well-documented achievement gap on this and other common standardized tests, African-American and Hispanic eighth graders in the city gain acceptance to these schools at much lower rates than their Asian and white counterparts.

Though African-Americans and Hispanics make about 71 percent of the city's combined public and charter school eighth-grade students, these groups made up only 17 percent of the freshman classes at the specialized high schools in 2009.<sup>2</sup> Given the size of their enrollments district-wide, if the same percentage of African-American and Hispanic students from traditional public schools were accepted by these specialized high schools, then an additional 166 African-American and 376 Hispanic students would have received an offer in 2009.

The nearby table shows the number of eighth grade students offered a seat in one of New York’s specialized high schools for the 2009 school year disaggregated by race/ethnicity<sup>3</sup> and by whether the student attended a public or charter school.<sup>4</sup>

The overall larger percentage of public school eighth graders offered admission to specialized high schools—relative to charter school eighth graders—is driven by the larger white and Asian populations. Nearly a quarter of Asian-American eighth graders in New York’s public school system were offered admission to a specialized high school in 2009.

Of course, the numbers provided here are only descriptive. From these data we cannot say the extent to which differences in the proportion of African-Americans and Hispanics offered a seat in a specialized high school is influenced—positively or negatively—by differences in the type of student who applies to attend a charter

school. In addition, the number of charter school students offered a seat might be lower than the number with a proficiency level high enough to qualify since many charter schools that offer eighth grade also offer high school grades and thus might not push their students to seek a seat in a selective high school.

Nonetheless, the admission figures are deserving of further consideration. Charter schools could increase minority access to the city’s esteemed high schools by offering a higher quality elementary and middle school education than is available in the traditional public schools system. Recent research suggests that on average students benefit substantially academically from attending one of the city’s charter schools.<sup>5</sup> About 95 percent of Gotham’s charter school eighth graders in 2009 were African-American or Hispanic. The data provide some additional descriptive evidence that charter schools are offering minority students a high quality elementary and middle school education.

	8th Grade Enrollment	Offered Seat	% Offered Seat
<b>Charter</b>			
African-American	850	20	2.4%
Hispanic	469	14	3.0%
Asian	31	6	19.4%
White	33	1	3.0%
Total	1,383	41	3.0%
<b>Public</b>			
African-American	20,387	314	1.5%
Hispanic	25,852	396	1.5%
Asian	9,970	2,313	23.2%
White	9,141	1,261	13.8%
Total	65,350	4,284	6.6%

<sup>1</sup> The eight specialized high schools are Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, Staten Island Tech, High School of American Studies at Lehman College, High School of Math, Science, and Engineering at CCNY, High School of Sciences at York College, and Brooklyn Latin.

<sup>2</sup> In 2009, 910 students were admitted to one of the specialized high schools from a private middle school. Because private schools are not included in the city’s data system, the race/ethnicity of these students at the time of admission is unknown. The remaining discussion in this paper does not include these students.

<sup>3</sup> In 2009, there were two public school students and one charter school student offered admission whose race/ethnicity was unknown. Those students are omitted from the calculations.

<sup>4</sup> We obtained the information through a data request to the New York City Department of Education. As part of that request we also obtained enrollment information for the 2010 school year. However, for reasons unknown to us, the race/ethnicity was unknown for 27 percent of charter schools students offered a seat, making comparisons like the one in this paper impossible. The total number of specialized high school seats for charter school students increased to fifty-one.

<sup>5</sup> Hoxby, Caroline, S. Murarka, and J. Kang (2009). “How New York City’s Charter Schools Affect Achievement.” The New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project.