



Key Takeaways: June 2018

New York City has been considered a leader on choice and portfolio strategies since around 2005 under then-mayor Michael Bloomberg. Under Mayor Bill De Blasio's administration, the city has backed away from many of the more choice- and autonomy-oriented strategies that set NYC on its current path. Looking forward, city education leaders must ensure that sustained pathways exist for recruiting and developing quality teachers and school leaders in both the district and charter sectors, and continue efforts to improve student integration and equitable access to the highest-performing schools. As the district guides these efforts led by new chancellor Richard Carranza, appointed in 2018, it must develop its vision for how various initiatives add up to a strong school improvement strategy, improve school quality citywide by replicating strong district and charter school models, and ensure that all families have opportunities to offer input on future strategies.

Challenges Ahead

► Building a new vision for systemwide improvement

New York City has made significant improvements over the past decade, but what is the vision to continue this trajectory? Mayor De Blasio and former chancellor Fariña instituted several major initiatives, such as the push for [Universal Pre-K](#), [Community Schools](#), and [Renewal Schools](#) (the mayor's approach to school improvement), but there are questions as to how effective these have been. Some Renewal Schools are improving, but at a very high cost, and the jury is out on whether this is the most cost-effective approach for growing high-quality school options across the city. Similarly, Pre-K programs are widely supported but there is concern that the rollout is replicating some of the same diversity challenges seen in the rest of the system. New chancellor Richard Carranza has signaled support for these efforts, but some community advocates worry that they are only piecemeal, may not be effectively tapping the strengths and resources in the city, and don't paint a clear vision for public education improvement and how the city will get there. Carranza has an opportunity to refresh or rethink these strategies to respond to these community concerns, or articulate a clear vision of the district that they are working to create.

► Improving school diversity and access to quality options

New York City has been criticized for several years as being one of the most segregated school systems in the nation. The De Blasio administration has taken steps to integrate several schools by reassigning some enrollment zones. The district also created a pilot program that provides weighted admissions to set aside seats in some high-demand NYCDOE schools and Pre-K programs for students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, English language learner (ELL), or other criteria. But some community leaders expressed concerns that so far, these schools are the exception within a large system, and that the proportion of set-aside seats are not moving the needle on diversity. The city's selective schools that base admissions on one test remain highly segregated. Chancellor Carranza, an immigrant to the U.S., has waded directly into the school segregation challenge early in his tenure, giving encouragement to many who felt the city's recent approach was too tepid. Along with the current push to better integrate schools, the DOE must collect strong data to know if new initiatives are working and determine other avenues to adjust enrollment zones in more schools. Interviewees also reported that there are gaps in access to charter schools by specific groups, such as students requiring ELL services. More analysis can uncover barriers underserved students encounter accessing quality schools, and identify effective partnerships between the charter and district sectors to address the needs of specific students, such as those experiencing homelessness.

► Addressing gaps in talent and shared pipeline issues

Given the size of NYC's school system, maintaining a strong pipeline of high-quality teachers and school leaders is critical. Both the DOE and the charter sector use a number of strategies to maintain this pipeline, yet there was a

perception from both district and charter leaders that the quality of recent applicants is not strong enough. The DOE and the charter sector could develop a shared regional strategy for developing more teachers with skills in high-need areas, such as special education and math. To do so, however, better data should be collected to clarify needs in the charter sector. In addition, the public is concerned about the DOE policy to place teachers from the “Absent Teacher Reserve” back in schools, a policy that conflicts with the autonomy of principals to hire teachers who are the right fit for their schools.

Spotlight

Districts and Charters Collaborate to Strengthen Special Education

Since 2011, the [NYC Special Education Collaborative](#) (Collaborative), a citywide membership organization, has been empowering NYC’s charter schools to develop quality education programs for students with disabilities by providing on-site training, professional development, resources, support, and expert guidance.

More recently, the Collaborative and the NYCDOE have been working together to inform system leaders about how to provide better support to schools that use inclusive settings. The two teams meet regularly to discuss trending issues and brainstorm solutions, in addition to touring schools together to better understand programming and seek out best practices. The Collaborative hosts regular professional development series for charter and district educators about instructional practices, culturally responsive education, and behavior supports.

Challenges remain. Region-based IEP meetings, which include charter school and district staff, are still focused more on compliance than knowledge sharing, and the city as a whole lacks data to drive strategy. But this emerging collaboration bodes well for students and sets the groundwork for continued work ahead.

NYCDOE’s Alliance with Strong CMOs Helps Teachers and Students Thrive

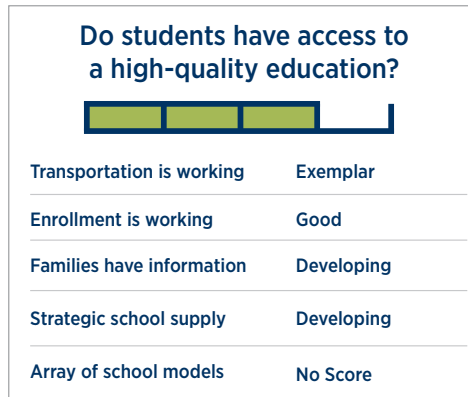
New York city is home to tense politics between the charter and district sectors on issues like charter school access to facilities. However, several cross-sector efforts that started a decade ago have continued to expand over the last few years.

The NYCDOE’s Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships supports school-to-school work on problems of practice—restorative justice, instructional practice for ELLs, math instruction—between sets of neighborhood district and charter schools, and for charter and district schools colocated in the same building. Several district superintendents have received small grants to initiate local districtwide projects to help educators and leaders meet, share, and break down misconceptions.

NYCDOE has two growing partnerships with high-performing CMOs: Uncommon Schools and KIPP. Uncommon Schools holds weekend workshops to share their “[Teach Like a Champion](#)” curriculum with DOE teachers, and KIPP has partnered with the DOE to extend their Summer Bridge program to DOE students from Upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

In such a large city, these efforts are just the first steps toward systemwide coordination. But education leaders express hope that, below the surface of the political battles that dominate the news cycle, educators are growing their practice in recognition that all types of schools have something to contribute to support students.

System Reforms



Each indicator is scored with a rubric on a 4-point scale. We added the scores for the indicators to get an overall goal score. An arrow shows increase or decrease from the 2017 score.

Key Takeaways: System Reforms

Between 2002 and 2013 the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) developed a sophisticated system to manage the city’s school supply in response to community needs. But intervention on low-performing schools has slowed, so a number of these schools persist. The district and charter sectors have some good processes in place to support families with choosing schools, and to respond to community priorities and input on school openings and closures. The city must continue to address the need for high-quality teachers and leaders and consider opportunities for high-quality charter schools to be part of a strategic plan for providing choice and quality options.

Is the education strategy rooted in the community?



Is the whole community engaged? Education is a citywide endeavor. When families, community organizations, and city leaders have the opportunity to provide feedback and share in the vision, the strategy is more likely to be sustainable and meet the needs of all students. In this goal, we look at how well the city is doing with engaging key stakeholders.



Does the city engage families in educational decisions that impact them?

In general, district- and school-level staff engage meaningfully with families during school openings and closures. District school closures, which are used as a last resort, follow a multiyear, iterative process led by the local superintendent and often only after three years in the Renewal Schools Program. District school consolidations incorporate community input through regional [Community Education Councils](#). The same is true for the few school openings that have occurred over the last three years. Within the charter sector the degree and quality of engagement during closures depends on the school operator and authorizer. Both active authorizers in NYC require that charter school applications show community need for a new school, though schools are ultimately sited where the DOE offers space, which is often not known until after authorization. Despite the city’s robust policies, community leaders perceive that more transparency is still needed, and that a greater variety of families should be involved in the decisionmaking process.



Are a variety of groups engaged in education?

NYCDOE continues to partner with a variety of organizations and community members to inform the broader education strategy, and several advocacy groups outside of the DOE work with families and schools. The DOE has an abundance of partnerships with outside organizations as part of parent engagement and student support initiatives.



Is there a strong and deep coalition of support for the education strategy?

NYCDOE’s [Equity & Excellence](#) platform includes major initiatives such as Pre–K for All and Community Schools, and DOE parent surveys show support for these two initiatives. The teachers and principals unions support the agenda put forth by the mayor and chancellor. However, some community advocates see these as piecemeal efforts rather than as a clear direction forward for citywide improvement and question the value of significant investing in the Renewal Schools Program given its mixed outcomes. Interviewees said widespread frustration also exists about continued inequities across schools and districts, the lack of diversity in the city’s elite schools, and what some see as a lackluster effort to address segregation. While the current mayor and chancellor are perceived as less antagonistic toward the charter sector now than when first elected, there is still tension over the role of charter schools in the city, and reform advocates see missed opportunities for a vision that includes all school types, especially as a number of charter schools outperform nearby district schools.



Does the education system respond to community feedback?

NYCDOE is perceived by some community leaders as being fairly responsive to families and communities. The regional [Community Education Councils](#) provide opportunities for parent and community input and this feedback can shift citywide policy. For example, one local district pushed education leaders to improve how gifted and talented students were identified across the city. DOE has made it a priority to reach out to parents with limited English proficiency by providing targeted outreach with language supports, and has recently begun neighborhood-wide “visioning” conversations in some areas to steer priorities in line with community interests. However, there is still a perception among community advocacy groups that the district mostly responds to issues that are aligned with its agenda and that some issues, like equitable funding, are not on the district agenda. Advocacy organizations in the city engage parents in system-level work, but community leaders reported that parents of charter school students do not have much opportunity to influence the direction of education beyond their individual school.

Do students have access to a high-quality education?



Do school choice and supply meet family needs? This goal addresses how well the city is doing with providing families access to quality schools. We look at what the city is doing to ensure quality schools are in every neighborhood, and how well the choice process is working for families who want to use it.



Exemplar

Is transportation working for families?

NYCDOE has a unified transit policy for all public school students that provides either half-fare or free transit passes for students. Some busing is provided, depending on the school. Transportation was not reported by community or education leaders as a major barrier to accessing schools. However, long commute times to cross the city emphasize the need to provide good options in all neighborhoods.



Good

Is the enrollment process working for families?

The district sector and the charter sector each have a separate school enrollment process. The DOE has a unified system for district high school selection and a separate unified system for district middle and elementary schools. Most charter schools (around 75%) participate in the NYC Charter School Center's [Common Application](#) system. Despite fairly streamlined systems and increased translation and outreach efforts, community members reported that choosing schools can be difficult. Interviewees said this was especially the case at the high school level where families have no default assigned school. There is continued frustration that the admission system for the city's eight specialized high schools does not work equitably for students of color and those from low-income neighborhoods, even after the DOE provided admission test tutoring. Admission is based on a single test and in 2018 only [10% of those admitted were African American or Latino in a system where they represent 70% of the students](#). Currently, admission is based on a single test, but for most of the eight elite schools it appears that [admission measures could be shifted to account for multiple measures, something the mayor has the power to do](#). Interviewees also reported that disproportionately lower numbers of students who are English language learners attend charter schools; efforts are underway to improve recruitment and access.



Developing

Do families have the information they need and know how to use it?

Currently, there is no consolidated information source to help families in the choice process. NYCDOE has two main systems for information on school options: the [NYC SchoolFinder](#) for district schools and the [Charter School Directory](#). The [NYC School Performance Dashboard](#) and School Quality Reports provide detailed school accountability and school culture data on every school in the city, including charters, but this information is divorced from curricular, programmatic, and student service information. Despite a number of resources, community groups reported a perception that parents do not have the information they need, and most families are still learning about school options through word of mouth—or through private consultants if they can afford them. Some community advocates report that the move away from an A-F school rating system to the more complex dashboard has made it more challenging for families to interpret and compare school performance.



Developing

Is the city strategically managing its school portfolio?

NYCDOE has developed data-driven systems for initiating school closure, consolidation, and opening processes. Changes in the district school supply are managed at the local district level, but the DOE uses centralized performance and enrollment data to identify schools needing improvement and areas with underenrollment or overenrollment. The pace of closures has slowed (22 district schools have closed over the past three years, 45 have consolidated) compared to the prior administration (more than 140 schools closed over a decade), and while some schools have improved, low-performing schools persist, [as shown in state reports](#). District school closures occur only after other efforts have been exhausted—generally after two to three years in DOE's [Renewal Schools Program](#) and following an intensive engagement process. A more thoughtful and strict authorizing process has reduced the need for charter school closures, though four charters are closing in 2018. High-performing charter schools with long waitlists face multiple barriers to expansion. Additionally, facilities are in high demand by charters. Colocations can be

contentious, and the charter sector perceives that the district is unwilling to provide space for charter schools despite state requirements to do so. These hurdles can get in the way of education leaders pursuing a purely data-driven or needs-based process. The lack of a cross-sector, citywide plan for schools misses an opportunity to use charter schools to diversify and improve the school system overall.

No Score

Does the school supply represent an array of models?

Researchers did not collect school-level data to provide a score for this measure. However, district and charter sector leaders perceived a wide variety of school types and instructional models. Community leaders reported that there is a lot of variety, but not enough quality, especially in some districts. They say that for the most part, local districts work collaboratively with community members to design the type of school families want, resulting in responsive school options such as a Haitian-Creole dual-language program. In the charter sector, leaders report that most new schools are replications of existing independent schools and CMOs, but authorizers have signaled that they are prioritizing building a diverse portfolio of charter school options.

Is the education system continuously improving?



Do schools have the resources they need? School improvement happens at the school level, but making sure resources are available requires sound, citywide policy. Having the right talent in a city is critical for schools to be able to provide students with a quality education. Schools should also have control over their budgets so they have the resources to address the needs of their student population.



Does funding equitably follow students?

NYCDOE allocates more than 5% but less than 50% of district money to schools using a student-based allocation formula (based on an analysis of fiscal year 2013-14). Recently, the DOE increased the average proportion of funds available through Fair Student Funding, which is available for use at the principal’s discretion.



Do schools have the kinds of teachers they need?

New York City has a number of alternative and traditional pipelines to prepare teachers. Several NYCDOE campaigns are pushing for more diversity in the teaching profession, such as [NYC Men Teach](#), a parent-to-teacher program, and a [Bronx-specific](#) recruitment program. DOE school leaders are empowered to retain promising teachers in their schools by providing them with leadership opportunities. The DOE has also expanded pipeline programs, although interviewees expressed concern about the quality of new applicants from the city’s teacher preparation programs. Across the city, schools from both sectors reported that they face similar gaps in high-needs subject areas such as special education, math, and science. The charter sector does not collect uniform data on teaching. Anecdotally, vacancies do not seem to be a significant issue but charter leaders worry about quality, fit, and retention.



Do schools have the kinds of leaders they need?

NYCDOE has multiple pipeline programs for preparing school leaders. Recently, the DOE increased the required teaching experience of applicants to seven years, which they hope will improve quality (although this could also limit opportunities for younger talent). All district principals are vetted by the district but hired by school teams, which is thought to improve fit. However some community leaders reported ineffectual leaders persisting in their district. The nonprofit [Relay Graduate School of Education](#) also operates a cross-sector school leader development program. Charter sector leaders perceive that quality within the sector varies, and are concerned that struggling principals may be circulating throughout the city rather than being removed from the pool.

Data & Scoring

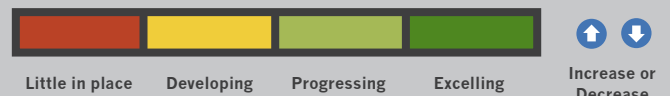
Where did we get this information?

- ▶ Interviews with district, charter, and community leaders
- ▶ Policy documents from district, charter, and state websites
- ▶ School data from each city
- ▶ A 400-parent survey administered in March, 2017 in Cleveland, Denver, Indianapolis, Memphis, New Orleans, Oakland, and Washington, D.C.

How did we score the system reforms and goals?

- ▶ Each indicator is scored with a rubric on a 4-point scale. We added the scores for the indicators to get an overall goal score. See the [Methodology & Resources](#) page for details.

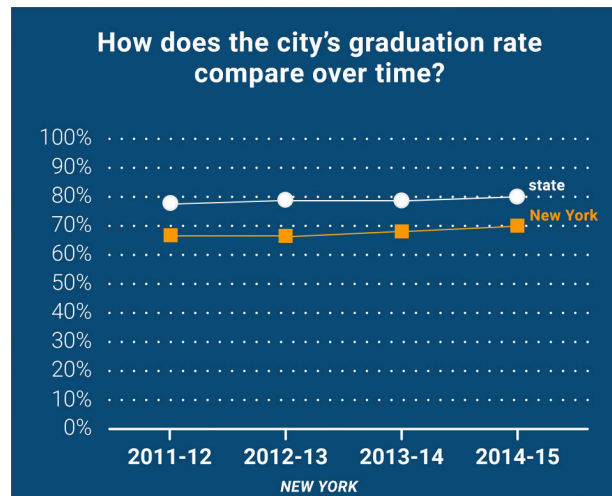
Score Levels



Key Takeaways: Student & School Outcomes

Low-income students in New York City perform slightly better on standardized assessments than their peers nationally, and school proficiency rates in math and reading improved relative to the state. Graduation rates remained essentially flat, lagging behind the state by 10 percentage points in 2014-15. Most student sub-groups in the city are enrolled in high school advanced math coursework at rates similar to the high school population. However, this is not true of all racial and ethnic groups: Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races had disproportionately high enrollment.

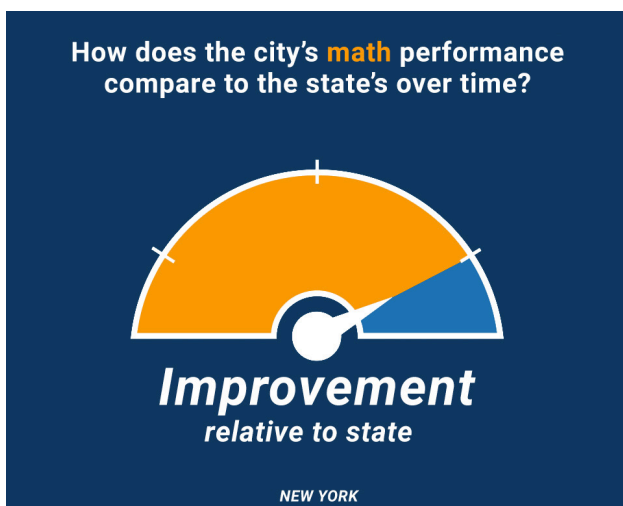
Is the education system continuously improving?



► Graduation rates in the city remained flat, relative to the state. In 2014-15, the city's graduation rate was behind the state's.

Data: Percent of first-time 9th grade students graduating in four years, citywide and statewide.

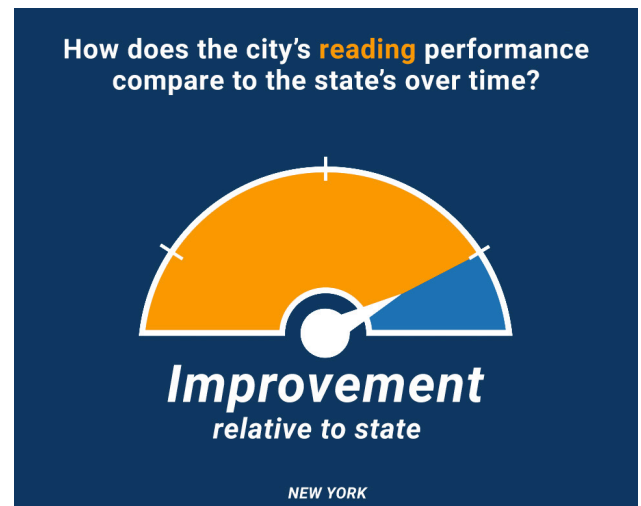
Source: EDFacts Initiative, U.S. Department of Education, Assessment and Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates Data, 2011-12 to 2014-15.



► Between 2012-13 and 2014-15, the math proficiency rate gap between the city and state was closing. In 2014-15 the city's proficiency rate was 5 percentage points below the state's.

Data: This figure reflects the city's estimated gains in proficiency rates across elementary and middle schools, standardized at the state level and controlling for student demographics.

Source: New York State Education Department, 2012-13 to 2014-15.

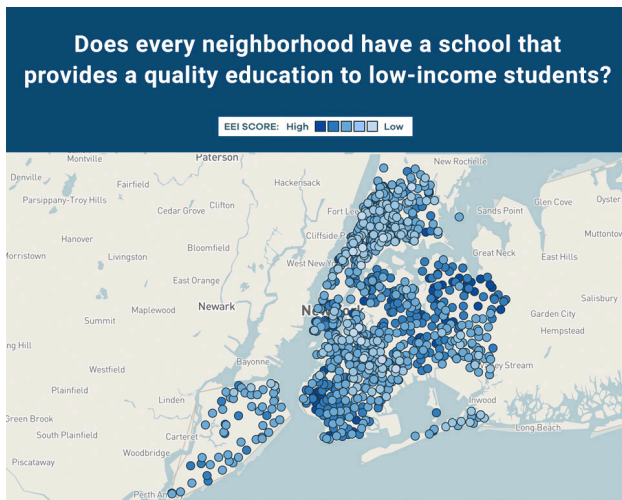


► Between 2012-13 and 2014-15, the reading proficiency rate gap between the city and state was closing. In 2014-15 the city's proficiency rate was 3 percentage points below the state's.

Data: This figure reflects the city's estimated gains in proficiency rates across elementary and middle schools, standardized at the state level and controlling for student demographics.

Source: New York State Education Department, 2012-13 to 2014-15.

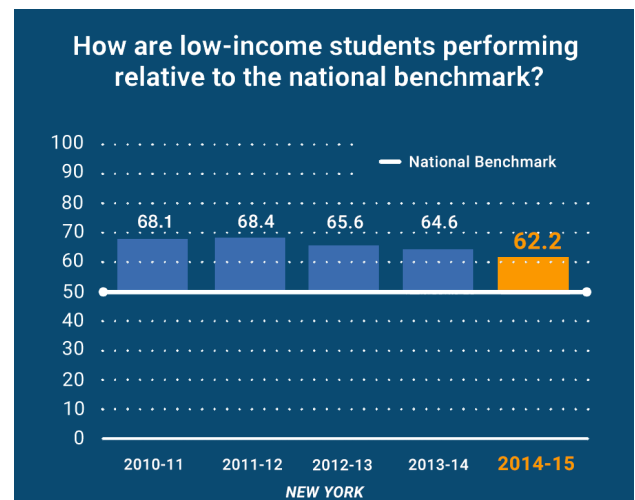
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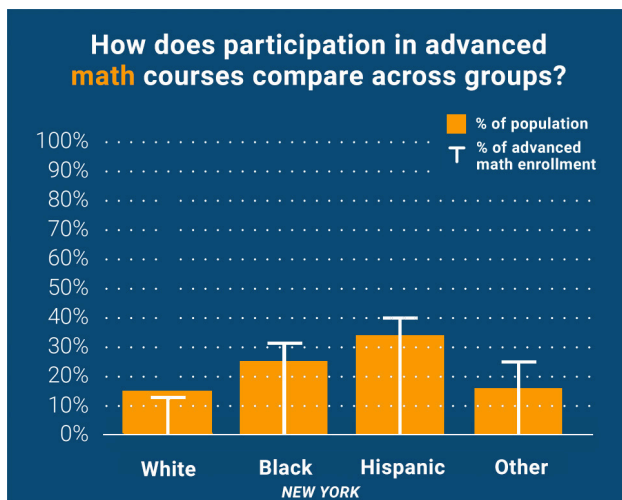
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Source: New York State Education Department, 2012-13 to 2014-15.



► In 2013-14, Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races (shown here as "Other") had disproportionately high enrollment in high school advanced math coursework.

Data: Enrollment of students in math courses above Algebra II. Rates calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in advanced math by the number of students in the school. Sub-group rates determined at the school level.

Source: U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection 2013-2014.

Data & Scoring

Where did we get this data?

- Publicly available state and federal data, making our results comparable and reproducible.
- The most up-to-date data available for all 18 cities at the time of our data collection. See [Methodology & Resources](#) for more information.

What makes the data citywide?

- We include all charter and district schools within the municipal boundary of a city.
- In Houston, Indianapolis, Memphis, New Orleans, and San Antonio we use school data from multiple districts within the municipal boundary.

About New York City

As the largest public school system in the country, New York City is a leader in managing quality and choice within a complex system. Under former schools chancellor Joel Klein, New York City embarked on a portfolio management strategy that opened it to improved choice and increased school-level autonomy. While choice and autonomy remained under Chancellor Carmen Fariña, new priorities focus on universal Pre-K, investing in struggling schools, and building community schools. The first charter school in NYC opened in 1999. Charters have grown to 10 percent of total enrollment but are limited by caps on authorizing.

School Choice in the City

New York City offers a citywide Pre-K and kindergarten choice process for all families, and 3-K for income-eligible families. Students are assigned to a neighborhood elementary school, but there are several citywide selective-enrollment choice schools in the lower grades, as well as three unzoned or partially unzoned districts (1, 7, 23). Students have limited choices for middle school, and all district high schools are available for choice. Charter schools are typically open enrollment, but some have neighborhood preferences.

Governance Model

The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) operates under the control of Mayor Bill De Blasio, who appoints the Chancellor of Education, currently Richard Carranza. Mayoral control has been in effect for 15 years, and the current contract runs through June 2019. There are 32 community school districts within the city that oversee schools in each region. There are three authorizers for charter schools in the city: NYCDOE (which can no longer authorize new schools), State University of New York, and the New York State Education Department.

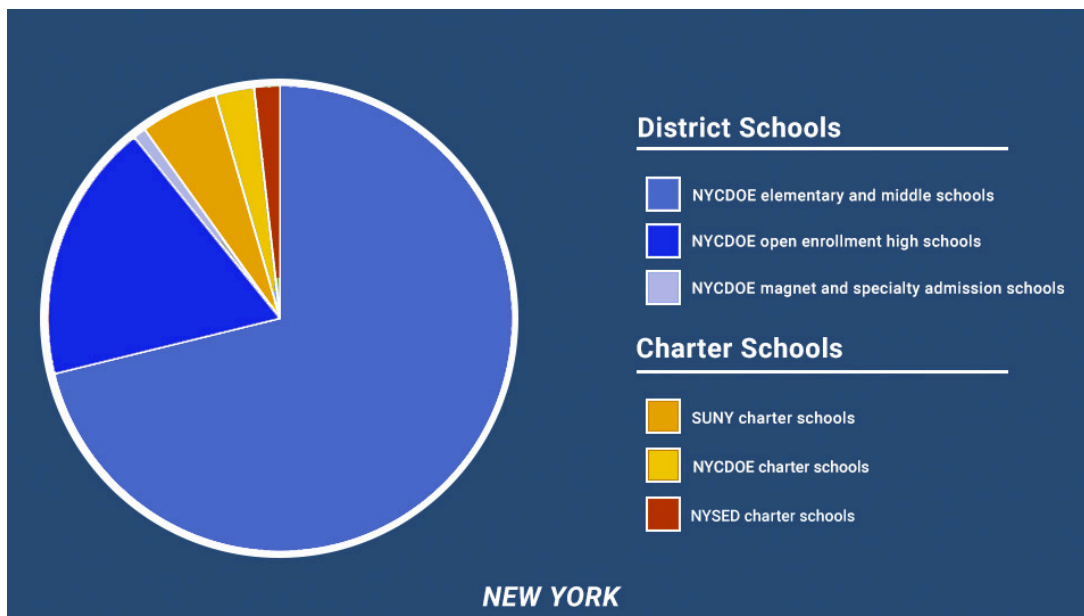
2015 District and Charter Student Body

Enrollment: 1,308,212 students

Race and ethnicity: 42% Hispanic, 31% black, 15% white, 12% other

Low-income: 72% free and reduced-price lunch

2017 School Composition



Source: Enrollment data from the Education Equality Index, 2014-15.
School data from researcher analysis of public records, 2016-17.

About This Project

The Citywide Education Progress Report looks at how a city is doing across three goals:

- The education system is continuously improving
- All students have access to a high-quality education
- The education strategy is rooted in the community

Across each goal we present indicators of what the cities are doing (what we call “system reforms”) and how they are doing (what we call “outcomes”).

Our city reports focus on education strategies for the 2017-18 school year. Our analyses reflect developments through June 2018. These are updates to our original reports from the 2016-17 school year.

To understand how well cities are doing, we used state and federal data to track school improvement, graduation rates, and student access to high-quality schools. Our student and school data cover the 2011-2012 to 2014-2015 school years. To understand city strategies and identify early progress, we relied on interviews, surveys, public documents, and news articles from 2014-2015 to the present. This analysis uses data for district and charter schools to look at all schools within municipal boundaries, rather than just one sector or district.

We cannot say that employing a certain strategy will lead to a particular result, or even whether a particular strategy is effective in these cities. But the reports can help us to see how a strategy is working, what problem areas remain, and which cities are seeing promising results.

The 18 cities in this study include Atlanta, Boston, Camden, Cleveland, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, New York City, Oakland, Philadelphia, San Antonio, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C.

To learn more about the project, compare other cities, and read the cross-city analysis, visit:
research.crpe.org/projects/stepping-up



The Center on Reinventing Public Education is a research and policy analysis center at the University of Washington Bothell developing systemwide solutions for K–12 public education. Learn more about our work at crpe.org.