



## Mayor de Blasio: Diversity Over Merit at NYC's Best Schools

New York City's best high schools — the “specialized” ones, as they're known — may not be the best for long. That is, if Mayor Bill de Blasio (shown) has his way, as he wants to dumb down admissions standards to increase “diversity.”



*City Journal* [provides](#) some background:

For decades, admission to New York City's eight elite “specialized high schools” has been based strictly on a high-stakes test administered to the city's eighth-graders. The meritocratic premise is simple: regardless of who you are or how much your parents make, if you hit a certain score on the test, you're guaranteed a place in one of these high schools, all among the best in the United States. But if Mayor Bill de Blasio gets his way, New York will scrap this venerable system for one that is as close to a race-based quota scheme as constitutionally possible.

Progressives criticize the admissions test as an instrument of “segregation” because black and Latino kids are underrepresented among students accepted at schools like Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, and Brooklyn Tech. Indeed, in 2016, Stuyvesant had only 20 black students among a student body of more than 3,000.

So now “the mayor, backed by his new schools chancellor, Richard Carranza, announced that he plans to scrap the entrance test for the eight elite schools and replace it with a system offering admission to the kids in the top 7 percent of every junior school in the city,” the *Journal* also reports.

Interestingly, Bolshevik Bill (de Blasio honeymooned in Cuba and once raised money for the Marxist Sandinistas) and company aren't talking about increasing the number of white kids in the elite schools. What's that, I say? Non-Hispanic whites constitute approximately 40 percent of NYC's population. Yet, for example, they amount to only 21 percent and 18.54 percent of, respectively, [Bronx Science's](#) and [Stuyvesant's](#) student bodies. (In fairness, with an inordinate number of white teens no doubt attending private school, they [represent only](#) 16.16 percent of NYC's general government-school population.)

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The group that's actually “overrepresented” (a leftist propaganda term) is Asian-descent students: Reflecting the elite schools in general, they constitute 73 percent and 62 percent of, respectively, Stuyvesant's and Bronx Science's student bodies despite Asians being only 11.8 percent of NYC's



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population.

Is this a problem? Bolshevik Bill and his lackeys apparently think so (We should ask: Bill, what exactly is your problem with Asians?). So now they want to dumb down admissions.

Now, I actually attended Bronx Science in the 1980s, and I can tell you that nothing magical occurs there. The school cannot cultivate nonexistent potential, and the kids there are smarter; in fact, it's still the case that of all the groups of which I've ever been a part, Bronx Sci. had the most impressive pool of intellects. But insofar as you stress diversity over merit and make the school "look like the rest of NYC," as Bolshevik Bill desires, it will begin to perform just like any other Big Apple high school (poorly).

Bolshevik Bill wrote a [piece](#) at Chalkbeat in which he complained about the current merit-based system; it's filled with falsehoods and fallacies. He claims that smart kids are being "locked out" of the city's most prestigious schools. This is as much of a lie as saying that I got locked out of the ATP Tour because I couldn't play tennis as well as Roger Federer.

De Blasio calls the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) a "monumental injustice" that must be scrapped. A Marxist subscribing to equality-of-outcome dogma would think so. This is the same thinking (feelings-disgorgement, really) that gave us the [Obama-born qualification standards for air-traffic controllers](#), where unemployed, scientifically illiterate ex-jocks are favored over those with aviation experience.

Playing the bean counter, Bolshevik Bill laments the racial and ethnic composition of the elite schools and that half their students come from only 21 of the city's 600 middle schools. He points out that just "14 percent of students at Bronx Science come from the Bronx" and asks, "Can anyone defend this? ... Can anyone say this is the America we signed up for?"

I can — and do. I lived within walking distance of Bronx Sci., but I always marveled at the kids who'd commute via public transportation as much as one and a half hours *each way* to attend; it reflected great dedication.

Specialty schools are just that: special. Their purpose isn't to draw a student body that looks like the surrounding area, the city at large, some closet communist's callow conception of fairness, or that looks like anything — *except the best*. A healthy civilization seeks to cultivate the given people's gifts, understanding that we all have different roles and paths. It may endeavor to level the playing field, but not the outcome.

Making his case for eliminating the SHSAT, de Blasio also writes, "Some people are good at taking tests, but earn poor grades. Other people struggle with testing, but achieve top grades." This is relatively meaningless. A great friend who attended Bronx Sci. with me later taught in NYC's government schools; he'd have told you that most of those schools stink and, in many cases, all that's required for top-seven-percent status is to show up and stay conscious in class. With social promotion and grade inflation rampant, especially in the inner city, grades are inadequate for comparing students across schools.

The SHSAT, in contrast, is a yardstick the same for all, success at which is a product of both IQ and application. Whether or not it's a perfect measure is irrelevant — perfection is not a thing of this world.

Bolshevik Bill also claims that poorer kids are disadvantaged if they can't afford SHSAT preparation, but deceitfully neglects to mention that it can be had *at no cost*. Moreover, and again reflecting the other elite schools, 45 percent of Bronx Sci. students are already [classified](#) as "economically



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disadvantaged.” How did they ever manage to pass muster?

The obsession with Diversity™ is destructive and foolhardy. As Professor Walter E. Williams has [pointed out](#), there’s no example anywhere, at any time in history, of all groups being represented proportionately in worldly endeavor. In fact, imbalance is the nature-dictated norm. This is why, to provide just one example, Jews are two-tenths of one percent of the world’s population but have been 22 percent of its Nobel Laureate winners.

De Blasio boasts that his reforms will cause “our premier public high schools to start looking like New York City” (whose educational attainment, again, generally stinks), “will raise the bar at the specialized high schools in every way,” and “will make these schools even stronger.” Yeah, we’ve heard that line before.

It was a lie then, too.

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