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District 3 Middle School Admissions Q and A

Responses to questions that District 3 parents submitted around Middle School Admissions.

1. How will screened schools make offers? Will they have the same rubric for all applicants?

All screened schools will maintain their own rubric for the admissions process that will determine how students are ranked and admitted.

If schools choose to have different components in their admissions rubric for different subsections of their applicant pool, they can do so as long as their rubric is public and made available to parents prior to applying. We are not asking schools to change their rubric as part of a diversity plan.

2. How will offers be made?

Offers will continue to be made based on each school's current admissions methods and priorities.

The first 10% of offers at each school will be made to applicants in Group A. The next 15% of offers at each school will be made to applicants in Group B. At screened schools, offers to applicants in each group will be made in the order of how each school ranked applicants. If schools do not have enough applicants in Groups A or B, they will not be required to make offers to students in these groups. At schools that use random selection, offers to applicants in each group will be made randomly.

The remaining 75% of offers will be made to remaining applicants, including applicants in Groups A and B. At screened schools, offers to remaining applicants will be made in the order of how each school ranked applicants. At schools that use random selection, offers to remaining applicants will be made randomly.

3. Will students scoring 3s and 4s receive priority?

We are not planning to implement a priority for students with Level 3 and 4 scores.

4. Will the target for students with disabilities change? Will that percentage of seats be in addition to the 25% of offers at each school?

Each school will still have seats for students with disabilities. During admissions for Fall 2018, 21% of middle school seats at each District 3 middle school were designated for students with disabilities.

If a student in group A or B is a student with a disability, they will count towards the total student with disabilities target.

5. What is the projected number of students that won't receive a match from their application?

The goal is to make the admissions process more equitable for all students. In each simulation presented, more families received a match to a preferred choice. The shift to blind ranking will also increase choice for all students because families will be considered by all schools they have ranked on their application.

Families are encouraged to apply to many schools to increase their chances of receiving an offer at a school they select.

6. What is the appeals process?

The appeals process will remain the same. All students may appeal to up to three schools, even if they got an offer to a school they listed on their application. Students may appeal to both schools they applied to or didn't apply to in the main round. In the appeals round, students are matched to any available seats using the school's selection criteria from the main round.

Families are encouraged to apply to many schools in the main round to increase their chances of receiving an offer at a school they listed on their application.

7. Will sibling priority be implemented?

Middle school admissions does not have an admissions priority group for siblings.

All screened schools will maintain their own rubric for their admissions process that will determine how students are ranked and admitted.

8. Is the 25% target set for admissions offers or the total seats at a school?

This target would be set for the offers made through the admissions process.

9. What is the timeframe for implementation of the diversity idea?

We are looking to have a proposal by early June.

10. Can the change to admissions be incremental?

The priorities in the scenario represent a significant step forward that we think is the first right step for the district at this time.

11. Will the Center School be included in the changes to admissions?

During the 2018-19 school year, the Center School will join the centralized application system for the first time.

They will then implement diversity targets the following school year, for students entering the school in September 2020.

12. By increasing the reliance on numbers, are we losing the individual aspects of a whole child?

No. All screened schools will maintain their own rubric for their admissions process that will determine how students are ranked and admitted.

Further, the goal of prioritizing seats is to better serve students across the district. We believe that students of different abilities learn from – and with – one another, and a diversity plan will lead to students learning from one another across our middle schools.

13. Why are two major changes being instituted at the same time without knowing how one alone will work?

Implementing blind ranking is an opportunity to move the discussion about broader diversity efforts forward. For the first time in District 3, students will be able to apply to a full range of options and be considered by all schools to which they apply. At the same time, adding Diversity in Admissions priorities would support greater academic diversity across District 3 middle schools.

In other districts that moved to blind ranking, the impact was small, but positive. Families put more choices on their application and matched to a slightly broader range of schools. In other schools and districts using Diversity in Admissions, schools have largely met or exceeded their targets.

Setting diversity targets in admissions will address additional concerns principals have shared around the potential impact of increased applicant pools under the new system.

14. How will the curriculum change and limited school resources be redistributed?

Curriculum decisions and resource allocation are yearly and ongoing decisions made by schools and the DOE. We are excited about the increase in Fair Student Funding that will positively impact some District 3 middle schools, new anti-bias training that we think can support this work across our schools, continued academic intervention services and funding, and Equity and Excellence for All initiatives that also represent increased investment across District 3 schools.

15. Are principals and teachers equipped to successfully transition and educate school populations potentially significantly different from those they are teaching today?

All District 3 schools serve students across all state test performance levels, and we believe that students of different abilities learn from – and with – one another. There will be some changes to the percentage of students in each proficiency level at some schools, and supports will be provided as needed.

16. Has the DOE considered the potential for this system inadvertently leading to stratification within schools? How can we integration be achieved at the school AND classroom levels?

We are aware of the potential for students to gain access to some schools and then continue to be segregated within a building. The conversation about increasing

diversity at – and within – District 3 middle schools will continue beyond any plan that comes into place for the 2018 process.

We will work with our principals to ensure integration within our school buildings.

17. How do we prevent students from “falling in the gap”? More specifically, students who have worked hard to earn 3’s will not have specific targets to assist them, yet may not shine like students with 4’s?

The intention is to make the admissions process more equitable for all students. Families are encouraged to apply to many schools to increase their chances of receiving an offer at a school they select.

Schools consider multiple measures in their rubrics, and many screened schools rank many students scoring a Level 3.