



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

State Senators Call For Open Dialogue And Consensus-Building On School Diversity And Admissions To NYC Specialized High Schools

HEATHER STEWART March 21, 2019

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION, NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, MAYORAL CONTROL, EVERY CHILD DESERVES A QUALITY EDUCATION, SYSTEMIC FAILURES IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**



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Contact: Heather Stewart |917-623-0940| heather@johnliusenate.com

STATE SENATORS CALL FOR OPEN DIALOGUE AND CONSENSUS-BUILDING ON SCHOOL DIVERSITY AND ADMISSIONS TO NYC SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOLS

New York, NY - Today, from the NY State Senate hearing room in Manhattan, Senators John Liu (Chairperson of the Senate's NYC Education Committee), Velmanette Montgomery, Kevin Parker, and Jessica Ramos announced their coordinated intent to conduct broad outreach on the issue of school diversity and admissions to New York City's specialized high schools for the purpose of identifying problems and formulating plans to address such problems.

This past Monday, the New York City Department of Education released the racial breakdown of the 2019-2020 admissions to the city's eight specialized high schools. The admissions data is consistent with that of previous years, and continues to raise concerns of declining enrollment of black and Latinx students.

This newly-released data has once again ignited fierce debate, vitriolic at times. State senators today urged constructive debate rather than divisive rhetoric, and announced that a series of community forums will be held. The schedule will be released next week.

"The lack of diversity in our specialized high schools and schools citywide remains controversial and emotional, and the plan put forth by the City has only made matters worse." Said Senator John Liu (chairperson of NYC Ed Comm and member of Ed Comm) "What we need is open-mindedness and open dialogue in order to build a consensus for a plan going forward. Through our community forums, we will solicit, facilitate, aggregate, and deliberate the concerns and suggestions of school officials, educators, parents, activists, and all stakeholders. I have every confidence that this issue, however controversial, can unite rather than divide communities."

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"The lack of diversity in specialized high schools is a symptom of systemic failures in our educational system and we cannot take this on by ourselves." Said Senator Velmanette Montgomery (member of NYC Ed Comm and Ed Comm) "As we continue this discussion with our constituents and stakeholders, I hope that we take this opportunity to evaluate how our children are being served by the high school system as a whole. It is very important that we reflect on why our young people are subjected to this high stakes environment and why parents see a handful of seats as being the only chance for their children to succeed."

"The recent story about the appalling lack of diversity in New York City's Specialized High Schools shines a spotlight on something we have long known to be a problem- the sharp decline of black and brown students in New York City's specialized schools." Said Senator Jamaal Bailey (member of NYC Ed Comm) "As one of a handful of people of color in the legislature who have attended specialized high schools and as a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, I understand firsthand how such an excellent academic environment can inspire one to succeed, and how greater diversity within such schools can only make the educational atmosphere better. I also remember being one of the few black or brown faces in many of my classes, which further motivates me personally to find answers to the diversity problem that exists now- and has existed since my days as a student. Unfortunately, the current discussion about diversity, while well-intentioned, has become far too polarizing and has created the appearance that there are sides to be taken in this matter that depend on how one feels about the SHSAT or not. I believe this is a conversation that has to continue, and must be about what's in the best interest of the children in New York City."

"Lack of diversity continues to be an intractable problem in New York City public schools. However, Specialized High Schools serve only 5% of high schools and 1% of all students city-wide." Said Senator Andrew Gounardes (member of NYC Ed Comm) "We must facilitate an open dialogue that examines the broader issue that pervades the entire schoosystem and build consensus to develop a holistic, comprehensive solution. Ultimately, our goal must be to ensure that every child, no matter the zip code, has access to the best possible education."

"This is not solely about diversity, but more so about ensuring that students who come from black and brown communities have the opportunity to receive a first class education." Said Senator Kevin Parker "We want to ensure that our students, who work hard and display a strong commitment to their school and home communities, have the opportunity for their full resume to be considered as part of the admission process."

"I am joining Senator Liu today to call for increased conversation around the issue of school diversity in New York City's specialized high schools." Said Senator Jessica Ramos "Our black and brown children are not being accepted into specialized high schools at the rate they should be, and we need to accept that one test cannot possibly capture the potential of each student. I am looking forward to having more conversations about this issue with my colleagues, parents, and students."