



THE COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**Statement On
U.S. Department Of Education Office of Civil Rights Complaint
of the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, et al.
Regarding New York City Specialized High Schools**

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, shares the complainants' concerns about the educational soundness of determining admissions for New York City's Specialized High Schools solely on the basis of the rank-order score on a single test, the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT).

The SHSAT itself is not a valid and reliable indicator of academic ability. The New York City Department of Education has not demonstrated that the SHSAT validly and reliably predicts the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to master the curriculum and satisfactorily meet the learning standards at the Specialized High Schools.

A score on a single test should not be the sole criterion for admission decisions. Educational experts and social scientists have been critical about the use of a single, high-stakes test in making key educational decisions. The use of multiple measures of achievement would better assess a student's academic merit and potential and, therefore, better predict success at Specialized High Schools. These measures could include, but are not limited to, elementary and middle school grades, tests related to actual middle school content, recommendations, and attendance. A multiple measures approach would favor high achieving students, including some Asian Pacific American students, that have demonstrated their strong track records of academic success and high academic potential to succeed in a Specialized High School. Also, a multiple measures approach would help those students, including some Asian Pacific American students, who are academically qualified but just happen to not perform well on that single test, or have not had access to formal test preparation courses. These students are overlooked for admission when the SHSAT remains the sole criterion.

A multiple measures approach is an equally effective approach that would promote equity and diversity at Specialized High Schools. CACF believes it is necessary for our young people to develop social skills and the ability to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Schools can offer invaluable opportunities for diverse student populations to interact and learn from each other. Moving towards a multiple measures approach would help admit classes of students that are both diverse and capable of achieving academic excellence. Therefore, CACF supports the use of multiple measures that capture a student's academic merit and potential to determine admissions into New York City's Specialized High Schools.