

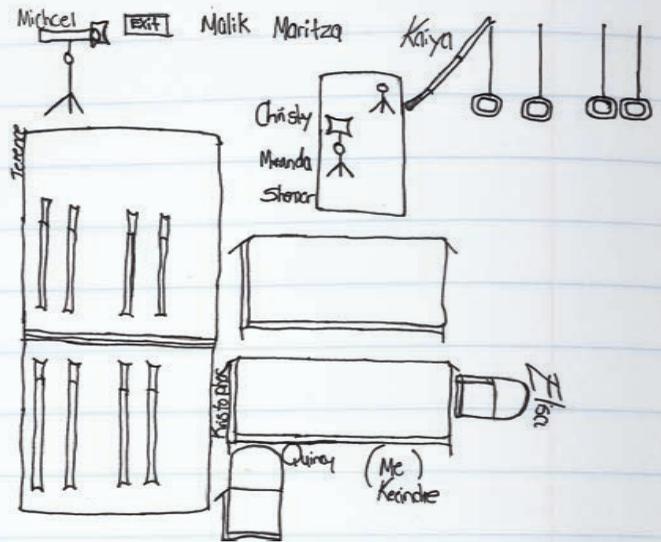
Stronger  
Together

# THE PUBLIC SCHOOL AVENGERS

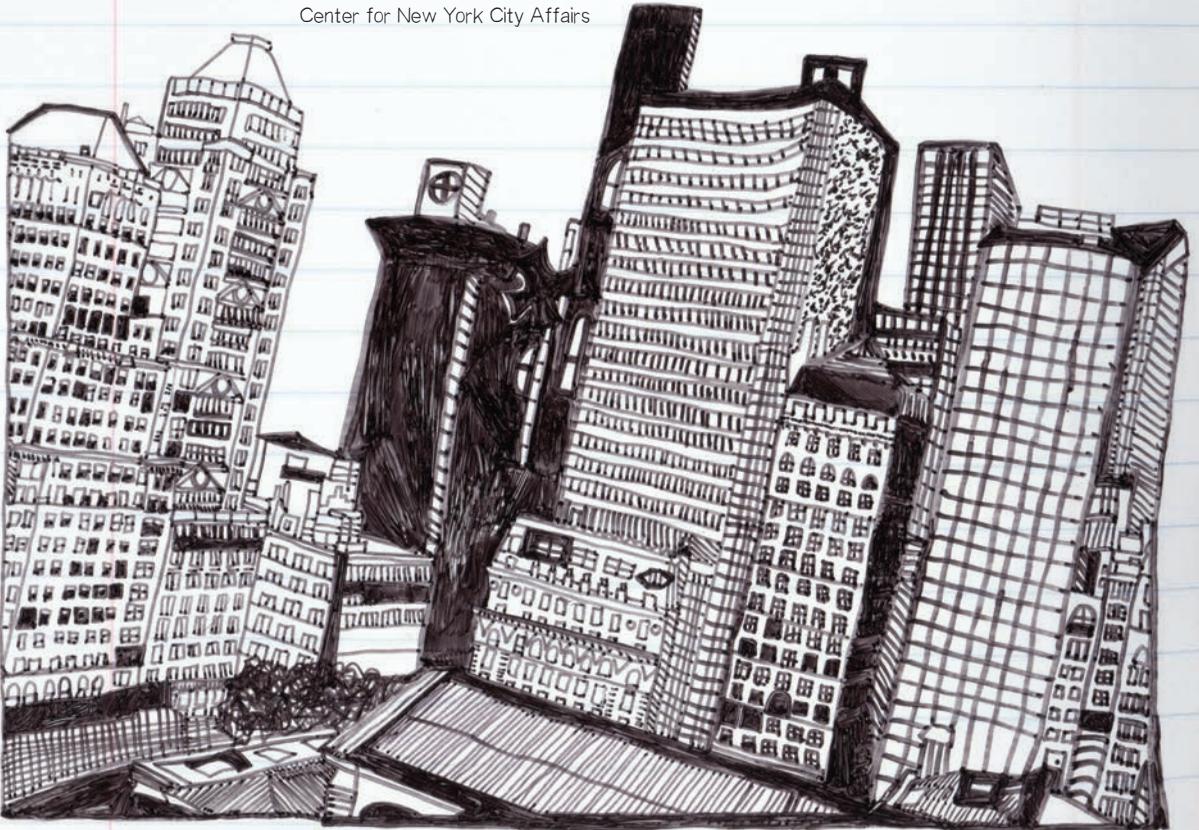
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"All of the different problems that have come up in my research all come back to education. If we were able to teach kids better, then there would be more opportunities for them as adults. More jobs and less inequality in their futures."

Interview setup at the Center for New York City Affairs



Nicole Mader  
Senior Research Fellow  
Center for New York City Affairs



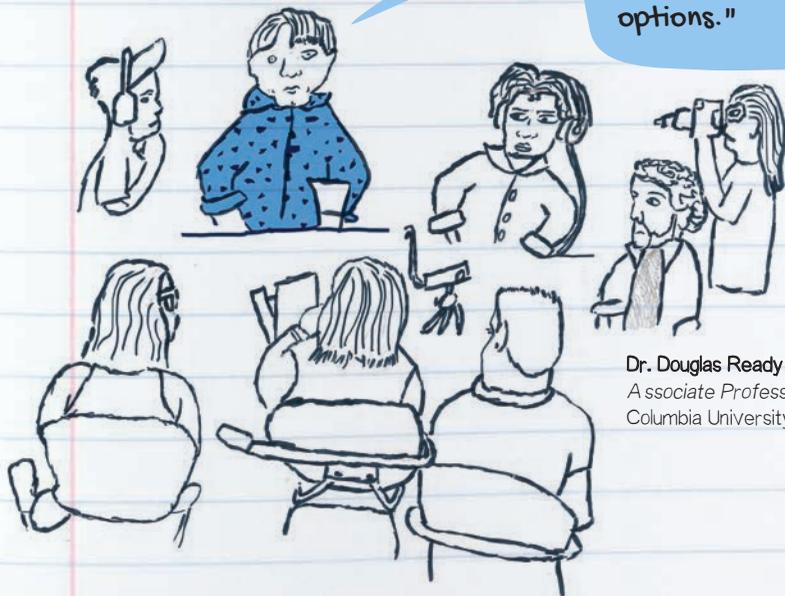
# INTRODUCTION

Over a quarter of a million students are enrolled in the 400+ New York City (NYC) public high schools. Who decides what school a student can attend? What factors influence this decision? How does segregation in NYC public high schools happen in such a diverse city?

CUP collaborated with Teaching Artist Nupur Mathur and students from the Red Hook Community Justice Center to peel back the layers on school segregation. Students got out of the classroom and into the politics of education to speak with people invested in the future of NYC's public high schools, from students and parents to educators and policy makers.

This booklet is a guide to school choice, the impact decisions make on a student's future, plus the superheroes and villains of school segregation.

"The definition of poverty is a lack of options. The definition of education means opening the door for options. If you get an education, you've got options."



Dr. Douglas Ready

*Associate Professor of Education and Public Policy  
Columbia University*

# WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO GET INTO A PUBLIC SCHOOL?

School zones limit who can enroll in NYC public elementary and middle schools based on your home address.



Find your school zone at <http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolSearch/>



"With zoned schools, the area where a student lives determines where they can go to school. If you have a lot of residential segregation, residential segregation then becomes school segregation. We've done some research showing that some of the neighborhoods are more diverse than they are in the school, so zoning isn't the only problem. Students are opting out of their public zoned schools and choosing other options like charter or private schools."

Nicole Mader  
Senior Research Fellow  
Center for New York City Affairs



"A lot of inequality outcomes for kids are there before high school even starts . . . The elementary schools that you attend make a huge impact on the high schools that students can attend. Segregation starts at a young age."

Dr. Douglas Ready

A associate Professor of Education and Public Policy  
Columbia University



Public high schools are not zoned and are open to any NYC student no matter where you live. Students fill out 1 application and select their top 12 schools out of over 400 that they want to attend. There is a separate application for Specialized High Schools that includes an additional entrance test or audition.



View school ratings at <https://insideschools.org/>



Follow a step-by-step guide on how to apply at <http://welcometocup.org/OldSchoolNewSchool/>

Even though it is the same application, each high school has a different admissions method to evaluate and select students.

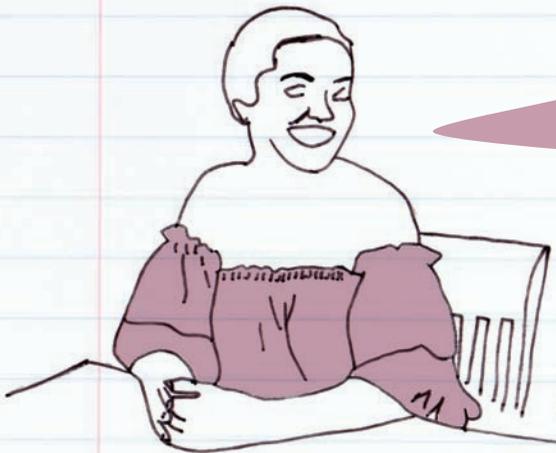


Find info on Public High School admissions at <http://schoolfinder.nyc.gov/>



# WHAT INFLUENCES WHAT SCHOOL A STUDENT ATTEND?

From applications to school location, there are various factors that influence the school selection process.



"Students of color aren't encouraged to take [Advanced Placement] classes and they're not given the resources they need. In our school it was apparent that students of color had less resources than white students. White students had money for extra help like tutors but many students of color didn't have that extra support."

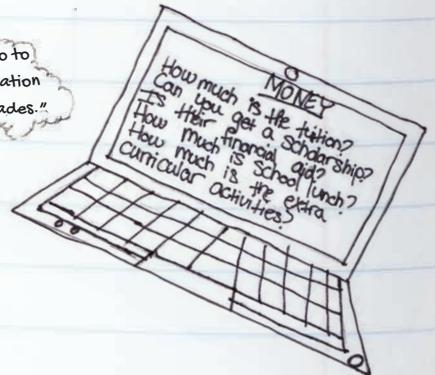
Aneth Naranjo  
Director of Youth Engagement  
IntegrateNYC4me

"grades affect which school you can get into."

"Most kids who want to go to school have greater motivation to be successful in their grades."



Malik Boston  
Student





"We are separated by policies that put some people in a position of privilege while oppressing other people. The most sought after high schools in the city have tests to get into them, which act as a barrier to both entrance and to equity. They maintain segregation."

Lisa Donlan  
Community Education Council District 1 President  
Teachers Unite Board Member



OUR ~~MY~~ SCHOOL

"It's not just about what the kids look like, it's about the performance of the teachers, the principal and the school as a whole that impact school choice. Some students might be willing to travel farther out of their neighborhood because they're worried about the quality of education they will receive from their local school that may have less resources or lower ratings."



Nicole Mader  
Senior Research Fellow  
Center for New York City Affairs

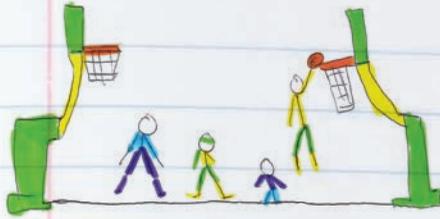
# WHAT MAKES EACH SCHOOL IN NYC DIFFERENT?

"The majority of funding comes straight from property taxes. So neighborhoods with rich families get more money and more resources for their schools and get a chance to hire better teachers, create better programs, and more things to attract students to their schools. Then there's private funds through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), so wealthier families can afford to donate more to their school. The formula is very different at every school."

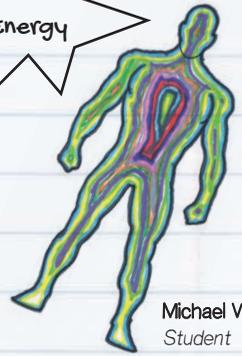


"Segregation impacts everybody. There's a lot of research that shows that diverse learning environments have a very positive impact on students no matter their background. We live in a multicultural society, it's becoming more diverse every year, yet our neighborhoods and schools are still segregated at multiple levels."

Anya Kamenetz  
Author and Lead Digital Education Reporter  
National Public Radio (NPR)



Villian Energy



Michael Williams  
Student



"There is a segregation of resources. Some schools get a lot of resources while other schools don't. That happens in different ways at both a city and state level, with our government not giving us the resources that we need."

"One of the biggest problems in my district is that the schools are over-populated. Some schools are 200% over crowded, which means that every classroom space is beyond capacity. That's a huge impact."

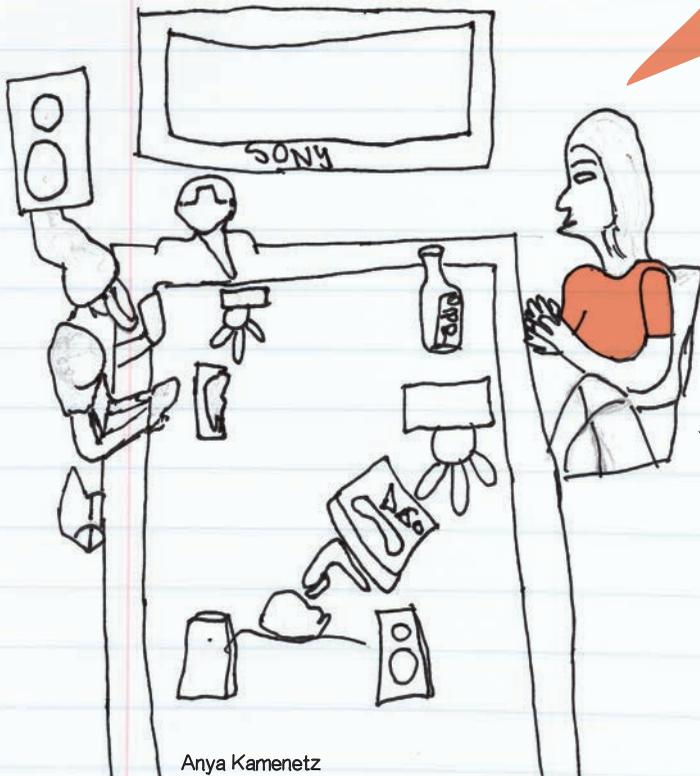


Carlos Menchaca  
New York City Council Member  
District 38

# HOW DID WE GET THIS WAY?

The United States Supreme Court declared in the case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that segregation in schools was unlawful and that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." How have NYC public schools changed since this ruling in 1954?

"It has been many generations since the *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, and we see that schools are not the way that we want them to be. They don't reflect the ideal society that we want and we continue to produce inequality from generation to generation."



Anya Kamenetz  
Author and Lead Digital Education Reporter  
National Public Radio (NPR)

Villian Two Sided Education



Michael Williams  
Student



Superhero  
Justice and  
Equality

Shemar Miller  
Student

"Different races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, new English language learners, and students with disabilities should be served in all schools, not just some select schools. We are still segregating schools, whether it's by zoning or by choice or by screening. What we've created in New York City are schools with limited resources that are serving mostly high need students, rather than all schools serving these students. This is the inequity that is unacceptable. This is born of our history, of our institutional racism, white supremacy, and privilege that the system propagates itself. It hurts everybody."



Lisa Donlan  
Community Education Council District 1 President  
Teachers Unite Board Member

...continued



"A lot of what influences racial segregation in New York City schools is housing. The city has very high concentrations of poverty that surround schools that make it very difficult for those neighborhoods to have successful schools. That's a poverty issue in combination with a race issue. That is the most tenacious part of segregation."

"People with money have better access to good schools than those who don't. Parents with money have the time and the ability to figure out which the best schools are for their kids."

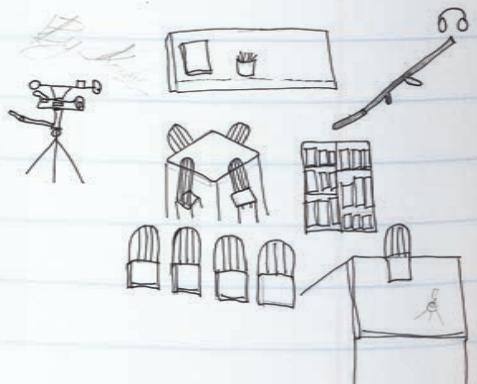


Kristopher Whitehurst  
Student

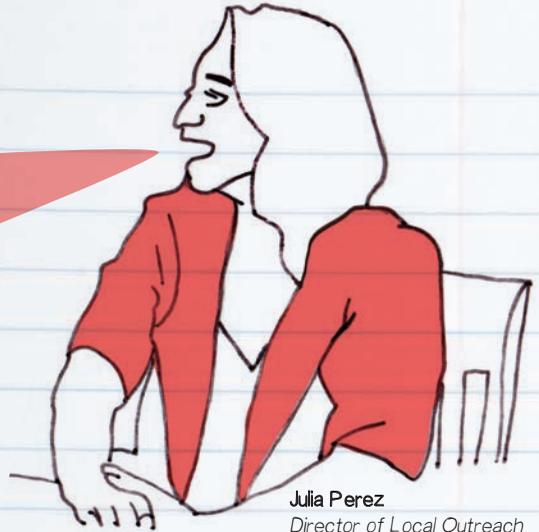


Clara Hemphill  
Founder and Editor  
InsideSchools

Nicole Mader  
Senior Research Fellow  
Center for New York City Affairs



"Your chance to get into schools is put to only one test. The same test for every student from every school. But students learn differently and have different resources to get support for those tests. You can't expect the same results from the same test when students are not given the same support and the same resources."



Julia Perez  
Director of Local Outreach  
IntegrateNYC4me

## HOW COULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

### INCLUSIVE PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS



Supergirl  
Wonder  
Woman

Christy Liu  
Student

"Students of color are often not represented by parents in their own PTA. Students of color often have parents that work multiple jobs or don't speak English so it's hard for them to participate. We need to find various ways to include ALL parents in the PTA."

## EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES



Clara Hemphill  
Founder and Editor  
InsideSchools

"Our school funding depends on local tax dollars. In the United States there is a huge disparity between rich neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods in the amount of money that is spent on education, from the amount we can pay teachers to the quality of education overall. In other countries, the funding is mostly national and rich kids and poor kids get roughly the same quality of education. We could do that here."

## INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY



Lisa Dorlan  
Community Education Council District 1 President  
Teachers Unite Board Member

"I prefer equity of access instead of diversity. Even if something is diverse, it may not be that everyone has equal access to the same kinds of resources, facilities, and teachers with experience. How do we make schools better and fair? I would like to find schools that look like the city's they are in, that serve the whole spectrum of kids and families that they serve."



"There's a lot of argument over how much money actually matters. Money in general doesn't matter but it's how you use the money. Sometimes that means having smaller classes with more teachers, which costs money. There's evidence that smaller class sizes actually do help low-income kids learn. Teachers matter a lot to kids learning. Resources matter, but it's not all about textbooks. It's other things."



Dr. Douglas Ready  
*Associate Professor of Education and Public Policy  
Columbia University*



"The pre-kindergarten that all 4 year olds are now getting in New York City is great. This is a step forward. The achievement gaps actually start way before school starts, so this early step can help in eventually getting into a great high school."



"I think an easy policy change for high school would be to change the screens that are required to get into some high schools and make it more accessible for students of different academic abilities to get in. A lot of the reason why high schools are so segregated by race and socioeconomic status is that the academic records from middle school prevents a lot of kids from getting into better schools. We should make it easier for diverse academic abilities to get into a lot of the city's high schools."



Nicole Mader  
*Senior Research Fellow  
Center for New York City Affairs*

# HOW CAN YOU CREATE CHANGE?

**JOIN A COMMUNITY  
EDUCATION COUNCIL!**



Apply to be on your local Community Education Council at  
<http://nycparentleaders.org/community-education-councils.html>



**ATTEND YOUR LOCAL  
COMMUNITY BOARD!**



"We want everyone to talk to policymakers and influence their decisions."

**SPEAK WITH  
POLICYMAKERS!**



Contact your local council member at  
<https://council.nyc.gov/>



Nicole Mader  
Senior Research Fellow  
Center for New York City Affairs

**SUBMIT AN IDEA AND  
VOTE IN PARTICIPATORY  
BUDGETING!**

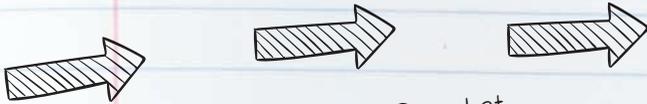


Submit your idea for Participatory Budgeting at  
<https://council.nyc.gov/pb/>



"I will do my best to represent your voices, but there is nothing better than you being at the table. Your experiences in the school system need to be part of the conversation in government. Be part of your community education councils. Be part of your education committees. Be part of the community boards."

"If you are committed to ending segregation, which I believe you all are, then you need to show up. It's not going to happen by not doing anything. You need to show up, be heard, do your research because you are smart, and share your experiences because they matter. It's not just about data, it's about your experience. You can make an impact and create change."



Find your Community Board at  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml>



"As a young person, I wanted to have a voice and organize my people because my people need to get involved. So I think the most cool thing to do in this city is to be a council member. We are at the ground. We are at the forefront of what is happening in the city. My job is to advocate for my district, for the people of New York City, and to make things better."

"We bring 2 million dollars to every district in the city, and you as a community get a chance to decide how to spend that money on a capital project like improving schools. As young as 6th graders can vote in Participatory Budgeting, so even if you're not 18, you can still vote."



Carlos Menchaca  
New York City Council Member  
District 38

# ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE AT YOUR SCHOOL!



Julisa Perez  
Director of Local Outreach  
IntegrateNYC4me

"Meet with your principal on the changes you want to see in your school. Advocate for a staff body that represents the student population. Ask for cultural sensitivity training for teachers. Ask for cultural clubs in your school. Ask for integration."



Create an IntegrateNYC4Me chapter in your school at  
<http://www.integratenyc4me.com/build/>



# CREDITS



**The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)** is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities.

This project is one of CUP's Urban Investigations – project-based after-school programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and Teaching Artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the fields of arts and social justice.

To learn more about CUP, visit [welcometoCUP.org](http://welcometoCUP.org).

**The Red Hook Community Justice Center (RHCJC)** is the nation's first multi-jurisdictional community court and is part of The Center for Court Innovation that seeks to help create a more effective and humane justice system by designing and implementing operating programs, performing original research, and providing reformers around the world with the tools they need to launch new strategies.

To learn more about the RHCJC, visit [courtinnovation.org](http://courtinnovation.org).



**CUP**

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**Project Support:** Frampton Tolbert



**RHCJC**

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**Associate Director of Youth and Community Programs:** Sabrina Carter

**Training and Education Associate:** Joshua Pacheco

**Students:** Miranda Almonte, Maritza Romero Baez, Malik Boston, Kenneth Frazier, Keandre Hayne, Terence Hoskey, Kaiya Jordan, Quincy Kingston, Christy Liu, Shemar Miller, Elisa Salgado, Kristopher Whitehurst, Michael Williams.

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