

Don't Believe the Hype!

The Real Deal on Morris High School & Bloomberg's Failed Education Policies

Claim: Bloomberg likes to contrast the graduation rate at the old Morris HS to graduation rates at the high schools currently housed in the building, as evidence of the success of his education policies.

Reality: The types of students enrolled at the old and new Morris campus are very different. Of the students enrolled in the four schools currently housed in the Morris building, only 1.7% are in self-contained special education classes—revealing their higher level of need, compared to 14% of students enrolled in the old Morris HS in 2001-02.¹ Also, dividing up the building has caused its own problems; for example, according to a teacher at one of these schools, there is no longer any librarian and the library is completely unutilized: *"Lots of books with no one tending to them or using them."*

Claim: In response to criticism that students at phase-out schools suffer a loss of resources and services, Deputy Chancellor Suransky has said that graduation rates actually improved at Morris HS in its final year: *"... it was a school that used to take 700 kids into the ninth grade every year and graduate 70 four years later. And as it was phased out, in the second year of the phase out it graduated 120 kids ...In the third year it graduated over 200 and in its last year it graduated 300."*²

Reality: According to state figures, only 121 students in the last class at Morris HS graduated and only 3% of them attended college.³ Meanwhile, the student discharge rate soared to 55%, compared to 33% of the prior class, a pattern repeated in many of the phase-out schools.⁴ Of the 21 schools closed by this administration between 2003 and 2009, 37% of the students in their final classes graduated on average, 20% dropped out, 33% were discharged, and 10% were still enrolled when the schools closed their doors.⁵

Claim: Bloomberg's educational policies are helping more students leave school college- and career-ready.

Reality: The schools now housed in the Morris building have college readiness rates ranging from 0% (High School for Violin and Dance) and 2.9% (Bronx International High School), to 4.8% (School for Excellence) and 5.7% (Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies.)⁶

¹ NYC DOE School Progress Reports 2010-2011 & NYS School Report Cards 2001-2002.

² GothamSchools, "Chief DOE deputy to parents and teachers: Check our work," March 15, 2011.

³ NYSED, Office of Research and Information Systems, "NYS High School Graduates & Their NYS Public College Participation and Persistence, 2004-5." June 24, 2010.

⁴ Jennifer L. Jennings & Leonie Haimson, "High School Discharges Revisited: Trends in NYC's Discharge Rates," April 2009.

⁵ Urban Youth Collaborative, "No Closer to College: NYC High School Students Call for Real School Transformation, Not School Closings," April 2011. The denominator for discharge rates is the total reported cohort plus the number of discharges. Discharges are taken out of the official DOE reported cohorts on which graduation, still enrolled and dropout rates are based. Each of these outcomes was based on revised cohort figures which included discharges.

⁶ NYC DOE School Progress Reports, 2010-2011.

After a decade of school closures and other free-market policies, only 21% of NYC high school students overall and only 13% of Black and Latino HS students are college ready after four years.⁷ 79% of NYC students entering community colleges need remediation, and the percent of high school graduates who require triple remediation in math, reading and writing has increased 47% since 2005.⁸

Claim: The Mayor's educational policies are equitable and fair.

Reality: Most of the schools closed in recent years and those proposed for closure this year enroll higher than average concentrations of English language learners, students who entered the schools overage, and/ or students with disabilities.⁹ ***In fact, Mayor Bloomberg's school closing policy is a shell game that displaces high-needs students from one school to another, without addressing their educational needs.***

Claim: The new schools started during the Bloomberg administration are uniformly more successful.

Reality: More than half of the middle and high schools that DOE proposes closing this year were started during his administration. Many of the new schools have small percentages of the highest-needs students. However, when the new schools serve comparable populations of students in self-contained special education, their students tend to succeed at the same rate as the high schools that preceded Bloomberg.¹⁰

Claim: Under Bloomberg, student learning has increased and the achievement gap has narrowed.

Reality: As measured by scores on national exams, NYC is second to last in student progress compared to ten other cities since 2003, when Bloomberg's policies were first put in place. And the achievement gap has not narrowed significantly between any racial or ethnic group.¹¹

For nearly a decade, Bloomberg has had complete authority over our educational system. Yet of last year's eighth graders, who entered Kindergarten when he first took office in 2002, only 35% read and write at grade level.¹²

Truly, these are Bloomberg's kids and Bloomberg's responsibility.

NYC can't afford any more of Bloomberg's failed education policies.

Prepared by the Coalition for Educational Justice and Class Size Matters, January 2012.

⁷ NY Times, "College-Readiness Low Among State Graduates, Data Show," June 14, 2011. NYC Black and Latino percentage calculated from NYC DOE. Graduation Results. School Level Regents-Based Math/ELA Aspirational Performance Measure 2010.

⁸ NY Times, "In College, Working Hard to Learn High School Material," October 23, 2011.

⁹ Parthenon Group, "NYC DOE "Beat the Odds" Update," March 6, 2008; GothamSchools, "Internal report stokes questions about city's closure strategy," January 26, 2011; NYC Independent Budget Office, "Schools Proposed for Closing Compared With Other City Schools," January 2011; NY Times, "State Approves School Closings, but Puts City on Notice," July 22, 2011; Jackie Bennett, "Closing Schools: DOE Spins Itself an Alternate Universe of Facts," Edwize, December 14, 2011.

¹⁰ Jackie Bennett, "Closing Schools, DOE Spins Itself an Alternate Universe of Facts," Edwize, December 14, 2011; Jackie Bennett, "Meet the New Schools, Same as the Old Schools," November 21, 2011.

¹¹ Class Size Matters, "NYC second to last among cities in student progress on the NAEPs since 2003," January 9, 2011.

¹² NYC DOE, NYC 2011 Mathematics & English Language Arts Citywide Test Results Grades 3-8, Aug. 2011.