



**THE 8 WORST DISTRICTS
FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL IN NYC:
MAYOR de BLASIO'S
MIDDLE SCHOOL FAILURE**



JANUARY 2017

INTRODUCTION

A decade ago, the Fordham Institute released the paper “Mayhem in the Middle,” detailing how the nation’s middle schools are failing and offering prescriptions for how to fix them. The fundamental flaw of the “middle school concept,” the paper argued, is low academic expectations. Many of the ingredients of great middle schools are now known and schools such as P.S./ IS 178 Holliswood in Queens and KIPP Infinity Charter School in Manhattan prove it is in fact possible to educate 13 year olds.

Despite a surplus of research on how to run effective middle schools and examples in his own city, Mayor de Blasio’s education department has fallen down on the job. **StudentsFirstNY analyzed middle school data and found that EIGHT New York City school districts are effectively deserts where there are ZERO quality middle school options.**

If you’re a family living in one of these eight school districts and you can’t afford to move, there are no zone middle school options for you. So how many are impacted by this? There are currently 17,000 students in these failing middle schools and 56,000 students in zone elementary schools who will soon attend them.

What about the selective admissions schools in these neighborhoods, surely they offer a way out? StudentsFirstNY’s analysis found these schools are for the most part a mirage providing little better than the unscreened zone schools.

StudentsFirstNY also looked at the middle schools in these eight districts that have been lavished with resources through Mayor de Blasio’s Renewal program to see if any could be considered a quality option. Sadly not one of them is a good option for families.

Lastly, charter school results were analyzed to determine whether these choices are an effective solution to the middle school desert problem. The findings are clear – charter schools are providing the only high quality options in these middle school deserts.

BACKGROUND

Across New York City's middle schools, roughly one-third of students are reading and doing math on grade level (37% proficiency on ELA and 32% on math). While this citywide average is not a true measure of quality, for the purpose of this analysis, StudentsFirstNY looked at every district where not a single school met this one-third proficiency bar. **In eight districts, not a single zoned middle school met the citywide average in reading and math.**

THE 8 WORST DISTRICTS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Eight districts are Middle School Deserts, where no good middle schools are to be found. If you're a student in any of the following districts, there are no quality zone middle school options for you:

District 4:
East Harlem

District 18:
Canarsie, East Flatbush

District 5:
Central Harlem

District 19:
East New York, Cypress Hills

District 14:
Williamsburg, Bed-Stuy

District 23:
Ocean Hill, Brownsville

District 12:
East Tremont, Crotona Park

District 32:
Bushwick

In total, there are eighteen NYC school districts where middle school proficiency in both ELA and math was significantly lower than the city's middle school average.

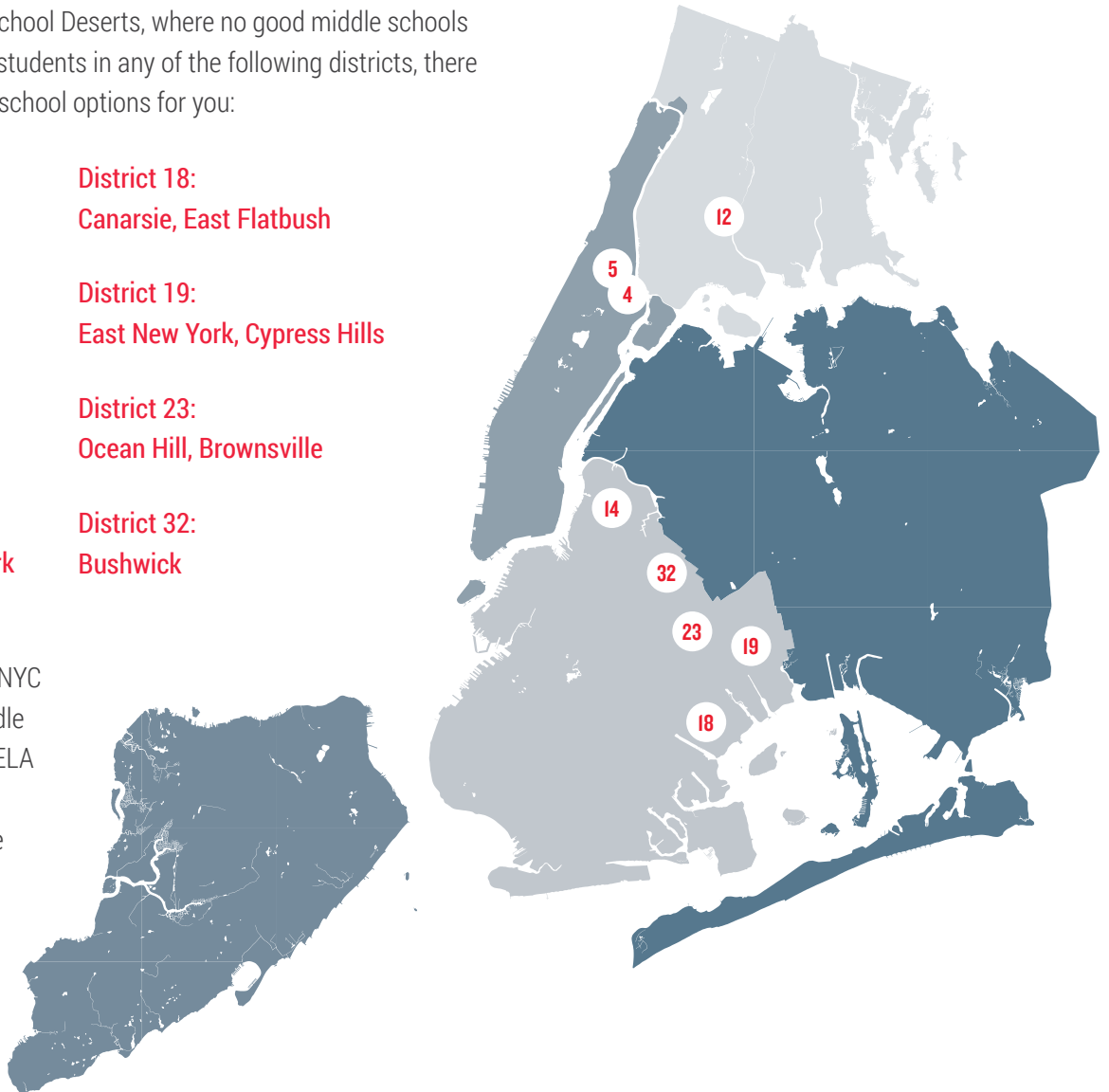


Chart I: Middle School Deserts and Below Average Districts

Middle School Deserts

NYC School District	# of Middle Schools At City ELA Average	# of Middle Schools At City Math Average	Middle School ELA Proficiency Average, 2015-2016	Middle School Math Proficiency Average, 2015-2016
4	0	0	30%	21%
5	0	0	24%	14%
12	0	0	17%	14%
14	0	0	30%	20%
18	0	0	29%	19%
19	0	0	20%	14%
23	0	0	20%	14%
32	0	0	31%	18%
9	0	2	19%	14%
10	0	2	24%	20%
13	1	1	27%	16%
16	1	1	18%	14%
7	1	2	17%	10%
17	1	2	29%	23%
8	3	2	24%	17%
29	3	2	27%	17%
6	3	3	28%	21%
11	5	6	28%	22%
Middle School Citywide Average	N/A	N/A	37%	32%

8 MIDDLE SCHOOL DESERTS

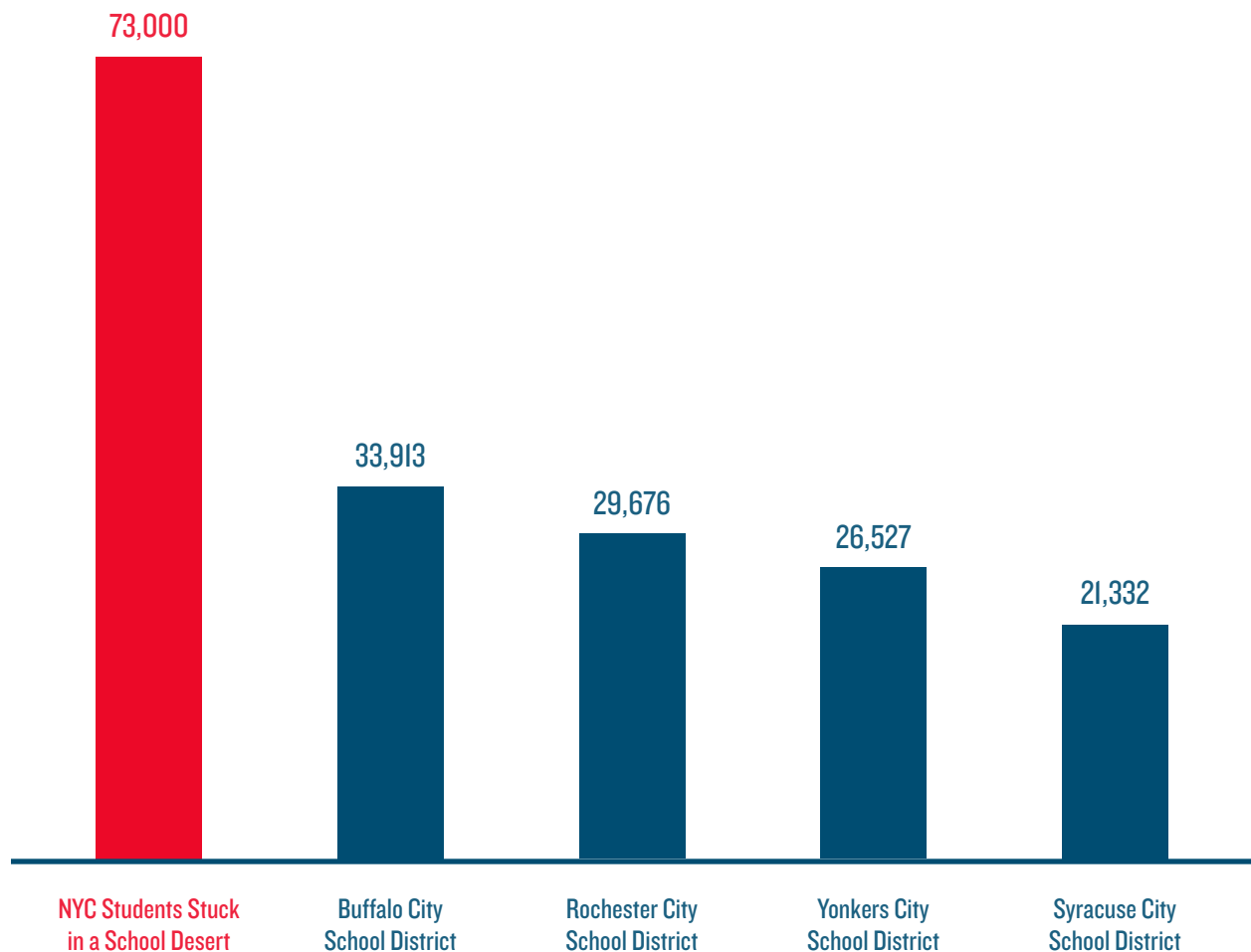
Source: NYC DOE, "Grades 3 – 8 New York City Results by District, 2015-2016"
<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults>

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS STUCK IN QUICKSAND

The total middle school enrollment of the eight school deserts comes out to about 17,000 students. However, there are 56,000 elementary school students set to attend those same failing middle schools, bringing the total to 73,000 students in these deserts. To give some perspective on the scale of this problem: the amount of students stuck in a NYC middle school desert is larger than the total number of students in Buffalo and Rochester combined. If it were a district, it would be second in size only to New York City. That number of students without access to a single quality middle school would qualify this group of students to become one of New York's "Big Five" school districts.

Chart II: Middle School Students Stuck in Desert is Large Relative to NY School Districts

2015-2016 School Year Total Student Enrollment by New York School District



Source for outside NYC School District Numbers: NYSED, "Public School Enrollment," <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/statistics/enroll-n-staff/home.html>

Source for NYC Middle School Student Numbers: NYC DOE, "Demographic Snapshots," <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>

THE MIRAGE: SCREENED SCHOOLS

There are 37 screened middle schools in the eight Middle School Desert districts that limit admissions based on various criteria. Even though these schools are able to cherry-pick students, 26 of them still failed to meet NYC's middle school proficiency average in math and 27 failed to meet that level in ELA. For families who and themselves in these eight school deserts, finding a quality screened school parallels the arduous journey of finding a quality traditional middle school.

Chart III: Screened Middle Schools Provide no Relief in Quality School Desert Districts

NYC School District	Total # of Screened Middle School	# of Screened Middle Schools Below City ELA Average	# of Screened Middle Schools Below City Math Average
4	8	4	4
5	3	2	2
12	0	0	0
14	6	5	5
18	4	3	3
19	7	6	6
23	4	3	3
32	5	3	4
Total	37	26	27

Source: NYC DOE, "Grades 3 – 8 New York City Results by School"
<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults>

DRINKING SAND: RENEWAL SCHOOLS PROVIDE NO RELIEF

Mayor de Blasio has made the Renewal Schools program the cornerstone of his education policy, but these schools have failed to deliver for the students they serve. 13 of the 14 Renewal schools located in these eight school deserts scored in the single digits when it came to proficiency on this year's State math exam. 11 out of the 14 Renewal schools saw a decline in enrollment from last school year to the beginning of this school year, an indication that NYC families are rejecting the Renewal Schools program.

Chart IV: Renewal Schools Provide No Relief in Middle School Deserts

NYC School District	School Name	2016 ELA Proficiency	2016 Math Proficiency	2015-2016 Enrollment	2016-2017 Enrollment*
4	P.S. 050 Vito Marcantonio	13%	4%	288	242
4	Renaissance School of the Arts	17%	4%	163	142
5	P.S. 123 Mahalia Jackson	14%	2%	554	516
12	School of Performing Arts	9%	7%	313	292
12	Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School	16%	7%	267	275
12	Entrada Academy	5%	7%	254	264
14	Juan Morel Campos Secondary School	10%	7%	622	591
18	East Flatbush Community Research School	16%	11%	129	133
19	P.S. 306 Ethan Allen	23%	6%	579	498
19	Essence School**	5%	5%	124	107
23	P.S. 165 Ida Posner	5%	3%	408	375
23	Gregory Jocko Jackson-Sports-Arts	10%	6%	535	480
32	J.H.S. 291 Roland Hayes	10%	8%	349	312
32	I.S. 349 Math, Science & Technology	16%	6%	304	294

*Total Enrollment Number collected from each school's DOE Home Page from December 22th, 2016

**This school is slated to be closed by the NYC DOE

Source for School Proficiency Number: NYC DOE, "Grades 3 – 8 New York City Results by School" <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults>

Source for 2015-2016 School Enrollment numbers: NYC DOE, "Demographic Snapshots," <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>

THE GREAT OASIS: CHARTER SCHOOLS

One reliable alternative within Mayor de Blasio's district-run Middle School Deserts has been charter schools. Charter middle schools consistently outperform their district school counterparts in all eight of these struggling districts.

Chart V: Charter Middle School Performance in Middle School Deserts

NYC School District	ELA Proficiency of Zone Middle Schools, 2015-2016	Math Proficiency of Zone Middle Schools, 2015-2016	ELA Proficiency of Charter Middle Schools, 2015-2016	Math Proficiency of Charter Middle Schools, 2015-2016
4	18%	12%	39%	52%
5	16%	7%	41%	53%
12	18%	15%	32%	24%
14	20%	10%	30%	37%
18	25%	14%	36%	48%
19	18%	10%	37%	40%
23	16%	12%	39%	48%
32	19%	10%	57%	74%

Source for NYC Middle School Numbers: NYC DOE, "Grades 3 – 8 New York City Results by School, 2015-2016" <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults>

Source for NYC Charter School Numbers: NYC DOE, "Charter Schools" <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults>

Despite these outcomes, Mayor de Blasio has failed to embrace charters as part of his education policies, severely limiting options for parents.

CONCLUSION

This paper revealed that 73,000 students are trapped in middle school deserts, that City-run screened and Renewal schools provide no relief, and that the only quality options in these areas are charters.

All families deserve to feel confident that their local middle school is academically preparing their children for the rigors of high school. Unfortunately, our analysis reveals that this is not the case and Mayor de Blasio has not announced a single policy that will make a dent in this problem.

These 73,000 families deserve IMMEDIATE and bold action by Mayor de Blasio to improve the quality of middle school offerings in these deserts. The Mayor must also embrace charter schools as an important part of the solution.

LEARN MORE:
STUDENTSFIRSTNY.ORG