



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo wants to see the SHSAT remain, with changes to make it more accessible to more students

SENATOR JOSEPH P. ADDABBO, JR. November 23, 2020

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As the NYC Department of Education (NYC DOE) continues to try to figure out how to administer high school admissions for the upcoming year, State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. wants to ensure that the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) remains in place — with some possible improvements.

Addabbo, a member of the Senate Standing Committee on Education, believes that the SHSAT is a good tool to utilize for admission into New York City's specialized high schools. Currently under state law, a student's SHSAT score is the only criteria for admission to these schools.

The Senator understands the frustration expressed by many of his constituents as the NYC DOE looks to alter the admissions process, as it calls for greater diversity at specialized schools, but doesn't think that eliminating the SHSAT is the right path.

"A student's hopes of getting into one of these amazing schools should be encouraged, and they should be provided with improved accessibility to educational materials and resources to assist them with the exam," Addabbo contends.

One area of concern for Addabbo is the costs associated with the test. Although the SHSAT itself does not require a fee, many of the test preparation courses and books are expensive, which could discourage students from low-income households from taking the exam. Addabbo believes that these resources should be made more widely available to all students.

“By increasing the availability of the SHSAT, we would allow our brightest students to flourish, improve our specialized high schools and increase the diversity of students who can take the test,” Addabbo said. “After that, it is up to the students and their abilities to prove that they can in fact compete for a seat. By combining more widely available and affordable test prep options with adding to the specialized high school admissions criteria, I believe we can provide even more students across the city with the educational opportunity to attend these schools.”

The Senator remembers when NYC DOE Chancellor Richard Carranza met with the members of the Senate Standing Committee on Education in Albany on May 1, 2018 (available on YouTube) and spoke of the SHSAT. Addabbo, who asked the Chancellor a question regarding school safety, recalled how later on in the meeting Mr. Carranza didn't suggest an elimination of the SHSAT, but the use of “multiple measures” when evaluating a student for admission to a specialized high school.

Of the Chancellor's visit, Addabbo stated, “I believe that since many smart students are not good test takers or could have a bad experience when taking the SHSAT, measures such as attendance, a GPA, extracurricular activities, volunteerism, or a student's entire body of work could be considered during the admissions process, in addition to the SHSAT score.” The Senator noted that unfortunately, Chancellor Carranza stood by Mayor Bill de Blasio about a month after his visit to Albany announcing the plans to eliminate the SHSAT, a different tone than the one the Chancellor expressed to the Senate committee members.