
Diversity at Hunter College High School

A Call For A School That Reflects Our City

Calls for diversity at Hunter have been taking place for MANY years now. Our presentation and discussion will focus only on the High School process where Hunter relies on a single test for admissions.

The HCHS admissions process has many issues from the way students qualify to take the test, how they get notified, the way the test is formulated, administered and graded; and ultimately the use of a single exam as the sole criteria for admissions is at the core of the diversity crisis at Hunter.

As you listen, we want to ask you to remember that our calls for diversity are about the safety, inclusion, success and education of ALL of our children. The environment at our school impacts ALL of our children - not just those who are in the minority.

**Did you know
that diversity &
equity are part
of the HCCS
mission?**

“Our schools strive to reflect the city they serve by admitting and educating a population of students who are culturally, socio-economically, and ethnically diverse. We seek to serve as a model for combining excellence and equity, serving as a catalyst for change in New York City and the nation.”

The dual goal of excellence and diversity is, in fact, enshrined in the HCCS mission statement.

How are we doing?

First we would like to acknowledge that diversity is big term, and we're going to talk in this presentation about ethnic diversity, racial diversity & socioeconomic diversity. Unfortunately, in all of these areas, Hunter fails to live up to its mission.

2019 - 2020 HCHS Student Body

1	.1 %	American Indian or Alaskan Native
2	.2%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
31	2.4%	Black or African (not Hispanic)
79	6.2%	Hispanic or Latino
274	21.4%	Multiracial (not Hispanic)
440	34.4%	White (not Hispanic)
453	35.4%	Asian

This information comes from the most recent BEDS data we have for the 2019-2020 HCHS population. (BEDS = Basic Educational Data System).

To put these numbers in perspective, assuming a population of 225 students per grade at the start of 7th grade, 31 Black students is 5 per grade. 79 Latinx students is 13 per grade.

The class of 2021 (my own children's class) had 10 black students in elementary school to start, 7 of them left. 3 new students came in & there are now a total of 6 students who identify as black in the entire graduating class.

2019 - 2020 HCHS Student Body

9%

Low Income

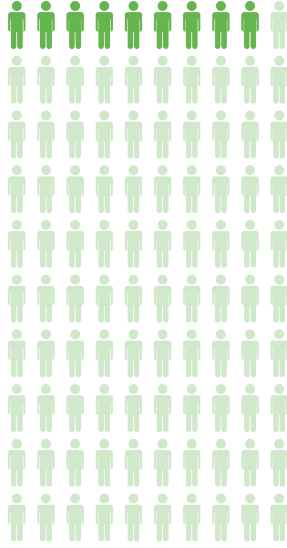
105 Students

Low income students are also significantly underrepresented at Hunter. Just 9% of our 7-12 graders are defined as low-income by the New York City DOE, meaning they qualify for free & reduced lunch. If we figure a student population of a 1,280 students (or 225 per grade – though it is less by graduation) we have 17.5 low income students per grade.

NYC 72.8%



HCHS 9%



**NYC
STUDENT
POPULATION**

72.8% Low Income

**HCHS
STUDENT
POPULATION**

9% Low Income

These charts compare the Hunter High School student population to the wider NYC student population to reveal how skewed our demographics are for a public school whose mission is to reflect the city it serves.

NYC 40.6%



HCHS 6.2%



**NYC
STUDENT
POPULATION**

40.6% Latinx

**HCHS
STUDENT
POPULATION**

6.2% Latinx

NYC 25.5%



HCHS 2.4%



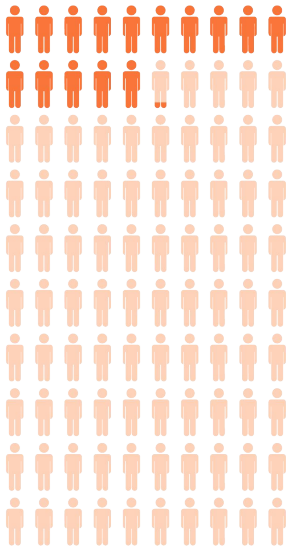
**NYC
STUDENT
POPULATION**

25.5% Black

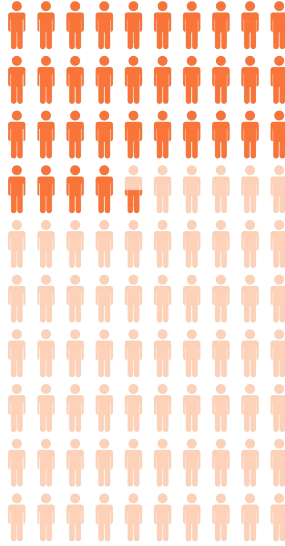
**HCHS
STUDENT
POPULATION**

2.4% Black

NYC 15.1%



HCHS 34.4%



**NYC
STUDENT
POPULATION**

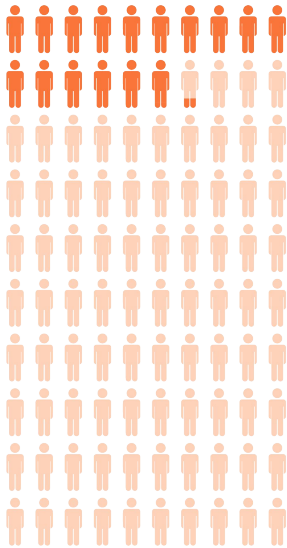
15.1% White

**HCHS
STUDENT
POPULATION**

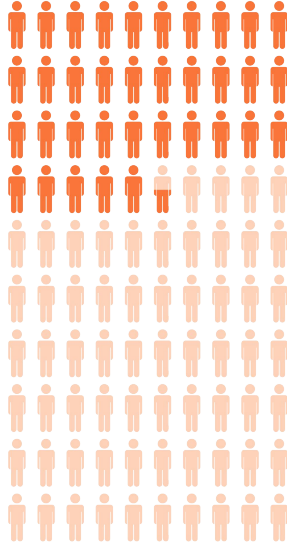
34.4% White

When we look at the numbers for white and Asian students, they tell a different story.

NYC 16.2%



HCHS 35.4%



**NYC
STUDENT
POPULATION**

16.2% Asian

**HCHS
STUDENT
POPULATION**

35.4% Asian

**For our kids, these
aren't just numbers...**

Now we'd like to share some quotes about how these numbers are experienced by Hunter students and parents.

“

”

Since Hunter is one of the hardest schools to get into, what kind of message does that send when children don't see other kids at the school who look like them?

The lack of diversity in the student body at a school for gifted students sent a very clear and false message that students of color were not smart enough to get into the school.

Here's a statement from a Black student who left Hunter College High School

“

”

There have been too many instances where I left a classroom disturbed or frustrated because of a comment, remark, or entire lesson that made me uncomfortable.

And here's another student voice.

“ Right now I feel safe since I’m at home but if we were to go back to school in September, I’m not sure that would be the case. I feel like I don’t have a support system in my day to day classes. ”

When we talked about the police brutality that black people are facing in class, one person just smiled and laughed the whole way through it. I didn’t feel like I could say anything because there was only one other black person there and I wasn’t sure if she felt as hurt as I was. No one addressed him at all and I don’t think he cared.

After that, I took a minute to cry to myself off camera because I was so frustrated and felt so powerless. I was lucky that it was online because had it been an in-person class, I would’ve been sitting next to him.

Another student shared –

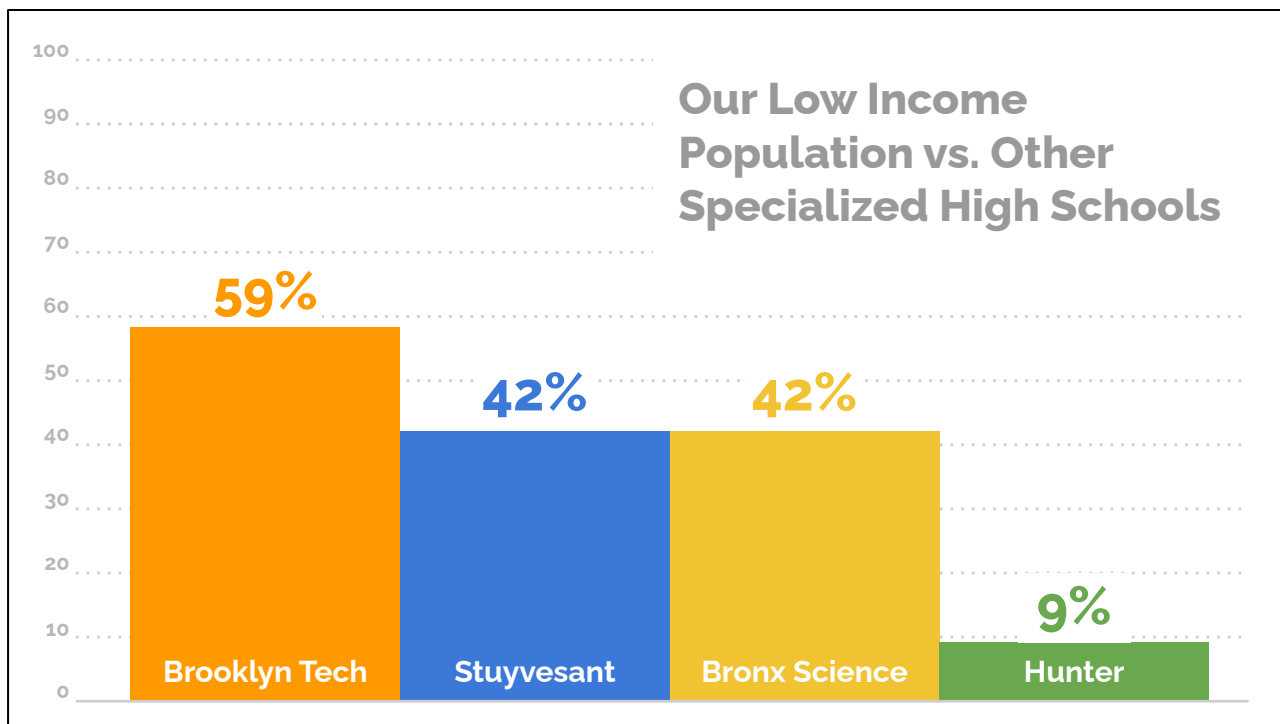
“

”

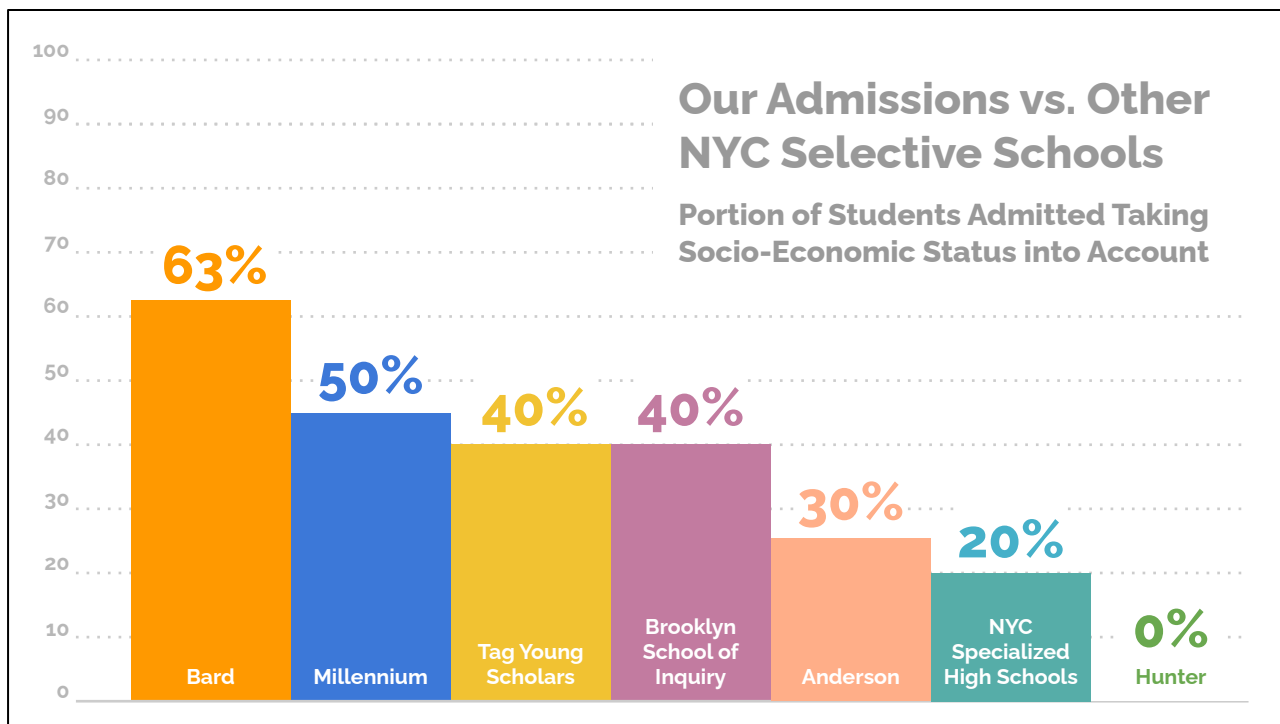
My child is going to graduate soon. We live in New York City and he will graduate not having had one African-American classroom teacher.

The last quote is from a parent.

**How do we compare to
our peer schools?**



My older child went to Stuyvesant, and in terms of economic diversity, "we're out of step."



Hunter is increasingly alone among NYC schools in NOT modifying its admissions system to address inequity. Leading G&T schools now reserve a portion of their incoming student slots for disadvantaged students.

Who can make change?

Unlike the specialized high schools Hunter to require DOE or Albany approval for change.

Jennifer Raab

President of Hunter College

Jennifer Raab enjoys complete discretion to address the under-representation of low-income, Black and Latinx students at our school.

There are no legal obstacles to modifying the admissions system.

President Rabb has been president of Hunter since 2001. During her 19 year tenure, she has remained wedded to a single-high stakes test, despite serious calls for changes. But this model for admissions is no longer serving the NYC community in an effective way.

10 Years Ago

the 2010 Middle States Accreditation Report called on Hunter to address its admissions and diversity issues:

“ It is not a matter of gathering good ideas, identifying research-based methods, or resolving logistics – it is a matter of will and true motivation.

Accepting challenges is bedrock in the Hunter culture. Take on this challenge and find a way to make Hunter look more like the vibrant city it has called home for more than 100 years. ”

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is the body responsible for accrediting our institution and ensuring the quality of the education it provides.

After the report was released in 2010 a school-led committee including faculty, administration and parents met for a year and came up with a comprehensive set of recommendations for reforming our admissions process which included a detailed 7-year plan with targeted goals to meaningfully increase diversity at Hunter by 2017.

Nothing was implemented

Are there good models for change ?

We're not advocating for any one solution.

Yes!

One is Chicago's selective public high schools have been working for over a decade to develop a citywide model.

They have achieved significant diversity at their selective high schools.

This model is simply an example which shows that it is possible to design systems that increase # of lower-income students and improve racial diversity simultaneously. It also shows that other cities invest deeply in principle and make a commitment to this and monitor and adjust their model based on results. We could too.

The Chicago Model considers:

- **$\frac{1}{3}$ state test scores**
- **$\frac{1}{3}$ grades**
- **$\frac{1}{3}$ admissions exam**

30% of applicants are admitted by strict academic criteria.

70% are admitted by academic criteria weighted with socioeconomic status factors.

Chicago retains an admissions exam - AND considers other criteria.

THIS model is about identifying UNTAPPED Excellence!

We have integration experts ready to work with the school to use carefully researched census tract data & ENI data to improve diversity at HCHS.

ENI stands for Economic Need Index and measures the socioeconomic circumstances of a school's population and assigns a score to each school based on the number of students eligible for free lunch or public assistance or who live in temporary housing.

The bulk of current HCHS students are ultimately selected from a relatively few affluent and majority white neighborhoods: (129 of New York City's 2,164 census tracts)

Using this system, the elite Whitney M. Young Magnet High School maintains a student body that is 37% low income, 29% Hispanic and 18% Black.

Whitney M. Young is Michelle Obama's alma mater.

This is not unattainable for HCHS. Among the pool of New York City 5th graders scoring high enough to qualify to take the Hunter admissions test, 27% are Black or Latinx and 47% are low-income.

Why Now?

Why focus on diversity now? Because we have a unique chance to make a difference!

The confluence of the pandemic and Black Lives Matter create an historic opportunity for change.

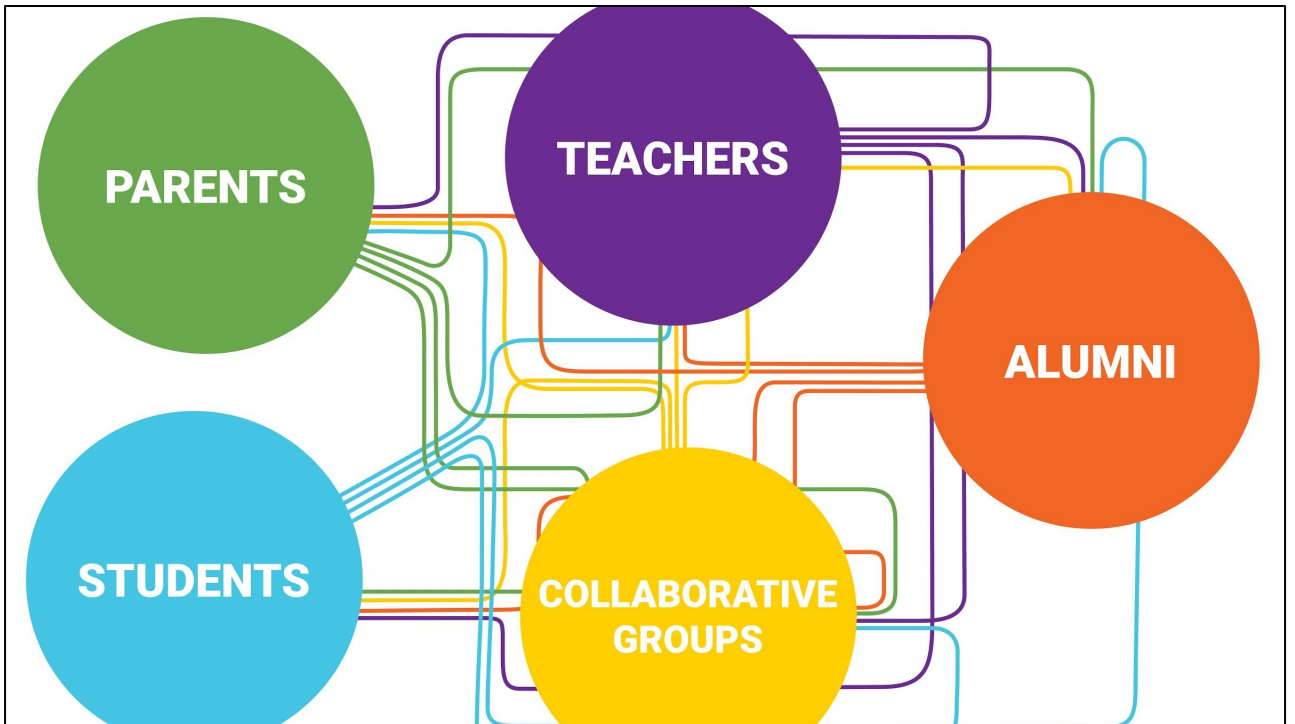
We've all experienced the struggles of living through a pandemic, AND we all know about George Floyd's excruciating death, handcuffed and pinned to the ground by a police officer's knee. Maybe you've asked yourself, "what can I do?" Well, Hunter is within our sphere of influence.

The Pandemic Is Worsening Inequalities Built Into the Public School System

- NYC public school students have not had equal access to high-quality online education.
- 5th grade state tests were not administered.
- Preliminary DOE data suggests that using 4th grade test scores will further disadvantage low-income, Black and Latinx students.
- The safety of holding an in-person test in January 2021 is in question.

We can stand up for educational equity. In the words of civil rights leader and congressman John Lewis, we can get in "good trouble!"

What's being done?



This is a grassroots effort - with parents, students, teachers, alum, and collaborative groups all working to affect change.

By their nature, grass-roots efforts are messy and complicated! I'm going to walk us through a timeline of these overlapping efforts. It doesn't even begin to represent the hours or complexity of the work, but it does show passion & energy behind this effort! I believe it also represents the frustration with a lack of leadership from administration and a lack of process to address the issues at our school.

In Oct 2019 a group of parents formed an admissions working group to conduct research and collect data on admissions.

In April 2020 Mosaic made a request for a formal Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan to address admissions, faculty, climate and curriculum.

parents

In October of 2019, a group of parents including Paul Sonn, Denise Millstein, Olati Johnson, Clayton Harding, Andrew So & Andy McCord . . .

**In June 2020 our students wrote a
Call for Diversity Letter.**

**To date it has been signed by 1,895
parents, students, faculty and alum.**

students

In true Hunter form, our students wrote an impassioned, well-argued and deeply researched call....

In June 2020 the parent working group also presented their research to administration in a detailed memo outlining the state of admissions at Hunter.

All of these letters asked for an acknowledgment of the problem and a plan for action.

After the June letters were sent, parents and students joined forces.

They consulted with integration experts, education experts, politicians and activists.

collaborative groups

Inspired by the student letter, alum, who already had their own diversity efforts under way, joined parent and student working groups to push for change.

alumni

This summer a Hunter parent set up HSAI: the Hunter Summer Anti-Racism Initiative. It brought together a broad coalition of parents, teachers, students and alum for bi-monthly meetings to discuss and work on the issues of school climate, representative faculty, student body and curriculum.

collaborative groups

This summer Hunter Parent Will Baker...

**Has there been a formal
response?**

In July 2 Meetings Were Held with Administration

Meeting 1 • Focused on admissions

Meeting 2 • Focused on broader DEI issues

Our own HCHS administration has expressed interest in working on broader DEI, but not admissions. We are waiting for the reopening process to settle in the hopes that a multi-stakeholder DEI working group will be formed.

Efforts now are focused on education, outreach and putting pressure on Jennifer Raab to acknowledge and address the inequities in Hunter's admissions system.

These were multi-stakeholder meetings which included students, parents, alum, and HCCS administrators. President Raab did not attend either of these meetings. She sent an emissary, John Rose, the Dean for Diversity at Hunter College who made no commitment to change.



Despite repeated requests for action and engagement, President Raab refused to meet with our students. On September 18th students organized a protest at Hunter College designed to put pressure on the President.

Three days later, on September 21st our students were invited to meet with President Raab - it was the first time President Raab agreed to meet with anyone involved in the process of calling for change.



Nearly Half of New York City's Public-School Students Stayed Home to Protest Segregation in a 1964 Boycott. That Fight Is Still Unfinished

TIME

TRUMP TESTS POSITIVE

POTENTIAL HEALTH RISKS

LESSONS FROM WORLD LEADERS

CORONAVIRUS STA

BY OLIVIA B. WAXMAN AND VIDEO BY ARPITA ANEJA SEPTEMBER 22, 2020 2:00 PM EDT

The sign could have been an artifact from a 1960s civil rights protest:
Which side are you on? Segregation or Integration??

Instead, that sign was on display last Friday in New York City at a student-led **demonstration** calling for a more inclusive admissions process at one of the city's most selective public high schools, Hunter College High School, where about 10% of students are Black and Latino.

On Sept 22nd Time Magazine Published an article about our nation's unfinished fight for school integration. New York is at the center of this ongoing struggle. Despite the diversity of our city, we are one of the four states with the most segregated school systems in the country. The lead for the Time Article reads....

The meeting with President Raab created some openings but did not lead to a clear path or commitment to increasing diversity at HCHS. The student actions have galvanized teachers to "make admissions a priority," and they have begun their own efforts to put pressure on President Raab.

We believe parents also have a role to play in creating a school that lives up to our mission: to reflect our city; to serve as a model for combining excellence and equity, to be a catalyst for change in New York City and the nation."

What Are We Asking For?

The students, our children, are doing their part, and we need to do ours. Here are three overarching goals...

1.

Structural Admissions Reform

Designed by integration experts to meaningfully increase the number of high-achieving Black, Latinx and low-income students we attract, admit and retain at HCHS.

2.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan

A commitment to a plan with actionable steps and accountability to improve diversity in the areas of: curriculum, faculty and climate.

3.

Transparency

Process for both that is transparent and includes multiple stakeholders: parents, students, faculty, administration and alums.

What's Next?

**We believe that
excellence at Hunter
is contingent on diversity.**

“A seminal study published in 2002 found that informal **interactions with peers of other racial groups significantly enhanced** an individual’s **learning outcomes**.

That is, it **improved intellectual engagement**, self-motivation, **citizenship** and cultural engagement, and academic skills like **critical thinking**, problem solving, and **writing — for students of all races**. In other words, interacting with diverse peers outside a classroom setting directly benefits students, making them better scholars, thinkers, and citizens.”

Kristen Tsuo Century
Foundation 2015

**It is an incredible privilege
to be part of the Hunter
College Campus School
community, and with great
privilege comes great
responsibility.**

“I am, somehow, less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein’s brain than in the near certainty that people of equal talent have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops.”

Stephen Jay Gould

We want to hear from you!

(updates on current news)