



Students**First**NY

THE GRADUATION *FACADE*

How New York City's Diploma Mills Mask College Readiness Crisis

JUNE 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the start of 2016, Mayor Bill de Blasio hailed a two-point increase in New York City's high school graduation rate to approximately 70 percent. The Mayor said the City was on its way to achieving his goal of 80 percent graduation in the next ten years. The goal would be admirable if it weren't being used as a façade to cover up a larger issue – the fact that college readiness in NYC high schools lags far behind graduation rates.¹

Graduating high school is an essential first step, but it is not enough to address the long-term needs of NYC public school students. Recent world events highlight the important ways that our economy has changed – and the need for the public school system to shift to meet new demands. In an increasingly competitive global job market, a diploma must become more than just a certificate of attendance. Preparing students for college and career is critical to ensuring their individual success and happiness, as well as the economic strength of our City and the nation.

The Mayor may be content to ignore deeper problems with City schools, but families deserve a straight answer to a basic question:

Does a high school diploma from a New York City public school mean a graduate is ready for college and beyond?

A new analysis from StudentsFirstNY exposes the problem of Diploma Mills, schools where the graduation rates are above average, but the students are not prepared for college or a career after high school.² At these Diploma Mills, despite the hard work of the students, the piece of paper is not an indicator they are ready for their next life step. The report takes a deeper look at the college readiness crisis in New York City and identifies areas for improvement.

Among the key findings are:

I. DIPLOMA MILLS ARE A SERIOUS PROBLEM.

- There are 45 high schools with above average graduation rates that mask college readiness rates below 20 percent.
- Every Diploma Mill on this list has a 50-point or higher gap between the graduation rate and the percent of students who are college ready.
- Only one of the 45 Diploma Mills qualified for the Mayor's Renewal program because their high graduation rates masked the real problems.
- The worst example of this is the HS for Medical Professions, which boasts a 95 percent graduation rate when only 15 percent of students are college ready.

2. COLLEGE REMEDIATION IN NEW YORK CITY IS OFF THE CHARTS.

- Only if you're lucky enough to get into one of 34 high schools (of 428 with graduation statistics) do you have a decent shot to make it through college successfully.

3. THE DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION HAS NO CLEAR PLAN FOR SCHOOLS WITH THE WORST COLLEGE READINESS RATES.

- Of the 10 schools with the lowest college readiness rates, just two are in the Mayor's Renewal program.

THE DIPLOMA MILL LIST

Below is the list of the 45 New York City high schools with above average graduation rates and shockingly low college readiness rates.

NYC DIPLOMA MILL HIGH SCHOOLS

RANKING	DBN	SCHOOL NAME	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE (2015)	SY 2014-15 CUNY COLLEGE READINESS RATE
1	18K633	High School for Medical Professions	95%	15%
2	09X365	Academy for Language and Technology*	94%	20%
3	18K563	It Takes a Village Academy	92%	19%
4	84X539	New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math	91%	14%
5	10X437	Fordham High School for the Arts	91%	15%
6	84M353	New Heights Academy Charter School	89%	17%
7	14K488	Brooklyn Preparatory High School	86%	19%
8	84X703	Bronx Preparatory Charter School	85%	15%
9	18K637	Academy for Conservation and the Environment	83%	13%
10	10X243	West Bronx Academy for the Future	82%	12%
11	02M288	Food and Finance High School	81%	14%
12	09X252	Mott Hall Bronx High School	80%	19%
13	17K537	High School for Youth and Community Development	80%	11%
14	15K519	Cobble Hill School of American Studies	79%	18%
15	02M500	Unity Center for Urban Technologies	79%	12%
16	07X548	Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports	79%	16%
17	03M299	High School for Arts, Imagination and Inquiry	78%	18%
18	19K618	Academy of Innovative Technology	78%	12%
19	13K412	Brooklyn Community High School of Communication	78%	14%
20	84K359	The Uft Charter School	78%	11%

RANKING	DBN	SCHOOL NAME	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE (2015)	SY 2014-15 CUNY COLLEGE READINESS RATE
21	84K473	Williamsburg Charter High School	78%	15%
22	12X372	Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conservation	77%	11%
23	11X275	High School of Computers and Technology	77%	13%
24	10X225	Theatre Arts Production Company School	77%	16%
25	32K168	The Brooklyn School for Math and Research	77%	15%
26	09X505	Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice	76%	17%
27	18K569	Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School	76%	7%
28	29Q498	Humanities & Arts Magnet High School	76%	13%
29	19K404	Academy for Young Writers	75%	6%
30	84K693	Northside Charter High School	75%	12%
31	02M543	New Design High School	75%	10%
32	28Q690	High School for Law Enforcement and Public Safety	74%	17%
33	13K605	George Westinghouse Career and Technical Education	74%	11%
34	08X293	Renaissance High School for Musical Theater & Technology	74%	12%
35	12X511	Bronx Envision Academy	74%	10%
36	14K632	Frances Perkins Academy	73%	5%
37	17K751	Academy for Health Careers	73%	12%
38	18K576	Victory Collegiate High School	73%	9%
39	16K498	Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology	73%	13%
40	02M437	Hudson High School of Learning Technologies	73%	9%
41	84X553	New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities	72%	9%
42	03M307	The Urban Assembly School for Media Studies	72%	12%
43	16K393	Frederick Douglass Academy IV Secondary School	71%	11%
44	21K348	High School of Sports Management	71%	9%
45	15K429	Brooklyn School for Global Studies	71%	9%

**School is for ELL Students who have been in the United States for less than 4 years.*

COLLEGE REMEDIATION IN NEW YORK CITY IS OFF THE CHARTS

College remediation is an enormous problem for New York City high school graduates. When students begin college without being prepared for college-level coursework, they are diverted into remedial classes. These remedial classes cost just as much as college courses do, but they don't build credit towards a college degree. Students forced to take remedial classes are much more likely to drop out than their college-ready peers, and far less likely to graduate with a degree.³

A closer look at the results for all 428 high schools with graduation statistics reveals:

- Only 1 in 5 high schools prepare a majority of their students for college.
- Only **34 high schools out of 428** prepare more than 75% of their students for college.
- An astonishing half of NYC high schools prepare fewer than 25 percent of students for college.

The bottom line: unless you're lucky enough to get your child into one of the 34 schools with a high success rate, it's more unlikely than likely that your child will be prepared.

DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION HAS NO CLEAR PLAN FOR SCHOOLS WITH WORST COLLEGE READINESS

One of the reasons the Mayor has chosen to highlight rising graduation rates rather than address the college readiness crisis is that he has no clear plan to turn around schools with the lowest rates of college readiness.

- Of the 10 schools with the lowest college readiness rates, just 2 are in the Mayor's Renewal program.
- There are 72 high schools where fewer than 10% of students are college ready and many of these have no intervention plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1: TRANSPARENCY

The Mayor must improve transparency so that parents know whether or not their children attend a Diploma Mill high school. If a high school diploma from a school doesn't prove you're college ready, then the City should be forced to very clearly report and distribute the following information:

- An annual list of Diploma Mill schools
- An annual list of schools with the lowest college readiness rates
- The percentage of college ready graduates at each school

StudentsFirstNY will actively distribute the Diploma Mill list to parents across New York City.

As an appendix to this report, StudentsFirstNY has also prepared a list of the 72 high schools where fewer than 10% of students are college ready. StudentsFirstNY will widely disseminate this list to parents. This kind of transparency is key to empowering parents to make good decisions.

RECOMMENDATION #2: URGENCY IN IMPROVING INSTRUCTION

Mayor de Blasio must quickly develop a plan to address:

- The quality of instruction at the 45 Diploma Mills
- The quality of instruction at the 72 high schools where fewer than 10% of students are college ready.

CONCLUSION

Parents and families rely on a high school diploma as a sign that their children are ready for future success whether they enroll in college or join the workforce. Unfortunately, as this report shows, simply graduating from a NYC high school does not guarantee that a student has the academic skills to compete and succeed in higher education. Furthermore, a majority of graduates will have to take remedial classes to catch up to their college ready peers – spending thousands out of pocket in the hope they can catch up. The Mayor needs to wake up to the reality that far too many high schools across the city are serving as little more than Diploma Mills, without preparing their graduates for success.

¹ <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/AB773209-5CDE-49F2-87CE-2B10F5837F7B/0/2015GraduationRatesWebsite11116.pdf>

² This analysis utilizes 4-year graduation rates for the 2011 cohort and the CUNY-aligned "College Readiness Index" (met CUNY's standards for avoiding remedial classes). Both are available in schools' School Quality Reports.

³ <https://edreformnow.org/app/uploads/2016/04/EdReformNow-O-O-P-Embargoed-Final.pdf>

APPENDIX

To raise parent awareness around college preparedness among NYC schools, StudentsFirstNY has compiled a list of the 72 high schools where less than 10% of students are college ready and meet CUNY's standards for avoiding remedial classes.

HIGH SCHOOLS WHERE LESS THAN 10% OF STUDENTS GRADUATED COLLEGE READY AND MEET CUNY'S STANDARDS FOR AVOIDING REMEDIAL CLASSES

RANKING	DBN	SCHOOL NAME	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE (2015)	SY 2014-15 CUNY COLLEGE READINESS RATE
1	13K265	Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts	50.7%	1.4%
2	08X452	Bronx Guild	57.1%	1.6%
3	84M279	The Opportunity Charter School*	68.9%	1.6%
4	08X295	Gateway School for Environmental Research and Technology**	36.5%	1.9%
5	27Q324	Rockaway Park High School for Environmental Sustainability	53.8%	2.2%
6	07X520	Foreign Language Academy of Global Studies**	44.2%	2.3%
7	08X650	Jane Addams High School for Academic Careers **	55.7%	2.3%
8	27Q400	August Martin High School	24.6%	2.4%
9	07X522	Bronx Design and Construction Academy	53.3%	2.5%
10	10X660	Grace Dodge Career and Technical Education High School**	36.6%	2.8%
11	19K583	Multicultural High School***	54.3%	2.9%
12	14K610	Automotive High School	45.9%	3.1%
13	09X329	DreamYard Preparatory School	61.4%	3.4%
14	12X278	Peace and Diversity Academy**	28.8%	3.4%
15	04M409	Coalition School for Social Change	44.0%	3.6%
16	14K685	El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice	66.1%	3.6%
17	07X655	Samuel Gompers Career and Technical Education High School**	39.2%	3.8%
18	09X276	Leadership Institute	27.5%	3.9%
19	13K350	Urban Assembly High School of Music and Art	56.1%	4.1%
20	84M433	Renaissance Charter High School for Innovation	52.7%	4.5%

RANKING	DBN	SCHOOL NAME	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE (2015)	SY 2014-15 CUNY COLLEGE READINESS RATE
21	12X692	Monroe Academy for Visual Arts & Design	52.3%	4.6%
22	09X414	Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications**	40.7%	4.7%
23	14K632	Frances Perkins Academy	73.2%	4.9%
24	18K642	Urban Action Academy	60.3%	5.1%
25	02M625	High School of Graphic Communication Arts**	45.5%	5.2%
26	11X253	Bronx High School for Writing and Communication Arts	51.3%	5.3%
27	14K454	Green School: An Academy for Environmental Careers	65.3%	5.3%
28	09X543	High School for Violin and Dance	66.1%	5.4%
29	14K322	Foundations Academy**	32.4%	5.4%
30	07X473	Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School	44.9%	5.6%
31	02M460	Washington Irving High School**	51.1%	5.7%
32	08X432	Bronx Bridges High School***	57.0%	5.8%
33	19K404	Academy for Young Writers	75.3%	5.9%
34	05M685	Bread & Roses Integrated Arts High School**	36.1%	6.0%
35	06M463	High School for Media and Communications	54.8%	6.1%
36	10X438	Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology	48.7%	6.1%
37	08X519	Felisa Rincon de Gautier Institute for Law and Public Policy	45.8%	6.3%
38	09X412	Bronx High School of Business	38.7%	6.5%
39	12X479	Bronx Career and College Preparatory High School	46.2%	6.6%
40	29Q494	Law, Government and Community Service High School****	63.5%	6.8%
41	14K071	Juan Morel Campos Secondary School	48.3%	6.9%
42	03M415	Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing & Visual Arts	64.0%	7.0%
43	17K533	School for Democracy and Leadership	53.5%	7.0%
44	09X404	School for Excellence	60.6%	7.1%
45	18K569	Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School	76.2%	7.1%
46	27Q302	Queens High School for Information, Research, and Technology	55.4%	7.2%
47	18K589	Arts & Media Preparatory Academy	48.1%	7.4%
48	03M283	Manhattan Theatre Lab High School**	54.5%	7.6%

RANKING	DBN	SCHOOL NAME	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE (2015)	SY 2014-15 CUNY COLLEGE READINESS RATE
49	02M427	Manhattan Academy For Arts & Language	53.9%	7.9%
50	05M367	Academy for Social Action: A College Board School	58.0%	8.0%
51	05M469	Choir Academy of Harlem**	40.0%	8.0%
52	08X305	Pablo Neruda Academy	59.3%	8.1%
53	27Q260	Frederick Douglass Academy VI High School	44.6%	8.4%
54	02M437	Hudson High School of Learning Technologies	72.6%	8.5%
55	10X284	Bronx School of Law and Finance	64.4%	8.5%
56	12X251	Explorations Academy	59.1%	8.6%
57	84X553	New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities	72.4%	8.6%
58	15K429	Brooklyn School for Global Studies	70.6%	8.8%
59	19K615	Transit Tech Career and Technical Education High School	57.7%	9.0%
60	21K348	High School of Sports Management	70.8%	9.0%
61	18K576	Victory Collegiate High School	72.7%	9.1%
62	21K620	William E. Grady Career and Technical Education High School	62.0%	9.1%
63	29Q496	Business, Computer Applications & Entrepreneurship**	57.6%	9.1%
64	19K507	Performing Arts and Technology High School	69.4%	9.3%
65	07X547	New Explorers High School	58.4%	9.6%
66	10X213	Bronx Engineering and Technology Academy	70.2%	9.6%
67	10X268	Kingsbridge International High School***	65.8%	9.6%
68	10X342	International School for Liberal Arts***	67.3%	9.6%
69	10X433	High School for Teaching and the Professions	58.8%	9.6%
70	19K659	Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School	57.7%	9.6%
71	12X550	High School of World Cultures***	55.9%	9.8%
72	12X511	Bronx Envision Academy	74.1%	9.9%

* School is for students with disabilities.

** School is closing at the end of the 2015-2016 School Year.

*** School is predominately for ELL students.

**** School is closing at the end of the 2016-2017 School Year.