

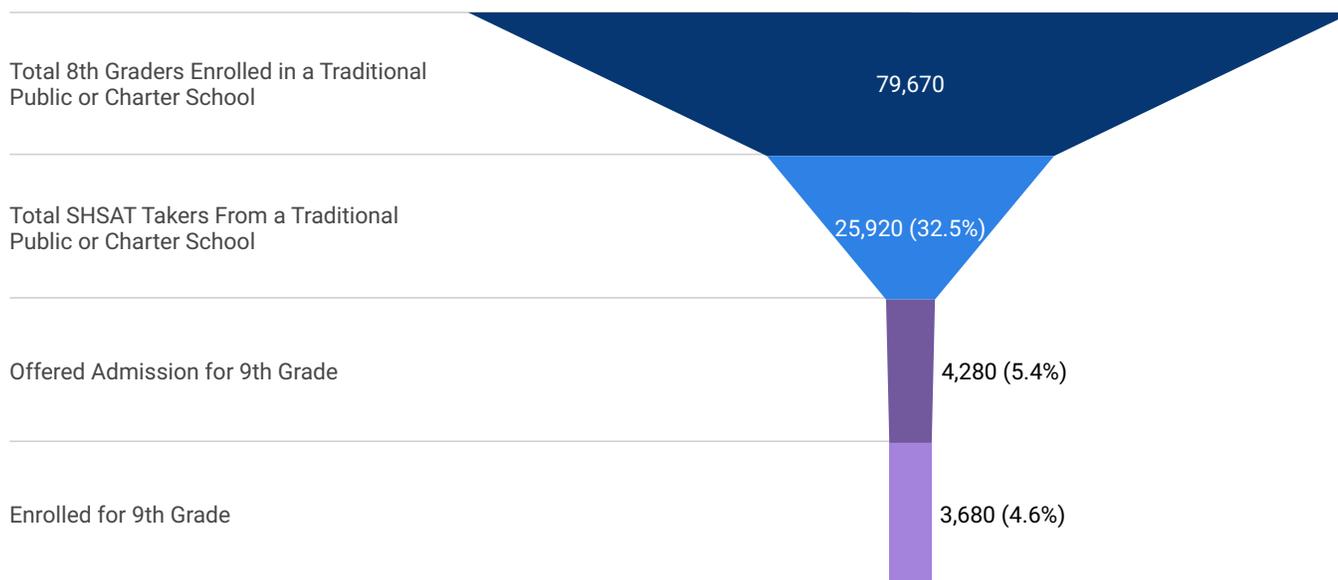
The Specialized High School Admissions Pipeline

In New York City, 8th grade students apply to enroll in high school. Nine of New York City's 400 high schools are [specialized high schools](#), and eight of those schools determine admissions through the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). New York State Education law mandates the use of the SHSAT as the sole admission criteria for three specialized high schools: Stuyvesant High School, The Bronx High School of Science, and Brooklyn Technical High School. The Department of Education currently mandates the SHSAT as the sole admission criteria for five additional schools: The Brooklyn Latin School, High School for Mathematics, Science, and Engineering at City College of New York, High School of American Studies at Lehman College, Queens High School for the Sciences at York College, and Staten Island Technical High School. While elected officials and advocates have proposed alternative measures for admission to the specialized high schools (for a modeling of one such proposal, see IBO's [Fiscal Brief](#)), the exam remains in place. At the request of Brendan Rose, a graduate student at Columbia Journalism School, the Independent Budget Office (IBO) examined the pipeline through that admissions process for traditional public and charter school students, including offers of admission and enrollment by disability status.

All New York City 8th and 9th graders are eligible to take the SHSAT, regardless of their current enrollment in a public, private, or charter school, or if they are homeschooled. In 2021-2022, of the 27,680 8th grade students who took the SHSAT, 81.2% (22,460 students) were enrolled in a traditional public school, 12.6% (3,460 students) were enrolled in a charter school, 6.2% (1,730 students) were enrolled in a private school, and 0.1% (30 students) were homeschooled. In total, 25,920 traditional public and charter school 8th graders took the SHSAT in 2021-2022 (see Figure 1 below). To determine offers of admission, an algorithm matches students to specialized high schools based on SHSAT scores and students' preferences, limited by the number of available seats at each school (for more information on the algorithm, see [IBO's Fiscal Brief](#)). A smaller number of 9th grade students take the exam each year for admission to a limited number of spots: of the 1,704 9th graders who took the SHSAT in 2021-2022, 95 received an offer of admission. In this study, IBO focuses on the 8th grade pipeline alone.

The following charts explore the specialized high school admissions process, including participation, admissions, and enrollment rates for 8th grade traditional public and charter school students. At each stage of the admissions process, those rates were lower for students with disabilities than for students without disabilities.

In the 2021-2022 School Year, Approximately One Third of Traditional Public and Charter School 8th Graders Took the SHSAT, and 4.6% Enrolled



SOURCE: IBO Analysis of Department of Education data, including biographical data and Specialized High School Admissions Test data.

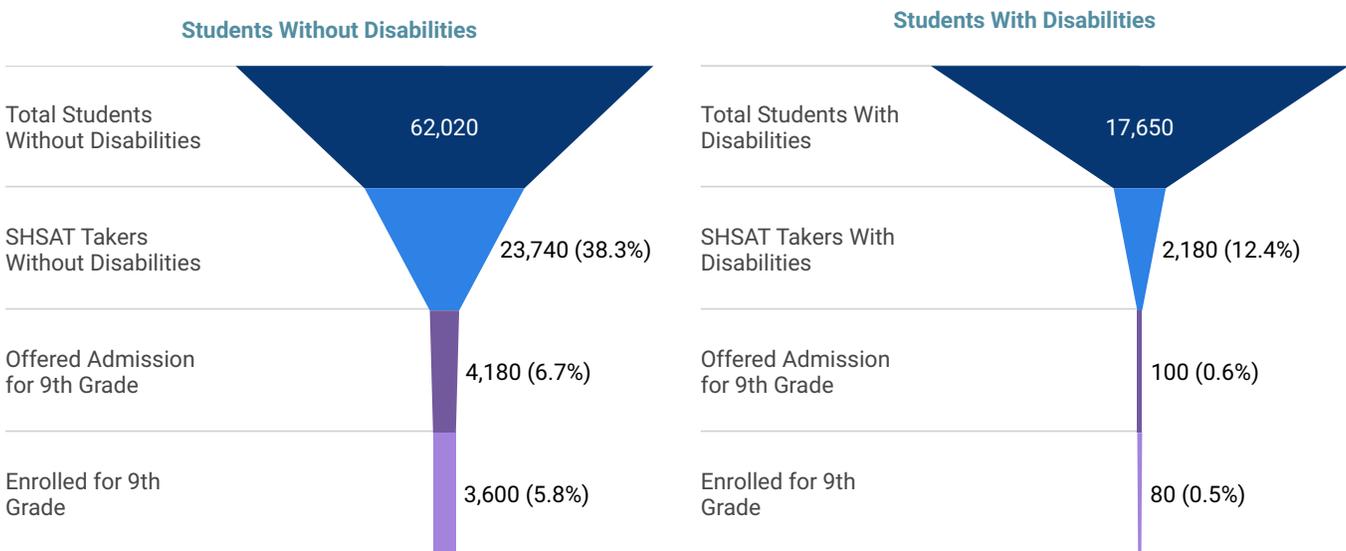
NOTE: Students may receive offers of admission through the initial algorithm process, or through the Discovery program. After taking the SHSAT, students that scored just below the threshold for admissions to all specialized high schools may receive an offer to attend the Discovery summer program at their preferred specialized high school. Those students then receive an offer of admissions that fall, contingent upon completion of the summer program.

In 2021-2022, about one third of the 79,670 8th grade students enrolled in traditional public and charter schools took the SHSAT. Of all 8th graders enrolled in a public or charter school that year, 4.6% enrolled at a specialized high school the next fall.

Of the 4,280 traditional public and charter school students who were offered admission that year, 63% were offered admission to their first-choice school, 23% were offered admission to their second-choice school, and 7% were offered to their third-choice school. The remaining students were offered admission to their lower-ranked schools, with 5% being offered admission to their fourth or fifth-choice school, and 2% being offered their sixth through eighth choice.

Students with disabilities had lower rates of participation in the SHSAT exam, offers of admissions, and enrollment the next year compared with students without disabilities.

In 2021-2022, 8th Grade Traditional Public and Charter School Students With Disabilities Were Less Likely to Take the SHSAT Than Their Peers Without Disabilities



SOURCE: IBO Analysis of Department of Education data, including biographical data, Special Education Student Information System, and Specialized High School Admissions Test data.
 NOTE: IBO defines students with disabilities as those students who are provided additional education services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The categories of students with disabilities includes Autistic, Deaf, Deaf and Blind, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Learning Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Intellectual Disability, Other Health Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Speech Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visual Impairment.

While about one third of traditional public and charter school 8th grade students took the SHSAT during the 2021-2022 school year, far fewer students received offers of admission and ultimately enrolled. IBO examined admissions rates by disability status and found students with disabilities were less likely than their peers without disabilities to take the SHSAT, to receive offers of admission to a specialized high school—and to enroll.

Students with disabilities took the SHSAT three times less frequently (12.4%) than their peers without disabilities (38.3%).

The disparity between the two groups increased as students moved through the admissions pipeline. Students with disabilities received offers of admission eleven times less often (0.6%, compared with 6.7%) and they enrolled nearly twelve times less than their peers without disabilities (0.5%, compared with 5.8%).

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