



High school admissions

Seven steps to a successful result at city schools

BY MAURICE FRUMKIN

Tens of thousands of families across New York City are now facing the high school admissions waiting game they have heard about — and have been dreading for months and sometimes years.

After submitting the “round one” public high school application choices back in December, parents and students are now waiting for the results (expected in early March) and are asking themselves, “What happens next?” “What happens after we get our round one result?” And most important of all, “What if we don’t get a school we are happy with?”

In recent years, there have been thousands of students each year who are not matched to any of their first high school choices, or are less than satisfied with their round one match. The reasons are beyond the scope of this discussion, but the next immediate step in the process

for these families is the infamous “round two.” This represents another chance to submit choices, and many of the mechanics of the process are similar to round one. Is your head spinning yet?

What is significantly different from round one, however, are the school program choices that are typically available. As one can imagine, as time (and rounds in the process) passes, seats are filled. The city does its best to fill as many remaining seats as possible with students who willingly choose those seats. Unfortunately, the reality of round two is that there are fewer seats in the schools that many families deem “desirable.”

Based on my work with hundreds of families faced with exactly this scenario, these are my Seven Steps Towards A Successful High School Result.

- Anticipate and plan. This may seem obvious, but the truth is many families don’t do this. Most wait until round one results are issued

in March and only then think about what happens after that. This is the worst course of action. Understand the process the best you can, and develop a proactive plan of action. You can always rest later.

- Don’t assume you will get what you want. This may sound harsh and may be hard to swallow now, but it is best to anticipate the worst and be ready for it. The day letters are issued can be traumatic for many students, so plan to be there to support your child the best you can. If you are pleasantly surprised, so be it. But the numbers don’t lie — unfortunately, not everyone can get a top choice, no less their number-one choice.

- Understand what happens in round two and beyond. This cannot be overstated, since you will most likely not have the luxury of time in round two to act and make decisions. Should you participate in round two if you got a round one match? Should you apply to any of the same schools as in round one? Should you forego round two and submit an appeal? These are just some of the questions many families will have, so be sure to anticipate your own responses.

- Understand the appeals process, but don’t rely on it. There is a reason it’s called the appeals process and not “round three,” but unfortunately many families are already relying on the appeals process to get what they want and will be sorely disappointed when their appeal is denied.

- You may have to compromise. Again, this is probably not what you want to hear. But know that many students flourish in their new schools, despite not getting a top choice.

- Don’t let your emotions get in the way of the unfinished work ahead. I have seen many families who, in frustration or anger directly elsewhere, sabotage their own efforts by spending an inordinate amount of time and energy on unproductive activity. Focus on the work that matters, not personalities or emotions.

- Consult an expert. Whether that is your school counselor, friend, or someone else who truly knows the process well, get the facts, develop a solid plan based on accurate information, and don’t act based on rumors or someone else’s situation.

Maurice Frumkin is president of NYC Admissions Solutions, a Brooklyn-based firm that provides expert advice to families navigating the complex city high-school admissions process. Follow him on Facebook at NYCAdmissionsSolutions, Twitter @NYCHSAdmissions, and sign up for his free monthly newsletter at www.nycadmissionssolutions.com.