



A Look at Outcomes of Diploma Plus Schools in New York City

Background

Four schools among New York City's new small high schools are operated using the Diploma Plus school model – Brownsville Academy High School (Brooklyn), PULSE High School (Bronx), Harlem Renaissance High School (Harlem/Manhattan), and Crotona Academy High School (Bronx). These are all 'transfer schools,' serving overage and under-credited students.¹

Brownsville Academy began as a Diploma Plus school in September of 2004, and just completed its third year of operation. PULSE, Harlem Renaissance, and Crotona were opened as new schools in September 2004 and adopted the Diploma Plus school model beginning in September of 2005. These three schools just completed their second year of operation as a Diploma Plus school.

June of 2007 is the first time that all four high schools have graduated students. Previously, only Brownsville Academy had enrolled students long enough to yield graduates.

This fact sheet highlights some of the first student outcome data available for the four Diploma Plus schools in New York City.

1. Graduation rates are high, and most students are planning to go to college

School	Number of graduates (2006-2007)	% of students in Plus Phase graduating	% of June graduates accepted to / planning to attend college
Brownsville Academy	67	88.6%	100%
Crotona Academy	20	100%	60%
Harlem Renaissance	15	93.8%	80%
PULSE High School	54	87.1%	92.6%
Total all Diploma Plus schools	156	90.2%	87.5%

Source: Graduation rosters and school reports filed with Commonwealth Corporation.

Note: Graduation rates represent the percent of students in the Diploma Plus 'Plus Phase' who graduated, according to school records. Schools in their second or third year of operation had a relatively low *number* of graduates (as expected) but a relatively high graduation percentage, since 2006-2007 is their first graduating cohort. Figures do not represent a 4-year graduation rate, since no school has used the Diploma Plus model for a full four years. In addition, Diploma Plus students typically enter their schools overage and under-credited, and begin in different phases.

New York City reported a four-year cohort graduation rate of 55% in 2007 across all of its secondary schools, and a graduation rate of 73% among the 47 schools that (a) counted as new small high schools and (b) that graduated students in June 2007. The four Diploma Plus schools are included in this cohort of new small schools.

The graduation rate of 90.2% presented in Table One is a percentage of students in the Plus Phase – or senior year – and **is not directly comparable to the overall NYC graduation rate**. Nonetheless, a 90% graduation rate for students who are typically over-aged and under-credited is a notable accomplishment.

¹ In the 4 NYC Diploma Plus schools, 59% of the students are African-American, 38% Latino(a), 2% Caucasian, and 1% other. 84% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunches.

2. Passing rates on Regents tests exceed those of comparable schools

Measure	Diploma Plus Schools	All District 79 Schools
Students passing Math A in 2006-2007	78%	
Students passing English in 2006-2007	80%	
Students passing Math A in 2005-2006	83%	75%
Students passing English in 2005-2006	86%	62%

Source: New York City Department of Education, District 79 and school reports. For 2006-07: by the time of this report, three DP schools reported Regents data for their students and the overall NYC data was not yet available.

Note: Not only did a higher percentage of DP students pass these Regents, but – compared to District 79 schools² – a **higher percentage of DP students eligible to take these tests did so.**

Additional indicator: Between the 2004-2005 school year and 2006-2007 school year, students at Harlem Renaissance High School passed 218 of 359 Regents tests taken (includes all subjects), a passing rate of 61%. During the same period, students at PULSE High School passed 303 of 410 Regents exams, a passing rate of 74%.

3. Retention exceeds that of District 79 schools

School	# students returning to school in Fall of 2006	# students graduating	# students not returning (transferred, dropped out)	% retained or graduated
Brownsville Academy (n=183)	127	33	23	87%
Crotona Academy (n=150)	102	2	46	69%
Harlem Renaissance (n=197)	151	3	43	78%
PULSE High School (n=127)	95	0	32	75%
TOTAL	475	38	144	78%

Source: School self-reports filed with Commonwealth Corporation.

Note: The table reflects the number of student who returned to the school in the Fall of 2006 that had completed the previous academic year at the same school. In the year for which data is available, Brownsville Academy was the only school expected to have cohort graduates.

For comparison purposes, the cumulative retention/graduation rate among all students in New York City District 79 high schools (i.e. students deemed overage and under-credited) was 65% after one year, 37% after two years, and 24% after three years. This analysis was reported in the Multiple Pathways Strategy from NYC DOE, August 2006. Data include students enrolled between 2001 and 2005 who at age 16 had earned less than 8 credits.

² District 79, up until 2007-08 when a city-wide restructuring occurred, encompassed all the NYC high schools serving overage and under-credited students. These schools are also referred to as 'transfer schools.' Diploma Plus schools are all transfer schools and in District 79, and hence comparable to other District 79 schools.

4. Enrollment has been steadily increasing

School	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2-year increase
Brownsville Academy	142	183	249	74.5%
Crotona Academy	136	150	145	6.6%
Harlem Renaissance	118	197	209	77.1%
PULSE High School	125	127	125	0.0
TOTAL	521	657	738	41.6%

Source: Fall enrollment reports 2004, 2005 & 2006.

Notes: Because of space constraints, Crotona and PULSE were not able to increase enrollment. Brownsville increased to 275 students during the 06-07 year

5. Attendance comparable to that of District 79 schools

School	Attendance 2004-2005	Attendance 2005-2006	Attendance 2006-2007
Brownsville Academy	76%	73%	67%
Crotona Academy	58%	57%	63%
Harlem Renaissance	66%	62%	61%
PULSE High School	75%	76%	75%
District 79 Comparison	61%	66%	69%

Source: New York City Department of Education data website.
<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Stats/attendance/>

6. Attendance significantly improved since attending a DP school

School	Attendance rate of students prior to enrollment at Harlem Renaissance	Attendance rate of students once at Harlem Renaissance
Harlem Renaissance	26.1%	72%

Source: Report by the Harlem Renaissance High School filed with Commonwealth Corporation. None of the other Diploma Plus high schools reported attendance data for students prior to their enrollment at the school. Attendance rate after enrollment is calculated on entering students and is based on average attendance for two years, 2005 – 2007.

One story (among many) of student success in a Diploma Plus School

In 2003, April Ramkalawan, 18, and her mother left her father and siblings behind and moved to New York City from Trinidad. She was already in her third year of high school in Trinidad when she was told that she had to start classes in the 9th grade in New York.

She began at Manhattan Village Academy but was depressed with the prospect of being in school for so long, and soon stopped attending school. She often went back to Trinidad, unsure of her ability to adjust to a new place and new people. After her second year of sporadic attendance and poor grades, April's principal told her she would have to repeat the grade adding another year onto her high school career.

After this setback, the dean at Manhattan Village Academy suggested she transfer to an alternative school. She did transfer to the Harlem Renaissance High School, a Diploma Plus school – Diploma Plus is a national school model that is part of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Alternative High School Initiative.

April entered Harlem Renaissance High School with only 6 credits towards graduation and with no Regents tests passed. In her first year, she didn't show many changes. After countless parent meetings and interventions, April's attendance was still at 46%.

By 2006-07, April got it. "It took awhile to adjust and blossom but I did and I did in so many ways," says April. Through the help of her teachers and the Learning to Work program, April had over 90% attendance. She joined the yearbook club, became a student council member and ran for student body president. April has taken on numerous independent study opportunities and participated in PM school.

April not only helped herself but helped her classmates as well. She continually supported her classmates in completing their work during class and initiated a school-wide attendance incentive plan.

At Harlem Renaissance High School, April found the right formula for success. "I love mathematics and it's my best subject. Even though that's my best subject, at my other school I didn't understand how to do the work and I could not concentrate to learn and remember what was taught. But at Harlem Renaissance, I passed all of my classes with high grades."

In June of 2007, April graduated from high school. Although she didn't do it in the same timeframe as if she stayed in Trinidad, she graduated on time by New York City standards. April has been accepted to Pine Manor College and will become the first member of her immediate family to attend college.

Demographic Characteristics of the Diploma Plus students in New York City (Spring, 2007)

Race / Ethnicity	Number of Students	% of Students
African-American	425	59%
Latino(a)	277	38%
Caucasian	17	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	>1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	>1%

Gender		
Males	304	42%
Females	420	58%

Other		
Free or Reduced Priced Lunch	549	84%
ELL	21	3%

Source: Race/ethnicity and gender from school reports from Spring, 2007. Numbers and percentages for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch and ELL students are from 2005-2006.