

MASTERMAN REPORT

An Executive Summary

Prepared by the Masterman HSA

As presented at the January 10, 2023 HSA Meeting

This is a work in progress and the final report will be published by the end of January.

Purpose of the Report:

- **to use** Dr. Watlington's Transition Report published in October 2022 as a framework for looking at Masterman as a model school
- **to document** the impact of the 2022 school selection process on Masterman
- **to share** the information in the form of a report with the SDP
- **to get answers** from SDP about the future of Masterman and its purpose as a magnet school

Impact of School Selection Process on Magnet Schools

Definitions:

Magnet schools exist to attract students with specific interests, who demonstrate specific skills.

Equity means allocating the appropriate resources needed by students to achieve an equitable outcome.

Criteria defines if a student is the right fit for each magnet school.

Lottery Selection Process

Lottery process established in October 2021 without discussion or input from stakeholders, showing signs of not being carefully thought through.

- Did not consider how attached middle schools would be affected.
- Did not provide students with ranked choice.
- Did not create enough seats for everyone to be placed.

In an effort to be more inclusive, the SDP relaxed and reduced eligibility criteria, without increasing the number of seats in top magnet schools.

- Lower PSSA requirements
- Equal access for charter and independent school students
- Random draw rather than preference for higher performing students

Automatic entry to qualified applicants from certain zip codes.

Lottery Selection Process Results

Lowering criteria and randomizing selection:

- Does not address equity (depends on the pool of eligible applicants)
 - SDP said it would, but backed away from such claims this year
- Creates a student body with a wider array of needs in under-resourced magnet schools
- Sets some students up for failure without the right supports
- Disproportionately impacts academic magnet schools since performing art schools kept their auditions and continue to exclude students based on “fit” for their program

SDP now calling for a “total revamp” of selection process next year

Impact of
School Selection Process
on Masterman

District Sees Improvement in Diversifying School Selection Pool

Posted on March 18, 2022
Categories: [News from SDP](#)

Context for School Selection Process Changes

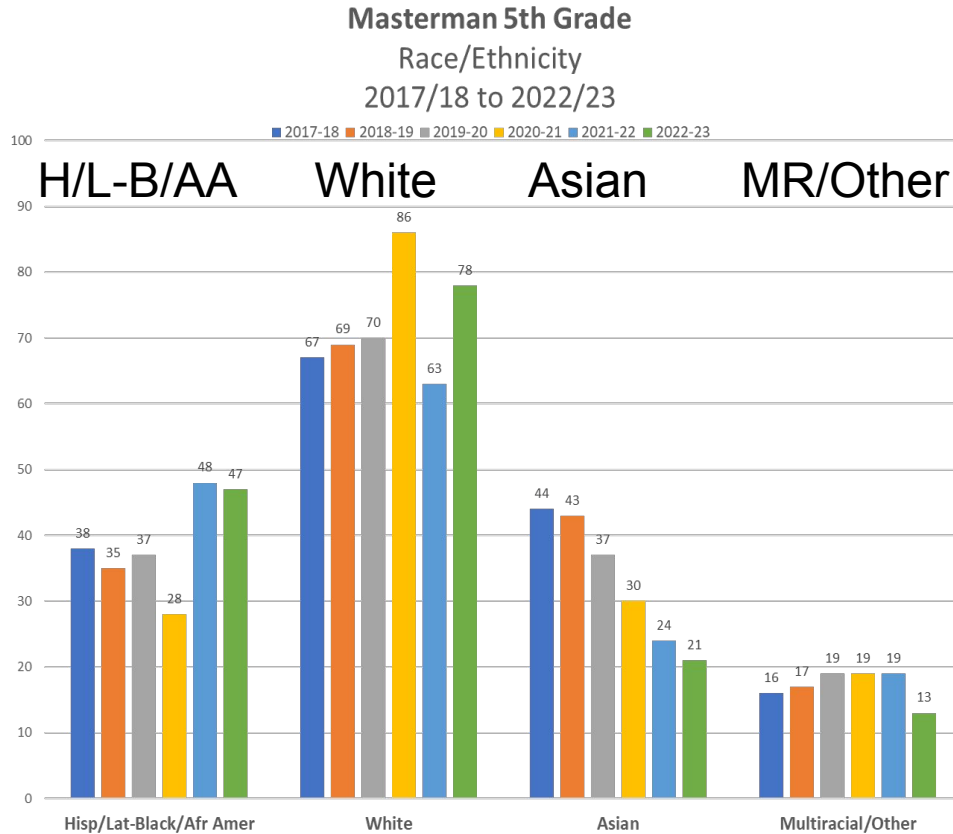
Guardrail 4: Addressing Racist Practices

4.1: Among 8th grade students who are qualified to attend Criteria-Based High Schools, the percentage who are Black/African American or Hispanic/Latinx will grow from 34.3% in August 2020 to at least 52.0% (making progress towards being proportional to population as a whole) by August 2026.

<https://www.philasd.org/blog/2022/03/18/selectionimprovement/>

<https://www.philasd.org/era/goals-and-guardrails/#1652466534334-2ab05503-a554>

How did the students admitted to 5th and 9th grades change in 2022-23?



5th Grade

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Hisp/Lat	12	4	9	12	13	12
Black/Afr Amer	26	31	28	16	35	35

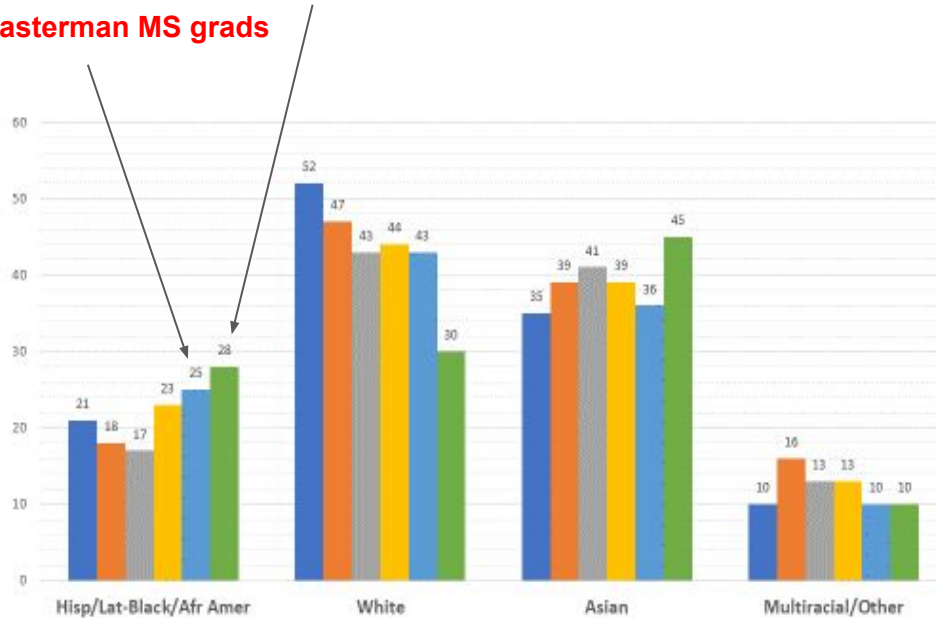
How did the students admitted to 5th and 9th grades change in 2022-23?

Masterman 9th Grade
Race/Ethnicity
2017/18 to 2022/23

■ 2017-18 ■ 2018-19 ■ 2019-20 ■ 2020-21 ■ 2021-22 ■ 2022-23

2/3 non-Masterman

99+% Masterman MS grads



9th Grade

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Hisp/Lat	7	5	2	8	10	8
Black/Afr Amer	14	13	15	15	15	20

Effects of the Selection Process on Masterman

- There is no longer a continuous eight year “advanced intellectual study” program.
- The Middle School and the High School are now two entirely separate and unrelated schools that just happen to be in the same building, undermining both the academic program *and* the community.
- The middle school no longer serves as a required foundation to prepare students for its rigorous high school program.
- There are students in 9th grade for whom Masterman was not their first choice of high school; while in the past 9th grade comprised of students who actually wanted to be here.
- Qualified 8th grade students, including students of color, have been denied entry into Masterman and in some cases entry into any magnet school.

Effects of the Selection Process on Masterman

Erosion of Morale and Community in Middle School:

- Increase in student attrition
- No priority for continuing at Masterman
- No reasonable assurance of admission to other SA schools
- Increase in incidents at school, including suspensions, caused by lack of behavior requirements for admission
- Transportation safety concerns to attend a middle school with eroded academic program

Erosion of the Accelerated Curriculum and Need for Intervention Teaching Staff:

- Poor reading scores have been identified in a significant set of 5th, 6th and 9th graders.
- The significant set of students in 5th and 6th grades have also been identified for strategic and intensive math intervention.
- In November, a 6th grade classroom teacher was reassigned to address academic ELA intervention needs of students in 11 sections of 5th and 6th grades.
- This teacher has been replaced by a long-substitute.

Effects of the Selection Process on Masterman

Erosion of World Language Program:

- Full Course eliminated for the entire 8th grade
- Chinese enrichment provided to 7th and 8th grades this year from a SDP resource. No guarantee of continuity through coming years
- AP French removed and then reinstated and scheduled during lunch which is a time students participate in club activities
- World language full course for 8th grade and continuum of French instruction in 11th and 12th grade is still under consideration for elimination
- Language AP options erode with the elimination of a 5 year language program

Erosion of the Music Program:

- Instrumental and vocal music lessons through 4 years of MS results proficiency
- Several MS and HS All City participants; High level of proficiency in HS musicians
- Only 2 of the 28 students for MS orchestra, 2 of 22 from MS choir were chosen by lottery
- This puts the HS Orchestra, Jazz Band that the all grade Masterman Musical at risk

Advanced Math Track Eliminated: in 2020 for equity reasons prior to lottery admissions.

Effects of the Selection Process on Masterman

Risk of Attrition of Teaching Staff:

- Changing needs of students because of the more varied abilities of students with criteria changes
- Limited resources assigned to the school to meet these needs
- Curricular changes (Chair of WL program left after 8th grade WL program was eliminated)

Challenges to Community - School Leadership Relations:

- Visions for Masterman middle school: school leadership vs parents and students when they enrolled
- Curricular decisions with lasting academic ripple effects (i.e., WL) on the whole community
- Communication and transparency re: events/changes that impact the school and student education
- Parent/guardian ratings of school leadership in SDP survey (2021-22)

This year, the Masterman mission statement, prominently displayed on the school website, was removed without explanation:

"to engage academically talented students in grades 5 through 12 in advanced intellectual study."

The school crest with the motto "Dare to Be Excellent" was replaced with "Middle & High School."



The totality of changes have raised existential questions about the future of Masterman for current and prospective families.

What to Expect Going Forward

- Dr. Watlington has indicated a “total revamp” of the selection process
 - HSA VP Leon McCrea on Parental Advisory Committee
 - VP Jennifer Lennon on Leadership Advisory Committee
 - This report will contribute to that process
- Transition Report shows a commitment
 - to quality education
 - to improve academic standards in neighborhood schools
 - to increase access to algebra and foreign language courses
 - to engage parents and community members to actively participate
- Also hope to meet with top leaders, including Dr. Watlington
- Address mission/vision at February meeting

Questions for SDP Leadership

What does the School District of Philadelphia, have as its objectives for a magnet school system?

Questions for SDP Leadership

What is the current vision for and identity of Masterman, that should guide curriculum and offerings?

Questions for SDP Leadership

What actions can we take now to reshape Masterman's commitment to "dare to be excellent"?