



Assessing College Readiness Through Authentic Student Work

How the City University of New York and the New York Performance Standards Consortium Are Collaborating Toward Equity

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The Public Science Project at the Graduate Center,
City University of New York

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Executive Summary

This report describes the history, context, implementation, and early results of a unique college admissions pilot, one that provides new evidence in the ongoing debate about how colleges should evaluate students to determine who is likely to thrive. Since 2015, the City University of New York (CUNY), serving over 250,000 students through 25 two- and four-year colleges, and high schools in the New York Performance Standards Consortium (the Consortium), which use performance-based assessments to assess student progress, have collaborated to add authentic evidence of student learning to the college admissions process.

Drawing on a data set that links data from the New York City Department of Education and the CUNY system, this report provides a statistical portrait of the progress of Consortium graduates attending CUNY, including a subset who were admitted to college based, in part, on performance assessments, student work, and teacher recommendations but who scored below the SAT cutoff score for CUNY admission to 4-year institutions.

The report describes the schools' performance-based assessment system and how it functions within Consortium schools. It details how teachers and students collaborate to produce high-quality work and how teachers within each school and throughout the network collaborate to maintain and support the rigor and relevance of the assessment process. It describes how the work that students produce through these systems can inform college admissions and what the results of those admissions decisions were in this pilot, as measured through credit accumulation, college GPA, and college persistence.

The Consortium and Performance-Based Assessment Tasks

The Consortium network is made up of 38 schools located in New York City, Rochester, and Ithaca, New York, that currently educate more than 30,000 k–12 students. In New York City, where the pilot took place, Consortium schools across four boroughs (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx) serve a diverse range of high school students, including a greater-than-citywide proportion of English learners, students with disabilities, youth living in temporary housing, Hispanic students, and students in economic need.

Unlike other public schools in New York City, the Consortium high schools operate under a waiver from the state Regents exams that organize the curriculum of most schools. Aside from the English Regents exam, which their students take, the schools use a system of practitioner-developed, student-focused, and externally reviewed projects, papers, performances, experiments, and experiences called performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs). Proponents of the Consortium model have argued that its high-quality assessment system promotes deep engagement and critical thinking; promotes rich evidence of student learning; and ameliorates, to some extent, traditional achievement gaps.

Events That Gave Rise to the Consortium–CUNY Pilot

Historically, Consortium graduates had routinely applied to and been accepted by CUNY in the same way as all other New York City students, without submitting performance assessments. Over time, Consortium educators began to notice their students, particularly students of color from

low-income families, were accepted at test-optional private colleges but denied entry to CUNY 4-year colleges. At the same time, a report by the Community Service Society, a nonprofit advocacy group, linked the decreasing numbers of New York City students of color gaining admission to CUNY's 4-year colleges to three changes: the CUNY system's growing reliance on strict cutoff scores on college entrance exams and GPA for admission, efforts to raise minimum test scores among accepted applicants, and the cessation of "conditional admission" through which a low-scoring student might gain admission to a 4-year program by successfully completing coursework over the summer. While the CUNY admission team might review additional supporting materials submitted by a candidate, such a review was not common, and the standard application form did not call for it.

When advocates raised concerns about the dwindling share of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, CUNY agreed to launch a small pilot to evaluate an alternative admissions approach for its 4-year colleges. The pilot admitted Consortium students who had fulfilled their high school graduation requirements with high-quality work but who had SAT scores below the cutoff needed to gain admission to CUNY 4-year programs. Researchers agreed to follow these pilot students over time to assess their academic progress at CUNY, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic need, as possible. To ensure both transparency and accountability, this study documented the academic progress of successive cohorts of Consortium–CUNY students, comparing (1) all Consortium graduates, (2) pilot students, and (3) other New York City–based high school graduates.

Piloting the Use of Performance-Based Assessment Tasks for Admissions

The students that the Consortium–CUNY pilot admits are thrice vetted: first by their teachers, as students submit PBATs that have received, at minimum, the score of Competent required to graduate; then by college counselors at the high school; and, finally, by CUNY admissions officers.

High school counselors at Consortium schools support students whose SAT scores fall below the CUNY minimum requirement to build their applications in a special format by the end of December, an earlier timeline than would otherwise apply. Students seeking admission through the pilot are required to submit the following: the CUNY common application (including a rank order of preferred colleges), letters of recommendation, evidence of their GPA, a personal essay, a performance-based assessment paper, and a statement from their high school describing its assessment policy. Once the pilot applications arrive, CUNY's central admissions office engages in a holistic review of each applicant file, deciding whether or not to send the application on to colleges according to the applicant's priorities. If an offer is extended, the applicants decide whether or not to attend CUNY. Between half and two thirds of the Consortium–CUNY pilot students admitted choose to attend CUNY in their first year of college.

Preliminary Results for Pilot Students

Preliminary quantitative evidence demonstrates that students in Consortium schools begin high school more educationally and economically disadvantaged than their peers and yet are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and persist in college than demographically similar peers. Those who go on to attend CUNY are more likely to be Black and Hispanic and are more likely to be from the Bronx than their CUNY peers. Early evidence suggests that Black males, in particular, benefit from a Consortium education when compared to Black males educated in traditional high school settings: They are noticeably more likely to persist in college and to receive higher grades.

The results also indicate positive outcomes for students admitted to CUNY through the Consortium–CUNY pilot: On average, they achieve higher first-semester college GPAs, earn more initial credits, and persist in college after the first year at higher rates than peers from other New York City schools, who, on average, have higher SAT scores.

These results suggest that a more holistic review of admission applications that include evidence of student work can help identify students with strong potential to succeed in college, despite lower scores on college entrance exams. Continued analysis is needed to determine the impact of these practices on graduation rates and degree GPA, by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Summary of Key Findings and Implications

The research has several key findings and implications.

The authentic learning and assessment practices of Consortium schools contribute to enhanced academic progress for students: Students educated in Consortium schools are immersed in inquiry-oriented and project-based instruction that is linked to an assessment system that is innovative, rigorous, student focused, teacher directed, and externally validated. Diverse by race, ethnicity, immigration status, (dis)ability, gender, housing circumstances, socioeconomic status, academic history, and first language, these students begin high school with more marginal academic records but graduate, enter college, persist in college, gain credits, and sustain higher GPAs than their peers. This evidence reinforces the findings of other research suggesting that learning experiences structured around performance-based assessments support student advancement and can help narrow race, class, and linguistic gaps in secondary and higher education achievement.

Performance-based assessments are a useful component of holistic review: Students who demonstrate competence through performance assessments appear to fare well in the CUNY system, even when they score below the admissions threshold on college entrance exams. Admissions officers found the information valuable and have been transforming the broader admissions process to expand what they can learn about students and their work. Performance-based assessment offers one path for how holistic scoring might enrich equity in access and success.

Performance assessment can be a catalyst for equity conversations and institutional change: This small pilot has opened an institution-wide conversation about admission criteria, racial/economic equity, and academic success in one of the largest urban systems of higher education in the country—one with more than 100,000 applicants a year. The pilot study helped seed conversations within CUNY about ways to view college readiness through a wider aperture, rather than simply focusing on test scores and GPA. During the early years of the pilot study, CUNY developed a new online platform that allowed students to submit a broader range of evidence of their learning, encouraged applicants to submit various forms of academic work, and allowed for a more holistic and student-centered view of student potential.

Introduction

We know that each student fortunate enough to find his or her way through the doors of a Consortium school will be welcomed and supported in the quest to meet personal dreams. Consortium schools remain a beacon of promise that must never be allowed to dim. You have our complete admiration for your commitment to our children. Thank you.

—Presentation by New York Board of Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa and Regent Judith Johnson to 800 participants attending the Consortium’s 2018 conference, Julia Richman Complex

The schools lauded in this speech by two members of the New York Board of Regents are among the 38 high schools belonging to the New York Performance Standards Consortium (the Consortium), which have cultivated a unique approach to education for the last 30 years. Students attending these schools enjoy a rich public school experience rooted in an inquiry-oriented, culturally responsive curriculum and student-centered pedagogies. They graduate through a well-developed and externally validated performance assessment of cumulative work that illustrates their competence in all of the key disciplinary areas (math, science, English language arts, history/social studies). These complex projects are evaluated as performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs), which are revised, by students, after feedback from educators and external evaluators, to meet explicit standards and are graded on a common set of rubrics. Students defend these projects orally before a committee prior to graduation.

The challenging work that students undertake to complete these performance tasks prepares them to identify and frame problems and questions; conduct research; evaluate evidence; develop arguments; explain and defend their thinking; communicate clearly in writing, as well as orally, quantitatively, and graphically; plan complex projects; receive and incorporate feedback; revise accordingly; seek out resources; and overcome obstacles. Previous research on the Consortium schools (and others that use these assessments for graduation) has indicated that these serious inquiries help students learn the skills they will need in college and throughout their lives. Indeed, graduates of Consortium schools both attend and persist in college at much higher rates than their peers, despite the fact that they are, as a group, more likely to be economically disadvantaged.¹

The researchers examined administrative record data from the university, along with survey and interview data, to assess graduates’ success in college.² The study found that Consortium students, based on what they heard from their peers, reported greater comfort writing papers and doing extensive research projects in college. They also said they were comfortable approaching college faculty for assistance, knew how to take feedback and revise their papers, and sought help—rather than give up—when faced with challenges. These are, of course, the noncognitive skills students should be developing in high school to help them succeed in college. The study’s author noted, “I am seeing an incredible commitment to learning among [Consortium] graduates and real agency around getting through obstacles. If we were able to look at them 10 years out of high school, we would see even higher rates of graduation and success.”³

One of the key questions that has arisen across the nation is how this kind of deep inquiry work can be encouraged in high schools and how colleges and universities can include the results of such work in their admissions decisions. More than 1,500 colleges have eliminated admissions test requirements in recent years, and since COVID-19 struck, many more have opted to go test-optional, at least for a time. College administrators are looking for ways to integrate evidence of student learning that illustrates a broader range of student capacities, desires, and creativity into their admissions processes. In addition, given race- and income-based disparities in access to test prep courses and in performance, many colleges are interested in ways that they can better assess students who are on the margin for admissions, potentially enhancing the diversity and multiple forms of intelligence of students recruited in the process.⁴

This report provides data about one such effort initiated by a partnership between the City University of New York (CUNY) and the Consortium to admit students from Consortium schools based, in part, on the results of the PBATs they prepared for high school graduation, GPA, and teachers' recommendations. The report traces the academic progress of Consortium students out of high school and into the CUNY system. The analysis pays general attention to Consortium graduates at CUNY over the past 3 years and particular attention to the students who were admitted through a Consortium–CUNY pilot in which Consortium students with SAT scores below CUNY's minimum requirement for 4-year colleges were admitted, in part, based on academic work reflected in the PBATs.

The preliminary evidence summarized here points to a range of academic and equity benefits resulting from this approach, in terms of students' access to and persistence in college. The descriptive data, drawn from the New York City Department of Education and CUNY databases, demonstrates that students in Consortium schools begin high school more educationally and economically disadvantaged than their peers and yet are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and persist in college than demographically similar peers. (See Appendix A for more information about the study methods.) Consortium students who attend CUNY are more likely to be Black or Hispanic, and less likely to be White or Asian American, than CUNY students at large and are far more likely to come from communities in the Bronx.

The academic and equity value added seems to be sustained as these students move through higher education. As students from Consortium schools generally, and those in the Consortium–CUNY pilot in particular, make their way through high school and into the CUNY system, the racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps found throughout secondary and higher education appear to be narrowing.

The Consortium and Its Assessment System

The New York Performance Standards Consortium began in the early 1990s as an indirect outcome of New York State Commissioner Dr. Thomas Sobol's *Compact for Learning*—an initiative in which, among other things, schools regarded as particularly effective were asked to offer assistance to schools in need of support. When close observation revealed that several of the mentoring schools utilized a system of performance assessment in place of the state's standardized exams, the Commissioner granted a waiver that allowed these schools to extend their systems of practitioner-developed, student-focused, and externally reviewed assessments, which came to be known as performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs).

By 1998, the group of schools using this system formed the New York Performance Standards Consortium. Through the Consortium's Center for Inquiry, which coordinates the Consortium's professional and curriculum development, its rubric design, and its teacher and principal collaborations, the Consortium has continued to develop and refine its performance assessment system, detailed in the following sections. It has done so despite seismic shifts in state and national policies that have pushed standardized testing to the center of school, student, and teacher accountability.

The performance assessment system in Consortium schools focuses on the quality and depth of student work, scaffolded by educators providing support and feedback over time. Students choose and design meaningful projects that use disciplinary modes of inquiry, iterate on their work, receive and interpret feedback, review and refine their material, and, prior to graduation, present their work, in written form and orally, to a committee of jurors from both inside and outside the school. The committee members ask questions that probe for the candidate's deep understanding of the content and evaluate the product and the presentation and then debrief with the candidate about strengths and areas for improvement. Not all PBATs pass muster on the first round. Sometimes students need to revise and re-present. The projects, papers, experiments, and works of art that emerge are a product of teacher-designed curricula and rubrics, intense collaboration among those teachers, ongoing professional development, and annual moderation studies that calibrate scoring, designed in alignment with state standards.

Background of Consortium Schools

At present, nearly 30,000 students attend the Consortium's 38 schools located in four boroughs in New York City (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx), Rochester, and Ithaca, New York. While Consortium schools serve different demographics and neighborhoods, all share a common assessment system. Each school cultivates an institutional culture that encourages rigor, a sense of belonging, academic drive, trust, strong relations with families, and collaboration. As the New York City Department of Education data demonstrate (see Table 1), Consortium schools rate highly on metrics of rigorous instruction, supportive environment, trust, and student achievement across racial and ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender groups.

Table 1
School Quality Comparison of Consortium Schools and New York City Schools (2018–19)

Percentage of Schools Meeting or Exceeding Targets on New York City Department of Education School Quality Guide

Quality Metric	Consortium	Citywide
Rigorous Instruction	98%	77%
Collaborative Teachers	98%	83%
Supportive Environment	97%	83%
Effective School Leadership	94%	85%
Family–Community Ties	89%	78%
Sense of Trust	97%	80%
Student Achievement	86%	74%

Data sources: These results were calculated using publicly available data. See: NYC Department of Education InfoHub. (n.d.). School quality reports and resources. <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/school-quality/school-quality-reports-and-resources> (accessed November 2019, January 2020). Databases consulted: Citywide Data, High School Citywide Results, Transfer High School Citywide Results.

Demographics

New York City Consortium high schools include transfer schools, schools designed for English learners (ELs), and schools that might be called “second-chance” programs for students who have “stopped out” but then returned to secondary education. Drawing on the New York City Department of Education data presented in Table 2, we see that students in the Consortium schools in New York City, compared to students citywide, are more than 50% more likely to be classified as ELs, slightly more likely to be students with disabilities (SWD), and 30% more likely to live in temporary housing. In addition, 78% score highly on the economic need index compared to 76% citywide. Consortium students are more likely to be Hispanic (52%), slightly less likely to be Black (25%) or White (13%), and less likely to be classified as Asian (7%) than citywide demographics.

Incoming academic preparation

According to standardized metrics, Consortium students begin high school less academically proficient than students citywide. As presented in Table 2, average incoming math scores (based on school-level 8th-grade state tests) are 2.57 out of 4 for Consortium schools versus 2.71 citywide; average incoming English language arts scores are 2.70 for Consortium schools and 2.83 citywide.

Table 2
High School Demographics Comparison of Consortium Schools and New York City Schools (2018–19)

Demographic	Consortium	Citywide
English Learners	19%	12%
Students With Disabilities	19%	17%
Temporary Housing	13%	10%
Black	25%	26%
Hispanic	52%	40%
Average Incoming Scores: Math	By School: 2.57 By Student: 2.71	By School: 2.71 By Student: 2.91
Average Incoming Scores: English Language Arts	By School: 2.70 By Student: 2.82	By School: 2.83 By Student: 2.98
Economic Need Index	By School: 78% By Student: 74%	By School: 76% By Student: 71%

Note: Comparisons are of Grades 9–12 high schools.

Data sources: These results were calculated using publicly available data. See: NYC Department of Education InfoHub. (n.d.). School quality reports and resources. <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/school-quality/school-quality-reports-and-resources> (accessed November 2019, January 2020). Databases consulted: Citywide Data, High School Citywide Results, Transfer High School Citywide Results.

Building school cultures of intellectual curiosity and engagement

Perhaps most compelling, these Consortium schools, rooted in a high-quality, performance-based assessment system, build school cultures that nurture student inquiry, ensure strong educator support, and encourage collaboration with families, and they are held accountable by external examining committees of scholars, professionals, and scientists. As presented in Table 1, New York City Department of Education school surveys for 2018–19 reveal Consortium school cultures that value equity and relationships, rigor and trust, and student-educator and family engagement at extraordinarily high levels.

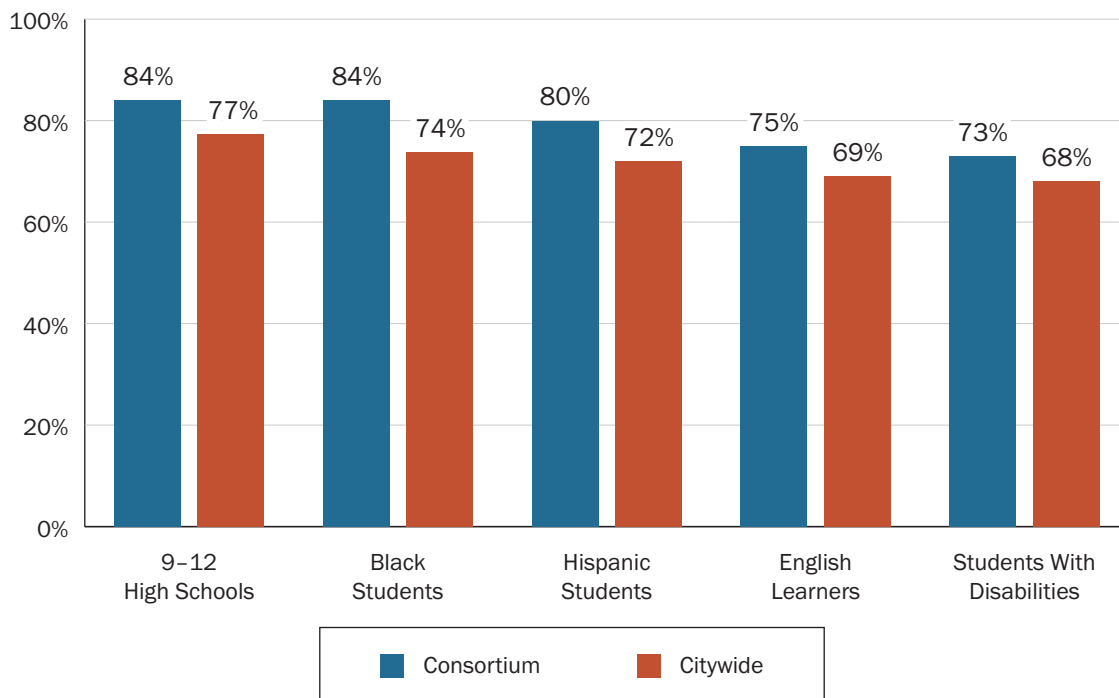
Outcomes of Consortium Schools

It seems clear that the Consortium schools produce cultures of care and achievement; educate high rates of students living in precarious circumstances; produce graduates of great promise; and build students’ experience with academic inquiry, feedback, revision, persistence, and what some would call “grit.”

Achievement and outcomes

While Consortium students enter high school at some economic, housing, and structural disadvantages relative to the citywide population, and start off at some academic disadvantage, they graduate from high school with substantially better academic outcomes, as presented in Figure 1 and Table 3. Whether we consider student achievement, credit accumulation, 4-year graduation rate, 18-month college enrollment, or college readiness, we find that Consortium students substantially outperform their citywide peers. It is most impressive to note the equity “boost” or value added for Consortium students who identify as Black, Hispanic, EL, and/or SWD.

Figure 1
High School Graduation Rate of Consortium Students Compared to Their Peers Citywide (2018–19)



Note: Consortium graduation data based on 2 or more years of enrollment in a Consortium member school.

Data sources: These results were calculated using publicly available data. See: NYC Department of Education InfoHub. (n.d.). School quality reports and resources. <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/school-quality/school-quality-reports-and-resources> (accessed November 2019, January 2020). Databases consulted: Citywide Data, High School Citywide Results, Transfer High School Citywide Results; NYC Department of Education InfoHub. (2020). New York City Graduation Rates: Class of 2019 (2015 Cohort). <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2019-graduation-rates--website--1-16-20.pdf> (accessed January 2020).

The advantages and academic dispositions developed by Consortium students are sustained well beyond graduation and into college. It is impressive to note that Consortium schools meet New York City Department of Education 18-month college enrollment targets at a consistently high rate: 72% compared to 57% citywide. Students in these schools meet college-readiness targets at a rate of 96% compared to 68% citywide.

Table 3
Academic Outcomes of Consortium School Students Compared to Their Peers Citywide (2018–19)

Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Department of Education Target Set for the School

Academic Outcome	Consortium	Citywide
Student Achievement	90%	72%
Credit Accumulation Grade 9	71%	55%
18-Month College Enrollment	72%	57%
4-Year College Readiness	96%	68%

Data sources: These results were calculated using publicly available data. See: NYC Department of Education InfoHub. (n.d.). School quality reports and resources. <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/school-quality/school-quality-reports-and-resources> (accessed November 2019, January 2020). Databases consulted: Citywide Data, High School Citywide Results, Transfer High School Citywide Results.

Performance-Based Assessment Tasks: A Closer Look

In the Consortium schools, the PBATs grow organically out of the curriculum. Topics for assessment are co-created by teachers and by students, once they have discussed, debated, and thoroughly interrogated the material both verbally and in writing. The curriculum itself may undergo changes as a result of this process, with teachers introducing different books or journals or web materials to deepen the exploration of the topic, respond to questions raised, or simply help students understand an issue that has proven difficult for them. Out of this engagement and the relationship it develops in the classroom, both teacher and student become the co-creators of the task and take ownership of it. It is a meaningful and purposeful process, unlike the more formulaic use of “banked” or “canned” tasks.

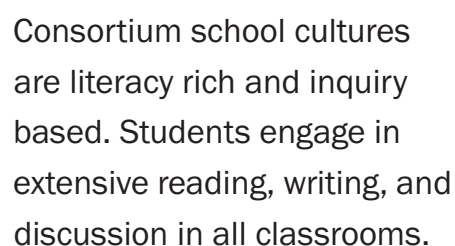
The Quest for Deep Learning

In New York state, most public school students earn a Regents diploma by passing 44 credits and a series of Regents examinations in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (U.S. and global history and geography). For nearly three decades, the New York State Board of Regents and New York State Education Department have waived some of these requirements for Consortium schools, whose students earn a Regents diploma by passing 44 distribution credits, achieving a passing score on the Regents English language arts exam, and completing a series of disciplinary and interdisciplinary performance tasks that address the core standards in the subject areas.

In order to graduate, students in Consortium schools are asked to write and orally present a series of PBATs in history, science, math, and English language arts. As a part of this process, students are asked to explore questions generated from their own intellectual curiosity, facilitated by educators and evaluated by external scholars and professionals. The design and scoring of these tasks reflect the standards of the subject area disciplines, developed and standardized across educators within the Consortium network. For example, students write literary essays based on works they have studied in class as well as literary works of their own choosing. The Literary Analysis rubric focuses on analysis, interpretation, style, and connections that students may make between the literature and other concerns (such as thematic issues, historical setting, etc.). See Appendix B for sample rubrics and Appendix C for examples of tasks.

Preparation for PBATs begins with a student’s entrance into the school. Consortium school cultures are literacy rich and inquiry based. Students engage in extensive reading, writing, and discussion in all classrooms. This immersion in literacy and inquiry builds toward the graduation tasks required of every Consortium student: (1) an analytic essay on literature; (2) a social studies research paper; (3) an extended or original science experiment; and (4) problem-solving at higher levels of mathematics.

Each school may also add tasks in the arts, in art criticism, in foreign language, in relation to an internship, or in other areas. Because students have different strengths, the Consortium has built



Consortium school cultures are literacy rich and inquiry based. Students engage in extensive reading, writing, and discussion in all classrooms.

multiple ways for students to demonstrate their learning. In addition to written reports, students also participate in oral presentations of their work in the form of discussions, debates, or other types of exhibitions.

A series of activities and assessments precede the PBATs required for graduation. These include:

- a range of projects applying concepts in each content area;
- interim assessments of analytic and expressive skills;
- roundtables featuring rich discussions of ideas;
- oral argumentation based on content and evidence;
- analytic as well as creative and first-person writing; and
- teacher- and student-initiated assignments resulting in a range of products, from mathematical models and physics explanations of real-world phenomena to formal scientific investigations and research papers on topics of interest.

In 11th and 12th grade, students work on projects that lead to their final PBATs. They receive feedback that may result in the assessments undergoing revision. Educators work closely with students and provide guidance to ensure appropriate evidence is being used, analytic skills are being developed, and projects are clearly communicating their results.

Although all member schools require graduation-level tasks in the four main academic disciplines (literature, mathematics, science, and social studies), topics vary from school to school and even within a single classroom. Examples of recent literature PBATs include a comparative analysis of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Beloved*; an examination of *Heart of Darkness* based on an essay by Chinua Achebe; and an exploration of the role of gender in *Othello* and *Antigone*. Topics in other subject areas display the same diversity. Mathematics PBATs have looked at adaptations of classic mathematical problems, such as the 19th-century Frobenius problem, the Gauss problem, and the ancient Zeno's paradox. Science PBATs engage students to think like scientists and, of late, have encouraged involvement that extends their scientific inquiries into climate crisis activism. Similarly, social studies PBATs often include social justice challenges but also investigate thorny issues of history, such as the history of leadership in Turkey and the contrasting visions for Puerto Rico of Pedro Albizu Campos and Luis Muñoz Marín.

Development and Scoring of PBATs

Two important principles underlay the Consortium's work: the *professionalism* of the teaching staff and the sense of *ownership* both students and teachers have of the process. Student voice is a feature of many of the rubrics developed for evaluating the PBATs. For this reason, after meetings and workshops to discuss both pluses and minuses, the Consortium decided to encourage teachers and students to develop PBATs as they emerge from the curriculum and the dynamic exchanges among students and teachers during classroom discussions, as opposed to using an external list of suggested tasks.

The role of teachers

Consortium teachers design challenging curriculum and tasks and provide feedback about their peers' tasks; they respond to student interests and needs, develop and revise rubrics, and participate in Consortium- and school-based professional development focused on PBAT curriculum and assessments. Collaboration is extensive, from observing each other's classrooms to visiting each other's schools and serving as external evaluators, sharing curriculum, and evaluating each other's work during moderation studies. Consortium teachers understand the responsibility they share in the creation of the Consortium performance assessment system. They commit to the many layers of work and collaboration required to make the system functional. For this reason, the Consortium schools are excellent examples of professional communities in which teachers have the latitude to innovate and a voice in shaping school policies and structures.

Importantly, collaboration occurs both within and across schools. With the combination of professionalism, ownership, and strong sense of community, teacher retention in Consortium schools is high and consistently exceeds that of New York City public high schools overall. Based on Department of Education data from 2011 to 2016, high school teacher retention rates for teachers with less than 5 years' experience were 80% for Consortium schools, compared to 72% for New York City high schools citywide.⁵

Scoring

Graduation-level PBATs are evaluated by external assessors, including university scholars, government and private sector experts, scientists, and public intellectuals, using Consortium-developed rubrics for both writing and oral presentations. These PBATs are scored as Outstanding, Good, Competent, or Needs Revision, as a requirement of graduation. The rubrics for evaluation are available in Appendix B of this report, with a set of representative PBAT papers in Appendix C.

To ensure comparable standards across assessments, the Consortium hosts a series of moderation studies in which both the tasks used in the PBATs and student papers are reviewed by panels of educators from across schools and with varying years of experience. Each school sends a teacher representative in each academic discipline to participate in the moderation study. These moderation teams meet in small groups of 10–13 and evaluate both the task and the student paper, using the appropriate Consortium rubric and Webb's Depth of Knowledge guidelines for categorizing tasks according to the complexity of thinking they require.⁶ All responses are returned to the originating school for a faculty-based discussion of the results and comments.

While the PBATs are student focused and teacher directed, across the Consortium teachers rate the student work within each subject area with a common rubric. (See Appendix B.) If teachers find the rubrics need revision to better meet student needs or reflect concerns related to the discipline, the Consortium will hold workshops during the year for teachers to suggest and evaluate any revisions to the rubrics they decide are necessary. For example, as a result of this process, the teachers designed an Engineering and Design rubric in addition to the Experimental Science rubric.

Events That Gave Rise to the Consortium–CUNY Pilot

Historically, New York City Consortium high schools have been excellent feeders to the CUNY system. Students applied in the same way as all other New York City public high school students, without submitting PBATs. Hundreds were accepted every year. There was no specific criterion for Consortium schools. CUNY understood that Consortium students had a different system for assessment and that it was receiving Regents-endorsed diplomas. Like most of the 100,000 applicants to the CUNY system, Consortium students submitted their application materials with evidence of their GPAs and SAT scores.

In 2012, two dynamics became evident and combined to inspire the Consortium–CUNY pilot. First, Consortium educators routinely meet, across schools, to assess shifts in students and innovations in curriculum as well as struggles with social issues and college-going. In 2012, at one such meeting, discussion turned to a curious common experience with admissions to CUNY. Strong students from the Consortium, particularly students of color from low-income families, who previously would have been accepted into the top-tier CUNY colleges, were increasingly being accepted at private test-optional colleges but were denied access to the most competitive CUNY 4-year colleges. They were being accepted instead into CUNY’s community colleges.

Across schools, these patterns were evident particularly for students of color, students from working-class families, students whose families have immigrated to the United States, and/or students with disabilities. College guidance advisors reported that their most successful students who were admitted to competitive 4-year private colleges (Trinity, Sarah Lawrence, Connecticut College, among others) and state universities (SUNY Albany, Stonybrook, Buffalo) were being denied entry to CUNY’s 4-year colleges (e.g., Hunter, Lehman, City, Brooklyn, Queens, Baruch). Most disturbing, a high percentage of these high school graduates were Black and/or Hispanic.

The same year, the Community Service Society of New York (CSS), a 175-year-old New York City nonprofit that addresses the root causes of economic disparity through research, advocacy, and litigation, issued a report documenting that while the number of applicants to CUNY was rising overall, decreasing numbers of New York City students of color were gaining admission to CUNY’s 4-year colleges.⁷ With some investigative work, CSS discovered that CUNY’s admission formula had been altered after the recession of 2008, raising the minimum required SAT score for the top 4-year programs to 500 and eliminating “conditional admissions” for promising students with lower scores.

The change, part of CUNY’s Master Plan, was intentional. Proponents wanted CUNY’s 4-year colleges to become the “Harvard of New York City” and serve what they saw as “academically elite” students, while other students were to begin their postsecondary careers at CUNY’s 2-year colleges. Opponents argued that the narrowing of admissions criteria and an overreliance on test scores disadvantaged students from low-income families, students whose families have immigrated to the United States, and students of color, who historically score less well on the SAT than their White, affluent counterparts. CUNY’s 2-year colleges, they pointed out, like most 2-year colleges in the United States, had significantly lower graduation rates than the 4-year institutions. The new policy, they argued, flew in the face of CUNY’s mission to educate all of the children of the city.

At the intersection of this conflict, educators from the Consortium joined with their college counselors and CUNY faculty colleagues to initiate a meeting with CUNY administration and data managers. After some back and forth, the group devised a pilot program in which Consortium school

graduates who did not reach CUNY's minimum required SAT scores but were nevertheless assessed as well qualified for success would be considered for admission. They were to be considered for admission based on GPA, a personal essay, a PBAT paper, the CUNY common application, teacher/counselor recommendations, and a statement of the school and its assessment policy. Those accepted by the central admissions office would be given an opportunity to attend one of the 4-year colleges, ideally from a list that applicants submitted prioritizing their three top college choices within CUNY.

To ensure both transparency and accountability, the Consortium agreed to work with the authors to systematically document the academic progress of successive cohorts of Consortium–CUNY students who are first-year, first-time freshmen at CUNY, comparing (1) all Consortium graduates, (2) pilot students, and (3) other graduates from public high schools in New York City. Based on a data-sharing agreement with CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) and approval from the university's Institutional Review Board, the research team has annually received a de-identified data set tracking students' academic outcomes for each cohort of first-time freshmen, including pilot students.

This report is based on data for three cohorts of incoming first-year students and publicly available data from the New York City Department of Education, which allow the authors to track the CUNY-wide retention, credit accumulation, and GPA of CUNY students. Where possible, the data have been disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, borough, and ethnic composition of CUNY students' sending high schools. The report focuses on the first preliminary descriptive exploration of the following two research questions:

1. How do students educated in the Consortium, with performance assessments instead of Regents tests, who attend CUNY fare over time in terms of college persistence (measured as CUNY-wide retention), GPA, and credits accumulated, in the aggregate and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, when compared to CUNY students in general?
2. How do students in the Consortium–CUNY pilot, who failed to meet CUNY's minimum required SAT scores, fare over time in terms of college persistence (measured as CUNY-wide retention), GPA, and credits accumulated, in the aggregate and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, when compared to CUNY students in general, Consortium students accepted through traditional means, and students from selective high schools?

Use of Performance-Based Assessment Tasks for Admissions

Consortium students with SAT scores above 480 in reading and 530 in math continue to apply to CUNY through the traditional application process (a common application form, evidence of GPA, and SAT scores) and undergo a traditional evaluation process. As part of the Consortium–CUNY pilot, students with SAT scores under these minimum cutoffs required for CUNY 4-year institutions, with recommendations from their teachers and college guidance counselors, can submit the CUNY common application, GPA, and SAT scores along with recommendations, statements of the academic and curricular requirements of the Consortium schools, the rubrics used to determine the final evaluation of their PBATs, and the written portion of a PBAT.

Because CUNY has rolling admissions, pilot students submit their applications as early as feasible, usually early December. A list of all Consortium applicants to the pilot is sent to the CUNY central admissions office. To be clear, the students in the pilot who are applying to CUNY 4-year colleges are not simply sending in a paper, or a video, or an art piece with no evaluation. They are submitting a scored piece of work, along with the criteria and rubric used for scoring, and a description of the school’s overall assessment process.

Once the CUNY central admissions team receives an application through the pilot program, it launches a more holistic review than it would for traditional candidates. Consortium schools’ college counselors have rich, deep trusting relationships with CUNY admission staff, who are familiar with the Consortium assessment process. For each pilot applicant, CUNY central admission staff review the academic and curricular requirements of the Consortium schools, the letters of recommendation, the rubrics used to determine the final evaluation of their PBATs, the evaluation of the PBATs by both teachers and college counselors at the high school, and the work produced by the student in the form of a PBAT.

As presented in Table 4, in the three cohorts since 2016, more than 75% of pilot applications were sent on to the college admissions offices in 4-year colleges with a letter from CUNY Central explaining that CUNY recognizes Consortium schools as excellent feeders; that Consortium students, on average, surpass CUNY students in persistence and GPA; and that SAT scores slightly below cutoffs are permitted. If a CUNY 4-year college extends an offer, the applicant then decides whether or not to accept and attend CUNY. Many who are accepted to CUNY 4-year colleges have other postsecondary options, including private colleges, with scholarships, and public universities in New York state or elsewhere. Some students welcome the opportunity to attend a campus outside the city. In addition, those students who have been offered scholarships may decide to choose a non-CUNY campus. In the most recent cohort of 2019–20 applicants, 127 Consortium graduates applied to CUNY through the pilot, and 84% were accepted into 4-year colleges, marking a rise in numbers of applications and proportion of positive admission decisions. We do not yet have yield information. Over the past 5 years, between half and two thirds of the Consortium–CUNY pilot students who were admitted attended CUNY in the fall of their first year of college.

Table 4
Percentages of Pilot Applicants Admitted to CUNY 4-Year Colleges
and the Percentages of Admits Who Attended

Admits	Cohort			
	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Admitted to 4-year college	28.8% (n = 52)	77.8% (n = 81)	95.5% (n = 111)	78.1% (n = 110)
Yield	60.0% (n = 15)	66.7% (n = 63)	51.9% (n = 106)	67.4% (n = 86)

Data source: CUNY Admissions Office.

A quick footnote on fall 2015 data: The first year (2014–15) of the pilot was filled with difficulties, including very late applications and an underdeveloped process, which has since been refined. These difficulties may explain why participation was low in 2015. As we can see from 2016–18, CUNY admitted between 77.8% and 95.5% of the pilot applicants, and between 51.9% and 67.4% decided to attend CUNY.

We conducted a few interviews with key CUNY administrators to understand the thinking behind the policy shifts at CUNY Central and to unpack how this transformation affected the labor and decisions of the admissions office staff. We asked Joanne Kucharski, Associate Director of Admissions and Recruitment, “What are you looking for in these applicants?” She responded with reflection and honesty:

I still remember some of the PBATs I read years ago. It’s interesting we now know—from so much evidence—that the SAT doesn’t predict college readiness. We know that GPA does a much better job. At CUNY, we were realizing that so many of our tests that we relied upon were just invalid. A study showed that more than 25% of students who tested into remedial could have passed the regular courses without remediation. When I reviewed these PBATs, we could see capacity and aspirations. Students were using evidence, making arguments, writing well, raising questions, and able to handle complex material with maturity. So after we review their applications, we send them on to the college with the memo saying that these students have capacity, they are from the Consortium, and we have evidence that these students, on average, perform better than most of the students of your campus.

Our CUNY staff were really impressed with the PBATs when we sat around to read them. This encouraged us to move toward a new online platform for gathering and assessing more information about students. We had an old-fashioned, flat platform, and now we are asking anyone who wants to submit more materials, including letters of recommendation or student work, to please do so. We transformed policy; concerned about equity, we are moving toward more holistic scoring.

Once the CUNY admissions office began to review the PBATs submitted by Consortium–CUNY pilot students, a new mindset evolved. The staff could see “capacity and aspirations.” The admissions office moved toward a new online platform that permits applicants to submit evidence of their learning. Conversations about equity in admissions, remediation, and academic persistence opened up, increasingly innovative and evidence based. It is a credit to CUNY, the leadership of Kucharski, and the strength of the PBATs that a small pilot could inspire a large reconsideration of capacity, aspirations, and equity, prying open a discussion of “how do we know” who will thrive?

The pilot was not the only exception to the 500 score cutoff, as there are multiple pathways to CUNY first-year admissions for students from different contexts and targeted admissions practices for recommended students with “great potential” who do not satisfy traditional admissions criteria. In this context, the pilot was an “official” experiment, documenting outcomes and empirically evaluating what turns out to be one of multiple pathways to admission.

In their interviews, Kucharski and former interim Chancellor Vita Rabinowitz confirmed:

The time has come for expanding the use of performance assessment at CUNY. We know the old measures like high-stakes testing are not nearly as valid and reliable as we originally thought, and they disadvantage students from racial/ethnic and socioeconomic minority groups. PBATs allow us to “meet” the students—in seeing what it is they can actually do—even before they arrive.

Study Findings

This report presents the first results of the study's analyses. In our preliminary descriptive analysis, we compare three cohorts of first-time, first-year CUNY students comprising (1) pilot students, (2) non-pilot Consortium students, and (3) students from non-Consortium New York City public schools on measures including first-semester GPA, first-semester completion of attempted credits, and persistence at CUNY after 1 year. Over time, we will focus our analyses on longer-term outcomes, such as graduation rates and final college GPA.

For technical reasons implemented to protect students' privacy, our current data set reliably identifies 54 out of 106 pilot students from the fall 2015, 2016, and 2017 cohorts. At the time of this report, no data are available for the fall 2018 cohort. To protect student privacy, we limit our analyses to sub-samples of 10 or more, and thus we are currently unable to disaggregate pilot results by student demographic characteristics. However, we are able to show this disaggregation of the data for all Consortium students (pilot and non-pilot combined) as compared to other New York City public school students, and we include those analyses in our presentation of data below.

Results for Pilot Students

Across the three cohorts, data indicate that, on average, Consortium students begin college with somewhat lower SAT scores than other New York City public school students. By definition, pilot students have scores somewhat below those of their Consortium and non-Consortium peers. (See Table 5.) However, their average high school GPA is higher than those of other groups. (See Table 6.)

Table 5
SAT Scores for First-Time Freshmen, by School Type

School Type	Total	Mean	SD	Median
Consortium (Non-Pilot)	522	992.8	155.1	990.0
NYC Public ^a	24,311	1027.4	144.6	1030.0
Consortium (Pilot)	54	965.9	97.3	970.0

Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: These results are based on the records of students with known SAT scores; thus, total student numbers (N) in this table for some student groups might differ from those presented in other tables throughout this report.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Table 6
High School GPA for First-Time Freshmen, by School Type

School Type	Total	Mean GPA	GPA SD	Median GPA
Consortium (Non-Pilot)	511	85.72	6.01	86.2
NYC Public ^a	24,490	85.94	5.89	86.3
Consortium (Pilot)	53	89.15	5.20	89.4

Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: These results are also based on the records of students with known high school GPAs; thus, total student numbers (N) in this table for some student groups might differ from those presented in other tables throughout this report.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Despite lower SAT scores, Consortium–CUNY pilot students have higher first-semester GPAs than their peers from Consortium and New York City public schools (see Table 7), and they are more likely to earn at least 80% of their first-semester attempted credits compared to their peers from Consortium and New York City public schools. (See Table 8.) Consortium–CUNY pilot students—an admittedly small sample—are far more likely to persist within the CUNY system within 1 year of enrollment. (See Figure 2.)

Table 7
First-Semester GPA of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree, by School Type

School Type	Total	Mean GPA	GPA SD	Median GPA
Consortium (Non-Pilot)	515	2.77	1.1	3.07
NYC Public ^a	24,284	2.87	0.9	3.09
Consortium (Pilot)	54	3.06	0.7	3.16

Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Students with unknown GPAs are excluded from this analysis; thus, total numbers (N) in this table for some student groups might differ from those presented in other tables throughout this report.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Table 8
Percentage of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree Who Earned 80% or More of Attempted First-Semester Credits, by School Type

School Type	Total	Earned 80% or More of Attempted Credits	
		<i>n</i>	%
Consortium (Non-Pilot)	516	395	76.6
NYC Public ^a	24,316	19,910	81.9
Consortium (Pilot)	54	48	88.9

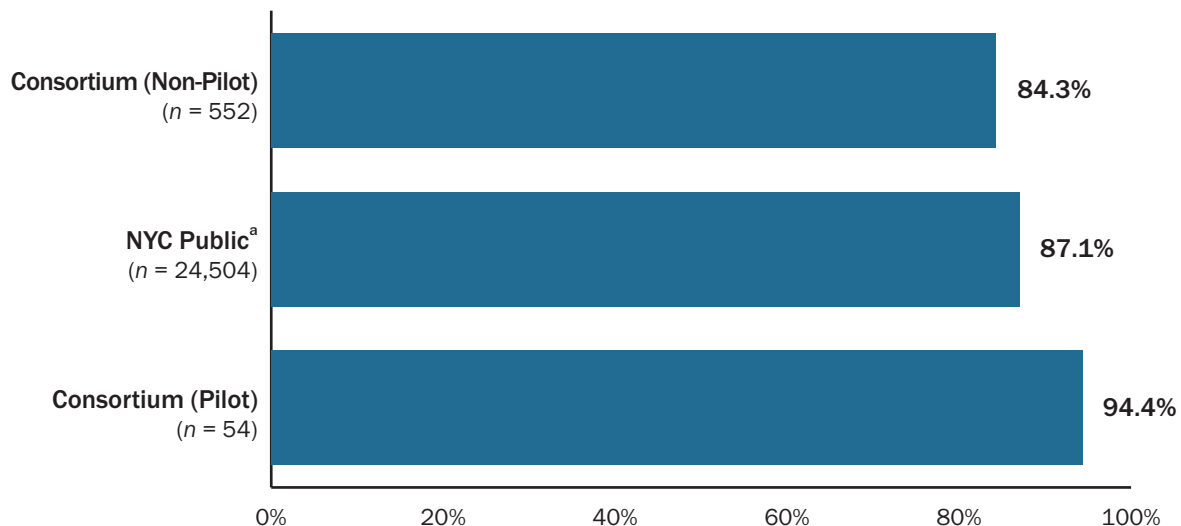
Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Students who did not attempt credits are excluded from this analysis; thus, total numbers (N) in this table for some student groups might differ from those presented in other tables throughout this report.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Figure 2
One-Year CUNY-Wide Persistence Rates of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree, by School Type (Preliminary Results)



Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Students who enrolled but did not attempt any credits in their first semester are excluded from this analysis; thus, total student numbers (N) in this table for some student groups might differ from those presented in other tables throughout this report.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Results for Underrepresented Students of Color and Students From Low-Income Families

As Table 9 shows, Consortium students at CUNY (both pilot and non-pilot students) are much more likely to be classified as underrepresented students of color (Black and Hispanic) than non-Consortium New York City public school graduates at CUNY (61% vs. 46%). Among Consortium graduates at CUNY, the proportion of students classified as Hispanic is much higher (45% vs. 30%) and the proportion of Asian American students is much lower (21% vs. 36%) than the pool of non-Consortium New York City public school graduates at CUNY.

Table 9
Number of Students by Ethnicity and School Type

School Type	Total	Native American	Asian American	Black	Hispanic	White
Consortium	574	0.0%	21.4%	16.4%	44.6%	17.6%
NYC Public ^a	24,507	0.3%	35.5%	15.6%	30.4%	18.1%

Note: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Our preliminary analyses suggest that Consortium students from underrepresented groups (Black, Hispanic, and Native American) have first-semester GPAs that are comparable to those of their non-Consortium peers (and a higher median GPA), though they are slightly less likely to earn 80% or more of their attempted credits in the first semester (see Table 10 and Table 11). As shown in Table 12, Consortium students from underrepresented groups have 1-year CUNY-wide persistence rates comparable to those of their non-Consortium peers.

Table 10
First-Semester GPA of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen From Underrepresented Groups, by School Type

School Type	Total	Mean GPA	GPA SD	Median GPA
Consortium	346	2.73	1.0	3.03
NYC Public ^a	11,246	2.72	1.0	2.96

Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Underrepresented students include Black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

Note 3: Students who did not attempt credits are excluded from this analysis.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Table 11
Percentage of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen From Underrepresented Groups Who Earned 80% or More of Attempted First-Semester Credits, by School Type

School Type	Total	Earned 80% or More of Attempted Credits	
		<i>n</i>	%
Consortium	347	259	74.6
NYC Public ^a	11,262	8,797	78.1

Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Underrepresented students include Black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

Note 3: Students with unknown GPAs are excluded from this analysis.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Table 12
One-Year CUNY-Wide Persistence Rates of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen From Underrepresented Groups Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree, by School Type

School Type	Total	Persisted (<i>n</i>)	Persisted (%)
Consortium	350	292	83.4
NYC Public ^a	11,355	9,508	83.7

Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Underrepresented students include Black, Hispanic, and Native American students.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Black male students from Consortium schools who were full-time, first-time students noticeably outperformed those from non-Consortium schools in terms of both first-semester GPAs (2.75 vs. 2.44) and persistence at CUNY after 1 year (90% vs. 78%), as shown in Table 13 and Figure 3.

Table 13
First-Semester GPA of Black Men Who Were Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree, by School Type

School Type	Total	Mean GPA	GPA SD	Median GPA
Consortium	39	2.75	1.0	2.90
NYC Public ^a	1,542	2.44	1.0	2.66

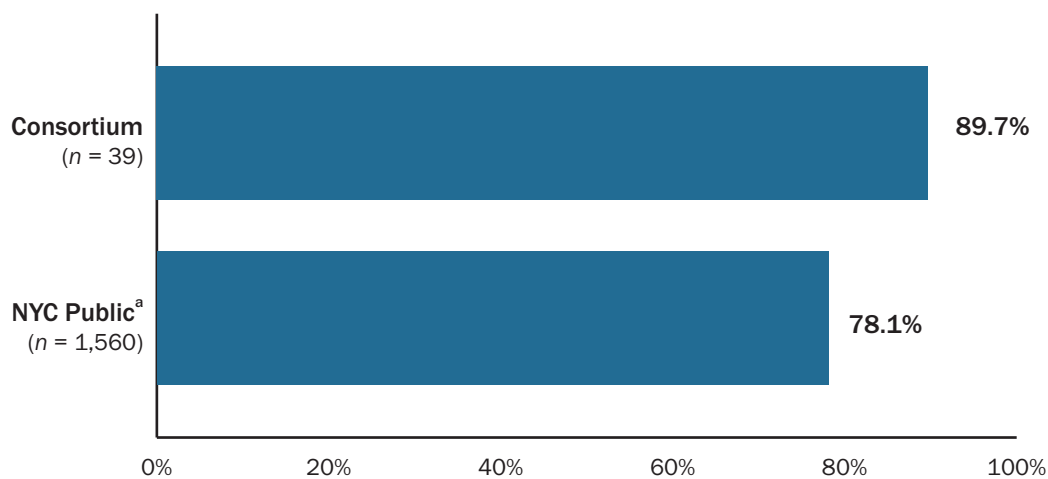
Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Students with unknown GPAs are excluded from this analysis.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Figure 3
One-Year CUNY-Wide Persistence Rates of Black Men Who Were Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree, by School Type



Note: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

As presented in Table 14, our data also suggest that Consortium students who are classified as economically disadvantaged have first-semester GPAs comparable to those of their non-Consortium peers. Table 15 shows that their persistence rates are slightly lower overall, but when we consider the demographic composition of high schools, students who come from Consortium schools where over 70% of students are economically disadvantaged have higher first-year retention within CUNY (87%) compared to their non-Consortium peers at similar high schools (84%).

Table 14
First-Semester GPA of Economically Disadvantaged Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree, by School Type

School Type	Total	Mean GPA	GPA SD	Median GPA
Consortium	485	2.80	1.0	3.07
NYC Public ^a	20,226	2.86	0.9	3.08
Specialized	1,690	3.23	0.8	3.48

Note 1: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Note 2: Students with unknown GPAs were excluded from this analysis.

^a Specialized New York City public schools, such as Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Technical High School, and the Bronx High School of Science, are excluded from this analysis.

Data source: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis.

Table 15
One-Year CUNY-Wide Persistence Rates of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree, by School Type and School Economic Composition

School Type	Percentage of Students Categorized as Economically Disadvantaged	Total	Persisted (n)	Persisted (%)
Consortium	< 50%	191	166	86.9
	50% to 70%	144	115	79.9
	> 70%	239	208	87.0
	Overall	491	422	85.9
NYC Public	< 50%	6,052	5,401	89.2
	50% to 70%	10,027	8,903	88.8
	> 70%	7,018	5,878	83.8
	Unknown	1,409	1,151	81.7
	Overall	20,398	17,804	87.3

Note: These results are based on the population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY's senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school) and include entering cohorts of fall 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Data sources: The CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment provided raw data for this analysis. High School composition data is based on publicly available New York City Department of Education data. See: City of New York. (n.d.). NYC OpenData. <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/browse?category=Education> (accessed 06/28/19).

Thus far, the evidence suggests that Consortium–CUNY pilot students outperform their Consortium and non-Consortium peers on the measures of first-semester GPA, first-semester credit attainment, and 1-year persistence at CUNY. As noted earlier in this report, the Consortium–CUNY pilot students have higher high school GPAs than these comparison-group students and strong performance on the PBATs. Thus, these findings are consistent with a substantial body of research that finds that grades and academically rigorous coursework in high school are generally stronger predictors of college success than SAT scores.⁸

Thus far, the evidence suggests that Consortium–CUNY pilot students outperform their Consortium and non-Consortium peers on the measures of first-semester GPA, first-semester credit attainment, and 1-year persistence at CUNY.

Because of small sample sizes, pilot students could not be disaggregated by race/ethnicity or family income. However, we were able to disaggregate the overall sample of Consortium students. These analyses demonstrate that Consortium students from underrepresented groups (both pilot and non-pilot) perform comparably to other New York City peers at CUNY, and Black males from Consortium schools outperform their non-Consortium peers on first-semester grades and 1-year persistence by a noticeable margin. Economically disadvantaged students from high-poverty Consortium high schools also outperform their peers from demographically similar schools at CUNY.

These results suggest that the kind of rigorous intellectual work offered by Consortium schools prepares many students to succeed in college, despite lower SAT scores. Further, a more holistic review of admission applications that includes evidence of student work can help identify students with strong potential to succeed in college.

Summary of Key Findings and Implications

As noted, our preliminary findings indicate that Consortium students admitted to CUNY under the pilot admissions program are successful in their first year of college—outperforming their peers in first-semester grades and credits earned and persisting after a year at higher rates—with 94% continuing into their second year of college. While these students had lower SAT scores than the CUNY cutoff benchmarks, they had higher GPAs in high school than their peers, on average, and strong evidence of college-readiness skills as demonstrated by the performance-based assessments they submitted with their applications.

Although Consortium students overall included more economically disadvantaged students and more underrepresented minorities, they performed well in college, with Black males especially outperforming their counterparts from other New York City high schools in first-year outcomes and persistence in college.

Key Findings

The authentic learning and assessment practices of Consortium schools contribute to enhanced academic progress for students:

Students educated in Consortium schools are immersed in inquiry-oriented and project-based instruction that is linked to an assessment system that is innovative, rigorous, student focused, teacher directed, and externally validated. Diverse by race, ethnicity, immigration status, (dis)ability, gender, housing circumstances, socioeconomic status, academic history, and first language, these students begin high school with more marginal academic records but graduate, enter college, gain credits, earn GPAs, and persist in college at equivalent or higher rates than their peers. This evidence reinforces the findings of other research suggesting that learning experiences structured around strong coursework and performance-based assessments support student advancement and can help narrow race, class, and language gaps in secondary and higher education achievement.⁹

Students educated in Consortium schools are immersed in inquiry-oriented and project-based instruction that is linked to an assessment system that is innovative, rigorous, student focused, teacher directed, and externally validated.

Performance-based assessments are a useful component of holistic review: Students who demonstrate competence through performance assessments fare well in the CUNY system, even when they score below the admissions threshold on college entrance exams. Admissions officers found the information valuable and have transformed varied aspects of admissions based on the pilot and admissions officers' exposure to PBATs. The pilot helped admissions counselors expand their understanding of what can be learned about students' "capacity and aspirations" from samples of their work. As more colleges and universities adopt admissions policies less reliant on tests,¹⁰ performance-based assessment offers one component of holistic scoring that can simultaneously enrich equity in access and success.

Performance assessment can be a catalyst for equity conversations and institutional change: This small pilot has opened an institution-wide conversation about admissions criteria, racial and economic equity, and academic success in one of the largest urban systems of higher education in the country—one with more than 100,000 applicants a year. The pilot study helped seed conversations within CUNY about ways to view college readiness through a wider aperture, rather than simply focusing on test scores and GPA. During the early years of the pilot study, CUNY developed a new online platform that allowed students to submit a broader range of evidence of their learning and allowed for a more holistic view of student achievement.

The Consortium–CUNY pilot, and the early confirmation of its success, opens the door to an evidence-based equity intervention that can facilitate the admission of a rich and diverse student body, eager to engage in critical inquiry and scholarship, with higher rates of credit accumulation and persistence, particularly for the most marginalized students.

Implications

Against the backdrop of the sprawling New York City public school and CUNY systems, the Consortium–CUNY pilot is small, but its implications are substantial and compelling. A localized equity concern regarding one group of Consortium graduates metabolized into structural transformations as the pilot showed rapid evidence of success.

Within Consortium schools, the pilot provided validation that without a strong emphasis on standardized assessments, students are being prepared for college and beyond through the rigorous coursework and performance tasks they undertake. Within CUNY, the pilot’s empirical “experiment” in admissions helped fuel a growing conversation that has become part of a larger national concern about higher education equity, access, and persistence. As the Consortium–CUNY pilot was underway, conversations were initiated more broadly within CUNY about rethinking remediation, soliciting student work as part of the application process, and reconsidering how college math readiness would be assessed.

The Consortium–CUNY pilot has provided an on-ramp for considering alternatives to overreliance on standardized testing; for rethinking admission, remediation, and placement tests; and for enhancing access for students previously underrepresented based on their racial, linguistic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. Partly as a result of the early indicators of success of this process, all students applying to CUNY now have the option of submitting additional evidence of their learning. CUNY admissions switched online platforms to accommodate student work and teacher recommendations generally, to facilitate more holistic assessments.

Similarly, the Consortium–CUNY pilot students’ success in their credit-bearing math classes has demonstrated the efficacy of placing students in these courses instead of remedial courses assigned on the basis of placement tests. As former interim Chancellor Vita Rabinowitz noted:

We needed to transform our remediation system. Traditional math remediation—long sequences of no-credit courses—was a killing field for many students. At one point, a full 57% of incoming CUNY students were placed into remediation for either math or reading and writing, and after 2 years, 50% of those students had not passed a single credit-bearing course in their area of need. They never finished college—not at CUNY, not anywhere else. We now have multiple pathways

to achieving proficiency, including short, targeted workshops in areas of need, co-requisite courses, and programs like CUNY START and MATH START¹¹ to provide extra support to those who need deep remediation. And as for performance and other authentic prior learning assessments, the time has come. CUNY in this new era is thinking about equity, access, and success with a wide, deep, and holistic approach to admissions and student support.

In the words of Joanne Kucharski, Associate Director of Admissions, “CUNY is moving away from looking for students who are college ready and moving toward a student-ready college.”

Policy implications for k–12 school systems

The New York Performance Standards Consortium is one framework for reimagining and redesigning an accountability system that is rooted in teaching and learning, that honors students’ inquiry and teachers’ professional judgments, and that encourages external evaluations. Other systemic alternatives that are widely accepted by public and private universities throughout the nation include the International Baccalaureate and a new Advanced Placement research course that consists of inquiry projects evaluated by teachers both inside and outside the school.

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The Consortium, with its more than 20-year history, is perhaps the most established network of performance assessment systems that is rooted in public schools, not selective for an academically elite group of students, developed by educators, monitored through a cross-school annual moderation study to calibrate scoring across schools, and open to transparent external evaluation.

Other networks of public schools have more recently developed systems for evaluating students through structured performance assessments. Across the country, initiatives have been created by the schools associated with the New Tech Network, the Internationals Network for Public Schools, the Asia Society network, the Boston Public Pilot Schools, Envision Schools, and the large network of Linked Learning Alliance schools in California and beyond. A number of districts—including Oakland and Pasadena, California, and those that are part of the Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE) pilot in New Hampshire¹²—are requiring performance assessments tied to capstone projects or portfolios for graduation. The California Performance Assessment Collaborative has been developed to document and support the initiatives in that state.¹⁵ Similar collaboratives have been established in Hawaii, Maine, and Massachusetts.

Teachers across the country have expressed interest in learning about, developing, and applying such intellectually engaging and rigorous work in their classrooms. Parents and caregivers have voiced their support for such work,¹⁴ and evidence is accumulating that a wide range of students are more engaged and benefit academically, in terms of high school graduation and college-going.¹⁵

Policy implications for institutions of higher education

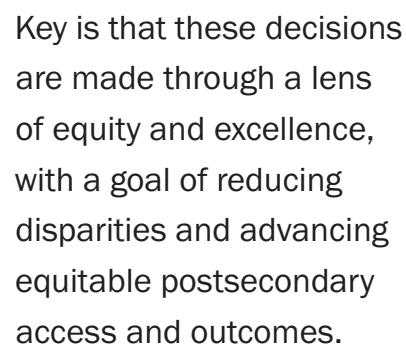
Universities across the country—public and private—are looking for admissions frameworks to enhance equity and access and encourage students’ critical inquiry skills prior to college. Many universities—and national organizations representing their admissions officers, registrars, and presidents—have begun to look for ways to include samples of student work from rigorous performance assessments and portfolios. Colleges ranging from MIT to the University of Michigan have begun to invite portfolio evidence of learning as part of their admissions processes. Harvard, University of Chicago, and Yale, among many others, invite samples of student work.¹⁶

Through the Reimagining College Access (RCA) initiative, which includes higher education and k–12 leaders working on this problem, several state university systems have launched pilots to bring such student work into the process for college admissions, placement, and advising.¹⁷ Among other things, RCA has worked with the Common App, serving more than 800 colleges, to leverage a portal through its online application to accept portfolios and other evidence of authentic student work. These submissions may be examined for all students or be used to evaluate students near the margins for admission and to build a stronger, more educationally diverse incoming class. They also are used to inform placement and advising for a wider range of students.

A key point to keep in mind, however, is that the benefits found in this study pertain to a comprehensive system of curriculum and assessment that organizes the teaching, learning, assessments, and school cultures of the Consortium schools and shapes the thinking of their graduates. The New York Performance Standards Consortium process is distinct in that students have been educated, prior to college, from 9th or 10th grade through graduation, in schools where student inquiries and teachers’ professional judgments shape curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, school culture, professional development, and graduation requirements.

When Consortium students submit a PBAT, they are submitting a sample of the kind of work they have long been producing—not an exceptional piece but a representative piece of work. If the readiness of students to do college work is to be inferred from work submitted as part of the admissions process, it will be important for colleges to know about the system of curriculum and assessment that exists in sending schools—and the criteria associated with scoring the work submitted—in addition to seeing a sample of the work itself.

Finally, there are important questions of labor and time for admissions staff who are reviewing performance-based applications. Reviewing applications with holistic frameworks is more time-consuming for, and requires more care from, admissions staff than sorting students in and out of admissions buckets defined by quantitative metrics. These are the ethically necessary choices of universities. New approaches to reviewing candidates may be needed; more staff and/or faculty review may be needed; more attention may need to be paid to particular candidates at particular junctures in the process; and resources may need to be shifted between functions associated with recruiting, data management, and candidate review. Key is that these decisions are made through a lens of equity and excellence, with a goal of reducing disparities and advancing equitable postsecondary access and outcomes.



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Appendix A: Methods

To document the outcomes of the Consortium–CUNY pilot, we entered into a data-sharing agreement with CUNY’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) as well as sought and received approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once a year, we receive a de-identified data set, tracking students’ academic outcomes for each cohort of first-time freshmen entering CUNY, which includes pilot students.

Data Collection and Analysis

This data set contains de-identified student-level data, including admissions information (e.g., high school GPA, SAT score, high school name, etc.), demographic information (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender, etc.), and semester-by-semester and yearly college performance (e.g., GPA, credits attempted, credits earned, retention, transfer within CUNY, degree level, among others). Our data do not contain any course-level or major information. Thus, we are unable to speak to which courses/subjects students are taking during any given semester. Each year, our data grow when we incorporate the new cohort and one more year of outcomes for each previous cohort. However, each year’s data set stands alone, to further protect students’ privacy and data security; thus, each year’s analysis is created anew based on the most recent data set.

As an integral part of both the economic and educational landscape of New York City, CUNY serves a very diverse population of students. Entering cohorts often include not only recent high school graduates but also working adults of all ages who are enrolling in college for the first time, international students, and high school graduates who delayed college enrollment. While aware of this diversity among the first-time freshman population, we currently focus our analysis on students whose college attendance patterns are similar to the pilot participants—a population of students who graduated high school in 2015 or later and entered one of CUNY’s senior colleges as first-time, full-time freshmen pursuing a baccalaureate degree without delay (usually within 6 months of graduating high school). We also focus only on students who have attended New York City public high schools. Using high school names, we created a school-type grouping variable identifying “Specialized,” “Consortium,” and “Other” New York City public schools.

During data processing and de-identification, research analysts from OIRA created a variable in the data set that identifies pilot students. This variable then allows us to separate non-pilot Consortium students from pilot participants. The authors of this report have neither contact with pilot participants nor access to their application materials, including PBATs, beyond the information provided in the data set. This project does not focus on accessing predictive validity of individual PBATs but, rather, looks at the overall approach to application review that is grounded in PBATs.

In order to account for high school–level variables, such as class size and demographic composition, we downloaded school-level data made publicly available by the New York City Department of Education and were able to successfully match most of the school-level data to our data set. Availability of high school–level data will allow us to control for school-level variables beyond the use of PBATs. Doing so will allow us to take into account the existing variability among New York City public schools, including the Consortium. For this preliminary study, we analyzed all data using descriptive statistics.

Limitations

As with all research, this study has its limitations. Many are obvious. We are limited by the contours of the institutional data management for both the New York City Department of Education and CUNY and the occasional technical difficulties associated with secure data-sharing procedures. Because our sample size grows as more students join the pilot and is currently very small, we are limited to analyzing first-year outcomes until earlier cohorts mature. For example, while our most recent data set includes second- and third-year performance data for the fall 2015 pilot cohort, the cohort is so small that for privacy and security reasons we cannot report any of those outcomes at this time. Thus, at the moment, we limit our analysis to the first-semester/year outcomes since these data are available for all three current cohorts. The upcoming data exchange will allow us to look at 2-year outcomes for all three cohorts presented in this report while expanding our first-year outcomes analysis to include the fall 2018 cohort. Thus, each year, our ability to conduct more robust, and thus informative, analysis improves.

Selection bias is another limitation that we hope to address in the future, as we currently do not have systematic data for the Consortium students who chose to attend private colleges and universities or public institutions outside of CUNY. Thus, our analysis is limited only to those students who chose, or self-selected, to attend CUNY. As for generalizability, both the Consortium and CUNY are complex institutions, with long histories of struggle for educational and racial justice, and they are also both caught in the contradictions of what it means to be part of the public education system. These systems cannot be replicated; thoughtful and equitable assessment systems must be organically developed within and across institutions. The Consortium–CUNY collaboration, even in its early stages, offers insights from the work it aspires to accomplish. At this point, we have tried to make modest claims, even as the data all point in promising directions.

As for our positionalities, we are both social psychologists trained in qualitative and quantitative methods, committed to mixed methods, and situating our inquiries in history and context. We write as researchers at CUNY who have long collaborated with the Consortium, and we have decided to interrogate with methodological rigor and mixed methods how the Consortium–CUNY collaboration was developed, the impact on students, the disaggregated effects (to the extent possible), and the implications over time. We are enthusiastic supporters of both the Consortium and CUNY but not at all blind to the flaws or limitations of each system. Our enthusiasm is rooted in what philosopher of science and scholar Sandra Harding calls “strong objectivity”—in which we test, empirically and with transparency, our situated knowledges against a range of forms of evidence to understand what is and what could be.

Appendix B: Performance-Based Assessment Task Grading Rubrics

This Appendix contains rubrics for evaluation available online at <http://www.performanceassessment.org>, along with samples of exemplary PBAT papers. Readers interested in a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary PBATs, ranked as outstanding, good, or in need of revision, may see examples of student work at the Consortium website at <http://www.performanceassessment.org/studentwork>.

**New York Performance Standards Consortium
Performance Assessment: Literary Analysis**

Student _____

Title /Texts _____

Circle one: Written Oral

Circle one: Teacher External Evaluator

Evaluator (Print name) _____

Overall Holistic evaluation

Signature _____ **Date** _____

09/2019

Performance Indicator	Outstanding	Good	Competent	Needs Revision
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generates a clear thesis or central idea that makes a compelling point Uses relevant, convincing evidence and quotations that thoroughly support thesis or central idea Makes explicit and elegant transitions from one idea to next, developing thesis or central idea effortlessly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generates a clear thesis or central idea that make an interesting point Uses relevant evidence and quotations that support central thesis or central idea Makes seamless transitions, flows easily from one idea to the next, developing thesis or central idea cohesively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has an identifiable thesis or central idea, though may lack focus at times Uses mostly relevant evidence and quotations to support thesis or central idea Has mostly coherent organization Uses transitions but may lack smooth flow from one idea to the next 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a central idea, but vague, unfocused, and undeveloped Unfocused organization Insufficient, irrelevant, or no evidence used to support a central idea Few or incorrect use of transitions so ideas do not flow smoothly
Analysis & Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides deep insight and creates meaningful interpretation of text(s) Elaborates and extends thesis or central idea and meaning of supporting evidence; answers question, So what? May consider author's language, craft, and/or choice of genre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates meaningful interpretation of text(s) Explores thesis or central idea and meaning of supporting evidence; answers question, So what? May consider author's language, craft, and/or choice of genre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides basic interpretation of text(s) though somewhat limited exploration of meaning Develops a thesis or central idea and explains choice of evidence and quotations, but has not fully developed their meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited or no meaningful interpretation of texts Uses faulty analysis or merely summarizes Insufficient or no use of evidence or appropriate quotations
Style and Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of passion for subject or deep curiosity Writer willing to take risks Displays intellectual engagement Creative, clear, and appropriate use of language and word choice based on the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of a mind at work, grappling with ideas Clear and appropriate use of language and word choice based on the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to the question asked and communicates ideas clearly Shows some awareness of appropriate language and word choice based on the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to question asked but lacks clarity Shows little or no evidence of formal or appropriate use of language and word choice
Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes innovative and insightful connection between a text and one of the following: A developed theme <i>or</i> Another work of literature <i>or</i> Historical/cultural context <i>or</i> Biographical context <i>or</i> Film version of text <i>or</i> Substantial criticism <i>or</i> Creative element (e.g., writing of poetry based on poet being analyzed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes insightful connection between text and one of the following: A developed theme <i>or</i> Another work of literature <i>or</i> Historical/cultural context <i>or</i> Biographical context <i>or</i> Film version of text <i>or</i> Substantial criticism <i>or</i> Creative element (e.g., writing a poem based on poet being analyzed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes some connection between text and one of the following: A developed theme <i>or</i> Another work of literature <i>or</i> Historical or cultural context <i>or</i> Biographical context <i>or</i> Film version of text <i>or</i> Substantial criticism <i>or</i> Creative element (e.g., writing a poem based on poet being analyzed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connection is attempted, but it is inappropriate or not relevant to thesis or ideas that are the main focus of the paper
Conventions (for writing assignment only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical and grammatical errors are rare or non-existent; follows accepted conventions for quotations and citations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few mechanical or grammatical errors; follows accepted conventions for quotations and citations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some mechanical or grammatical errors but communication is not impaired; demonstrates knowledge of accepted conventions for quotations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication is impaired by errors; little or no use of conventions for quotations and citations
Presentation (for oral component only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to respond to questions and expand on ideas during discussion; communicates ideas clearly in appropriate, sophisticated, and original way to audience; presents complex, accurate, substantive ideas and information clearly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to respond to questions and expand somewhat on ideas during discussion; communicates clearly in appropriate and original way to audience; presents accurate, substantive ideas and information clearly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to respond accurately to questions though may have difficulty expanding on ideas; communicates clearly in appropriate way to audience; presents information accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not respond well to questions during discussion; unclear or inappropriate presentation to audience; some information presented may be inaccurate

New York Performance Standards Consortium
Experimental Science

Student _____

Circle one: **Teacher** **External Evaluator**
Circle one: **Written** **Oral Defense**

Title of Experiment _____

Evaluator (Print name) _____

Overall Holistic Evaluation _____

Signature _____

Date _____

03/2017

Performance Indicators	Outstanding	Good	Competent	Needs Revision
Contextualize	Background research has been thoroughly conducted using at least two original sources. • Sources are all appropriately cited. • The significance of the problem is clearly stated • The hypotheses/theses are grounded in the background research.	Background research has been thoroughly conducted. • Sources are appropriately cited. • The significance of the problem is stated • The hypotheses/theses are relevant to the background research.	Background research is included in the introduction. • Sources are cited. • The significance of the problem is stated • The hypotheses/theses are clearly stated.	Background research is not included in the introduction. • Sources are not cited. • The significance of the problem is not stated • The hypotheses/theses are not stated.
Critique Experimental Design	Identifies, describes and controls relevant variables. • Thoughtfully evaluates the procedure, data sampling method*, and/or set up • Clearly describes bias in the design	Identifies, describes and controls most relevant variables. • Evaluates the procedure, data sampling method*, and/or set up • Clearly describes bias in the design	Identifies, describes and controls some relevant variables. • Evaluates the procedure, data sampling method*, and/or set up • Attempts to describe bias in the design	Does not identify, describe or control any variables. • Does not evaluate the procedure or sampling method and/or set up • Does not attempt to describe bias in the design
Collect, Curate*, Organize, and Present Data	Collects or curates* data in a reliable and valid manner. • Presents relevant data that is consistent with the problem. • Generates appropriate tables, charts and graphs with data and makes appropriate calculations. • Conducts thorough mathematical analysis of the data.	Collects or curates* data in a reliable and valid manner. • Presents relevant data that is consistent with the problem. • Generates appropriate tables, charts and graphs with data and/or makes appropriate calculations. • Conducts mathematical analysis of the data.	Collects or curates* data in a reliable and valid manner. • Presents data that is consistent with the problem. • Generates tables, charts and graphs with data. • Conducts analysis of the data.	Collects or curates* data in a non-reliable and/or invalid manner. • Does not present data or presents data that is not relevant to the problem. • Does not generate tables, charts and graphs. • Does not analyze the data.
Analyze and Interpret Results	Draws thoughtful conclusions that are supported by the data. • Relates conclusions to original question. • Thoroughly describes sources of error and their effects on the data or identifies limitations of data & conclusion*.	Draws conclusions that are supported by the data. • Relates conclusions to original question. • Describes several sources of error and their effects on the data or the limitations of data & conclusion*.	Draws conclusions that are partially supported by the data. • Attempts to relate conclusions to original question. • Describes sources of error and attempts to describe their effects on the data or the limitations of the data & conclusion*	Draws no conclusions or draws conclusions that are not supported by the data. • Does not attempt to relate conclusions to original question. • Does not describe sources of error or does not attempt to describe their effects on the data or limitations of data*.
Revise Original Design	Proposes effective and relevant revisions for the experimental plan (and investigative plan*) to lessen the effects of bias and sources of error. • Poses thoughtful and relevant questions for future research.	Proposes relevant revisions for the experimental plan (and investigative plan*) to lessen the effects of bias and sources of error. • Poses relevant questions for future research.	Proposes revisions for the experimental plan (and investigative plan*) to lessen the effects of bias and sources of error. • Poses questions for future research.	Does not propose revisions for the experimental plan (and investigative plan*). • Does not pose questions for future research.
Defense (for oral component only)	Thoroughly answers questions relevant to the experiment and related topics.	Adequately answers questions relevant to the experiment and related topics.	Adequately answers questions relevant to the experiment..	Does not adequately answer questions relevant to the experiment.

*When working with "big data."

New York Performance Standards Consortium Student _____

Performance Assessment: Mathematics Project Title (e.g. Mathematical Modeling, The Can Project): _____

Project Topic (e.g. Linear programming, Volume-surface area optimization): _____

Circle One: Written Oral

Circle One: Teacher External Evaluator Evaluator (Print name) _____

Overall Holistic Evaluation Signature _____ **Date** _____

09/2016

Performance Indicators	Outstanding	Good	Competent	Needs Revision
Problem Solving	Selects appropriate and efficient strategies to solve non-routine problems. Provides in-depth analysis of strategies Executes conceptually sound mathematical procedures accurately.	Selects appropriate and efficient strategies to solve non-routine problems. Provides some analysis of strategies Executes conceptually sound mathematical procedures with minor computational errors.	Selects appropriate, but inefficient, strategies to solve non-routine problems, and executes conceptually sound mathematical procedures with minor computational errors. or Selects appropriate and efficient strategies to solve non-routine problems but executes mathematical procedures with minor conceptual and computational errors.	Selects an inappropriate strategy or Makes major conceptual errors or procedural errors.
Reasoning & Proof	Makes valid conceptual/theoretical argument(s) and mathematically justifies it logically and thoroughly.	Makes valid conceptual/theoretical argument(s) and mathematically justifies it logically.	Makes argument(s) and justifies most mathematical statements accurately.	Makes arguments but does not justify mathematical statements accurately.
Communication	Always uses mathematical language and notations accurately. Always clearly explains mathematical thinking in an organized and detailed way.	Mostly uses mathematical language and notations accurately. Mostly clearly explains mathematical thinking in an organized and detailed way.	Sometimes uses mathematical language and notations accurately. Sometimes clearly explains mathematical thinking in an organized and detailed way.	Limited use of mathematical language and notation in an accurate manner. Rarely clearly explains mathematical thinking in an organized and detailed way.
Connections	Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the relationships between mathematical concepts, procedures, and/or strategies.	Demonstrates an understanding of the relationships between mathematical concepts, procedures, and/or strategies.	Demonstrates a limited understanding of the relationships between mathematical concepts, procedures, and/or strategies.	Does not demonstrate understanding of the relationships between mathematical concepts, procedures, and/or strategies.
Representation	Creates an accurate and sophisticated mathematical representation(s), inherent to the task, to solve problems or portray solutions.	Creates an accurate mathematical representation(s), inherent to the task, to solve problems or portray solutions.	Creates an accurate mathematical representation(s), inherent to the task, to solve problems or portray solutions, but may be imprecise or contain minor errors.	Does not create an accurate mathematical representation, inherent to the task, to solve problems or portray solutions.

**New York Performance Standards Consortium
Engineering/Design Science**

Student _____

Circle one: Teacher External Evaluator
Circle one: Written Oral Defense

Title of Design _____

Evaluator (Print name) _____

Holistic evaluation (circle one): Outstanding
Good Competent Needs Revision

Signature _____ **Date** _____

06/2014

Performance Indicator	Outstanding	Good	Competent	Needs Revision
Contextualize the Design Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering/design problem is clearly defined and explained in terms of the human needs that are to be solved or fulfilled. Specific design constraints are clearly explained. Specific criteria for success are clearly explained. Background research on the project's content and context has been thoroughly conducted using relevant and credible resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering/design problem is defined and explained in terms of the human needs that are to be solved or fulfilled. Specific design constraints are explained. Specific criteria for success are explained. Background research on the project's content and/or context has been conducted using relevant and credible resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering/design problem is defined but only partially explained in terms of the human needs that are to be solved or fulfilled. Specific design constraints are mentioned but not fully explained. Some criteria for success are explained but may not be specific. Background research on the project's content and/or context has been conducted but uses few relevant and credible resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering/design problem is defined but not explained in terms of the human needs that are to be solved or fulfilled. No or few specific design constraints are mentioned or explained. Few criteria for success are explained. Little or no background research on the project's content and/or context has been conducted.
Critique the Design Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoroughly describes the design phase including thoughtful evaluation of models (e. g., diagrams, replicas, analogies, computer simulations, mathematical formulas) and design priorities. Thoroughly justifies how the selected prototype will best satisfy all criteria for success. Thoroughly justifies why all alternative prototypes were rejected. Thoroughly identifies and describes all relevant variables including any appropriate controls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes the design phase including evaluation of models (e.g. diagrams, replicas, analogies, computer simulations, mathematical formulas) and design priorities. Justifies how the selected prototype will best satisfy some of the criteria for success. Justifies why some of the alternative prototypes were rejected. Identifies and describes most relevant variables including any appropriate controls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes but does not sufficiently evaluate the design phase including models (e. g., diagrams, replicas, analogies, computer simulations, mathematical formulas) and design priorities. Only partially justifies how the selected prototype best satisfies some of the criteria for success. Only partially justifies why some of the alternative prototypes were rejected. Identifies and describes some relevant variables including any appropriate controls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes but does not evaluate the design phase including models (e. g., diagrams, replicas, analogies, computer simulations, mathematical formulas) or design priorities. Does not justify how the selected prototype best satisfies some of the criteria for success. Does not justify why some of the alternative prototypes were rejected. Identifies but does not describe relevant variables including any appropriate controls.
Test the Design Prototype: Collect, Organize & Present Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects extensive relevant data in a reliable manner for the purpose of optimizing the design. Thoroughly represents data appropriately in multiple ways (e.g., tables, charts, graphs). Conducts thorough mathematical analysis of the data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects relevant data in a reliable manner for the purpose of optimizing the design. Represents data appropriately in multiple ways (e. g., tables, charts, graphs). Conducts mathematical analysis of the data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects sufficient and relevant data for the purpose of optimizing the design. Represents data in multiple ways (e. g., tables, charts, graphs). Conducts analysis of the data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects insufficient and/or irrelevant data. Does not represent data appropriately. Does not analyze the data.
Evaluate the Design (Prototype)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoughtfully analyzes the extent to which prototype satisfies all criteria for success. Thoughtfully explains how data were used in optimizing the design through multiple iterations. Thoughtfully proposes effective - and relevant revisions to the design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzes the extent to which prototype satisfies some of the criteria for success. Explains how some of the data were used in optimizing the design through multiple iterations. Proposes some relevant revisions to the design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes but does not analyze the extent to which prototype satisfies some of the criteria for success. Only partially explains how some of the data were used in optimizing the design through multiple iterations. Proposes few relevant revisions to the design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not describe or analyze the extent to which prototype satisfies all criteria for success. Does not explain how the data were used in optimizing the design through multiple iterations. Does not propose any relevant revisions to the design.
Defense (for oral component only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoroughly answers questions relevant to the design and related topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequately answers questions relevant to the design and related topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequately answers questions relevant to the design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not adequately answers questions relevant to the design.

Appendix C: Sample Literature Performance-Based Assessment Task

Their Eyes Were Watching God and *Beloved* Performance-Based Assessment Task

Task: You will write a literary analysis essay focusing on a central idea. Using two pieces of literature you have read, analyze how the author’s use of craft, literary techniques, and rhetorical devices develops this central idea. Use strong and thorough evidence from the texts to support your analysis. You must demonstrate how the author’s use of craft develops the central idea of the work. Do NOT simply summarize the text. Final paper must be typed using size 12 font, double-spaced and be a total of 5–7 pages. Include a works cited page.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Identify a central idea demonstrated in both texts
- Analyze how the author’s use of craft develops this central idea with each text
- Use strong and thorough evidence from both texts to support your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing

Step One: Choose one central idea to analyze both pieces of text you have read.

Example: The central idea you identified is Revenge. Now write your thesis statement: Revenge is motivated by the need to make others feel the same pain and suffering experienced when wronged, yet it is a thirst unquenched and truly never brings peace to that wrong.

Step Two: Students read significant pieces of text in English class. Students discuss, analyze, and look for examples of literary craft, techniques, and rhetorical devices.

Step Three: Students choose two pieces of text from all that they have read to use in their final literary analysis essay.

Step Four: Students begin the process of writing the literary analysis essay based on a thesis about the central idea and two pieces of text they have studied.

Step Five: Student follows the writing process in composing this paper. Final draft is scored using rubric by two English teachers.

Step Six: Student presents paper to a committee of three: two teachers and one community member. Presentation will be around the analysis of the two pieces of text completed by the student.

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Beloved*: Performance-Based Assessment Sample Student Response**

The Aftermath

It is hard to love when you had to survive in a life that teaches you to do the exact opposite. The oppression of slavery can reach out and grab the innocent, it follows, ready to drag those, not even from the generation of slavery, into its darkness. For some, the only way to be pulled out of this darkness is to find love and freedom outside of the darkness that cages you. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, the author argues that slavery has altered the act and meaning of love and that there is a right way and a wrong way to love. In *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, the author argues the need to judge due to the slave culture that has been imprinted on today's society. Both authors are telling us that self-love is freedom and that the effects of the wrong kind of love can hold you back, rendering you from becoming your true and free self.

The novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, tells a story about a girl lost in the effects of the wrong type of love. Janie is raised by her ex-slave grandmother, who goes by the name Nanny. Nanny raises Janie to be trapped in the oppressive love of a man that will "protect" her and make sure that she has everything needed to survive. Nanny never teaches her how to love and live for herself but instead, forces her to marry Logan Killicks. When Janie finally realizes that this marriage is not love, she leaves Logan for Joe Starks. Joe is a man who is about his money and his overall "look." This "look" includes a pretty, young woman to keep by his side, making him look good, feel lucky, and be happy. Again, Janie realizes that this oppressive and abusive love; flourishing through the strength of Joe's money is not for her. Joe dies due to his manly cockiness that kept himself from seeing a doctor. Joe's death, in a way, sets Janie free from their marriage but traps her in the aftermath society's rule of being a widow. With many knowing that Janie is left with money, a home, mayor duties, and a store, the men in the community begin to try to win Janie's heart. With Janie being the type of person she is, she ignores them all until she finds her first true, Tea Cake. Tea Cake is the one and only person who teaches Janie how to love and do for herself. Unfortunately, he dies saving Janie from a rabid dog but even though he is not there physically, he is there spiritually.

Oppression reaches out and grabs Janie by the hair when her Nanny guilts her into a marriage that is not love. She guilts her when she states, "Ah don't want yo' feathers always crumpled by folks throwin' up things in yo face. And Ah can't die easy thinkin' maybe de men folks white or black is makin' a spit cup outa you: Have sympathy fuh me. Put me down easy, Janie, Ah'm a cracked plate" (Hurston, 24). This is Nanny's way of loving Janie. Nanny's love is illustrated through the metaphor of comparing Janie to a bird. Feathers are beautiful and delicate but the negative connotation of her feathers being potentially "crumpled" reveals how easy it would be hurt Janie; that is exactly what Nanny is trying to protect her from but this protection is really oppression. When Nanny states, "'Put me down easy, Janie, Ah'm a cracked plate'" Hurston is utilizing metaphor to reveal just how fragile Nanny is and that if Janie doesn't do this for her, then it will break her. She makes Janie feel like this is the one thing that she owes Nanny, the one thing that will keep her soul at peace. Nanny only does this out of love although, this love isn't true love. It is the only love Nanny knows due to the fear embedded in

her through slavery. It isn't true love because when you love others then you teach them how to do things on their own, love themselves, and not just survive but live. Nanny never even teaches Janie how to be a woman. She never truly teaches Janie how to live and love herself but instead, teaches her how to stay alive and survive under a man with power and money who will only oppress her. When you have been constantly been beaten, degraded, and told that you're nothing then how could you love yourself? With Nanny being an ex-slave, she wasn't allowed to love herself or anything/ anyone else. Slavery only taught her how to survive, not to love. In fact, slavery taught her exactly how not to love. When you're not able to love yourself, then you'll never truly be able to love someone else.

You can't love someone else if you don't learn to love yourself first. With Janie being taught how to only survive based on someone else taking care of her and not on her own, she struggled with the true definition of love. Janie has her first sexual awakening as a teenage girl under a pear tree, which is symbolized throughout the story as a symbol of growth and self-taught life lessons. This awakening is a representation of Janie finally becoming a young woman without the coddling of Nanny: "She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid" (Hurston, 14). Learning about yourself is the first step to maturity. As Janie learns what it feels to feel love, she has reveals to us her first awakening. This awakening is shown through the personification of "the gold of the sun and the painting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice." Bringing nature to life shows how real and important this awakening is for Janie. It's like breathing life into something that was dead. The imagery of the bees and blooming flowers reveal the fertility between the two. The bee is a representation of men and the blooming flower is a representation of Janie turning from a child into a teen/young woman. When things bloom, it brings this feeling of bursting and irresistible life telling us that this awakening is unavoidable. This unavoidable awakening continued to be portrayed through the use of imagery and metaphor of Janie's masturbation scene to show this true connection through "the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight." By creating the image of Janie's life and growth factors being in this tree, it tells the reader that this is the point where she is the most down to earth and connected not only with herself, but with nature and life itself. To be this tree is to be alive for Janie. This descriptive scene is pushed by the words "a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid," showing the reader that she is finally relaxed and comfortable with herself. She has finally grown and is beginning to learn to love herself. This reveals to the reader that this is something that is normal and that it is a stage necessary in life. This is to show that you must learn to love yourself before you attempt to love another.

Before learning to love herself, Janie searches for the love that she hungered for through Joe Starks, also known as Jody. Janie marries Jody and in this marriage, Janie feels trapped. Here in this marriage her dreams and self-worth begin to rot. Hurston describes Janie as a "rut in

the road” (Hurstun, 91). The alliteration of the “r” sound in “rut” and “road” reveals how much Janie is rotting on the inside where she has been forced to bottle everything up. The metaphor of the “rut” reveals a feeling of worthlessness that Jody had cast upon her throughout their marriage by making her feel ugly and worthless, inside and out by taking her voice away and hiding her beauty for himself. With Janie being forced to live only in “her hat and her heels” (Hurstun,91), it’s almost as if she was hiding in those things, having to keep all her opinions and emotions to herself, known as her “emotional disturbances.” The “h” sound in “her,” “hat”, and “heels” is to further reveal how much she is hiding and hurting within herself. All of this is to develop Hurstun’s larger meaning of the African American woman being the mule of the world.

Nanny, while teaching Janie her lesson about men and love stated, “De white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don’t tote it. He hand it to the womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world” (Hurstun,18). African American women carry the heaviest load of them all. They are left to carry not only the burden of their own lives on their backs but also, the heavy weight of others around them. This reveals that in marriage then and now, women put their pride and happiness aside to keep the man happy and prideful, as Janie did for Jody. This shows how society has trained women to stay silent and to keep the man happy in order to survive.

Toni Morrison also shows the oppression of slavery taking away the ability to truly love in *Beloved*. In *Beloved*, there is a runaway slave by the name of Sethe whose murderous act of love changes her entire life. When trying to protect her children from harm and slavery, she attempts to kill them all with the intent of killing herself at the end. After only successfully killing one child, Beloved, she is forced to live the consequences of her loving actions. In *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, the story follows the life of Sethe, a runaway slave living in the 124 home in Ohio. After frightening her two oldest sons by murdering their sister through an act of love, they left the home, leaving 124 with just Sethe, Denver, and the ghost of the murdered child, Beloved. As Sethe struggles with loving and forgiving herself, a flawed man by the name of Paul D comes to love Sethe but the past hardships of being a slave holds him back from truly being able to love her. Beloved appears in human form where she later breaks open Paul D’s rusted closed heart. It takes a long time for Sethe to realize that this new person in their lives is her child, Beloved. Throughout the novel, Sethe struggles with loving herself but that struggle deepens when she learns that this person is the daughter that she murdered. Sethe just wants to give all her love to her child, leaving not too much to spare for her daughter Denver. As Sethe begins to give her life over to Beloved, figuratively and literally, we learn the importance of learning to love yourself first, the wrong way to love others, and also the effects of slavery.

As Sethe tries to forget the past, markings of her abuse live on her back, making it hard to forget the hardships of slavery. Many like to think of scars as battle wounds but that implies a positive way of thinking. The scars are not really representative of a positive experience but they can be seen as a coping mechanism for dealing with the tragedy. Allowing other people into your past can be very risky. In this time, enslaved people were taught to stay to themselves in order to survive and that is exactly what they did. To open up to someone, for them, requires vulnerability. As a slave, Sethe was raped by Schoolteacher and his nephews

where she also had her milk stolen from her as she was held down while being pregnant. With memories like these, people have to find different ways of dealing with traumatizing situations. For some, just changing the name of what happened can help the person cope with the scars that are left behind. When Sethe states, “Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still” (Morrison, 20) it is to reveal the contrast between the traumatizing event and the way she views the aftermath of it all. The imagery of Sethe’s scars being formed into a tree is to reveal how the healing is a form of new life and new beginnings. For these scars to be on her back is to show the burden that she has to carry on a regular basis for the rest of her life. The irony of making the dead and coiled skin into a lively tree is to show the concept of survival; it shows the choice people make about whether to dwell in the past or to find ways to move on in their lives. The fact that this tree continues to grow on her back is to reveal that the scar will continue to grow and continue to have an effect on her life. This illustrates the larger idea about how in order to move on and continue life, you must deal with your problems in your own ways.

The idea of the traumatizing event can make someone feel powerless and to reveal your truth can make you become vulnerable. Sethe became vulnerable toward Paul D when she allows him to see and feel the scars on her back as they stood in the kitchen. When he first caught sight of her scars, he thought of them as the most beautiful and delicate thing that he has ever seen. This affection results in them having intercourse but afterwards, his views of her tree turns for the worst: “And the wrought-iron maze he had explored in the kitchen like a gold miner pawing through pay dirt was in fact a revolting clump of scars. Not a tree, as she said. Maybe shaped like one, but nothing like any tree he knew because trees were inviting” (Morrison, 25). When you think of a tree, you see beauty but when you think of wrought-iron, it depicts something dark and ugly. The simile of comparing Paul D’s actions to one of a gold miner pawing through pay dirt is to create the two contrasting ideas of how scars can either be beautiful and a symbol of survival-battle scars or that scars can make you ugly, animalistic, and less beautiful. The contrasting ideas serve to make the reader question his intentions severely because it reveals that he only saw her beauty and worth when he desired her body for sexual intention. Once they had sex, his attitude changed in a more negative viewing. This reveals how humans are never satisfied and in fact, are very judgmental. For Paul D to so easily judge Sethe’s scars, shows how people in society feel the need to judge others for their past traumas and wounds. Sethe does not need to visually see her scars in order to know their value and believe them to be beautiful. She chooses to see them as battle scars and to not allow the oppression of being an ex-slave define her. This reveals the larger theme of how hurt people, hurt people, meaning that when people are suffering, they want others to suffer with them.

Although Paul D did not mean for Sethe to suffer as he did, he is not capable of showing and feeling love due to slavery. Slavery had dehumanized Paul D, literally taking away his ability to love because he was struck with fear and had no choice but to sleep with the cows-forcing him to question his own manhood. His entire manhood was taken away from him the day he was raped-forced to have oral sex with the chain gang leaders: “Occasionally a kneeling man chose gunshot in his head as the price, maybe, of taking a bit of foreskin with him to Jesus” (Morrison, 127). It can be perceived that it was easier to die than it would be to live with this traumatic experience. The brutal image of taking a gunshot to the head reveals how

much pride, humanity and manliness was taken away. Some of these men would rather kill themselves than deal with having their manhood and humanity being taken away. Although Paul D survives these horrors, his heart is replaced with a tobacco tin revealing that he lost his heart and soul. These experiences are what prohibited Paul D from being able to love and be loved. The slave culture has consumed many and has continued to be passed on into today's society through the act of judgment. Morrison is telling the reader that we overcome this cycle in order to move on.

In the very end of the novel after the town has “run off” Beloved, Paul returns to Sethe and begs her to accept his love: “He wants to put his story next to hers. “Sethe,” he says, “me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow. He leans over and grabs her hand. With the other he touches her face. “You your best thing, Sethe. You are” (Morrison, 322). Morrison argues that in order to move on, you have to want to move on. The word “yesterday” is a representation or symbol of past. When Paul D states, “We got more yesterday than anybody” it is to say that all they have is the past but also that he wants more than that. Paul D doesn't want to only be stuck living in the past; he wants to move forward and he doesn't want to leave Sethe behind. The imagery of when “he leans over and grabs her hand” is used to reveal unity. This form of unity makes it easier for them both because facing their “yesterday” alone would be scary but it's necessary in order to move on. To be able to face the past with someone else brings comfort and security, making you more likely to grow and conquer. The quote, “You your best thing Sethe. You are” relates back to having to love yourself first. As Paul D reassures Sethe that she is the best thing she has, he also reveals that in order to move on, she has to come to terms with herself and accept herself and be able to love herself. Morrison is proposing that in order to overcome, we must help lift each other up instead of knocking each other down, telling us that this is the only way to overcome the societal slave cycle.

Love can be a confusing and complex situation. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, both authors reveal that self-love is freedom and that the effects of the wrong kind of love and connection can hold you back, rendering you from becoming your true and free self. This is caused by the mark that slavery has left and passed on through generations. The authors reveal that things will only change if we take the necessary steps to change it as Paul D did to help Sethe in *Beloved* and as Janie did for herself in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

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