Bronx students learn options at high school fair with some of city's best institutions

Hundreds of seventh- and eighth-graders from one of the borough’s poorest areas packed a Highbridge gymnasium Tuesday to mingle with representatives from some of the city's most elite high schools.

BY BEN KOCHMAN

Tuesday, September 23, 2014, 8:32 PM

The future looks a little brighter for these Bronx bookworms.

Hundreds of seventh- and eighth-graders from one of the borough’s poorest areas packed a Highbridge gymnasium Tuesday to mingle with representatives from some of the city's most elite high schools.

Most of the students from Middle School 218 and Highbridge Green Middle School hail from low-income, immigrant backgrounds and are not exposed to a full spectrum of high school choices, organizers said.

“They’ve never ever heard of a lot of these private schools,” said Nicole Jennings, program director at WHEDCo, which put on the two-hour fair.

“They’ve always been something that is for someone else and not for them.”
The youngsters met with representatives from dozens of top-tier private, religious, charter and border schools, including Ethical Culture Fieldston School and Riverdale Country School, which are both in the Bronx.

“There’s this high school called Riverdale, which I had kind of heard about, but I didn’t totally understand it,” said eighth-grader Ivette Sierra. “But it seems like a great opportunity.”

Officials from schools on hand said they offered a variety of financial aid to help students in a district where city statistics peg the median income from 2010-2012 at just under $26,000 a year.

Tuition at Riverdale Country School — which boasts a bucolic Riverdale campus — rings in at $37,000. About 20% of its graduating class got financial aid, according to the school’s website.

The fair has churned out blossoming Bronxites before.

“When I told my mom about Fieldston, she was like, ‘What? Where is that?’” said Shaoli Yusaf, a former MS 118 student who is now a sophomore at the private Riverdale school.