



Candidate Survey for Mayoral Candidates

Please return by Monday, July 8th to info@nyckidspac.org

June 2013

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Governance

Many New York City parents feel disenfranchised by the current system of mayoral control over public education and feel there are few checks and balances. Only 22% of New Yorkers believe that mayoral control should continue in its present form after the state legislature revisits the issue in 2015.

	Yes	No
Would you support changes to the system that would give parents a significant voice in decision-making and/or provide checks and balances to the current system?	Yes	
Which of the following changes to what is now called the Panel for Education Policy (the de facto Board of Education) would you support? Please check as many as you like.	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A directly elected Board of Education 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reconstituted Board of Education with a majority not appointed by the Mayor 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Education Councils (CECs) selecting parent representatives to the Board of Education 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having Board of Education members with set terms, who cannot be fired at will by the mayor 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of an independent committee to nominate potential Board of Education members, from which the mayor will select the actual members 	Yes	

Which of the following measures to ensure that parents and community members have a say in their children's schools would you support? Please check as many as you like.	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the powers of CECs, including giving them approval authority over school closings and co-locations? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorizing municipal control; i.e., the City Council making law on educational policy, including school closings, etc.? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowing School Leadership Teams (SLTs) to regain the power to develop school based budgets? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconstituting school based committees or SLTs to select principals? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoring the district structure, with a superintendent who supervises principals and provides access for parents with issues and problems? 	See below	

Answer:

I want to empower superintendents who will supervise principals and provide access for parents with issues and problems, however, I do support Mayoral control.

Do you have other proposals to provide a stronger parent voice and/or checks and balances in school governance?

I will give parents a substantive voice on the Panel for Education Policy (PEP), by including members on that body who are nominated by fellow parents. One parent will be appointed by the CEC Chairs. On day one of my administration, the voice of parents will be heard when the Department of Education makes decisions. The voice of parents has been shut out for too long; I will bring them back into the decision-making process day one.

What is your view of how parents should be involved in educational decision-making? Please be as specific as possible.

Parents have the greatest impact on the lives of their children -- parents have known their children the longest, they know them the best, and they understand what they need. That's why they should have the opportunity to help dictate how their children will be educated, and that's why I will give parents a substantive voice on the Panel for Education Policy. I will also create a parent's academy to ensure that parents know the right questions to ask educators and to hold schools accountable to the success of our children.

Chancellor

We have had a series of Chancellors who have required a waiver from the NYS Education Department. The Mayor has defended his appointments based on his belief that the public education system needed a business manager.

As to the role of Chancellor, would you support:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Chancellor being chosen by Board of Education rather than the mayor?		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Selecting only a chancellor who does not require a waiver from the state (i.e., an educator)	Yes	

In what ways would you change the Chancellor's role, if any?

One step I will take to ensure that the public education system improves while I'm mayor is making our chancellor of education an educator; the people deciding our policies on education should know how to educate.

Do you have any other proposals for changes in the Chancellor's role?

Please describe some successes you believe mayoral control of education has brought. Please describe some problems you see as well.

I've been a consistent supporter of mayoral control of education, but in its current form, it has lacked the parental involvement and creativity necessary for it to succeed. We need to have a vision for the education of New York's youth, and we need to get parents and the public involved in the education vision. This administration has acted unilaterally without listening to parents and the public; I will put an end to that as mayor.

Even with mayoral control of education, we have stuck to many outdated methods of educating New York's children. I will engage our students in their education -- teaching art, music, physical education and more and allow teachers the flexibility to teach to engage critical thinking, rather than teaching to tests.

Testing

Another issue that parents feel passionately about is the need to reduce standardized testing, test prep, and their being used to evaluate schools, students, and teachers. What is your position on this matter?

Would you support:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating the use of test scores as the primary basis for making promotional decisions? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating or minimizing test being used as the primary criteria on which school grades or progress reports are based (currently, school grades are derived about 85% from test scores)? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating school progress reports altogether? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crafting a teacher evaluation system that depends as little as possible on standardized test scores? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusing to expand standardized testing into other grades (Pre-K to 2nd)? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pledging not to create new local standardized exams? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposing the creation of 3-8th grade standardized exams in subjects other than ELA, math and science? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making admissions to all schools based on more holistic factors, and especially Gifted & Talented programs and the specialized high schools? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging other NYC high schools to join the portfolio/alternative assessment consortium as opposed to basing graduation decisions on the results of the Regents exams? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a non-punitive process by which NYC parents can choose to have their children opt-out of the standardized testing? 		

Would you propose any other policy changes in this area?

Our students shouldn't just understand how to solve equations; they should understand the theories behind them. When I'm mayor, our schools will focus on teaching students the critical thinking skills they need to tackle the problems they will face in life, rather than the facts that they will need to answer the problems on their next test. This way, we will be teaching our students to be problem solvers, who will be able to tackle the broader problems facing not only this city, but our world.

What do you think is the best use, if any, of standardized testing?

Standardized tests have some virtue as a tool for evaluating students' performance in math and science, but they can never be the only factors we are using. We must focus on developing critical thinking skills and helping students participate in projects as well as labs to test our students' comprehension of material and further retention.

Resources and equity

The last few years have seen cuts of about 14% to school budgets. Class sizes have risen, and in the early grades are at the highest level in 14 years. Art, music, science, and afterschool programs have been eliminated from many schools. How would you address these issues? How would you go about guaranteeing the civil rights of all students and providing them with an equitable opportunity to learn, regardless of their background?

More specifically would you:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that school budgets remain stable and/or increase in the future? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set reduced class size goals to achieve by the end of your first term? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with the plan the city adopted in 2007, as a response to the Contracts for Excellence state law, which calls for class size reduction in all grades? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to spending a larger percent of the city budget on reducing class size, and if necessary, raise revenue to fund this? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-evaluate "fair student funding" to discern whether it has provided more equity or, instead, incentives to principals to increase class size and/or get rid of their experienced teachers? 	Yes	

How would you address the need to reduce class size, the top priority of parents on the DOE's own surveys?

In order to improve the education system for our students, we must acknowledge that our current model is outdated. I will work to reduce class sizes and provide students with more one-on-one time with teachers.

How would you ensure that children are provided with a well-rounded education, including art, music, science, and physical education, and how would you fund this?

We must work to control contracts on pricey consultants, which have robbed our school system of critical dollars. I will stop outsourcing the city's workforce and also partner with the private sector, as well as work to increase dollars to the Fund for Public Schools to fund arts, music, science and physical education programs.

How would you go about developing and supporting measures to attract and retain experienced and high-quality teachers?

I will focus on working to create supportive environments for teachers so they get the tools, training and support to be successful teachers with a long career in the NYC public school system. We will work to create greater linkages between our CUNY schools and DOE so that more people see teaching as the rewarding career that it is.

Our schools have become increasingly segregated over time. How would you address the goal of increasing diversity in NYC public schools? **Please be specific.**

Diversity is key to creating healthy school environments. I plan to reengage parents so that they see the schools as part of the community and work to foster greater collaboration between neighborhood schools through cultural events and shared learning opportunities so students are able to collaborate on projects. I would develop public-private partnerships between schools, parents, businesses, and cultural institutions so that our children can be exposed to a diversity of experiences and perspectives. I believe that learning about the diverse experience of others is an invaluable part of any child's education and I will work hard to ensure that all schools have diversity.

Any other comments on resources and/or equity?

Additionally, we must ensure that our schools are adequately funded and as Mayor, I will work hard to make sure that New York City receives its fair share and that money is invested wisely to protect our schools.

School facilities

Overcrowding is a chronic and ever-worsening problem in NYC schools. The city has underinvested in school facilities over the last decade, resulting in most of our students attending schools in overcrowded and/or substandard conditions. There are thousands of children on waiting lists for their zoned elementary schools. Mandatory Kindergarten, expanded Pre-K and community schools with wrap-around services will require even more space. And yet the current capital plan does not have enough new seats to keep up with future enrollment growth, not to mention eliminating existing overcrowding or reducing class size.

Do you support any of the following measures? Please check all that apply.	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A more ambitious capital plan that would provide the space necessary to eliminate overcrowding and allow for smaller classes, as well as devotes sufficient funds to maintenance and repair. 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest a larger percentage of the city’s overall capital spending towards these goals. 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform the blue book formula so it more accurately reflects overcrowding and incorporates the need for smaller classes. 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to providing transparent enrollment projections. 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require developers to provide space for schools in overcrowded areas or pay “impact” fees into a fund for school construction. 	Yes	

Do you have any other proposals to address overcrowding?

Will work with schools to obtain more timely and substantive data to plan for the growth of schools.

Privatization

DOE is spending more than \$4 billion this year on private contracts, which represents the fastest growing part of its budget. More and more educational and support services are being outsourced and the budget for charter schools is approaching \$1 billion.

Would you:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the spending on privatization, outsourcing, contracts and consultants? 	Yes	
If your answered yes to the above question, how would you do so?		
We must stop our overreliance on outside consultants. I will ensure an open and transparent process for all contracts. Additionally, I will work to train our city workforce in new technology so that work can be done in house.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent the awarding of contracts to companies that have already been shown to have stolen funds or are suspected of corruption? 	Yes	
If your answered yes to the above question, how would you do so?		
I will ensure greater oversight on large contracts and work with administrators to follow key procedures to better monitor costs for projects.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the continued expansion of charter schools? 	Yes however, not to come at the expense of public schools.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the practice of co-locating charter schools in existing DOE facilities? 		<p>This I would leave blank, or write: I've called for a moratorium on the collocations of schools until the problem is fixed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce the provisions in state law, which requires co-located charter schools to pay for the services and space that they now currently receive from the DOE for free? 		<p>No</p>

How would you work to ameliorate the divide and inequities between the charter school community and those in district public schools?

Both district and charter schools in NYC must be improved and aligned to better meet the needs for students. I have stated that we must stop school closures and additionally, I have called for a moratorium on charter school expansion until we deal with the current system at hand.

Any other comments on privatization?

School closings, small schools and online learning

Mayor Bloomberg will have closed more than 150 schools during his administration, and created more than 450 new small schools. Most parents opposed these school closings because they disrupted our children's education and displaced the neediest students elsewhere. There is also discontent with the requirement that all new schools be small; i.e. 400 students or less; which leads to an inefficient use of resources and space, and difficulty in providing students with advanced coursework and a full range of

extra-curricular activities. The rapid expansion of online learning has also been among this administration’s priorities, replacing the personal contact between student and teacher by delivering course content and instruction through computers and software.

Would you:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the Bloomberg-era policy of closing schools and forming new schools, or instead pledge to do more to improve existing schools? 	This is not a yes or no question. To clarify, It is my intention to STOP school closures and invest more in improving our schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relax the requirement that all new schools be of a small size? 		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that students have full, face-to-face, in-person access to teacher, or continue to expand on learning as the alternative? 	This is not a yes or no question. The important issue is that each student receives more personalized instruction with more opportunities to ask questions and receive training more tailored to their needs.	

Other comments on school closures/new schools/online learning?

Transparency

Even experts at the Independent Budget Office say the DOE’s budget has become less transparent than in the past, making it difficult if not impossible for parents and advocates to learn what funds are being spent on, not to mention give input about possible improvements in spending & priorities. Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests are rarely responded to, and never promptly, and there is much data that the DOE refuses to disclose, such as results of surveys and enrollment projections.

Which of the following measures to increase overall transparency would you carry out? Please check all that apply.	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Itemized, fully detailed breakdowns of education budget comparable to other city agencies 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to FOILs in a timely and complete fashion 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an online log which reports on which FOILs have been submitted and when they were responded to, with a link to the results [along the model of the Illinois board of education; see http://www.isbe.state.il.us/foia/default.htm] 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More accurate reporting of class size and overcrowding 	Yes	

Any other suggestions as to how to increase transparency?

Special education

Under the current special education reform, schools are required to accommodate children with a large variety of special needs in general education or inclusion classes, often resulting in their being placed in extremely large class or with a teacher who is not adequately trained. In fact, principals have been instructed to accommodate children with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) in general education classes up to the legal limit (32 children per class in most elementary grades). While parents understand the benefits of inclusion, they worry that sufficient resources and staffing are not being provided either to meet the needs of students with disabilities or the rest of the students in the class.

Yes	No

Would you:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promise to release reports twice a year, showing how many students have IEPs that are out of compliance? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree to commission a report, in consultation with Citywide Council on Special Education and the District 75 Citywide Council, by an independent research group on the implementation of the special education reform, including survey results from parents, students, administrators and educators at the school level 	Yes	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission a study, again by an independent expert, analyzing the causes of the increase in the number and percent of students diagnosed with special needs? Such numbers have been on the increase in NYC in the past five years. 	Yes	
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How will you make sure that the needs of students with disabilities are met, that they are provided with the individual attention and smaller classes that they require, and that the funding provided is sufficient and is properly spent to achieve these goals?

As Comptroller, I advocated for a Special Education Resource Center to help parents of students with special needs to navigate the complex world of special education, and provide direct access to individuals that have the knowledge and authority to help them with problems that cannot be resolved at the school level; as mayor I will push for a similar program.

Estimates are that 25% of special needs students in NYC do not receive their mandated services. How would you ensure that all students with disabilities receive their services promptly?

We must ensure that our special needs students receive adequate and timely instructional and support services. I will work to make sure that IAPs are more accurate and work with parents/guardians to ensure our students are getting the services they need.

How would your administration deal with the over-representation/identification of students of color in special education?

We must use clear indicators to determine which students may need special education services. Additionally, we must ensure that our school personnel are trained to be able to effectively evaluate needs for special education.

Other suggestions to improve opportunities for students with disabilities?

Other policies

Cellphone ban Most parents believe that for safety reasons their children should be allowed to carry cellphones to and from school. Would you continue the official policy of prohibiting students from bringing their cell phones to school?

Privacy protections

The state and the city are currently sharing highly sensitive, personally identifiable student data with a corporation named inBloom Inc., which is storing it on a vulnerable data cloud and making it available to for-profit vendors without parental consent. At the same time, inBloom has stated it will not be held responsible if the data leaks out either in storage or transmission.

Would you agree to:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pull NYC student data out of the inBloom cloud as soon as possible? 	Yes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pledge not to share personally identifiable student data with any third party without parental consent? 	Yes	

School to prison

Many parents and advocates are concerned by the number of police in our schools and the high rate of students who are arrested for minor offenses. What would you do to protect children with minor behavioral issues from being suspended or otherwise forced into the school to prison pipeline?

As Mayor, I will work hard everyday to want to make sure that our schools remain safe, that schools are safe and the environments in there protect teachers and students and those inside. But the way discipline procedures are applied today in our public schools is detrimental to our students, which disproportionately affects students of color. Over the years we've seen an increase of students being arrested for things a lot of us might have been involved in when we were kids, in fistfights and things like that **you don't want to see a student with a criminal record with an arrest on their record because of a thing like a fistfight.**

Focus on creating stronger safety environments in schools, by **improving training for school safety agents, involving school administrators more in decisions, strengthening discipline protocol and procedures, having a zero-tolerance policy on bullying in our schools and ensuring that wraparound services like mental health** are available for our young people and their families.

I've long called for **accessible and open data, while protecting personal information** regarding school discipline procedures and as Mayor I will ensure stronger accountability to the public around this issue of school discipline and suspensions.

Additionally, I have called upon the state legislature to stop the prosecution of 16 and 17 year olds as adults so that we provide more opportunities for our young people to receive supportive services, instead of jail time.

Credit recovery

To inflate their graduation rates, some schools have implemented sub-standard credit recovery programs based on online learning or packets of homework that allow students who have failed their courses to graduate on time. How would you address this issue to ensure that receiving a high school diploma actually means that a student is equipped to become a productive citizen?

We must find multiple ways toward a path to graduation for our students and ensure that we are preparing students so that they can graduate on time. We can work to increase tutoring and Saturday programs for our most vulnerable students.

Open-ended questions

Please summarize your record of achievements in public education as a policymaker.

Throughout his career as a public servant, I have been widely recognized as one of our city's foremost advocates for a high-performing, well-funded, accountable and transparent public education system. I was appointed to the New York City Board of Education in 1994. In five consecutive terms as its president, I led a reform agenda that resulted in improved student achievement and greater public transparency. I championed a series of uncompromising accountability reforms that helped to pave the way for Mayoral control of the public schools. In my role as New York City Comptroller, I continued the fight to improve New York City's public education system.

To help New York City students develop the 21st Century skills they need, I have:

- Exposed serious flaws in the City's tracking of student graduation, finding that student transcripts did not have evidence supporting graduation for one out of every 10 students.
- Examined and exposed massive overcrowding in City schools, proposing new mechanisms to finance and accelerate school construction.
- Called for the expansion of universal pre-kindergarten classes for all city children from the pulpit of the New York Times op-ed page.
- Examined the benefits of investment in vocational training in New York City schools to provide young people with the skills to compete in an increasingly technical local economy.
- Advocated and provided public testimony in support of expanded physical education in schools to combat childhood obesity.
- Advocated for increased State and federal funding to New York City public schools.
- Spoke out in support of expanding our city's many extraordinary charter schools.
- Proposed a plan to improve mayoral control to increase parental involvement on the Panel for Education Policy and on Community Education Councils.
- Proposed an independent body to audit test scores and graduation rates, given concerns over data manipulation related to improvements in those areas cited by the City.
- Condemned the Department of Education's ballooning use of no-bid contracts under mayoral control, and proposed fair and open competition in the awarding of City contracts.

Please describe the ways in which, as a public official, you have demonstrated responsiveness to parental concerns or community members in the area of public education?

See above

What would be your top educational priorities if elected mayor?

- Launch a new initiative to deliver comprehensive services to students ages five and under. Paired with an expansion of pre-k services, the initiative will provide support for kindergarten success and work with families to understand the comprehensive support that young students need to be successful in school. The initiative will identify - very early on - who needs additional help and we will provide it.
- Create a pre-K to career- and college-ready system, where students are not repeating the same work and where each lesson and each year builds on the last. This comprehensive, connected approach will help us make sure we start kids off on the right track and keep them there.
- Create a mini-grant system for the most innovative schools, especially when it comes to career and college readiness. When educators do something well, we will give them the opportunity and resources to do even more of it.
- Use the success at schools such as Pathways In Technology as a model. Expand that model to more schools - at least one in every borough. We will identify and partner with business leaders in medicine, biotechnology and engineering to give New York City students a direct path to a good job.
- Open more schools like the Academy for Software Engineering, where students don't just learn how to write computer code or engineer programs, they learn how to be innovators in their own right. Students can do what they love in the city that they love.
- Stop School Closures. Close schools always as the last option, not the first. Students in every school deserve the same chance of success as students in every other school. I will stop school closures and introduce a comprehensive system to support struggling schools.
- Support the Common Core. We should use it to shift the testing paradigm. Critical concepts will drive lesson planning. And those concepts can be reiterated in the games younger students play, across different subjects and in after-school programs. Teachers will have freedom to convey those concepts.
- Create a Real Career Ladder for Educators. Identify our strongest, most-effective teachers, especially in math and science, and put them to work guiding first-time teachers. These teachers can take on additional leadership functions at the school level.
- Put Effective Teachers in Struggling Schools: Create an incentive program to reward teachers who take on these challenges. Putting our most effective teachers into struggling neighborhood schools so we can work to raise student achievement.
- Give Parents a Voice in Education Policy. Appoint parent representatives to the Education Panel. People on the Education Panel will support my policies because they are the right policies. Not because he appoints them.

How would your approach differ from the current Mayor, and in what ways would you emulate his policies?

Under Mayor Bloomberg, New York has substituted statistical analysis for success. But listen to parents and teachers and community leaders, and you know things are not working. Even the scores tell us their policies are not working.

Teachers are accountable for what happens in their schools and classrooms. Simply threatening teachers with arbitrary scores, as Mayor Bloomberg has done, isn't accountability. It's criticizing from behind. The City needs to use more than just tests to evaluate our teachers - and make sure teachers have a clear understanding of the metrics. I believe in a system that incorporates scores, professional observation, parent and peer feedback and more.

It's clear to me that we need an immediate moratorium on school closures. During his term, the Mayor has closed more than 150 schools, in large part based on these questionable accountability standards. That's not leadership – that's throwing in the towel. And one thing you can count on from me is that I will never throw in the towel on any neighborhood in this city.

Anything else you would like to share?

	Yes	No
Would you agree for a member of our group to interview you in person, if we have follow up questions?	Yes	

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer our questions.