



Candidate Survey for Mayoral Candidates

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

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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?	X	
Which of the following changes to what is now called the Panel for Education Policy (the <i>de facto</i> 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 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reconstituted Board of Education with a majority not appointed by the Mayor 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Education Councils (CECs) selecting parent representatives to the Board of Education 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having Board of Education members with set terms, who cannot be fired at will by the mayor 		X
<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 		X
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 		X

school closings and co-locations?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorizing municipal control; i.e., the City Council making law on educational policy, including school closings, etc.? 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing School Leadership Teams (SLTs) to regain the power to develop school based budgets? 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstituting school based committees or SLTs to select principals? 		X
<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? 	X	

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

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

We believe in a citywide and school systemwide Parents' Association, comprised entirely of parents of public school students. The nominal dues provided to this association would provide a budget, and the organization itself will provide a check and balance to other stakeholders in the education system. Additionally, principals and schools should have continual communication with parents. In a digital age, this communication can occur over many platforms, and should not be restricted to the few parent-teacher nights that occur over the school year.

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? 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting only a chancellor who does not require a waiver from the state (i.e., an educator) 		X

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

I propose the Chancellor leads the transformation of K-12 schools away from a textbook-based and memorization-based teaching approach towards team-based and blended-learning approaches. This move to new approaches to teaching is a cornerstone of my educational policy.

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.

Mayoral control of education has led to quicker decision-making and has allowed some new creative approaches to blossom. My main concern is the emphasis that's been placed on charter schools, because the data on charter schools are mixed and because charter schools are not a scalable solution to the problems facing our education system We must fix the issues at a systemwide level.

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? 	X	
<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)? 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating school progress reports altogether? 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crafting a teacher evaluation system that depends as little as possible on standardized test scores? 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusing to expand standardized testing into other grades (Pre-K to 2nd)? 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pledging not to create new local standardized exams? 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposing the creation of 3-8th grade standardized exams in subjects other than ELA, math and science? 	X	
<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? 	X	
<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? 	X	
<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? 	X	

Would you propose any other policy changes in this area?

I will encourage the expansion of waivers for performance-based assessment tests (PBATs). Schools such as East Side Community High School and others have proven that such an approach yields positive results.

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

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? 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set reduced class size goals to achieve by the end of your first term? 	X	
<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? 		X
<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? 	X	
<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? 		

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

My team-based and project-based approach to education will automatically reduce class size by focusing attention on small group learning. It will also transform the role of the teacher from a lecturer of 25 to 35 students to one of a facilitator and coach to small teams of kids. Schools like East Side Community High School and P-TECH in Brooklyn demonstrate that small group work is an effective way to improve learning.

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?

My primary concern is to bring new, innovative approaches to the classroom, like those previously mentioned. Moving more schools to team-based and project-based learning approaches lead kids to work together in ways they will need to work together in the real world. Kids leave these schools with expertise

in a wider range of areas than students schooled with traditional, textbook-based techniques. Across the country, schools like Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, VA (perennially ranked among America’s top high schools) and Cleveland’s MC²STEM, among others, have conclusively shown that such approaches work better than standard rote- memorization and textbook-based approaches, and do so while costing the same or even less than schools that use standard approaches.

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

NYC teachers have one of the hardest jobs in the city. It is unfortunately far too focused on drilling for tests and scoring exams. I will transform the role of teachers from lecturers and testers to one more akin to facilitators and coaches. We have seen this transformation occur, with incredibly positive results for both schools and teachers, at schools across the country. I will invest in teachers, and in their continued professional development.

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

Any other comments on resources and/or equity?

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. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest a larger percentage of the city’s overall capital spending towards these goals. 	X	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform the blue book formula so it more accurately reflects overcrowding and incorporates the need for smaller classes. 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to providing transparent enrollment projections. 		X
<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. 		

Do you have any other proposals to address overcrowding?

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? 	X	
If your answered yes to the above question, how would you do so?		
<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? 	X	
If your answered yes to the above question, how would you do so?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the continued expansion of charter schools? 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the practice of co-locating charter schools in existing DOE facilities? 	X	
<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? 		

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

Charter schools only serve 56,000 of 1.1 million students in New York City schools. The data on charter schools is mixed. Some have succeeded, while others are below par. Charter schools must be held to same

level of accountability as other schools, and nonperforming charter schools must be phased out. As previously stated, we must fix city schools' issues in a systemwide fashion. Charter schools won't do that.

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?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Relax the requirement that all new schools be of a small size?	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure that students have full, face-to-face, in-person access to teacher, or continue to expand online learning as the alternative?		

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

We must do more to improve current schools before they are slated for closing. By transforming schools to team-based, small-group centered approaches, we can save many schools from closing, and end the disruption to kids' lives that such closings lead to.

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 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to FOILs in a timely and complete fashion 	X	
<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] 	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More accurate reporting of class size and overcrowding 	X	

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.

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? 	X	
<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 	X	
<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. 	X	

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?

It is clear now that a textbook-based curriculum is not optimal for all students. For a wide range of students, blended-learning approaches yields far better results, including students with disabilities.

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 will hold senior staff within the education system accountable for delivering such services to special needs students in a timely fashion.

How would your administration deal with the over-representation/identification of students of color in 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 cellphones to and from school. Would you continue the official policy of students from bringing their cell phones to school?

Yes	No
	X

to carry prohibiting

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?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pledge not to share personally identifiable student data with <i>any third party</i> without parental consent?	X	

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?

Our primary concern is the safety of all students. As we transform schools into engaging, team-based approaches we expect the incidence of behavioral issues will decrease.

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 are against any substandard credit recovery program. Productive citizens in today's economy must have strong skills in problem-solving and interpersonal communication. Unfortunately, the majority of our K-12 schools do not do an adequate job in this regard. Our challenge-based, team-based approach will address many of these issues and make kids college-ready, job-ready, and life-ready.

Open-ended questions

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

I worked with leaders in public education -- including Mark Federman, principal of East Side Community High School, as well as NIH and other leading institutions -- to identify and champion discovery-based and project-based approaches to learning. I have visited numerous principals and schools across the country to understand how exemplary schools have achieved their results, including Thomas Jefferson High School For Science and Technology in Virginia and MC²STEM in Cleveland, both of which are public schools that achieve exemplary results with project-based approaches to learning

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?

What would be your top educational priorities if elected mayor?

My top education priority is to improve public schools by advocating innovative approaches -- like those used in places as diverse as P-TECH, East Side Community High School, and the Academy for Software Engineering -- into more public schools, and to do so outside the charter school system.

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

We commend and appreciate the accountability reforms achieved by Mayor Bloomberg. Now it's time to refocus on the student, and the classroom experience. We feel strongly that there has been too much emphasis placed on textbooks, memorization, and testing. We would like to transform our schools into platforms for creativity and discovery. We will restore arts and hands-on science into schools, along with other key disciplines.

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?	X	

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