



CANDIDATE SURVEY FOR MAYORAL CANDIDATES

PLEASE RETURN BY MONDAY, JULY 8TH TO INFO@NYCKIDSPAC.ORG

June 2013

Candidate's full name	Bill de Blasio
Staff contact and e-mail	Emma Wolfe – emma@billdeblasio.com
Phone number	(718)-986-8623

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
• A directly elected Board of Education		x
• A reconstituted Board of Education with a majority not appointed by the Mayor		x
• Community Education Councils (CECs) selecting parent representatives to the Board of Education		x
• Having Board of Education members with set terms, who cannot be fired at will by the mayor	x	
• 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
• Expanding the powers of CECs, including giving them approval authority over school closings and co-locations?		x

• Authorizing municipal control; i.e., the City Council making law on educational policy, including school closings, etc.?		x
• Allowing School Leadership Teams (SLTs) to regain the power to develop school based budgets?		x
• Reconstituting school based committees or SLTs to select principals?		x
• 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?

- Allow Community Education Council's to vote on major school utilization changes in their communities. This vote will influence and provide insight to the Panel for Education Policy.
- PEP members will have two-year fixed terms, which will ensure that PEP members who might disagree with Bill will maintain their membership.
- Ensure that all members of the PEP are given at least 2 weeks to discuss the policy ideas at hand before bringing them to a vote.
- Work with the Community Education Council to develop portfolio assessments within their respective communities to get an understanding what schools need to grow, what schools have space and what schools are struggling.
- Improve the role of the Citywide Education Councils (High school, Special Education, English Language Learners, D 75) by ensuring they provide written recommendations to the Panel for Education Policy on policy issues related to their respective councils.

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

- Parental engagement will be a key element to my administration. As a public school parent, I understand the importance of parental engagement at the school, community and system level. As Mayor I will:
- Create customer service guidelines for all schools by identifying model parent engagement schools and mirror these practices across the school system. In addition, provide training and guidance to ensure every school and DOE office welcomes and respects families.
 - Have district superintendent's offices be the place where parents can get information about admissions, programs and special education services.
 - Work with Community Education Councils (CECs) to develop district plans for each school year, and work collaboratively with the DOE to assess schools with open space or space issues and identify struggling schools in need of support.
 - Raise the level of significance of the CEC's. The Panel for Educational Policy must address the PEP's vote on major school utilization changes in their PEP meetings. They must state why they disagree with the local CEC and work with the local CEC for alternative solutions.
 - Ensure that all PTA and CEC meetings are streamed online for parents who are unable to attend.

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
• The Chancellor being chosen by Board of Education rather than the mayor?		x
• 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?

Under my administration, the Chancellor will focus on instruction and curriculum, and ensuring that we are helping our struggling schools.

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.

Our City has only seen Mayoral Control under one mayor, coincidentally, one of the most undemocratic Mayors in our City's history. I firmly believe that under my leadership, our City will strike a balance between community engagement, responsiveness and accountability. Under the Bloomberg administration, the Mayor used Mayoral Control to shove his policies into schools and communities. Community engagement is central to my leadership philosophy. I will consult with communities and develop plans to address our schools with them.

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
• Eliminating the use of test scores as the primary basis for making promotional decisions?	x	
• 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	
• Eliminating school progress reports altogether?		x
• Crafting a teacher evaluation system that depends as little as possible on standardized test scores?	x	
• Refusing to expand standardized testing into other grades (Pre-K to 2nd)?	x	
• Pledging not to create new local standardized exams?	x	
• Opposing the creation of 3-8 th grade standardized exams in subjects other than ELA, math and science?		

• Making admissions to all schools based on more holistic factors, and especially Gifted & Talented programs and the specialized high schools?	x	
• 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	
• 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?

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

I believe standardized test play a role in our education system, but we all know that a single test should not be the sole determining factor of success in learning and development. Students learn in different ways, and our evaluation system for students and schools must reflect that reality.

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
• Ensure that school budgets remain stable and/or increase in the future?		x
• Set reduced class size goals to achieve by the end of your first term?	x	
• 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	
• Commit to spending a larger percent of the city budget on reducing class size, and if necessary, raise revenue to fund this?		x
• 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?	x	

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

During a time of fiscal uncertainty, I cannot commit to raising additional revenue for class size or increasing school budgets. While I cannot make these commitments, I still understand the importance of reducing class size and have put forth the following proposals that will help reduce class size:

- Create Early Education Centers within communities that will free up classroom space currently used for pre-kindergarten in community schools.
- Fight for the \$3 billion in court-ordered state funding owed to New York City to

reduce class sizes as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

- Audit the Contracts for Excellence budget to see how we can re-prioritize reducing class size.
- Work with school supervisors and principals to adjust the school day schedule and maximize staff time with students.

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?

A well-rounded education is critically important and it will be one of the key goals of my administration. Regarding arts education, research shows that arts education is a benefit to a child's academic success.¹ Yet many New York City students are not receiving their required arts curriculum. I will establish a four-year goal of providing 100 percent of all students in kindergarten through the eighth grade 8 with once-a-week, yearlong arts instruction. In order to sustain the growth of arts education, I will launch a NYC Arts Instruction Campaign to raise private, philanthropic funding to support this vital expansion.

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

1

<http://www.nea.gov/research/arts-at-risk-youth.pdf>

I will make it a priority to provide schools with a pool of knowledgeable, caring and committed teachers. The efforts to identify potential teachers will include expanding efforts to encourage New Yorkers to consider teaching as a profession by expanding “grow your own” programs in high schools, teacher residency programs², and partnerships with CUNY and SUNY colleges to expand the pool of potential teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers. My administration, will focus on supporting teachers and provide opportunities for teachers to grow. As Mayor, I will work to create career paths that encourage quality teachers to remain in teaching, like Lead Teachers and Master Teachers¹. Lead Teachers – used in a small proportion of City schools –mentoring new and struggling teachers, develop curriculum, and generally strengthen the professional development of their peers.

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

First and foremost, increasing diversity needs to be a strategic initiative by the DOE. Despite the Mayor's focus on the high school choice process, we have seen a lack of diversity in many of the City's selective and specialized high schools. My administration will focus on ensuring there are quality schools in EVERY neighborhood. Additionally, I will make sure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity have access to our City's selective and specialized high schools.

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
• 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	
• Invest a larger percentage of the city’s overall capital spending towards these goals.		
• Reform the blue book formula so it more accurately reflects overcrowding and incorporates the need for smaller classes.	x	
• 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?

My administration will focus on auditing the enrollment projections and the blue book- these two data sets are providing incomplete information on our schools and communities. I firmly believe that developers needs to build more schools and will explore the “impact” fees for school construction. In addition to auditing the blue book and the enrollment projections, I will also focus my attention on ensuring the capital budget addresses 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?		
My administration will throughly evaluate all DOE contracts, maintaining contracts that are producing positive results for our schools. Additionally, I will focus on retaining talent “in-house” therefore eliminating unnecessary contracts.		
<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?		
My administration will develop protocols that will prevent the awarding of contracts to companies that have already shown to have stolen funds.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the continued expansion of charter schools? 		
<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? 	x	

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

As Public Advocate, I demanded significant reforms in how the Department of Education implements co-locations. These changes include requiring more information on how co-locations will impact programs for students with disabilities in the building, establishing additional venues for parents to relay their concerns, and a process in which the DOE responds to parent's concerns. I will work with community members to implement the policy solutions I have offered the DOE over the last three years.

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
• Continue the Bloomberg-era policy of closing schools and forming new schools, or instead pledge to do more to improve existing schools?		x
• Relax the requirement that all new schools be of a small size?	x	
• Ensure that students have full, face-to-face, in-person access to teacher, or continue to expand online learning as the alternative?	x	

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

The City needs to create an early warning system for schools that are falling further behind. We should be able to help schools before they get on the State's Persistently Low Achieving list. Schools identified will receive targeted support through a new “Office of Strategic Supports” housed in the DOE for struggling schools. The Office of Strategic Support will develop intervention strategies in conjunction with the school communities and target individual high-need schools which will receive short-term, intensive support.

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?

I have a record of transparency and will ensure that under my administration, the DOE will be in full compliance with FOIL. As Public Advocate, I monitored and reported on the city's compliance with the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). I also created a "Transparency Report Card" helps the public track which agencies have complied with their FOIL obligations—and which have not.

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? 		
<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. 		

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 Public Advocate, I recognized that NYC lags behind the nation in providing students with disabilities the opportunity to learn with their non-disabled peers. In June 2011, I agreed with Chancellor Walcott to put politics aside and provide for an independent, objective study of Special Education Reform implementation. The first report on Reform implementation was released by the Fund for Public Advocacy in August 2012. The study continues to examine implementation of Reform at the school level. Over the last year, researchers have talked with parents, students, teachers, service providers, administrators and advocates. The results of the study will be released in the fall.

As Mayor, I will continue to support increasing the learning opportunities for all students, especially students with disabilities who are most vulnerable. Further, I will insist on commissioning independent and objective studies of major education initiatives in order to ensure that DOE is listening to parents and community members as well as teachers and administrators responsible for implementing the initiatives. I will explore the idea of commissioning a report to analyze the growth of children diagnosed with a disability, especially children with LD and ED diagnoses.

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?

Under my administration, I will survey parents of children with disabilities to get an understanding of the related services that are not being met. This will help my administration develop a strategic plan to ensure students are receiving the services they need to grow academically and socially.

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

My administration will ensure that children, especially young children of color, are being given the resources they need to succeed prior to being referred to special education. This includes an emphasis on pre-kindergarten and early intervention.

Other suggestions to improve opportunities for students with disabilities?

OTHER POLICIES

Cellphone ban

Yes	No
	x

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?	x	
<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?

As Mayor I will do the following to address the school to prison pipeline:

- Expand the community school model, which helps address mental health needs in our City’s school system.
- Build capacity in schools for positive discipline strategies, and expand student support services through multi-agency/service provider collaboration
- Adopt a Graduated Response Protocol to resolve student misbehavior at school level
- Focus role of School Safety Agents (SSA) on behavior that requires law enforcement response, by integrating SSA's with school administration team and conduct conferencing between SSAs and principals prior to arrests

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?

First and foremost, we must make sure that we are helping students on the front end-- not waiting for them to nearly fail out of school. We need to make sure we are engaging them in middle school with afterschool programs and we need to develop early warning systems for students who are struggling. Additionally, we need to improve our curriculum so that all students being challenged to think critically and not just taught to memorize for tests.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

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

As a public school parent, former School Board member, former City Council Member, and Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio has fought for every child in New York City get what his own daughter and son received – an education from a New York City public high school that prepares students for success upon graduation. Bill’s administration will promote equity and social and economic justice by striving to establish *high quality schools in every neighborhood*.

--Creating Truly Universal Pre-Kindergarten, and After-School Programs for ALL Middle School Students. In front of some of New York's wealthiest residents, Bill de Blasio called for an increase in taxes for New Yorkers earning \$500,000 or more to dramatically expand after-school programs for all middle schools students, and to create truly universal pre-k programs.

- Expanding and Improving Career and Technical Education. While the Bloomberg administration has opened up several new CTE schools, they have ignored many of the older CTE schools and have not focused enough on developing schools that focus on high-growth, high-wage, and high-skill jobs. Bill de Blasio called for reforms that include dramatically expanding the number of schools in high growth fields, as well as making sure that all poor-performing CTE schools are matched with successful CTE schools in their field.

- Increasing Parental Engagement and Communication in the Co-location Process. As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio demanded significant reforms in how the Department of Education implements co-locations. These changes include requiring more information on how co-locations will impact programs for students with disabilities in the building, establishing additional venues for parents to relay their concerns, and a process in which the DOE responds to parent's concerns.

- Fighting Unfair Closures by Standing Up for Struggling Schools. As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio successfully fought unfair school closures, including the closing of PS 114 in Canarsie, Wadleigh in Harlem and Maxwell High School in East New York. Struggling schools require specific plans to address their needs, which is exactly what he did for PS 114, and it’s what Bill de Blasio will do for every struggling school.

- Providing a Voice for Students with Disabilities. There are more than 160,000 students with disabilities in NYC public schools. As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio has provided parents of children with disabilities a voice in the DOE. In 2010, he initiated a multi-year evaluation of the DOE's Special Education Reform, and has called for increased professional development for principals and teachers to better meet the needs of students. In 2011, he launched a survey for parents of students with disabilities to learn their concerns about their child's education and declared, alongside advocates, April as “Students with Disabilities Month.” In 2011, he also called the DOE to reform the kindergarten admissions process for students with disabilities.

- Stopping Bullying in Schools. In 2012, Bill de Blasio hosted an anti-bullying forum with educators and advocates, and called for reforms on how schools address bullying issues. These ideas include requiring the DOE to hold yearly workshops on bullying prevention, instituting new disclosure requirements on bullying prevention trainings at the school level, and examining data on bullying to help monitor schools' anti bullying strategies.

- Addressing Behavioral Issues. Many schools have inadequate supports to address students with behavioral issues. As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio filed a lawsuit against the City in

State Supreme Court demanding data on students who were sent to the emergency room because of behavioral problems at school instead of getting the help they need. He also called for an expansion of the Community Schools model to ensure that all children were receiving adequate mental health services in schools.

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?

As a council member and as Public Advocate I have consistently demonstrated my responsiveness to parents. As Public Advocate, I issued two reports on parental engagement in major school utilization changes. Additionally, I developed a survey for parents of children with disabilities and from that survey issued a report on school transportation. Parental and community engagement will be key to my administration because parents are the first and last teachers for their children.

What would be your top educational priorities if elected mayor?

I would prioritize expanding and improving early education, expanding afterschool programs for all middle school students, improving the DOE's relationship with parents, supporting our City's struggling schools, and improving our Career and Technical Education programs.

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

I have consistently fought the Mayor on the education policies. I have disagreed with, including his lack of parental engagement, his undemocratic version of Mayoral Control, his school closure policies and his emphasis on testing. As Mayor, I will push for high achievement for ALL New York City' students and will ensure that my policies are community driven and based on best practices.

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.