



Candidate Survey for Mayoral Candidates

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

June 2013

Candidate's full name	John Liu
Staff contact and e-mail	Shammeik Barat, shammeik@johnliu2013.com
Phone number	646-490-9818

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 school closings and co-locations? 	X	
<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?

My report, [No More Rubber Stamp](#), details reforms that I would enact to the Panel for Education Policy. Among them is a different approach to PEP. The critical difference is that the mayor's appointees to PEP must be selected from candidates chosen by a nominating committee. That committee will be made up of representatives from the community, labor, elected officials, education professionals and mayoral appointees. Representatives of the community will have the most seats on that board, ensuring a strong check on school governance.

Other proposals in that particular report the effect checks and balances are fixed four year terms for members of PEP and required approval of the Chancellor from PEP with veto power.

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

Parents must be much more involved in decision making than we have seen during the Bloomberg administration. My report, mentioned above, details how we can get parents inserted into the power structure and decision making aspects of school governance.

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 will again point you to my report, [No More Rubber Stamp](#), that details some of the requirements I would have of the next Chancellor. Among the requirements:

- At least ten years of successful experience as a public or private school educator
- A proven record of success in improving outcomes for all students
- A proven commitment and ability to clearly and accurately engage with the public and motivate staff

- A strong commitment to capacity-building, peer network collaboration, and transparency in process and data
- PhD or EdD in educational leadership

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

The New York State Education Commissioner should not be able to provide waivers for prospective chancellors. Business managers and systems-oriented specialists can and should serve prominently in the governance structure, but such individuals would not be eligible to serve as chancellor unless they meet the established criteria. As mentioned previously, the new PEP would have the authority to approve or veto the mayor’s selection for chancellor.

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

Mayoral control has allowed the Mayor to absorb all of the power, but has left accountability to the schools. This has meant that while schools have more autonomy they are also allowed to fail. Unfortunately, this has meant 140 school closings since 2003. We need a more collaborative and responsive system of school governance.

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?	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?

In my report, [The Power of Guidance](#), I call for a dramatic expansion of school counselors. I think that the addition of counselors will allow for a more holistic evaluation of student growth, beyond treating them as statistics.

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

Standardized testing should be one of the many factors we take into consideration when evaluating student, teacher and school success. It should not be the primary factor, as it has become.

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? 	X	

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

Reducing class size requires additional funding to hire more personnel. I would raise the funding necessary to do this through a more progressive tax system where the wealthiest New Yorkers pay more, increase commercial real estate tax rates, charge private equity firms the Unincorporated Business Tax for carried interest, and clawback tax benefits from firms that don't create the jobs they promise, among other things.

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?

See answer above.

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

Teachers want to teach. By creating an environment where they have the freedom to do that, as opposed to constant evaluation. We can and should make their jobs more rewarding. Additionally, as mentioned above, I have a plan to ensure that our school system is adequately funded, and our teachers appropriately compensated.

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

Segregation in our schools is a reflection of income disparities that have grown during the Bloomberg administration. As Mayor I will close the gap between the haves and have-nots. The closing of the inequality gap will reverberate throughout our schools.

I am a vocal supporter of diversifying the much-vaunted Specialized High Schools. Schools like Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan, or Brooklyn Tech, or my own alma mater, the Bronx High School of Science. Of the approximately 12,500 Black and Latino families among them, more than 90 percent, or about 12,000, were not admitted.

The Specialized High schools are the equivalent of New York City's Ivy League. Admittance to these schools is a ticket to success. They bring an almost certain guarantee of high school graduation, in a city where the graduation rate is 65 percent, and an almost certain guarantee of college acceptance. More than a quarter of the graduates of Stuyvesant and Bronx Science go on to university in the real Ivy Leagues, at Harvard, and Yale, and Brown, or other top tier colleges.

Even though more and more Black and Latino kids have been taking the Specialized High School exam every year -- and despite a slight uptick this year -- relatively few of them find their way into the best schools.

At the most competitive Specialized High Schools -- Stuyvesant and Bronx Science -- Many educational experts have long decried this admissions method and some good ideas have been proposed to change it. I support legislation on the state level to change the admissions criteria for the Specialized High Schools to include grade point averages and other factors, such as interviews, personal statements, and portfolios, as well as an entrance exam. Their model is, in fact, similar to the same broad admissions process used by most colleges and universities in the U.S.

Another factor that ought to be considered in the admissions process is geography. Specialized High Schools should serve students from every neighborhood -- even the most economically disadvantaged.

Geographic diversity could be achieved by reserving a seat for the Valedictorian and Salutatorian, or the top five percentile, of every public middle school graduating class in the City.

While we explore legislative options to crack open admissions to the Specialized High Schools, the City should do everything possible right now to increase diversity in these important schools. The numbers are even more stark. Right now at Bronx Science, in a student body of 3,005, there are only 320 Black and Latino students, or just 11 percent. At Stuyvesant, of 3,295 students, 120 are Black and Latino, or less than 4 percent. Yet Black and Latino students make up some 69 percent of the total New York City Public High School population. Today, getting into a Specialized High School requires one thing and one thing alone: an outstanding performance on a single, grueling test.

We should consider the following steps to immediately close the disparity:

First, the City should examine the effectiveness of current support programs like the Specialized High School Institute and the summer Discovery program, which are directed at low-income students who want to prepare for entrance into the Specialized High Schools.

Secondly, the Specialized High School Test should be analyzed by an objective third party to see if the exam shows any signs of predictive bias.

Third, the City needs to boost math education among minority students and do it as early as third grade, rather than playing catch up in middle school when performance gaps have already widened.

Fourth, the City should market the Specialized High Schools in communities of color to ensure that more students and their parents know about the great opportunities these schools present.

Finally, we should expand the number of Specialized High Schools by creating new ones like the Math, Science, and Engineering School at City College of New York. Entrance to the New York City Specialized High Schools should be dependent on a well-rounded assessment of a student's knowledge and skills, rather than on the ability to perform well on a single test. The exam as it is encourages the widespread "teaching to the test" that so many educational experts deplore.

Any other comments on resources and/or equity?

Nearly one-quarter of households in New York City lack a computer, highlighting a digital divide that threatens to leave many young people without the technology skills necessary to succeed after high school. Black and Hispanic households are especially likely to have no computer (41 percent and 29 percent respectively), as are households in the Bronx (37 percent). Additionally, 60 percent of households without broadband Internet have annual incomes lower than \$30,000, and 73 percent are headed by someone who did not attend college. To address these disparities and improve students' ability to use technology, I issued a report recommending expansion of computer ownership, broadband adoption, and technology training for students and their families. I recommend:

- 1) Expanding the CFY (formerly Computers for Youth) program to all New York City public school sixth graders at schools where at least 75% of students receive free or reduced price lunch. CFY participating families are provided a refurbished home computer that is pre-loaded with educational software as well as the training to use it.
- 2) Putting a MOUSE Squad in every New York City public middle and high school. MOUSE provides students with critical 21st century skills and trains them to handle technological repairs, computer troubleshooting, help desk operations, and customer service. This would provide savings of \$15.1 million annually in foregone tech repair costs.
- 3) Giving free computers to low-income New York City public school graduates who are college-bound.
- 4) Requiring businesses receiving City tech grants to donate used computers to New York City individuals with disabilities, at-risk students, and those who are economically disadvantaged via the National Cristina Foundation.
- 5) Promoting digital literacy training through the NYC.gov website and at government offices.

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. 	X	

Do you have any other proposals to address overcrowding?

As Comptroller I have created creative ways to fund capital projects through lean times. My Capital Acceleration plan, Green Apple Bonds and leveraging of the pension funds have been great plans to get capital projects started. More of those smart approaches will be needed to ensure we have enough space for our students.

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?		
I would require the agency to explain why the project could not be completed with City employees before I would approve a contract for outsourced work.		

<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?		
I would place companies that steal funds or are corrupt on a do not hire list, banning them from being awarded any City contract.		
<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? 	X	

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

Charter schools are being given the best facilities and resources inside of public schools, which put the existing public school at a severe disadvantage. We need to ensure that public schools are given adequate resources to succeed.

Any other comments on privatization?

The City has become much too dependent on consultants that wind up costing the City in the end. I have uncovered unsavory practices with CityTime and the 911 call center and a host of examples of irresponsible contracting. Throughout my tenure as Comptroller I have called for the insourcing of contracts.

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? 		X
<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? 	X	

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

It is essential that students grown up capable of functioning and thriving in a digital world. However, e-learning is no substitute for a present teacher.

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?

As Comptroller, I made my office into one of the most transparent City agencies, garnering national recognition, and arranging for the broadcasting of pension board meetings. My office has created a suite of tools on-line where anyone can track City spending. I would expand these initiatives City-wide.

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?

The DOE has been a disaster at getting Medicaid reimbursements from the federal government. We estimate that they have left \$150 million on the table. Much of that money is dedicated for students with special needs. I would ensure that the DOE gets all of the federal money for which it is entitled.

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?

As mentioned above - by claiming our reimbursements we can ensure that students with disabilities receive their services.

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

We need to make sure that the people that identify students for special education have the cultural competency to make those determinations.

Other suggestions to improve opportunities for students with disabilities?

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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?

We need to re-examine the school justice system. The culture of suspensions has grown out of control and only sets students that need the most help, further back. We need to look at innovative ways to change the disciplinary climate that will teach students how to be accountable for their actions in a constructive way.

My office released a report recently, "The Suspension Spike: Changing the Discipline Culture in NYC's Middle Schools," which offers a blueprint for replacing the DOE's failed zero-tolerance policy with restorative justice practices that help middle-school students stay in school and remain on the path to college and career readiness.

This report demonstrates the sad reality that the stop-and-frisk atmosphere, which presumes that men of

color are guilty until proven innocent, begins as early as age 11. Children ages 11 to 14 are still learning how to manage their own feelings and behavior. The DOE's policy of removing them from their classrooms for even small infractions teaches them nothing and may in fact worsen their conduct. Researchers have found that such suspensions often lead to higher dropout rates and other bad outcomes. We need to stand by our kids and give them the guidance they need, not make them feel like criminals.

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?

That practice is unacceptable and is damaging for the student. This is another instance where an over-emphasis on numbers is driving learning as opposed to common sense.

Open-ended questions

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

While a Council Member, I served as a member of the Committee on Education, where I had the opportunity to question and make recommendations to top Department of Education officials. I also sponsored and help pass major legislation improving the lives of students, including a law that I introduced that created a one minute idling period adjacent to schools to prevent students, parents, school staff and others from breathing noxious fumes.

As Comptroller I have released a series of reports that detail plans for education in our City. The first of these, [Beyond High School](#), makes the case for massive investments in education and views education as an economic development strategy. Additionally, my reports [No More Rubber Stamp](#), [The Power of Guidance](#), and [Early Childhood Education](#) demonstrate a commitment to reforming our education system.

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 discussed, as a Council Member, one of the bills that I introduced, which became law, limits idling near schools to one minute. I have also been a cosponsor of a bill addressing bullying in the schools. As a Council Member, I also made sure to address the equipment and other needs of all of the schools in my district, including making sure they had the latest technology. As Comptroller, I have continued to advocate vigorously for reshaping our public schools so that all the children are equipped to graduate from college after leaving our public schools.

What would be your top educational priorities if elected mayor?

My top educational priority would be to ensure that students who graduate from our public schools have the skills necessary to go to college and graduate. Increasingly, a college degree is needed to get a good paying entry level job. The education that our schools should be able to help its graduates obtain a good paying job.

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

I would be much more responsive to the community's input than the current Mayor. My reports above articulate the ways in which I would change our educational system.

Anything else you would like to share?

The most promising strategy for achieving long-term fiscal balance, economic prosperity, and a high quality of urban life in New York City is one that focuses on elevating the educational attainment of its population or, in economists' language, by investing in human capital. We need to evaluate education from top to bottom to ensure that it serves student's and parent's needs.

	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.