



### Candidate Survey for Public Advocate Office

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### Governance

Many New York City parents feel disenfranchised by the current system of mayoral control over public education and that there are few if any checks and balances. Though the Public Advocate may not have a direct influence on whether mayoral control will be changed or renewed in 2015, it is important to know what position he or she will take in the debate.

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"> <li>• A directly elected Board of Education</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reconstituted Board of Education with a majority not appointed by the Mayor</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Education Councils (CECs) selecting parent representatives to the Board of Education</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Education members with set terms, who cannot be fired at will</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation of an independent committee to nominate potential Board of Education members, from which the mayor will select the actual members</li> </ul>	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"> <li>• Expanding the powers of CECs, including giving them approval over school closings and co-locations</li> </ul>		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorizing municipal control; i.e., the City Council with the power to legislate on educational policy, as it does with other city agencies</li> </ul>		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing School Leadership Teams (SLTs) to regain the power to develop school based budgets</li> </ul>		X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconstituting school based committees or SLTs to select principals</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restoring the district structure, with a superintendent who supervises principals and provides access for parents with issues and problems</li> </ul>	X	

If you are elected public advocate, how will you fight for a stronger parental voice, particularly if the new mayor continues the Bloomberg administration’s agenda?

The first step is to ensure that parent coordinators remain at all schools. Parent coordinators are the first line of contact for parents who have been shut out of their child’s education. They serve a critical role and must remain in each and every school in New York City. The second step as public advocate would be to mobilize parents to fight to make sure their voices are heard. Parents have been ignored by our department of education for too long, and simply by having an advocate in city government who listens to their voices and acts on their concerns, we will make a great deal of progress in getting parent voices back into the schools.

**If you are elected public advocate, do you have any ideas or initiatives to put forward to ensure checks and balances in the running of our public schools?**

The “check” is the change in the law from the particular type of Mayoral Control that we have now, where there is a rubber stamp board. However, in the interim, the PA’s office can help to insert more aggressively the voices of parents. My research component, the “Advocate Think Tank” (adding 50 staff to reinforce the research/ unit, as well as other units in the office) will also be able to put out studies and policy papers that will give voice to the needs of parents when ignored. (Think Tank white paper attached as a second attachment).

Issues like co-location of charter schools and the proliferation of charter schools WITHOUT any accountability is a school issue we will focus on. The almighty focus on single-measure testing is a national conversation, but one that we have to examine in NYC aggressively. The minimization of teachers and teaching profession is a travesty. The lack of focus on special needs children (gifted and talented included!!) is a singular issue of concern. The “lost in the shuffle” aspect of middle schools in NYC is also of grave concern. The reinvention of the NYC high school – magnet schools, alternative high schools, vocational and technical schools AND our zoned high schools need to be re-examined.

### Testing

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

Would you support:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate the use of test scores as the primary basis for making promotional decisions</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate or minimizing test scores as the primary criteria to judge schools (currently, school progress report grades are derived about 85% from test scores)</li> </ul>	X	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate school progress reports altogether</li> </ul>		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crafting a teacher evaluation system that depends as little as possible on standardized test scores</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging more NYC high schools to join the portfolio/alternative assessment consortium rather than basing graduation on the results of Regents exams</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a non-punitive process by which NYC parents can choose to have their children opt-out of the standardized testing</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fighting against the test score based accountability even if the new mayor continues it</li> </ul>	X	

If you answered yes to the last question above, how would you help ensure our children, teachers and administrators are not judged based on test scores?

Children, teachers and administrators should never be judged solely on test scores. Test scores reflect only a small fraction of what goes on in a school or classroom, if that. As public advocate, I would fight to ensure that children, teachers and administrators are evaluated holistically. Evaluations should not only be based on performance on math and English test scores, but on student progress. In addition, learning in our schools should encompass other subject areas, including social studies and the arts. A fair and comprehensive evaluation of all stakeholders in schools would include teacher observations, overall improvement of student performance (measured not only by standardized testing but by student attendance, participation, and performance on teacher-designed assignments and assessments) and improvement on standardized testing.

As public advocate, what other ideas/initiatives if any would you put forward on the issue of testing?

Testing is over-used in our public school system. Teachers and administrators are so afraid that their students will not demonstrate the required amount of progress on annual testing that they spend a disproportionate amount of class time teaching material that will be tested and giving practice tests. This is no way for our school system to be run, and no way to prepare our children for the demands of higher education and careers. While objective measures are required to track student progress and keep the New York City Department of Education in compliance with federal education policy, I would recommend initiatives that address the subject areas that have fallen out of focus. In order to ensure that our students remain well-rounded, they and their teachers should also be evaluated on learning of the arts and humanities. I would not recommend standardized testing on these subjects per se, but a more holistic and comprehensive system of evaluation to ensure that these subjects that are necessary for our children to remain competitive and critical thinkers do not fall by the wayside in favor of math and English language subjects.

## 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. As public advocate, what would your position be on the following issues?

More specifically would you support:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That school budgets remain stable and/or increase in the future</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that the city complies with its state mandated plan to reduce class size in all grades</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that the city complies with the state law which calls for robust public input, including borough hearings, into the city's class size reduction plan</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-evaluate "fair student funding" to discern whether it provides real equity or incentives to principals choose between increasing class size and discarding their experienced teachers?</li> </ul>	X	

As public advocate, what ideas/initiatives if any would you put forward on issues of class size and funding?

As public advocate, I will create the Public Advocate Think Tank, which will employ our city's brightest and most capable graduate and doctoral student researchers to investigate and solve the city's most pressing problems. We will dedicate a portion of this think tank to local education issues. These researchers will investigate the needs of every school in every neighborhood of New York to ensure that schools that currently have the largest class sizes receive the most amount of funding in order to remedy the class size issue.

Any ideas/initiatives you might offer as Public Advocate on how to help ensure that students are provided with a well-rounded education, including art, music, science, and physical education?

As the daughter of two NYC public school teachers, and having graduated from a NYC public high school, I know all too well the importance of a well-rounded education. These "other" pieces of the curriculum are in fact, vital to keying into the multiple intelligences of every child. The public advocate can use the bully pulpit to keep the value of these curriculum on the front burner. Again, the PA Think Tank will help in this capacity.

Our schools have become increasingly segregated over time. As Public Advocate, what ideas/ initiatives would you offer to address the goal of increasing diversity in NYC public schools?

As long as school assignments are determined by zip codes, we will continue to see economic and racial segregation in our schools. Housing segregation and school segregation go hand-in-hand. In order to target school segregation, housing segregation must be dealt with. I would fight for increased access to housing in typically wealthier neighborhoods of New York City for middle and lower-income New Yorkers, which would enable the children of these families to attend traditionally wealthier schools. In addition, working toward and increase in parental involvement in schools that currently serve lower-

income students and working toward overall improvements in these schools will make these schools more appealing to all families, and encourage families to move to and invest in these neighborhoods and their schools.

Any other comments on how you as Public Advocate might work to improve resources and/or equity in our public schools?

Equity is not “equal” ... equity is giving all children and chance to start at the same spot. Early childhood education is an answer to much that separates poor performing children in schools. An early focus (0-4) can “right” many of the wrongs that our system engages some children in – specifically children of color and poorer children. But all children – and ALL their special needs – must be re-examined.

### 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.

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

As public advocate, what ideas/initiatives would you put forward to address school overcrowding?

Again, our think tank would do the research to provide real data for every neighborhood in the city to

determine each school’s needs, current capacity and enrollment. A full study must be done in order to determine the most effective way to address school overcrowding problems. Our studies will also allow us to plan for the future of our city’s neighborhoods. Traditionally underserved and less-populated areas of New York are now seeing unprecedented increases in populations. The city will need to increase its support of these communities in order for them to have the resources to support an expanding population.

## Privatization

DOE is spending more than \$4 billion this year on private contracts, which represents the fastest growing part of its budget. The budget for charter schools alone is approaching \$1 billion.

Would you support:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing the spending on privatization, outsourcing, contracts and consultants</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevent the awarding of contracts to companies that have been shown to have stolen funds or are suspected of corruption</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Halting the continued expansion of charter schools</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ceasing the practice of co-locating charter schools in existing DOE facilities</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support requiring that co-located charter schools pay for the services and space that they currently receive from the DOE for free</li> </ul>	X	

As public advocate, what ideas/initiatives if any would you put forward on the issues of privatization and contracts?

The Public Advocate can force an examination of privatization of contracts, which tend to remove the accountability mechanisms already in place for public employees and contracts. I am all too intimately aware of the devastating affect this practice has had on the diminishment of the pedagogical expertise coming out the “central” over the last 12 years of Mayoral Control.

As public advocate, what ideas/initiatives would you propose to ameliorate the divide and inequities between charter schools and district public schools?

The only way to ameliorate the divide and inequities between charters and public schools is to make district public schools as desirable and high-performing as our city’s best charter schools. No child should be shut out of a high-level education because of a lack of a “winning” lottery ticket or because that child’s zip code says he must attend a low-performing schools. All of our public schools, which are the only guaranteed schools for our city’s children, must rise to meet the rigorous level of education that our city’s top-performing charter schools demonstrate. While most charter schools do not perform any better than our city’s public schools, some do. All of our children deserve an excellent education. Charter schools were originally conceived to be think tanks and incubators of initiatives to benefit public schools. It is time that our city re-invest in that originally conception of charter schools. If these schools are going to be co-located in our city’s public schools and are going to be supported by our city’s tax dollars, then the methods and initiatives employed by the most successful charter schools should be shared with our city’s public schools. The Public Advocate Think Tank can work with administrators of both charters and public schools to assist in that collaboration.

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### 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 oppose school closings because they severely disrupt children’s education and merely displace the neediest students elsewhere. There is also discontent with the DOE’s policy that all new schools are 400 students or less; which leads to an inefficient use of resources and space, and makes it difficult to give students advanced coursework and a full range of extra-curricular activities. The rapid expansion of online learning has also been a priority of this administration, delivering course content and instruction through computers and software.

Would you support:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Focusing on improving existing schools rather than continuing the Bloomberg policy of closing schools and forming new ones</li></ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Relax the requirement that all new schools be of a small size</li></ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continue to expand online learning as the alternative to instruction and personal contact from teachers</li></ul>		X

If you answered yes to any of the above, how would you counter-balance a Mayor with a different agenda?

The small school movement in NYC had no correlation to better schooling. The school closure movement in NYC had NO correlation to better schooling in NYC. A PA who actually knows something about schools pedagogically – and has the Think Tank behind her – can facilitate this conversation in an aggressive way by using the research and the data to punctuate the conversation with real teeth.
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As public advocate, what other ideas/initiatives would you offer, if any, in relation to school closures/new schools/online learning?

The process has to be opened up to the public in a fully transparent way. Parents and teachers and community activists have to be involved in the process of vetting and analyzing criteria for data for potential closures. As PA, I will aggressively and expertly insert myself and all the true stakeholders into this process.
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### Transparency

The Public Advocate could take a strong role in helping to enhance transparency at the DOE. Many experts say the DOE’s budget has become even less transparent under mayoral control, making it difficult

to discern how public funds are spent. Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests are rarely responded to in a timely fashion and the DOE refuses to disclose much important data.

Which of the following measures to increase overall transparency would you support? Please check all that apply.	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require that DOE provide itemized, detailed breakdowns of education budget similar to other city agencies</li> </ul>	x	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond to FOILs in a timely and complete fashion</li> </ul>	x	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 <a href="http://www.isbe.state.il.us/foia/default.htm">http://www.isbe.state.il.us/foia/default.htm</a>]</li> </ul>	x	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require more accurate reporting of class size and overcrowding</li> </ul>	x	

What ideas/initiatives as public advocate would your office pursue to increase transparency?

Work closely with the Comptroller's office to feed auditing ideas so that we can have aggressive auditing of the "ways and means" of the Department of Education. I will also use my Think Tank to give weight to issues that are often ignored by the system, like special education and gifted education, and better high schools (magnet, vocational AND alternative high schools. There are also, as we know, a dearth of pre-K spot as well as G&T spot for 4 year olds. These issues need to be addressed, and addressed aggressively.

### 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 placement in extremely large classes or with teachers 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 to meet the needs of students with disabilities or the rest of the students in the class.

Would you consider:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Releasing regular reports, showing how many students have IEPs that are out of compliance?</li> </ul>	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission a study 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.</li> </ul>	X	



As public advocate, what other ideas or initiatives, if any, would you put forward in the area of special education reform?

Our think tank will be able to do the research to address the needs of schools and families as they relate to students with disabilities. Our research can include conducting interviews with faculty members of schools serving students with IEPs to gage the preparedness of teachers to meet their needs. Where the need exists, we will advocate for increased training and professional development to ensure that all teachers are prepared to work with students with disabilities in a general education setting. In addition, we would work to ensure that school resources are increased, not decreased, in order to meet the demands of classes that include students with a variety of types and severities of disabilities. Finally, my office will fight for the rights of parents, teachers and school administrators to have a say when they feel a child is not appropriate for the general education environment. While we should all strive for students with disabilities to be included in the general education environment whenever possible, there will always be students who will learn best in self-contained or specialized schools. All students have the right to a free and appropriate education, and it is up to their parents, teachers and related service professionals to make recommendations for that placement, not City Hall.

### 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.

Do you support:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulling NYC student data out of the inBloom cloud as soon as possible?</li> </ul>	x	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the DOE should not share personally identifiable student data with <i>any third party</i> without parental notification and consent?</li> </ul>	x	

As public advocate, are there any other ideas or initiatives you will propose in the area of protecting student privacy?

The interests of PARENTS as the chief stakeholder need to be addressed in this area. As a parent, I will take their ideas and concerns and SOLUTIONS about privacy problems into the policy and political fray and represent them aggressively.

### *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. As public advocate, what ideas/initiatives would you put forward, if any, to help ensure that children with minor behavioral issues are not suspended or otherwise forced into the school to prison pipeline?

Cops should not be in schools. This causes an instant and often undue ratcheting up of the problem that put children AND teachers in a web of law enforcement when these issues can be dealt with in-house suspension other school-based fixes.

## Open-ended questions

In the event your education platform as Public Advocate differs significantly from that of the new mayor, how will you fight for what you believe?

I am the daughter of two NYC public school teachers. Two of my sisters are the same. I have a PhD in education policy, and teach NYC politics of schools at Columbia and NYU. I have a three year old. I am the educator in this race, the parent. What I am not, is a politician. I will fight for the rights of our children in the classroom in an apolitical way: as a parent, as an expert educator, as a fighter. The whole point of the PA is to be NOT beholden to anyone. Coming from outside the political realm, and as the lone educator, I am uniquely qualified to do just that – actually lead with expertise and knowledge and not with political baggage.

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

I am product of the NYC schools, having graduated from Curtis HS on Staten Island. I have a doctorate in education policy from NYU. My research was – and is – on the policy agenda of the NYC public schools. I have taught a generation of teachers and educators and policymaker sand principals for the last decade at both NYU School of Education and Teachers College. My parents were both career NYC public school teachers, as are my siblings. I am the mother of a 3-year-old daughter who is about to enter the schools. I am highly invested in the NYC public schools, not just from an expertise and teaching perspective, but from an experiential and a “DNA” level. Watch me upset expectations on engaging the future of the system - and the next Mayor – on this topic. Watch me stand in the gap – as I have my whole career – for the whole life of the child, in and out of the classroom.

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?

I am proud to have gotten the endorsement of the School Employees Union, Local 372. I stand for the professionalization and the respect for our educators as they do their work for our children. I have been the LONE voice of parental engagement in this race relative to the schools. I have stood with the Parent Coordinators as they fight for more “teeth” for parental voices. I am someone’s mother. I have had enough of us being excised from power from our own children’s lives.

What would be your top educational priorities if elected public advocate?

- (1) overturn the state law on Mayoral Control
- (2) make the process of charter school implementation more accountable and transparent
- (3) stop co-location of charter schools

- (4) put a moratorium on school closures
- (5) expand the curricular focus to include the arts, physical education and music, among other interdisciplinary areas
- (6) have the city focus on the “whole life of the child” whereby the city’s resources – in and out of the classroom – for children are put together in full, connected tapestry of services.
- (7) Raise an awareness of children with special needs, which includes the full spectrum of special education as well as Gifted and Talented. We must be better prepared to serve all children.

Anything else you would like to share?

Please see the subset of attachments that outline some of the work I have done thus far on this campaign to flesh out what I think about the priorities of the PA and education.

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