

# COMMUNITY



# PLAN

# John Liu Community Education Reform Plan

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**“As a public school graduate and parent, I know that there is nothing more important to our communities than the quality of our schools.**

**“Overcrowding, lack of adequate resources and limited opportunities for parental input has tarnished the jewels of our communities – our public schools.**

**“We need to reform our educational system to give our kids the tools they need to be college and career ready.”**

**– John Liu, candidate for State Senate, S.D. 11**

# Common Sense Common Core Reforms

The increasing prevalence of high-stakes testing is taking its toll on parents, students, and educators without any reliable proof that such an approach yields better educational outcomes.

This past session, the Legislature took the necessary action of delaying the implementation of the dysfunctional Common Core. To ensure the new system is fair, unbiased, grade level appropriate and properly administered, it should take the next step to address the concerns of parents and educators by:

- Reducing the over-reliance on high-stakes standardized testing to encourage the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills without adhering to a solely data-driven approach to educational policy planning that will produce a more balanced learning environment in which testing is conducted as a diagnostic exercise for information and planning, not punishment and sanctions;
- Requiring disclosure of test questions and answers so parents, educators and students can review the questions and better understand the reason behind the test scores;
- Requiring the Commissioner of the State Education Department to issue an annual report on:

- The effectiveness of the testing system in enhancing student performance;
  - The grade level fairness of the tests;
  - The correlation between test scores and grade point average (GPA);
  - Any gender, race, ethnic or regional factors in the disparity between student performance; and
  - A review of the vendor as a testing agency
- Establishing an appeals process for parents who believe their child received an inaccurate score;
  - Developing reasonable accommodations for English language learners and students with disabilities;
  - Requiring the State Education Department to survey school administrators and teachers on Common Core testing; and
  - Allowing parents of students to request that personally identifiable information and/or biometric records not be disclosed to certain third parties, except in cases where it's required by law, court order, subpoena, state or federal audits or for health or safety emergencies.

# Reduce Class Sizes & Close Down Trailer Learning

We must reduce class sizes because smaller class sizes allow for greater learning and overcrowded schools lead to under-performing children. Size matters when it comes to schools. And bigger isn't better.

To create a more intensive and attentive learning environment, we must:

- Prioritize capital planning based on population analysis so that areas with schools that have seen the fastest increase in population are first in line for capital expenditures;
- Establish a three-year sunset for the use of school trailers; and
  - During the three-year sunset phase, the DOE would be required to develop a five-year capital construction plan and new zoning lines that would allow each school district to house students without the use of trailers
- Reform school planning through a more data-driven methodology and allow for greater community input to meet the concerns of the local community by:

- Mandating the use of birth-rate data and population projections from the City Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene and City Planning when drawing school districts and zoning lines and when constructing the DOE's five-year capital plan
  
- In conjunction with the use of that data, the DOE would be required to:
  - Make those population numbers public;
  
  - Explain how the city's plans would meet the demand for seats;
  
  - Make all comments it receives in response to the school siting plans and five-year capital plan public; and
  
  - Respond to those comments in a publicly accessible manner
  
- Give local Community Boards veto power over School Construction siting in their area.

## Reform Mayoral Control

We need school governance reforms that take into account the needs of parents, children and educators to improve education quality and outcomes. For mayoral control to achieve top-level accountability and meet the needs of our communities, we need reforms that allow for:

- Greater input and notification for parents and educators in policy planning;
- Increased opportunities for Community Education Councils to publicly review and influence proposals before they are made; and
- Reform the structure of the Panel for Education Policy by adding three additional appointments that would allow for greater community input, accountability, and independence:
  - 8 appointments by the Mayor, with all appointments having to live in New York City and two must be public school parents (same as current PEP)
  - 5 appointments by the Borough Presidents – one public school parent member appointed by each of the five borough presidents from within their respective boroughs (same as current PEP)



- 3 non-voting members, which would include two student advisory members selected by the Chancellor's High School Advisory Council, and the Chancellor as a non-voting ex-officio member (same as current PEP)
  
- Empower greater accountability to our local communities by adding the appointment of three representatives to be made by the City Council (new addition to PEP)
  - 1) A retired educator nominated by mutual consent of the United Federation of Teachers, the Council of School Administrators and Supervisors, and DC37;
  
  - 2) A parent from the Community Education Councils; and
  
  - 3) A City University of New York representative
  
- While PEP members would continue to serve at the pleasure of the official who appointed them, for greater independence and transparency, before a member could be dismissed, a formal written statement of dismissal would have to be submitted at a public hearing by the official and such dismissal could be overturned by a 2/3rds majority of the remaining PEP members (new reform to PEP)