

NO MORE RUBBER STAMP.

Reforming
New York City's
Panel for
Educational
Policy



NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER
JOHN C. LIU

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NO MORE RUBBER STAMP:

Reforming New York City's Panel for Educational Policy

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Comptroller's Office

John C. Liu

Comptroller

First Deputy Comptroller

Ricardo Morales

**Deputy Comptroller for
Public Affairs**

Ari Hoffnung

Chief Economist

Frank Braconi

**Special Assistant for Public
Affairs**

Jacqueline S. Gold

Director of Policy

Carolyn Karo

Rachel Bardin

Doug Giuliano

Tomas Hunt

Manny Kwan

Andrew McWilliam

Susan Scheer

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About the New York City Comptroller's Office

The New York City Comptroller, an independently elected official, is the Chief Financial Officer of the City of New York. The mission of the office is to ensure the financial health of New York City by advising the Mayor, the City Council, and the public of the City's financial condition. The Comptroller also makes recommendations on City programs and operations, fiscal policies, and financial transactions. In addition, the Comptroller manages the assets of the five New York City Pension Funds, performs budgetary analysis, keeps the City's accounts, audits City agencies, manages the City's debt issuance, and registers proposed contracts. His office employs a workforce of more than 700 professional staff members. These employees include accountants, attorneys, computer analysts, economists, engineers, budget, financial and investment analysts, claim specialists, and researchers, in addition to clerical and administrative support staff.

About Beyond High School NYC

Beyond High School NYC is a major initiative launched by Comptroller John C. Liu to increase the proportion of New Yorkers with higher education to 60 percent by the year 2025 through strategic investments in public education.

Introduction

A Very Brief History of School Governance in New York City

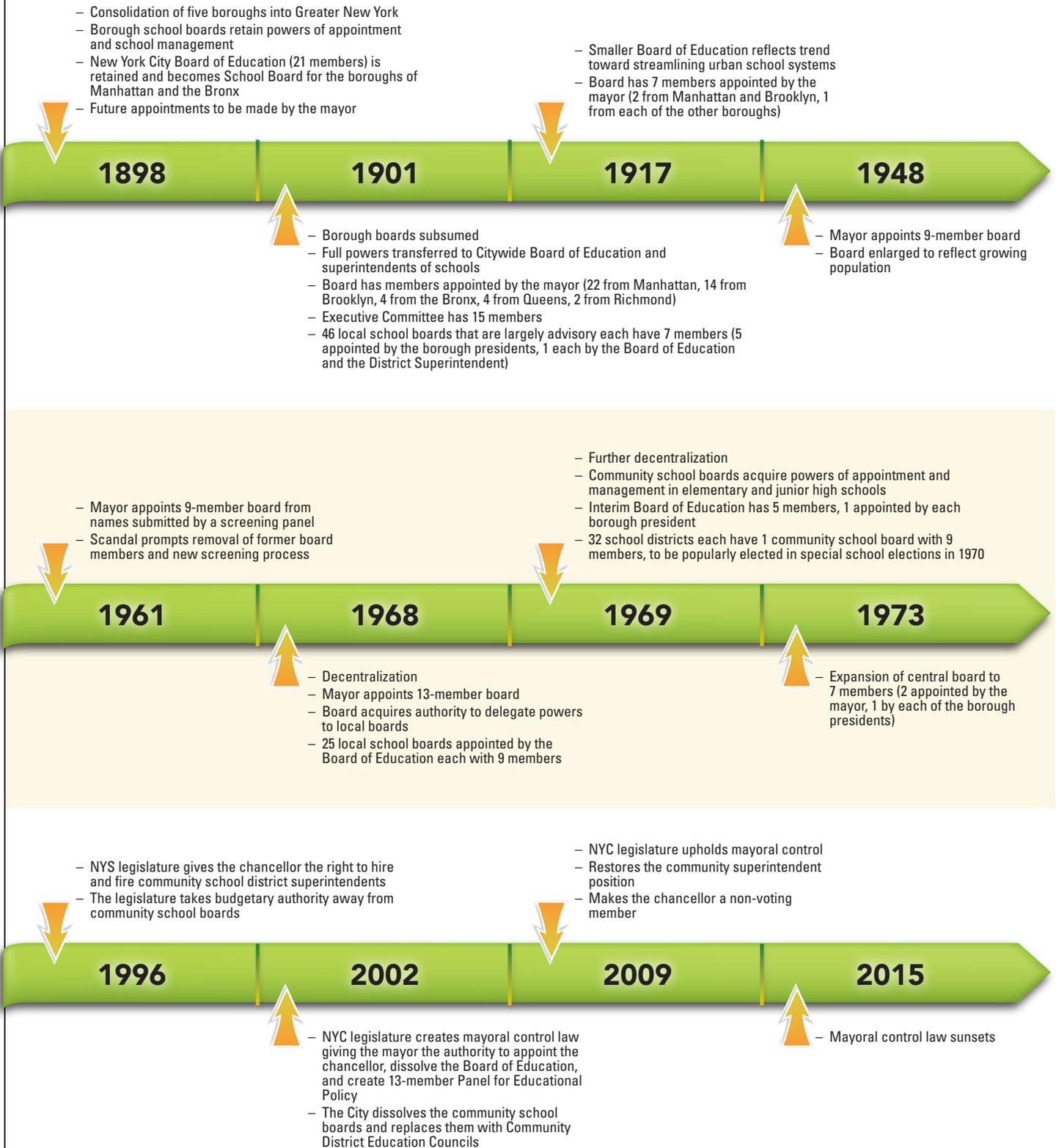
Many people believe that mayoral control of the New York City school system is a deviation from the norm. In fact, it is not. Throughout most of the City's history, the mayor has appointed the majority or all of the central Board of Education. In the 1960s, the civil rights movement inspired high-profile mobilization for greater community control over City schools, which opened the door for several "local control" pilot programs in select New York City neighborhoods. In 1961, in response to public outcry over a pay-to-play scandal at the central offices of the Board of Education, the state legislature dissolved the board and required that Mayor Robert Wagner appoint a nine-member board from a pool of candidates nominated by a screening committee. The disarray at the central level, combined with significant implementation problems with local control pilot programs, led to high-profile civil unrest. Ultimately, this gave way to the 1969 decentralization law that created an independent central Board of Education which oversaw thirty-two mostly autonomous community school districts. The 30-plus year period that followed was actually the deviation from New York City's traditional school governance structure.¹

The shift back occurred on June 12, 2002, when New York State Governor George Pataki signed a law transferring control of the New York City public school system to newly-elected Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The return to mayoral control unfolded in the context of public outcry over educational stagnation, local corruption and patronage, and the emergence of a series of positive national stories of successful mayoral control governance models in American cities. Seven years later, in 2009, the New York State legislature reaffirmed mayoral control, with few changes.

¹ Ravitch, D., "A History of Public School Governance in New York City," in *When Mayors Take Charge*, ed. Joseph P. Viteritti, Brookings Institute Press, 2009.



Timeline of School Governance in New York City



Source: The Encyclopedia of New York City, 2nd Edition



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Ten years into this new school governance structure, the promise of mayoral control—interagency collaboration, improved efficiency, organizational alignment, and top level accountability—remains elusive.² Moreover, an increasing grassroots movement has risen in opposition to mayoral control in its current form.³ The 2002 and 2009 school governance laws effectively transferred power up from the district level and concentrated it at the top of the administration. While the administration has absorbed all the power, it has also left accountability at the school level, thus giving principals more authority, while at the same time putting more pressure on them to improve school performance or risk losing their jobs.⁴ The system functions a lot like a franchise corporation where the school is the managerial unit and, in exchange for a degree of autonomy, the managerial unit is completely accountable for its own success or failure. “Failure” under this system has resulted in nearly 140 school closings since 2003.⁵

However, mayoral control is a governance arrangement; it does not inherently dictate a prescribed set of principles and reforms.⁶ The current shift of accountability to the schools, combined with a concentration of power at the chancellor level and the implementation of market-based reforms, reflect a very specific educational and management philosophy. Looking ahead to the sunset of the law on June 30, 2015, we consider what a different school governance system would look like.

Collaboration is Key

According to analyses of international performance data from the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the McKinsey Group, the top performing countries in terms of public school educational achievement focus on capacity building and collaborative practice as the primary drivers of change, while explicitly downplaying high-stakes accountability.⁷ Additionally, studies in the United States show that “schools in communities with higher levels of...civic engagement, all other things being equal, [are] best able to develop the essential supports necessary for school improvement and make effective use of those supports.”⁸ They include the ability to build professional capacity within a school community and to effectively engage families and the broader community in school improvement efforts.⁹ The research also shows that in neighborhoods with high needs, it is not enough simply to have an active community structure, and that, “a much more powerful model of school development is needed—one that melds a comprehensive community school initiative.”¹⁰

2 See addendum beginning on page 13 for a discussion on the promise of mayoral control.

3 These broad-based coalitions such as the Parents Commission on School Governance, the Independent Coalition on Public Education, Alliance for Quality Education, the New York City Parents Union, and S.E.E.D.S., among others, have put forth new school governance proposals calling for more democracy. Additionally, several Albany lawmakers have introduced legislation to curb or end mayoral control.

4 In order to gain this authority and become empowerment schools, principals were required to sign contracts with the New York City Department of Education requiring them to improve academic achievement in their schools. (See: <http://tinyurl.com/9kn6a8t>).

5 The New York City Working Group on School Transformation, “The Way Forward: From Sanctions to Supports,” with support from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, April 2012.

6 Henig, J., “Mayoral Control: What We Can and Cannot Learn from Other Cities,” in *When Mayors Take Charge*, ed. Joseph P. Viteritti, Brookings Institute Press, 2009.

7 Leana, C., “The Missing Link in School Reform,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Fall 2011.

8 Bryk, A. and Schneider, B., *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*, as discussed in Warren, M., and Mapp, K., *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

9 Bryk, A., et al., *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*, as discussed in Warren, M., and Mapp, K., *Ibid.*

10 *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform*, Oxford University Press, 2011.



The first step to make mayoral control more collaborative, open, transparent, and inclusive is to reform the Panel for Educational Policy. While considerable structural changes need to be implemented at the community level, the focus of this report is on the Central Board and the selection of the chancellor.

The Current Panel for Educational Policy

A primary change in the 2002 school governance law was the dissolution of the seven-member Board of Education and the creation of its replacement, a thirteen-member Panel for Educational Policy (PEP).¹¹

PEP Today

MEMBER COMPOSITION

- **13 VOTING MEMBERS**
 - 1 public school parent member appointed by each of the five borough presidents from within their respective boroughs
 - 8 members appointed by the mayor—all must live in New York City and two must be public school parents
- **3 NON-VOTING MEMBERS**
 - 2 student advisory members selected by the Chancellor's High School Advisory Council
 - The chancellor is a non-voting ex-officio PEP member
- **ALL MEMBERS SERVE AT THE PLEASURE OF THE OFFICIAL WHO APPOINTS THEM**

CHAIR SELECTION

- The voting members select the chair

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Advise the chancellor on matters of policy
- Approve standards, policies, objectives, and regulations proposed by the chancellor
- Review and approve all labor union collective bargaining agreements
- Serve as the appeal board for statutorily-identified actions of the chancellor
- Adopt an estimate of the total sum of money necessary for school operations
- Review monthly performance reports submitted by community district educational councils
- Consider modifying community district boundaries
- Review and approve all contracts over \$1 million
- Review and approve all contracts not part of the standard procurement process
- Review and approve the capital plan
- Review and approve all school closures or significant changes to school utilization

¹¹ N.Y.S. Education Law §2590-b (2009).

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The original appointees on the PEP were comprised of highly regarded educators and advocates including the former President of Bank Street Teachers College, Augusta Souza Kappner; the Director of the Dominican Studies Institute at the City University of New York, Ramona Hernandez; the Director Emeritus of El Museo del Barrio, Susana Torruella Leval; and 31 IDEAL founder and Staten Island UFT representative, Joan McKeever-Thomas. These members, along with other PEP members, were more than qualified to debate publicly important educational topics. It appeared, by virtue of the status and qualifications of its members, that the PEP would function as an independent body.

Any such hope, however, was lost on Monday, March 13, 2004, infamously dubbed the "Monday Night Massacre."¹² On that night, Mayor Bloomberg and Staten Island Borough President James Molinaro dismissed three PEP members for indicating that they were planning to vote against the mayor's proposal to end social promotion.¹³ When questioned about the blatantly autocratic move, the mayor's response was:

*"This is what mayoral control is all about. In the olden days, we had a board that was answerable to nobody. And the Legislature said it was just not working, and they gave the mayor control. Mayoral control means mayoral control, thank you very much. They are my representatives, and they are going to vote for things that I believe in."*¹⁴

Thus, the reality is that the PEP in its current iteration serves as a virtual "rubber stamp," approving every policy initiative the mayor or chancellor proposes. In this arrangement there is no deliberative process and no serious discussion or debate among PEP members about important decisions affecting schools and education.¹⁵

Recommendations

I. PEP Nominating Committee

In outward appearance, the recommended PEP would look the same as its current incarnation. It would continue to be comprised of thirteen members, five appointed by the borough presidents and eight by the mayor. At least seven members of the new PEP will be required to be parents who have at least one child in the public school system, and only individuals residing in the five boroughs will be eligible to serve. The parent members

¹² "Bloomberg's Finest Hour," *New York Sun*, March 17, 2004, <http://www.nysun.com/editorials/bloombergs-finest-hour/44673/>, accessed on August 15, 2012; Herszenhorn, D., "Bloomberg Wins on School Tests After Firing Foes," *New York Times*, March 16, 2004, <http://tinyurl.com/98wx3yk>, accessed on August 15, 2012; and, Phillips, A. and Walz, M., "Bloomberg Announces an End to Social Promotion in Grades 4,6," *Gotham Schools*, August 10, 2009, <http://gothamschools.org/2009/08/10/bloomberg-announces-an-end-to-social-promotion-in-grades-4-6/>, accessed on August 15, 2012.

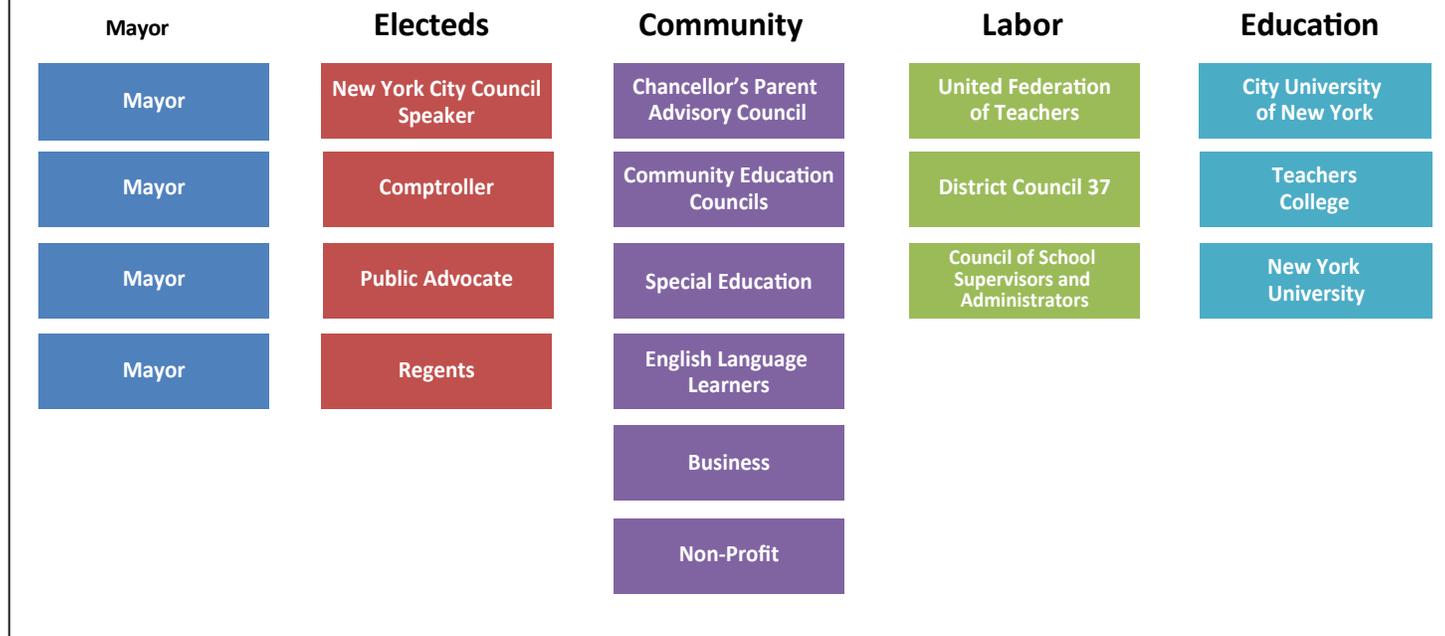
¹³ Social promotion is the practice of passing students along from grade to grade with their peers even if the students have not satisfied academic requirements or met performance standards at key grades. It is called "social" promotion because it is often carried out in the perceived interest of a student's social and psychological well-being. (See: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/social-promotion/>).

¹⁴ Herszenhorn, D., "Bloomberg Wins on School Tests After Firing Foes," *New York Times*, March 16, 2004, <http://tinyurl.com/98wx3yk>, accessed on August 15, 2012.

¹⁵ The use of the term "rubber stamp" to describe the PEP process was used by former New York State Assemblyman and the Chair of the Education Committee, Steven Sanders (D-AD 74) in 2004 following the aforementioned process by which the mayor had fired members who were against his promotion policy. The term is now ubiquitous when describing the PEP. Sanders, S., "Grade Retention Policy Demands Solid Planning & Ample Funding," *Education Update*, April 2004, http://www.educationupdate.com/archives/2004/apr04/issue/metro_grade.html, accessed on August 16, 2012.

will remain eligible for PEP service for up to two years after their child has left the school system. The critical difference in the recommended PEP is that the Mayor will select his/her appointees from a pool of nominees.

PEP Nominating Committee



The recommended PEP nominating committee would be chaired by one of the mayoral appointees and be comprised of a broad and diverse group of stakeholders with responsibility for reviewing the merits and qualifications of potential PEP nominees. The chair would ensure that deliberations are conducted respectfully, efficiently, and in adherence to specific guidelines. These guidelines would require that committee members have sensitivity to the diversity of New York City public school students in terms of race, ethnicity, income, and special needs, and ensure best efforts are made to nominate PEP members reflective of those considerations.

The selection committee will be required to hold public meetings in each borough and consider all nominees formally submitted to the committee from the general public. All potential nominees will complete a detailed questionnaire, accessible for public review, describing their qualifications for the position and their understanding of and perspective on educational issues and policies. The committee would have six weeks to nominate as few as two and no more than three individuals for each slot.

A transparent and open nomination process would help restore public debate on public education and alleviate the secrecy and paternalism endemic to the current administration. It would also provide an opportunity for the general public to learn and scrutinize the positions of prospective PEP members. The process would help create a more informed and engaged educational community, and allow all points of view to be heard and expressed in full public view.

II. The New Panel for Educational Policy

As is the case now, the chancellor would serve as ex-officio and as a non-voting member and two students would also serve as non-voting members. The Panel would elect its own chair. Also, generally, the PEP would have the same roles and responsibilities that it currently has, as described previously.

New Features

FIXED AND SECURE TERMS

- Members will begin serving staggered four-year terms¹⁶
- No term limits other than those previously discussed in relation to parent members
- Once appointed, members cannot be removed from the panel without due cause

DEDICATED STAFF SUPPORT

- For members and sub-committees
- Including special assistance and legal support

COMPENSATION

- Members provided a stipend at a rate set by the city council

SUB-COMMITTEES

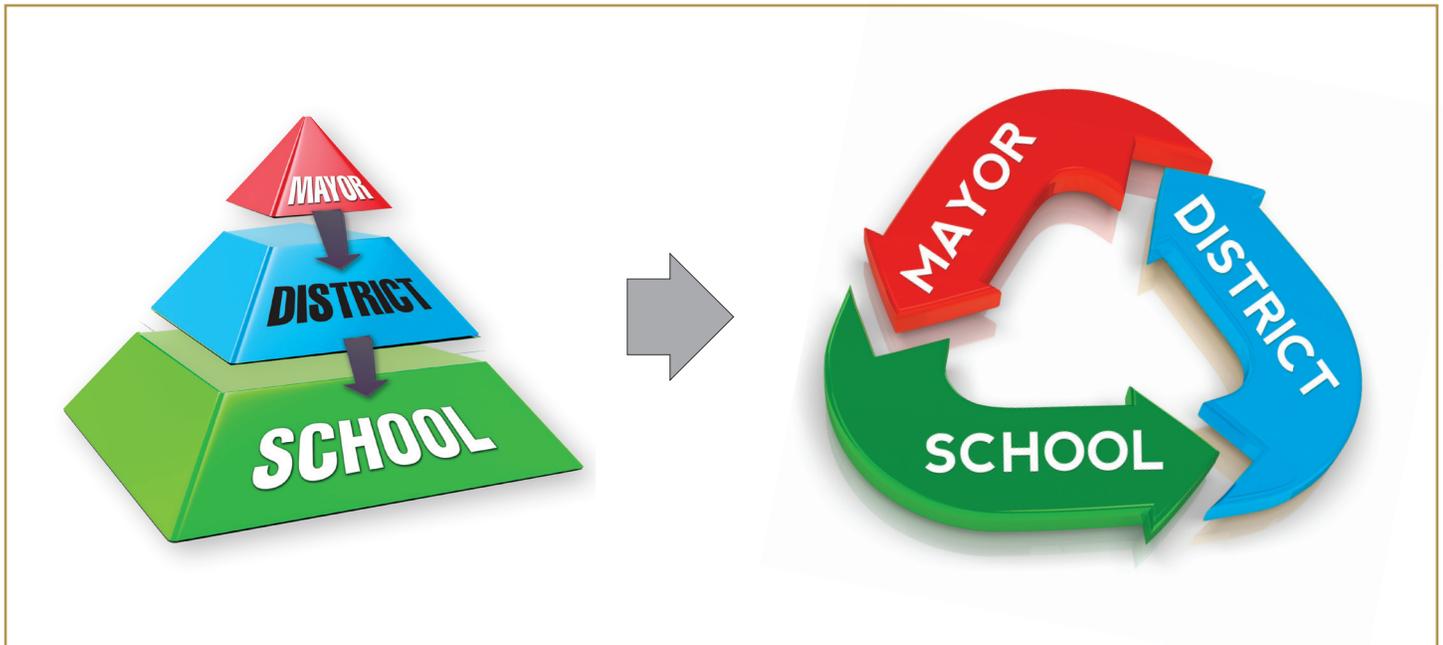
- Adequately staffed
- Subject to reporting requirements
- The Citywide parent and youth advisory committees would work collaboratively and formally with the sub-committees and in turn collaborate, share, and present their work to the communities that the individual members of advisory committee represent.¹⁷
- Sub-committees would include but not be limited to:
 - English Language Learners
 - Special Education
 - Early Childhood
 - Employment Diversity
 - Data Collection and Analysis
 - Professional Development
 - Budget and Contracts

CHANCELLOR SELECTION

- PEP required to approve or veto chancellor selection

¹⁶ This means that the first iteration of the Panel would include 6 two-year terms and 7 four-year terms.

¹⁷ In this new arrangement we have added the Citywide Council on Early Childhood.



In this arrangement, decision-making power remains at the top, but the mayor and his various proxies (including deputy mayors or others from different agencies involved in interagency collaboration), the chancellor, and the PEP will function more as a guiding coalition focusing on peer collaborative structures and capacity-building to the benefit of schools and communities.

In support of this effort, the Department of Education (DOE) might consider creating an Office of Collaborative Practices and Capacity Building that would engage in the productive use of a wide range of data and perform research for and provide support to the PEP. This office would also assist in professionalizing the Citywide parent advisory groups.

III. Chancellor Selection

Under this plan, the mayor will convene a national search for a chancellor who is required to meet educational, managerial, and personal qualifications.

Recommended Chancellor Requirements

EDUCATIONAL

- Educational leadership and the ability to motivate and inspire students, parents, staff, and policy makers
- At least ten years of successful experience as a public or private school educator
- Evidence of being a respected, highly skilled instructional leader with broad experience as an educator across roles and student populations (e.g. general education, English Language Learners, special education)
- A proven record of success in improving outcomes for all students
- Demonstrated commitment to high standards, differentiated instruction, professional and community capacity-building, data-driven decision-making; sophisticated understanding and ability to apply theories of action and effective practices for:
 - student learning, growth, and development
 - group process, communications, and organizational planning
 - formative assessments
 - evidence-driven evaluation, self-evaluation, and adjustment of instruction
 - understanding and supporting the instructional needs of English Language Learners at all stages of English acquisition, special education students, and gifted students.

MANAGERIAL

- 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
- Strong service and support orientation toward schools and school communities
- The ability to resolve conflicts, diffuse argumentative situations, and bring all constituencies together in pursuit of common goals

PERSONAL

- Evidence of high standards of ethics, honesty, and integrity in professional matters
- The ability to work well with individuals and groups
- The ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- PhD or EdD in educational leadership
- Prior experience running a large city school district

Many of the criteria in the Recommended Chancellor Requirements on page 9 come from Chancellor Regulation C-37, which outlines selection eligibility of community school district superintendents.¹⁸ The set of requirements that apply to the selection of community superintendents should also apply to the selection of the chancellor, who is essentially the superintendent of superintendents.

Moreover, the New York State Education Commissioner should not be able to provide waivers for prospective chancellors who do not meet those qualifications.¹⁹ 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. Finally, as mentioned previously, the new PEP would have the authority to approve or veto the mayor's selection for chancellor.

¹⁸ New York City Department of Education Chancellor Regulation C-37 (2010).

¹⁹ The last four chancellors (Dennis Walcott, Cathleen Black, Joel Klein, and Harold Levy) have needed a waiver from the state education commissioner since they did not meet the requisite criteria. Chancellor Black's waiver request was most widely contested (see: *Matter of Jeffries v. Steiner*, 85 AD3d 1431, [2010]), as she had no teaching or education administration background, nor did she have a Master's or any high level degree. Bloomberg selected her because he felt she had the business acumen to be a successful leader. After what generally was acknowledged to be a disastrous tenure, the mayor asked for Black's resignation four months after her appointment.

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Comparison of Past Chancellors' Educational Qualifications

	Dennis Walcott 2011 - Present	Cathleen "Cathie" Black Jan 2011 - April 2011	Joel I. Klein 2002 - 2010	Harold Levy 2000 - 2002	Dr. Rudolf "Rudy" Crew 1995 - 1999	Ramon C. Cortines 1993 - 1995	Dr. Joseph A. Fernandez 1990-1993*	Nathan Quinones 1984 - 1987	Anthony Alvarado 1983 - 1984	Dr. Frank Macchiarola 1978 - 1983	Irving Anker 1973 - 1978	Dr. Harvey Scribner 1970 - 1973
At least ten years of experience as a public or private school educator	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes**	Yes	Yes
Evidence of being a highly skilled instructor with broad experience across roles and student populations (e.g. general education, English language learners, special education)	Unknown	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes
A proven record of success in elevating outcomes for all students	Unknown	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes**	Yes	Yes
Career experience supervising teachers	Unknown	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Educational experience with effective practices for: • student learning, growth, and development • group process, communications, and organizational planning • formative assessments • evidence-driven evaluation, self-evaluation, and adjustment of instruction	Unknown	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes
A track record of educational leadership working with students, parents, staff, and policy makers	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes**	Yes	Yes
PhD or EdD in educational leadership	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Prior experience running a large city school district	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
REQUIRED STATE WAIVER?	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		

* Between 1987-1990 there were three Chancellors—Charles Schonhaut, who was an interim Chancellor; Richard Green, an educator from Minneapolis and the first black NYC Chancellor, who died while serving in office; and Bernard Mecklowitz, who served as interim after Green's death.
 ** Higher Education experience

Conclusion

Highlights

-  **PEP NOMINATING COMMITTEE**
-  **FIXED AND SECURE TERMS FOR PEP MEMBERS**
-  **STIPENDS AND STAFF SUPPORT FOR PEP**
-  **PEP APPROVES OR VETOES CHANCELLOR SELECTION**
-  **NO WAIVERS FOR THE CHANCELLOR**

Governance systems are much like schools—each is unique with its own constantly changing culture. A successful and sustainable governing structure, like a successful and sustainable school, demands the same thing: collaboration from teachers, principals, parents, students, neighbors, and the larger community. The mayor and the chancellor retain a large degree of authority and decision-making power in this revised school governance system, but there are important new components in place by which the public can participate, be heard, and have influence. An improved mayoral accountability process committed to building collaborative structures would set the course for sustainable improvement of our schools.

Addendum

The Promise of Mayoral Control

There is no “one best system” when it comes to school governance.²⁰ Political scientist Herbert Kaufman considers the tradeoffs having to do with three competing possibilities: non-partisan control, representative democracy, and centralized authority.²¹ Each one of these possibilities can achieve prominence, but at the potential expense of one or both of the other possibilities. For example, for many years prior to decentralization, the City adhered to non-partisan arrangements and the task of running the schools was transferred to professional educators and technical experts. The period of decentralization in New York City (1969–2002) shifted to a representative democracy, embodied by community school boards elected by popular vote. The prominence of centralized authority marks the current mayoral control arrangement.²²

With respect to mayoral control, a number of theories supporting its potential are compelling. First is that mayoral control links school governance to existing political structures, and thereby produces interagency effectiveness through enhanced coordination with City-provided services in medical, cultural, recreational, and social services.²³ Political scientists Jeff Henig and Wilbur Rich succinctly capture the promise of interagency collaboration through mayoral control:

“Mayoral control is designed to promote comprehensive planning by putting decisions about schools in the hands of a leader in position to steer decisions about child welfare, safety, public health, recreation, arts organizations, job-training, and economic development-issue areas that bear heavily on the tasks that schools are expected to perform but which typically are outside the sphere of influence of superintendents...”²⁴

A second appealing feature of mayoral control arrangements is that the mayor and the chancellor are directly aligned, which means they speak with the same voice, which in turn creates stability—a critical first step in building sustainable reform.²⁵ Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein worked together as a shared voice of authority for nearly a decade. This is extraordinarily rare, given that the average tenure of school superintendents in the nation’s largest cities is approximately three and a half years.²⁶ The City of Boston’s mayor, Tom Menino, and its superintendent, Tom Payzant, had a similar working relationship for nearly a decade. Boston and Chicago were among the first (1995 and 1993, respectively) to implement the modern version of mayoral control and

20 Tyack, D., *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, Harvard University Press, 1974.

21 Kaufman, H., *Politics and Policies in State and Local Governments*, as discussed in Kirst, M., “Mayoral Control of Schools: Politics, Tradeoffs, and Outcomes,” in *When Mayors Take Charge*, ed. Joseph P. Viteritti, Brookings Institute Press, 2009.

22 Kirst, Op. Cit.

23 Cuban, L. and Usdan, M., *Power Reforms with Shallow Roots*, Teachers College Press, 2003.

24 Henig, J. and Rich, W., *Mayors in the Middle: Politics, Race, and Mayoral Control of Urban Schools*, Princeton University Press, 2003.

25 Portz, J. and Schwartz, R., “Governing the Boston Public Schools,” in *When Mayors Take Charge*, ed. Joseph P. Viteritti, Brookings Institute Press, 2009.

26 “Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary,” Council of Great City Schools, http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Supt_Survey2010.pdf, accessed on August 14, 2012.

helped influence the shift to mayoral control in New York City. Superintendent Payzant, who is now professor of practice at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, often discusses the importance of long-term sustained leadership:

"...schools benefit considerably both from having a stable, consistent political environment and continuity of leadership from those who govern and lead school districts and schools. Given this stability, school districts and schools can, over time, develop the capacity to plan effectively, use data for instruction, organize themselves for effective school wide professional development, and produce genuine gains in student achievement. The key to sustaining education reform lies in the extent to which schools have internalized the goals of the district and engaged the whole school in focusing on the essentials of improving teaching and learning for all students."²⁷

What flows from this point is the promise that mayoral control is more efficient and can tightly align organizational goals between different levels—central, district, and school.²⁸ By seizing control of a school system the mayor and his proxies should be able to “unlock” bureaucracy and identify spending efficiencies. By doing so, recovered funds can be redirected toward the schools. Moreover, mayoral control puts the mayor in a position where he/she is inclined to increase funding for education overall. The flow of new money to the schools creates the capital by which the central authority can develop more streamlined organizational alignments between the central entities, the district, and the schools.

Finally, an oft-positing benefit of mayoral control is that it will promote top-level accountability. The argument is that decentralized governance arrangements make it impossible to assign accountability due to the numerous elected and high-level functionaries.²⁹ In contrast, mayoral control involves really only two individuals—the mayor and the chancellor—who are ultimately accountable for the success or failure of the school system.

All governance arrangements have strengths and weaknesses, and none have been without controversy. Historical context can often define the ascendancy and demise of one form of governance over another. It has been argued that Bloomberg's first phase reforms were essential to “jolt the system.”³⁰ They were characterized by top-down, highly-centralized structural changes that adhered to the axioms: “1) Do it fast. 2) Do it deep. 3) Take no prisoners.”³¹ Indeed, the Bloomberg administration has significantly reorganized the infrastructure of the school system. There is something intriguing about the idea of needing to jolt a “complacent and ossified school system,” suggesting that what follows the jolt is a more balanced system with democratic representation.³² To be sure, the jolt creates a new dynamic, which in turn creates a new context to which the system must adjust.

²⁷ Payzant, T., “Continuous Improvement: Sustaining Education Reform Long Enough to Make a Difference,” *Voices in Education*, Fall 2005, <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/wp-content/pdf/VUE9.pdf>, accessed on August 14, 2012.

²⁸ Cuban and Usdan, Op. Cit.

²⁹ Viteritti, J., “Why Governance Matters,” in *When Mayors Take Charge*, ed. Joseph P. Viteritti, Brookings Institute Press, 2009.

³⁰ Kirst, Op. Cit.

³¹ Rodgers, D., *Mayoral Control of New York City Schools*, Springer, 2009.

³² Kirst, Op. Cit.

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The fundamental problem with this approach is that it alienates a large and important group of stakeholders and has the potential to squander an administration's ability to build coalitions and community support for its reforms. Emerging research on school governance strongly suggests that, in any arrangement, the lasting potential of any reform must come from a widely trusted source and process.³³ Moreover, in the interest of whole-system reform it is critical that the different levels—central, district, and school—are unified in mission and purpose.³⁴

The sustained leadership in Boston provides the opportunity for that city's experience to be compared with others that have had similar long-term stability in their school systems. Typically, cross-city comparisons are undermined by the differing characteristics of cities—the political culture, bureaucratic capacity, fiscal health, student characteristics, local leadership, and the power of key interest groups.³⁵ Both Boston and New York have enjoyed long-term stability as a result of mayoral control but have approached the subject of education reform in distinctly different ways. Boston has engaged in systematic educator capacity-building programs with an intense focus on professional development. The Boston approach is collaborative by design and requires “whole school” buy-in while recognizing that buy-in requires significant cooperation and support from the larger school community. New York City, however, has adopted a series of top-down market-based “portfolio reforms” that focus on high-stakes, devolved authority to the school level, and a system of rewards and punishments.³⁶ Despite the differences in philosophy and approach, both cities have managed to sustain their reforms through the institutional architecture of mayoral control.

To date, there has been no systematic comparative analysis of the two cities but it is likely that the community buy-in model in Boston versus the laissez-faire approach in New York City would figure prominently in any such analysis. Recent research from political scientist Clarence Stone and his colleagues have produced the most comprehensive longitudinal analysis of urban school governance and concluded that even powerful reforms without broad support are not sustainable.³⁷

The promise of mayoral control can still be realized in New York City, but the focus must shift from managerial units and high stakes accountability to collaboration and capacity-building. This is only possible with an open, transparent, and inclusive school governance system.

33 Fullan, M., *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform*, Corwin, 2010.

34 Ibid.

35 Henig, Op. Cit.

36 Saltman, K., “Urban School Decentralization and the Growth of “Portfolio Districts,” *Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice*, June 2010: The portfolio district approach merges four strategies: 1) decentralization; 2) charter school expansion; 3) reconstituting/closing “failing” schools; and 4) test-based accountability.

37 Stone, C., et. al., *Building Civic Capacity: The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools*, as discussed in Rodgers, D., *Mayoral Control of New York City Schools*, Springer, 2009.



Comptroller of the City of New York

1 Centre Street, New York, NY 10007
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