

Parent and Community Engagement in NYC and the Sustainability Challenge for Urban Education Reform¹

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"Anyone can get up and say parents are important partners in the education of their kids. In New York City, look at this: we are walking the walk."
(Joel Klein at August 2003 kick-off of new system of parent coordinators)²

"Under the current system, while there is plenty of lip service regarding the need for parental involvement, parents are shut out. This must be reversed."
(Dan Jacoby, Democracy for New York City, at the State Assembly Standing Committee on Education Public Hearing in January 2009)

INTRODUCTION AND FRAMING

Parent and community engagement is a typical “mom and apple pie” issue. Like national prosperity, quality health care, and safe streets, the goal of promoting community and parent engagement in schools is broadly endorsed. Consensus in this instance depends on keeping definitions of “engagement” vague. Some think of it in individualistic terms (parents getting involved to improve their children’s education); others think of it collectively (parents trying to make school- or district-wide changes). Some see it as a collaborative exercise marked by defined roles, while others see it as adversarial because parents, teachers, and central administrators have different needs and priorities. And there is often sharp disagreement when it comes to identifying just who represents the authentic and legitimate voice of parents and community—disagreement that carries extra resonance because it often aligns with racial, class, and geographical boundaries.

In New York City, the Bloomberg/Klein administration’s approach to parent and community engagement was framed in contradistinction to the Community School Districts (CSDs) that predated it; CSDs were rooted in a vision of a more collective and aggressive form of engagement in which parents and communities directly set priorities, selected policies, and shaped implementation. The administration considered this preexisting system to be fundamentally flawed in both concept and practice.

In place of engagement at the community level, the administration’s approach centers on engagement at the level of families and schools. In place of involvement in setting goals and priorities, it focuses on engagement in implementation of policies. In place of emphasizing political voice as a way for communities to exercise their demands, it puts a strong emphasis on exit—giving families the option to choose a different school if they consider it a better fit for their child than they one they are assigned. Finally, while the CSDs provided education-specific agenda-setting venues in which parents and teachers were influential actors, the administration’s position on mayoral control of schools deliberately shifts authority for agenda setting and policymaking to general purpose politics and mayoral elections, where other issues compete for priority, and where most groups do not have a direct stake in public education.

In this chapter, we review these competing visions of engagement as manifested in the formal and informal policies of the Bloomberg/Klein administration and as challenged within the context of conflicts surrounding the 2009 extension of mayoral control of the city’s schools. We draw on extensive interviewing, field observations, and document analysis.³ The mayor and his allies were victorious on key points of contention in the battle over the renewal of mayoral control, but the conflict revealed that allegiance to a more active form of engagement was

deeper than they anticipated. Failure to fully credit and understand the motivating force behind the movement for a stronger role for public engagement in setting policies and priorities (instead of simply supporting them) can feed resentments and political backlash that undermine the long-term sustainability of reform initiatives.

OUT WITH THE OLD: NYC'S LEGACY OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

“To inform the conversation, it is critical to think about mayoral control and accountability in relation to what preceded it,” Dennis Walcott, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development, told a public hearing in January 2009. “Under the old system, decisions were shared by several power centers...32 elected school boards across the city hired 32 community superintendents who had 32 different standards, 32 different policies, and sometimes 32 different ways of operating.” While decentralization to the community level worked for some, Walcott’s overall verdict was decidedly negative. “I remember the inequities inherent in the 32 school systems, some run capably, and some run corruptly.”⁴

The belief that the Community School Districts (CSDs) were a key part of the problem underpinned the administration’s earliest reform efforts. Even before a chancellor was appointed, Bloomberg aggressively pursued a strategy of shifting power and authority away from the CSDs. Under the mayoral control law passed by the state legislature in June 2002 the CSDs would remain, but each district’s board was eliminated and the chancellor would appoint each community superintendent.⁵ In January 2003, the mayor announced a restructuring of the system that would strip the CSDs of almost all of their remaining authority. Calling them “notorious bureaucratic dinosaurs [that] will be extinct,” the mayor told the New York Urban League that in their place “will be one, unified, focused, streamlined chain of command.”⁶

From Community Control to Community School Districts

Emerging from a push by parents and community leaders for community control of the public schools, the New York state legislature enacted decentralization legislation in 1969. The push for community control was a demand for “strong democracy,” a transformation of the relationship between parents and the New York City (NYC) schools. Strong democracy calls for robust public engagement and meaningful participation of community members.⁷ It is similar to theories and strategies used by community organizers.⁸ Community control advocates’ theory of action was based on the transfer of authority from education bureaucrats to parents and community leaders. Black and Latino parents had long argued that while their voices might be heard, education officials were not responding to them in the same way they responded to white parents.⁹ If democracy is having a say in the decisions that affect family and community, it was missing for the parents of Latino and Black students in the city’s public schools. The idea was to give parents a viable role in the operation of the NYC schools, to shift power downward.

The legislature’s decentralization plan, which was in effect until 1996, created the 32 CSDs, each with a nine-member school board, elected every three years. The boards were responsible for administering elementary and junior high schools, including hiring the district superintendent, teachers, and supervisory staff. They also managed the districts’ budgets of tens of millions of dollars. High schools and certain citywide programs were kept under central office control. The top central administrator, the school chancellor, was to oversee the local districts.

From the start of decentralization, the city's clubhouse politicians captured control of the local school board elections in many parts of the city. Local politicians, activist parent organizations, and leaders of the local teachers union-controlled elections in which turnout typically was low. Some CSDs, especially those in the more affluent areas of the city, were able to mobilize and use decentralization as an avenue for educational innovation, but many community school districts had reputations for malfeasance and patronage.¹⁰ Many of these districts were home to the most low-performing, violent schools.

Reforming Decentralization

Prior to Mayor Bloomberg's election, there were major efforts to reform the 1969 decentralization law. For example, in 1996, to rein in corruption, patronage, and mismanagement, the state legislature stripped the local school boards of their power to hire and fire principals and allowed the chancellor to take over a school district.¹¹ In the late 1990s, under Chancellor Rudy Crew, the state legislature moved more authority to the central office, giving the chancellor authority to fire school superintendents in low-performing districts.

Many observers believe that by the time of Mayor Bloomberg's election in 2001, community school boards "had already been dying a long, slow death."¹² The CSDs and the elected school boards that governed them for over 30 years had been stripped of much of their influence. However, as a mayoral candidate, Michael Bloomberg used the decentralized CSDs' reputation for corruption, patronage, and low student performance to build support to further re-centralize school decision-making. Bloomberg's call for more centralization of school authority also implicitly discredited community control and the idea of strong democracy.

In 2002, state leaders acceded to Bloomberg's request to dramatically change the governing structure of NYC public schools. The new system put in place a 13-member central school board, the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP). Each borough president appoints one member, and the mayor appoints the remaining eight. In addition, the mayor was given the authority to appoint the chancellor. No longer would the district boards appoint a local superintendent; this role was given to the chancellor. After the mayor appointed Joel Klein to be chancellor, and as Klein's administrative and educational vision came into focus, the role of the CSDs was weakened further. Administratively, the key units were a leaner and more restrained central office playing a guiding function for substantially empowered schools. The 32 geographically defined districts were seen as too large and complex to focus on the learning environment in individual schools and, at the same time, too small and parochial to represent broad city interests and enforce a coherent plan.

CONTRASTING VISIONS OF PARENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The targeting of the CSDs was partly tactical. The administration wanted to move quickly and boldly, and the CSDs were a likely focal point for resistance. But portraying this as a one-dimensional battle between forces of change and resistance obscures nuances on both sides. Also at stake were competing visions of the most appropriate forms of parental and public engagement, and competing beliefs about how to reconcile the need for strong and coherent policymaking and the need to build coalitions to ensure that reforms are sustained.

Figure 1 distinguishes among four conceptions of the proper role for engagement, based on whether the key unit for engagement is individualistic (student and family) versus collective (community or district-wide) and whether engagement focuses on policy formulation (setting priorities and shaping policies) versus implementation (collaborating in carrying out policies). Although not mutually exclusive, crafting a policy of engagement in practice demands emphasizing some more than others. Attending to the differences in emphasis can help us illuminate the lines of cleavage that developed between the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and its critics, and clarify how such tensions could be so high despite the fact that all involved believe themselves to be promoting parent and community engagement.

Figure 1: Types of Parent & Community Engagement

	Implementation	Policy Formulation
Individualistic (Student & Family)	A. Information and choice	B. Child-centered collaboration
Collective (School or District)	C. Supportive partnerships	D. Advocacy, strong democracy <i>versus</i> E. Accountability through mayoral elections

Cell A: Information & choice

The emphasis here is on giving parents better information about what their child’s school offers and about how their child is performing, to help them reinforce the school’s efforts at home. School and district policies are set by school and district administrators (often working in collaboration with intermediary organizations), with engagement efforts centered around ensuring that parents have established channels for asking questions and registering concerns about their own children and their classrooms and schools. If there is a mismatch between their child’s need and what the school provides, the DOE policy emphasizes the option for parents to select one of an array of alternative publicly supported schools outside their attendance zone. Formal DOE policy, including some of its most innovative efforts, is best represented by cell A.

Cell B: Child-centered collaboration

Compared to cell A, this conception of engagement envisions parents less as passive consumers of school and district services than as active collaborators in their own children’s educational experience. Parents’ role is partly as "extenders" of the teacher and school mission: overseeing homework, ensuring attendance, encouraging educational aspirations. But in return they also share with teachers and principals a role in shaping an individualized educational program for their child. DOE efforts to increase individual schools’ autonomy provides room to put such practices in place.

Cell C: Supportive partnerships

This vision of parental and community engagement is more collective; it involves organized bodies of parents (e.g., PTAs or School Leadership Teams) and community-based stakeholders in efforts to better enable schools and the district to pursue their policies and programs. Examples include school-based fundraisers, adopt-a-school relationships with local businesses or non-profits, and collective efforts to lobby on behalf of the district for more resources at the city or state levels. While collective in nature, as with cell A engagement is passive and supportive, keyed to enlisting parents and community to extend the impact of policies and priorities they did not directly participate in establishing.

Cells D & E: Strong democracy vs. mayoral control

The notion of strong democracy holds that conflicts among individuals can best be addressed through “a participatory process of ongoing proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods.”¹³ In democratic theory, strong democracy is sometimes contrasted with representative government, in which citizens choose leaders they expect to govern wisely and then hold them responsible, by voting them out of office if their performance does not meet expectations. Much of the mayoral control battle that we discuss below centers on the issue of whether the chance to vote every four years in general elections in which those without a direct stake in the schools also participate provides parents with a sufficient opportunity to influence policies and priorities.

DOE INITIATIVES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND PARENT LEADERSHIP

DOE officials approach parent engagement through either family engagement or parent leadership engagement. Family engagement initiatives primarily fall within cell A as represented in Figure 1, and these are more innovative and arguably more central to the DOE’s efforts. Parent leadership initiatives, in contrast, were largely inherited by the administration and maintained under the watchful eye of the state legislature, which mandated key elements. Since 2002, the DOE has implemented multiple parent engagement structures and initiatives; we discuss in this section the components that have been particularly central to DOE’s efforts.

Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy

As with other aspects of the administration’s reform agenda, the first stage of reforming parent and community engagement efforts involved centralization. Previously, responsibilities were housed in different offices, and were not necessarily connected between district, school, and the central office.¹⁴ “You had parent support officers without any real clear direction or mission,” a current official notes. In 2007, the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy (OFEA) was established to centrally direct and monitor the district’s engagement initiatives. It started the 2008–09 school year with a budget of approximately \$5.4 million¹⁵ and roughly 100 staff members.¹⁶

Parent Coordinators

At the same time it was centralizing some key functions, the administration gave attention to a new effort to facilitate engagement with parents at the school level. Parent Coordinators were

placed in every school as part of the first set of “Children First” reforms, with the goals of increasing parent involvement with their children’s learning and school, and providing information and assistance. Welcoming the roughly 1,200 new Coordinators in August 2003, Klein told them they would be “one of the key levers for change.” Funding for these positions totaled approximately \$43 million in the first year.¹⁷

DOE continues to see Parent Coordinators as an important, and in some cases the most important, element of parent engagement.¹⁸ The department reports that 95% of schools have a functioning Parent Coordinator, and that almost all of the Coordinators in 2009 had been in that position since it was instituted in 2003.¹⁹ By the DOE’s count, based on Parent Coordinator logs, Parent Coordinators answered 1.6 million phone calls and assisted parents with 7.8 million walk-in visits in 2008-09.

Nonetheless, some have questioned the quality of the services these Coordinators provide. When the program began in 2003, critics saw it as a self-conscious effort by the administration to soothe anger over the dismantling of the CSDs, and regarded it more as symbolic appeasement than a genuine effort to provide parents an active role. They predicted that the Parent Coordinators would have too little power to resolve parent-principal conflicts, would be too beholden to the principals who hired and could fire them, and might end up being an obstacle blocking parents from reaching the principal. Much of the press coverage focused on the price tag and the uncertain benefits. Some criticized the Coordinators’ lack of availability. The Public Advocate conducted phone surveys of Parent Coordinators in 2003, 2004, and 2008, and each time cited the Coordinators for lack of response to phone messages.²⁰

District Family Advocates

The DOE created the District Family Advocate (DFA) position in 2007, following the reorganization of the school system and dissolution of the 10 regions. The DOE suggests that these positions help parents “get answers and support close to home, rather than at far-away regional offices.” DFAs are supposed to step in to assist elementary and middle school families if the local Parent Coordinator cannot (high school families are served by the Deputy Borough Directors). DFAs assisted 9,418 parents in district offices and received 40,379 phone calls in 2008–09.²¹ However, during the debate about the renewal of mayoral control, which we discuss below, many parents as well as local legislators voiced frustration regarding their inability to find assistance outside of the local school to resolve problems, and one of the changes in the governance legislation in 2009 was to try to address this concern by making the DFAs report to superintendents rather than OFEA.²²

ARIS Parent Link and P311

Introduced in May 2009, ARIS Parent Link is an online platform designed to provide parents with information about their child’s educational progress and to support relationships between parents and teachers. The Link provides parents with the same data about their child that are available to the teacher, including attendance rates, state test scores, English language learner assessment results, and transcript information. The system is designed to create an online parent network, providing parents opportunities to join online discussions, develop blogs, and post documents. In the year since ARIS Parent Link was introduced, approximately 300,000 accounts (roughly 35% of families)²³ have been created and accessed by parents.

In 2009 the DOE introduced P311, an extension of the city's 311 government information and services telephone hotline. P311 was designed to streamline and simplify parent access to information about city schools, such as enrollment and choice, special education, transportation, and ARIS. District administrators reported that they track the P311 calls as well as the DFA's responses, and that these data are compiled for superintendents to review to ensure parents are receiving adequate support and information.²⁴ Data on parent calls indicate that the majority of inquiries were related to finding a school or school zone (28% of calls), or regarding the public school calendar (17% of calls).²⁵

Parent Survey

A major parent engagement initiative in 2008 was the development of a parent survey, "to solicit parent views of what was working and what was not in the system."²⁶ Parents are asked to rate their satisfaction with their children's school in academic expectations, communication, engagement, and safety and respect. It focuses only on the school; there are no questions about the policies or performance of DOE as whole.²⁷

The scale of the survey effort is substantial. In 2009, 381,543 parents completed the survey. Response rates increased from 26% of parents in the first year to 45% in 2009.²⁸ The DOE reports results publicly for each school, publishes a citywide report summarizing survey results by question, and provides an online tool with graphs comparing an individual school's responses to the overall city's responses. The DOE also offers feedback sessions with principals, schools, unions, and others to discuss results.

The most prominent use of the school survey data is their incorporation into the metric used to grade schools on their performance. Parent survey data are combined with student and teacher survey responses to generate each school's "learning environment" score, which formally counts for 15% of the performance score (although schools can get "extra credit," meaning it actually contributes less than that). The survey report also informs principal performance reviews, although it carries very small weight.

Choice and Charters

Although not always cited this way, school choice appears to be another avenue for parent engagement. The administration has built on a longstanding tradition of public school choice at the secondary level—for example, its innovative high school match system requires eighth graders to choose high schools, allowing them to rank up to 12 from among more than 600 available programs citywide—but the embrace of charter schools has attracted the most attention. In most of the country, traditional districts have been wary about charters, if not directly hostile, but the mayor and chancellor have embraced them enthusiastically. The administration lobbied aggressively to raise the state's cap on charters and has given charters access to the system's school buildings to a degree perhaps unmatched across the country.²⁹

The administration's support for charters is based on several considerations, including its belief that charters introduce beneficial competition and bring in innovative educators with new ideas. National charter school proponents emphasize engagement as another benefit, arguing that empowering parents to select their schools increases commitment. The administration seems to share that view: "We sometimes get hung up on whether we ought to consult parents about how we teach long division, and it strikes me that the choice issue is a much more significant

way to engage families.”³⁰ While many of the parent engagement tools discussed above tend to provide information from the administration to parents, school choice provides a potential feedback mechanism in the system. Parents and students “vote with their feet,” and the DOE reports that it uses these patterns of school choice to inform decisions about school closures and new school sites. For example, declining school enrollment is one indicator used to determine whether to close a school.³¹

PARTNERSHIPS: ENGAGING PARENTS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Under the “engagement” stream, the DOE has channeled extensive resources into parent engagement in supporting the academic achievement of their own child. Efforts related to what the department calls “leadership” and we call “partnerships” have been more halting and occasionally contentious.

The administration has accepted in principle the role of parents and community in providing feedback to inform its decisions, but it has retained unadulterated authority to act once its decisions are made. Tensions have arisen as the department has implemented a parent engagement approach grounded in information provision, consumer service, and choice while the state legislature has in contrast insisted on retaining some ideas and structures that had evolved out of the more active vision of community-based engagement. In addition, parent and community advocates continue to resist what they see as their disempowerment, and have proved over time to be more persistent and to have a broader constituency than the administration initially thought.

School Leadership Teams (SLTs)

SLTs, required by state law, are composed of elected parents and staff. The role of the SLTs in school decision-making has been a point of controversy. Critics of the administration suggest that, following the advent of mayoral control, SLTs have ceased to function in any effective manner. Numbers from 2008 indicate that approximately half of schools have functioning SLTs.³² A May 2009 report by City Comptroller Thompson attributes this lack of functioning to ineffective parent and parent-teacher associations (PAs/PTAs)³³ at the school site, a perceived lack of power granted to the SLTs, and inadequate parent training provided by OFEA.³⁴ While acknowledging that it has more to do on this front, DOE officials suggest that this level of engagement is impressive considering the challenges.³⁵

In addition, controversy about the SLTs under this administration involves state law regarding the role they should play in developing the Comprehensive Education Plan, hiring principals, and establishing the school budget. In 2007, the chancellor strengthened the authority of principals to make the final determination on the budget and Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). In an appeals process, the state education commissioner ruled in 2008 that the principal cannot have final decision-making authority over the CEP, but instead must work collaboratively with the SLTs to develop the CEP. In response, the chancellor revised SLT guidelines, although critics still condemn the vague language requiring principals to “consult” with the SLT to develop the budget and use “consensus-based decision-making processes.”³⁶

Community Education Councils (CECs)

The CECs are required through state law to oversee policy for elementary and middle schools within each of the 32 districts. The state instituted CECs in 2003 following the elimination of the Community School Boards. One stated purpose of the CECs was to focus on parent rather than community participation; CEC members now must be public school parents, while prior to these changes any community member could serve.³⁷ Responsibilities of CECs also include “approving school zoning lines, holding hearings on the capital plan, evaluating community superintendents, and providing input on other important policy issues.”³⁸

Reports suggest that 2 of the 34 CECs are not functioning, the number of candidates for the position has decreased over time, and many elections are uncontested.³⁹ In 2009, the DOE hired Grassroots Initiative to oversee the CEC elections and to encourage more parents to become involved, but the problem remains.⁴⁰ “I think they're very aware there's not a lot of authority under the current law,” one CEC president told a reporter in attempting to account for the low levels of involvement.⁴¹ Similar to the controversies surrounding SLT powers, the state and DOE continue to grapple over the responsibilities and powers of CECs. We discuss some of these points of contention later in the context of the battle over the extension of mayoral control.

Support Organizations and Networks

Although the specifics have changed over time, a reform strategy since at least 2007 has included encouraging or requiring schools to align with support organizations, which included not-for-profits and some universities, to expand their capacity to undertake their new responsibilities.⁴² Some support organizations have emphasized parent engagement while others have not. DOE’s stance of devolving responsibilities permits schools to select partners who will take parent engagement seriously, but it does not mandate or systematically encourage them to.⁴³

RIVAL VISIONS OF DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT: THE BATTLE OVER MAYORAL CONTROL

As the previous section illustrated, DOE officials see collective engagement as a potential source of good ideas and feedback on what is and is not working. They mistrust calls for more active forms of engagement, what we call advocacy and strong democracy in Figure 1, cell D, suspecting that some activists use such processes to mask a self-interest in resisting change, and that others hold sincere but naïve notions that effective policy can be based on consensus. As one DOE official explained, “For the most part placing consensus at the high end of the value hierarchy often leads to either stagnation or least-common-denominator solutions.”⁴⁴ This impatience with the prospect of taking the time to build a supportive coalition before acting seems largely due to a sense of urgency, legitimizing an approach of “act now and make corrections later.” The rationale for this approach is based at least in part on sincere indignation at the persistent low performance of many NYC schools, and an assessment that the system is incapable of reforming itself.

This impatience with discussion and debate that delays active intervention is also linked to and buttressed by a broader and more philosophical vision of governance. The administration accepts the premise that the community broadly has a legitimate role to play in shaping policy, but prefers that this role take the form of what we term in Figure 1 accountability through mayoral elections. In place of an active and day-to-day role for parents in setting goals and

priorities, this view of public engagement has a broader array of voters and groups (including but extending beyond parents and teachers) exercising their agenda-setting power by endorsing or rejecting an administration in mayoral elections. In addition to broadening participation, the model calls for sharpening accountability by reducing checks and balances that diffuse responsibility, empower interest groups, and demand endless bargaining and compromise at the expense of enacting a coherent plan. Candidates compete by presenting clear and distinct platforms, and once elected should be able to put their ideas into place and get them sufficiently developed for voters to have something to evaluate and respond to in the next election. Under this model, mayoral control is the answer to critics' claims that DOE policies fail to provide sufficient opportunity for parents to shape policies.

The battle over whether and in what form to extend mayoral control of NYC schools provides insights into how this conception of school governance clashes with notions of strong democracy as favored by some parent and community-based groups. Failure to understand the depth and breadth of this fundamental clash in perspectives risks fueling a political backlash and may substantially exacerbate the challenge of sustaining reform.

Broad Pressure for Greater Engagement

Despite the initial agreement on the need for dramatic change in school governance to remedy a fragmented system, it was not long before many concluded that Bloomberg was overstepping the spirit of the 2002 law. "Before the ink was dry," as one legislative leader from that era put it, "the mayor began to do things clearly contrary to discussions we had about how to implement."⁴⁵

A sense that centralization had gone too far was crystallized when the mayor arranged the firing and replacement of three Panel on Education Policy (PEP) members who disagreed with him on a decision about social promotion. The chancellor's use of executive power to limit the authority of district superintendents, by removing their oversight of principals and reducing their jurisdictional authority by assigning them system-wide responsibilities, was another flashpoint. Thinning out the middle layers between the central office and the schools, one legislator suggested, meant "there isn't a structure anymore where there's somebody on the local level who knows the local schools."⁴⁶ Furthermore, the parent leadership components of the DOE's parent engagement portfolio—the PTAs, SLTs, and CECs—had been required by state law to provide some means for collective parent input to decision-making at different system levels, but over the life of mayoral control had become substantially weakened.

During fall 2008, three groups emerged, representing three distinct positions on mayoral control.⁴⁷ Although the administration was ready with the argument that any change to the mayoral control legislation represented a return to a discredited past, these groups—even the one initiated by the mayor's own allies—agreed that there were problems with the current system—especially in the area of parent and community engagement. The groups differed on whether, and what type of, changes should be made to the mayoral control law (see Figure 2). Taken together, the three groups reveal that there was a broader and more diverse set of interests than the administration was acknowledging. Here we briefly describe the three groups and their relative positions, and the emergence of one group, the Campaign for Better Schools, and its ability to give legitimacy to a counter-narrative to that of the mayor and DOE. We will discuss in more detail how the Campaign's platform for improving mayoral control advanced stronger democratic participation in school governance.

Figure 2: The Playing Field – Three Parent Groups

	Who	When	How
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Position on Mayoral Control</p> <hr/> <p>KEEP IT</p> <hr/> <p>CHANGE IT</p> <hr/> <p>END IT</p> </div>	<p>Learn NY Proposed that mayoral control be extended</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition of 60-70 community groups, parents, and religious leaders Some had received funding from the city, the DOE, and possibly Bloomberg Constituency included many low-income charter school parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerged in fall 2008 Dissolved after mayoral control was renewed in August 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocated for no change to PEP but greater transparency and participation, and argued this could be done without changing statutes Gave testimony at Assembly and Senate hearings, city-wide forums, CEC meetings, and media interviews Coalition funded with an estimated \$4 million from Bill Gates and the Eli Broad Foundation
	<p>Campaign for Better Schools Proposed that mayoral control be continued with significant changes to the law</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition of 26 advocacy, organizing, research, and policy organizations Constituency included a spectrum of low-income parents and youth from diverse racial and ethnic groups, including immigrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed in summer 2008 Disbanded officially June 30, 2009, but continued activity through August 2009, and groups continue to collaborate informally around issues of mutual interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a platform recommending that mayoral control legislation be amended to provide checks and balances at the level of the PEP, as well as greater transparency, and public participation Organized press events, speak outs, rallies; attended Assembly and Senate hearings, CEC meetings, and Parent Association meetings Supported by an estimated \$445,000, largely from the Donors' Education Collaborative (DEC)
	<p>Parents Commission Proposed that mayoral control be allowed to end, with recommendations for reforming NYC school governance</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group of individuals, including members and leaders of the CECs and Presidents' Councils, and those associated with Scope or Class Size Matters Many constituents were middle class parents from Manhattan's upper-West and upper- and lower-East sides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed in summer 2008 Some members wanted to disband after their recommendations were released in spring 2009, but activity continued through August 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a "Recommendations" document, which proposed legislative changes creating a Board of Education, restoration of the Community School Districts and CDECs as the basic units of governance. Conducted press interviews, met with legislators, and planned rallies Did not receive outside funding; staffed solely by volunteers

The Three Groups

The crux of the mayoral control debate was around the degree of authority granted the mayor, and by extension the degree to which opportunities to shape policy and priorities were limited to the arena of mayoral elections every four years. The core of this struggle, which took place in the media and at public events, was the three groups' differing views on changes to the PEP, which, if enacted, would provide checks and balances to the mayor's control.

Learn NY (which we will refer to as Learn) included institutions with close ties to the mayor and the DOE as well as charter school advocates and operators that could mobilize charter school parents. In recalling the impetus to create Learn, one member of the administration stated that it was to "create a counter-narrative" to those who criticized the administration.

Learn pressed for continuation of mayoral control, with no change to the PEP, and ultimately to the mayor's authority. Nonetheless, one of its chief spokesmen, Geoffrey Canada, did acknowledge the need for improvement in the area of parent engagement, stating that parents needed more information provided in a more timely way.⁴⁸

Of the three groups, Learn was the best funded by far. There had been rumors that Bloomberg himself had funded Learn, but in August 2009 it was revealed that Bill Gates and Eli Broad had provided Learn with a substantial portion of its budget of several million dollars.⁴⁹

A media analysis we conducted indicated that Learn had limited success in portraying itself as an authentic voice of parents.⁵⁰ The fact that many of its supporting groups were recipients of city or DOE funds, or even beneficiaries of support from Bloomberg himself, contributed to suspicions they were part of "the strategy the mayor has, for these last eight years, which is... to buy off community groups."⁵¹ As one journalist put it, "I don't think the elected officials were fully persuaded that these [Learn NY representatives] were real people ..."⁵² The fact that Learn virtually faded away when the debate went to Albany added to the perception that Learn had no real roots.

The Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control (Parent Commission) was at the other end of the spectrum from Learn; it was an all-volunteer organization with proposals for legislative changes that came the closest to calling for an outright end to mayoral control and a return to the structures that the administration argued had been proven failures. The Parent Commission consisted of members of NYC's formal structures for collective parental engagement: PTAs/PAs, CECs, and SLTs. Many of its most active members, though certainly not all of them, were from affluent neighborhoods of Manhattan that had fared fairly well previous to mayoral control. The Parent Commission focused on revamping the formal governance institutions to return to greater parent input. For example, it recommended revitalizing the Community School Districts together with CECs "to be the basic unit of school governance."⁵³

Even though the Parent Commission was a volunteer organization of parents, it had difficulty convincing some observers that it spoke for a broad cross section of the community. Our media analysis indicated that coverage of the Parent Commission, while substantial during the heat of the debate in May, June, and July 2009, was mainly in just a few sources.⁵⁴ Furthermore, although the Parent Commission was active in Albany during the period of legislative negotiations, they had little experience there and their impact—standing alone—was limited.

The Campaign for Better Schools (the Campaign) was in the middle of the continuum between Learn and the Parent Commission. We had the opportunity to closely follow the activity of the Campaign as part of a two-year study from May 2008–May 2010 for the Donors Education Collaborative (DEC). We concluded that the depth and breadth of the constituency it represented forced the mayor and his supporters to work harder to defend their position than they might have initially anticipated.

The Campaign consisted of coalitions of constituency-based groups such as the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), along with public school advocacy, policy, and research organizations. Demographically, the Campaign’s membership tended to be minority groups in economically struggling neighborhoods and new immigrants citywide.

Among its first tasks, the Campaign conducted research into mayoral control in other cities and learned that NYC represented an extreme version of mayoral control in its concentration of power in the mayor. The Campaign positioned itself as being for continuing mayoral control, but with significant changes to the legislation that would rebalance the mayor’s authority. The Campaign’s recommendations included making official structures, like the SLTs and CECs, more representative and increasing their role in policy decisions as well as expanding the processes for public input. Its framework for change—greater checks and balances to the mayor’s authority, increased transparency of achievement and financial data, and expanded public participation—resonated with many parents and community-based organizations, and a number of legislators.

The Campaign’s strategy for building a strong coalition and for mobilizing its constituency had several features that strengthened its claim of—and increased its recognition in the media as—being a fresh voice speaking for parents and community, and not simply wanting to protect a privileged old guard. The groups that made up the Campaign were well-established, often multi-issue, organizations. Many had wide reach across the city and were embedded in local communities and/or constituencies. Several of the member groups were constituency-based organizations and coalitions that had strong relationships with members who represented new and emerging civic actors in the city, including immigrants, English language learners, and low-income African Americans, Latinos, and youth. The Campaign was able to get large turnouts at its own rallies and press events as well as at other public events. Further, Campaign constituents, because of the extensive process of education about school governance that had accompanied the creation of their platform for improving mayoral control, gave clear and consistent messages at these events. Although some of the groups received city or DOE funding for their core agendas, they agreed to stand by the platform, once it had been formed. Finally, in press accounts, quotes from Campaign members were more likely to be attributed to a parent than a staff member—strengthening the Campaign’s image as representing parents’ perspectives. One media observer noted that, as “opposed to Learn that had money,” the Campaign “had the people... people who were angry about something...”⁵⁵

The Campaign, of all the groups, had the greatest capacity to carry the debate to Albany, where the state legislature would have the ultimate say. Several of its member organizations had previous experience working together in Albany around issues of fiscal equity and public education. These earlier efforts—and successes—had increased their visibility and earned them the reputation of being knowledgeable players in the education arena. In the next section, we

will show how the Campaign was able to gain traction for its vision of strong democratic governance embedded in its platform.

Competing Visions of What Counts as Genuine Engagement

With the three groups vying for the attention and support of the public and lawmakers, a wider range of possibilities were being seriously considered in the mayoral control debate than most observers had predicted in early 2008.⁵⁶ The Campaign's position offers a clear example of a strong democracy vision of public engagement, cell D in Figure 1 introduced earlier. For the Campaign, as well as the Parent Commission, it was critical for parents and community members to be able to influence policies, even to share in their development, not just every four years, but as they were being formulated.

Having established itself as a "pragmatic" voice in the debate, the Campaign got a full hearing for its platform recommendations. While it did not win its bid to change the balance of power on the PEP, the final legislation and amendments reflected a number of the other changes it had pushed for. The Campaign's critique of parent engagement under Bloomberg, embedded in its platform recommendations, centered around two dimensions: 1) the amount of *power* parents and community members should have in the system and 2) structures that ensure that parents can act *collectively* to have input in policy decisions.

The Campaign's platform included elements designed to increase the power and capacity of parents, students, and community members to participate in decision-making. The Campaign's platform called for giving the SLTs more input at the school level by restoring their contribution and oversight of the principal in aligning the school's comprehensive education plan with the annual school budget. The Campaign platform also called for principals to hold public meetings in which they would provide the necessary information to the school's community so that they could weigh in on planning and budgeting as a means for increasing the capacity of parents to participate fully and effectively on the SLTs.

While power at the school level is critical, there are some policies and functions that have an impact at the community or neighborhood level, and the DOE's decisions about the role of the district superintendents and the CECs were perceived to have undercut parents' ability to address concerns at this level. The DOE's changes in the authority and role of district superintendents eliminated the administrative level between the central administration and the school, effectively eliminating the means by which the public could have input to policies with community-wide impact. "I think there is a general consensus ...that many issues are local and you can't solve everything from the bottom of Manhattan," suggested one of our interviewees (see endnote 3), with a front seat to the implementation of the DOE's parent and community engagement strategies.⁵⁷ The Campaign's platform called for restoring the geographically bounded jurisdiction of the district superintendents as well as some of their powers, particularly as these related to decision-making about school closings.

School closings were a particularly sore spot and represented a significant chasm between the administration and many in the public. For the administration, closing schools that were under-enrolled or which had failed to make progress on tests was an integral part of its mission, and it viewed parents as too subjective when it came to their neighborhood schools. "Parents didn't want it closed," a key official observed about one illustrative case, "but if you looked at the feedback it was about nostalgia. And it was about communication, not feeling as if they had

been brought along in the process...” The Campaign emphasized that parents and community members should be informed about the rationale for school closings well in advance and that they should have input into the decisions. The Campaign platform called for advance public notice and the completion of an education impact statement that would help parents and community members make informed judgments. The platform also called for the CECs to be able to vote on or appeal these decisions to the PEP. The platform intended to provide levers for collective action codified in the law that would enable the public to influence policy in a timely way, exemplifying the strong democracy vision that the Campaign was advancing.

To bolster parents’ and community members’ power, the Campaign recommended, provisions that would increase the public’s capacity to monitor the progress of reform. For one, the Campaign recommended changes to the Independent Budget Office (IBO) as another way to hold the mayor accountable by assuring the trustworthiness of information on the school district’s strategies, academic progress, and spending. One of the recommendations it pushed for was the establishment of an independent Parent Training Center that would also serve students as another way to build the capacity of public actors to participate in policy decision-making.

Most of the media attention following the passage of the mayoral control bill was on the mayor’s retention of control of the PEP. Less attention was paid initially to the many new provisions in the legislation and amendments that directly reflected those elements of the Campaign platform that strengthened parents’ power through various levers for input and action and building of capacity. Those provisions of the law, if parents and the public took full advantage of them, provided opportunities to realize the strong democracy vision that the Campaign forwarded on behalf of a significant share of public school constituents. In the next section, we examine recent events and show how these elements added to the legislation are playing out in the months since it was enacted, and consider the legislation’s implications for the future of mayoral control in New York City.

THE EXTENSION OF MAYORAL CONTROL AND ITS AFTERMATH

The battle leading up to the mayoral control legislation had many twists and turns, and the final weeks were made even more chaotic by a series of unrelated political and organizational upheavals in Albany, which resulted in NYC briefly reverting back to pre-mayoral control governance structures during a Senate impasse. Ultimately the Senate passed the Assembly’s bill on August 6, 2009, alongside four amendments that the DOE agreed to enact regardless of whether they later passed through the Assembly and became law. The most prominent among these was a provision establishing a Parent and Student Training Center.

Because of efforts by the Campaign and others, the mayor and his team had to work harder to defend their interests in Albany and had to accept some changes—despite their original negotiating stance that any changes risked weakening the institutional structures upon which their reforms were built. Measured by legislative changes, the score sheet indicated that the mayor had largely achieved his goal of resisting any alteration to his and the chancellor’s authority.⁵⁸ On the key battles around checks and balances and the composition and autonomy of the PEP, they had held their ground. On issues related to more transparent and independent handling of financial and achievement data they gave up some ground, but they did so on points they had never aggressively resisted, in part because some key elements within their own

constituency thought such changes were a good idea. On greater citizen participation, the concessions initially were barely acknowledged in the media. Aside from establishing the Parent Training Center, which has yet to take form, groups that championed stronger forms of community engagement won what seemed at the time to be largely symbolic victories, including the requirement that school closures require an impact statement, a public hearing, and six months' notice.

Yet the battle appears to have had residual consequences that can prove meaningful. Several factors have produced subtle but important changes in the political landscape, creating room for public challenge of administration policies and seeding elements of what might develop into a vision and organizational foundation for an alternative view of public education reform.

In November 2009, Michael Bloomberg won reelection to his third term, but by a considerably smaller margin (51% to 46%) than most observers had expected. While the mayor and his Democratic opponent traded charges and countercharges about who would do a better job of running the public schools, exit polls suggested that other issues—most notably the economic collapse and the need for job creation—eclipsed education as a deciding factor for most voters. Significantly, candidates for other offices featured criticism of the mayor and chancellor in their successful campaigns and offered indications that they would use their new positions to stand up for a different vision of school reform. For example, in campaigning for the position of public advocate, generally considered the second highest ranking citywide elected office, Bill de Blasio had supported the general notion of mayoral control but sharply criticized the mayor's governing style. Similarly, John Liu, in his campaign for city comptroller, promised to provide greater transparency and oversight over the DOE, particularly its achievement and accountability data, and proposed to audit the administration's decision-making process around school closures.⁵⁹ Perhaps the most dramatic mark of the changing landscape was the January 2010 PEP Meeting on 19 planned school closures, attended by 2,000 people. Other schools had been closed in the past—over 100 in New York City in the past decade, including 12 in 2009 and 15 in 2008—but this meeting overshadowed previous ones in terms of visibility and sympathetic coverage. Although the provisions for impact statements and public hearings had received little attention when mayoral control was extended, they seem to have played an important role in setting the stage for this massive protest and for ongoing legal challenges to the administration's closure and turnaround policies.

The degree to which the extension law shifted the landscape by opening the field for judicial intervention is illustrated by the March 26, 2010 decision by Justice Joan B. Lobis of the State Supreme Court in Manhattan to block the DOE's planned closure of 19 schools based on violations of the law's procedures requiring that school closures follow detailed educational impact statements. The UFT, NAACP, and other plaintiffs, including the Alliance for Quality Education—one of the Campaign's key member organizations—had argued that the PEP vote to close the schools was improper because the nominal impact statements were vague and formulaic and failed to address key community concerns. According to the *New York Times*, "Justice Lobis...said the new law 'created a public process with meaningful community involvement regarding the chancellor's proposals.'" The entire mayoral control law must be enforced, she wrote, "not merely the portion extending mayoral control of the schools."⁶⁰ In July 2010, the appellate court unanimously reaffirmed this ruling, rejecting the city's claim that it had substantially complied with the state law. Coverage of the legislature's extension of mayoral control had focused more on opponents' failure to shake the mayor's dominance of the PEP, but

the Campaign quietly believed that some of the concessions it won would later prove to be important.⁶¹ What is clear is that the change in the law gave opponents of the administration's policies an additional weapon, and one that they will likely use, or at least threaten to use, again.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF REFORM: IMPLICATIONS FOR NYC AND ELSEWHERE

In broad terms, there are at least three reasons a city or district might encourage parent and community engagement: 1) to engage others as partners to *make the policies and practices it has adopted work better*; 2) to enlist a broader range of ideas to *formulate better policies and practices*; 3) to create a broader and more fully engaged constituency to *create a coalition more likely to sustain the policies and practices over time*. These are not necessarily incompatible, but in practice an emphasis on one often comes at the expense of the others.

The ardor and urgency with which the administration launched its reform efforts, combined with suspicion that many of the most mobilized stakeholders were invested in the status quo and therefore part of the problem, appears to have made DOE leaders wary of calls for extended consultation and debate. While admitting that they did not have all the answers, they had confidence they could learn on the run, and to the extent they needed additional knowledge they were inclined to look to individuals and organizations that brought fresh ideas, norms, and traditional ways of getting things done. The administration was concerned early on about sustainability, but it believed the first stage of reform required eliminating obstacles and getting new procedures into place. The confidence that they were doing the right thing was combined with the belief that a silent majority within the city either supported them from the first or would come to support them once they experienced the benefits of the reforms. In that sense, sustainability would take care of itself. A supportive coalition would follow in the wake of the reforms' successes and be validated first by the mayor's reelection and eventually by the election of a successor who would campaign on a promise to retain the core elements or, even if tempted to do otherwise, would find those elements too entrenched and well defended to dismantle.

In our view, the administration failed to appreciate an alternative view of community engagement as a more robust approach to creating the constituencies needed to sustain reform over time. The demand for a stronger and more clearly defined collective role for parents and community, including the establishment of priorities and the formulation of policies, fueled resentment that was deeper and broader than the administration anticipated. Efforts to characterize protesting groups as "professional advocates" reflexively protecting a status quo in which they enjoyed special privilege failed to reckon with the fact that many unmobilized parents saw these groups as more legitimate. It is true and important that the mayor won the political battle over extending mayoral control with no change to his authority over the PEP and was elected to a second and third term. The multi-issue nature of mayoral elections, however, makes it problematic to interpret this as an endorsement of his educational policies; the economy, safety, and managerial competence were powerful considerations in the minds of NYC voters in November 2010. Mayor Bloomberg's winning edge seems to have depended not on swaying public school parents but on convincing others that his school reform efforts were on the right track; exit polls suggest the mayor won only 43% of the votes of public school parents compared to 55% for his Democratic competitor.⁶² This fact—that mayoral elections do

not hinge on education even when a mayor makes that a defining issue—helps explain why parent and community groups concerned about public schools remain wary of a governance system that rests primarily on those elections as the mechanism for affirmative engagement in shaping the local educational agenda.

At this point, with the advantage of a third term, it is possible that the administration will nonetheless succeed in implanting many of its initiatives and make it infeasible for future mayors and chancellors to undo key elements of their reforms. However, pursuing a strategy to get policies and programs in place rapidly, in the expectation that they will create their own sustaining coalition, is very risky. An unusual concentration of formal and informal power made it possible for the mayor and chancellor to move much more quickly and authoritatively in changing policies and practices than could be expected in other places where multiple veto points and powerful rivals make the up-front challenges of winning legislative victories or negotiating compromise the first and foremost issue of concern. The high visibility of New York City on the national stage made it an attractive place for national foundations and philanthropists to invest, and the home-grown wealth of the local financial community provided critical enabling resources as well. For other cities and districts, which are not likely to have the full range of formal and informal resources that the mayor and chancellor could muster, naively attempting to replicate their theory of action could prove to be a huge mistake.

Even in NYC and despite the seeming victory in the mayoral control battle, the backlash is strong and the potential exists that a counter-movement, animated by a different vision of community engagement, will force the administration to back off or rethink some of its initiatives. Regardless, it seems likely that these competing visions will be an important fulcrum as candidates and supporters form the messages and alliances that will determine the next administration and how it will define and execute its own agenda for school reform.

ENDNOTES

¹ We're grateful for the research and editing support provided by Research for Action research assistants, Jesse Gottschalk and Deborah Good, and interns Maggie Larson, Katherine Saviskas and Matthew Tossman, who assisted with coding the data. Henig is listed as first author to reflect the role he played in coordinating and integrating the process but each of the co-authors made substantial contributions to this article and the others are listed in alphabetical order.

² Elissa Gootman, "1,200 Parents Prepare to Take on Role as Paid Liaisons in Schools," *New York Times*, August 21, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/21/nyregion/1200-parents-prepare-to-take-on-role-as-paid-liaisons-in-schools.html>

³ Beginning more than a year before the planned legislative action, we were engaged in a major research project on the political dynamics around the mayoral control debate. The study, commissioned by the Donors Education Collaborative, focused especially on the Campaign for Better Schools, a coalition of organizations it had helped to get off the ground in the hopes of ensuring that the governance debates would include a broad range of voices. The purpose of the study was to examine DEC's strategy of support for collaboration among grassroots, advocacy, policy, and research groups to affect education policy, using the Campaign and the mayoral control debate as the lens through which to assess its grantmaking. For that project, which is distinct from and begun prior to our research specifically for this chapter, we conducted 91 interviews with a variety of actors, observers, and policymakers, and 44 observations of events and meetings. In addition, we reviewed relevant documents and closely tracked media coverage of the groups, individuals, and issues involved in the mayoral control debate and legislative negotiations.

⁴ New York State Assembly, Standing Committee on Education, Public Hearing on the Governance of the New York City School District, Queens Borough Hall, January 29, 2009.

⁵ Richard Pérez-Peña, "Albany Backs Mayoral Rule Over Schools," *New York Times*, June 11, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/11/nyregion/albany-backs-mayoral-rule-over-schools.html?pagewanted=1>.

⁶ Mayor Michael Bloomberg's education address at New York Urban League's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium, January 15, 2003.

⁷ Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

⁸ Marion Orr, "Community Organizing the Ecology of Civic Engagement," in *Transforming the City: Community Organizing and the Challenge of Political Change*, ed. Marion Orr (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 1–27.

⁹ Marion Orr and John Rogers, eds., *Public Engagement for Public Education*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰ Lydia Segal, "The Pitfalls of Political Decentralization and Proposals for Reform: The Case of New York City Public Schools," *Public Administration Review* 57, no. 2 (1997):141–149.

¹¹ Lydia Segal, "The Pitfalls of Political Decentralization and Proposals for Reform: The Case of New York City Public Schools," *Public Administration Review* 57, no. 2 (1997):149.

¹² Anemona Hartocollis and Yilu Zhao, "School Boards on the Wane, But Not Without Some Regrets," *New York Times*, June 12, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/12/nyregion/school-boards-on-the-wane-but-not-without-some-regrets.html>.

¹³ Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 151.

¹⁴ In 1996, Chancellor Crew formed a new Office of Parent Advocacy and Engagement, later renamed Office of Parent and Community Affairs (OPCA), staffed by seven parent coordinators and with an annual budget of approximately \$600,000. In 2000, Chancellor Levy replaced the OPCA with a revamped Office of Parent Advocacy and Engagement (OPAE), in an effort to increase parental involvement and to better respond to parents' problems. Laura Williams, "Crew's New Office Aims to Get Parents Involved," *New York Daily News*, October 14, 1996, <http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/1996/10/14/1996-10-14-crew-s-new-office-aims-to-ge.html>; Carl Campanile, "Levy Expels Board's Chief Parent Liaison," *New York Post*, September 19, 2000, http://www.nypost.com/p/news/levy_expels_board_chief_parent_liaison_c4CDJpKmOgoRXho3S5godN; and *New York Post*, "No Excuse for Absent Parents," November 9, 2000, <http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/opinions/2000/11/09/2000-11-09-no-excuse-for-absent-parents.html>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Interview with NYC DOE official. April, 2010.

¹⁷ Elissa Gootman, "1,200 Parents Prepare to Take on Role as Paid Liaisons in Schools," *New York Times*, August 21, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/21/nyregion/1200-parents-prepare-to-take-on-role-as-paid-liaisons-in-schools.html>

¹⁸ Interview with NYC DOE official, April, 2010; Dennis Walcott, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development, Testimony at Queens Borough Senate Hearing, Thursday, January 29, 2009.

¹⁹ Martine Guerrier, Testimony at Queens Borough Senate Hearing, January 29, 2009.

²⁰ The three reports, all issued by the Office of the Public Advocate, are: Betsy Gotbaum, *Waiting for your Call...: A Survey of New York City Department of Education Parent Coordinators* (Office of the Public Advocate of New York City, 2003), http://publicadvocategotbaum.com/new_policy/waiting_for_call.html; Betsy Gotbaum, *Still Waiting for your Call...: A Follow-Up Survey of New York City Department of Education* (Office of the Public Advocate of New York City, 2004), http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/2697still_waiting_for_your_call.pdf; and Betsy Gotbaum, *Is Anybody Listening? A Follow-Up Survey of New York City Department of Education Parent Coordinators* (Office of the Public Advocate of New York City, 2008), <http://nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/moved/pubadvocate/2008ParentCoordinatorReportfinal.pdf>

²¹ New York City Department of Education, *Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy Annual Report 2008-2009* (New York, NY: New York City Department of Education, 2009).

²² Interview with NYC DOE official, April, 2010.

²³ There are about 1.1 million students with about 1.8-2 million parents, but some families have multiple children in the system. The 35% estimate here uses as its denominator the same estimate of number of families used by DOE in presenting response rates to its annual parent survey (848,500).

²⁴ Interview with DOE official, April 2010; Interview with DOE official, May 2010.

²⁵ City of New York, *Mayor's Management Report*, 2009, http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/2010_mmr/0910_mmr.pdf

²⁶ Dennis Walcott, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development, Testimony at Queens Borough Senate Hearing, Thursday, January 29, 2009.

²⁷ We were told that this is something that may be done in future years.

²⁸ New York City Department of Education, *New York City School Survey: 2009 Citywide Results* (New York, NY: New York City Department of Education, 2009).

²⁹ According to a recent report by the city's Independent Budget Office, more than two-thirds of the city's charter schools are located in public school buildings, and the IBO calculated public support for charter schools in 2008–09 at \$16,373 per pupil for schools in DOE buildings and \$13,661 for those not in DOE buildings. New York City Independent Budget Office, "Fiscal Brief: Comparing the Level of Public Support: Charter Schools versus Traditional Public Schools" February 2010.

³⁰ Interview with DOE official, May 2010.

³¹ Joel Klein, New York City School Chancellor, Testimony at Manhattan Borough Senate Hearing, February, 2009; Garth Harries, senior executive NYC Department of Education, Testimony for the Aspen Institute NCLB Turnaround Committee.

³² Jess Wisloski, "Parent Groups Playing Hooky," *New York Daily News*, May 5, 2008, http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/queens/2008/05/06/2008-05-06_parents_groups_playing_hooky.html.

³³ In addition to leadership structures listed below, the state has mandated the establishment of the perhaps more traditional parental involvement structures of parent associations or parent-teacher associations at each school, and requires the principal to consult with these groups regularly on issues related to curriculum, budget, discipline, safety, food services, and special programs.

³⁴ Office of the New York City Comptroller, "Powerless Parents," The New York City Comptroller's Office, http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/opm/reports/05-20-09_powerless-parents.pdf

³⁵ DOE official, phone conversation, October 5, 2010.

³⁶ New York City Department of Education, "Regulation of the Chancellor, Number A-655, 2010," New York City Department of Education, <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/381F4607-7841-4D28-B7D5-0F30DDB77DFA/82007/A655FINAL1.pdf>.

³⁷ Dennis Walcott's testimony, as quoted in Gail Robinson, "Hanging Up on Parents?" *Gotham Gazette*, May 22, 2006, <http://www.gothamgazette.com/print/1860>.

³⁸ New York City Department of Education, "Citywide and Community Education Councils, 2010," New York City Department of Education, <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/CEC/default.htm>.

³⁹ Jess Wisloski, "Parent Groups Playing Hooky," *New York Daily News*, May 5, 2008, http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/queens/2008/05/06/2008-05-06_parents_groups_playing_hooky.html; Richard Gentilviso, "Community Education Council Election

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⁴⁰ Jennifer Freeman, “CEC Q&A: promoting democracy at home.” Insideschools.org, <http://insideschools.org/blog/?url=http://insideschools.org/blog/2009/02/23/cec-elections-promoting-democracy-at-home/>

⁴¹ Rachel Monahan and Meredith Kolodner, “Number of candidates for New York City school council races plunges,” *Daily News*, April 7, 2009.

⁴² Some of the city’s enlistment of intermediary organizations is traceable to the New Century High School Initiative funded by Gates and Carnegie, among others, and begun under previous administrations. New Visions, one of the most important of the intermediary groups, was formed at this time. For background on how the Bloomberg/Klein administration drew these groups more directly into a school support role, see Jonathan Gyurko and Jeffrey Henig, “NYC: Strong Vision, Learning by Doing, or the Politics of Muddling Through?,” in *Between Public and Private: Politics, Governance, and the New Portfolio Models for Urban School Reform*, eds. Katrina E. Bulkley, Jeffrey R. Henig and Henry M. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2010); and Joan E. Talbert, in this volume.

⁴³ The DOE reports that it has now assigned a point person to each cluster in an effort to encourage more engagement efforts (DOE official, telephone conversation, October 5, 2010).

⁴⁴ Interview with DOE official, January, 2010.

⁴⁵ Interview with former state official, August, 2008.

⁴⁶ Mark S. Weprin of Queens, quoted in Jennifer Medina and Elissa Gootman, “Campaign to Keep Schools Under Mayor’s Thumb,” *New York Times*, September 1, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/02/nyregion/02control.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Campaign%20to%20keep%20schools%20under%20mayors%20thumb&st=cse.

⁴⁷ Much of the original data collection for the sections on the mayoral control battle was undertaken as part of the two- year study Research for Action, in collaboration with Professor Jeffrey Henig of Teachers College, conducted of the Campaign for Better Schools for the Donors’ Education Collaborative (DEC). For more detailed accounts, see report series: Eva Gold et al., *The Campaign for Better Schools: Building a Coalition, Gaining Recognition and Forging a Platform to Influence the Terms of the Mayoral Control Debate in NYC, May 2008–May 2009* (Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action, 2009); and Eva Gold et al., *The Campaign for Better Schools: Outcomes of the Mayoral Control Debate—Changes to NYC School Governance Legislation and Long-Term Effects, May 2009–May 2010* (Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action, 2010).

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Canada, “Accountability = Achievement, Says Top Children’s Advocate,” *New York Daily News*, November 22, 2008, http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2008/11/23/2008-11-23_accountability_achievement_says_top_chi.html.

⁴⁹ Beth Fertig, “Lobbying Groups for Mayoral Control of Schools Raised \$7.5M,” *WNYC*, March 2, 2010, <http://www.wnyc.org/news/articles/151088>

⁵⁰ Jesse Gottschalk, *Addendum to Year 2 Report: The Mayoral Debate and the Media: The Campaign for Better Schools and other Actors in the Public Lens, September 2008–May 2010* (Philadelphia: Research for Action, 2010).

⁴⁷ See, for example, Anna Phillips, “A state of frenzy with 10 days left before mayor’s control expires,” *Gotham Schools*, June 20, 2009, <http://gothamschools.org/>.

⁴⁸ Interview with journalist, October, 2009.

⁵³ Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control. *Recommendations on School Governance*. (New York: author, March 2009).

⁵⁴ Jesse Gottschalk, *Addendum to Year 2 Report: The Mayoral Debate and the Media: The Campaign for Better Schools and other Actors in the Public Lens, September 2008–May 2010* (Philadelphia: Research for Action, 2010).

⁵⁵ Interview with journalist, October, 2009.

⁵⁶ Eva Gold et al., *The Campaign for Better Schools: Building a Coalition, Gaining Recognition and Forging a Platform to Influence the Terms of the Mayoral Control Debate in NYC, May 2008–May 2009* (Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action, 2009); Eva Gold et al., *The Campaign for Better Schools: Outcomes of the Mayoral Control Debate—Changes to NYC School Governance Legislation and Long-Term Effects, May 2009–May 2010* (Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action, 2010); and Gottschalk, J. *Addendum to Year 2 Report: The Mayoral Debate and the Media: The Campaign for Better Schools and other Actors in the Public Lens, September 2008–May 2010*. Philadelphia: Research for Action, 2010.

⁵⁷ Interview with local official. October, 2009.

⁵⁸ For a much fuller analysis of the question of who won and who lost see Eva Gold et al., *The Campaign for Better Schools: Outcomes of the Mayoral Control Debate—Changes to NYC School Governance Legislation and Long-Term Effects, May 2009–May 2010* (Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action, 2010).

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Benjamin, “Liu Will Audit DOE’s ‘Musical Chairs’ School Closures,” *New York Daily News*, January 28, 2010, <http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/dailypolitics/2010/01/liu-will-audit-does-musical-ch.html>.

⁶⁰ Sharon Otterman, “Judge blocks closing of 19 New York City Schools,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/27/nyregion/27close.html>.

⁶¹ Our characterization of leaders’ thinking is based on multiple interviews and observation of Campaign meetings.

⁶² *New York Times*, “Profile of New York City Voters,” November 4, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/11/04/nyregion/1104-ny-exit-poll.html>.