

2005 STRAW POLL OF NEW YORK CITY EDUCATION ACTIVISTS

National Center for Schools and Communities
Fordham University
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INTRODUCTION

Debates over which statistic most accurately represents the tragic drop out rate in New York City Public Schools or what to do with funds from a court settlement that may or may not materialize any time soon frequently dominated the discussion of education policy during the recent campaign season. The mission of the National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University (NCSC) charges us to “provide analysis and information to strengthen grassroots efforts for school reform.”

This briefing unpacks our findings from a straw poll of just over 500 New York City education activists. We hope that this sounding of New Yorkers who are committed better public schools will contribute to a broader and, perhaps, more nuanced dialogue about what our community’s education priorities might be.

Among this group, at least, we found virtually no support for the City continuing the current set of strategies that includes mayoral control, new small schools, standardized testing, grade retention, and uniform literacy and math programs.

This straw poll documented focused support for a set of educational strategies, some of which contrast sharply with the Mayor and Chancellor’s agenda:

- Reducing class size and overcrowding.
- Improving the quality of instruction available to all students.
- Adopting assessment techniques that move away from cookie-cutter approaches.
- Implementing the framework and increased financial support required by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision.

The analysis and interpretation summarized in this briefing are solely those of the NCSC and in no way represent official positions of the Graduate Schools of Education and Social Service or Fordham University as an institution.

METHODOLOGY

In developing the Education Activist Straw Poll, we attempted to frame a range of policy options that represent the diverse priorities of the many groups that populate the world of New York City school reform. We circulated the draft lists -- one a list of possible priorities for City Hall and the Department of Education (DOE), another a list of possible priorities for the organized school reform community – to a number of organizations. We used their feedback to refine the survey. We then piloted the instrument with a number of colleagues to identify mechanical issues with the survey and made additional adjustments.

The survey was available on the National Center for Schools and Communities’ website from Thursday, November 17 to Monday, December 5. NCSC staff posted the survey link directly to some listservs and requested list managers to post it to others requiring moderated access. Most of the lists through which we distributed the survey link are opt-

in; in other words, we can be fairly confident that recipients of our invitation have expressed an explicit interest in school reform issues. We also invited colleagues of the Center who have an established interest in improving schools to take the survey.

The analysis and discussion in this briefing are based on 501 responses. This self-selected group holds intrinsic interest but does not represent a formal sample of New York City education activists.

The survey begins by asking people to rank their first, second, and third preference from a list of possible policy initiatives for City Hall and the Department of Education, including “stay the course.”

Now that the election is behind us, what should the top three priorities be for the Mayor and Chancellor?

- A) Stay the course with the administration's current package of mayoral control, small schools, standardized testing, grade retention, and uniform literacy and math programs.
- B) Strengthen and expand early childhood education (Pre-k to 3).
- C) Reduce class size citywide to research-based limits of 18 for K-3, 22 for grades 4-8, and 25 for high school, with still smaller classes in highest needs schools.
- D) Reduce overcrowding system-wide by leasing more buildings, expanding and restructuring the capital plan for schools, and providing incentives for real estate developers to build schools.
- E) Place highly qualified, well-supported teachers in every classroom.
- F) Base student evaluation on classroom performance and standards-based and portfolio assessment rather than standardized testing.
- G) To address the continuing gap between elementary and middle school outcomes, focus additional resources and creativity on grades 6 to 9.
- H) Establish effective policies, resources, and practices to coordinate and smooth student transition from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school.
- I) Open additional small schools under the Mayor and Chancellor's small schools initiative.
- J) Place a moratorium on opening additional small schools under the Mayor and Chancellor's small schools initiative.
- K) Open more charter schools.
- L) Place a moratorium on opening more charter schools.
- M) Expand the Impact Schools Program.
- N) Eliminate the Impact Schools Program.
- O) Reduce drop out, push out, and counseling to GED and improve the four-year graduation rate.
- P) Bring all special needs education and programming for ELL into compliance with legal standards and established best practice.

- Q) Develop an ongoing strategy to address institutional racism in the public school system.
- R) Provide transparent, accessible reporting of spending, policies, and outcomes, including those for the Children's First" reforms.
- S) Increase consultation with parents and other stakeholders about spending and policy decisions.
- T) Other

Then, respondents undertook a parallel exercise prioritizing strategic options for the local school reform community. The two lists overlap but are not identical because the scope of action and resources available to City Hall and DOE, on the one hand, and to students, parents, and their allies, on the other, are distinct. For example, formal responsibility for the initial implementation of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity court decision -- a potential priority for local activists -- resides with the Governor and Legislature, not City government. These options were:

What do you believe the top three strategic priorities for education justice activists should be?

- A) Reduce class size.
- B) Improve the quality of classroom instruction.
- C) Eliminate overcrowding by building and leasing more school facilities.
- D) Eliminate use of standardized testing for promotion, retention, graduation, and teacher ratings.
- E) Organize more charter schools and community-driven small schools.
- F) Preserve the successful educational environments of small schools established in the nineties and late eighties.
- G) Using a human rights framework, develop system change proposals for implementation after the 2009 legislative sunset of mayoral control.
- H) Restructure school discipline policy to eliminate inequities and tracking into educational settings that do not meet NYS constitutional standards.
- I) Establish ongoing, authentic mechanisms through which students affect educational policy that affects them.
- J) Eliminate the impact of institutional racism on students.
- K) Force the State and City to comply with the content (class size, teacher quality, and school facilities) and accountability criteria for a sound basic education as mandated by the NYS Court of Appeals decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case.
- L) Force the State to ensure the funding required by the CFE decision.
- M) Make Community Education Councils effective representatives of public school stakeholders.
- N) Through parent associations, community groups, School Leadership Teams, and

other official or grassroots mechanisms, increase the influence of parents and students over their community's schools.

O) Eliminate forced grade retention policies.

P) Other

With the exception of a set of open-ended questions,¹ the findings of which we will present in a future briefing, the remainder of the survey probes for various respondent characteristics such as parenting status, race, and organizational orientation that relate to differences in their school reform priorities.

We should identify two structural weaknesses in our research methodology. This survey is particularly inaccessible to parents who, despite a deep commitment to better public schools, might lack the economic resources necessary to be wired into the Internet or the educational opportunities required to be computer literate. Second, the survey is in English but deals with a school system that is highly multi-lingual. We hope to correct this latter problem in future generations of this survey.

Finally, a specific reservation about the response group: Students are sparsely represented for reasons related to our lack of access to e-lists serving students. The NCSC is currently involved in projects that we hope will expand our options for collaborating with organized students in the future.

FINDINGS

Demographics

Who are the 501 education activists who responded to the straw poll? Nearly 70 percent of the respondents (69.6) had a child, grandchild, or foster child in the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). Compared to the enrollment of the New York City Public Schools, respondents were disproportionately white. (This relates, in part at least, to issues of language and technology access mentioned earlier.) Compared to the school enrollment by borough, Manhattan is over-represented. Queens and the Bronx are under-represented. The following table provides demographics of straw poll respondents. Compared to the general population, they have more formal education than the general population.

¹ In your opinion, what has been the biggest challenge or barrier to the success of New York City Public School in the past four years?

What do you believe has been the most significant positive change for the New York City Public Schools in the past four years?

In your opinion, what will be the biggest challenge or barrier to the success of the New York City Public Schools over the next four years?

Table I. RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATION ACTIVIST STRAW POLL			
FEATURE		STRAW POLL	
Responsible for one or more NYCPS students n = 490	Yes	69.6%	
	No	30.4%	
			<i>NYCPS Enrollment</i>
Ethnicity n = 474	White	66.9%	15.0%
	Black	14.6%	34.0%
	Hispanic	11.4%	38.2%
	Asian & others*	7.2%	12.8%
Residency n = 496	% Brooklyn	30.2%	29%
	% Bronx	7.1%	21%
	% Manhattan	39.1%	15%
	% Queens	13.1%	28%
	% Staten Island	5.8%	6%
	% Elsewhere	4.6%	n/a
Organizational home base** n = 493	Parent related	47.7%	
	Public school educator	14.4%	
	Policy organization	17.2%	
	Community-base organizations	5.2%	
	Other	14.0%	
	Blank	1.6%	
Highest level of education n = 495	% Elementary School through Associate's Degree	17.2%	
	% Bachelor's Degree	21.4%	
	% At Least Some Graduate School	61.4%	
			<i>City-wide Results</i>
Voted for mayor n = 459	Bloomberg	18.5%	57.3%
	Ferrer	52.3%	38.3%
	Others	13.7%	4.5%
	Percent of eligible voters voting	86.6%	30.6%

* Other includes Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives and Native Americans.

** Categories based on "organizational home base" question. See survey in appendix.

Respondents voted for Bloomberg at less than the citywide rate (less than 19 percent compared to over 57 percent citywide. They were also somewhat more likely to have voted for Ferrer (over 52 percent compared to 38 percent citywide.)

Like its voting habits, the reading habits of this group are atypical. Almost half (47 percent, n=477) read the New York Times. At 37 percent, the second largest group lists a

variety of other news sources, including the Staten Island Advance which we neglected to include in our options, and NY1. Most, however, refer to Internet and organizational resources rather than publications or mainstream media.

Although the notion of membership in many of the groups polled can be a fairly porous concept, various questions delved into the organizational “significant others” or reference points of respondents. In response to the question, “Which of the following do you most respect as a source of information and informed opinion about public school reform in NYC?” respondents (n= 451) selected one of 22 options. The top three were Inside Schools/Advocates for Children (20.2 percent); Class Size Matters (15.3 percent); and Other listservs, websites, or email bulletin (13.5 percent). For the full list of choices, see the survey in the appendix.

Strategies for School Improvement: Priorities

The straw poll asked participants to pick their top three education reform policies for the Department of Education and City Hall and their top three priorities for New York City’s education activist community. A full description of people’s selections is in the appendix. The following tables present the top four policy options for DOE/City Hall and the school reformers defined by the number of individuals who selected them as their unduplicated first, second, or third priority.

Table 3. TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE MAYOR AND CHANCELLOR					
	1st Priority	2nd Priority*	3rd Priority**	Total	Total as a Percent of all Surveyed (n=501)
Reduce Class Size	201	80	35	316	63.1%
Highly Qualified Teachers for All	66	83	76	225	44.9%
Reduce Overcrowding	39	84	42	165	32.9%
Assessment that Serves Instruction	37	62	58	157	31.3%

* Figures for the third priority exclude those who indicated that the same item was their first priority.

** Figures for the third priority exclude those who indicated that the same item was their first or second priority.

Respondents see reducing class size to research-based levels as the top priority for both the administration and their own advocacy work. Nearly two thirds (63.1 percent) listed it as their first, second, or third choice for City Hall, and nearly half (48.7 percent) thought it should be one of the top three priorities for New Yorkers working for better schools.

	1st Priority	2nd Priority*	3rd Priority**	Total	Total as a Percent of all Surveyed (n=501)
Reduce Class Size	146	60	38	244	48.7%
CFE Accountability	78	61	52	191	38.1%
Improved Instruction	52	68	54	174	34.7%
CFE Funding	52	45	55	152	30.3%

* Figures for the third priority exclude those who indicated that the same item was their first priority.

** Figures for the third priority exclude those who indicated that the same item was their first or second priority.

Putting a highly qualified teacher in every classroom was the second priority for the administration, and improving the quality classroom education – the closest instruction-related equivalent for the community options – was the third priority for the advocates.

Combined, the interest in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity issues would vie for most popular first choice. However, we separated the options into one focusing on the content of the CFE court decision and another touching on what has become the debate over how to spend the additional money the courts have said the City requires to offer a sound basic education. (This debate has raged despite the fact that the court order lays out a set of criteria for allocating the total cost of a sound basic education.)

Twenty-three people (4.6 percent) identify “staying the course,” as the first, second, or third priority for the administration. We defined staying the course as “the administration’s current package of mayoral control, small schools, standardized testing, grade retention, and uniform literacy and math programs.” (See full listing of “Respondents Top Priorities for Mayor and Chancellor” in the Appendix.)

“Student evaluation on classroom performance and standards-based and portfolio assessment rather than standardized testing” came in fourth for the number of respondents identifying it as their first, second, or third high priority for the administration.

The following two tables explore whether different groups within the respondents do or do not tend to set their priorities differently.

Priority	Parent Status ²		Race ³		Highest Level of Education		2005 Mayoral Vote ⁴		
	Responsible for a Child in Public School n=341	Responsible for no Child in Public School n=149	White n=317	Black, Hispanic, Asian & Other n=157	Less than Graduate School n=191	At Least Some Graduate School n=304	Bloomberg n=85	Ferrer n=236	Voted for Another Candidate n=59
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Reduce Class Size	66.9 (228)	55.7 (83)**	65.3 (207)	59.2 (93)	62.3 (119)	64.5 (196)	48.2 (41)**	67.8 (160)	59.3 (35)
Highly Qualified Teachers for All	47.2 (161)	40.3 (60)	45.1 (143)	45.9 (72)	49.7 (95)	42.8 (130)	51.8 (44)	41.5 (98)	40.7 (24)
Reduce Overcrowding	37.0 (126)	24.2 (36)**	33.4 (106)	33.8 (53)	39.3 (75)	29.6 (90)**	42.4 (36)	32.2 (76)	20.3 (12)**
Assessment that Serves Instruction	32.8 (112)	29.5 (44)	33.8 (107)	28.0 (44)	30.9 (59)	32.2 (98)	18.8 (16)**	36.9 (87)	35.6 (21)

Notes: (1) Includes respondents who indicated that this was one of their top three priorities for the Mayor and Chancellor. (2) Includes parent, grandparent, or foster parent. (3) Describes race/ethnicity of family. (4) Includes only those New York City residents who voted in the mayoral election. (5) Statistical significance is indicated by: *p<0.10 and **p<0.05.

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	Responsible for a Child in Public School n=341	Responsible for no Child in Public School n=149	White n=317	Black, Hispanic, Asian & Other n=157	Less than Graduate School n=191	At Least Some Graduate School n=304	Bloomberg n=85	Ferrer n=236	Voted for Another Candidate n=59
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Reduce Class Size	54.5 (186)	35.6 (53)**	49.2 (156)	46.5 (73)	46.6 (89)	51.0 (155)	41.2 (35)	53.8 (127)*	40.7 (24)
CFE Accountability	43.1 (147)	28.2 (42)**	36.6 (116)	40.1 (63)	42.9 (82)	35.5 (108)*	37.6 (32)	37.7 (89)	40.7 (24)
Improved Instruction	37.5 (128)	45 (30.2)	34.1 (108)	35.0 (55)	40.8 (78)	31.3 (95)**	51.8 (44)*	31.4 (74)	28.8 (17)
CFE Funding	30.5 (104)	30.9 (46)	34.1 (108)	23.6 (37)**	27.7 (53)	32.2 (98)	28.2 (24)	31.4 (74)	45.8 (27)*

Notes: (1) Includes participants who indicated that this was one of their top priorities for Education Activists. (2) The list of priorities for education activists included different options than the previous list. (3) Includes parent, grandparent, or foster parent. (4) Describes race/ethnicity of family. (5) Includes only those New York City residents who voted in the mayoral election. (6) Statistical significance is indicated by: *p<0.10 and **p<0.05.

There are no significant differences between white respondents and black, Hispanic, and Asian and other respondents (as a group) except that white respondents are more likely to see making sure the CFE decision is funded as a priority than other respondents.

In terms of respondent education levels, those with “some graduate school” are significantly less likely to select reducing overcrowding as an administration priority and “improved instruction” as a community priority.

Respondents who are responsible for NYCPS students (‘parents’) differ significantly in their opinions from ‘non-parents.’ Class size, overcrowded schools, and CFE accountability are issues in which they diverged significantly from non-parents. They are significantly more likely to support reduction of class size as both administration and community priorities and overcrowding as an administration priority than non-parents. They were also more likely to identify CFE accountability as an activist priority than non-parents.

Respondent voting patterns also related significantly with their choice of administrative and community priorities. The sample population voted solidly in favor of Ferrer (52 percent vs. 19 percent). Ferrer voters and voters who voted for another candidate were more likely than Bloomberg voters to find reduction of class size to be an administrative priority. Similarly, they were more likely to support ‘assessment that serves instruction’ as an administrative priority. Those who voted for Ferrer differed in their choice of community priorities as well. They were more likely to choose reduction of class size as a community priority than voters who voted for Bloomberg or another candidate and less likely to choose improved instruction as a top community priority than Bloomberg voters. Respondents voting for another candidate were more likely than those voting for either Ferrer or Bloomberg to choose CFE funding as a top community priority and less likely than Bloomberg voters to see reducing overcrowding as an administrative priority.

Discussion

We base our analysis and discussion in this briefing on 501 responses. This self-selected group in no way represents a formal sample of NYC education activists. The mining of their opinions and the relationships *among* their responses, however, draws on appropriate statistical tests. However, these respondents are citizens of the region of public affairs where people participate in parent associations, teacher caucuses, and grassroots organizations concerned with school improvement. They provide research on best practice to teachers and policy analysis for decision makers. They turn out on the steps of City Hall and the Tweed Court House to insist that politicians and a wider public address specific educational issues. They vote.

Three major points stand out in the findings detailed in the previous section.

First, there is no evidence to support a mandate for the continuation of the DOE/City Hall education strategy.

Less than two dozen people who pay above average attention to what is happening in the schools feel that continuing the current set of strategies is a top priority for the city officials in charge of our schools.

Although harsher, this finding is consistent with the New York City Mayoral Election Study: General Election Telephone Exit Poll.² About a third of those polled (36 percent) agreed that the schools have improved; 14 percent thought worse and 24 percent that schools are the same. Furthermore, only 21 percent of Bloomberg voters said that schools were the issue “most likely to have influenced their votes.”

Second, there is strong convergence around a short list of priorities

- Reducing class size and overcrowding.
- Improving the quality of instruction available to all students.
- Adopting assessment techniques that move away from cookie-cutter approaches.
- Implementing the framework and increased financial support required by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision.

Reducing class size is the first priority for officials by a margin that is over 40 percent higher than the next three contenders for first choice combined. As a first choice for community advocacy it also outstrips the second choice. Moreover, parents of public school students are even more likely to support downsizing both class size and overcrowding.

When we look at the combination of first, second, and third choices by strategy, we see that nearly 70 percent of respondents are committed to supporting the framework of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision or pushing the state to implement the increased financing mandated by the court.

Third, some of the most strongly supported priorities for both Tweed and the school reform community are in tension with the status quo. For example, the class size reduction proponents in New York consistently fault the City for failing to comply completely with the state and contractual class size limits currently on the books and point out that research, in fact, supports yet lower caps.

The implementation of the City’s version of small schools has consistently complicated pre-existing overcrowding at larger schools selected to house the new schools.

DOE’s use of standardized tests to benchmark No Child Left Behind progress and make retention and graduation decisions is at odds with respondents from groups who advocate for a standards-based (as opposed to standardized) approach that uses multiple forms of assessment.

² Trichter, J and Paige, C (2005 November 9). *New York City Mayoral Election Study: General Election Telephone Exit Poll*. Pace University with New York Observer, WCBS 2 News, WNYC Radio. New York, NY.

APPENDIX



The National Center for Schools & Communities at Fordham University (NCSC) is conducting a post-election survey of concerned parents and students, education activists, and other stakeholders in New York City public schools to highlight the policy priorities of this community. NCSC will analyze these data and disseminate survey results to elected officials, the news media, and the education community.

We appreciate your assistance in making this survey as useful as possible. By fully completing this survey, you will help all of us in the education justice community understand who we are and how we think about this work. All survey data collected by NCSC will remain confidential. This survey should take about fifteen minutes to complete.

We would be happy to email the results of the survey to you personally at (please fill in email address):

1. Now that the election is behind us, what should the top three priorities be for the Mayor and Chancellor?

- A)...Stay the course with the administration's current package of mayoral control, small schools, standardized testing, grade retention, and uniform literacy and math programs.
- B)...Strengthen and expand early childhood education (Pre-k to 3).
- C)...Reduce class size citywide to research-based limits of 18 for K-3, 22 for grades 4-8, and 25 for high school, with still smaller classes in highest needs schools.
- D)...Reduce overcrowding system-wide by leasing more buildings, expanding and restructuring the capital plan for schools, and providing incentives for real estate developers to build schools.
- E)...Place highly qualified, well-supported teachers in every classroom.
- F)...Base student evaluation on classroom performance and standards-based and portfolio assessment rather than standardized testing.
- G)...To address the continuing gap between elementary and middle school outcomes, focus additional resources and creativity on grades 6 to 9.
- H)...Establish effective policies, resources, and practices to coordinate and smooth student transition from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school.
- I)...Open additional small schools under the Mayor and Chancellor's small schools initiative.
- J)...Place a moratorium on opening additional small schools under the Mayor and Chancellor's small schools initiative.
- K)...Open more charter schools.
- L)...Place a moratorium on opening more charter schools.
- M)...Expand the Impact Schools Program.
- N)...Eliminate the Impact Schools Program.
- O)...Reduce drop out, push out, and counseling to GED and improve the four-year graduation rate.
- P)...Bring all special needs education and programming for ELL into compliance with legal standards and established best practice.
- Q)...Develop an ongoing strategy to address institutional racism in the public school system.
- R)...Provide transparent, accessible reporting of spending, policies, and outcomes, including those for the Children's First" reforms.
- S)...Increase consultation with parents and other stakeholders about spending and policy decisions.
- T)...Other

a. First priority (please select the appropriate letter):

b. Second priority (please select the appropriate letter):

c. Third priority (please select the appropriate letter):

2. What do you believe the top three strategic priorities for education justice activists should be?

- A)...Reduce class size.
- B)...Improve the quality of classroom instruction.
- C)...Eliminate overcrowding by building and leasing more school facilities.
- D)...Eliminate use of standardized testing for promotion, retention, graduation, and teacher ratings.
- E)...Organize more charter schools and community-driven small schools.
- F)...Preserve the successful educational environments of small schools established in the nineties and late eighties.
- G)...Using a human rights framework, develop system change proposals for implementation after the 2009 legislative sunset of mayoral control.
- H)...Restructure school discipline policy to eliminate inequities and tracking into educational settings that do not meet NYS constitutional standards.
- I)...Establish ongoing, authentic mechanisms through which students affect educational policy that affects them.
- J)...Eliminate the impact of institutional racism on students.
- K)...Force the State and City to comply with the content (class size, teacher quality, and school facilities) and accountability criteria for a sound basic education as mandated by the NYS Court of Appeals decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case.
- L)...Force the State to ensure the funding required by the CFE decision.
- M)...Make Community Education Councils effective representatives of public school stakeholders.
- N)...Through parent associations, community groups, School Leadership Teams, and other official or grassroots mechanisms, increase the influence of parents and students over their community's schools.
- O)...Eliminate forced grade retention policies.
- P)....Other

a. First priority (please select the appropriate letter):

b. Second priority (please select the appropriate letter):

c. Third priority (please select the appropriate letter):

3. Please tell us something more about your perspective.

a. Which of the following do you most rely on as a source of news about public school reform in NYC? (Please select one from this pull down list.)

AM New York
Amsterdam News
El Diario
Hoy
Metro
Newsday
New York Daily News
New York Observer
New York Post
New York Times
New York Sun
Wall Street Journal
Other News Source

b. Which of the following do you most respect as a source of information and informed opinion about public school reform in NYC? (Please select one from this pull down list.)

Alliance for Quality Education
Association of New York City Educaiton Councils
Campaign for Fiscal Equity
Center for Educational Innovation/Public Education Association (CEI-PEA)
Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC)
Class Size Matters
Education Priorities Panel
Fair Test
ICOPE (Independent Commission on Public Education)
Inside Schools/Advocates for Children
NYCORE (New York Collective of Radical Educators)
Our Schools Now
Institute for Education and Social Policy (NYU)
National Center for Schools and Communities (Fordham)
PENNY (Progressive Education Network of New York)
TC Record (Teachers College)
Time Out for Testing
United Federation of Teachers
United Parents Association
NYC Department of Education/City Hall
Other listserv, web site or e-mail bulletin

c. In the recent New York City mayoral election, on which line did you cast your ballot? (Please select one from pull down list.)

Conservative
Democrat
Education Party
Green Party

Independence
Liberal
Libertarian
Rent Is Too Damn High
Republican
Socialist Workers
Other (including write-in)
I did not vote for NYC Mayor.

d. In your opinion, what has been the biggest challenge or barrier to the success of the New York City Public Schools in the past four years? Please describe.

e. What do you believe has been the most significant positive change for the New York City Public Schools in the past four years? Please describe.

f. In your opinion, what will be the biggest challenge or barrier to the success of the New York City Public Schools over the next four years? Please describe.

4. Who are New York City's education activists? Please let us know a bit more about you to make the results of this survey more interesting.

a. Where do you live? (Please check one.)

Brooklyn
Bronx
Manhattan
Queens
Staten Island
Westchester, Suffolk, or Nassau County
Orange, Putnam, or Rockland County
Somewhere else within the NY metropolitan area
None of the above

b. I am currently the adult responsible for the education of the following NYC public school students (please check all that apply):

My child or children
My grandchild or grandchildren
One or more foster children
No child at this time

c. My organizational home base for school reform work is (please select one):

Parents' association
School leadership team (or similar parent participation committee)
Concerned parent
Education advocacy organization
Student government
Concerned student
Independent youth organization
Civil or human rights organization
Community organization, block club, or tenant organization
Teaching in a NYC public school
Teachers' union
Other union
Other NYC public school employment
Other public policy organization
Other political organization
University or college
Elected official
My unaffiliated commitment to school improvement

d. What is your highest level of education? (Please select one.)

Elementary or middle school
Some high school
GED
High school diploma
Trade school or apprentice certification
Some college
Associate's degree
Bachelor's degree
Some graduate school
Master's or other professional degree
Doctorate

e. In terms of how the NYC Department of Education identifies students, where would your family fit in regards to race/ethnicity?

White
Black
Hispanic
Asian and others*

* Other includes: Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, and Native Americans.

f. How do you prefer to identify your family in terms of race/ethnicity?

g. Which list serve, organization, or other source referred you to this survey?

5. Would you like to be included on our mailing list? If so, please include your contact information below.

a. Name:

b. Organization (if applicable):

c. Street Address:

d. City:

e. State:

h. Zip code:

i. Telephone number:

j. Email:

6. Are there any other comments that you would like to include in this survey?



Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey.

To learn more about how your group can work with the National Center for Schools & Communities at Fordham University

[please click here.](#)

RESPONDENTS' TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE MAYOR AND CHANCELLOR	1st Priority		2nd Priority		3rd Priority	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reduce class size citywide to research-based limits of 18 for K-3, 22 for grades 4-8, and 25 for high school, with still smaller classes in highest needs schools.	201	40.4	80	16.2	35	7.2
Place highly qualified, well-supported teachers in every classroom.	66	13.3	83	16.8	77	15.7
Other priority.	44	8.9	26	5.3	40	8.2
Reduce overcrowding system-wide by leasing more buildings, expanding and restructuring the capital plan for schools, and providing incentives for real estate developers to build schools.	39	7.8	84	17.0	44	9.0
Base student evaluation on classroom performance and standards-based and portfolio assessment rather than standardized testing.	37	7.4	63	12.8	59	12.1
Strengthen and expand early childhood education (Pre-k to 3).	17	3.4	30	6.1	17	3.5
To address the continuing gap between elementary and middle school outcomes, focus additional resources and creativity on grades 6 to 9.	17	3.4	14	2.8	44	9.0
Develop an ongoing strategy to address institutional racism in the public school system.	15	3.0	22	4.5	25	5.1
Increase consultation with parents and other stakeholders about spending and policy decisions.	15	3.0	16	3.2	28	5.7
Bring all special needs education and programming for ELL into compliance with legal standards and established best practice.	12	2.4	16	3.2	25	5.1
Stay the course with the administration's current package of mayoral control, small schools, standardized testing, grade retention, and uniform literacy and math programs.	11	2.2	10	2.0	2	0.4
Reduce drop out, push out, and counseling to GED and improve the four-year graduation rate.	9	1.8	18	3.7	16	3.3
Provide transparent, accessible reporting of spending, policies, and outcomes, including those for the "Children's First" reforms.	6	1.2	13	2.6	22	4.5
Place a moratorium on opening additional small schools under the Mayor and Chancellor's small schools initiative.	3	0.6	2	0.4	4	0.8
Establish effective policies, resources, and practices to coordinate and smooth student transition from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school.	2	0.4	8	1.6	18	3.7
Open more charter schools.	2	0.4	3	0.6	6	1.2
Open additional small schools under the Mayor and Chancellor's small schools initiative.	1	0.2	3	0.6	17	3.5
Place a moratorium on opening more charter schools.	0	0.0	1	0.2	2	0.4
Expand the Impact Schools Program.	0	0.0	1	0.2	2	0.4
Eliminate the Impact Schools Program.	0	0.0	0		6	1.2
Total	497	100.0	493	100.0	489	100.0

RESPONDENTS' TOP PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION ACTIVISTS	1st Priority		2nd Priority		3rd Priority	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reduce class size.	146	29.4	60	12.1	39	8.0
Force the State and City to comply with the content (class size, teacher quality, and school facilities) and accountability criteria for a sound basic education as mandated by the NYS Court of Appeals decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case.	78	15.7	61	12.3	52	10.7
Improve the quality of classroom instruction.	52	10.5	69	14.0	56	11.5
Force the State to ensure the funding required by the CFE decision.	52	10.5	45	9.1	55	11.3
Eliminate use of standardized testing for promotion, retention, graduation, and teacher ratings.	31	6.2	60	12.1	50	10.3
Through parent associations, community groups, School Leadership Teams, and other official or grassroots mechanisms, increase the influence of parents and students over their community's schools.	30	6.0	31	6.3	51	10.5
Eliminate the impact of institutional racism on students.	24	4.8	15	3.0	27	5.5
Eliminate overcrowding by building and leasing more school facilities.	19	3.8	74	15.0	48	9.9
Using a human rights framework, develop system change proposals for implementation after the 2009 legislative sunset of mayoral control.	19	3.8	14	2.8	15	3.1
Other priority.	17	3.4	8	1.6	16	3.3
Establish ongoing, authentic mechanisms through which students affect educational policy that affects them.	8	1.6	5	1.0	6	1.2
Organize more charter schools and community-driven small schools.	7	1.4	10	2.0	14	2.9
Preserve the successful educational environments of small schools established in the nineties and late eighties.	6	1.2	12	2.4	16	3.3
Restructure school discipline policy to eliminate inequities and tracking into educational settings that do not meet NYS constitutional standards.	4	0.8	10	2.0	13	2.7
Eliminate forced grade retention policies.	3	0.6	8	1.6	7	1.4
Make Community Education Councils effective representatives of public school stakeholders.	1	0.2	12	2.4	22	4.5
Total	497	100.0	494	100.0	487	100.0