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SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF
MAYORAL CONTROL IN NEW YORK CITY 2002-2009

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Secondary School Teacher and Principal Perceptions of
Mayoral Control in New York City 2002-2009

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This qualitative research study analyzed perceptions held by principals and teachers about the effectiveness of mayoral control in New York City from 2002 to 2009 as a form of school governance and as an educational reform strategy. In particular, it examined how the teachers and principals perceived student achievement under mayoral control. Teachers and administrators work at the organizational level closest to students and how they “make sense” of reform efforts and perceive “conflict” in the school system is an important component of educational reform. Data from 70 interviews at 3 high schools revealed that most teachers and principals perceived greater stability in district-level leadership, an increase in accountability at all levels due to a “business mentality,” and an increase in student achievement under mayoral control, which concurs with the literature. School structure influenced participants’ perceptions; teachers who worked at magnet schools reported little to no effect from organizational changes and reform initiatives, compared to effects reported by teachers at small and large high schools that were direct targets of the Mayor’s and Chancellor’s reform initiatives. Perceptions differed with regard to perceived experience and understanding of organizational changes and reform initiatives under mayoral control: Principals experienced changes to a greater degree than

did teachers, reflecting that people are affected only by initiatives that directly impact their day-to-day operations. Despite reforms initiated under mayoral control, teachers and principals lack of money, small class sizes, parent involvement, and individual student responsibility as the major roadblocks to further improvement of student performance. Some participants saw the goal of mayoral control to dismantle the teachers union and divide teachers; others saw the teachers union as a roadblock to improvement because it protects “poor teachers.” While slightly more participants supported mayoral control and its reauthorization at the time of the interviews (2009-2010), current (2012) empirical evidence suggests that the role of the teachers union and teachers’ public opinions of mayoral control may have changed.

Dedication

To my grandfather, Joseph Wiencek, whose support, energy,
and vitality for life cannot be matched.

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In education, we often say that it “takes a village to raise a child.” At the end of this educational process, it has taken a village of people supporting me, listening to me, questioning me, pushing me, answering me, and providing me with theoretical, technological, and inspirational support to raise this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Arne Duncan, former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Chicago Public Schools and current Secretary of Education for President Obama, rattled the education world with his comments in spring 2009 when he announced his support and recommendation to all large urban public school districts to adopt a system of mayoral control.

Part of the reason urban education has struggled historically is you haven't had that leadership from the top That lack of stability, that lack of leadership, is a huge part of the reason you don't see sustained progress and growth. Given how far every city has to go until every child receives a high-quality education, we need to push on this very, very hard. ("School Chief," 2009, para. 10-11)

He also acknowledged that school governance does not need a strong system of mayoral control or a strong school board, only strong leadership at the top ("School Chief," 2009). The Secretary of Education's comments highlight the increasing level of local, state, and federal governance in education in recent years, as well as the importance of strong school leadership, especially in urban areas, which have historically suffered from lower levels of student achievement and graduation rates than other types of communities. Has strong leadership at the local level under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein in New York City (NYC) had a positive impact on increasing student achievement, according to high school principals and teachers in NYC? This study was designed to understand how effective Mayor Bloomberg's and Chancellor Klein's form of governance has been in reforming the NYC public school system from 2001 to 2009 in order to improve student achievement from the perspective of high school teachers and principals.

Purpose of the Study

Increasing Federal, State, and City Levels of Involvement in Education

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), including Title I, which provided financial assistance to schools to educate low-income urban and rural students, as it was clear that not all children were succeeding academically or equally, was the beginning of federal legislation in the arena of education and a mission to improve educational achievement for all students. However, in 1983, *A Nation at Risk* stated that “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very survival as a nation and a people” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, para. 1). Since 1983, public school systems have attempted myriad reforms to solve this crisis in public education, including changing instructional strategies, assessments, curriculums, and forms of school governance, in an effort to battle back against the “tide of mediocrity.” Under the re-enactment of ESEA in 2002, now known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education [DOE], n.d.), schools are even more concerned about increasing student achievement, especially achievement by urban and minority children, and federal pressure to improve achievement has expanded to even greater financial and legislative levels. This pressure has become even heavier in 100 of the 16,580 school districts in the country (most of which are in urban areas) because they serve 23% of the country’s school-age population, 40% of the nation’s minority students, and 30% of the nation’s economically deprived students (Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002). Many reforms have sought to eliminate the achievement gap and the inequalities in education through initiatives from the district level, the citywide level, the state level, and now ever

increasingly the federal level. As these reforms have proven to be largely unsuccessful in closing the achievement gap we have migrated from the old progressive model of running school systems back to a business model approach of running schools, as is evident in NYC under Mayor Bloomberg.

Change to Global Society

Unlike the past, education is no longer just serving to socialize newly arriving immigrants into the ways of American society. Understanding how education has changed in America requires understanding how the change in school governance has been impacted by economic, racial, and demographic factors and how urban leaders have been forced to address these factors to maintain a level of political favor with their constituents. Education must prepare future participants for their role in the national and global economy. The world has become more globalized as the economy has changed from a manufacturing-based economy to a service economy, or more interconnected through the role of human migration, international trade, and rapid movements of capital and integration of financial markets (Sassen, 1991).

Geographical dispersion of economic activity brings about new requirements for centralized management and control, or agglomeration (Sassen, 1991). Global cities have evolved as a result of spatial changes within cities and changes that have occurred in the nature of economic activities and a concomitant shift in location, whereby the production and manufacturing process within developed countries has decreased and the service economy has increased (Sassen, 1991). NYC is one such global city, requiring a large number of high-skilled workers and low-skilled workers to maintain its global status. In order for cities to survive in this era of globalization, local leaders must focus on

increasing economic offerings within urban areas to increase financial capital and compete with the rest of the world. Education will still serve as a means of producing future participants within the global economy, but there are economic, racial, and theoretical considerations for urban leaders and reformers that must be taken into account.

While deindustrialization altered the U.S. economy by moving industries to the suburbs or to less developed countries, urban education systems, such as NYC, were forced to maintain quality educational systems despite a declining tax base and an increasing number of poor minority and immigrant populations in urban classrooms. The period of deindustrialization continued to exacerbate urban problems and extend racial inequalities in America. The structural migration of inner-city areas as a result of the change in the U.S. economy accelerated the increase in joblessness among Blacks, and is the root of Black poverty (Wilson, 1996). Deindustrialization also meant a decline in unionization rates, which contributed to lower wage and nonwage compensation for less skilled workers, making education and training even more valuable and making some jobs obsolete (Wilson, 1996). An individual who used to be able to earn a decent living as an industrial worker with basic literacy skills now finds that middle-class life requires higher level skills.

In addition to changes in the global and urban economic systems, urban areas have a “majority-minority” population that has persisted despite federal and local policies to eliminate residential segregation and improve declining urban areas. To eliminate the achievement gap between African American and White students, as well as between lower-class and upper-class students, educators and policy makers must understand the

racial implications of mayoral control as a method of urban school reform. In some cases, mayoral control has been referred to as a “White initiative” because the mayor takes charge of what had been primarily minority-based, locally elected school boards that are more demographically representative of the communities that they serve (Henig & Rich, 2004). It is important to understand the implications of establishing a White or Black mayor in control of the school system as a replacement for locally elected school boards because school systems, traditionally run by locally elected school boards, have hired minorities at larger rates, for a longer period of time, and more aggressively than other government agencies or the private sector (Henig & Rich, 2004). Education has served as a place of pride and increasing social mobility for many African Americans, as well as a rallying point during the Civil Rights Movement (Henig & Rich, 2004). In NYC, the establishment of mayoral control and the elimination of locally elected community school boards had to be approved by the U.S. Department of Justice because the community school districts had been established as part of the Decentralization Law of 1968.

Changing or reorganizing a school system requires consideration of the demographic characteristics of the system, as well as the role of the electoral constituencies in the newly organized system. Local school board elections, despite typically low voter turnout, tend to result in greater representation of minority constituencies than mayoral elections, which are citywide and may involve a large number of voters who do not have children or who send their children to private schools (Henig & Rich, 2004). As urban economies have changed, local leaders have been forced to change their style of governing and their urban agendas to meet the needs of minority constituencies. According to Henig and Rich (2004), “During the first half of the

twentieth century, mayors were themselves often parochial in vision; many ignored education or focused on schools primarily as sources of patronage” (p. 11). Today, mayors must create a connected urban system that will improve urban life for all residents and visitors. Mayors such as Mayor Bloomberg often have more corporate connections that “may be better able to open up the education decision-making process so that it incorporates and responds to signals from the global economy” (Henig & Rich, 2004, p. 11). Local, state, and national leaders have interjected themselves into the traditional school board-dominated area of education through court decisions, electoral politics, and democratic responsibility (Henig & Rich, 2004). The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind law was opposite of George Bush’s Republican history to have centralized government influence the area of education, which had been historically left to state and local governments (Usdan, 2006). Yet, the majority of governance changes to mayoral-controlled school systems have come at the hand of Republican legislatures (Moscovitch et al., 2010).

NYC as a Modern, Global City

Mayor Bloomberg gained control over the NYC public school system through state legislative action. The history of school organization and governance in NYC demonstrates that education was not successful in eliminating the achievement gap under all previous forms of school system organization. Mayor Bloomberg saw “mayoral control” of the NYC public school system as an opportunity to create a different type of organization for the NYC public schools that would change NYC educational history. Ironically, his version of mayoral control was initiated at the downtown Manhattan Tweed Courthouse, site of early 19th-century NYC big boss cronyism. Since 2002,

drastic reforms have been implemented and several organizational restructurings of the system have occurred, including periods of centralization, decentralization, and “centralized decentralization” in which the NYCDOE argues that more autonomy has been given to individual school principals. The history of governance changes in NYC has been one of only partial solutions, never implemented as school leaders fully intended them, as under the period of decentralization, which meant that student achievement has not greatly improved and the achievement gap has not been significantly reduced in the past century. It has been the mission of Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein to end that trend.

In 2009, electoral politics and the legislative process determined whether Mayor Bloomberg, who lobbied the City Council and succeeded in extending term limits to 12 years and was reelected as the mayor of NYC, would maintain control over the public school system and initiate a new set of reforms to improve teaching, education, and the quality of life in NYC. State legislatures, community groups, researchers, and parents voiced their opinions and recommendations for improving NYC school governance during 2009-2010 through reports, press releases, newspaper articles, public hearings, and political demonstrations. However, the majority of teachers and principals, who are in classrooms and schools daily and are responsible for implementing Mayor Bloomberg’s and Chancellor Klein’s reforms, did not express their viewpoints outside formal union statements. This is important to note because one of the most common complaints about mayoral control in NYC has been the lack of “educator experience” at the top of the school system. To evaluate whether mayoral control has been effective in NYC and other urban areas, it is important to examine how NYC public school teachers

and principals evaluated mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg from 2002 to 2009 and whether it is an effective form of school governance for increasing student achievement.

According to Stone, Henig, Jones, and Pierannuzi (2001), survey results revealed that the top six groups or actors who people felt were especially important in education decision making were business or chamber of commerce, city government in general, school board, mayor, community groups, and teachers. Teachers have the greatest influence on student achievement (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005) and thus it is important to understand what teachers believe about the educational reforms in NYC and how they perceive its impact on student achievement levels under Mayor Bloomberg. Principals are the educational leaders of the school building, and their leadership is the connection between central office reform and school-level implementation (Liu, Rosenstein, Swan, & Khalil, 2008). They relay the reform and policy efforts from the Mayor and Chancellor and determine the level of implementation at the school level. The greatest number of organizational changes in the system has occurred at the high school level, and thus principals and teachers at this level are the focus of this investigation. High schools have the responsibility to sort and assign students, which creates and determines roles for how they will eventually enter into the economic system via the job market or higher education. Therefore, the focus of this study is to understand how macro-level policy (from the Mayor, Chancellor, and central DOE offices) affects student achievement according to secondary school teachers' and principals' perspectives because they have witnessed how reform efforts have played out at the micro level of individual schools and classrooms.

Rationale: Why Study the NYC Public School System?

When the New York state legislature reauthorized the bill giving Mayor Bloomberg control of the NYC Public Schools, they included a “sunset provision” that required the bill to be reauthorized in 2015. Providing a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of mayoral control from the perspectives of principals and teachers employed under the Bloomberg administration will aid politicians, policy makers, educators, and citizens in determining the future of school governance in NYC and in other large urban areas regarding whether school systems are operated more successfully and have higher rates of student achievement under mayoral control or under some other form of school governance.

As the largest public school system in the nation (larger than those of eight U.S. states combined), NYC faces many of the problems and challenges that other urban public school systems confront such as a high school dropout rate, many children living in poverty, a teacher shortage, frequent situations involving drug and child abuse, large immigrant populations (both transient and nontransient), a shortage of bilingual programs, and low levels of general educational achievement. As a result, the NYC public school system is a spotlight for educational systems across the world. Many have learned from NYC’s previous reform efforts about what policies and programs may work or fail and have already learned valuable lessons from other cities that operate mayoral-controlled school systems.

Mayoral control in NYC is unique in that it has experienced both trends of both centralization and decentralization during the Bloomberg administration. When Mayor Bloomberg was given legislative authority over the schools, he eliminated the Board of

Education (BOE) that was supposed to be a joint mayoral-appointed/elected school board with an Advisory Panel that had no real legitimacy in the system. In addition, increased school-based decision-making authority was delegated to individual principals at the school level to an even greater extent than was done in Chicago's and Detroit's mayoral takeovers. Bloomberg has also made several other unique reform efforts, including an attempt to alter the city's educational budget to provide equity to all schools across the city. NYC provides a valuable opportunity to analyze the effects of this centralized citywide governing power over decentralized local principal-controlled schools in terms of improvements in teaching and student learning and reduction of the achievement gap.

Why Study the Educator Perspective?

Mayor Bloomberg wrote in his memoir that “companies in the end need direction, not discussion. . . . Someone must have a vision and take others along, not the reverse (Bloomberg, 1997, as cited in Rogers, 2009, p. 30). Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have directed the NYC public school system through several organizational changes and reform efforts during their control of the system. While strong leadership is essential to the success of any successful organization, company, school system, or school, it is also important to know, understand, and consider employee perceptions of how things operate within the entity; without that knowledge, understanding, and consideration, production cannot continue to grow in an efficient and effective manner. Therefore, it is also necessary to understand how multiple forms of conflict have been perceived by employees within the organization. Mayor Bloomberg acknowledged that he tends to “just do my thing and apologize for not posting others after” (Rogers, 2009, p. 30), but it is still necessary to understand how more than 90,000 NYC school teachers

and 1,500 principals view the operation and success of the NYC public school system in order to continue to improve student achievement in every corner of the city (Bloomberg, 1997, as cited in Rogers, 2009, p. 30). Findings of this study will show how teachers and principals perceive or “make sense” of their profession and reform efforts, which analysis is essential to continuing school reform efforts and future policy decisions. This lens is necessary to understanding the findings of this dissertation study.

Money allocated for school improvement efforts in recent years has grown exponentially nationally and locally in NYC. Increasing federal and state involvement in how school monies are spent affects the type of improvement efforts that schools adopt. These improvement efforts, or changes, impact teachers and “there is no doubt that the question of centralization has a place in the discussion of school policy” (Seashore Louis, as cited in McLaughlin, Talbert, & Bascia, 1990, p. 21). According to Seashore Louis, “Social values affect the nature of school improvement strategies” strongly from three areas: basic cultural values, professional values, and community values (as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1990, p. 18). In addition, there has been little research on how participants understand problems during policy implementation and how their actions, behaviors, and perceptions affect how policies are enacted and followed (Cohen, 1990; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Sociological theories on sense making explain how school participants actively construct their understanding of policies by interpreting them through the lens of their preexisting beliefs and practices and thus affects their decisions and actions to enact and interpret policy in their schools and classrooms (Coburn, 2006; Guthrie, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Spillane, 2000; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Most research on sense making has focused on perceptions by teachers in individual schools, and thus it

is important to understand the differences and interactions in how principals and teachers have perceived reforms across multiple schools under mayoral control in NYC (Coburn, 2006).

Why is it important to understand what educators think? “Teachers’ different responses to contemporary students—the patterns of practice they pursue in their classrooms, and the conceptions of students and principles of teaching from which they derive—fundamentally shape students’ classroom experiences” (Davidson, 1996, as cited in McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 32), ultimately impacting student achievement levels. This study was designed to learn how teachers and principals perceived and evaluated mayoral control in NYC between 2002 and 2009. It was also designed to understand how teachers and principals have perceived changes in student achievement during this time period; thus, it was important to gather teachers’ perceptions on reform efforts and the level of reform implementation that they experienced during this period.

Teachers’ quality of life and work and their level of reform implementation and participation are also connected to the community context, the socioeconomic level of the school and community, and the level of parents’ and students’ aspirations (Seashore Louis, as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1990). Under a type of reform such as mayoral control, concrete structural reforms “allows the reform movement to treat all schools alike, expecting them to be equally responsive to broad changes that can be applied across the board through increased curricular requirements, external monitoring, or internal structural changes” (McLaughlin et al., 1990, p. 40). However, research has shown that schools operate differently based on their social class, and thus teachers’ lives differ based on the social class of the community that they serve (Anyon, 1981). “The

communities around most schools, especially in metropolitan areas, are relatively homogeneous in social class; community interaction may increase the homogeneity of their perspectives” (Haywood Metz, 1990, p. 44). Teacher and principal backgrounds may be similar or different from those of the communities in which they serve. Within schools, teachers also develop similar perceptions that are specific to their school and are created from their experiences and interactions within that school (Haywood Metz, 1990). For this reason, teachers were interviewed in this study across nine schools (three large comprehensive high schools, three small schools, and three magnet or “specialized” high schools). The size and type of school is important to consider in examining teacher and principal perspectives because in large high schools teachers are separated and often conform to the viewpoints of their subjects or departments, which can lead to diverse perspectives within a school. On the one hand, all teacher communities “enact conceptions of practice and career and respond to ‘shocks’ from the broader system (such as changes in student demographics, local economy, and public attitudes about education, policy shifts, and demands for new systems of accountability and assessment)” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 93). On the other hand, each school community develops its own understanding of concepts, pedagogy, and culture.

They all manage in one way or another the press that institutional traditions and expectations bring toward particular conceptions of “good teaching,” valid subject matter and knowledge, “good students,” “good colleagues,” and desirable teaching assignments and careers. Yet how teachers’ communities construct such visions and play their roles varies substantially. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 93).

Thus, it was essential to examine educators’ perceptions across schools in this study. In analyzing the results, the similarities and differences between teachers’ viewpoints in all schools are compared, while noting that their own personal backgrounds and experience

within the system will influence understanding of their evaluation of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein.

According to McLaughlin et al. (1990), effective teaching depends on “how teachers think and feel about what they do . . . through shared values and beliefs, individually and collectively mediate the influence of context conditions on student outcomes” (p. 3). The researchers explained that teachers are affected by the “contexts of teaching” including the school as a “formal organization and as sociocultural system,” the larger societal culture, educational policy system, and networks (p. 3). These contexts affect how teachers think and feel about their work and therefore impact their professional nature and students’ educational experiences. Teacher quality is one of the greatest factors that affect student achievement levels. For this reason, it is important to consider the teacher’s perspective regarding whether mayoral control has been effective as a method of school reform and in increasing student achievement.

Why Study High Schools?

With the increasing federal pressure to increase graduation rates, high school teachers are under a different level of pressure than other teachers because they are the gatekeepers to college and career pathways for their students. Therefore, it is important to understand high school teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of student achievement and district reform as they are responsible for improving secondary education and ultimately the American economy through student preparation for higher education or career readiness. “The currency of particular values and standards for high school teaching influences the ways in which teachers think about their work—and so can inhibit or

promote change within the culture of high school teaching,” and ultimately the rate of student achievement (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 125, note 3).

In this study, teachers’ and principals’ perceptions were examined across three types of schools—magnet, large, and small schools—to determine whether there was any difference in participant understanding/perception of school governance and the level of reform implementation under mayoral control in NYC. This level of analysis is important because schools and groups within schools (“nested subcultures”) share beliefs about education that may seem unusual in other societies (Rohlen, 1983; Spindler, 1973). Also within one society, groups of the same social class develop common assumptions about education that highlight, deemphasize, or subtly transform generally accepted societal understandings (Anyon, 1981; Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982; Cookson & Persell, 1985). In this study it was important to investigate whether there were any “nested subcultures” that appeared within school participants and between schools through analysis of interview transcripts.

The Research Problem

Public schools are one of the top five employers in urban areas in general, as well as in New York State. From the perspective of urban development, schools have the ability to attract high-income jobs and individuals, which contributes to the overall success and development of a city. Therefore, the individual(s) who control the public schools in urban areas have an important and powerful job from the perspective of urban development, especially in an increasingly globalized society. Since the 1850s, mayors have had varying control over public school systems in America, despite many arguments to “take the schools out of politics” (Tyack, 1974). In recent years, mayors began taking a

more active and aggressive role in public school systems following the increase in accountability-based reform in the 1990s. This involvement was motivated by a public desire to improve the educational system and because mayors were seen as the elected leaders who could be held accountable for student achievement and school improvement. With the reauthorization of the ESEA of 1965, as with NCLB in 2001, the level of accountability was heightened for all school districts.

As of 2005, over two million children were educated under mayoral-controlled school systems and the number of cities with mayoral control over schools is increasing (Plecki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006). The new era of mayoral control has been formally attempted in several cities, since Mayor Richard Daley first took control of the Chicago Public Schools in 1995. In 2002, Mayor Michael Bloomberg requested and gained control over the NYC Public Schools. This research study began after almost 7 years of mayoral control in NYC, as educators, community members, and government officials were in the process of determining whether the mayor would retain control or control would be decentralized to the local level. In 2009, New York legislators voted to maintain mayoral control, with some minor modifications of the original law. New forms of mayoral control are on the horizon as the federal Secretary of Education is promoting this form of school governance. Thus, it is essential that policy makers, educators, political leaders, and citizens have accurate and nonpartisan analyses of school governance to make informed decisions. In NYC, key stakeholders held and spoke at public hearings and released research reports and recommendations for legislators to consider in making this important decision. It is essential that the key stakeholders also have a nonpartisan opinion from the teachers and principals who work for the NYC

public school system directly with students on a daily basis. Therefore, the following questions guided development of that nonpartisan opinion to the research problem:

1. What does the empirical evidence reveal about the effectiveness of mayoral control, with respect to school governance, faculty, administrator, and community input and student achievement?
2. How do NYC secondary school teachers and principals perceive the effectiveness of mayoral control with respect to school governance, faculty, administrator, and community input and student achievement?
3. If there are differences between the empirical evidence and secondary school teachers' and principals' evidence regarding school governance and student achievement, how can these differences be explained?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Talcott Parsons (1960) described schools or school systems as one of four types of organizations. Schools, as “pattern-maintenance organizations,” preserve and transmit society’s culture. Thus, the relationship between a school as an organization and its environment and larger society is important in understanding how the organization functions for the greater good, or in this case, how it works to improve student achievement.

Blau and Scott (1962) defined *organizations* in terms of who benefits from the organization and delineated four types of organizations. Schools are considered to be “service organizations” but are connected to the other three types of organizations due to their relationships with political parties, unions, and so forth. Organizations are also classified according to the kind of power exerted by the leadership of the organization:

coercive power, remunerative power, and normative power (Etzioni, 1961). The use of normative power is best method for school leadership; however, to achieve this correctly requires collaboration by all stakeholders. If a school leader moves toward using coercive power, altercations and division in the school community may result.

In any community, urban or rural, there will always be competing interest groups. Regarding governance over the NYC Public School system, there are many competing interest groups and these stakeholders had a 30-year history of local control prior to the 2002 legislative decision to turn that control over to one person: the mayor of NYC. *Conflict theory*, originated by Marx (1848), refers to a person or group's ability to exercise influence over another, in an attempt to produce the social order and is one theoretical perspective from which to evaluate the effectiveness of mayoral control in NYC. The NYCDOE is one such organization that has been the center of conflict throughout its history as various stakeholders have attempted to control the direction of this organization.

Conflict theorists in education argue that different groups of people exist within society and that each group has its own values and norms, which they internalize. While the social, political, cultural, and economic systems maintain order within groups, they cause tension between groups; it is this conflict between and among groups that defines society. Conflict theorists hold that inequalities are reproduced because the schools function for and in the interest of the dominant groups in society, allowing the dominant groups to have the authority to maintain their prestige, power, and socioeconomic position within society (Sadovnik, 2006). Understanding the "conflict" from the various interest groups and stakeholders, each with vastly different experiences and interactions

with the new system of school governance, will aid in evaluating the success of school governance under mayoral control in NYC. The various systemwide reorganizations, from decentralization to centralization and between (centralized decentralization), along with multiple reform initiatives, have continued to create conflict within the organization. Despite this conflict, the reorganizations and initiatives have been implemented by people, such as principals and teachers, within the organization. By examining the experiences and interactions of principals and teachers, one can identify successful aspects and ineffective aspects or tensions within the organization or the DOE as a result of Mayor Bloomberg's and Chancellor Klein's educational initiatives. Figure 1 paints a picture of the theoretical framework for this study.

Case studies also introduce the concept of "sensemaking" processes that people use in a phenomenon, event, group, or organization under study (Weick, 1995).

[Sensemaking] is the manner by which people, groups, and organizations make sense of stimuli with which they are confronted how they frame what they see and hear, how they perceive and interpret this information, and how they interpret their own actions and go about solving problems and interacting with others. (Berg, 2007, 285)

This study seeks to understand how teachers and principals, as local actors, understand and frame the problem, or the conflict resulting from organizational changes as a result of mayoral control, because their subsequent decision making influences how policies play out in practice and ultimately affect student achievement (Cohen, 1990; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). How teachers and principals construct their understanding of the "conflicts" shapes their decisions and actions as they enact policy in their schools and classrooms and thereby effect changes in student achievement (Guthrie, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Spillane, 2000; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Since principals' and teachers' sensemaking of policy implementation is affected by their immediate school

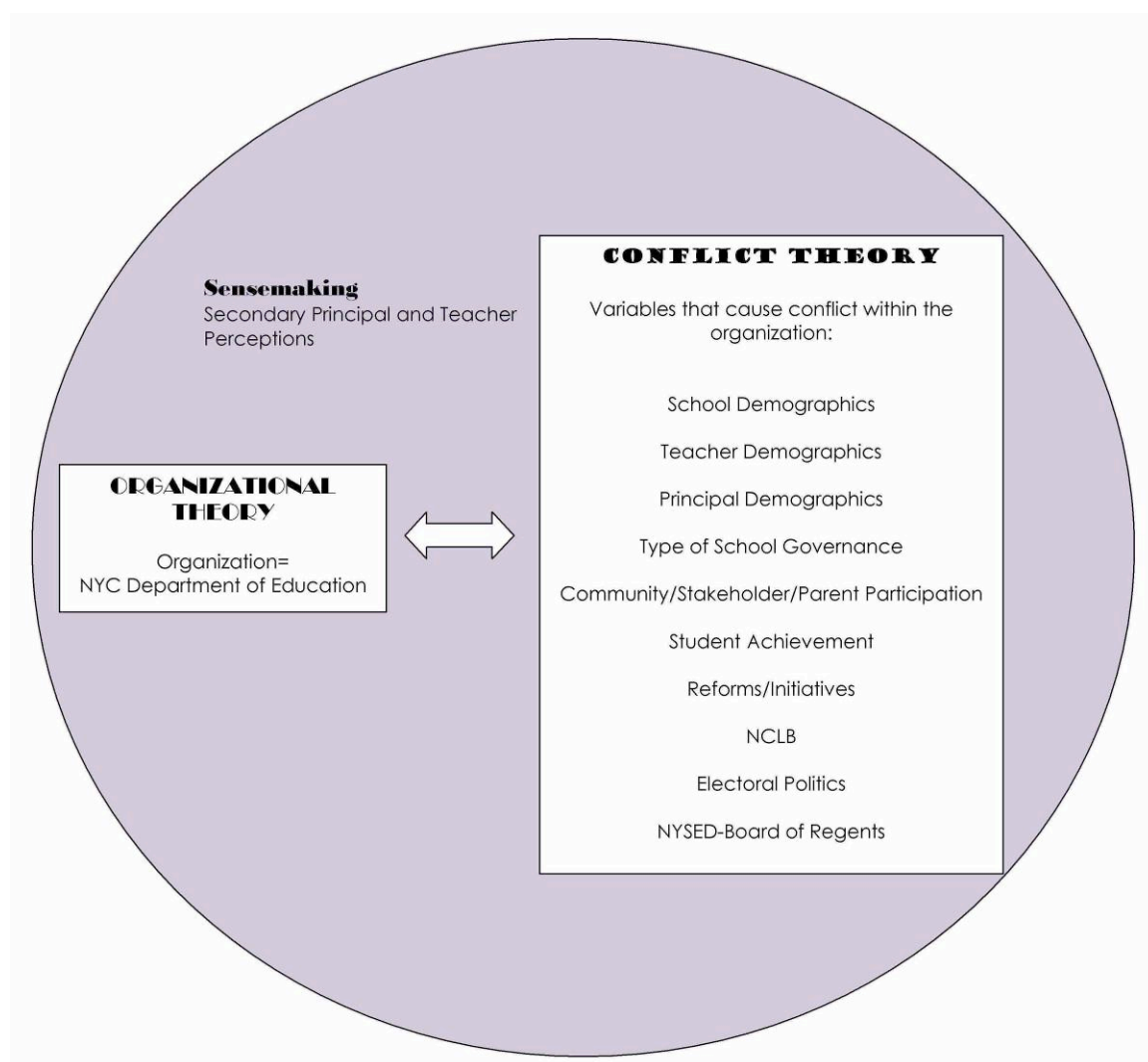


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for the current study.

and the larger organizational structures related to education, it is important to understand how organizations impact their understanding and implementation of policy and school reform.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used in this study. Chapter 3 discusses changes in organizational structure or school governance that have been used as a method of school reform. Chapter 4 presents a history of school governance in NYC to provide

background information on how the DOE has been affected by previous conflicts between centralization and decentralization, and moved to Mayor Bloomberg's and Chancellor Klein's period referred to as "centralized decentralization." Chapter 5 explains how mayoral control as an organizational change and a method of school reform has been evaluated nationally and locally in NYC. Chapter 6 explains how secondary school teachers and principals understand the current organizational structure of school governance and its perceived strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 7 analyzes how teachers' and principals' perceptions of student achievement have changed under mayoral control in NYC and how their perceptions compare with the empirical evidence on student achievement in NYC. Chapter 8 explains the major reforms and sources of conflict under mayoral control as they are connected to the three reorganizational periods from 2002 to 2009. Chapter 9 describes the major "roadblocks" or continued sources of conflict for teachers and principals that prevent them from improving their schools and student achievement even more, along with suggested solutions. Chapter 10 discusses how teachers and principals have evaluated school governance as an organizational strategy to reform the NYC public schools. Chapter 11 presents the conclusion.

Findings were examined across three types of schools (large, small, and magnet) in three boroughs, comparing perceptions held by teachers and principals according to their years of experience in the school system and their route to certification. Findings about teachers' and principals' perceptions highlighted themes in seven areas:

(a) Participants reported increased accountability and a "business model mentality" through changes in governance and organization; (b) the majority of participants across all types of schools reported that student achievement had increased but not necessarily

due to initiatives under mayoral control; (c) perceptions were inconsistent across teachers, principals, and schools with regard to multiple reform efforts to increase accountability at the school level and to provide opportunities for community input and participatory decision making; (d) despite the fact that the literature and the participants in this study suggested that educators want to be involved in decisions that affect their profession, most teachers and principals lack understanding of or are unaware of or do not care to be involved in educational decisions made outside of their discipline, classroom, or school building; (e) teachers identified similar roadblocks, including more money and lower class size, which, despite advertised advances by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, have appeared not to change, according to most teachers and principals; and (f) participants reported an overall slightly more positive evaluation of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, with recommendations for the future of school governance in NYC.

There were no clear differences in teachers' and principals' perceptions according to their years in the system, their school's borough, or their route to professional certification. However, there was a clear difference between how teachers and principals experienced reforms under mayoral control, as principals were the leaders in the reform roll-out at the school level. There was also a clear difference in perceptions based on type of school: Magnet schools remained relatively "untouched" or unaffected by Mayor Bloomberg's and Chancellor Klein's reform efforts, whereas small schools and large schools were direct targets of the reform efforts.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Evaluating school governance in NYC requires consideration of both a macro and a micro level of evaluation. At the macro level, one considers national, state, and district policies and processes/governance and its ultimate effect on student achievement; at the micro level, one considers the day-to-day school governance/processes and policies. The purpose of this dissertation was to describe how NYC secondary school teachers and principals perceived the macro- and micro-level effects of school governance under mayoral control. At the macro level, one considers how the change in organizational structure and function of school governance and subsequent school reforms have affected schools; at the micro level, one considers secondary school teachers' and principals' "sense" of the reforms and how their perceptions compare to the empirical evidence and available literature about student achievement, school governance, and school reform. Accordingly, this study was designed as an exploratory case study (Yin, 2006) of teachers' and principals' perception of mayoral control. As an exploratory case study of the NYC public school system, documentary evidence was gathered for the period of time that Mayor Michael Bloomberg controlled the public school system, to serve as the political and historical context of educational reform in NYC.

These initial data were collected from archival information, primary and secondary sources, informal informational interviews, a sample focus group, public assemblies and hearings, and a research project with the Institute on Education Law and Policy, Rutgers University-Newark (IELP) that investigated mayoral control nationally,

all of which informed the design and selection of the boroughs and schools and the interview participants (Moscovitch et al., 2010).

Summary of the Research Design and Data Collection

A historical and archival analysis was conducted on the history of school governance in NYC to understand the context and historical background of how school leaders have enacted policy changes under previous school administrations and how those initiatives impacted school organization and administration in NYC until 2002. Archival data were gathered during 3 years from various public news sources, books, journal articles, Internet blogs, research organization studies, and city and school district reports. The methodology of this study was based on a similar study of urban school reform conducted by Henig, Hula, Orr, and Pedescleaux (1999). While the Henig et al. (1999) study investigated the role that race played in challenging and complicating educational reforms of Black-led cities, the premise and design of the research study, using interviews, surveys, and historical documentation, was used as a model to investigate the success of educational reform in NYC according to high school teachers and principals.

Multiple Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) studies also provided methodological models for this study. Similar to NYC, the Chicago Public Schools went through the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative (CHSRI) in which several small high schools were created within the district. The CCSR conducted interviews to understand the schools' experiences with implementation, to explore which issues, if any, affected schools that began at different times, to understand any issues that the new schools faced, and to identify resultant questions (Sporte, Kahne, & Correa, 2004). The

results of that research are described in Chapter 4. Research was also conducted to understand how mayoral control has been evaluated both nationally and locally in NYC, reported in Chapter 5.

Through the process of observing community meetings, state senate hearings, state assembly hearings, reviewing news reports, and conducting informal interviews with educators and community stakeholders, key themes and issues emerged concerning the NYC school governance system. The investigator attended more than 10 public hearings to observe more than 200 hours of testimony and participant observation from 2008 to 2010. Key themes and issues were disagreements as to whether student achievement was increasing; efficiency, functionality, and stability of school district leadership; questioning school reforms (related to school and district organization, curriculum, pedagogy, principal and teacher training programs, evaluation programs, social promotion, etc.); the school governance law and the waiver to have a noneducator in charge; and an overall opinion for or against mayoral control, with or without Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein. Using this information, interview protocols were constructed and tested on a sample focus group of five NYC public school teacher volunteers in fall 2008. From this sample focus group, the following themes and issues were reinforced/identified and used to revise the teacher interview protocol. While the initial research proposal intended to conduct focus groups with teachers and individual interviews with principals, gathering 6-10 teachers at one time proved to be a logistical issue at all sample schools. Therefore, individual interviews were conducted with 6 to 10 teachers at each of the nine schools, for a total of 61 interviews conducted between November 2009 and April 2010. Teachers also completed a short demographic survey

(Appendix A). Interviews were conducted with principals at nine schools following an interview protocol (Appendix B). In addition, principals completed a short demographic survey (Appendix A). The investigator took notes and audio recordings when permissible. Teachers and principals were offered \$10 Amazon.com gift cards as thanks for participating in the study. Interview recordings were transcribed. None of the participating teachers or principals in this study had participated in a union-sponsored event connected to the reauthorization of mayoral control in NYC.

Sampling Methodology

High schools in NYC experienced great levels of reform and reorganization due to the opening and closing of schools due to poor academic performance. While all high schools have similar organizational structures and curriculum, high schools are considered to be more standardized in New York State than high schools in other states because all students in the state are judged by their performance on the Regents' exams. Due to the size of the NYC public school system, it is impossible to include all but a sample of high school teachers from a sample of the schools in the system. Since the most restructuring of the system has occurred at the high school level, this study was delimited to high school teachers who had been in the system for at least 3 years, or since the start of the 2006-2007 school year. Initial schools were selected using Clara Hemphill's *Guide to the NYC Public Schools* (the Insideschools.org website in 2009), as well as student demographics, teacher demographics, and performance data. As a result, a representative sample of schools was selected for participation in the study: one comprehensive high school, one small school, and one magnet school in each of three boroughs: Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. The borough population of Staten Island is

still too homogeneous to include in this study. High Schools in the Bronx were also eliminated because access to a large percentage of the schools in the borough was denied, making it impossible to have three participating schools in the various categories. Figure 2 shows how many teachers participated from each borough.

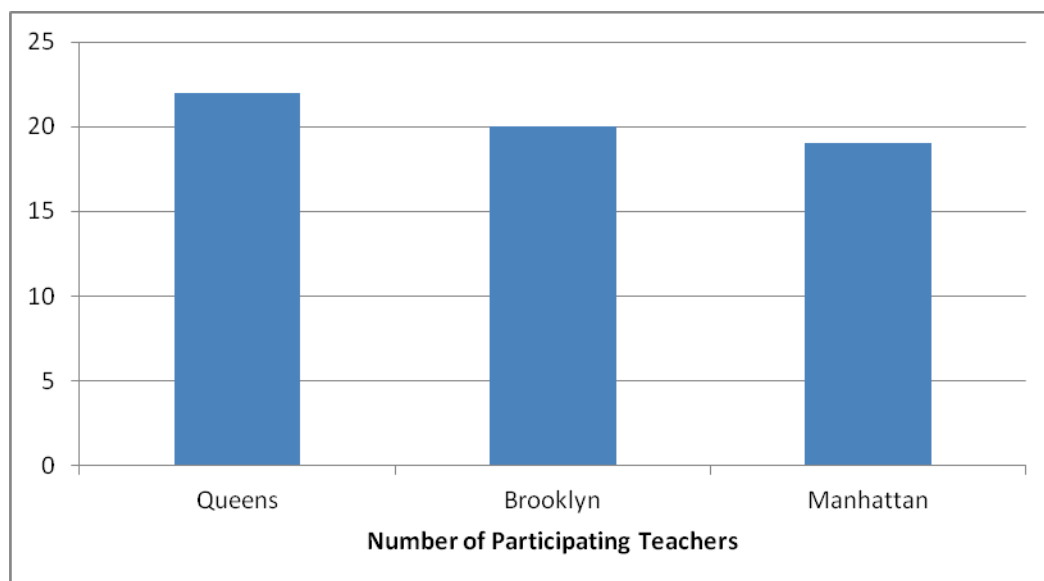


Figure 2. Total number of teacher participants by borough.

After sending mail to the schools, distributing emails, attempting to visit, making multiple telephone calls to the principal, only 2 of the initial 12 schools selected for the sample were included. It appeared that there was a “culture of fear” with regard to participation in the study. In general, access to schools in the NYC public school system was difficult despite Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the NYCDOE. One teacher stated, “I signed a disclosure agreement with my name on it, so I don’t think I’m going to answer that” (SST7). One principal commented that he would be “careful what I say” about some topics (SSP1). One school refused to acknowledge my IRB researcher

status and stated that I should go through the “DOE press department.” The principal of that school stated that she “doesn’t do any interviews” (personal communication with the person at the security desk and conversation with the principal, October 21, 2009). While inquiring at another school, I was repeatedly told that “this is not how it is done,” referring to my request for school participation. A second round of sample schools was identified where possible but, due to the limited number of schools in the comprehensive and specialized high school category, this was not possible for all boroughs. Therefore, convenience or availability sampling was used (Babbie, 1998; Mutchnick & Berg, 1996, as cited in Berg, 2007). Using social capital that the principal investigator had acquired as an employee with the NYCDOE and as a consultant for two organizations, additional schools were identified and indicated willingness to participate. Principals were also offered a free professional development workshop for their history teachers in exchange for participation in the study and participating teachers were offered \$10 Amazon.com gift cards.

It is important to note a few things about the final nine sample schools. Originally, the sample was constructed to contain small schools that had been created after 2002, when Mayoral Bloomberg took control of the schools. Two of the three small schools met this criterion. Unfortunately, every other small school created after 2002 declined participation, citing time, established affiliations with other universities, with no response from the remaining schools for declining participation. With regard to the magnet schools, there are a limited number of specialized or choice high schools in which the school has the opportunity to select its student population based on a student’s educational record, admissions test, application, and/or interview and audition. This

resulted in only a few schools to be requested to participate. With regard to large schools, one of the major reforms of the Bloomberg era has been to close failing high schools, especially large comprehensive high schools, and replace them with small high schools. As a result, by November 2009, there were a limited number of large comprehensive high schools left to participate in the study. One of the three sample high schools was ordered to begin closing during the time of the interviews, which may have influenced some of their responses. Figure 3 summarizes the distribution of participating teachers according to school type and Figure 4 summarizes the distribution according to certification type.

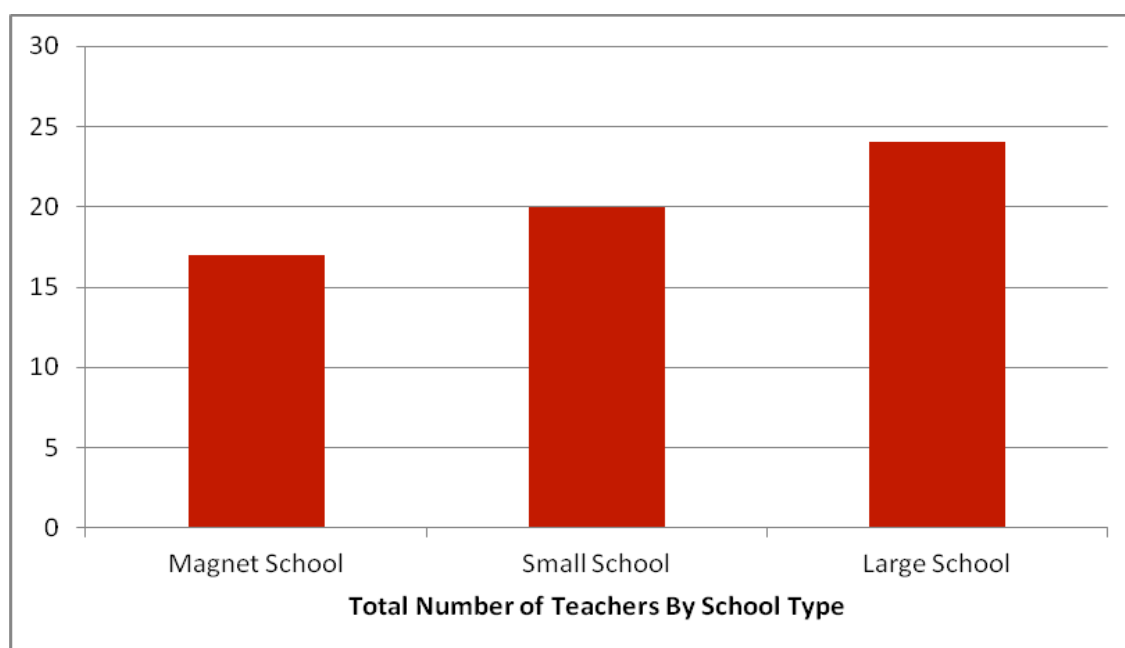


Figure 3. Number of teacher participants by school type.

Eventually, this study included 70 participant interviews (61 teachers and 9 principals), including 38 females (one female principal) and 32 males. In general, at least one third of teachers had more than 25 years experience, 80% were Caucasian, and 75%

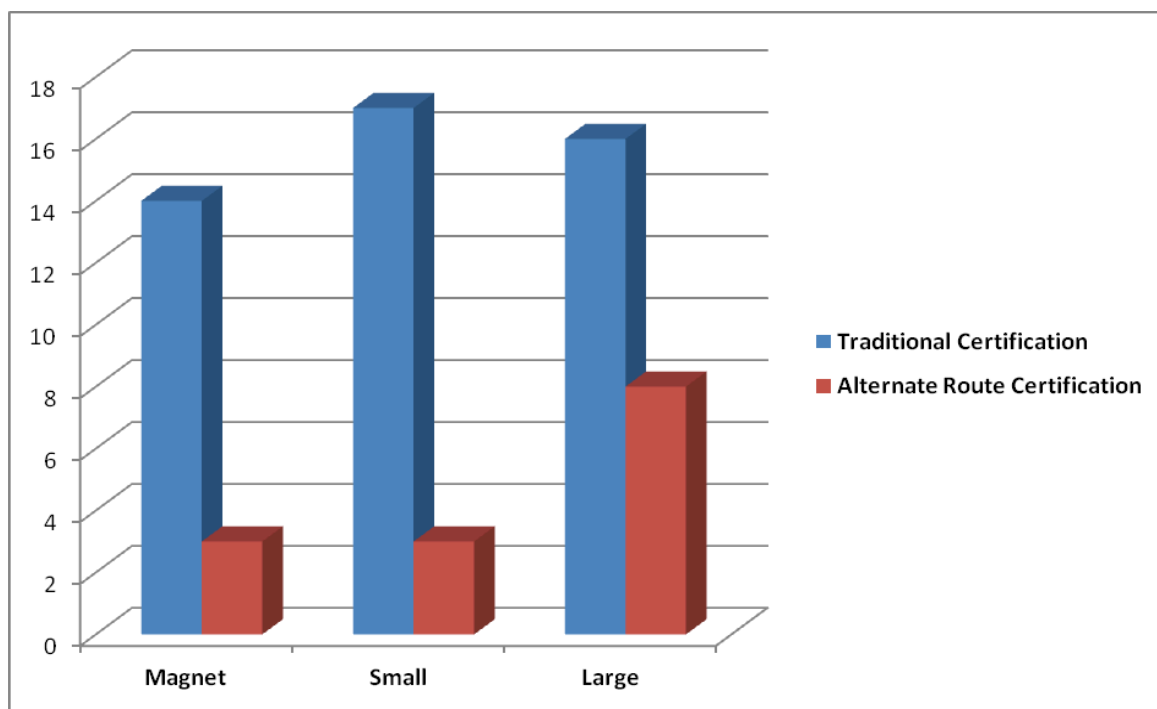


Figure 4. Participating teachers by certification type.

were traditionally certified through teacher education programs. Of the nine principals, one was Asian, one was Black, one was Other, and six were Caucasian. The demographics of the teachers, based on a demographic questionnaire completed by each teacher at the beginning of his/her interview (Appendix A), are summarized according to certification type in Figure 4 and according to race in Figure 5.

Participating teachers' years of experience ranged from the minimum requirement of 3 years to 37 years.

Teachers in the same system experience their careers in radically different ways—as advancing, as stagnating, or as declining—depending on the trend of these core informal professional rewards. High school teachers' careers, like their classroom practices, mirror the culture of their professional communities. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 68)

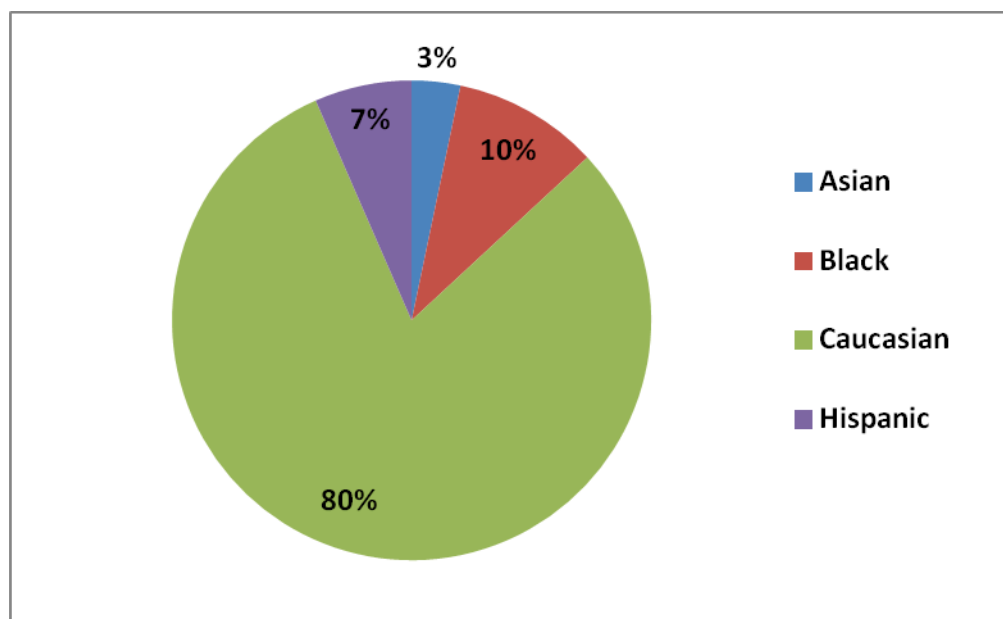


Figure 5. Participating teachers by race.

How teachers in this study perceived their careers in the NYC public school system therefore impacted how their professional community has changed under mayoral control, depending on their career ambitions and level of involvement within their school and the larger teaching community. This is important to consider because

teachers in high schools that lack strong communities of practice, and that have growing proportions of nontraditional students, generally experience decline in their professional rewards. The downward trend in their teaching career prompts many teachers to withdraw from the profession, either by disengaging or by leaving for another occupation (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 72)

thus potentially painting a more negative perception of how student achievement has changed or how mayoral control has affected the NYC public school system.. Teachers who have stagnant or declining careers, which could be seen in approximately 50% of the sample, tend to be more professionally isolated and thus not as interested in or knowledgeable about the changes and reforms that are happening in the school and/or district (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Teachers care most about “the quality of their

colleagues, of their course assignments, and of their students' learning" (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 90). The distribution of years of experience of the participating teachers is shown in Figure 6.

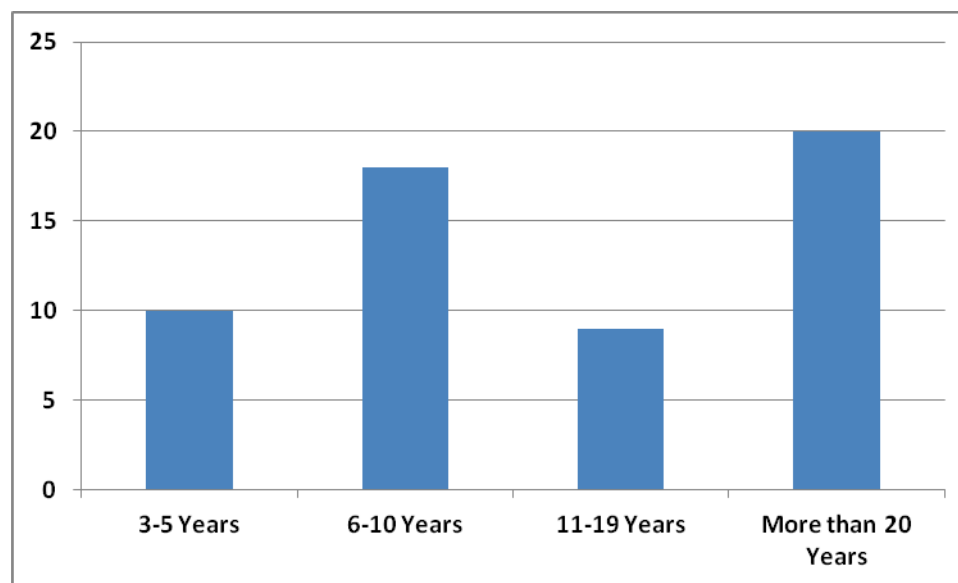


Figure 6. Participating teachers by years of experience.

Interviews

Interviews, observations, and archival and content analysis are all methods that can be used in qualitative methodology; all were utilized in this study. Since interviewing became popular in clinical settings, counseling, and psychological testing following World War I, the concept of interviewing has been discussed by many researchers (e.g., Babbie, 2001, 2003; Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2002; Denzin, 1978; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2000; Leedy & Ormrod, 2004; Patton, 2001; Salkind, 2003; Spradley, 1979, all as cited in Berg, 2007, p. 89). Intensive and informational interviewing (Charmaz,

2006) was used to gain insight into the experiences and opinions of the principals in the school system and community.

The process of interviewing is an “active” process in which the exchange between interviewer and interviewee leads to a collaborative story, which in this study provided a personalized context and weight to the perceptions held by high school teachers and principals that had not been studied before in evaluating school governance in NYC. Such interviews offer an in-depth experiential account of respondents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Interviewing, in its most common form, is an individual face-to-face process that can be structured, semistructured, or unstructured.

An important note about interviewing is that the process is connected to the historical, political, and contextual background of the interviewee and society at large (Fontana & Frey, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Interview methodology allows researchers to understand not only the “what” of questions but also the “how” of their lives (Cicourel, 1964; Dingwall, 1997; Silverman, 1993, 1997), which allowed in this case for explicit explanation in participants’ evaluation of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg in terms of reform efforts and student achievement. While interviewing has the ability to generate a deep response to research questions, it can also create short or incomplete responses, making the process of interviewing an important skill for any researcher to acquire (Kahn & Cannell, 1957).

In this study, the researcher used a semistructured interview process in which all participants were asked the same questions in the same sequence to create consistency across interviews. The interviewer played a neutral role, abiding by established

procedures and refraining from interjecting or responding to the participant's statements in a positive or negative fashion.

The CCSR has conducted a series of studies that focused on understanding principals', teachers', and student perspectives' of the reforms initiated after the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988. As these reports mentioned, principals and teachers in Chicago were greatly affected by implementation of the reforms, as were principals and teachers in NYC. In the report entitled "Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspective," principals were surveyed concerning four major topic areas: their reactions to school reform and its new governance structures; their assessments of their teachers and efforts to improve the human resources of their schools; the restructuring activities occurring in their schools; and questions concerning the principals themselves (Bennett et al., 1992). The survey served as a model for creating interview protocol questions for the principals interviewed in this study, specifically in areas focused on gathering their perspectives on school reform and new governance structures.

There are always a few limitations to aspects of research mediums, and using interviews as a research methodology is no different. Just as there is historical and political context with the interviewee, the interviewer is also a person with a personal history that is brought into the conversation (Scheurich, 1995). Interview methodology has also been viewed as a "hodgepodge" of information that the researcher constructs (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). While this method of collecting data has become popular in recent history, people are still hesitant to reveal personal perspectives; at the same time, because this method has become popular, people have the ability to be more selective in their responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Another limitation is that

participants may share what they believe is the more “socially desirable” opinion or avoid stating certain information because they believe that their answer is what the researcher wants to hear (Bradburn, 1983). While an interview protocol can help to create consistency across interviews, it can also be a limitation of the methodology. The wording of the questions, the sequence of the questions, and how the administrator states the questions can influence how the participant responds to the question. In this study, the interview protocol was tested with one trial focus group, after which revisions were made to the wording and order of questions before the protocol was used with teachers and principals.

Data Analysis

Following Glaser and Straus’s (1967) grounded theory approach, the researcher wrote reflection and analytic memos throughout the data collection process, highlighting key issues and themes that emerged from participant responses to interview questions. Glaser’s (1978) constant comparison method of analysis was used to analyze the data because Glaser’s approach to grounded theory focuses more on organizational and political issues than does Strauss’s focus on individual issues. Using the themes and codes that emerged from the transcriptions and interview notes, theoretical assertions were developed and written in additional memos, compared to the data, and revised again to create clear categories and codes, using Atlas TI and a system of coding by hand. By identifying the key issues, recurrent events, or activities within the data transcripts, categories were identified and then dimensions within those categories were highlighted by certain incidents within the data. Additional analytic coding and writing occurred as the analysis focused on the core categories and dimensions within the data. Through

interviewing 6 to 10 teachers in each building, the investigator identified patterns and themes in both teacher and principal perceptions of school governance and reform in NYC. Evidence of “recurring discursive phenomena” and common language surfaced during the data analysis process. Responses were sorted into categories: (a) across boroughs, (b) by types of schools, (c) by participants’ years in the school system, and (d) by participant’s route to certification.

Kildow (2000, as cited in Ganihar & Hurakadli, 2005) also conducted qualitative interviews to collect data that was then coded according to recurring themes and patterns. Prominent themes and patterns emerged relating to the governance structure of the school, power relations and hidden agendas of participants, and the leadership roles of all participating constituents. In another study in which teachers’ and principals’ perceptions were compared, data were analyzed individually and then compared across schools for patterns and themes (O’Prey, 1999). These studies used similar methodologies to analyze teachers’ and principals’ perceptions as structured interviews were completed with the school principal and 6 to 10 teachers in each building in this study. Available literature and archival data were triangulated with principal and teacher interviews to identify themes and patterns across types of NYC high schools.

From the data, the investigator hoped to “make sense” of the composite experience of teachers’ and principals’ perceptions during their tenure in the NYC school system under Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s version of mayoral control. Their experiences provide a meaningful description of the effectiveness of the system and their schools in improving student achievement under the multiple reorganizations and reforms that were implemented by Chancellor Klein and Mayor Bloomberg from 2002 to 2009, from the

perspectives of those who were most directly involved in experiencing and implementing the changes and reforms. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 describe how the categories illuminated understanding of “conflicts” identified from teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of school governance, reorganization, and reform efforts under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein.

Sensemaking

In examining teacher and principal responses, it is important to understand how their individual and collective understandings influence their perceptions of the effectiveness of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg in NYC from 2002 to 2009. In sensemaking, researchers examine how actors “notice or select information from the environment, make meaning of that information, and then act on these interpretations, developing culture, social structures, and routines over time” (Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989, as cited in Coburn, 2006, p. 345). While individuals process individually, they also form collective understandings based on their interactions and negotiations (Coburn, 2001; Louis, Febey, & Schroeder, 2005; Porac et al., 1989; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Vaughan, 1996; Weick, 1995). Previous research cites evidence that individuals and groups of people draw on their community experiences to construct their beliefs about a situation or larger systems of beliefs (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Weick, 1995), aspects of their employee culture (Barley, 1986; Porac et al., 1989; Spillane, 1998; Vaughan, 1996), and specific organization or department traditions (Lin, 2000; Porac et al., 1989; Siskin, 1994; Vaughan, 1996; Yanow, 1996).

In schools, there is evidence that sensemaking processes play a crucial role in how school employees implement instructional policies (see Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002, for a review). Teachers construct their beliefs based on their preexisting beliefs, their interactions with colleagues, and the conditions of their school; they enact policies based on their how they understand the policies (Coburn, 2001; Galucci, 2003; Guthrie, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Siskin, 1994; Spillane, 1998, 1999; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Principals also affect how teachers perceive, understand, interpret, and implement policy (Coburn, 2005). For this reason, it is important to consider how principals and teachers at nine NYC high schools perceived reforms and student achievement under Mayor Bloomberg from 2002 to 2009.

Limitations of This Methodology

There were several limitations of this methodology, including the size of the NYC public school system, gaining access to a representative sample of schools, gaining access to a representative number of teachers, an inability to establish a direct correlation between reform efforts and student achievement, and a lack of clarity and consistency in how “student achievement” was defined in the interview protocol. While this study was designed to establish a researched-based analysis of school governance in NYC, it was impossible to demonstrate a direct correlation between school governance and student achievement. At best, the data identify trends from secondary school teachers and principals that can serve to evaluate the effectiveness of school governance and reforms of the NYC public schools. This is consistent with Chatterji’s statement that “the mission of evaluation researchers today has broadened to an extent where ‘impact evaluations’

involving generalized causal inferencing are just one of many models that are viewed as useful in addressing critical social problems” (2005, p. 14).

As the NYC public school system is the largest school system in the nation, it was difficult to collect a representative sample of schools and participants from more than 300 high schools and more than 90,000 members of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT; teachers union). While a sample was selected to represent a diverse and established group of schools in each borough and numerous attempts were made to contact selected schools, it was almost impossible even to talk with a principal via telephone, person, or email to explain this study. Administrative assistants and security guards were the gatekeepers to the schools; in some cases they were helpful and in other cases it was impossible to get past the security desk or to receive a return email/phone message. Other difficulties included Mayor Bloomberg’s reform effort of closing larger high schools and replacing them with smaller high schools, which has left few established high schools with a graduating class. Responses to requests for participation included *no, no response, we are affiliated with another university, this is not how it is done, and you need permission from the DOE press office in order to do any interviews*. This last response supports the fact that the size of DOE press office more than doubled under Mayor Bloomberg (Rogers, 2009). In the end, the investigator relied on social capital and persistence to recruit nine schools, one of each type (small, large, and magnet) within three boroughs (Queens, Manhattan, and Brooklyn).

Accessing representative teachers within each school was also difficult. Recruiting teachers to participate in the study was done mostly by individual school administrations, where principals, assistant principals, or administrative assistants

recruited participants based on the advertised selection criterion (at least 3 years in the school system). The investigator announced the study during a school faculty conference at one school, soliciting volunteers for the study, but no participants were recruited from the school. Social capital at that school proved to be helpful later in recruiting participants. However, in all other cases, principals and/or their secretaries asked specific teachers whether they would be interested in participating.

The researcher asked participants how “student achievement” had changed under mayoral control but, unfortunately, the interview protocol did not specify what participants should use to measure “student achievement.” The majority of participants defined student achievement in terms of standardized test scores at their school. However, some participants discussed how they perceived changes in student achievement across the city or within their classrooms specifically related to students whom they taught and assessments that they had given. It would also be important to specify the difference between “achievement” and “student learning.” As the accountability movement and mandated testing have increased each year, there has been a discussion about whether students are actually “learning” or are just being taught to pass tests. This is an important distinction that would be valuable to understand from the educator’s perspective and it should be asked in follow-up research. The lack of clarity in the current protocol led to inconsistency in the reliability of participant responses to this question. Future research should ensure that this inconsistency is eliminated.

CHAPTER 3

School Governance: History and Evaluation

School reform, of which changing forms of school governance has been one method, has become an “incoherent patchwork,” with many forces, groups, and interests thrusting their goals on complex systems of education (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 511). The result of this “incoherent patchwork” for an organization such as a school district is conflict in many forms. Many forms of school governance have been tried nationally as a means of reforming large urban school systems and NYC has been no different. In this chapter, it is important to review the previous literature surrounding school reform efforts related to the many organizational forms that school governance and mayoral involvement in education have taken to understand how reorganizing school governance as a method of reforming school districts has led to many levels of reform and conflict for all stakeholders involved in NYC.

Changing School Governance as a Method of School Reform or Organizational Change

“It is morally unconscionable to allow some schools in a district to excel while others celebrate their mediocrity or languish in their desperation. . . . entire school districts must improve, not just parts of them” (Duffy, 2006, p. 8). To aid struggling urban school systems, researchers have tried to identify factors that create “effective” or “successful” schools in order to replicate the successful conditions in low-performing schools. One of the major components of effective schools and school systems and a factor that is essential to increasing student academic performance is strong leadership (Barth, 1990; Semel, 1992; Semel & Sadovnik, 1999, as cited in IELP, 2002). Leadership

is defined in two ways: “providing direction” and “exercising influence” (Leithwood, Seashore Lewis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The importance of strong leadership as a means of improving public school systems became an integral part of educational reform efforts that, since the 1990s, as been referred to as “systemic” or “standards-based” reforms. Systemic reform is characterized by large structural changes systemwide, beginning with a change in the school system governance, the creation of high-achieving outcomes for all students, and the alignment of all institutions and policy creators to achieve these outcomes (Goertz, Floden, & O’Day, 1996).

“Systemic reform” originated in 1990 when the National Science Foundation (NSF) developed the Statewide Systemic Initiative (SSIs) program, which called “for projects intended to broaden the impact, accelerate the pace, and increase the effectiveness of improvements in science, mathematics, and engineering education in both K-12 and post-secondary levels” (NSF, 1990, p. 1). SSI projects required various parts of the system to be aligned and to produce “comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained change” by developing “curriculum learning goals; content, instructional materials, and practice; assessment; teacher recruitment and preparation; and professional development of teachers, administrators, and others” (Heck, D. J., & Weiss, 2005, p. 1). As future chapters demonstrate, by this definition, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, upon taking over the NYC public school system, initiated a systemic reform effort from 2002 to 2009.

Governance changes, one of the key components of systemic reform or organizational change, have included state or city takeovers, privatization and outsourcing of schools, changes in executive and/or district level leadership such as

superintendents, moving school boards from elected to appointed or vice versa, site- or school-based management, one of many forms of mayoral control, or a combination of all of these forms of governances.

School Boards

Historically, locally elected school boards have dominated school district governance and have been the “iron fist” in informing educators as to how they were to operate their schools, in isolation from municipal politics. In fact, separatism has reigned in politics and schools, even to the point of holding separate school board elections from general municipal elections to further isolate school governance from main municipal governance. However, school boards have the power to stimulate effective school factors in their schools and require successful collaboration with teachers (Hofman, 1995).

Types of school boards, school board members, and how school board members are elected/appointed varies within each district. Typically, there are no tests or requirements to become a school board member; thus, members’ experience and qualifications vary from simply their own public school experience to doctoral degrees. In most cases, school board positions are unpaid, and there are mixed regulations regarding school district employees or family members of employees serving on the board.

Some administrators have noted that appointed boards of education with decision-making authority need less “care and feeding” than an elected board, which means that senior administrators spend less time in helping board members to distinguish policy and administrative matters (Carol Johnson, Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, personal communication, March 25, 2009; District of Columbia Schools Chancellor

Michelle Rhee, personal communication, April 1, 2009; Debra Weiner, consultant to Philadelphia public schools, personal communication, March 26, 2009). Appointments are often made from the business sector and include people with experience as members of corporate or nonprofit organization boards. Their familiarity with the functions of a board can reduce the time required for the board to become effective. However, several school administrators have observed that, regardless of prior experience board members in large urban school districts need training in governance and about the policymaking role of school boards, training that is geared to the large urban settings in which they operate. Boards of education typically play roles that corporate boards or city councils do not, according to Dr. Johnson. She distinguished between being “policy governance oriented,” as boards of education are, and being “constituent- or just governance oriented,” as city councils and corporate boards are. She pointed out that, with school boards, “You’re trying to define the specific policies that would benefit students, what the parameters are that the superintendent and staff should operate under, what stability can be afforded the superintendent, and how to have a good accountability system for holding the superintendent and staff accountable.” In addition, as another administrator noted, school boards hold student expulsion and teacher termination hearings, functions that are unique to school boards (Nithin Iyengar, Philadelphia School Reform Commission [SRC] Chief of Staff, personal communication, March 26, 2009).

Many states require simply that school board members be of a certain age; no particular experience is required. According to Cleveland’s Dr. Eugene Sanders (personal communication, April 16, 2009), those minimal requirements suggest an “issue around competency skills for board members.” The number of members on the board can also

impact its effectiveness, as well as the swiftness with which boards can meet and make decisions (former Philadelphia SRC Chair James Nevels, personal communication, May 19, 2009). Dr Nevels noted that, as chair of the SRC, it had been much easier to administer five people than if membership had been larger; the SRC could meet “as a committee of the whole.” For her part, Dr. Arlene Ackerman of Philadelphia (personal communication, May 6, 2009) stated that five SRC members are “a sufficient number.”

Hofman (1995) found that school board characteristics explain variance in students’ cognitive achievement. From a random sample of 133 Dutch school boards and one of their elementary schools, data were collected via school board and school leader questionnaires, in conjunction with student standardized test data. The manner in which school boards function creates the greatest difference in students’ cognitive development (Hofman, 1995). School boards that involved school teams and parent committees in the decision-making process yielded higher results in students’ cognitive achievement: “Public education should be organized in such a way that school members can influence the policy of the school board” (Hofman, 1995, p. 325).

School leaders, the teachers, the parents and non-teaching personnel should have a considerable influence on the decisions of the school boards, especially on the important issues in the school like educational matters but also on the allocation of funds for personnel and for other financial matters. (Hofman, 1995, p. 326)

Hofman’s (1995) study indicates a “need for a very sensible intellectual commerce between teachers and school boards” (p. 326). With the elimination of local community school boards in NYC in 2003, parents and teachers could access local DOE personnel through local Community Education Council (CEC) meetings, but they have no legislative or decision-making authority over their educational district.

Takeovers

From 1998 to 2002, 49 districts in 19 states and the District of Columbia experienced some sort of takeover by the mayor or the state (IELP, 2002). City or state takeovers are designed to produce (a) higher student performance, especially for the lowest-performing schools; (b) more effective financial and administrative management; and (c) improved public perception of the school district through greater methods of accountability (Wong & Shen, 2003a). Twenty-four states currently have the ability to exercise control over local school districts. Historically, only 11 states have exercised this power, when there have been extremely low-performing schools across the entire school district, financial mismanagement, or illegal activity. City or state takeovers are a temporary fix to urban school systems, under the assumption that local control will be reestablished, which has been true in 10 of 14 cases that did not involve academic reforms. More recently, Philadelphia and Detroit were taken over by their respective state governments (in 2001 in Philadelphia, and in 1999 and 2009 in Detroit) after years of poor academic performance and/or financial mismanagement.

In cities in which the state assumed control or plays a large role in governing the school system, administrators interviewed in the 2010 IELP report on school governance noted that the state's involvement had resulted in greater financial support. In Baltimore, increased funding came in response to system school finance and special education litigation, as well as in Philadelphia in response to a fiscal crisis. In both cities the state's governance role gave the state a greater stake in improving student achievement. Interviewees in Baltimore and Philadelphia (Baltimore Superintendent Andres Alonso, January 15, 2009; Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick, February

25, 2009; Baltimore Community Foundation President Thomas Wilcox, February 18, 2009; Nithin Iyengar, Philadelphia School Reform Commission Chief of Staff, March 26, 2009; Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak, May 22, 2009; Philadelphia Chief Education Officer Lori Shorr, February, 23, 2009; Philadelphia Education Fund Executive Director Carol Fixman, April 20, 2009) noted that city-state partnerships can work, and have worked, only when the city and state work together. The state partnership in Philadelphia created “not only buy-in but commitment and resources that follow in a number of ways,” including shared “responsibility for the success of the outcome of the school system” (Arelene Ackerman, Superintendent of Schools for the Philadelphia Public School District, personal communication, May 6, 2009). An \$80 million influx of state funding in the early 2000’s was “huge” and made “a big difference in helping a lot of children,” according to former SRC chair James Nevels (Swarthmore Group, former and first chair of School Reform Commission of the Philadelphia Public School District, personal communication, May 19, 2009). In Hartford, board chair Ada Miranda reported that state funding flattened after state control of the Hartford public schools ended in 2002 (personal communication, May 27, 2009).

Change in School District Leadership

Another form of governance change has been to change the head of the school system, known as the Chancellor, the superintendent, or CEO. In a study for the Council of the Great City Schools of large urban districts that had improved significantly and reduced their achievement gaps, superintendents in those districts were reported to have clear vision, strong leadership, relentless focus, political acuity, personal accountability, effective management, and fortitude (Snipes et al., 2002). While some contend that the

person who controls the schools should have a background in education, recent school leaders have been chosen for strong corporate managerial background, such as Joel Klein, Arne Duncan, and Paul Vallas. Vallas, the former CEO of the Chicago Public School System 1995-2001 and a noneducator, managed the Philadelphia School System 2002-2007 and currently manages the New Orleans Public School System. Since his arrival in New Orleans, Vallas has been successful in revitalizing the school system and increasing student achievement by creating a portfolio option of charter, turnaround, and traditional public schools (Hobbs, 2009; Nossiter, 2007). Examples of other school districts that have sought new leaders from outside the area of education include cities such as Los Angeles, San Diego, New York, and Seattle, who have hired attorneys, a former governor, and military personnel to run the public school systems (Fossey, as cited in Miron & St. John, 2003). While viewed as a successful reform strategy, hiring a noneducator to lead a school system has typically met resistance from educators in the system, which can be a barrier to implementing reforms. One study found that noneducators as superintendents had been successful in most but not in all cases (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Privatization

Privatization or outsourcing has taken place in conjunction with or independent of some of these other forms of governance changes. School districts, such as Philadelphia, have given schools to universities, educational management organizations (EMOs), for-profit organizations, and nonprofit organizations in the hope that these groups can put the schools on a path to improved student achievement. Charter schools—public schools that are free of bureaucratic strings—are also seen as a form of privatization.

School or Site-Based Management

In addition to outside forms of governance, many systems are increasing the level of autonomy for individual schools in their districts, despite some research that declares such a move of incapable of raising academic standards. In general, decentralized reform has not produced systemwide improvement in student performance in big-city schools because it often fails to account for all interest groups (Wong & Shen, 2003a). Chicago public schools were given additional school-based management power under Local School Councils (LSC) in 1988, but this reform lost some authority with the move to mayoral control in 1995.

Integrated Governance

As developed by Wong (1999) and Wong, Sunderman, and Lee (1997), integrated governance is a relatively new framework for examining educational governance, where district and/or state level of power and authority are “integrated” into urban school districts, typically to turn around years of decentralized systems (Wong, 2000).

According to Wong,

Integrated governance creates institutional pressure and support that are necessary to address a key limitation of decentralization, namely, that organizational change at the school level is not a sufficient condition for academic improvement system-wide while decentralization may produce successful reform in some schools, system-wide improvement is not likely to occur unless district-wide leadership has the political will and the capacity to implement outcome-based accountability. (2000, p. 97)

This type of governance is evident in the second phase of organizational changes under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein.

Mayoral Control

The final option has been for city mayors to take control of the school system, as has occurred recently in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York City, and even

more recently in Washington, DC. This is an organizational change in reform efforts from past models that have focused on market forces and instructional strategies to altering the governance structure directly by placing responsibility in the hands of an elected official (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Henig & Rich, 2004). As a result, this change is often viewed as the most systemic of all governance reform strategies because it gives power to the mayor to change the entire school system, as compared to other forms of governance changes (Rogers, 2009). Mayoral involvement, without formal mayoral control, has also been increasing across the country as mayors continue to push the boundaries of their influence and authority to improve their cities. Before moving to discussion of mayoral control today, it is important to understand the history of mayoral involvement in education and why mayoral control is an important organizational model to investigate for improving urban education.

History of Mayoral Involvement in Education

Mayoral control is not a new or unusual concept in educational reform. Almost every mayor had direct control of the public school system from the 1850s through the 1930s (Edelstein, 2006). The social, political, and economic context of mayoral control in NYC today is not greatly different from what it was prior to the turn of the 20th century. School governance has gone through three general shifts throughout history in respect to varying degrees of mayoral control (Wong & Shen, 2003a).

The first shift in mayoral control and school governance occurred during the Progressive movement, which reduced partisan politics and mayoral control over school systems by introducing scientific management of schools. School boards had become excessively representative, motivating the change to put a nonpartisan superintendent in

place, moving from the institutional theory of legislative representation to executive leadership and neutral competence (Kaufman, 1956).

By the 1960s, bureaucratic control of educational systems continued to be critiqued and the usual result of these criticisms was to streamline decision making and authority by creating a more corporate style of governance (Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Wiseman, 2005). Mayors in most big cities became more involved in the public school system, largely to serve as crisis managers intervening between school boards and superintendents but also to resolve racial inequalities and complications related to the desegregation of schools. By the 1990s, the role of the mayor in the educational system had become more visible and aggressive with the introduction of accountability-based reform (Wong & Shen, 2003a). In every city there was widespread recognition that the public schools were failing to educate children, especially poor, minority, non-English-speaking children, and this frustration with persistent low academic performance was motivation to improve school governance models (Sadovnik, et al., 2010). The trend to identify measurable outcomes and closely monitor student achievement in the schools, a major component of NCLB, led many school systems to adopt a more centralized form of school governance in which the mayor or new school leaders were held accountable for student performance (Moscovitch et al., 2010). The urgency for improving schools was directly connected to a public desire to improve human capital in a more globalized economy.

Business leaders were critical of educational systems. In 1989 the National Business Roundtable initiated a nationwide campaign to promote state and local representatives to reform local public schools (Shipps, as cited in Cuban & Shipps, 2000).

Governors and states began the movement of school district takeovers when public school systems were in financial, administrative, and academic disarray, particularly because they believed that a business management model of managing school systems would be more effective (Sadovnik et al., 2010). Many business leaders, and especially Republican lawmakers, were vocal in ascribing blame to teachers and their unions for protecting poor performance and stifling work rule changes. They pushed for governance that was not obligated to unions.

In addition to the persistent poor academic performance, financial mismanagement, preference for a business management model, and increased level of accountability, there has also been pressure for school districts to offer more school choice options to parents in their districts (Sadovnik et al., 2010). The pressure to increase competition within schools, especially from Republican lawmakers and business and civic groups, has impacted the need to change school governance models. Charter schools have become widely accepted as a method to increase options for parents, as well as to test new educational models. Vouchers and outsourcing or privatizing school management have also been tried in many of these new governance models.

With this need for accountability and reform efforts, the historical forms of school governance had to change; some mayors began to lead school systems themselves, a complete reversal from the 1920s movement to remove politicians from education. There was more support from stakeholders promoting alternative models of school governance, including mayoral control. Mayor Bloomberg was one such mayor; he requested control over the NYC public school system from the NY state legislature in 2002, with the intent of improving the entire system that he believed was functioning ineffectively.

Why Investigate the Effectiveness of Mayoral Control?

In July 2009, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan told school boards that, if they could not improve student achievement, they had a moral obligation to consider mayoral control (Partners in Reform, 2009). Research and history have shown that educational reform with strong leadership is necessary, and mayors have realized that they have the power to effect change in their cities that can benefit both the educational system and their urban communities as a whole. The first reason to investigate mayoral control is that mayors are the center of their cities and education is one of the most important systems within a city, politically and economically. Mayors have felt pressured to take control of educational problems within their jurisdiction and to join the fight to improve their city's underperforming schools (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1996, as cited in Cuban & Shipps, 2000; Usdan, 2006). The urban economic market is affected by school systems and, with the global economy in place today, city governments are competing against each other for more jobs and capital (Shipps, as cited in Cuban & Shipps, 2000). "School policy becomes labor policy" and schools reflect the resources of the community, thus "urban school systems are seen as engines of economic development when corporate and local political leaders cooperate in their governance and redesign" (Shipps, as cited in Cuban & Shipps, 2000, p. 96).

In addition, mayoral control is connected to the role that public schools play at the local level. Public schools are among the top five employers in many large cities and one of the largest employers in other areas, and management and success of the educational system severely affects the job employment market as well as the city budget (Henig et al., 1999). School systems have the ability to attract income and middle- and upper-class

families, thus aiding overall development of the city (Peterson, 1981). If school governance is successful, then classrooms and teachers are more likely to be successful; if the public education system is successful, then cities tend to be more successful (Wong, Shen, Anagnostopoulos, & Rutledge, 2007). As discussed earlier, organizational changes in governance are supposed to renew human effort, foster social cooperation around the school, and open up new possibilities for improvement, and this can be examined by investigating whether Mayor Bloomberg's reforms have made a difference in student learning and teaching (Bryk & Bender-Sebring, 1991). One additional benefit of mayoral control is that mayors are supposed to be able to build political coalitions that are reform oriented and garner additional political and financial resources more easily than can school boards (Cibulka, 2001). With Mayor Bloomberg's business background, he has generated a significant amount of private funding for reform initiatives, such as the NYC Leadership Academy, which was founded on \$80 million worth of private donations, in addition to the fact that he works for a salary of \$1 a year, as he was estimated in 2011 to have a net worth of \$18 billion.

There are many pathways by which mayors can influence teaching and learning. Mayors may be able to turn around low-performing schools because mayors tend to increase and reinforce the level of accountability according to a set of systemwide standards. The focus on low-performing schools during the mayoral takeover helps to increase public trust in the system and its ability to provide the necessary resources to meet the achievement goals. Edelstein (2006) claimed that "a mayor's efforts to reform central office practices can positively affect student outcomes in the long term" (p. 23).

Howell (2005) found that mayoral takeovers had positively impacted elementary schools and lower-performing schools.

The second reason to investigate mayoral control is that mayors have the ability to coalesce various city agencies and departments to improve the quality of life for urban citizens as a whole. The majority of transitions to mayoral control are a reaction to a crisis situation, general dissatisfaction, or negligence with the school system, or due to extreme school failure districtwide. Mayors have authority over social service agencies, public safety and health organizations, transportation systems, and other resources that can directly impact children's lives and thus improve levels of educational achievement (Edelstein, 2006; Kirst, 2002). Especially as urban areas continue to struggle with issues of race, class, employment opportunities, housing, and illegal substances, mayoral involvement in education has the potential to create the necessary combination of political, economic, and social institutions for improvement.

An additional argument for evaluating and investigating the potential of mayoral control is that such control has the potential to improve outcomes by increasing accountability, as well as providing support and imposing sanctions on low-performing schools (Wong & Shen, 2003a). Increasing accountability has led mayors to end social promotion. Mayor Richard M. Daley was the first mayor to bring attention to this issue in 1995 when he gained control over the Chicago Public Schools. Mayoral control also has the potential to redirect resources, such as curriculum and instruction changes, across the entire school system based on student outcomes (Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998).

Another rationale for investigating mayoral control is that such control has the potential to change administrative personnel by hiring noneducators for positions at the

higher levels of the administrative system who may bring new insight to managing the schools. However, this leads to one of the limitations of the takeover in that traditional educators are threatened by their potential loss of autonomy and that they are receiving instructions from persons with no instructional or curricular experience. Other limitations include focusing exclusively on achievement tests and issues regarding race in the transition to mayoral control (Wong & Shen, 2003b).

Another reason to investigate mayoral control is due to the nature of bureaucracy in a school system and the rapid turnover that accompanies regime changes. One limit and possibility of having the mayor control the school system is that most urban school leaders, such as superintendents, typically last from 2.5 to 4 years in that position, and mayoral terms are typically 4 years (Council for Great City Schools, 2003). While Chicago and Boston have maintained stable political leadership due to the absence of term limits and thus continue to implement their school reform strategies, most urban mayors are limited to two terms or 8 years as mayor, which makes them “too subject to defeat and distraction” with their political agenda and campaign, regardless of any valuable insight that they could offer to the school system (Hill & Harvey, 2004). At the same time, 4 to 8 years is a longer period of stability than many urban superintendents experience in reforming school systems.

Increased mayoral involvement is the result of “a growing awareness of the impact public schools have on a city’s economic growth and development” and “the city’s public education system affects the city’s own reputation and prestige” (Edelstein, 2006, p. 6). The increasing demographic switch of cities to larger percentages of minority families has increased the level of mayoral involvement in cities (Usdan, 2006). In an

increasingly globalized society, the hope is that mayoral control will improve student performance, increase and sustain fiscal discipline, and elevate the profile of public education in urban environments by restoring public confidence in and commitment to the city's schools (Wong et al., 2007). This research study was designed to investigate secondary teachers' and principals' perceptions of mayoral control in NYC because previous qualitative research on mayoral control has failed to consider the educator's perspective in NYC.

Types of Mayoral Control

Many mayors have influenced their level of authority and influence with the school systems without gaining formal legislative mayoral control. For example, partial mayoral control in Philadelphia, Providence, New Haven, Hartford, and Trenton has allowed mayors to influence and push reform agendas (Kirst & Edelstein, 2006). Mayors in other cities, such as St. Louis, Norfolk, Miami, Phoenix, and Denver, have increased their level of involvement in education in their cities without legislative authority (Kirst & Edelstein, 2006). There are no "established patterns" of mayoral control, but a report by the United States Conference of Mayors identified four types of mayoral control in education and multiple approaches that mayors can take to become involved in the public education system (Kirst, 2002). Depending on the mayor's capacity for involvement, he or she may have total control, partial control, a partnership relationship, or medium involvement with the school system (Edelstein, 2006). New York, Chicago, Washington, and Boston are examples of cities that have total mayoral control, where the mayor appoints the leader of the school system. According to these definitional criteria, Philadelphia, Providence, Trenton, Oakland, Indianapolis, and Hartford have partial

mayoral control. Partial control of the school system means that the mayor determines part or all of the school board membership and then the school board selects the superintendent (Edelstein, 2006). In partial control cities the control over the budget and the mayor's involvement vary with each city. The third type of mayoral control is the partnership relationship, in which the mayor and the school superintendent collaborate to resolve common issues and initiate reforms to improve the educational system. This type of mayoral control can currently be found in St. Louis, Long Beach (CA), San Jose (CA), Miami, Akron, and Bridgeport. In most cases, this new form of mayoral involvement has appeared in cities with a "strong" mayor system of governance, or at least a system in which authority is divided between the mayor and the city council (Kirst & Edelstein, 2006).

While Kirst (2002) classified mayoral control of education based on the relationship and responsibilities of the mayor, superintendent, and school board, Wong et al. (2007) classified cities with mayoral control over education as a system of "integrated governance" that seeks to redefine responsibilities, legitimize systemwide standards and policies, improve the capacity of districtwide leadership, build human capital as a form of economic development, and focus on student performance. As part of the system of integrated governance, the mayor may also have a formal role, as opposed to an informal role, in education when a legal change has occurred in the state legislature. In all cases, the school board is subject to regulations established by the state legislature. The legislature also has the ability to establish additional checks and balances within the system by instituting an oversight and/or nominating committee that monitors the board

and its progress in managing the district or by writing a “sunset provision” that requires reevaluation of the system of school governance.

There are three methods of obtaining mayoral control formally through the legislative process: (a) the state legislature grants authority to the mayor to replace an elected board with an appointed board, (b) the state legislature grants authority to the mayor to appoint the school board but requires a citywide referendum on whether this authority should continue, and (c) voters decide on changes in a charter that allows the mayor to appoint school board members (Wong et al., 2007).

Examples of Mayoral Control

Table 1 lists the school districts that have had some change in school district governance by giving the mayor more control over education decisions in the past decade. Also listed is the degree of “strength” of mayoral involvement, where strength indicates how much power the mayor has over key education decisions. The degrees of strength were chosen initially based on an in-depth study of each district, including the legal framework and implementation of education policy, followed by a discussion until consensus was reached (Moscovitch et al., 2010).

The following cities demonstrate how a mayoral control system of governance can operate, as well as some of the previously cited positive and negative outcomes of each system.

Boston

In 1989, a referendum barely passed, giving Mayor Raymond Flynn direct control over the school system. The 13-member school board was replaced by seven appointed board members from candidates chosen by a nominating committee. The Boston School

Table 1

Mayoral Involvement in School District Governance

District	Year of change	Strength
Baltimore	1997	Moderate
Boston	1992	Strong
Chicago	1995	Strong
Cleveland	1998	Moderate
Detroit	1999-2004	Moderate
Hartford	2005	Moderate
New York	2002	Strong
Philadelphia	2001	Weak
Washington, D.C.	2001	Weak till 2007, strong thereafter

Committee's role is purely advisory, meeting twice a month for 2-hour sessions. The day-to-day operations are delegated to the Superintendent. The Boston City Council still approves the school budget and holds hearings on school issues but is largely "symbolic and theatrical" (Kirst, 2007). Mayor Menino was elected in 1992 as the self-proclaimed "education mayor." In a 1996 referendum, 54% of the voters opposed returning to the traditional form of governance.

There are both positive and negative benefits to the appointed Boston School Committee. Because the members are appointed, they are more focused on school improvement than on reelection and patronage. The power of the Teachers Union has also been somewhat reduced because they have to negotiate directly with the mayor

instead of soliciting board members. Having Mayor Menino as the public face of education helps to absorb criticism and handle the media, as well as continually keep education a priority in the city government.

Boston won the Broad prize for most improved urban school district in 2006; however, despite their many proclaimed accomplishments, many community members and school parents contend that their voices have been shut out of the school reform process and that their needs have not been met since the start of mayoral control. They maintain that members of the school committee are less engaged and representative of the communities of Boston and, because they are not elected, are not as accountable to the public. This led to the formation of the Boston Parent Organizing Network (BPON), comprised of parents, activists, and community members seeking to advocate for improvement in the Boston Public Schools. They helped to create the position of Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement, as well as to reorganize the Boston Public Schools Family Resource Center. Despite parent and community complaints, the Boston School Committee has become very representative of the diverse Boston committee (Carol Johnson, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, personal communication, March 25, 2009).

Under mayoral control, Mayor Menino increased the education budget and gained strong support from the business community to improve the public schools. He appointed Thomas Payzant, an educator and former U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, as the Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. With no term limits law in Massachusetts, Mayor Menino and Payzant have enjoyed 11 years of stability within the school system. In 2002, Payzant left the Boston Public Schools for

Harvard's School of Education; former headmaster of the Boston Latin School Michael Contompasis was appointed Superintendent in 2006.

During Payzant's tenure as Superintendent, there was evidence that academic proficiency rose in Grades 4 and 8 in reading and mathematics and in Grade 10 reading and mathematics scores (Cuban & Usdan, 2003). The number of failing schools was reduced during the period 1998-2002 (Cuban & Usdan, 2003). Boston has been highlighted as a mayoral control city that has attempted seriously to improve access to public services in conjunction with educational needs. Mayor Menino has made moderate improvement in coordinating children, youth, and family services offices with the Boston Public Schools and has expanded the after-school program until 6:00 pm to help working parents.

Chicago

Like Boston, Chicago has benefited from stability provided partly due to a lack of term limits. Chicago is an example of an urban school district that went from decentralization to full mayoral control, with a school board nominating committee for a brief period of time. Chicago school reform began in 1988, when the state legislature passed a law to remove some of the central administrative authority to a more site-based management model. LSCs were created under this law to provide parents and community members with opportunities to participate in the management of their local schools, based on the belief that authentic parental participation can lead to school improvement (Wong, 1992). In 1995, central administration was re-established in the form of mayoral control after 7 years of experimenting with decentralization. Trends in student achievement were

inconclusive; only 1 in 3 elementary schools “developed the organizational capacity to address structural challenge” (Wong, 2000, p. 99).

Under the recommendation and suggestion of business leaders in Chicago, Mayor Richard Daley assumed responsibility for the public school system and “principals gained greater autonomy in selecting their staff, and they received new resources relative to the number of low-income students their school served” (Bender-Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 441). A 15-member board of education was created, its members appointed by the mayor from nominees submitted by a Board of Trustees also appointed by the mayor (five members). With the mayor’s new authority over financial, managerial, and educational matters, the Mayor hoped to restore public confidence and improve the school system. The 1995 law severely reduced the power of the LSCs and increased the level of central administrative oversight of them.

In order to make improvements, reforms were implemented under a new leadership team, led by Paul Vallas as the CEO and various administrators from diverse backgrounds outside of the field of education. Mayor Daley eliminated the School Board Nominating Commission and the School Finance Authority to increase accountability and authority at the top level of the system. This form of integrated governance “enhanced the ability of the central administration to perform financial and management functions efficiently,” thus “promot[ing] policy coherence and improve organizational effectiveness” (Wong, 2000, pp. 100-101). An ambitious agenda was launched to improve low-performing schools, in particular by implementing regulations, providing support, and limiting school-level control over school improvement programs (Wong, 2000). Sanctions and financial incentives for principals were restructured under a 4-year

performance contract. The effective school principals in Chicago had three common elements: their leadership style, their strategies, and the issues on which they focused (Bender Sebring & Bryk, 2000). The effort sought to increase parent and community involvement with the schools, increase teachers' skills through professional development, and create a more professional environment in the school (Bender Sebring & Bryk, 2000). These changes to the principal position had significant impact on achievement scores (Hess, 1999). Schools that were under probation were forced to hire contracted external partners to help the schools to improve instruction and achievement, similar to the idea of the school support organizations (SSOs) in NYC (Wong, 2000). Chicago laid the framework that Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York City would later follow by centralizing financial and academic accountability to the mayor but decentralizing certain decisions about operations and leadership to individual schools.

Results from 1988 and 1995 achievement tests showed almost no improvement. Some gains were seen in subsequent years, but the gains could not be attributed to the restructuring of the school system (Franklin, as cited in Miron & St. John, 2003).

Nonetheless, Chicago's school reform has been cited as "one of the most dramatic restructuring initiatives ever undertaken in American education" (Nakagawa, as cited in Mirel, 1993, p. 116).

Philadelphia

Philadelphia and Baltimore are examples of partial mayoral control. Philadelphia is an example of partial mayoral control because it is operated by a five-member SRC that is jointly appointed by the Mayor (two appointments) and the Governor of Pennsylvania (three appointments, including the chair). In December 2001 Pennsylvania

took control of the School District of Philadelphia. Governor Tom Ridge signed two acts that allowed the state to control school districts with fiscal problems and imposed interventions on them similar to those that were written as part of the NCLB law. Due to Philadelphia Mayor John Street's opposition to the state takeover, two of the five members of the SRC are appointed by the mayor. Other adjustments made to the school district included additional financial support from the city and the state, as well as having only a portion of the schools assigned to private firms. The state appoints the three remaining members of the SRC, including then chair James E. Nevels. Consistent with this form of mayoral takeover, Nevels was not an educator but the head of the Swarthmore Group, the largest Black-owned business in the United States.

The SRC adopted a "diverse provider model" or portfolio-based system of management and outsourced 45 of 264 schools to seven outside organizations. Edison, Inc. was awarded 20 of the 45 schools, a much smaller percentage than the original 100% takeover that the state had envisioned. The additional for-profit EMOs included Victory Schools and Chancellor Beacon Academies. Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Universal, Inc. and Foundations, Inc., as well as two locally based nonprofit organizations, were also awarded schools. The SRC created an Office of Restructured Schools (ORS), placed the 21 lowest-performing schools under its jurisdiction, and imposed several reforms. The last act by the SRC was to hire Paul Vallas, CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, as the new CEO; Vallas implemented many reforms upon assuming control of the Philadelphia School District. Vallas left Philadelphia in 2006 to manage the New Orleans public schools in the aftermath of

Hurricane Katrina and has recently been hired to reform the Bridgeport, Connecticut, public school system (Lambeck, 2011).

Vallas's reforms included increasing safety and discipline measures, reducing class sizes, mandating a core curriculum in four major subjects, establishing 6-week benchmark tests, improving professional development for teachers, starting an after-school and summer school program, and beginning the process of phasing out all middle schools by 2008 to establish K-8 schools. He initiated an Instructional Management System that allows teachers to access student and instructional information and resources technologically. Vallas made it a priority to balance the budget, employ and retain more highly qualified teachers (a requirement of NCLB), and construct and renovate school buildings across the city. Many of these reforms also established a good relationship with the teachers union.

In 2004-2005, a new set of reforms emerged, creating 28 smaller high schools. Vallas contended that the city should offer more academic choices to students across the district, similar to the plan that Mayor Bloomberg initiated in NYC. Additional partnerships were formed with companies and nonprofit groups to create charter schools (54 of them as of fall 2005) and accelerated options were added to magnet schools citywide. A program to develop and support principals was also created. The ORS was eliminated and the Creative Action and Results Region was created to manage 11 schools that did not meet federal standards.

Overall, positive changes have been made in Philadelphia, as demonstrated by an increase in test scores from 2002 to 2005, a more balanced budget, a higher rate of teacher quality and retention, a core curriculum with benchmark assessments, an after-

school and summer school program, expanded literacy and mathematics blocks for lower-performing students, an expanded preschool program, a school renovation and construction program, conversion to K-8 schools, accelerated academic options at smaller high schools across the district, and integration of charter schools and civic organizations into the district's plan for the future (Sadovnik, Borman, O'Day, & Bohrnstedt, 2007).

The reforms implemented in the Philadelphia school district, in part required by changes in both state and federal laws, including the implementation of NCLB, have demonstrated gains in student achievement. Student assessment results have demonstrated growth among the lowest-performing students toward achieving state standards (Useem, 2005). However, the issue of whether the gains are a result of the public or private sector or the change in the state's Academic Yearly Progress (AYP) is debatable. Additional schools have recently been taken by the Philadelphia Public Schools from several outside providers, following a RAND study that demonstrated that those schools had made little to no achievement gains in comparison to traditional public schools (Gill, Zimmer, Christman, & Blanc, 2007). All of these changes were made under the direction and supervision of a strong leader, Paul Vallas, although it is difficult to determine whether any improvements were based on partial mayoral control or on other reforms, such as NCLB, which was implemented during this period.

Washington, DC

In 2000, when District of Columbia residents approved a referendum to reorganize the board of education (Mezzacappa, 2001), the mayor gained a major role in public education, appointing four of the nine members of the board of education. Mayoral

power was expanded substantially in 2007 when the District City Council voted to give Mayor Adrian Fenty full authority to “govern the public schools.”

Mayoral governance of the school system since 2007 has included the power to appoint a chief executive officer of the public schools, establish a department of education in municipal government to oversee the public schools, and (for a 2-year period) to appoint four of nine members of the state board of education. The increased educational role for the mayor came about through a rare combination of legislative action on federal and local levels, since public school governance in the District, unique among U.S. major cities, derives directly from Congress.

Congress has Constitutional power to legislate for the District of Columbia, including oversight and governance of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Until 1969, Congress retained direct oversight of the public schools, but in that year Congress granted the District the authority to elect a school board. The board consisted of eight elected members (one from each of the eight wards in the city), three members elected at large, and one nonvoting student. In 1973 Congress expanded local control by enacting the Home Rule Act, which gave District residents, for the first time in more than 100 years, the power to elect public officials, such as the mayor and city council (National Association to Restore Pride in America’s Capital, n.d.).

By the 1990s, both fiscal mismanagement and student underachievement in the District were major problems requiring solutions. The city’s fiscal condition was so poor that in 1995 Congress created a board to manage the district’s finances.¹ The

¹Public Law 104-8 (1995). The name of the board was the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority but it became known as the Financial Control Board.

five-member Financial Control Board controlled the purse strings not only of the city but also of the school district. In 1996 the Board issued a report concluding that the DCPS was “educationally and managerially bankrupt.” (Henig & Rich, 2004, p. 191, note 1). The Board fired the school superintendent, hired a retired army general as a replacement, and transferred most school board authority to a board of trustees (Vise, 1996, as cited in Henig & Rich, 2004.)

Calls for reform of the District’s public school system began to sound. In 1999 the DC Appleseed Center released a report recommending that the District of Columbia BOE be reorganized and that local and state functions be separated. *The Washington Post* editorialized that the school district was rife with financial mismanagement and other problems (“Who Should Lead D.C. Schools?” 1999). Good-government groups and the business community added calls for reform (Henig, 2004).

On June 27, 2000, District residents approved a referendum to reorganize the school board, giving the mayor power to appoint four of the nine board members (Mezzacappa, 2001, p. 17). School governance was put in the hands of a hybrid (elected and appointed) school board and a superintendent. The referendum had been supported by Mayor Anthony Williams, business organizations, the Financial Control Board, the *Washington Post* and *Washington Times*, and many professional and education reform groups (Henig, 2004). The referendum had been opposed by the citywide association of parent-teacher groups (PTAs) known as the D.C. Congress of Parents and Teachers (Henig, 2004). The opposition focuses on concerns about loss of political power that had

After the District met financial preconditions established by the law, the Board suspended all operations on September 30, 2001.

developed during the post-1969 home rule period among Black citizens who comprised, and still comprise, the majority racial group in the District.

For 7 years the hybrid board and a superintendent of schools governed the District's public schools. However, student achievement hardly improved. By 2007, DCPS students scored lowest in reading and math among students in 11 major cities, even when students of lower socioeconomic status were compared with other students of low socioeconomic status (Keating & Haynes, 2007). Nationally, 33% of fourth-grade students of low socioeconomic status were below the basic skills level in math, compared to 62% of DPS fourth graders. Similarly, 49% of the country's eighth-grade students were below the basic skills level in math, compared to 74% of DCPS students. Although the DCPS spent nearly \$13,000 per student, it ranked first among the 100 largest districts in the nation for spending most of its budget on administration, and last in spending on teachers and class instruction (Keating & Haynes, 2007).

In January 2007 Mayor Adrian Fenty, a former city council member who ran on a platform promising reform and accountability in the District's schools, took office (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2007). He pushed through the D.C. City Council a series of legislative enactments effective in June 2007 that entirely revamped the District's public school system, making the school system a "cabinet-level agency subordinate to the mayor." The legislation allowed Mayor Fenty to appoint a deputy mayor for education (Victor Reinoso) to head the city's newly created DOE and authorized the mayor to replace the superintendent of schools with a chancellor who was not beholden to a school

board. Mayor Fenty appointed Chancellor Michelle Rhee, an education reformer who had never before led a school district.²

The June 2007 legislation again reformulated the board of education, which now reports to an Office of State Superintendent of Education rather than to the chancellor. The Act authorized an initial nine-member state BOE to consist of four members appointed by the mayor and five elected members. In January 2009, the initial State Board ceased and a fully-elected State Board took its place. The District's State Board handles functions that are typically handled by state boards of education, such as representing the District before the U.S. DOE.

In preparing a draft Five-Year Action Plan in April 2009, the new leadership of the DCPS frankly acknowledged its challenges: As of early 2008, the District's fourth and eighth graders placed at the bottom of urban school districts in the United States on nationwide tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Only 43% of ninth graders enrolled in DCPS schools or DC charter schools were graduating within 5 years and, although charter school enrollment had increased significantly, enrollment in DCPS schools was plummeting. DCPS is taking on these challenges, pledging "to create the best urban school district in the country" (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2009, para. 4).

Chancellor Michelle Rhee scored a major victory in the spring of 2010 when the Washington Teachers' Union approved a collective bargaining contract that tied increased teacher compensation to greater accountability for students' academic growth.

²*Education Week* (2007, p. 18) called Rhee "untested as a leader" in a public school system when she was appointed Chancellor. Prior to her appointment to lead the District of Columbia public schools, she had taught in Baltimore as part of Teach for America, and in 1997 founded The New Teacher Project. She holds a master's degree in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

The new contract provides for a 21.6% retroactive salary increase through 2012, a voluntary pay-for-performance system that rewards teachers whose students meet certain targets, and a new teacher evaluation system that uses test score growth as one criterion (Turque, 2010b).

Detroit

Detroit's experiment with mayoral control of the public schools lasted only 5 years, during which there was never much enthusiasm for the enterprise. In fact, many in the city viewed mayoral control as a hostile takeover, racially motivated. The Detroit experiment with mayoral control—a 5-year pilot program—began in 1999 when the Michigan Legislature passed the Michigan School Reform Act (MSRA). The impetus for the experiment came not from Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer but from Michigan Governor John Engler, who made education a high priority in his three terms in office. Responding to persistent reports of financial mismanagement and low achievement in the Detroit public schools (Mirel, 2004), Engler proposed abolishing the 11-member elected school board and replacing it with a seven-member board that would be appointed by, and responsible to, the mayor.

The MSRA was not Engler's first brush with school governance reform. In 1993, in an effort to close the gap between wealthy and poor districts, the state legislature passed an act prohibiting the use of local property taxes for school funding, ushering in an educational state of emergency (Mirel, 2004). Under the new structure, 80% of public school funding in Michigan would come from the state, with limited property taxing powers given back to local municipalities. Daring to reduce local property taxes by

100%, Engler went along with this move.³ This alleviated some of the disparities between poor and wealthy districts but also gave the state broad authority over school policy—not just in Detroit, but statewide (Mirel, 2004). Later that year, Governor Engler pushed through a bill that gave bite to a previously existing law banning strikes by public employees, including teachers unions, previously the most powerful education interest group in the state. The law authorized local school districts to fine the unions \$5,000 for every day on strike (Mirel, 2004). Under the new law, districts had the option of fining unions for every day that their employees were on strike.

In 1997 Engler backed two attempts at a takeover of the Detroit public school system. His first attempt, the School District Accountability Act, would have authorized the state to take control of school districts in which 80% of the students were failing state proficiency tests and the dropout rate rose above 25% (“Educational Takeover,” 1997; “Engler Pushes Takeover,” 1997). This bill was opposed by Detroit Public Schools Superintendant David Snead, who criticized the state for “continu[ing] to mandate programs without proper funds” (Educational Takeover,” 1997, p. 16). In defense of the bill, Engler stated, “I defend local control, but I cannot defend failure” (“Educational Takeover,” p. 16). His second attempt was a bill that would have empowered parents to take control of failing schools in Detroit. Both efforts failed in the state legislature.

By 1999, however, Engler had additional ammunition. A \$1.5 billion bond issue passed in 1993 to build schools and repair crumbling old ones had been stalled by inaction (at best) and corruption (at worst) for more than 5 years (Mirel, 2004, pp. 124-125). The press reported that less than \$134 million had been spent; there was a lack of

³In 1993, he agreed to a 100% reduction in property taxes for funding education, and significantly increased the state’s contribution (“Mr. Engler’s Education” 1993).

any master plan for construction and renovation; contracts had been steered improperly to the friends of top district officials; and, in many cases, lower bids for the work had been rejected (Claxton & Hurt, 1999). Also, some contractors had been paid for work that was not done or had been paid twice for the same work (Claxton & Hurt, 1999) and the program was mired in litigation.

Given the school board's apparent inability to manage this bond issue effectively, state control of Detroit's school system seemed to be a reasonable alternative. Although he was opposed initially to the MSRA, Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer eventually came out in support of the proposal. Detroit's Urban League and a coalition of Baptist ministers backed the plan as well, but other Black leaders, including the local branch of the NAACP, were bitterly opposed to the loss of voter control over the schools ("Blacks Split").

Despite the opposition, the MSRA passed both houses of the Michigan legislature and Governor Engler signed it into law in March 1999. Mayor Archer moved swiftly, dismissed the elected members of the school board, and appointed six members to the newly formed School Reform Board. The six appointees served at the will of the mayor, with a seventh member to be appointed by the State Superintendent of Schools. The MSRA dictated that this School Reform Board would be responsible for appointing a chief executive officer of schools, replacing the prior position of superintendent, although the single representative of the state was to have veto power over the selection of the district CEO (Mirel, 2004). The School Reform Board was to manage the day-to-day operations of the district until a CEO was appointed, at which point these responsibilities

would devolve to the CEO. The School Reform Board appointed interim CEO David Adamany to a 1-year term (Mirel, 2004).

Public dissatisfaction and concerns that the reform act was a thinly veiled state takeover increased when in 2000 the state representative on the School Reform Board exercised veto power on the selection of the new permanent CEO over the votes of the other six mayor-appointed members. Shortly thereafter, the board unanimously appointed Kenneth Burnley to the position of CEO (Mirel, 2004).

While some stakeholders—notably the business community—praised the decisiveness with which Mayor Archer seized control and the quality of his appointments (“Winners and Losers,” 1999), it was rocky going. In August 1999 the teachers union defied Governor Engler and began a strike, delaying the opening of school (Irwin, 1999; Tsai, 1999). In 2002, organizations representing Detroit teachers, students, and parents brought a lawsuit against the MSRA alleging that it violated the equal protection clauses of the Michigan and United States constitutions and the Voting Rights Act. Ultimately, the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit upheld the School Reform Law (*Moore v. Detroit School Reform Board*, 2002).

In that same year, when Mayor Dennis Archer decided not to seek reelection, Kwame Kilpatrick, who previously represented Detroit in the Michigan House of Representatives and had loudly opposed the reform act, was elected mayor of Detroit (Mirel, 2004). Kilpatrick put his stamp on the school reform effort by making his own appointments to the School Reform Board, but he never embraced mayoral control. Instead, he saw improving schools as one part of a bigger effort to rebuild Detroit, the goal being to “build communities, not just building new houses or new schools in a

vacuum” (Kilpatrick, 2003, p. 1). Like Kilpatrick, the voters were never entirely enthusiastic about their new school governance. The law had established the appointed school board as a 5-year pilot program. At the close of the pilot program in 2004, the decision to continue with mayoral control was put to a citywide referendum. By a margin of 2 to 1, the voters ousted the appointed board and the district returned to an elected school board governance structure in 2005.

In 5 years there had not been enough time to tackle all of the fiscal and educational problems of the system before the experiment ended. During the appointed school board’s brief run, the district saw an alarming enrollment plunge, from 174,000 students during the 1998-99 school year to only 130,000 in 2005 (Pratt, 2005). Perhaps it was too much to expect that a change in governance could effectively address all of the political, demographic, and economic challenges in Detroit, particularly since the experiment was commonly perceived by Detroiters as a hostile state takeover cloaked in a transfer of district control to the mayor.

In 2010, the issue reemerged as Mayor Dave Bing, Governor Jennifer Granholm, and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan urged the City Council to place a referendum on the November ballot asking residents to vote on whether to reinstitute mayoral control. They argued that the Detroit school system was dysfunctional and that mayoral control was essential to rescue it; however, by a 6-3 vote the Council voted against the referendum (Nichols, 2010).

Chapter Summary

Examining the models of mayoral control in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, and Detroit shows how the variety of ways in which school systems can be organized

under mayoral control and explain areas of conflict among stakeholders within the organization. While similar conflicts and reforms have resulted from mayoral control centralizing authority and decision making in these cities, these systems have not experienced the massive reorganizations that secondary school teachers and principals have experienced under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein's version of mayoral control in NYC. With that in mind, Chapter 4 explains how conflicts between stakeholders and changes in the organizational structure of the school system in NYC have led to the version of mayoral control that came to be in NYC in 2002 to 2009.

CHAPTER 4

History of Governance of the New York City Public Schools

This chapter briefly recounts the history of governance of the NYC Public Schools, while defining the organizational changes and resulting conflicts that occurred during the historical periods of centralization and decentralization and the perceptions that stakeholders had of school governance and student achievement during those periods. In addition, important terminology is discussed, along with some of the literature associated with defining school governance and how the BOE in NYC went through an organizational change to experience mayoral control of the public school system in NYC.

NYC has a long history with public school system bureaucracy, experiencing periods of both centralization and decentralization. According to David Rogers (1968), the NYC BOE, as an organization, was a “sick bureaucracy” that failed to effectively implement curriculum, personnel, and governance reforms, thus alienating educators, community members (including students and parents), state board of education employees, and city and state political figures. During most of the 20th century, the NYC public schools were under a centralized system of school governance. The shift from a “professional control paradigm” under a centralized system of education to a community-based, lay form of decentralization was the result of those conflicts and failures, along with the inability to meet the needs of all students in NYC. While Shipps (2006) labeled this change as an “empowerment regime,” the actual levels of control and power experienced by members of the community school boards was low, due to simultaneous powers by the chancellor, vague regulations, and power implementation with little

support from the district. More information and evaluation of the period of decentralization are provided below.

Large urban school systems were either compartmentalized or integrated and centralized or decentralized (Ornstein, 1989). In a compartmentalized system of organization, the multiple levels of the school system are organized separately; for example, all of the elementary schools report to one organization separate from the middle schools and the high schools. An integrated organization, as was the case in NYC under decentralization in the 1970s, focuses on a geographic form of organization instead of a departmental basis. In this case, each community school district was totally responsible for managing the entire educational program within the geographic boundaries of the school district, with one district superintendent and auxiliary service personnel responsible for all schools. According to the American Association of School Administrators (1958, as cited in Ornstein, 1989), this format is advantageous for continuity of leadership, better coordination, and more independence for experimentation within individual districts. At the same time, with as many community school districts as NYC had, it is important to establish policies, procedures, and standards that are consistent across all districts, so decentralized districts retain certain centralized functions.

Decentralization

As public school systems formed in the United States, most school systems, including NYC, were organized as local ward board systems, where decision making was “decentralized” to the point where community members and local officials made decisions about the schools within the neighborhoods in which they lived. In general,

educators and historians have defined the term differently over the years; as of 2000, one report suggested that scholars and policymakers had yet to agree on a definition, aspects of, or recommendations for decentralization (Walberg, Paik, Komukai, & Freeman, 2000). The key aspect to focus on in discussing “centralization” or “decentralization” is to focus on the level at which decisions are made: the federal government, state and/or local governments, school districts, individual schools, and/or classrooms. Centralizing or decentralizing reorganizes the centers for decision making.

The concept of decentralization, in relation to schools and school districts, has various meanings. One model of decentralization is based on the idea of administrative decentralization, where school districts are separated into smaller units with some decision-making authority that may have formerly been in the central office (Ornstein, 1974). While some level of authority has been delegated, the hierarchy and level of accountability remain in the upper echelon of central administration (Hanson, 1979). Another form of decentralization focuses on the idea of community control, in which power shifts from the professional educators in the board of education to community members or groups that did not previously have any level of authority within the system (Ornstein, 1974). Ornstein (1974) defined *decentralization* in terms of the degree of change or power that it represents from the previous management structure to the new management structure.

Walberg et al. (2000) analyzed 22 definitions of decentralization and their views of effectiveness. While the definitions “yield little unanimity” nor do the effects of decentralization “form a consensual pattern,” *decentralization* can generally be defined as “shared decision making at progressively lower levels of educational systems—

ultimately by school staff or individual teachers, if not parents and other education consumers” (Walberg et al., 2000, pp. 161, 157).

Site-based management has also been considered a form of decentralization (National Education Association, 1991). In the studies examined by Walberg et al. (2000), those districts that did not successfully define roles for educators, parents, and students within a decentralized system failed to implement this method of systemic reform successfully (c.f. Segal, 1997, for a New York example). A RAND Institute report in 1994 found that the level of control in decentralized school districts remained centrally located or a hybrid arrangement; therefore “decentralization failed, because the true locus of power remained where it had always been—with school boards, central office staffs, and state authorities” (Walberg et al., 2000, p. 163). In reviewing studies of decentralization from 1966 to 1997, evidence reveals that aspects of decentralization have shown little or no influence on value-added learning (Walberg et al., 2000). Yet, most policymakers and educators support the idea of decentralization, particularly when roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated.

Decision-making authority is central to the concept of organizational structures. In decentralization, the level of authority is shifted from the highest levels in the administration to lower levels, reducing the hierarchal structure that makes decisions regarding personnel, financial matters, and instruction, as happened in NYC in 1969. Within schools and school districts, decentralization often refers to sharing power or decision-making ability among principals, teachers, and parents, or a shift in authority inside or outside the administrative structure. Bimber (1993) classified “administrative” decentralization as authority shifted downward in the organizational structure, often to

teachers, and “political” decentralization as authority shifted outside of the organizational structure, often to parents and community members. Brown (1990) used the terms *vertical decentralization* to refer to scenarios where decision making is shared by parents and community groups and *horizontal decentralization* as decision making that is separated among central office employees.

The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 is an example of political decentralization, when authority to hire principals was shifted to LSCs, groups that were outside of the administrative hierarchy. NYC’s 1969 Decentralization Act is an example of simultaneous administrative and political decentralization, as decision-making authority was shifted to the newly elected community school boards as well as within the administrative hierarchy. The level of decentralization in these two instances was seen by policy researchers and local reformers as the most promising organizational strategy for large failing urban school systems (Boyd & Cibulka, 2003; Bryk, Bender Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998). The hierarchical level in which power is redistributed within a system also influences the level of “decentralization.” In most school systems, administrative decentralization of the bureaucratic offices often has little impact at the community, school, and classroom levels, whereas decentralizing authority from administrators to principals and/or teachers can make system changes more visible. For this reason, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein would decentralize more administrative authority to principals and justifies, which makes it important to understand how the implementation and evaluation of systemwide changes from the principal’s and teacher’s perspective.

The difference between the decentralized system and the centralized system is the placement of leadership in the administrative hierarchy, not simply the presence or absence of strong quality leaders (Bimber, 1993).

School reformers must be careful to distinguish between the need for decentralization per se in the form of greater autonomy, discretion, and problem-solving capacity at the level of the school, and the need for more democratic decision making, in the form of inclusiveness and greater capacity to represent the views and interests of teachers and parents. (Bimber, 1993, p. x)

Education reformers actually saw mayors as the “problem,” not the solution, by 1910 (Kirst & Edelstein, 2006, p. 152).

While the level and degree of authority and power is important to define when discussing the concepts of centralization and decentralization, it is also important to note who made the decision to institute an organizational change in governance structure because this can be a reason for conflict among members of the organization. According to Wissler and Ortiz (1988), some decisions are made internally by school district members in response to constituents, while other decisions are external and thus imposed on the school district, by the state legislature, for example.

Centralization

At the turn of the 19th century, centralization was seen as the best organizational model for school district organization because fewer people would have their hands in decision making, thus decreasing the level of conflict between stakeholders and attempting to “take the schools out of politics” (Tyack, 1974). Centralization is often referred to as “concentrating in a central or top authority, decision making on a wide range of matters, leaving only tightly programmed routine implementation to lower levels in the organization” (Walberg et al., 2000, p. 157). Historically, educators have maintained that most school districts were “centralized” during the Progressive Era, when

the industrial model for school administration and “social efficiency” ideology were prominently regarded (Tyack, 1974). According to Joseph Cronin’s (1973) study, almost every major city in the nation moved from a decentralized, ward-based system of patronage and corruption to a more centralized system of government. Frederick Taylor’s scientific management techniques of a bureaucratic top-down model of decision making that could educate a large number of students typically relied on a superintendent and other central staff to ensure that all school board policies were carried out at the school level. In response to the industrialization movement, schools focused on efficiency, scientifically showing progress of students, numerous standards, and strict rules. Specific guidelines and processes guided all aspects of the system, with a strict hierarchy of power and managers at each level. Taylor’s principles focused on the business model applied to schools, which emphasized the elimination of waste in terms of time, raw materials, and human resources. Raw material, or students who finished school ready to work in the factories or as productive members of society, was the goal for educators. Callahan (1962) reported that scientific methods were admired during this period as the best way to solve problems; if business and college-educated people could be successful in using it, then educators could do so as well, increasing their status and professionalization in communities. This movement also changed the population that was serving on school boards, from local community ward boards to smaller, more elite central boards comprised of business people. The system was criticized for focusing more on being more about cost efficiency than about providing every student with a quality education (Callahan, 1962). Later revisionist historians criticized this form of school organization for its lack of democratic participation, shared decision making, and professional

autonomy for teachers. Similar arguments were made against mayoral control in NYC during the reauthorization debate in 2009.

In NYC, mayoral control actually began in 1864, when the mayor was allowed by law to choose school officials, with approval and oversight by the central board (Ravitch, as cited in Viteritti, 2009). With the consolidation of Kings, Richmond, and parts of Queens into Greater New York, the population of NYC was over 3.4 million people by 1900 (the Bronx was added as a separate county in 1914; Cremin, 1988; Godfrey, 1995). Eighty-four percent of the White population was either foreign born or the child of an immigrant, mostly from Italy, Russia, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Austria, or Great Britain (Cremin, 1988). There was also a large Black population, the majority of which was also foreign born (Cremin, 1988). The number of institutions and the bureaucracies that governed NYC increased and became even more complex to meet the needs of the diverse population and to cope with world events. In 1904, the Department of Public Instruction and the Office of the Regents merged to become an even larger bureaucracy: the New York State DOE (Ward, 2002).

The Progressive Movement, mainly an urban movement by middle-class, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants from 1900 to 1920, was an effort to effect change and increase participation in municipal government (Grob & Billias, 1987; Nasaw, 1979). Muckrakers created conflict and brought attention to the political corruption that was occurring in municipalities, especially in the schools, because they were seen as the most corrupt of government-run agencies (Nasaw, 1979). While muckrakers may not have fully understood the problems, they succeeded in creating conflict by publicizing the

overcrowding of schools and the lack of effort by the ward boards to remedy the problems (Callahan, 1962; Cremin, 1964).

In 1917, John Hylan was elected mayor, which was “justification for the end of the first incarnation of mayoral control of urban schools” (McGlynn, 2007, p. 46). Contemporary proponents for mayoral control maintained that such control would reduce conflict by eliminating patronage and cronyism. However, Mayor Hylan used his position to control the financial power of the Board of Estimates in order to create and fill positions on the BOE on a political basis (Ravitch, 2000). Many positions were given to friends and relatives of the Brooklyn Democratic Party boss, despite protests from the Superintendent.

Public education as an organization had increased so much by the 1920s that students were being educated in monstrous buildings with over 5,000 students and average class sizes of at least 40 students (Rousmaniere, 1994). Many schools ran double or triple sessions to accommodate the increased enrollment, while other schools were housed in portable buildings without modern plumbing or electrical facilities (Rousmaniere, 1994). Due to compulsory education and child labor laws (in 1874, 1894, 1916, and then later in 1936, 1994, and 2000), the increased enrollment brought a new diverse group of students to the public education system with a host of physical and emotional problems and/or disabilities that teachers and administrators had to accommodate (Ward, 2002). The need to educate an increased number of students so that they could contribute successfully to the American economy brought the use of intelligence testing to the classrooms. The corporate model of administrators saw this as an efficient method of dividing and “tracking” students according to their “IQ ability”

(Spring, 1986). With all of the changes made by the bureaucracy, surprisingly only 5% of all NYC teachers joined the Teachers Union between 1916 and the 1930s, despite the fact that teachers had little control over the policies and administration of the schools (Rousmaniere, 1994). By the 1960s, this changed when the union claimed 85% of NYC's 60,000 teachers (Urofsky, 1970).

One muckraker in particular, Jacob Riis, blamed the immigrants and the middle class for their ignorance with regard to the state of the public school system when controlled by the ward boards or bosses (Nasaw, 1979). The boards were typically controlled by elite upper class members of society, thus not representing the majority of citizens who sent their children to public schools (Butts & Cremin, 1959). They also refused to listen to the complaints and problems that community members brought before them regarding school policy (Butts & Cremin, 1959). Slowly the relationship between the ward bosses and the business community declined and conflict increased as the push for efficient corporate enterprises became the model for all organizations; business leaders realized that graft and payoffs were extremely expensive and inefficient methods of doing business (Nasaw, 1979). While the muckrakers and settlement workers drew attention to issues of reform regarding urban education, it was the middle- and upper-class businessmen and other allied professionals who initiated and dominated municipal reforms (Hays, 1964). Business leaders established civic improvement groups focused on the removal of schools from politics.

The move toward centralization, and ultimately NYC having the largest school system in the nation, began in 1896 with the Committee of 100 (actually 104 members; Tyack, 1974). Founded by Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Teachers College (later

affiliated with Columbia University) and Stephen Olin, a prominent Wall Street lawyer, the Committee of 100 included 49 other Wall Street attorneys, 31 officers of national corporations, and 18 (Nasaw, 1979). Their political and corporate connections contributed to reforms by eliminating conflicts and providing Butler the use of law clerks, introductions to important Republican and anti-Tammany politicians in NYC and Albany, newspaper and magazine contacts, an unlimited funding source, and free practical advice (Hays, 1964). Muckrakers, reformers, and business leaders agreed, thus reducing conflict between constituents by publicizing that the ward boards were the reason for overcrowded schools, juvenile delinquency, illiteracy, and failing schools with poor management. The “social elites” of the Committee of 100 took the opportunity to publicize these problems to spread a favorable light on the process of centralization. They also had a vested interest in the success of the public school system, since compensatory education laws were reducing their labor force. By April, Mayor Strong signed the bill that abolished the ward boards and isolated control over the schools under the Superintendent. This elimination of local political control led to the beginning of a new era of centralized control. The New York state legislature passed the NYC public school reorganization bill in 1896, confirming centralization of the NYC schools after a much longer and more arduous process than occurred in St. Louis and Philadelphia (Nasaw, 1979).

From 1898 to 1918, under the leadership of Superintendent William H. Maxwell, the system became more centralized, with one board of education, despite resistance from local borough leaders. According to Tyack (1974), Maxwell learned his strategies of persuasion from his position as Superintendent of the Brooklyn schools, where he used

whatever power and influence he could yield to appoint many unnecessary bureaucratic positions. The superintendent had powers over administration, curriculum, personnel, and purchase and dispensation of equipment and services (Cremin, 1988). Despite more centralized control, individual schools still differed according to their neighborhood characteristics and community needs.

Borman and Spring (1984) argued that the adoption of the industrial bureaucratic model of education was the cause of many of the major problems in the administration of central city school systems. Both the school system and the political machines functioned via large structured bureaucracies, although they tend to be portrayed in history as converse operations that worked against each other (Tyack, 1974). They each controlled decision making and attempted to aid immigrants in assimilating into the American way of life (Tyack, 1974). Finally, political machines provided additional services to minority ethnic groups by mediating jobs or contracts between their constituents and the school system, which often allowed for more social mobility (Tyack, 1974).

The phrase, “Keep the schools out of politics” became a prominent theme in efforts to make school board elections nonpartisan, thus eliminating conflict, corruption, and party politics that had become common in school board elections (Borman & Spring, 1984). The attempt to make school board members more neutral and representative of the population actually evolved into civic organizations that nominated, financed, and campaigned for school board candidates. This essentially ensured that greater financial backing was needed to become a member of the school board or that “keeping the schools out of politics” would be impossible for the average citizen. In other words, minorities saw the argument “keep the schools out of politics” as a method of propelling

White domination of the education system (Tyack, 1974). The education law of 1951 attempted to remove the school system from politics, which removed the mayor's ability to solve problems in crisis situations (Urofsky, 1970).

Ironically, teachers argued against the centralization of power under Superintendent Maxwell in 1896 by collecting petitions, writing letters of protest, and attending mass meetings (Tyack, 1974). Almost 70 years later, teachers would be arguing against decentralization in NYC and 40 years after that they would debate centralized and decentralized forms of school governance. But in 1896, Matthew Elgas, president of the New York Teachers' Association, "denounced centralization" and stated that centralization might "prove the beginning of disaster to our beloved schools" because it concentrated so much power and responsibility in the hands of one person (Tyack, 1974, p. 102). Teachers in NYC, with the luxury of a stable system of tenure established by 1885, feared the "unknown" of centralization. They predicted that a centralized bureaucracy would lead to greater amounts of work for them, as well as decreased job security (Tyack, 1974). Many teachers in NYC today would agree with the fears expressed by teachers in 1885. At this time and as history would show, communities later favored local systems of government that would represent the interests of their communities. However, the tide would eventually turn and teachers in the latter half of the 20th century feared the process of decentralization. Years of being underpaid, working under poor conditions, and experiencing progressively worse treatment by the central authority would lead to their first successful strike and use of collective bargaining in 1962 (Urofsky, 1970). These criticisms, as recorded by revisionist

historians, led to the movement toward decentralization of the NYC public schools in 1968.

After the boroughs were consolidated in 1898, each borough was governed by its own superintendent of schools and school board, except for the Bronx and Manhattan, which shared one school board. Conflict continued as it was difficult to gain citywide consensus on issues; thus, in 1902 a new and larger citywide school board of 46 members was established and operated until 1917. This arrangement included seven board members who were appointed based on the borough populations; this condition continued until the 1960s.

Mayoral control continued to govern NYC schools as an organizational system until the late 1960s. The education law of 1951 attempted to remove the school system from mayoral politics by removing the mayor's ability to solve problems in a crisis situation, it failed to do so (Usdan, 1969; Ravitch, 1974). During this time,

patronage appointments led to larger budgets and greater inefficiency led to arguments for institutional reforms advocated by journalists, researchers, and New York City Mayor John Lindsay called for moving from the narrow bureaucratic structure of the time to establishing new curricula and hiring practices" (Ravitch, 2000, as cited in McGlynn, 2007, p. 46)

Following *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Brown, 1954), the NYC BOE was committed to a policy of desegregation, but de facto segregation prevailed and achievement differences between neighborhood schools increased. By the mid-1960s, the NYC public school system had grown to over 900 schools, with 1.1 million students, 57,000 teachers, 3,700 administrators, and a \$1.4 billion dollar budget, which was more than was spent by 26 states for their entire government operations (Giuliani, 1995). Despite the large budget, conflict began to increase again as "centralized" decisions were

not meeting the needs of all students in NYC and most other diverse communities throughout the United States (Hawley & Rogers, 1974).

The increase in suburbanization actually resulted in a greater increase in segregated neighborhoods and schools, clearly identifying higher levels of student achievement for White neighborhoods versus Black neighborhoods. Political and racial tension developed as the urban center declined after the “White flight” to the suburbs and the relocation of many industrial occupations (Godfrey, 1995). Despite the development of a Commission on Human Rights in the 1940s to end bigotry in NYC, most of the city was divided by de facto segregation, with central-eastern Brooklyn having the largest concentration of Black people in the nation (Edgell, 1998). Differing political agendas from the NYC BOE, the Board of Regents, the UFT, Mayor John Lindsay and his office, and the state legislature, as well as community groups and parents, caused multiple disagreements over who should control the schools and who was willing to relinquish power. These disagreements led to a major controversy in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville section of Brooklyn in 1967-1968. The immediate cause of the conflict was the “redistribution of power” from the BOE and the UFT to the experimental local governing board in Ocean Hill-Brownsville concerning budgetary and personnel decision-making rights (Usdan, 1969). While this struggle occurred in the context of the educational system, the controversy was largely about minorities, particularly urban Blacks, participating in public policy decisions made concerning welfare, housing, and employment. The growing centralized bureaucracy of the first half of the 20th century failed to adapt to these changes and the demanding needs of society. Minorities sought to

participate in the growing bureaucracy of governmental institutions, first through decentralizing the school system.

Decentralization Part II

The concept of community school districts actually began much earlier in the nation's history as a "product of social change," specifically "the changing nature of rural life" (American Association of School Administrators, 1958, as cited in Ornstein, 1989, p. 98). In 1925, the New York State Commissioner of Education, responsible for administering the school district reorganization program, incorporated recommendations from a rural school survey that recommended that community school districts be established to cover 12 grades and organized with regard to trade and social centers, topography, transportation, and topography (Workers, 1940). Within NYC, the community school districts were developed coterminously according to judicial legislation. Prior to the decentralization of the school system, researchers admitted that larger city school systems had difficulty in adapting to the needs of their population quickly, as compared to systems that served fewer than 100,000 students. Yet, no one advocated dismantling large urban systems as a method of increasing their effectiveness (American Association of School Administrators, 1958, as cited in Ornstein, 1989).

In 1968, NYC schools were decentralized, allowing for more governance at the local level. On April 30, 1969, the state legislature passed a law governing the NYC school system to create an interim board of five members, one member appointed from each of the boroughs. Local school boards controlled most aspects of K-8 education, except for the school lunch programs and the school construction authority, both of which were still managed by the central BOE, along with all of the high schools in the city. The

introduction of the civil service system during this time also helped to reduce the amount of patronage and corruption that had previously occurred in the municipal system.

Decentralization advocates identify an association between school effectiveness and school-level discretion (Center for Policy Research in Education, 1990).

Decentralization theoretically leads to more local level decision making and school-level engagement by reducing the power of the central bureaucratic agency and giving it to schools, parents, local school boards, and community members. Decentralization at this stage in NYC history referred to the transfer of decision-making authority from the central board of education to the 32 local community school district boards. The legislature made the interim board permanent in 1973 and gave the mayor the authority to appoint two additional members to the interim board. A Chancellor of Education could be appointed instead of a superintendent of schools by the city BOE. Then the city was divided by the interim board into 32 community school districts with an average of 20,000 students (it became 15,000 students in 1973). While community school boards had operational power over all aspects of education within their districts, high schools were still managed by the Chancellor and the city school board (Marchi, 1991). School board members received \$15,000 and the Board President received \$20,000 annually. The board elected the President and Vice President from within the board to serve a 1-year term.

Ironically, ethnicity contributed to both the centralization of the school system in 1896 and the decentralization of the schools in 1969 (McGlynn, 2007). Proponents of centralization argued for more accountability both in 1896 and in 2001. It is also important to note that only schools serving grades K-8 were decentralized. The high

schools remained centralized as a citywide system managed out of offices at 110 Livingston Street.

Early on, the local community school board elections were controlled by the UFT and participation in the elections slowly declined to an all-time low participation rate of 2.5% of the population in 1999 (Ravitch, 2000). In 1973, all four of the democratic mayoral candidates criticized the decentralization law during their campaigns. In fact, the only issue on which they agreed was that the mayor should play a greater role in school operations, despite their belief that the decentralization law had not had enough time to work yet (McGlynn, 2007).

In 1974, a still greater problem and source of conflict faced the city: It was on the verge of bankruptcy. The school system was an attractive target for budget cuts because the BOE and community school boards controlled more than 50% of the education budget. Mayor Abe Beame sought to have more “direct control” of the school budget, but protests from the Chancellor, BOE, and African American and Puerto Rican caucuses successfully blocked his proposal in the New York State Assembly (McGlynn, 2007). The mayor’s power over the school budget was further constrained when the Assembly passed a bill that mandated that 21% of the city’s budget be appropriated for the schools (Breasted, 1976). Beame briefly proposed mayoral control of the schools but lost his bid for reelection. The next three mayors—Ed Koch, David Dinkins, and Rudolph Guiliani—all proposed mayoral control of the schools, although Dinkins, the city’s first African American mayor, initially supported community control.

Mayor David Dinkins recruited Ramon Cortines, former superintendent of the San Francisco Public Schools and known for his school leadership abilities, to head the

NYC public school system. Cortines continued to head the school system when Rudolph Guiliani succeeded Dinkins, but was forced out soon thereafter by Giuliani. While the decentralization plan sought to reduce conflict and give more control to individual actors closer to the schools, it actually resulted in loosening autonomy and accountability within the schools; by 1996, it was evident that the decentralization plan failed to involve families and communities (Thompson, 2002). Rogers (1968) described the NYC BOE as having shaped a “politics of futility” that was dysfunctional, unproductive, incompetent, and undemocratic. The 1969 decentralization law was supposed to have been re-examined and modified after 5 to 10 years.

As mentioned previously, an argument for mayoral control was to create accountability and to eliminate the constant conflict, fighting and lack of oversight between local school board members in NYC. The large decentralized bureaucracy created after 1969 created little accountability, with competing power structures between the central BOE, the community school boards, and the appointed chancellor, along with virtually no academic achievements (McGlynn, 2007). Early on, the local board elections were controlled by the UFT and participation in the elections slowly declined to an all-time low participation rate of 2.5% of the population in 1999 (Ravitch, 2000).

The downfall began in 1972, when Dr. Kenneth Clark, historic City College of New York (CCNY) psychology professor whose doll studies were instrumental in *Brown* (see footnote 11 in *Brown*) and proponent of decentralization, declared decentralization as an organizational strategy a failure in 1972 (Ravitch, 2000). In 1973, all four of the Democratic mayoral candidates criticized the decentralization law during their campaigns. In fact, the only issue on which they agreed was that the mayor should play a

greater role in school operations, despite their belief that the decentralization law had not had enough time to work yet (McGlynn, 2007).

Proponents of the local school boards argued that they knew what is best for their individual community needs, something that a centralized board of education could not provide for their small communities. The board did not set an ideal example when they were caught adding “phantom” children to school rosters and giving false estimates for construction costs to increase the amount of money available for the city’s 5-year capital improvement plan (McGlynn, 2007). According to the Marchi Commission in 1991,

The legacy of 20 years of complex interpretations of and legal amendments to the law had clearly produced a system that was overly complex and simply opaque. Knowledgeable observers described the mix between centralization and decentralization as the worst of both worlds. (Marchi, 1991, p. 53)

The legislature enacted Chapter 740 of the Laws of 1988, which created the Temporary State Commission on New York City School Governance, named the Marchi Commission. The Marchi Commission was given the responsibility of studying and developing recommendations on the effectiveness of the school district governance in meeting the needs of NYC’s children according to the systemwide standards. In 1991, the Marchi Commission made recommendations that led to adoption of considerable reforms in the 1990s and 2000 (Padavan, 2002). One of the reforms involved school custodians in November 1992, with the issuance of a report by Special Commissioner of Investigation for New York City Schools (Edward Stancik) suggesting that supervision of custodians at the community level should be greater to prevent future system abuses (Padavan, 2002). Performance standards were established for custodians by Governor Cuomo as part of Chapter 722 of the Laws of 1993.

According to Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr., in testimony before the NYCC Education Committee on February 26, 2002, reading scores gradually increased, even after the BOE had raised the standards and renormed the standardized tests. However, others maintained that “those who are on the front lines of education, and most especially school leaders, must have both the authority and responsibility over the organizations they manage” (Ravitch & Viteritti, 2000, p. 8). Thompson also maintained that educational control should be given to the mayor because 45% of the city’s budget was allocated to the school system (Thompson, 2002). While he was Board President, he supported Harold O. Levy, a noneducator and corporate lawyer, for Chancellor in 2000, after the previous Chancellor, Rudy Crew, had been forced out of office by Mayor Guiliani.

Guiliani lobbied harder for control than had Koch or Dinkins. Guiliani received legislative support from a Republican Governor and a Republican state senate in 1995 but his plan was still opposed by the Democratic State Assembly and the UFT. Guiliani was interested in initiating a system of mayoral control in which he could introduce vouchers and privatization, along with eliminating the central board of education and community school boards; this method of control was opposed by the Democratic-controlled State Assembly, city educators, and the then-current school Chancellor Rudy Crew (Rogers, 2009; see Figure 7).

Guiliani received an increased level of centralization of the NYC BOE but not full mayoral control. The new law eradicated the operational functions of the community school boards and elucidated the powers of the chancellor in the hope of increasing the level of accountability within the system. Chapter 720 of 1996, the New York City



Figure 7. Chancellor Rudy Crew with Board of Education President William Thompson, December 1996. Source: “In Schools Post, Thompson Was a Conciliator,” by Nancy Siesel, *The New York Times*, October 20, 2009, retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/21/nyregion/21thompson.html?emc=eta1>

Governance Reform Act, “enacted the most sweeping changes in governance, central board, and local community board responsibilities since decentralization in 1969” (Padavan, 2002, p. 11). All administrative and executive powers were transferred from the BOE and community school boards to the Chancellor and superintendents. The Chancellor had the power to hire all district superintendents but only from lists created by the community school boards. School district elections became the responsibility of the City Board of Elections.

After Mayor Giuliani was strongly re-elected in 1997, he recommended establishing a system of mayoral control again in 1999, stating that the school system should be “blown up” (Hartocollis, 1999). While the State Assembly and UFT still

opposed mayoral control as an organizational model for school governance, City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, the *New York Times*, and Arthur Levine (President of Teachers College) supported the establishment of mayoral control. Levine (2000) said that Giuliani was already the “de facto” leader of the system, which created a system with zero accountability under the current legal framework.

Eyeing a potential U.S. Senate seat at the end of his mayoral term (under new term limits, he could not run for a third term), Giuliani attempted again in 2000 to gain mayoral control to improve his education record (McGlynn, 2007). By this time, there was a coalition of business leaders supporting the idea, and Tishman Speyer organized an influential lobbying effort (Lipton & Goodenough, 2000). Even the union came to support the proposal: During summer 2001, UFT President Randi Weingarten announced that she would support an expansion of the central BOE for which the mayor would be able to appoint a majority of the members (McGlynn, 2007). Senator Hillary Clinton also announced her support (McGlynn, 2007).

Mayoral Control

After he won the mayoralty, Michael Bloomberg lost no time in following the path that Giuliani had blazed. He asked for mayoral control in his inaugural address; 2 months later, he called the BOE a “rinky-dink candy store” where owners were “setting the price on every tube of deodorant” (Cardwell, 2002, p. B3). The City Council’s Education Committee sponsored a series of hearings because, as Chairwoman Eva Moskowitz said, “The issues need public airing,” and prominent witnesses lined up to support a change in governance (Hartocollis, 2002).

Mayor Bloomberg now had the momentum that he needed: Unlike Giuliani, he had less conflict to overcome as he had the support of the State Assembly Democrats and the UFT, along with a bargaining chip: the struggling city budget after September 11, 2001. The previous system of decentralization lacked management and bureaucratic organization, paving the way for a “business-minded” reformer like Mayor Bloomberg. The mayor promised that he would not balance the city budget by reducing the education budget if the Assembly agreed to give him mayoral control—a deal not available to any of the previous mayors (Dewan, 2002).

Perhaps the most difficult part of the legislative package was the issue of what to do with the community school boards in the new organizational model because the establishment of the boards in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx were part of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and any action that would weaken minority representation had to be sanctioned by the Justice Department.

Nevertheless, in early June 2002, Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker of the Assembly, Sheldon Silver, agreed to abolish the community school boards if Bloomberg did not cut the education budget, unless it was a financial emergency (McGlynn, 2007). The State Assembly passed the bill granting control to the mayor on June 11, 2002. That evening, Mayor Bloomberg announced a new contract with the teachers that gave them 16-22% raises. The Senate passed the bill the next day and Governor Pataki signed it into law. The community school boards were eliminated 1 year later, on June 30, 2003. During the year, a task force was created by the state legislature to propose a new form of district governance to exist in their place that would satisfy U.S. Department of Justice requirements.

Mayor Bloomberg received his wish in June 2002 when he became the first mayor of NYC to be given formal control of the school system through the passage of the School Governance Law in the state legislature. It is important to note that Congress had passed the NCLB law just 1 year earlier. A special bill was passed by the New York state legislature in 2002 that made him solely responsible for the city's school performance or the achievement of over 1 million students in 1,400 schools across five boroughs with over 90,000 teachers. "I commit to you today. . . . I will make the schools better. . . . I want to be held accountable for the results, and I will be," said a confident Mayor Bloomberg to the New York state legislature (Meyer, 2008, p. 11). The position of Chancellor was filled by the Mayor to serve as both a superintendent and CEO of the public school system, to oversee academic performance and fiscal equity, and to oversee the high schools and the specialized high school admission process. A city board was organized to have policy-making capabilities over the school system and community superintendents had jurisdiction over the personnel and schools within their district and in accordance with the Education Law. The 32 Community School Boards were eliminated once Mayor Bloomberg began this reorganization process.

Joel Klein, a former lawyer with the Department of Justice and litigator of the anti-trust Microsoft suit, was chosen by Mayor Bloomberg to become Chancellor of the NYC public schools. Joel Klein had grown up in Brooklyn and had attended NYC public schools. In order to appoint a noneducator as head of the school system, a waiver had to be issued from the New York State Board of Regents. (Guiliani was the first mayor to request such a waiver when he appointed Harold O. Levy, a Vice-President of Citicorp, as the school system's chancellor from 2000 to 2002.) The issue of appointing a

noneducator as the head of a school system has been a controversial issue among NYC stakeholders and was especially controversial for Chancellor Levy when he sent his children to the prestigious private Dalton School. It continued to be controversial after Joel Klein, with subsequent appointments of noneducators Cathie Black and Dennis Walcott as Chancellor.

Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein made several reforms over the past 7 years with the goal of reorganizing the NYC public school system to make the system more transparent. Complete mayoral control, as Bloomberg has in NYC, moves the educational system as a branch or department under the mayor's authority, as are the police and fire departments, renaming the system to NYC DOE. One of the supposed benefits of this move is that it allows the mayor to plan reforms in education that match programs and policies in other agencies throughout the city, such as child welfare and social services, transportation, housing and community development. Symbolically, this move was also represented in closing the building at 110 Livingston Street, which had historically housed the Board of Education, and relocating the offices to the Tweed Courthouse, directly across the street from the Mayor's office.

The Board of Education was relegated to serving as a 13-member advisory panel called the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP); the mayor appoints eight members and each of the five borough presidents appoints a member. The Chancellor serves as the head of this panel. In contrast to the community school boards, this panel is allowed only to give advice, which in most cases occurs via their monthly meetings and shows no conflict between panel members. The mayor stated that he does not expect "to see their names ever in the press answering a question either on the record or off the record . . . I

would not tolerate it for thirty seconds” (Robinson, 2009). Mayor Bloomberg actually removed two members of the panel and replaced them when they chose to advise against one of plans for ending social promotion in an effort to eliminate potential conflict. The *New York Times* wrote about PEP meetings that

the volunteer panelists . . . rarely engage in discussions with those who rise to address them . . . they do not debate the educational issues of the day, but spend most sessions applauding packaged presentations by staff . . . some have barely uttered a word during their tenures. (Robinson, 2009, para. 22)

Mayor Bloomberg said “They really didn’t understand what it meant to serve at the pleasure of the mayor. . . . I mean, why would you have a commission that didn’t vote the way you wanted it to?” implying that it was his intention to have a panel that voted his way every time (Gross & Austrie, 2009, p. 3). Steve Saunders, one of the authors of the mayoral control legislation as the Chair of the State Assembly Education Committees, did not intend for this committee to be a “rubber stamp” but also did not expect the board to disagree with the mayor, since the majority of appointees were chosen by the mayor. Community school district offices were consolidated into 10 Regional Operation Centers.

Children First was a multi-year reform effort that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein launched in 2003 to focus on significantly improving the public schools. Their goal was to create a system of model schools in which effective teaching and learning is the realistic goal of every teacher and student (Justino-Gomez, 2007). Benchmark testing programs were established and citywide literacy and mathematics curricula (Balanced Literacy and Everyday Mathematics) were implemented. Reading and mathematics coaches were appointed in each school to teach and support teachers in implementing effective pedagogical strategies in their classrooms. In response to community complaints that parents had no access to the school system, Mayor

Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein initiated the Parent Coordinator position in every school to reduce conflict between parents and the school system. Parent Coordinators report to the school's principal and are responsible for addressing parent concerns, assisting communication and needs between the school and parents, and increasing the level of parent involvement in the schools. Mayor Bloomberg also ended the practice of social promotion (promoting children to the next grade level even though they have not met standards in the previous grade) in 2004 in Grades 3 and 8 and has recently proposed the change for Grades 4 and 6 as well (Gonen, 2009b).

Mayoral control typically means a centralized system of organization. Beginning in 2006, Mayor Bloomberg, still managing a highly-centralized system, chose to decentralize partial power back to the school level by giving principals more autonomy over their schools and eliminating much of the middle-level bureaucracy. During the 2006-2007 school year, this theory was tested through establishment of the Empowerment Program, which gave about 350 high-performing schools increased principal autonomy, greater financial freedom over their budgets, and the ability to make school-level decisions about day-to-day operations and curriculum. Researchers have contended that the transfer of decision-making authority from the central office level to the school level enhances "the quality, effectiveness and responsiveness of public education" (Ainley & McKenzie, 2000, p. 139). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has classified decision making in four main categories: (a) organization of instruction, including authoritative bodies, school policy, time length, textbooks, grouping pupils, student assistance, teaching methods, and evaluating pupils; (b) planning of education and the establishment of the structures level,

including managing schools, curriculum, subject choice, course content, qualifying exams, and credentialing; (c) personnel management level, including hiring and firing personnel, and salaries for staff; and (d) resource allocation and use level, including itemized costs, resource use, and maintaining and operating costs (Walberg et al., 2000). The Empowerment schools were able to make decisions in each of these four areas, according to NYC DOE literature; the condition is debated among participating principals and teachers in this study regarding the extent to which they were actually “empowered.”

In January 2007, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein announced the next phase of reorganizational reforms, including their version of decentralizing power to all school principals. Under this new organizational model, principals had the option to choose one of three “school support organizations,” who would be paid out of their school budget to “support” them in whatever capacity was needed. Principals choose to become part of the empowerment network, a partner support organization, or one of four learning support organizations that are run by formal regional superintendents. While the four learning support organizations and the empowerment network operate under the DOE organizational umbrella, there are seven not-for-profit partner support organizations (three were not chosen by any schools). This is an effort to “free” principals from daily supervision and give them more power to raise achievement scores (Herszenhorn, 2007a).

Mayor Bloomberg also revised the education budget to distribute money more equitably for schools to obtain quality teachers (Herszenhorn, 2007b). The Mayor tried to increase parent involvement in the system again, after dismantling the community school

boards when he first took control of the schools in 2002. However, the deadline for parent volunteers to serve on one of the 34 new parent councils was extended due to lack of candidates (something that also happened during parent elections in 2011; Bosman, 2007). Parents are angered by the fact that these councils have “no real authority, no power to institute policy and no influence with the Department of Education” (Bosman, 2007, para. 6). As an interface between parents, schools, and the DOE, in addition to the school-based Parent Coordinators hired by the principal, Bloomberg hired one “Parent Superintendent” to resolve issues and concerns from parents.

Community School District Education Councils

When Mayor Bloomberg was given control of the city schools in 2002, the 32 community school district boards were eliminated and replaced by 32 Community District Education Councils (CDECs). The CDECs are comprised of nine parents elected by parent associations, two members appointed by the borough president, and one nonvoting high school senior.

David Bloomfield, chair of the Graduate Program in Educational Leadership at Brooklyn College and the first vice president of the Citywide Council on High Schools, was frustrated by “the perception that the Department of Education had created the council as window dressing . . . rarely was there a sense of welcomed collaboration between the parents on the board and the Department of Education officials” (as cited in Baum, 2005, para. 3). While some councils have felt empowered and have continued to work in positive ways with their administrations, many councils have had difficulty in filling all of the slots; at least three times (2005, 2009, 2011), the nomination and election period has had to be extended due to a lack of viable candidates (Baum, 2005; Robinson,

2009). Other frustrations included the unannounced revision of Regulation A-185, removing council authority to designate magnet and choice school programs in their districts, the inability to visit their schools without the principal's permission, and the required completion of financial disclosure and conflict of interest forms (Baum, 2005). A few councils even worked with a civil rights attorney to understand their roles and to provide technical assistance on budgetary matters (Baum, 2005). In general, the councils in communities that were active and influential under the community school districts have remained active and influential, whereas those communities that struggled for a voice prior to 2002 are still struggling under the current system of mayoral control.

Brief Reinstatement of the NYC BOE

Due to the State Senate's controversy, the mayoral control legislation was not addressed by the July 1, 2009, deadline, resulting in the return of the NYC BOE for a brief 38-day period (Figure 8). Seven members, one appointed by each borough president and two by the mayor, quickly gathered together and held one meeting that lasted 9 minutes (Medina, 2009b). During that meeting they approved two resolutions: (a) Keep Joel I. Klein as the Chancellor, with all the power necessary to operate the school system, "including but not limited to, authority to award and execute all contracts without restrictions to dollar amount or purpose"; and (b) encourage the State Senate to "immediately" pass a bill that would renew the mayor's control over the schools (as cited in Medina, 2009b). The Board scheduled their next meeting for September and volunteered to abstain from their \$15,000 stipends, personal assistants, and drivers. Following the announcement by the State Senate that they had passed the bill in August,

Figure 8. The Board of Education. From left, Jimmy Yan, Patricia E. Harris, Carlo Scissura, Dennis M. Walcott, Edward Burke, Edward Skyler, and Dolores M. Fernández at Tweed Courthouse, July 1, 2009. (Picture taken by Béatrice de Gêa for *The New York Times*). Source: “The Brief Life and Impending Death of a Board of Education,” by J. Medina, *The New York Times*, August 8, 2009.

Bloomberg acknowledged that “we had a great board for the Board of Education It’s just not the right structure long-term, so we’re back” (Medina, 2009b, para. 14).

Reauthorization of the Mayoral Control Act

State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver was successful in passing the renewed bill through the State Assembly in June. Finally, on August 5, 2009, the State Senate passed the Assembly bill, sponsored by Senator Frank Padavan from Queens, reauthorizing mayoral control of the NYC public schools until June 30, 2015, by a 47-8 vote (8 Democrats voted against the bill; Madore, 2009b). Ultimately, the passage was not without political commentary and conflict from both parties. Senator Shirley Huntley,

of Queens, denied accusations that she held up the passage of the bill due to a deal resulting from an incident in which she was trying to remove the principal of the school in which her daughter worked as a teacher (Gross & Austrie, 2009, p. 3). She also accused the bill's cosponsor, Daniel Squadron of Brooklyn, of supporting the bill due to his wife's recent employment in the Bloomberg administration (Madore, 2009a). Yet Mayor Bloomberg was excited that the Senators had passed the law without politics "stand[ing] in the way of progress" and claimed that "the State Senate today took a major step that will benefit millions of public school children for years to come: it preserved a system of clear accountability for our schools that has produced clear and dramatic results for our students" (as cited in Medina, 2009b, para. 9).

Additional organizational layers and provisions were enacted under the revised law in an attempt to reduce areas of conflict during the first period of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg. Under the new law, the PEP will authorize every contract over \$1 million. The DOE will be required to hold a public hearing in a local community prior to closing a school. Another change is the addition of a level of oversight by the city's Independent Budget Office to monitor DOE spending. Other changes include creation of a school arts council, establishment of a \$1.6 million parent activist training center in each borough by City University of New York, public hearings at all schools regarding safety issues at least once a year, and increased level of oversight for district superintendents (Lovett, 2009c). The Senate also voted unanimously to create a committee of four Democrats and three Republicans to monitor school governance in NYC; however, the committee will not have any additional authority than is currently held by the Senate Education Committee. Bloomberg's response to this last-minute

addition was, “I don’t think anybody thinks that the Senate should be getting involved in the details of running the schools, and I trust they will not do that” (Lovett, 2009c, p. 10).

The current PEP consists of nine men and four women, including three African American members, three Asian American members, and three Hispanic members. While the panel continues to operate free of conflict, stakeholders have increased their level of public disagreement with the panel. During their first meeting of the 2009-2010 school year, more than \$250 million in contracts were approved despite objections from borough presidents’ appointees and attending parents (Kolodner, 2009). One frequent critic of Mayor Bloomberg was not elected either chairman or vice-chairman of the PEP (Hernandez, 2009h). The question of the panel members’ objectivity has already been questioned, as several members have connections, including contracts with the BOE and other city agencies (Hernandez, 2009h).

Mayoral Control Since Its Reauthorization in 2009

Following reauthorization of the mayoral control law in 2009, Chancellor Klein announced his departure in December 2010, after the longest tenure as school chancellor in NYC history. At that time, Mayor Bloomberg continued the pattern of selecting a noneducator for the position of Chancellor by selecting Cathie Black, a publishing executive with no experience in the public sector. In selecting her for the Chancellor position, “The mayor consulted with virtually no one in his administration before naming her,” which went against most parent and community recommendations, as well as the majority of participating teachers and principals in this study (Halbfinger, Hernandez, & Santos, 2011, para. 55). In granting her a State DOE waiver for not having the qualifications to become Chancellor, the Commissioner required the appointment of a

Chief Academic Officer (CAO; filled by Shael Polakow-Suransky), a position that exists in the governance structures of Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver, Seattle, San Diego, and Pittsburgh. After angering community members at public hearings, resulting in a major loss of support from the Mayor's office as he received the lowest approval rating ever during the Mayor's time in office, Cathie Black resigned in April 2011. Public dissatisfaction with her appointment was widely discussed throughout the city. Although she had been appointed after data had been collected for this study, the majority of the participating teachers and principals discussed the importance of having an "educator" to lead the system. Unfortunately for them, the Mayor's next choice for Chancellor had greater ties to the community but still failed to meet the "educator" requirements.

In April 2011, following dismissal of Cathie Black after only 95 days, Mayor Bloomberg promoted Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott to be the next Chancellor. In contrast to the previous two chancellors, Walcott had worked for the NYC public school system for a few years, had grown up in the public school system, had earned a Master's degree in education, and had taught Kindergarten at a local parochial school in Queens. Never the less, his appointment required a waiver from the State Commissioner of Education because he lacked the certification credentials of a superintendent (the fourth consecutive Chancellor to require such a waiver). Coincidentally, Commissioner Steiner resigned the same week that he appointed Walcott, with some citing his appointment of Cathie Black as the reason; some commented that "the bar was dropped so low to get a waiver for Black that no one could ever be denied one in the future unless he or she had a criminal record" (Ravitch, as cited in Silverstein, 2011b, p. 1). His appointment was recommended and supported by the President of the CSA, Ernest Logan (Silverstein,

2011a). In 1993, Walcott had been appointed to the Board of Education by Mayor Dinkins, where he began a model of mayoral control for the NYC schools that involved “extensive parental involvement” (Halbfinger et al., 2011). Walcott was crucial in getting the original mayoral control bill passed in 2002, as well as its reauthorization in 2009 (Halbfinger et al., 2011; Rogers, 2009). While seemingly more popular with school system employees and the community, he still lacked the “educator” background that participants had requested in future school district leaders. The first year of his appointment was spent in rebuilding community support, increasing the level of parent involvement in the school system, improving teacher practices through continuous cycles of feedback, and increasing academic expectations for all students through Common Core State Standards-based performance tasks as dictated in his 2011-2012 Citywide Instructional Expectations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized the history of governance and organizational structures of the NYC school system, identified areas of conflict between stakeholders, and described the mayoral control reforms and initiatives under Mayor Bloomberg. The NYC school system began under a centralized system of governance and changed to a decentralized form of governance in 1963. When Giuliani became Mayor, he attempted to gain more centralized power over the school board and was successful in receiving additional executive powers but not successful in gaining full mayoral control. Mayor Bloomberg had the political and financial capital necessary to receive full mayoral control in 2002, once again centralizing all authority in the NYC public school system with the Mayor. Since 2002, the cycle of organizational change has been more rapid.

With change has come conflict among stakeholders. In 2006 the Mayor decentralized authority to school principals and in 2007 established a support system of networks for principals, beginning the era of “centralized decentralization.” A comprehensive description of the reform efforts under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein from 2002 to 2009 can be found in *Education Reform in New York City: Ambitious Change in the Nation’s Most Complex School System* (O’Day, Bitter, & Gomez, 2010). Specific organizational changes and reform policies that were evaluated by secondary school teachers and principals in this study regarding the level of implementation from their perspective and their effect on student achievement from 2002 to 2009 are described in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 5

How Has Mayoral Control Been Evaluated Nationally and Locally in New York City?

Most research on cities that have operated under some form of mayoral control have evaluated the organizational changes and cited Boston as the most successful example of positive improvement in an urban school system. In preparation for the reauthorization of the mayoral control law in NYC in 2009, several researchers and agencies evaluated mayoral control in NYC, citing its successes, its failures, and how governance in NYC can be amended to reflect stakeholder recommendations. Evaluations have been conducted nationally and locally concerning the outcomes and effects of organizational changes made under mayoral control. They have also been written at the citywide level, from the school district leader perspective, from the high school perspective, and from the parent/community perspective. Several organizations have written reports evaluating school governance and reforms in NYC under Mayor Bloomberg, as well as reports, articles, or books recommending changes to the School Governance Law in NYC, including an independent commission sponsored by the Public Advocate, the teachers and administrators' unions, the Independent Commission on Public Education (ICOPE; a committee created by the State Senate Democrats), and the City Council.

It is important to understand the published literature evaluating mayoral control nationally and locally in order to compare the results and opinions with perceptions held by educators, people on the ground level of school reform in NYC, with the public perception of mayoral control in NYC to determine whether there are areas of agreement

and/or disagreement on the implementation of reforms under mayoral control in NYC. Most information has been gathered from archival analysis, documentary evidence, public hearings, conversations with the researcher, and reading published findings. This chapter summarizes the perspectives of published literature evaluating mayoral control to address the first research question of the study: *What does the empirical evidence reveal about the effectiveness of mayoral control, with respect to school governance, faculty, administrator, and community input and student achievement?*

How Has Mayoral Control Been Evaluated Nationally?

Nationally, mayoral control has been evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as positively and negatively. Researchers have reported that mayoral involvement through a formal leadership role of the organization has affected school district management and administration, democratic public involvement, and student achievement (Henig, 2009). Whether these changes are viewed positively or negatively often depends on stakeholder perceptions of the levels of improvement.

Arguments in Support of Strong Mayoral Involvement

The main reported arguments in favor of strong formal involvement include increased electoral accountability, increased coordination of city services for schools, increased level of importance paid to education in the city, and increased philanthropic support for the schools. According to Kenneth J. Meier,

Greater mayoral control will affect three aspects of school district governance . . . it should centralize accountability, broaden the constituency concerned with education, and reduce the extent of micromanagement. (as cited in Henig & Rich, 2004, p. 222)

Edelstein (2006) claimed that “a mayor’s efforts to reform central office practices have the potential to positively affect student outcomes in the long term” (p. 23). Many

mayors have forced changes in administrative personnel by hiring noneducators to fill positions at the higher levels of the administrative structure, although critics, including teachers and principals in this study, do not see this as positive. Noneducators may bring new insights to school management and thus increase levels of accountability and reduce levels of bureaucracy. Mayors can coordinate with other agencies, have access to additional resources and expertise, and do not have to spend time gaining consensus as school board members do; however, critics, noted below, warn that such efficiency often comes at the expense of democratic input. Mayors who have a formal leadership role have often been more effective at negotiating teacher union contracts and avoiding strikes (Henig, 2009).

Strong mayoral involvement also can improve the quality of life for urban citizens as a whole, since mayors have greater ability to direct policy within the city and to allocate city resources and encourage outside organizations to partner with the school system and address the needs of the community. Mayors also may have authority over social service agencies, public safety and health organizations, transportation systems, and other resources that can directly impact children's lives and thus improve their levels of educational achievement (Edelstein, 2006; Kirst, 2002). As urban areas continue to struggle with issues related to racial and social class inequalities, employment opportunities, housing, crime and drug abuse, mayoral involvement in education has the potential to create a combination of political, economic, and social institutions necessary to solve these problems. Formally involved mayors also have the potential to redirect resources across the entire school system, including those supporting curricular and instructional changes, in order to improve student outcomes (Wong & Anagnostopoulos,

1998). When mayors have a formal leadership role in the schools, they focus on education and on improving the quality of schools and student achievement through better fiscal management. Further, those mayors give education an increased level of importance on the city agenda, as evidenced, among other ways, by their annual state-of-the-city speeches (Portz & Schwartz, 2009; Wong et al., 2007).

Advocates claim that another benefit of increased publicity for education can be an increase in philanthropic and corporate support for education in the city. Private financial support facilitates improvements in urban school systems that can potentially keep middle-class families in the city, thus maintaining or increasing municipal tax bases, which aids overall development (Peterson, 1981).

If mayors can increase the probability that school governance reforms will be successful, then classrooms and teachers are more likely to be successful; if the public education system is successful, then cities tend to be more successful (Wong et al., 2007). Advocates argue that strong formal mayoral involvement can improve student performance, increase and sustain fiscal discipline, and elevate the profile of public education in urban environments by restoring public confidence and commitment to the city's schools, thereby improving the city as a whole (Wong et al., 2007). Although many of these accomplishments may be a result of accountability reforms in general rather than a change in the mayor's role, proponents argue that a strong mayoral role provides a more efficient structure for ensuring accountability (Viteritti, 2009).

Arguments Against Strong Mayoral Involvement

Those who disagree with strong mayoral involvement in school governance cite a lack of community and parental input and access to the education system, a lack of

transparency, limited or no checks and balances on the mayor's discretion, and a lack of democratic accountability (Chambers, 2006; Hemphill, 2009).

As authority and decision-making power become more centralized under the mayor, parents and community members tend to find few ways to access the system. Typically, strong mayoral involvement also has meant fewer formal avenues for democratic community and parental involvement, especially for racial and ethnic minorities (Chambers, 2006). In such cases, the type of school board member has changed, no longer requiring—as a matter of law or political realities—representation from each neighborhood or ward. Mayors have felt free to appoint members of their own constituency instead of grassroots or community organizers (Meier, as cited in Henig & Rich, 2004). Historically, school systems have been a major avenue for African Americans to acquire social capital, gaining more positions of power in school systems than in fire and police departments (Henig, 2009). Where mayors have full power to appoint school board members, the board is seen as a rubber stamp and a loss of a major avenue for community member participation (Hernandez, 2009j; Portz & Schwartz, 2009). When school board members are appointed, there has been less debate and opportunity for public discussion and criticism, as members do not need to appeal to the needs of their constituency. Although Boston voters approved the continuation of their system of strong mayoral involvement, the major opponents to its extension were in African American neighborhoods in the city. In Chicago and Cleveland, parents and community members also perceived a loss of access to the systems when their own mayors took on a stronger leadership role (Chambers, 2006). The PEP in NYC has also been viewed as a “rubber stamp” to the mayor, in contrast to its previous form as the

BOE with real decision-making authority. It is for this reason that it is important to understand how the strong leadership role of Mayor Bloomberg in NYC positively or negatively affected student achievement, according to NYC teachers and principals.

How Have Researchers Analyzed the Effects of Strong Mayoral Involvement?

Various researchers have evaluated the new organizational models of school governance with strong mayoral involvement, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In general, researchers have found mixed quantitative results in seeking to correlate mayoral leadership with student achievement. While some attribute positive trends to mayoral leadership, it is methodologically problematic to argue that there exists a direct relationship between the level of mayoral influence and its impact on schools.

Quantitative results from IELP (2010) are no different. Ultimately, the local context of the city and its political and educational history appear to affect educational outcomes more than governance structure (Kirst, 2007). Mayoral control is one possible reform strategy, but its effectiveness is determined by the “right combination of ingredients—committed and skilled leadership by the mayor, willingness to use scarce resources, a stable coalition of supporters, appropriate education policies, and a cadre of competent, committed professionals to implement the reforms” (Cibulka, 2001, p. 35). Despite these limitations, it is important to acknowledge research that has attempted to isolate and evaluate the role of governance in general and mayoral influence in urban school improvement.

According to Wong et al. (2007), whose research provides the most in-depth quantitative analysis of student achievement data, cities with strong mayoral involvement

have experienced an increase in student achievement at the elementary level. However, Henig's quantitative analysis of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores⁴ resulted in a different conclusion. In his analysis of five "mayor-centric" school districts, as compared to six traditionally governed school districts, students in the traditionally governed cities generally made greater improvements in reading and mathematics scores across all measures and sectors of the student population (Henig, 2009).

Wong et al. (2007) used a national data set from 104 cities to measure the effectiveness of what they termed *mayoral control* on productivity (student achievement).⁵ Although these data span only the years 1999 through 2003, lack a significant portion of high school data, and cannot be disaggregated by racial group, they showed an increase in elementary school performance where the mayor has gained more control than previously experienced in that city and has appointment power over a majority of board seats. The limitations of the Wong et al. data set indicate that further research is required on the effects of school governance on student achievement and other variables.

Cuban and Usdan (2003), using a similar methodology to this study, studied six cities (Baltimore Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Diego, and Seattle) where the mayor's role went beyond the traditional form of appointing members to an independent board. Their sample included cities in which a noneducator was hired as superintendent.

⁴NAEP is the only test that is comparable across cities, as the same test is given to sample student urban populations across the country.

⁵They also attempt to measure effectiveness based on management and governance, human capital and building public confidence (Wong & Shen, 2007).

During the course of their qualitative investigation, the authors found little improvement in elementary test scores, with minority students still lagging behind and the size of the achievement gap remaining unchanged. Using case studies, primary and secondary sources, and interviews, they concluded that strong mayoral influence may result in positive changes because (a) linking urban school governance to existing political structures, including the business community, will produce organizational effectiveness, improve teaching and learning, and enhance citywide service coordination; (b) the mayor will be more efficient in aligning goals, curriculum, professional development, rewards, sanctions, and instruction; and (c) when noneducators lead urban districts, they have more connections to state and local political structures that will improve and sustain achievement (Cuban & Usdan, 2003). This research is confirmed in the IELP (2010) school governance report.

However, Cuban and Usdan (2003) concluded that to make informed judgments about the effects of any change in governance reform requires at least 5 to 7 from full implementation. Thus, there is some question whether the benefits described in the studies are significant enough to argue that strong mayoral influence is the preferred organizational model of school governance for cities, or whether it should be viewed merely as one option among others.

Other Considerations

Although it may be evident, it is still worth noting, as others have, that the success of mayoral leadership depends on the mayor. According to Viteritti (2009), the structure “is not a solution, it is an enabler . . . creat[ing] possibilities for the kind of bold leadership needed to turn around failing school districts” (p. 9). Typically, in systems

with strong mayoral involvement, the mayors are “reformers” who emphasize and give high priority to school reform, often in common with other civic leaders (Henig, 2009, p. 38). But not every mayor today is a reformer.

The effectiveness of mayoral leadership may also depend on term limitations. Urban education reforms take time; yet, on average, urban school leaders such as superintendents serve 2.5 to 4 years—not nearly long enough for serious reforms to be implemented (The Broad Foundation and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003). With strong mayoral involvement, school leadership may be more durable; but that, in turn, may depend on how long the mayor serves. For example, in Chicago, Boston, and NYC, in large part due to the absence of mayoral term limits (Chen & Barbaro, 2009), the mayors and their appointees are serving much longer. This has enabled them to implement their school reform strategies. By contrast, many urban mayors are limited to two terms or 8 years as mayor, which makes them “subject to defeat and distraction,” with their political and educational agendas given insufficient time to flourish, regardless of any valuable insights they could offer to the school system (Hill & Harvey, 2004). Yet, even 4 to 8 years is a longer period of stability than many urban superintendents experience in reforming school systems.

As Henig (2009) pointed out, the essential question to consider when evaluating mayoral leadership is, does a strong mayoral role in school district governance “augment or undermine” the need of struggling urban school systems to maintain their vision, build capacity, and sustain political support? (p. 42). According to Cuban and Usdan (2003), three factors affect whether mayoral involvement in governance can be successful: (a) whether the mayor’s role in the schools is integrated with existing political structures in

such a way that it improves organizational efforts, thereby contributing to teaching and learning improvements and citywide programs; (b) whether mayoral leadership can provide better management that focuses on aligning goals, standards, curriculum, professional development, assessments, rewards and sanctions; and (c) whether noneducators are connected to existing state and local political structures, resulting in improved and sustained student achievement. In a more recent paper by Henig (2007), mayoral control was reported to have an impact on management and administration, democracy and public involvement, and student learning, meeting Cuban and Usdan's criteria.

Governance changes depend largely on the conditions and context of the city at a particular point in time (Kirst, 2002). Viteritti, chair of the Commission for School Governance in NYC, observed, "No governance plan can overcome the social impediments that can prevent disadvantaged parents from having an effective voice in the education of their children" (as cited in "Should Mayors Run Schools?" 2009, p. 26). According to Henig (2009), there are five reasons to be concerned if strong mayoral involvement comes at the cost of limiting access to organizations that represent minorities, teachers, and parents: (a) Historically, educational policy makers have believed that teachers and parents should have greater influence in the educational system than the average voter; (b) central administrators are not on the "ground level" every day, and thus parents and teachers can provide beneficial information about the effectiveness of certain policies and programs; (c) the history of racial inequality in education may jeopardize the authority of mayoral control as a system of governance; (d) marginalized community and stakeholder opinions may suffer from a lack of perspective; and (e)

without community and political engagement and participation, even the most researched policy initiatives may fall short. Viteritti confirmed the importance of gathering evidence from teachers and principals, those on the “ground level,” who have been employed under the mayoral control regime (“Should Mayors Run Schools?” 2009).

Findings From the National Report on Mayoral Control

In the 2010 IELP Report, mayoral control was evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively. Academic achievement, while not directly correlated to the governance changes, showed greater improvement in cities under mayoral control than in cities that did not have mayoral control (Sadovnik et al., 2010). Findings regarding attitudes of school district leaders in urban education about the efficacy of the new governance models in the nine cities reported governance system in each of their school districts as positive, favoring their current models of organization mostly due to the fact that the current governance system was a radical departure from the dysfunctional past, and the districts had achieved some success in various areas of performance.

Chief administrators and school board members often cited two strengths of their governance systems: mayoral commitment to public education and leadership stability. In Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, NYC, and Washington, mayors campaigned on a pro-public education platform; once elected, they continued to be committed to increasing funding and reforming the public schools in their cities. These “education mayors,” all of whom have legal authority over their city’s school system, have raised the profile of public education reform. They are willing to take political heat for controversial reforms such as school closings in Boston and teacher merit pay proposals in Washington. They invite accountability for all aspects of public education, especially efforts to improve student

achievement. Teachers and principals in the current study cited a public commitment to education and stability in leadership as a strength of mayoral control (see Chapter 10).

Leadership stability—whether in the reelection of an “education mayor,” in longevity in the tenure of the superintendent or school board chair, or a combination thereof—was cited as the second positive that school administrators contribute to effective governance in their school districts (Sadovnik et al., 2010). Continuous leadership, such as has existed in the mayor’s office in Boston and Chicago, gives leaders the opportunity to implement reforms. While the consistency that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein had for two terms allowed them time to implement reforms, Mayor Bloomberg’s change to the term limits law and subsequent reelection to a third term was viewed negatively by many participants. With a lame duck administration in office following his reelection, Chancellor Klein exited the DOE in 2010; thus, the longest tenure of leadership stability in NYC came to an end.

Interviewees in the IELP report noted repeatedly that a structure that gives the mayor control over appointments is only as good as the mayor. An effective appointed board can be one mayoral election away from becoming ineffective. Mayoral control works when “the right mayor” is “actively engaged,” as CEO Sanders observed, and is “willing to put political capital behind education projects,” as Chancellor Michelle Rhee of Washington commented. Several participants in this report confirmed this finding by stating that mayoral control in NYC had been effective only due to the political and financial capital that Mayor Bloomberg brought to the table.

Qualitative research also found that it is important to consider the responsibilities and/or powers that the CEO or superintendent has within the district. In NYC, Chancellor

Joel Klein controls the educational policy and operational aspects of the school districts with essentially no check on his authority. It is in this area that many reports have recommended a system of checks and balances on the level of authority given to the chancellor. During the centralized decentralization phase of their reforms, Chancellor Klein directed power and decision-making authority to successful principals at the individual school level, with the hope that, regardless of which mayor or chancellor is in charge, school leaders can make the best decisions for their students (Hemphill & Nauer, 2009). Principals are “CEOs” of their buildings, making all budgetary, staffing, and teaching decisions; in many instances they are “noneducators” (Council of Supervisors and Administrators President Ernest Logan, personal communication, April 28, 2009; Clare Muñana, Vice President of Chicago Board of Education, personal communication, March 5, 2009; see also Robinson, 2007). While the management theory behind this reform decision makes sense, the reality experienced by some principals was that their level of authority had not increased and may have actually decreased. This is discussed in Chapter 10.

None of the school administrators interviewed in the IELP (2010) study were able to correlate directly, with hard data, gains in student achievement and the form of governance in their cities. Henig (2009) found gains in student achievement as a result of the Children’s First Reforms in NYC, but the majority of other stakeholders found it impossible to make a direct correlation between governance and achievement and/or to judge based on available data. Similar perceptions were found in participating teacher and principal interviews in this study, discussed in Chapter 8.

Administrators who were interviewed in the 2010 IELP study were aware of the often-voiced criticism that mayor appointed school boards remove school district governance from the democratic process. Participants in that study cited various ways in which their administrations seek “community input,” such as outreach through a district office of community relations and involvement of parents and others on district-wide or school-based advisory councils. Ultimately, voters have the prerogative not to reelect the mayor if they disagree with how the schools are run. While employees of the DOE argued that there was stakeholder participation and input in DOE decisions, most participants in this study agreed with the previously cited research that there was a lack of transparency and participation in the decision-making process (Rogers, 2009).

Another question related to democracy is whether mayor-appointed school boards have less debate at public meetings than elected boards. If there is less debate by appointed boards, does that mean that there is more consensus or merely rubber stamping what the CEO recommends? On this issue, the administrators who were interviewed for this study asserted that less debate usually means that there has been effective consensus building (an example is former Boston School Committee chair Liz Reilinger’s ability to develop consensus, according to Dr. Payzant) and thoughtfulness (a word used by Dr. Byrd-Bennett). “Lack of public shenanigans and expressions of disagreement” are not rubber stamps, according to Byrd-Bennett (personal communication, March 14, 2009). In Boston, where fistfights had occurred at meetings of the prior elected school committee, there was a sense of relief that civil decorum reigned at meetings of the appointed school committee. In NYC, most stakeholders agreed that the PEP was a “rubber stamp” and

that there was no debate or opportunity for true democratic participation. The most frequently cited examples were the annual PEP meetings that voted on school closings.

Also essential to the issue of democracy is whether board members are protected by fixed terms or can be removed by the mayor. When a consensus was not reached on Mayor Bloomberg's policy to end social promotion in third grade, three members of the PEP were removed on the day of the vote, even though the policy would have been approved (Herszenhorn, 2004). Testifying at a public hearing before the New York State Assembly, Chancellor Joel Klein said that "diluting" the mayor's authority over the PEP would "undermine the mayor's accountability to the city and that would be a huge mistake" because "if a mayor cannot pursue his priorities, he cannot fairly be held responsible for what happens in education" (Klein, 2009, n.p.).

Strong, visionary leadership by mayors, chief school administrators, and school boards was recognized universally by the interviewees as vital to the success of educational reform. Given that the impetus for new governance models in the nine studied cities came largely from Republicans and business critics pressing to free public schools from education bureaucrats and teacher union contracts and to open the way for more competition from charter schools and vouchers,⁶ it is not surprising that teachers and unions have not been eager supporters of governance changes, according to the IELP (2010) report on school governance. Teachers' and administrators' unions have had good cause to be wary of these new models. In NYC, both unions supported the authorization and reauthorization of mayoral control but supported the reauthorization with several

⁶For a succinct statement of this viewpoint, see March 4, 2009 testimony of R. Eden Martin, president of the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago before the Illinois Senate Committee on Deficit Reduction.

modifications in 2009. Recently, the New York Federation of Teachers sought voluntary recognition as the sole collective bargaining representative for the teachers at KIPP AMP, a charter school run by the Knowledge Is Power Program in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. However, the school's management refused to recognize the union, so the union will have to pursue formal proceedings before the New York Public Employment Relations Board (Medina, 2009#).

Teachers and administrators have not fared badly under mayoral control. Overall, class size has decreased in the cities studied in the IELP report (Moscovitch et al., 2010), as has the student-teacher ratio. In many cities, spending on schools has risen dramatically and salaries have risen as well. For example, in the first 5 years that Mayor Bloomberg had control of the New York City schools, teacher salaries rose 40% (Cardwell, 2007). Randi Weingarten, former president of the New York Federation of Teachers and now president of the American Federation of Teachers, has been careful in her comments on mayoral control. She came out in favor of extending mayoral control for NYC (Monahan, 2009). Instead of fighting with the administration, Weingarten has proposed partnering to garner additional funds to turn around failing schools, but she insists that unionized teachers stay in the schools and be included in the turnarounds. As co-negotiator on the DC teachers' union contract, she was pleased with the plan for increased professional development and classroom resources but still concerned with the level of top-down school district authority and lack of collaboration with district teachers (Turque, 2010a, 2010b).

One of the main goals of the changes in governance was to improve the image and academic performance of the public schools and thereby attract more families to live

in the city and send their children to the public schools. IELP (2010) found little evidence that the goal was being met. For example, when examining data on school enrollments and economic status of public school families, even where it might be possible to identify a trend in enrollments and economic status—for example, to indicate that more middle class families are choosing to send their children to public schools—it is impossible to separate the overall economic and demographic trends, much less show a correlation to a particular form of school governance.

Reauthorization Reports for the Mayoral Control Law in NYC

Analysis of several published reports on mayoral control in NYC revealed several themes. Overall, the reports from the UFT, the Council of Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), David Rogers, and the Independent Commission sponsored by the Public Advocate published in a book by Joseph Viteritti, positively evaluated mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein enough to recommend maintaining mayoral control, with a few revisions and modifications to the law prior to its reauthorization in 2009. The recommendations of “meaningful accountability at all levels,” greater transparency in the decision-making process, and the need for greater parent involvement were common themes that emerged from their reports.

Rogers (2009) cited that both the teachers’ and principals’ unions were angry about their lack of participation in the strategic decisions related to system restructuring, reflecting the perception that the unions’ power of the past was no longer present under the centralized power in Bloomberg’s version of mayoral control. In management theory, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein took a top-down approach to changing the system versus a participatory approach because they contended that it was necessary to

transform the NYC public school system (Rogers, 2009). There is disagreement between parties, the DOE and community members in particular, regarding their level of participation in organizational decisions. While stakeholders felt a lack of transparency, the DOE argued that they sought to involve parents and community members in decision-making processes, such as when they sought to implement the parent coordinator position in all schools (Rogers, 2009).

David Rogers (2009), a historian of NYC school bureaucracy, conducted a case study of the strengths and weaknesses of mayoral control in NYC from 2002 to 2007 in which he utilized sociological perspectives to understand Bloomberg's version of mayoral control as a "management modernization strategy." Interviewing 120 people from various stakeholder groups in NYC, he found that those who favored mayoral control were less willing to be interviewed, but his end result was that mayoral control was a positive change strategy for reforming the NYC public schools. However, he did not necessarily agree with the manner in which the reforms were implemented. At the end, he recommended renewing the mayoral control law with a few adjustments.

The CSA conducted focus groups and meetings at their office with members and recommended reauthorizing the mayoral control law, with similar recommendations of other organizations based on the experience of the previous 8 years. The CSA identified four key areas where the system could be drastically improved: (a) there must be meaningful accountability at all levels; (b) there must be collaboration and checks and balances throughout the system; (c) there must be genuine transparency of the decision-making and budgeting process; and (d) there must be an increase in parent and community access and involvement (CSA, 2008). They also identified some specific

problems with mayoral control that they contended could have been prevented if there had been more accountability and checks and balances at the top of the system, such as when there was a backlog of special education cases after the 2003 reorganization that led to students not receiving services, when they were inconsiderate in closing of suspension sites after the 2004 reorganization that forced some students to travel between boroughs, and when the mayor removed three members of the PEP prior to the vote on a major policy initiative. The CSA also maintained that there was a lack of transparency, citing the drastic budget cuts across all schools in 2004 without considering individual school needs as evidence.

One of the strengths of mayoral control is supposed to be increased collaboration with other city agencies; however, the CSA contends that there has been limited collaboration and communication by the DOE with other agencies and that the DOE did not take these problems seriously, calling them “bumps in the road” and a “work in progress” (CSA, 2008). From the CSA perspective, the DOE’s “bumps in the road” became major problems that school administrators were forced to repair and answer to community members as they attempted to rectify the problem such as when there were changes to the bus system that left students waiting for their buses in January 2007, and confusion over the new procedures to assign Pre-K and gifted students to schools in spring 2008 (CSA, 2008). According to a news report in December 2009, special education students at several schools were being forced to board school buses early, missing as much as 40 minutes of learning time at the end of the school day (Kolodner & Monahan, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d). The CSA also contended that “parents have been marginalized” under this form of mayoral control as the CDECs did not have

legitimate power as the old community school boards did prior to 2003, and as district offices were reorganized into regional and network offices (CSA, 2008).

The CSA cited several amendments that they sought to see included in the reauthorization of mayoral control. They recommended that the position of chancellor be appointed, but on fixed 4-year terms with eligibility for reappointment; that the chancellor have a background in education; and that the chancellor be held accountable to the central board based on a yearly performance review (CSA, 2008). In terms of the central board, the CSA recommended that it no longer be a “rubber stamp” for policy decisions but that it be redesigned to include 13 members (still with the majority appointed by the mayor) with fixed terms of 2 years and eligibility for reappointment, that their responsibilities and powers be specifically stated regarding school closings, and that they approve all educational policy decisions prior to citywide implementation (CSA, 2008). The CSA also recommended that parent and community involvement improve by giving district superintendents the power to support schools, principals, and parents in their districts; holding CDEC elections on Election Day to increase voter turnout; and giving the CDECs more power with regard to district budgets, safety plans, policies, and superintendent appointments, as well as charter school approval power and school closing power (CSA, 2008). Additional amendments included creating more transparency through an independent data and budget office to review, report and offer recommendations based on data, and creating more checks and balances within the system by giving the NYC Council one appointment position on the central board and giving the city comptroller access to all financial records of the school system. The CSA

recommended adding another “sunset provision” to the reauthorization of the law in another 8 years that would allow for continued dialogue and revisions in the future.

The UFT held five public forums, one in each borough, to hear advice from the public in creating their report. In agreement with other reports that have been published thus far, the UFT and other organizations have recommended maintaining mayoral control but have also suggested establishment of checks and balances in the system.

Other evaluations were conducted from an external perspective of mayoral control in NYC. In 2010, a group of researchers published evaluation of several aspects of mayoral control of NYC in *Education Reform in New York City: Ambitious Change in the Nation’s Most Complex School System* (O’Day et al., 2010). Their evaluation focused on governance and management, teaching and learning, and high school reform and student outcomes.

The chapter on high school reform described the reforms in local and national context and identified seven key changes to high school education in NYC based on information and interviews with 11 current and former DOE staff members, six high school principals, one union leader, and two partner organizations involved in high school reform efforts. The seven key changes or levers for system change identified from these interviews were:

1. The pace of change has changed.
2. The profile of the high school principalship has changed, with large numbers of new principals playing new roles.
3. Partners from outside the system play an increasingly central role in the design, operations, and support of high schools.
4. The portfolio of high schools is actively managed, with the phasing out of old schools systematically connected to the phasing in of new ones.

5. The process of choice has been extended to all high schools, and all students.
6. New options offer “multiple pathways” to graduation and new models of high school.
7. Professional development and school support have shifted from the district to intermediaries and networks, but high school—specific support in operations and instruction has become hard to find. (Santee Siskin, as cited in O’Day et al., 2010, p. 182)

Many of these seven key changes were identified in this study by participants and are verified in the following chapters. Despite all of this research, it remains unclear from the perspective of teachers and administrators what has been successful and unsuccessful in increasing student achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning during Mayor Bloomberg’s and Chancellor Klein’s era of control.

Community Perceptions

Without interviewing a representative sample of parents, it is difficult to judge parental reactions to governance changes. It cannot be assumed that activist groups whose opinions are most easily canvassed truly represent the majority of parents or community members. Further, it is well known that parental participation drops off in the high schools; do outspoken elementary school parents speak for all? Still, some trends among parent groups were identified in the IELP (2010) school governance report. Few parent or community groups directly attacked the system of governance. Hot button issues for parents included school closings, for profit and charter schools, and budget priorities. School closings were among the most controversial issues, especially in NYC.

Nevertheless, in mayoral-controlled cities, parents and community activists have been involved in school issues. In NYC a group comprised of multiple advocacy groups within the city, the Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control (2009), convened in June 2008 to make recommendations regarding whether to extend

mayoral control upon its sunset in June 2009 and weighed in on a variety of issues, including increasing community involvement in decisions affecting neighborhood schools. While aspects of their recommendations were adopted in new legislation, the level of parent and community involvement so far has not increased to their desired level.

Besides school closings, parent groups are leery of the trend toward more private and charter schools, as were most participating teachers in this study. While critical of the education that their children receive, parents tend to support the teachers and principals whom they know. The following parent organizations filed their opinions and evaluations of mayoral control and its reauthorization in NYC.

Some parent and community organizations supported mayoral control, were against the reauthorization of mayoral control, and supported mayoral control with recommended amendments. Leonie Haimson, founder of Class Size Matters, a parent advocacy group, expressed the wish that there would be more legislative changes included in the revised law. He said that the “point is that no matter what the law says, no matter how weak or strong it is, is there somebody who is willing or able to hold them accountable for anything” (as cited in Medina, 2009h, para. 16).

Learn-NY, a group that promoted reauthorization of mayoral control, was largely financed by Bill Gates (\$4 million) and Eli Broad for media and lobbying efforts, along with advertising, public relations, and bus trips through all five boroughs and to Albany (Campanile, 2009a).

The organization Campaign for Better Schools, which represented 27 smaller ethnically diverse advocacy organizations, recommended reforming the mayoral control law by increasing transparency in terms of school finances and student outcomes,

creating checks and balances, and increasing public participation for parents, youth, and community in the decision-making process (Campaign for Better Schools Flyer, received by the researcher in 2009 during a conversation with a co-leader of this organization).

The group reported that student achievement in fourth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) and math had increased more in the 5 years before Mayor Bloomberg than in the 5 years of his reforms; that students with disabilities and English Language Learner (ELL) students actually declined in achievement and graduation rates; and that fourth-grade scores on NAEP exams have stagnated and moved lower for eighth-grade students under mayoral control. The group reported that the racial achievement gap had closed slightly in mathematics but was stagnant or growing in ELA and in the Regents graduation rates. They contented that the school system has been less accountable to parents since parents have filed lawsuits in attempts to restore some of their powers and that parent coordinators had been less responsive to parent telephone calls. Campaign for Better Schools claimed a lack of transparency and communication with the public in the process of opening charter schools. They concluded that, despite the increase in the number of classroom seats, schools were still overcrowded and newly created small schools decreased the amount of classroom space available in schools (Campaign for Better Schools Flyer).

The 3R's coalition, which sought to "reclaim our schools, redesign the education system, and restore democracy," claimed that, "like previous efforts to change the system's governance without facing its deep systemic problems—still leaves the city with schools that fail to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of our children" (3R's coalition pamphlet received by the researcher in 2009). The 3R's, a coalition of 10

independent non-profits and advocacy groups recommended that the State Legislature establish a commission selected by educational leaders and assisted by independent researchers to create an new strategic plan and governance structure for the NYC public school system (3R's pamphlet).

The Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control described mayoral control as a “failed experiment” in which the leaders “manifest a disturbingly Wall Street mentality of ‘trust us, we know what we’re doing’” (pamphlet from the Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control given to the researcher in 2009). The group cited six myths that the Mayor and Chancellor proclaim and that they sought to dispel: (a) student achievement and graduation rates have improved under mayoral control; (b) mayoral control has eliminated waste and corruption and “put children first;” (c) the mayor is accountable; (d) parent input matters under mayoral control; (e) allowing mayoral control to expire will return anarchy, cronyism and/or political corruption to the system; and (e) the mayor has control. They reported that achievement and graduation rates had not increased under mayoral control and that Campaign for Fiscal Equity funds had not been spent to reduce class size in city schools. They contended that the mayor’s authority had remained unchecked and that he had not abided by all city laws and cooperated with legislative authorities. They claimed that mayoral control had operated behind a “veil of corporate secrecy without transparent public auditing and accountability or independent checks and balances.” They contended that, while the mayor has had control, it should be “replaced with a democratic process that requires the mayor to share responsibility for policymaking with independent checks and balances, and real engagement with parents and school communities.” Specifically,

they recommended (a) an independent board of education that provides checks and balances on the mayor and chancellor; (b) the chancellor be an educator with no waivers allowed; and (c) additional transparency and access be provided by created an independent accountability office, an ombudsperson position to hear parent complaints, and an inspector general to investigate improper allegations. Similar to the CSA recommendations, the group also recommended that the powers of the CDEC be restored to what community school boards and district superintendents had prior to mayoral control. They also recommended strengthening parent input and participation on school leadership teams, C-30 process, and a citywide parent organization for improving special education for all students by putting a parent of a special education student on each CDEC and requiring a cabinet-level position in the top layer of the DOE. Only one umbrella parent organization spoke for reauthorization of mayoral control: LearnNY, which was funded largely by supporters of Mayor Bloomberg.

Parent groups were not the only ones to speak out on the issue of mayoral control in NYC. Political figures, education professors, historians, researchers, and other stakeholders attended multiple hearings sponsored by various organizations and individuals to make their voice heard prior to the reauthorization.

City Comptroller and current Democratic candidate for mayor William C. Thompson, Jr. stated,

With its top-down approach, the Bloomberg administration has sought to avoid public debate and scrutiny, while fundamental decisions regarding education policy have been made by central administrators with very little education background. (as cited in Medina, 2009h)

Senator Bill Perkins of Manhattan, an outspoken critic of mayoral control, stated that the real issue was “race and class,” asking “Why are so many parents so against mayoral

control if it is working so well?” (as cited in Medina, 2009h, para. 18). The issue of race and class was also reflected in the Senate’s legislative discussions; critics were mostly African Americans and proponents were frequently White (Medina, 2009h). Scott Stringer, the Manhattan Borough President, stated the need for “a strong mayor to run the school system, but you do need parents to be able to go” to someone to have their concerns and voices heard (as cited in Robinson, 2009, para. 13). Shirley Hunt, Assemblywoman from Queens, pushed hard to revise the mayoral control law to include more participation and less dictator-like authority at the top of the school system (“Senator Shirley Huntley,” 2009).

Geoffrey Canada, founder of the Harlem Children’s Zone and the political support organization LearnNY, stated the importance of continuing to increase accountability by having one person in charge at the top:

The key to success of the new system has been holding officials truly accountable . . . new layers of bureaucracy will take us straight back to the bad old days, when corrupt and self-interested bodies answered to no one . . . We can’t have it both ways: either one person is in charge, or no one is. (as cited in Robinson, 2009, para. 18#)

In contrast, some changed their level of support during the 8 years of mayoral control in NYC. Diane Ravitch, professor at New York University (NYU), supported the initial authorization of the mayoral control law in 2002 but when it came time for reauthorization, she became one of the chief critics of Mayor Bloomberg’s style of mayoral control, stating that “no mayor has exercised such unlimited power over the public schools as Mr. Bloomberg” (as cited in Robinson, 2009, para. 11).

Business and Philanthropic Perceptions

Business and philanthropic communities have been major supporters of strong mayoral involvement in urban school districts. Businesses and philanthropic leaders see

themselves as important stakeholders in improving schools, having too often experienced first hand the problems facing urban schools when their employees, who are products of their city's schools, are unprepared for the workforce. Cognizant that a city's vitality is closely tied to its school system, corporations and foundations have been supporting efforts to reform school districts with strong mayoral involvement by providing operational expertise and funding.

The model of governance used by school districts under mayoral control borrows much in both form and substance from the corporate model. Several cities under mayoral control depend significantly on businesses to provide personnel, as well as operational and financial support. NYC Chancellor Joel Klein, for instance, was a well-known attorney before being tapped to head New York City schools and many of his top aides are from the worlds of business and law (Rogers, 2009). Moreover, representatives from prominent corporate interests can be found on most school boards, and many school districts have worked to foster direct relationships with the business community by developing programs like the one in New York that matches civic and business leaders with principals throughout the city (PENCIL, 2007).

Mayor Bloomberg has made opening small schools with the support of major funders a key strategy for improving high school graduation rates in New York City (Gootman, 2006). Bill Gates, a supporter both verbally and financially of mayoral control said, "You want to allow for experimentation. The cities where our foundation has put the most money is where there is a single person responsible. In New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C., the mayor has the responsibility for the school system," during an interview with CNN (as cited in Campanile, 2009a). This is one area that many

participating teachers and principals have debated as a success or failure in terms of a reform strategy under Mayor Bloomberg.

Gaining financial support directly from business and foundations is also an important part of these strategies. In NYC, there are high-level staff members responsible for fundraising from individuals, foundations, and businesses to support operational and instructional initiatives (Winlen, 2002). These efforts have been successful, as evidenced by the significant grants from funders such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, and the Broad Foundation (Samuel Tyler, Executive Director, Boston Municipal Research Bureau, personal communication, February 19, 2009; see also Gootman, 2006). It is important to note that NYC won the Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2007 (Broad Foundation, 2009).

While it cannot be stated with certainty what impact the corporate and philanthropic communities will have in the long run on efforts to reform school districts under mayoral control, for now they are major supporters of these initiatives. *The Daily News*, an avid supporter of mayoral control, stated that “full control, matched with complete accountability—must continue, calls to weaken a mayor’s grip on schools—not just the hold of this mayor, but any mayor—must be rejected” (Robinson, 2009, para 9). After hearing all of the above documentation on mayoral control in NYC, how did teachers and principals feel about mayoral control in NYC?

Chapter Summary

While the cited research and findings provide qualitative and quantitative information on mayoral control in general and in NYC, they do not provide real perspective on how this form of governance and method of school reform has played out

in individual schools from the perspectives of teachers and principals. It is necessary to understand whether the reform has impacted student achievement in a positive way by analyzing the perceptions reported by teachers and principals who have worked under this form of school governance and experienced the reforms first hand. This study investigated the qualitative perspectives of secondary school teachers and principals in NYC high schools regarding the reform efforts of Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein to increase student achievement, as well their governance efforts overall. Other reports and books evaluating mayoral control in NYC have not gathered educators' perceptions from teachers and principals currently employed in NYC high schools.

Only one report cited an increase in student achievement as a result of the reforms under mayoral control in NYC; all others reported that it was not possible to correlate directly or identify any changes in student achievement (Henig, 2009). While many of these reports considered various stakeholder perceptions of mayoral control, none considered solely the teachers' and principals' perceptions of reform across types of high schools and boroughs, which are presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 6

School Governance, Now and Then

With the passage of the mayoral control law in 2002, Mayor Bloomberg said,

It put an end to decades of diffused and confused educational administration, in which the buck stopped nowhere. . . . By the beginning of the next school year, these notorious bureaucratic dinosaurs [the system's many separate bureaucracies] will be extinct. In their place—will be one, unified, focused, streamlined chain of command. (as cited in Rogers, 2009, p. 28)

Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein had a vision for reforming, reorganizing, and transforming the NYC public school system and worked to perpetuate that vision for eight years.

This chapter explains how teachers and principals in NYC high schools understood and perceived the reorganization of school governance in NYC under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein from 2002 to 2009, shows how this differed from the system of school governance before mayoral control, and discusses the positive and negative aspects of the system under mayoral control. The following chapters will address these two research questions: (a) How do New York City secondary school teachers and principals perceive the effectiveness of mayoral control, with respect to school governance, reforms, student achievement, and community input? and (b) If there are differences between the empirical evidence and secondary school teachers' and principals' perceptions regarding school governance and student achievement, how do we explain these differences?

Data from participating teachers and principals are cited as evidence to support the findings in the following chapters. Quotations from participants are identified as follows: MST = magnet school teacher, SST = small school teacher, LST = large school

teacher, MSP = magnet school principal, SSP = small school principal, and LSP = large school principal.

Understanding School Governance in NYC

Teachers' level of understanding of school governance in NYC varied by the three types of high schools and by their years of experience. In response to the previous 30 years of decentralization in NYC and 100 years of educational history that sought to "keep education out of politics," mayoral control was enacted to put education "squarely in the political arena . . . there is no buffer of 110 Livingston Street." According to Chancellor Klein, "given the chaotic and dysfunctional organizational structure we inherited, our first task was to lock the system down, establish some control, and bring coherence to the system" (as cited in Rogers, 2009, p. 29).

Most teachers in this study understood that the school system was reorganized in 2002 so that "everything is under the control of the mayor" or that the "the chancellor works at the behest of the mayor" (SST37 and MST46). Teachers identified the Bloomberg/Klein regime as "centralization" and "top-down management," with the "mayor in charge . . . a Chancellor who's under him and the Department of Education, which used to be the Board of Education" (LST24 and SST31). They understood the chain of command within the organization in that information comes from the mayor and works "downward through the Chancellor, who works . . . [at] Tweed, or the Board of Ed, and then it trickles there to the principals" (LST12, LST60, LST67). The majority of teachers identified the system of governance specifically as "mayoral control," "under the control of Mayor Bloomberg who delegates things to Klein," that "Chancellor Klein works under the mayor and there is a committee of seven people under the mayor, four or

five of which were chosen by the mayor,” and the “Chancellor is appointed by the mayor” (MST25, MST26, MST27, and MST28, respectively).

There was a small difference between schools in the level of teacher understanding of school governance in NYC: Large school teachers had a greater understanding of school district governance as they referenced the PEP. While most of the teachers identified aspects of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, only a few teachers from large high schools and no principals made reference to the PEP, which changed from the BOE to an advisory panel appointed by NYC Borough Presidents and the Mayor as part of the organizational structure of school governance in NYC. The lack of educator knowledge about the PEP demonstrates their lack of presence and authority in the NYC public school system since its creation in 2003.

Participants from a large high school that had been voted by the PEP to be closed in the following school year were largely the only teacher participants who discussed the PEP as part of the governance structure. In other words, the large school that was slated to close during the time of this study was the school with the greatest number of teachers who were familiar with the PEP (three of seven), whereas only three other teachers of 63 made reference to the PEP as part of the governance structure of NYC. The PEP was referred to as a “committee,” “with 4 to 5 of the 7 right under the Mayor’s thumb” (SST27, MST27). The PEP was also described as, “the mayor selects someone to oversee, Klein, and then selects people to work under them . . . the committee that takes input is the PEP” (LST56). Overall, they described the organizational model of school governance as “very top down” with the “mayor and chancellor in charge and the PEP

who just voted to close us down” (LST59). While the panel meets every month and holds public meetings, the only time their decisions become highly contentious and publicized is when they vote to close schools (February 9, 2012; January 2010). Stakeholders and participants in this study described them as a “rubber stamp” for approving Mayor Bloomberg’s policies. Recently, they voted to close 23 schools (the most ever in one year) and will determine the fate of another 33 schools in spring 2012 (Christ, 2012).

More than 10% of the interviewed teachers had little to no understanding of the governance structure or did not feel comfortable in responding to the question because their focus is on issues at the school level, but there was no demographic similarity between the teachers in this category. For example, one teacher said, “Mayoral Control . . . I don’t know who has the control of the schools. . . . I don’t . . . think people understand this” (LST8). Another teacher stated that he had a “good understanding of the system” but felt “detached” from the upper levels of decision making in the system and thus had “little opinion” about what is going on outside of the school building (MST31). Teachers said that, “everything comes from the principal” and were “ashamed to say that [he] doesn’t pay attention . . . only knows what the principal tells [him]” (MST48). While all participants had at least 3 years of experience working in the NYC public school system, some had little to say or reported a “very basic understanding” of mayoral control because they had “nothing to compare it to” because they had worked in only one school under the Bloomberg/Klein administration and therefore were “not very aware” of the governance structure (MST31, MST47). One newer teacher claimed that he hears “people complaining about the new system and it sounds like the board of education was as confusing as it is now” (MST48). An example of the confusion through multiple

reorganizations was explained by two teachers as, “most stuff comes down from the chancellor” and they “started moving away from districts,” which one then identified as “regions I think . . . can’t be bothered . . . can’t keep track . . . it’s very top-down heavy . . . not very positive” (MST45) or the district is “mainly mayoral control,” in which the “mayor has policies in what he sees as best . . . smaller schools are given more autonomy” (SST54). However, it was not just newer teachers who could not explain the governance structure in NYC. Several veteran teachers with more than 23 in the system were not “really sure” they could describe the NYC public school system (LST63). Since the start of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, the DOE has been described as a “shifting bureaucracy” and many teachers found it difficult to keep track of all organizational changes (LSP3). Several teachers acknowledged that they do not always focus on what is going on outside of their classroom, as one teacher stated that she would “go in her room, close the door, and do what needed to be done” (LST62). Teachers’ focus was primarily on their classrooms and their students.

Overall, almost all educators in this study could identify that the mayor and/or chancellor controlled the school system, but the how and why of how he came to control/reorganize the NYC public school system could not be articulated or recalled. The only difference in participants’ understanding of school governance when compared across schools came from participants from large schools who had knowledge of the PEP.

School Governance Before Mayoral Control

A little more than half of the educators (54.3%) in this study had more than 9 years experience in the NYC public school system, giving them little to much experience working under other forms of administration in NYC. Twenty-seven of 70 educators had

been working in the system for more than 15 years and thus had experienced the system before Mayor Giuliani became mayor of New York City. Seven of nine participating principals had more than 15 years experience in the NYC public school system.

The majority of teachers cited the decentralized BOE as lacking accountability and a system of political nepotism before mayoral control. Under the decentralized model of organization with the BOE, each district had resources allocated by the central BOE; thus, they were unable to establish individual levels of taxation and spending (Sunshine, as cited in Hawley & Rogers, 1974). The money was distributed in a lump sum, so the district could determine how the money was spent, in accordance with central DOE contracts and legislation (Wytock, 1973, as cited in Hawley & Rogers, 1974). This description was confirmed by several participants who had experienced such corruption personally and therefore saw “no strengths under the system of decentralization” because “decentralization was like fiefdoms that were very solidly in place . . . local school board thought they had power, but it was really just the superintendent” (MST42). For example, one principal described his early entry in the NYC public school system as “impossible unless you knew a school board member” and then it cost him a “\$500” donation for access to a school board member (SSP3). In the mid-1980s, when he was looking for a job, “school boards were dysfunctional and corrupt” and each district had its own human resource person, which required the applicant to know someone in that district; “I couldn’t get a teaching job even in schools where there were advertised vacancies” (SSP3). Under the decentralized model of organization, the “old system was too bureaucratic and there was no accountability . . . you could get things if you knew people, which isn’t good, things should be equal . . . lotteries, not cronyism” (MST42).

With organizational changes, there is naturally a shift in personnel, institutional knowledge, and systemwide processes. Bureaucratic organization and efficiency under the system of decentralization was difficult and inefficient to navigate according to many teachers and principals. Therefore, the major differences in the school system under decentralization and mayoral control were viewed as disorganization at the district level under decentralization and increased school-based decision-making authority under mayoral control. Participants also commented on changes in employee knowledge level, but there were mixed responses regarding as to whether there was a greater level of knowledge under mayoral control or decentralization. In comparing the old system to the new system, one large school veteran teacher said that it was “very difficult to find a person you are looking for with an answer under the old Manhattan superintendency model . . . there was no personal contact with the people in Brooklyn” (LST59). At the same time, one had to “go to Manhattan to get a signature and then to Brooklyn” to get something done, whereas “now principals have more power to sign off on things,” which was seen as a major difference between the BOE and the DOE as, “back then the superintendent told you what to do, whereas now the principal makes all those calls” (LST59, LSP3). Despite the disorganization and inefficiency under decentralization, some described a greater level of professional knowledge available for assistance; “under the old BOE, it may have taken you a few phone calls to find the right person, but once you did, you had a very intelligent and knowledgeable source and you were set” (LSP2). In terms of instruction, there is “now one person in charge in central, whereas before there was one in each borough . . . you need the middle manager which has now been

eliminated” (LST59). There is an expectation that there is greater knowledge and decision-making authority at the school level.

Some contended that the BOE was “not as dysfunctional as publicized” and that many of the changes began occurring before Mayor Bloomberg was elected (MSP2). Giuliani, as the historical record demonstrates, “was the first one to start to dig in and make changes” to the system, such as trying to get administrators to work for 12 months (MSP2). While the organizational model under “community school boards became too political, but they worked well for the benefit of the children and parents” (SSP2). Even though there were “nepotism and corruption,” some said that it “wasn’t as blatant as it is today” under mayoral control (SSP2). From an organizational perspective, high schools were historically organized under a centralized system of governance during decentralization, as they were their own district, separate from the 32 local community school districts that governed elementary and middle schools. Principals remembered that, at the high school level, “principals were instructional leaders” and the “high schools were centralized at the Board of Education so everything came from the high school superintendents and 110 Livingston Street or 65 Court Street” (SSP2). The old system used to be “more ‘mom and pop’ . . . there was an old rabbi at the Board who got stuff done . . . we need someone like that” (MST41). Overall, most participants described the NYC school system under decentralization as an organizational system with nepotism and corruption because there were so many people yielding power throughout the city and no legal standard in hiring policies and procedures as compared to the system under mayoral control.

**Mayoral Control: Increases Leadership Stability, Increases Accountability
at Every Level, Increases Financial Responsibility and Decreases
Transparency, and Is Mayor Specific**

Mayoral control is said to increase the level of accountability in education, as well as the level of fiscal responsibility (Rogers, 2009; Wong et al., 2007). The majority of teachers across all types of schools cited an increased level of accountability, centralized governance, and financial responsibility when describing school governance under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein.

Increased Leadership Stability

Literature has stated that one of the benefits of mayoral control is increased leadership stability and continuity of governance under mayoral control (IELP, 2010; Wong et al., 2007). In NYC, Joel Klein's tenure as school chancellor was the longest term for a school chancellor since William Jansen was chancellor in 1947 for 11 years. Principals stated that the weaknesses of the previous system included a lack of "continuity, therefore people were not as willing to change . . . people didn't know how long or who was in power so they didn't make the effort, whereas now [under mayoral control] they know at least for the next three and a half years who they have to answer to" (MSP1). Stability and continuity are necessary to reform the system, as the "lack of continuity and therefore lack of direction, hurt the system overall . . . you couldn't change the system" (MSP1). "Ten chancellors in the 1990s does not bode well for the system," when trying to improve the educational outcomes of over one million public school children (MSP1). One principal stated that during the 1990s he "felt like they were changing chancellors all the time. . . . I met Rudy Crew when I became principal and he

was gone by Thanksgiving; you can't run a system like that" (MSP1). The strength of mayoral control in NYC has been the "continuity that it has provided in terms of leadership at the top" because "the mayor and the chancellor are on the same page and you are not going to move a system unless it comes from the top" (MSP1).

With sustained leadership in place at the top of the system, there is centralized accountability because "there's one governing body in charge," and this was a frequently cited aspect of mayoral control by teachers and principals as a strength of this new system of governance (LST12). The strengths of the school system are that mayoral control "attempts to bring standardization of curriculum and cohesion" to the system, "stronger lines of communication between the DOE . . . more transparency" (SST49, LST60, LST24). As a large bureaucracy, maintaining accountability within such a large system is even more impressive, "being able to be organized for encompassing so much" (MST29). Greater accountability has created a system under mayoral control that is "more equitable for students in how they are served and more efficient in terms of principals guiding the system and the layers of bureaucracy being removed" (MST25). There is a direct "line of response" in terms of running the system and "when a major decision is made . . . it only has to go through one person" (MST46, MST41).

Increased Accountability at All Levels

While some cited accountability and stability at the top of the system, the reform also brought accountability to all levels of the system, including the individual school level, through the empowerment and autonomy zone initiative and through disbanding district and then regional offices citywide. Chancellor Klein sought to establish a "system of excellent schools," rather than an "excellent school system" through his reform efforts

to provide more autonomy to individual schools (Herszenhorn, 2006). While mayoral control “brought accountability,” one teacher stated that it is “top-heavy” and there is “no one to channel up” because the school was part of the “autonomy zone” and therefore had “no connection to the superintendent or chancellor . . . we can’t call the region because it doesn’t exist now” (MST44). However, this organization of the system is a “strength” for schools because we can “flourish” and it is really the “structure in the building that is most important” because you know where you want to go (MST44). Increased accountability at the school level was paired with increasing the power and authority of individual school principals, which is discussed in Chapter 9.

The level of accountability extended down the pipeline to individual teachers and to the general public during Mayor Bloomberg’s tenure over the NYC public school system, as there is “more accountability on teachers for the performance of students” and there is a “bigger emphasis on education now” (SST50, SST52). The strength of mayoral control is that it “holds teachers and students accountable” and the “staff is more aware and teachers are more accountable for their work with failing students” (SST52, SST51, SST54). Mayoral control has been a strength because it has “initiatives that have been helpful, such as greater accountability in the classroom” (LST60).

From the principals’ perspective,

Mayoral control allowed [the Mayor] to pick the Chancellor, to put in a puppet policy board which would sign off on everything he allowed wanted to do [, which] if it works, the guy [the Mayor] is a genius, if it doesn’t the system crashes and burns even under mayoral control and mayoral control is just a mechanism that one person makes all the decisions, not that that one person is accountable, because there are plenty of people underneath him to take the fall when things don’t work. (SSP1)

Even though mayoral control was described as a “forced dictatorship,” its strength is its focused accountability (SSP2). Mayoral control is successful because there was no

accountability under previous administrations, and the mayor and chancellor actually worked against each other in some cases, such as when “Giuliani prevented Crew and the BOE from getting things done and once he decided that he didn’t want Crew in office,” they were ineffective in making any more organizational changes. In contrast, Bloomberg and Klein “have never had to deal with that” because they are the ones accountable at the top (LSP3). Mayor Bloomberg has been supportive of the schools and understands that he is the one being held accountable to the citizens of NYC, whereas “Giuliani would bash the schools whenever it was to his electoral advantage” (LSP3).

The majority of principals agreed that mayoral control had improved the level of accountability within the system because, previously, “principals weren’t held accountable for every kid in the building” (LSP3). There is also a difference in the level of accountability under the district offices versus the current network structure; the “network support staff is more accountable to principals” because principals pay them to support them, whereas “before no one was held accountable . . . the mentality was different” (LSP3). Participants cited increased accountability at all levels under mayoral control, and ultimately their perceptions matter because overall, it is “the teacher in front of the room makes the biggest difference, but by holding principals accountable, things have to change” (MSP1).

Criticisms of Increased Accountability

While the majority of the teachers and principals cited increased accountability as a strength of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg, there were a few critics, mostly from large school and veteran educators within the system who stated that mayoral control “lacks checks and balances” (LST66). From the teacher perspective,

approximately 20% of the teachers disagreed with “accountability” under the mayoral control system of organization and most of them discussed it in terms of how data were being used within the organization or how bureaucratic policy was disconnected from classroom-level reality. While “looking at numbers and data in terms of accountability” can be helpful, the weakness of the system is that “you need to look at more than the numbers” (LST59). Prior to mayoral control, the system “had too many cooks at the top before and now it’s layered differently” and “they claim that they were centralizing to get rid of bureaucracy, but there seems to be more and more layers” (LST58). This new form of governance has “put a lot of pressure . . . starting at the top, Superintendents, and then Principals . . . Assistant Principals . . . it trickles down to the teachers, and of course the teachers make the kids crazy because they want certain requirements—they call it accountability” (LST24). This becomes a weakness of the system “when the Chancellor makes a statement, many people interpret it differently in schools” and there is a “tendency to take a statement/policy and follow it to the letter, rather than a decree” (MST41). This increased level of accountability “doesn’t take into account the everyday realities of teaching in the classroom” (SST51).

While most principals saw the increase in accountability as a positive aspect of mayoral control, the increased accountability came with at a price as some saw a decrease in knowledge and personal connection within the system, as did some teachers. One principal described the change from pre- to post-Bloomberg/Klein as going from a “very personal system to an impersonal system . . . now you are on your own more and you have less control now even though they said you would have more . . . the only difference being that you could argue for what you want” (MSP2). He said that, before Bloomberg

and Klein took control of the NYC public school system, the Superintendent “recognized things and was there to share in your successes,” whereas, “now there is no recognition for your accomplishments” (MSP2). When he became principal, the Superintendent at the time called him and met with him, “giving me all the information that I needed and he had 50 other schools” for which he was responsible (MSP2). In other words, the Superintendent knew “schools well and knew what they needed and helped; things functioned,” compared to today, when his Superintendent under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein “didn’t know the schools and matched people inappropriately” (MSP2). This loss of personal knowledge and connection within the system was viewed by a small percentage of the principals to be a negative outcome of this new form of accountability.

When examining participant responses across types of schools, the greatest disagreement on the subject of accountability during mayoral control came from large schools, which by their nature have more staff members and thus more opportunity for variability in school culture and were feeling the greatest effects of the accountability movement. From one perspective, the teachers saw “far more accountability now” but noted that the “accountability” can be a weakness because there are far too many schools. They noted that the system is too large, and with more autonomy on the principal level, “principals have to spend lots of time away from the educational process” and that’s not effective distribution (LST65). There is “more accountability . . . the teacher is held at fault for everything” (LST63). On the other hand, there is “little change from the top down, it is like any other bureaucracy . . . they request information and you do whatever they want . . . they don’t think about the kids” (LST65).

Another teacher discussed the idea that the accountability method of one-reform-fits-all does not work for all schools in NYC. One large school teacher said,

The biggest issue with it is the fact that there are so many schools in the City, and it really seems like . . . when it's coming from one place, they want it to be consistent and they want it to be the same throughout, and really, there are just so many different types of schools, different populations of students, different needs, different desires of the students that are there, the teachers; So, I think its just difficult because you're not looking at the schools individually, necessarily—and the needs of the population that's in that school. I mean, they basically have the same idea of what's expected from, like, [a specialized high school] as is what's expected from [a large comprehensive high school]. And it's just very different. (LST12)

Despite the criticisms, the majority of participating teachers in this study considered greater accountability under the mayoral control model to be a positive change to the organizational system of governance.

Increased Financial Responsibility and Decreased Transparency

In addition to “increased accountability,” mayoral control is also supposed to bring more fiscal responsibility and better-managed budgets to the school system (Wong et al., 2007). It is important to note that, in general, New York State spends more than most other states per pupil and, for at least 3 years under mayoral control, the state led the nation in per pupil expenditures in education, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (as cited in Gonen, 2009j). Mayoral control has given “more money now, especially for resources and supplies, as compared to decentralization” and they been “spending enough money to budget for it [reforms]” initiated under Chancellor Klein (LST56, SST52). While most teachers and principals cited examples of more money in the system, they stated that there has been less accountability and transparency for how the money is spent under mayoral control. In one example, the *New York Post* reported that the DOE was more than 2 months late in holding public hearings as to how \$645 million in state aid

should be spent, basically ignoring the opportunity for public input and dispersing the money (Gonen, 2009g). There is the perception that the money is being paid to many external vendors; there is “a lot of outsourcing going on under the current system” such as the ARIS system of student assessment information and “still isn’t working the way its supposed to” (SSP2). The Mayor and Chancellor have also “spent a lot of money to revamp special education across the city, but the process has only benefited the budget, not the child,” according to one principal (SSP2). Another area where the mayor and chancellor have “spent a lot of money on is accountability of testing” to do “predictors, etc. when that money could have been directly infused into classrooms” as part of their standardization of assessment throughout the city (SSP2). Again, how these contracts have been determined has been an issue for many stakeholders, as reported by the media.

This finding was supported by participants in this study. In the current era of accountability and an increasingly globalized society where information is readily available, the Bloomberg and Klein administration have stated that “they have increased the level of transparency and accountability within the district” by publicizing more data (SSP1). At the same time, “If you read the papers you get a sense that, as much transparency as they claim they’ve brought, there’s also a whole level of confusion and question marks over a lot of things that go on behind the scenes that generate their data points, their metrics, how they use data, etc.” (SSP1, LST57). This finding can also be attributed to the global climate of education; “It’s more noticeable now, although probably the people who were doing the same things, just more quietly back then than they do it now” (SSP1). Principals reported that they have noticed the increase more

because “we’re more ‘front-line’; we’re sort of like mid-level managers, so you know when your part of management you notice management structure more” (SSP1).

While the mayor and chancellor may have taken control, the level and manner in which they have done so has not appealed to all of their constituencies. Their lack of transparency has led to a feeling of conflict and lack of democratic participation from many stakeholders, a feeling that has been expressed by similar stakeholders in other mayorally controlled cities (Chambers, 2006; New York Civil Liberties Union [NYCLU], 2009). “Teachers and parents are angry and administrators feel helpless, because they basically are . . . that’s what they did—they really took control—they took the reins of education and they are dictating policy . . . it’s not a democracy anymore” (LST24).

There is a “large concentration of power” that the Mayor and Chancellor now have (MST25). One principal said,

In the hands of the right person, Mayoral control could be good! But it also, it also creates a vacuum that’s just too tempting. A tempting vacuum is you don’t have to listen to anyone because everything is in your hands . . . you can say you’re listening to people . . . you can say you’re taking input, but you don’t have to. The fact that the policy board . . . what he did with the policy board . . . that . . . wouldn’t . . . when two people didn’t want to do what he wanted to do . . . I think said everything, you know? If you drown out . . . critical voices, that’s not a positive effect of control. (SSP1)

Teachers cited a lack of transparency as a weakness of the system under mayoral control, supporting the finding reported in the CSA (2009) and UFT (2009) reports, as well as Rogers (2009). One said, “The system has been made so that they can prove that mayoral control works . . . the goal of the mayor is to retain mayoral control” (MST46). He continued that the mayor and chancellor are “missing a tremendous opportunity to focus more on pedagogy than accountability . . . they are struggling to hold onto [it] . . . they are missing a chance to improve education through teacher education . . . help them

improve and find the best practices” (MST46). Another view was that the system was less accountable and transparent and “more of a dictatorship” where the “public is not involved in decision-making” (SST49). The system is “more amorphous,” whereas it used to be more localized” (MST40). Therefore, despite an increased level of accountability and financial responsibility, there was a decreased level of transparency.

Mayor-Specific Control

Viteriti (2009) stated that it is important to understand and consider who the mayor is when evaluating and/or promoting mayoral control as a method of organizational change and school reform. Several teachers cited their beliefs and opinions on mayoral control in NYC as connected to the individual role that Mayor Bloomberg plays in the organization, as compared to others who have previously managed the city or school system. In this case, “Bloomberg control” or “Kleinberg,” as participants referred to it, refers to the fact that Mayor Bloomberg happens to be wealthy and therefore “he doesn’t need money to work, so we don’t pay his salary” (MST26). In relation to that, he owns a very large media conglomerate and has connections to the media industry, which calls into question the impartial nature of media reports. Given his connection to the media industry, the “advertising, marketing, and PR” departments for the DOE have grown, which “prevents publicizing his weaknesses” (MST27). It is important to consider the background of Mayor Bloomberg and his specific financial, political, philanthropic, and community connections when evaluating the effectiveness of school governance reform in NYC.

Chapter Summary and Discussion

Table 2 summarizes the comparison of the participating teachers' and principals' perceptions of mayoral control and the empirical evidence gathered in this study.

Table 2

How the Teachers' and Principals' Perceptions Compared to the Empirical Evidence

Mayoral control	Perceptions by NYC teachers	Perceptions by NYC principals	Empirical evidence
Increased accountability	Majority saw it as positive; but also saw it as a source of conflict	Majority saw it as positive	X
Improved financial stability/ lack of transparency and democratic participation	Majority agreed	Majority agreed	X
"Bloomberg-control" mayor specific	Some recognized this	More frequently recognized	X

Overall, almost all educators in this study could identify that the mayor and/or chancellor controlled the school system, but the how and why he came to control and reorganize the NYC public school system could not be articulated or recalled. Principals had slightly more organizational knowledge of the system than teachers because they are more directly connected to the higher levels of bureaucratic organization. The only

difference in participants' understanding of school governance when compared across schools came from participants from one large school who had knowledge of the PEP. Otherwise, there was no difference in participant understanding of school governance across types of schools in NYC.

The major differences in the school system under decentralization and mayoral control were viewed as disorganization at the district level under decentralization and increased school-based decision-making authority under mayoral control. Participants also commented on changes in employee knowledge level, but there were mixed responses regarding whether there was a greater level of knowledge under mayoral control or decentralization. Overall, most participants described the NYC school system under decentralization as an organizational system with nepotism and corruption because there were so many people yielding power throughout the city and no legal standard in hiring policies and procedures as compared to the system under mayoral control.

The empirical evidence states that mayoral control is said to increase the level of accountability in education, as well as the level of fiscal responsibility (Rogers, 2009; Wong et al., 2007). The majority of teachers across all types of schools cited an increased level of accountability, centralized governance, and financial responsibility when describing school governance under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein. While some cited accountability and stability at the top of the system, the reform also brought accountability to the individual school level through the empowerment and autonomy zone initiative and through disbanding district and then regional offices citywide. Another benefit of mayoral control is increased leadership stability and continuity of governance under mayoral control and participants in this study confirmed the empirical

evidence (IELP, 2010; Wong et al., 2007). While “increased accountability” was the greatest strength of mayoral control, several participants cited “increased accountability” as a weakness of the system. Those participants who took this perspective typically had more than 20 years in the system and/or were teachers from the more established or oldest high schools (large high schools and magnet high schools). Participants reported that there was too much pressure on data, a lack of checks and balances, and a noticeable disconnect between policy creation and policy implementation at the classroom level.

Mayoral control is also supposed to bring more fiscal responsibility and better-managed budgets to the school system (Wong et al., 2007). While the mayor and chancellor may have taken control, the level and manner in which they have done so has not appealed to all of their constituencies. Their lack of transparency and democratic participation has led to a feeling of conflict from many stakeholders, a feeling that has been expressed by similar stakeholders in other mayorally controlled cities (Chambers, 2006; NYCLU, 2009). Teachers cited a lack of transparency as a weakness of the system under mayoral control, supporting the finding reported in the CSA (2009) and UFT (2009) reports, as well as Rogers (2009), that a more centralized approach to organizational management typically eliminates much community and stakeholder participation in making organizational decisions. Teachers and principals claimed that many decisions were made by manipulating data and/or using their social capital to push Mayor Bloomberg’s political agenda. Participants stated that who the mayor is matters when evaluating mayoral control and that, in this case, Mayor Bloomberg has significant social and financial capital that influences his leadership of the system.

CHAPTER 7

Student Achievement Under Mayoral Control

If 4 years from now reading scores and math scores aren't significantly better, then I will look in the mirror and say that I have been a failure. I've never failed at anything yet, and I don't plan to fail at that. (Mayor Bloomberg, radio interview, 2001, as cited in Medina, 2010k, para. 35)

School systems as organizations are continuously looking to improve, and that improvement is most frequently measured by changes in student achievement scores. Researchers (Henig, 2009; Kemple, 2010; Wong et al., 2007) have noted that mayoral control leads to increased accountability and improved student achievement scores based on quantitative analyses of assessment scores. According to the IELP (2010) study on school governance using NAEP data, five mayorally controlled school districts remain below the national average, but some have made more progress than other nonmayorally controlled school districts in coming close to it. This chapter explains how teachers and principals at large, small, and magnet high schools viewed changes in student achievement under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein's organizational version of mayoral control from 2002 to 2009. It also explains how the level of accountability has changed under mayoral control, affecting student achievement as Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have brought a "business" approach to management and schooling that has affected stakeholders at all levels.

Empirical Evidence on Student Achievement

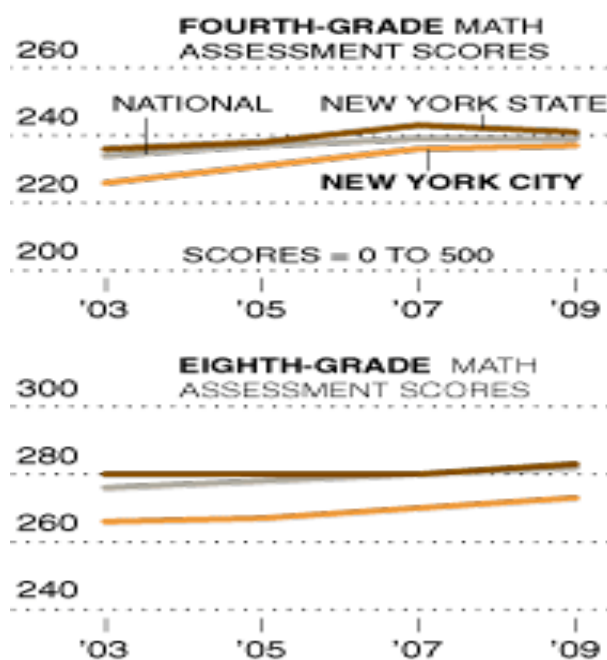
Stone (1998) discussed the idea of a performance regime as a system "constructed to further the goal of academic achievement for all students," and involving "social-purpose politics," which seeks to actively push forward a social purpose as compared to the distributive politics that emerge under an employment regime (p. 12). Under Mayor

Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, the DOE has sought to increase student achievement while narrowing the achievement gap for all subgroups, as measured by NCLB legislation. In conjunction, the DOE experimented with tying performance results to teacher and principal monetary bonuses in 2007-2008, mostly through private donations in the first year and then through municipal funding in 2008-2009 (Medina, 2009l). According to Chancellor Klein in 2008, achievement and progress increased at every grade level in Grades 3 to 8 in both ELA and mathematics from 2002 (Klein, 2008, as cited in Medina, 2009f). Klein stated that “since Mayor Bloomberg took responsibility for our schools, our students’ results have improved in a real way . . . and we’re closing the gaps that for so long separated NYC students from their peers throughout the State and the gaps that separated African-American and Latino students from white and Asian students inside of our City” (Klein, 2008, as cited in Medina, 2009f, para. 15). Not only has student achievement increased across the city; the DOE has stated that the graduation rate has increased citywide, and the city has made more progress than the rest of the state in closing the achievement gap, as shown in Figure 9 (NYC DOE, 2009).

In contrast to the DOE published literature, other published data evaluating and reporting on Bloomberg and Klein’s version of mayoral control based on the NAEP data have shown mixed results. In general, NYC has performed below the national average at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels when compared nationally and to the rest of New York State (Kemple, 2010, as cited in O’Day et al., 2010). There is also a large gap between the level of student proficiency on the fourth- and eighth-grade exams as measured by the New York State exams and the NAEP exams (Figure 10). Published authors and researchers were not the only ones to notice this discrepancy. Participating

City Improves, But Still Lags in Math

Test scores on federal math tests showed slight improvement among New York City students since 2007 and a gradual rise since 2003, with fourth graders closing the gap with the rest of the state and country.



Source: Department of Education

Figure 9. More progress made by New York City than by the rest of New York State and the nation in fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics. Source: “Modest Gains in City Math Scores on Federal Test,” by J. Medina, December 8, 2009f, *The New York Times*, retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/09/education/09scores.html>

teachers in this study noted “very different results on the NAEP tests and the state tests.

... I can only judge from his sample ... it hasn’t changed really,” making it difficult to

establish a direct correlation between changes in student achievement scores and the

organizational change made to the NYC public school system in 2002 (MST46). New

York State is working to reduce that gap by increasing the level of rigor on the state tests

to begin to meet the demands of the Common Core State Standards, and NYC has

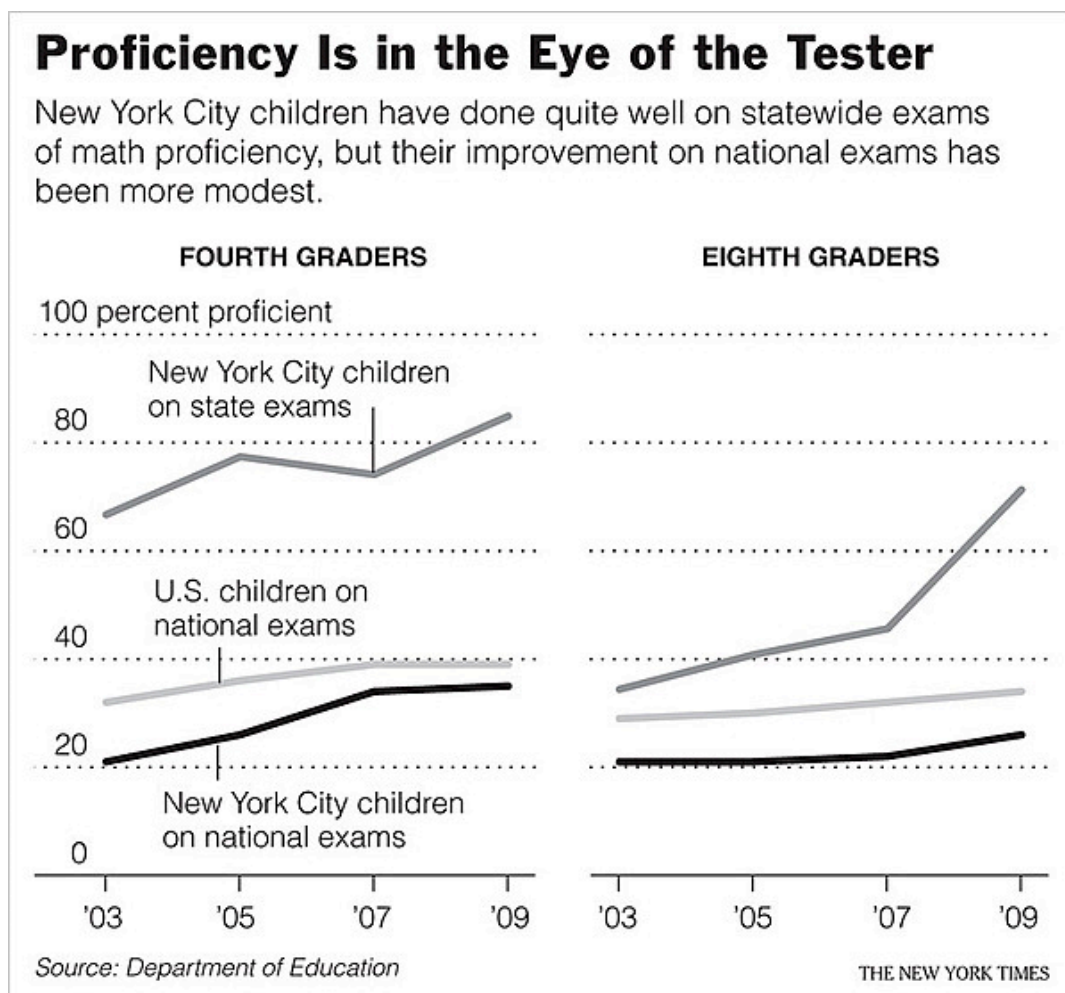


Figure 10. Different exams show differences in proficiency levels. Source: “Modest Gains in City Math Scores on Federal Test”, by J. Medina, 2009f, *The New York Times*, December 8, retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/09/education/09scores.html>

ordered all schools to begin assessing students against one literacy and math Common Core performance task during the 2011-2012 school year in preparation for meeting the demands of those future assessments (NYC DOE, Citywide Instructional Expectations, 2011).

It is difficult to measure increases in achievement when student performance has increased on the state test under mayoral control but not increased, or increased at a

different rate, on the NAEP assessments. According to NAEP, New York ranked 15th in the nation for fourth-grade reading scores and 23rd for eighth-grade reading scores (Gonen, July 28, 2009). In mathematics, fourth- and eighth-grade students demonstrated no significant improvements on the NAEP test since 2007, in contrast to significant gains demonstrated on the New York State Mathematics test (Medina, December 8, 2009). The NAEP test scores showed that the achievement gap has remained consistent between African American and Hispanic students and Asian and Caucasian students, but Chancellor Klein contended that there still has been improvement because overall scores rose slightly (Medina, December 8, 2009). Klein said, “Whose Blacks are on top? . . . While I would like to see more gap closure, I nevertheless think in a rising tide where people are doing better—and our Blacks are dramatically outperforming everybody else here—I think that’s a good story” (as cited in Medina, December 8, 2009, para. 15). Figure 11 depicts the differences in level of proficiency as measured by the New York State examinations in comparison to the NAEP examinations.

Using the state-administered exams, Figure 12 presents data reported by the Eli Broad Foundation (<http://www.broadprize.org/resources/reports2009.html>) for NYC. The graphs give the percentage of all students in the district scoring at or above proficiency in reading and mathematics in elementary, middle, and high school from 2005 to 2008. In each graph the solid line represents reading scores and the dashed line represents mathematics scores.

Achievement has increased at a lower rate at the high school level than at the elementary and middle school levels, but Figure 11 still demonstrates increases at all levels in both ELA and mathematics (IELP, 2010).

Achievement Gap

Levels of proficiency on state tests are far higher than those found by federal tests, known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the gap is growing.

Percentage of students considered proficient on mathematics test, New York State.

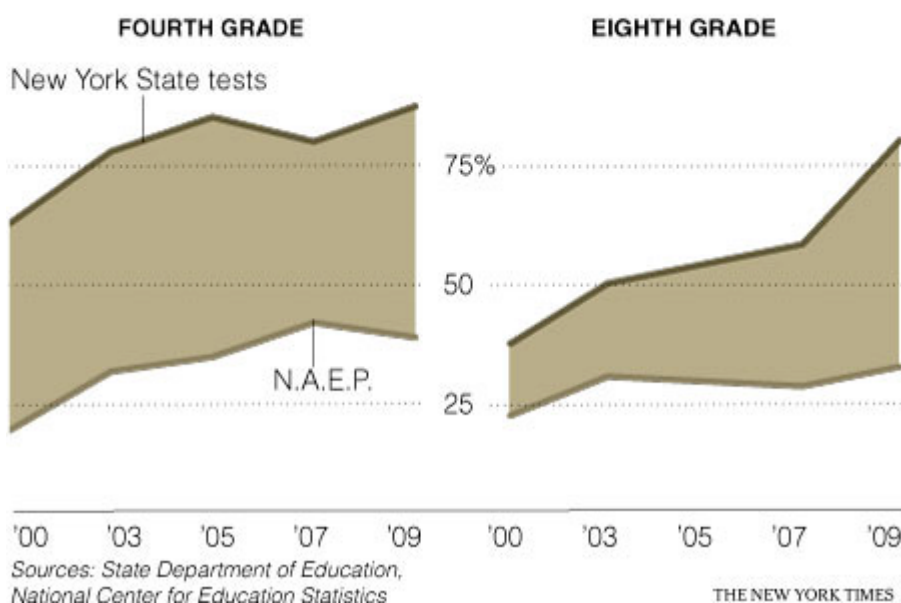


Figure 11. Differences in mathematics proficiency levels comparing the New York State tests to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams in fourth and eighth grades. Source: “Modest Gains in City Math Scores on Federal Test,” by J. Medina, December 8, 2009f, *The New York Times*, retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/09/education/09scores.html>

Outside of achievement scores, high school reforms can be measured by changes in graduation rates. According to Chancellor Klein,

The graduation rate is one of the most important indicators of how well we’re doing . . . a high school diploma gives our students the opportunities that they need and deserve—and the annual graduation rate report tells us how well we’re succeeding at helping our students meet and exceed standards. (Klein, 2008a, n.p.)

The DOE reported that, under mayoral control, the graduation gap between NYC students and the rest of the state had narrowed and that students of all groups were

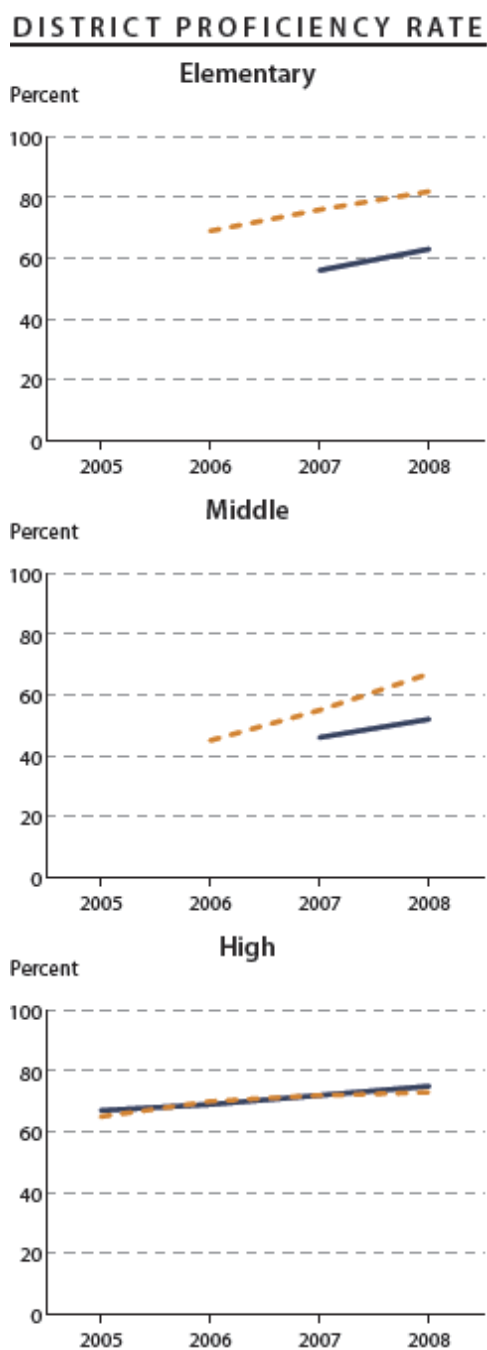


Figure 12. Progress at every level in New York City. Source: *The 2009 Broad Prize for Urban Education*, by Broad Foundation, 2010, retrieved from [http://www.broadprize.org/asset/1325-ny_newyorkcity_2009final\[1\].pdf](http://www.broadprize.org/asset/1325-ny_newyorkcity_2009final[1].pdf)

making progress. Therefore, while the graduation rate was improving, the dropout rate was declining and the percentage of students graduating with Regents and Advanced

Regents diplomas was rising (Klein, 2008a). Chancellor Klein stated that the system has “rais[ed] our graduation rate by 15 points (to 61 percent), . . . we are still a school system capable of graduating just six out of ten students in four years . . . we must do better than that for our kids and frankly, for the future of this city” (Klein, 2009, n.p.). According to an analysis of student scores by graduation cohorts, there has been a greater increase in the graduation rates in NYC than the rest of the state, but it is difficult to determine how much is related to the Children’s First reforms because the manner in which graduation rates were calculated changed from 2002-2009 and part of the reform effort led to the opening and closing of many high schools during this period (Kemple, 2010, as cited in O’Day et al., 2010).

How Did Teachers and Principals Perceive Student

Achievement Under Mayoral Control?

Similar to the published literature cited above, the majority of teachers and principals who participated in this study across all types of schools cited increases in student achievement over the past 8 years, especially from their individual school populations as a result of increased accountability measures and educators taking “pride in what they do” (MST31). As cited in Chapter 2, most participants defined student achievement in terms of increases on standardized test scores, but this concept was not clearly defined in the interview protocol.

While the majority of participants agreed that student achievement had increased under mayoral control, many participants also stated that changes were difficult to measure based on changes in testing at the state level, as cited in publicized literature (MST27). For example, from 2006 to 2009, the points required to pass the state

mathematics and ELA tests declined, more significantly on mathematics tests than on ELA tests (Hernandez, 2009c). In 2002, a student could pass the mathematics Regents Exam by getting 61% of the questions right, whereas in 2009, only 42% was required (Kolodner & Monahan, 2009b). While more students have been taking Regents exams and graduating from high school, according to the DOE, many teachers have complained that the Regents exams are “less comprehensive and rigorous,” leaving students unprepared for higher education (Kolodner & Monahan, 2009b). Seventh graders were required to answer only 44% of the questions correctly to receive a passing grade on the state math exams during the 2008-2009 school year. The state claims that, in fact, they have not made it easier to pass but have made the questions more difficult, thus reducing the number of correct answers required to pass the test (Hernandez, 2009c).

Conveniently, according to some stakeholders, this change was made during a time when Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein were lobbying for continuation of mayoral control and Mayor Bloomberg was vying for a third term.

Several participants “didn’t know” whether there were any changes in student achievement and noted that, in general, the “overall attitude has changed to progress” versus just measuring straight achievement (MST26, MST29). This perception is correct, as the DOE implemented a Progress Report for each school. This yearly evaluation tool uses a growth percentile model to measure how effective schools have been in increasing student achievement on standardized state exams.

Overall, the participating teachers at eight of nine participating schools agreed that student achievement had either increased or remained the same under mayoral control. Data from the ninth participating school were collected after the Chancellor had

announced that the school would close due to poor academic performance; their responses reflect this announcement. All principals agreed that student achievement had increased under mayoral control.

**Method of Accountability: Are the Changes in Student
Achievement Related to Mayoral Control?**

While there is evidence that student achievement has increased in NYC and participants agree with this evidence, is there any evidence that demonstrates that the increases are connected to reforms initiated under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein? From 2002-2003 to 2008-2009, student achievement increased under mayoral control, the Children's First reform efforts, and federal NCLB legislation, according to the NYCDOE and published literature (Kemple, 2010, as cited in O'Day et al., 2010). Further analysis by Kemple concludes that fourth-grade achievement gains in NYC for literacy and mathematics were the result of Mayor Bloomberg's reforms, despite the fact that achievement scores were on the rise prior to the Mayor taking control of the NYC public school system in 2002. The findings were similar for eighth-grade students, but possibly more outside factors contributed to that increase in proficiency ratings (Kemple, 2010, as cited in O'Day et al., 2010). In 2009-2010, the New York State Board of Regents increased the cut-off scores for children to meet the proficiency standards and thus the scores from that year were analyzed separately by Kemple to determine whether academic improvement continued in NYC. Despite the change in proficiency levels, the effects of the Children's First reforms persisted in fourth- and eighth-grade students (Kemple, 2010, as cited in O'Day et al., 2010). This is the only study that has attempted to quantitatively connect achievement scores with specific organizational changes and

academic reform efforts made under Mayor Bloomberg's and Chancellor Klein's control of the NYC public school system.

While Kemple's (2010) research using estimated counterfactual models shows that the increases in student achievement in NYC were in part connected to the Children's First reforms implemented by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, many participants did not agree that the changes in student achievement were the result of the mayor's control and/or policy initiatives or they could not directly associate the changes in student achievement with reforms that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein implemented. However, teachers and principals discussed that the Mayor and Chancellor had increased "accountability" at all levels of the NYC DOE that led to changes in student achievement because education is "more of a priority to him [the mayor]" (SST52). The next section discusses the differences in perceptions between schools in relation to student achievement and why it has or has not changed.

Consistent High Achievement at Magnet Schools Due to Increased Accountability From Mayoral Control

The most consistency in responses came from teachers who worked at magnet high schools because they consistently have students who perform at a very high level as measured by student achievement tests, so these teachers agreed that student achievement was increasing in their schools. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) explained that teachers in "elite" schools define their work "almost entirely in terms of ensuring highest levels of student academic achievement and the professional satisfaction and prestige they derive from their students' success" (p. 42). Most students in these types of schools are "good" students and college bound, exemplifying the "traditional" student whom they remember

from years earlier; “teachers are bound together by their school’s charter and its norms of professional practice; in this respect they are part of a strong professional community” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 43). This was evident in the participating magnet schools in this study. Teachers acknowledged that “we attract a higher level of students here than other schools,” making it difficult to judge whether student achievement has increased under mayoral control or that their school has “above average achievement levels” so the scores have remained similar there (MST46, MST48).

Yet, at magnet schools, the majority of teacher responses were that the changes in student achievement were attributed to the mayor’s increase in accountability, which also led to increased expectations for students by teachers. Student achievement was reported to have increased “due to the mayor . . . the scores have gone up” because there is “more accountability now than ever resulting in a better deal for kids” (MST25). Another teacher stated that the “statistics say that it [achievement] went up” and that is a “product of Bloomberg . . . wasn’t here before” as “expectations have changed” (MST44, MST46). Increased accountability at all levels has led to increases in student achievement under Mayor Bloomberg, according to teachers at magnet high schools.

Spectrum of Student Achievement Results at Small Schools

and Impacted by the State Board of Regents

The small schools that participated in this study had the smallest number of veteran teacher participants from the NYC public school system but had a wider range of teacher experience within their buildings. In terms of student achievement, their responses were mixed, reporting that student achievement remained the same, increased, or was difficult to determine. Most teachers agreed that “there has been no significant

change” because “people say they have dumbed-down the test,” and “if they wanted objective grades, then they would have other people grade the Regents,” referring to the fact that teachers grade their own students’ papers (SST49). Other teachers stated that student achievement “numbers are higher, but I don’t know if it’s really improved” (SST53, SST54). While it was difficult for them to judge how student achievement had changed, teachers stated that “small school graduation rates are higher than the large school” graduation rates, which confirms empirical evidence (Bloom & Unterman, 2012; SST50, SST51).

An interesting perspective emerged that identified the State Board of Regents as the agency that most impacts reform at the high school level. One teacher stated that student achievement “had nothing to do with the mayor because we are governed by the State Regents Office as far as our academics are concerned” (SST6). She agreed that both the state and the Mayor made an effort to “raise standards,” but she also thought that that was the result of the state making the Regents examinations more difficult (SST6).

The Board of Regents is a significant level of authority for high schools in New York State and all high school teachers must be aware of their policy initiatives in order to prepare their students to pass the Regents Exams, which is required of all high school graduates in New York State.

Large Schools Impacted By Larger High School Reform Effort

There were mixed responses from large schools in terms of how student achievement has changed, but the major theme was that, while they have been working to increase student achievement, they have been affected by the closing of other large high schools, which caused a change in their student demographics and ultimately student

achievement. The student demographic changes made it difficult to judge whether student achievement had increased. All three participating large high schools noted that their student population had become increasingly more minority and experienced higher levels of ELL students and students with disabilities, as Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein closed large high schools and poor-performing schools and created more small high schools, forcing a ripple effect on the student demographics at the remaining large high schools. Our schools “used to have students with stronger reading and writing skills” (LST59). From their perspective, the mayor and chancellor have not contributed at all to increasing academic achievement in schools (LST59). In fact, “the city has forced us to decline, we became a dumping ground . . . things deteriorated, grades went down . . . the building is only meant for so many people,” referring to the increase in student population as a result of other large high schools closing and those students being dispersed to their schools (LST58). Large schools have been “impacted very heavily by overcrowding and dumping more and more kids here” (LST58).

The literature confirms that most teachers in large comprehensive high schools “wrestled with the challenges presented by their students’ diverse cultures, languages, preparation, supports, and academic skills” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 46). Literature also confirms that teachers’ perceptions of their students and classroom contexts can vary greatly as, “subject departments are the hands-on professional ‘home’ for teachers, and departments can differ significantly both in collegiality and in beliefs about students, subject matter, and ‘good’ practices” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 46).

Participating large high schools consistently had the highest number of veteran teachers on staff but also had a wide range of years of experience, leading to a range of perceptions and lack of agreement among teachers' perceptions of student achievement under mayoral control. Some said that achievement had "gone up," some that it "has not changed at all," and some that "test scores have increased" (LST55, LST60, LST57, respectively).

At one large high school in particular, perceptions of student achievement were affected by the fact that they were being closed for poor academic performance or other large high schools nearby were being closed. In general, all eight teachers said that either the scores had decreased or it was difficult to determine based on them changing the tests and student populations. Teachers attributed the decrease in student achievement to factors beyond their control. There was a "decrease in achievement" for the special education population, "supposedly student achievement has gone up, but [she] thinks things [Regents' exams] were harder [before] . . . things are different, I don't know if I would say things are up," and it "is not fair to judge principals and teachers on low test scores when students are coming to high schools on a lower functioning level now than before . . . there is lots of pressure on high schools to get them to improve" (LST67, LST63, LST64). Teachers at this school stated that there is a "fear of closing down [our school]" and a "paranoia of what if our kids, school, doesn't do well?" referencing two nearby high schools, with different populations of students, that were informed that they were closing about the time of this interview (LST64). Teachers said that they "are responsible for more and students for less . . . the bar is higher and the standards are lower," based on a perception that the level of rigor on the Regents has lowered (LST65).

One teacher said that “achievement has dropped” and that “students in classes are lower functioning because there are more CTT classes and the school gets more money for CTT classes” (LST66). According to the teacher with the least amount of experience among participants at this large high school, “Some schools have gone up and some have gone down,” but “it depends on how you measure it” (LST68).

Overall, these findings show that teachers who were employed by large high schools agreed that student achievement had decreased under mayoral control due to the change in their student population. From 2002 to 2010, more than 20 underperforming high schools were closed and more than 200 small schools were opened across the city, along with revising the high school admission process to give all students an option for school choice in an effort to “change the landscape” of NYC high schools (MDRC, 2012). These 200 new schools were not required to take students with special needs, including students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or ELL students for the first 2 years of operation, thus forcing students with special needs to attend the remaining large public high schools (Sweet, 2006). More information about this process of reforming NYC high schools is provided in Chapter 8.

Principal Perspective: Achievement Has Increased,

But Not Necessarily Due to the Mayor

Principals provide an important connection between district-level initiatives to improve student achievement and teacher contributions in the classroom and thus were important participants to interview in understanding how Mayor Bloomberg’s and Chancellor Klein’s policies and reform efforts had impacted various types of high schools in NYC (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters, Marzano, &

McNulty, 2003). All principals agreed that student achievement increased from 2002 to 2009 across all three types of schools. The principals typically responded that student achievement had increased but that it was also difficult to judge based on inconsistent data. However, the reason for the increase in student achievement varied from the mayor's and chancellor's method of accountability, to the work of a school staff and students, to the "teacher in the front of the room that makes the biggest difference" (LSP3, SSP2, MSP1).

The three principals from the participating magnet schools agreed that student achievement had increased in their buildings, as well as across the NYC public school system, but that as several principals suggested, you can "manipulate the numbers to make them look anyway you want" and could not correlate changes in student achievement to mayoral control (MSP1, MSP2, MSP3). As teachers cited the changes in formulas, principals also stated that it is difficult to compare city and state graduation rates as a measure of student success because formulas have changed to include GED graduates (MSP2). Findings from the IELP (2010) report also showed that school leaders had difficulty in citing data to support that organizational changes in school governance were directly related to changes in student achievement scores.

The three principals from small schools agreed that student achievement had increased, but they did not agree that it was the result of Mayor Bloomberg's and Chancellor Klein's initiatives. According to one principal, student performance and achievement in his school had "improved due to the hard work of his teachers, committees of teachers, and giving the teachers the freedom to do what is necessary," as well as by giving "students a voice in how the school is performing and to see if their

needs are being met through informal conversations and town meetings” (SSP2). He moved beyond his own school to achievement citywide and said that “across the city, the numbers are fixed, fudged, etc. to make the mayor look good” as a result of the mayor’s initiative to “end social promotion” because, “after holding all the 3rd graders back instead of ‘socially promoting’ them, they have another year to improve and take the test over, so naturally the scores are going to be better” (SSP2). Another small school principal stated that, in his 22 years in the system, this is the first administration that has put an “emphasis on student achievement,” which had not been the case under previous administrations, so in that sense student achievement had improved because the administration had “forced” them to pay attention to the data. This principal also noted that it was “really a response to what was going on at a national level . . . NCLB was really the catalyst that made all this happen . . . they had to have some sort of accountability measures to keep their federal funding. . . I think that the Mayor and the Chancellor came up with a very good way to do that” (SSP3). The last small school principal stated that his students had made progress and that “more students are passing each marking period this year than in previous years,” but that it was difficult to judge because the State Board of Regents now requires all students to take the Regents’ exams.

The three large school principals agreed that student achievement had increased under mayoral control, but they did not necessarily attribute it to reforms by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein. From the perspective of one principal, student achievement had increased in his school and in NYC due to the Mayor’s and Chancellor’s increased level of accountability, which asks “how are students learning . . . how are you moving them?” (LSP3). He said that scores had gone up and achievement

had improved during mayoral control because the idea of achievement itself had become “more focused” (LSP3). According to the principal with the least experience in the system, “achievement has increased” since he has been principal at this school, but has been told that the “school would still most likely close down” (LSP1). While the principal of this school acknowledged that student achievement was increasing, his teachers stated that scores had not increased and emphasized that their student population had changed as other large schools closed, increasing the number of students in their classes with special needs.

While the participating principals agreed that student achievement has increased, the rationale for the increase varied by type of school. Principals from magnet high schools stated that the mayor and chancellor have had nothing to do with their achievement levels, where as the principals at small and large high schools agreed that some of the mayor’s reforms may have directly or indirectly impacted student achievement in either a positive or negative direction. Principals also had a broader perspective of student achievement than did teachers, recognizing that changes in achievement could be due to larger policy changes at the federal level. It is important to note that both teachers and principals cited changes in state testing and graduation policies as a reason for possible changes in student achievement levels. Within the organization, teachers and principals acknowledged academic improvement but did not consistently attribute it to the top-down organizational management strategy of mayoral control. This creates conflict in the organization and requires further research, analysis, and discussion with teachers and principals as to how school systems should develop a socially cohesive organization.

**Accountability at the Macro Level: NCLB, National Testing,
and the Pressure of High Achievement**

One theme and area of conflict between teachers, administrators, and families that emerged from teacher interviews was that there has been an increased feeling of pressure on teachers to ensure that students are higher achieving, especially on high-stakes exams, and that they are held more accountable for ensuring that their students perform at a higher level. This finding supports Wong and Shen's (2003b) finding as a limitation of mayoral control because there has been an increased focus almost exclusively on high-stakes assessments. With the era of accountability in the 21st century comes an increase in testing. Fortunately and unfortunately, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein began their management of the NYC public schools in 2001 in conjunction with the rollout of the revised ESEA (NCLB), which mandates testing all students in Grades 3 through 8.

Teachers and principals have felt the effects of this mandate but are unable to discern whether it is the result of Bloomberg/Klein's administrative policies or national policy. Since the sample population in this study is from the high school level, it is also possible that in most cases they did not directly experience either effect due to the state-mandated Regents testing that is specific to New York State; however, some teachers were aware that it affected the educational system at other levels. One principal of a small school stated, "At the elementary and middle school level now, there seems to be, from what I've read, an overemphasis on testing . . . and this has gotten a lot of bad press . . . and then there's some advocates for it, saying that the tests are harder" (SSP1). While New York State is currently working to increase the level of academic rigor on state tests, many contend that the tests became easier after the passing of NLCB; "tests are being

made easier . . . one of the negatives of a big system is that you are judged by just data; maybe some of it is NCLB data driven” (LST64) and as mandated by NCLB, “we were only testing Grades 4 and 8 [but now] we see more [testing] because we test more grades” (MST44). Unfortunately, the rest of the participating teachers and principals could not discern or comment on the relationship between Mayor Bloomberg’s and Chancellor Klein’s reforms and NCLB because they had no knowledge of NCLB that they could connect to the reforms in NYC.

While teachers and principals had difficulty in making a direct association or disassociation between Mayor Bloomberg’s reforms and NCLB policy, there was definite conflict within the organization over student performance. Teachers are not the only ones who have focused on test scores, as students and parents at the high school level are immediately concerned with postsecondary plans and thus also focused on standardized test scores. One teacher at a magnet school said that students are more “grade conscious,” “crunching the numbers, that’s their concern” (MST39). Another teacher said, “Kids are more and more concerned with their bottom lines” now and that the “sense of learning for learning’s sake has shrunk, but they are still good students” (MST40). He stated that he is “now giving higher grades than he used to in the 1970s and 1980s” and that creates a feeling of conflict between him, his peers, and the administration as he is “pressured to give them higher grades” and that means that the “greater attention to student achievement is problematic” (MST40). He stated that there “used to be cohesiveness in the faculty when you looked at regents, but now there is pressure . . . students should get 90s, but kids who shouldn’t get just as high scores” and the “present exam is not a good measure of teacher quality” (MST40). The theme of conflict over high achievement as it

relates to standardized testing continued as the interviewee said that “mayoral control has brought an emphasis on test scores;” “they are more for tests and less for learning” (MST41). Teachers saw this evident in students today as they do not have the bond with this school that they used to have and they are also more driven to the point that “they don’t have lunch” and they are “all about grades” to the point that the teachers “get called into the office if a certain percentage of students are under 85%” (MST41). According to one teacher, students under mayoral control are “much less prepared coming in here [her subject classes] than they used to be in the last 5 years” (MST42). The “scores have gone up, but the tests have changed so it is easier . . . misleading the public . . . I don’t know about the rest of the city” (MST43). She said that “kids in this school are consistent . . . the change in this school is less work ethic a little from students . . . they are more entitled and lazier” (MST43).

In addition to magnet schools, this theme also emerged at large high schools. Similarly, while teachers at large high schools acknowledged accountability and pressure to have high-achieving schools, there was a feeling that students did not necessarily deserve higher achievement scores. One teacher stated that she feels “pressure to pass students” along with the “external pressure to improve grades . . . everything is data driven and teaching to the test” (LST57). Other teachers stated that students are “more and more lazy” and that there “no accountability on the student,” the “work ethic of students has changed” (LST57, LST61). While teachers at all three schools cited an increase in accountability under mayoral control on schools, principals, and teachers to increase student achievement, conflict arose among teachers at magnet schools and large high schools because they felt that the level of accountability did not extend to students.

The structure of accountability that has grown under mayoral control in NYC both within the organization/DOE and each school has led to improved test scores but it has also created conflict in which teachers feel pressured to pass more students and where students feel more test driven and/or lazy instead of self-motivated and excited to learn.

Mechanism of Accountability: Business/Corporate Model of Operation

Business and philanthropic communities have been major supporters of strong mayoral involvement in urban school districts. Businesses and philanthropic leaders see themselves as important stakeholders in improving schools, having too often experienced firsthand the problems facing urban schools when their employees who are products of their city's schools are unprepared for the workforce. Cognizant that a city's vitality is closely tied to its school system, corporations and foundations have been supporting efforts to reform school districts with strong mayoral involvement by providing operational expertise and funding.

It is worth noting that the model of governance used by school districts under mayoral control borrows in both form and substance from the corporate model. In four of the nine cities studied in the 2010 IELP report (Cleveland, Hartford, Chicago, and Detroit), it is not the superintendent who heads the school district, but rather the CEO. In Chicago (with Cleveland and Washington following a similar pattern), the CEO is joined by a Chief Financial Officer, Chief Purchasing Officer, Chief Operations Officer, and a Chief Education Officer, titles—and, to a certain extent, functions—borrowed from the corporate world.

In addition to looking to the corporate model for its governance structure, several cities under mayoral control depend significantly on businesses to provide personnel, as

well as operational and financial support. NYC Chancellor Joel Klein, for instance, was a well-known attorney before being named to head New York City schools and many of his top aides are from the worlds of business and law (Rogers, 2009). Moreover, representatives from prominent corporate interests can be found on most school boards, and many school districts have worked to foster direct relationships with the business community by developing programs like the one in New York that matches civic and business leaders with principals from throughout the city (PENCIL, 2007). Mayor Bloomberg has made opening small schools with the support of major funders from the business and philanthropic communities, a key strategy for improving high school graduation rates in New York City (Gootman, 2006).

Gaining financial support directly from business and foundations is also an important part of these strategies. At least two cities, Chicago and New York, have high-level staff members responsible for fundraising from individuals, foundations, and businesses to support operational and instructional initiatives (Winlen, 2002). These efforts have been successful, as evidenced by the significant grants from funders such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, and the Broad Foundations (Samuel Tyler, Executive Director, Boston Municipal Research Bureau, interview, February 19, 2009; see Gootman, 2006). In fact, two cities under mayoral control, New York and Boston, won the Broad Prize for Urban Education in 2006 and 2007, respectively (Broad Foundation, 2009).

While it cannot be stated with any certainty what impact the corporate and philanthropic communities will have in the long run on efforts to reform school districts under mayoral control, for now they are major supporters of these initiatives. Although

the current economic downturn may lessen the ability of corporate and philanthropic leaders to be as prominent in reform efforts as in the past, they will undoubtedly continue to have significant influence on the direction of educational policies in these cities.

With increased accountability comes the management debate of centralization versus decentralization and whether services should be managed internally or externally. Historically in NYC, Superintendent William H. Maxwell had similar executive and all-inclusive powers from 1898 to 1916 as Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, in addition to the prominent role that business leaders at that time played in influencing municipal reforms. A common theme that teachers and principals expressed during this study was that the school system under mayoral control became more like a business or that mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg was a “management modernization strategy” (Rogers, 2009). In theories of urban change, organization, and management, researchers argue that municipal agencies continue to operate without change and improvement because there is a monopoly on city agencies and thus no incentive to improve or change (Hawley & Rogers, 1974). Mayor Bloomberg’s philosophy of introducing competing agencies, systems, and schools to NYC was his change strategy to improve the NYC public school system by forcing innovation, revitalization, and improvement. The potential negative effects of this theory is another source of conflict as the traditional agencies criticize the new agencies as “badly managed and inefficient” and the new agencies accuse the old agencies of being “racist, insensitive, and rigidly bureaucratic”—all creating a political struggle and energy that does not focus on educational improvements (Hawley & Rogers, 1974).

There was an overwhelming sense from principals and teachers at large high schools and magnet high schools that this management modernization strategy had negative effects on the school system from the human resources perspective of the system (hiring and firing of teachers), as well as how school community members are treated, from teachers to students and families. There was practically no discussion of the “business mentality” from small school teachers and principals; only one small school principal and teacher, from the same school and each with more than 12 years experience in the system, discussed the “business side” of the department of education under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein from a positive perspective.

This is not the first time that the education and corporate worlds have collided in NYC history. Frederick Taylor’s principles, similar to Mayor Bloomberg’s and Chancellor Klein’s, focused on the business model applied to schools, which emphasized the elimination of waste in terms of time, raw materials, and human resources. Raw materials, or students who finished school ready to work in the factories or as a productive member of society, was the goal for educators at the end of the 19th century, as it was under Mayor Bloomberg at the beginning of the 21st century.

Business of Schooling

The majority of participating teachers described the Bloomberg/Klein era as an attempt to operate the school system like a business, as has been shown in other mayorally controlled cities (IELP, 2010), especially in reference to his mission to hire and fire teachers and to closely monitor data as the “bottom line.” Mayor Bloomberg is “trying to apply corporate vocabulary model to education,” which “some will work and

some won't" (MST47). With that, participants were divided on whether looking at the school system as a "business" was a positive or negative management strategy.

This management strategy "made it [the system] more paternalistic by applying business standards to education" (MST27). "Bloomberg is looking for a reason to hire and fire people the way he did in his business world, and that's, I think, the biggest change that he's brought," causing many teachers to have performance anxiety (LST24). The "numbers are very important" to Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein (MST39). In one teacher's opinion, "He is trying to take that factory model, that business model and really jam it down the teachers, principals, and students' throats and I think that is uncalled for. . . . And I think the result is going to be a backlash from the communities . . . there were protests yesterday and there are protests tonight," referring to the protests surrounding the reauthorization of the mayoral control law (LST24).

Mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein was "never as destructive as other chancellors," but "teacher morale is low" as a result of his business model philosophy (MST39). Another teacher described the system as the "corporatization of education," and state that it is "bad for morale when people are let go, fired, become Absent Teacher Reserves (ATRs), etc." (MST30). More senior teachers have felt additional pressure under Mayor Bloomberg's reforms because, in giving principal's more authority over their school's budgets, principals are more aware of teachers' salaries. This has caused some concern for senior teachers because "teachers used to get paid by the DOE, but now get paid out of schools' budgets, so it is a disincentive to keep old teachers. . . . Salaries should not be part of the school budget" (MST43). A teacher with 33 years experience teaching in the NYC public school system also felt this

pressure, stating that they “want everything to run like a business” and are trying to “get rid of senior teachers” by having individual schools control their budgets” and so they “don’t want to hire old teachers” (LST67). School governance under mayoral control has “not treat[ed] them [teachers] in a professional way . . . [teaching] has become a job instead of a profession” (MST41).

Several teachers referred to the fact that Chancellor Klein has replaced BOE employees with employees who have business, financial, and legal backgrounds instead of education experience, effectively changing the administrative hierarchy of the NYC DOE (O’Day et al., 2010; Rogers, 2009). Having noneducators in charge of the system was an issue for many participants in this study. One teacher said that the “people running the system come from businesses” (MST41). There has been an increase in the number of employees at Tweed with business backgrounds, or in other words people who lack education backgrounds and/or experience with the NYC public schools (Rogers, 2009). One teacher acknowledged Bloomberg’s change in office personnel by saying, “We need to see the value in taking corporate people” into the system, because the “short-term vision is too reactionary We need to see 20-year plans . . . which sounds unrealistic” (MST47). At the end of the 2009 school year, only one quarter of the people reporting directly to Chancellor Klein (two of eight people) had “extensive experience” in the classroom. At the start of the 2009-2010 school year, the numbers increased to four of nine top administrators having experience in city classrooms, with a DOE spokesperson claiming that the remaining five positions are not education related, such as finance and legal (Cramer, 2009a). With these changes in organizational leadership, participants saw the school system “run more as a business now” and, as a result, district-level leaders

“don’t take into consideration [teachers’] knowledge and experience, as most of the people who work in the central office have “have never taught a day in their life, how can you tell us what to do. . . . It’s a slap in the face . . . [the administrators] live in an ivory tower.” “If Klein was a principal in the system, had been in the trenches, but he has never been and doesn’t know what its like” (LST67). Several teachers stated that Klein is under Mayor Bloomberg and wants it “run like a business, he is the CEO” (LST67). Teachers had a problem with the mayor and chancellor using “humans as a bottom line” (LST58). Overall, one “understands where the mayor comes from, but he can’t approach it from the top-down, especially with a strong union . . . can’t run it like a business” (LST56).

From the principals’ perspective, only one principal specifically referred to the “business side” of mayoral control as a negative repercussion of the school governance model. He said “it’s very dangerous” to run the school system like a business because there is a “human component” to the business (SSP1). This principal contended that schools go “beyond statistics” and that schools are

one of only two industries where our clients are in front of us 8 hours a day. The only other industry that you can think about that is healthcare. Everyone else, your clients are in and out, at best, in most industries now, they’re a phone call or e-mail away. You don’t even really see them. Ours are right in front of us. So the human factor of having to deal with kids . . . being there all day long . . . cannot be captured with statistics. (SSP1)

He continued,

You can’t tell a school that “you should only spend \$605 in support allocation per student” as a rule when every school is different. Different schools require different amounts of school aides, secretaries (depending on the work load and the size); that “one size fits all” is a very, very dangerous thing to do. Last year, after a 5% budget hit, two teachers were placed back on my table of organization. I could not get them re-excessed, because we were over the \$605. To get down to the \$605 per student, I would have had to excess every school aid, and like, go down to like three secretaries! But downtown, they don’t understand that. To them that seems like the smart thing to do. . . . Sure, get rid of your nonteaching staff . . . but that’s because . . . the only explanation can be that they’ve never

spent time in a school and don't understand the dynamics of having to deal one-on-one with teenagers or students or student issues all day long. It's not a store where your customer comes in, walks around, buys something, and 20 minutes or a half an hour later they leave, and they're gone. Doesn't work like that. You know, there are ongoing, constant needs all day long . . . AND we're dealing with kids! It just . . . goes beyond . . . just looking at data on a page and I think that has gotten lost in this system . . . we've overshot. We've moved too far in that direction. We need to pull that back a little bit and bring the school component back into it. (SSP1)

Ironically, this is not the first time that schools or a school system, even the NYC public school system, has been accused of operating under or with a “business mentality.” In the 1890s to the early part of the 20th century, the “factory model” and “efficiency” method of schooling began. Approximately a hundred years later, Mayor Bloomberg has brought a new version of “efficiency” and “standardization” to the NYC public school system.

Operating under the business mentality, along with the increased business and corporate connections to the NYC public school system from Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein's social capital, may have had both positive and negative effects on the school system, depending on the perceptions of the interviewee. In some instances, no-bid or excessively large contracts were dispersed with little or no input from the community and a “procedural” vote from the PEP. Bloomberg applied many business-minded strategies to the NYC DOE during this time period in an effort to improve efficiency, financial lines, and ultimately student achievement. Working to eliminate the ATR pool, initiating performance contracts for teachers and principals, and increasing the use of data in all areas demonstrated his dedication to the use of corporate strategies in education.

While many participants saw the “business model” as a negative, an equal percentage of participating teachers cited positive outcomes of the “business” mentality

of the DOE under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein. While there is more pressure now on teachers to perform, teachers who are strong performers are “more empowered with the mayor coming in through his infusion of the business model into the system” (MST25). This was a necessary change to the system, as everyone prior to Mayor Bloomberg was “band-aiding” the situation. According to one principal,

Mayor Bloomberg was the first person to say, “It’s hopeless the way it has been and there are no more band-aids to put on.” . . . Mayor Bloomberg comes from a business background, and an enormously successful business background, and he said “I’m going to try the one thing I know works,” and instead of band-aiding it anymore, he just threw it all out and started from scratch. (SST6)

He noted that Mayor Bloomberg is “saving the system thousands if not millions of dollars, because it’s more efficient at the top and [there] are less people at the top that are in charge of all five boroughs” (SST6).

Chapter Summary and Discussion

Table 3 summarizes the comparison of the participating teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of mayoral control and the empirical evidence gathered in this study.

Empirical evidence (Kemple, 2010) using estimated counterfactual models shows that the increases in student achievement in NYC were in part connected to the Children’s First reforms implemented by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, yet many participants did not agree that the changes in student achievement were the result of the mayor’s control and/or policy initiatives or they could not directly associate the changes in student achievement with reforms that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein implemented. However, both teachers and principals discussed that the Mayor and Chancellor increased “accountability” at all levels of the NYC DOE that led to changes in student achievement because education is “more of a priority to him [the mayor]” (SST52).

Table 3

How the Teachers' and Principals' Perceptions Compared to the Empirical Evidence on Mayoral Control

Mayoral control	Perceptions by NYC teachers	Perceptions by NYC principals	Empirical evidence
Student achievement	Student achievement has increased under mayoral control		X
“Business model” of school governance	Majority described it this way, but some saw this as a positive and others saw it as a negative		X
Public perception of education	Increased under mayoral control		X
Non-educator in charge	Frequently cited recommendation by participants		Common in MC cities

At magnet schools, the majority of teacher responses were that the changes in student achievement could be attributed to the mayor's increase in accountability, which also led to increased expectations for students by teachers. In terms of student achievement, responses from small schools were mixed, reporting that student achievement remained the same, increased, or was difficult to determine. However, small school participants confirmed empirical evidence that their graduation rates had increased more than graduation rates at other types of schools. Participants from small schools also noted that the Board of Regents is a significant level of authority for high schools in New York State and that all high school teachers must be aware of their policy initiatives to prepare their students to pass the Regents Exams, which is required of all high school

graduates in New York State. There were mixed responses from large schools in terms of how student achievement has changed, but the major theme was that, while they have been working to increase student achievement, they have been affected by the closing of other large high schools, which caused a change in their student demographics and ultimately student achievement. Participating large high schools consistently had the highest number of veteran teachers on staff but also had a wide range of years of experience, leading to a range of perceptions and lack of agreement among teachers' perceptions of student achievement under mayoral control. At one large high school in particular, participants perceived a decline in student achievement, but their perceptions were affected by the fact that they were being closed for poor academic performance or that other large high schools nearby were being closed.

Principals provide an important connection between district-level initiatives to improve student achievement and teacher contributions in the classroom, and all principals agreed that student achievement had increased from 2002 to 2009 (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). Principals from magnet high schools stated that the mayor and chancellor have had nothing to do with their achievement levels, where as the principals at small and large high schools agreed that some of the mayor's reforms may have directly or indirectly affected student achievement in either a positive or negative direction. Principals also had a broader perspective of student achievement than did teachers, recognizing that changes in achievement could be due to larger policy changes at the federal level.

One theme and area of conflict between teachers, administrators, and families that emerged from teacher interviews was that there has been an increased feeling of pressure

on teachers to ensure that students are higher achieving, especially on high-stakes exams, and that the teachers are held more accountable for ensuring that their students perform at a higher level. This finding supports Wong and Shen's (2003b) finding as a limitation of mayoral control because there has been an increased focus almost exclusively on high-stakes assessments. Teachers and principals have felt the effects of this mandate but are unable to discern whether it is the result of Bloomberg/Klein's administrative policies or national policy. The structure of accountability that has grown under mayoral control in NYC both within the organization/DOE and each school has led to improved test scores but it has also created conflict in which teachers feel pressured to pass more students and where students feel more test driven and/or lazy instead of self-motivated and excited to learn.

A common theme that the teachers and principals expressed in this study was that the school system under mayoral control became more like a business or that mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg was a "management modernization strategy" as the accountability or pressure to improve increased and the number of persons without backgrounds in education increased within the DOE (Rogers, 2009). Based on teacher and principal perceptions, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have increased the level of accountability in the NYC public school system, leading to an increase in student achievement and the perception of education in NYC as a whole, which supports the findings reported by Wong et al. (2007) that mayoral control elevates the public perception of education. While the "business of schooling" is not a new reform strategy, research literature describes the business mentality as a positive systemic reform effort. However, participating teachers were divided on the use of the business mentality as an

effective method of school reform in NYC. Principals and teachers at large high schools and magnet high schools stated that this “business mentality” had negative effects on the school system from the human resources perspective of the system (hiring and firing of teachers), as well as how school community members, from teachers to students and families, are treated. The increased level of pressure to produce improved student achievement results or be fired has contributed to the perception that teacher morale has gone down under mayoral control. So, while citywide achievement has increased, it has become an area of conflict for educators as the Mayor and Chancellor have absorbed the credit for such improvements.

CHAPTER 8

Policy Initiatives and Reforms Under Mayoral Control

This school system is doing something that has become the role model for the country. . . . We have taken, which, in all fairness, was a very good school system for a big city school system, and made it so much better. (Mayor Bloomberg, as cited in Davis, 2009, p. 6)

The first year of mayoral control was centered on standardizing all aspects of the system, from curriculum to staffing to culture and finances, with little to no input from any stakeholders, including teachers and principals. After all, even though Mayor Bloomberg received legislative authority to control the school system, he had only 8 years to demonstrate that this governance structure was effective and should continue after the sunset clause requiring reauthorization in 2009. Following the assurance of Mayor Bloomberg's third term, Chancellor Klein sent the following letter to all DOE employees highlighting his major reforms during Mayor Bloomberg's previous two terms:

Many of you remember how things used to be. For decades, our schools were characterized by a revolving door of leadership and reforms that never had the support to produce any sustained results. That all changed in 2002. By the end of this four-year term, the city will have experienced 12 years of consistent and bold educational vision. Mayor Bloomberg's continuity of leadership has led to historic achievement gains and what I hope is a permanent culture shift—creating a school system that puts the interests of students above all else. Today, our students have many more good school options from which to choose. Our teaching force is more highly qualified. And principals have more authority than ever to make decisions that best meet the needs of their schools. (Klein, 2009a, para. 3)

This chapter classifies and organizes the periods of reform, from centralized to decentralized to “decentralized centralization,” with explanation of their effects and outcomes on large, small, and magnet high schools from the perspectives of teachers and principals.

Mayoral control brought periods of centralization, decentralization, and centralized decentralization to the NYC public school system. These were the three periods of bureaucratic reorganization of the system from 2002 to 2009. At each phase certain factors put pressure on the system and caused conflict among stakeholders. During each phase, schools reported to and were supported by various organizations. The way in which Bloomberg's and Klein's reforms impacted schools in this study varied across the type of school. There was a difference in the way teachers and principals who worked at magnet schools viewed the reforms and the way those who worked at small and large high schools because magnet schools were "insulated" from most of the changes; as one principal put it, "They don't tinker with the wheel when it runs well" (MSP1). There was no evidence to suggest that the borough in which the school was located impacted the rate of reform. Each school approached the reforms differently based on their student and staff population, as well as their performance "rating" on school evaluation tools within the city. Generally, the variation between teachers and principals existed only in their perceptions of the levels of school bureaucracy outside their school building (school support organization/regional offices/central DOE) and the level of principal autonomy given under mayoral control. As one principal stated, "You really see it all," referring to the changes within the system (LSP3). Otherwise, there were no trends in terms of teacher or principal knowledge of the reforms according to other demographic characteristics or school location.

All three magnet schools were described as insulated from the reforms as a result of their traditional histories of academic success. The following teacher responses summarize the perspectives of teachers from three of the city's magnet schools: "Good

schools are differentiated, so we are distanced from the reforms” (MST28); magnet schools more affected by “state level reforms such as the way the state curves Regents’ scores” and the changes to the high school admissions procedures (MST28, MST48). From their perspective, policies enacted under mayoral control from 2002 to 2009 did little to nothing to increase student achievement and did not influence how they did their job on a daily basis.

The small schools were generated from the Mayor’s and Chancellor’s reform initiatives and thus were forced to consider and/or adopt reform efforts and policies coming from the central office. As one teacher at a small school said, they “have to implement it [reforms] whether we agree or disagree with it” and with more reforms, comes more accountability and “paperwork” (SST51, SST54). These schools were opened under the mayor’s partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Participants who worked at large high schools provided the greatest diversity of responses and preferences with regard to the Mayor’s policy initiatives; some teachers agreed with the reforms, some disagreed with the reforms, and some had no opinion and/or knowledge of the reforms. Responses that exemplify this are: “All changes are good and beneficial for students and teachers” (LST55); “There has been lots of work, but I don’t really pay attention” (LST61); some commented that they were too far removed from the reform efforts, even though all reforms directly impacted the students whom they served because the “top-down approach to management doesn’t come down to the classroom . . . the union is too strong and lost focus on that . . . students are the client, you can’t do that from the top, you have to do it in the classroom” (LST56); or a teacher “doesn’t see much of a difference” as a result of the reforms; the only thing he

sees more of is “fear” or a “corporate model” (LST58). There was also a group of teachers who, regardless of their years of teaching experience in the NYC public school system, could not identify or evaluate any citywide reforms (LST63, LST64, LST68). There were even responses that went to the extreme, completely disagreeing with all of the reform efforts because they were “dictatorial” and because “Klein shoves policies down our throats” (LST66).

As mentioned earlier, reforms under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein went through three main phases: (a) first, reforms were centralized citywide throughout all schools; (b) reforms were decentralized to the school level for individual schools and principals to make their own decisions; and (c) Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein initiated a network system where reforms operated under a system of “decentralized centralization.” Under the network system, schools are individual entities “supported by” a network that the school has chosen and paid for its services. It is this area that makes the NYC model of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg unique in working to create a balance between centralization and decentralization (Rogers, 2009). Klein stated, “I can’t emphasize it enough: the schools need to be where the action is, not the central or regional offices” (as cited in Rogers, 2009, p. 27). With that being the vision of Chancellor Klein and Mayor Bloomberg, how did NYC high school principals and teachers perceive the major reforms during these three phases of reorganization?

Centralized Reforms

After taking control of the NYC public schools in 2002, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein centralized all reform efforts under the newly renamed DOE, which was relocated from the historic 110 Livingston Street building in downtown Brooklyn to

the Tweed Courthouse in downtown Manhattan, next to the Mayor's office. This period of organizational change reflected Frederick Taylor's scientific management ideals and offered no avenues for debate from constituents. Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein decided that this type of reform strategy was necessary to build system capacity and develop coherence within the 10 geographic regions after 30 years of decentralization under 32 community school boards (O'Day et al., 2010). In order to develop coherence, most reform efforts were targeted at the elementary and middle school levels as the high school system was already centralized under one superintendent. Human capacity was built through adding parent coordinators and instructional coaches, creating the NYC Leadership Academy to strengthen and support leadership candidates, and negotiating salary increases with the UFT and the CSA (teachers' union and administrators' union, respectively). "No mayor before him was willing to negotiate significantly higher salaries for school teachers," said Randi Weingarten, who gave the mayor "huge credit" and described his actions as a "breath of fresh air" (as cited in Meyer, 2008, p. 14). By "significantly higher," Ms. Weingarten was referring to the 16-22% raise that teachers received over a 2.5-year period depending on their seniority level; overall, teacher salaries have increased 43% under Mayor Bloomberg. Teachers recognized this and understood this to be a priority of Mayor Bloomberg, in contrast to Mayor Giuliani, who "hated teachers, but at least Bloomberg gave us more money in our salaries" (LST59). The following section presents an analysis of how reforms affected teachers and principals across types of schools as the reorganizations and reforms were implemented between 2002 and 2009.

School districts, such as the NYC DOE, respond to the “crisis in education” differently, but most school district leaders begin with standardization of curriculum, performance criteria, and testing programs (Seashore Louis, as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1990, p. 22). Standardization allows for “increased accountability” within the system, which was evident in the first phase of Mayor Bloomberg’s reforms (Seashore Louis, as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1990). Asking teachers to respond to this type of reorganization and reform has implications for teachers’ work and often results in conflict. Change is always difficult, but according to Seashore Louis,

Change that is imposed from outside may conflict with a teacher’s own deeply embedded ideas of how a “real school” should operate and may cause considerable personal confusion as needed adjustments take place. . . . Burnout or stress may be more of a problem. . . . Teachers may also become disillusioned about the possibility of achieving enduring results from their investment in their performance and in improving education. (as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1990, p. 25)

Teachers and principals were asked how they viewed changes in principal authority, technology, and the creation of school evaluation tools during this period. While the initial changes imposed by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein had created stress, feelings of disillusionment, and burnout for several teachers interviewed in this study, the majority of participants interviewed were unaware of many of the reforms taking place during this period. This can be attributed to the fact that many of the reforms targeted changes at the elementary and middle school levels. They did see an increase in technology, both in the amount of technology and in the amount of information available, yet felt that it could have been made more productive. There was a difference in perceptions between teachers with regard to the development and use of school evaluation tools. Teachers from both small and large high schools reported more pressure to improve following implementation of these tools than did teachers at magnet high schools. Table 4

Table 4

Comparison of Teachers' and Principals' Perceptions on Reforms During the Period of Centralization

Aspect of mayoral control	Small school teachers	Large school teachers	Magnet school teachers	Principals
Lack of principal decision-making authority	Lacked knowledge of organizational and curricular decisions made during this time			Greater understanding of changes
Increase technology	Saw increase in amount of information available but not as always the most useful information			
School evaluation tools	High stakes		Slightly less pressure	High stakes, unclear, tied to their ratings

highlights participants' perceptions of these reforms and the section below provides detailed information about the changes and areas of conflict during this period.

Lack of Principal Decision-Making Authority Under District and Regional Office Structure; Teachers' Focus Remains Within the School Building

Initially, creating a more top-down structure within the NYC school system was one method by which Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein sought to improve the quality of the system and the management of the largest city in the United States. Top-down management can be done in two ways: procedurally and structurally; both ways seek to improve city government by creating a "strong center or top management with consolidated authority and power, and considerable professionalism in administration,

program analysis, and political bargaining” (Rogers & Hawley, 1974, p. 345). When Mayor Bloomberg assumed office in 2002, the NYC public school system was structurally fragmented across 32 community school districts, each with its own school board, superintendent, and district office. Theories of organizational management argue that these smaller units were consolidated and integrated, allowing delivery of services (educational in this instance) to improve because more comprehensive and cohesive planning could exist without duplicating programs or services and with improvement of accountability and efficiency, as discussed in the previous chapter (Rogers & Hawley, 1974).

This top-down structure was initiated in 2003 through consolidation of 32 local community school districts into 10 geographic regions. During this period of governance, the Mayor and Chancellor initiated large-scale reforms to standardize all aspects of the system, brought a new technology initiative to manage student achievement data, and created a system to quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate schools. Naturally, this form of top-down reform meant that principals had less authority and decision-making ability within their own schools, as the Mayor and Chancellor sought to “equalize” education across all schools within the city. There were no clear findings between schools or teachers with regard to teachers’ perceptions of this process of standardization. Teachers’ years of experience influenced their knowledge of organizational changes from districts to regions. As one would suspect, some newer teachers had little to no contact with administration outside of the school and thus were unable to evaluate the reform based on their experiences (LST16). At the same time, many veteran teachers, with more than 20

years experience in the system, also had no knowledge or understanding of the district or regional level of bureaucracy outside of their classroom, nor of citywide reform efforts.

While there was relatively no difference in teachers' perceptions of reforms during this period based on demographic differences or type of school, there was a difference between how teachers and principals perceived the changes. From the principals' perspective, the changes in organizational structures from districts to regions influenced how they did their job. While the changes impacted all principals, the changes were felt more by principals at small schools and large schools. Access to information and assistance was stronger prior to the regional model, according to principals:

I felt that the support coming out of the Superintendency was excellent. You needed something, you could get someone on the phone and you could get an answer immediately. And the person knew the answer. The budgeting process was different, you know? You know, the whole system was structured differently. But if you needed something, you could get someone on the phone, you got an answer. Someone that knew, someone who had been doing the same thing for a long time . . . now, I've had . . . up until this year, I have four different budget reps in 4 years . . . or in 3 years. . . . Every year it was a different person. "Where is the person before that?" "Oh, I was in purchasing last year" or "I was in Human Resources last year." So, in other words, you've only been doing budgeting for a year, so you bring nothing to the table. I have conversations with them—and I say this with humility: I knew more than they did! That's not good! (SSP1)

As stated above, the change from the High School Superintendency system to the regional system put high school principals in the same meetings with elementary and middle school principals, which principals saw as an ineffective use of their time and professional learning (LS3). One principal stated that the superintendent had her agenda, "but it wasn't meaningful to us [as high school principals] so we turned off" (MSP2). While principals were supposed to have discretion over when they chose to attend these meetings, the meetings were being run by their rating officers and therefore could not be considered as "optional" (MSP2). This organizational model was enacted to clearly

delineate decision-making authority from Tweed through the regions to individual schools, with a specific Local Instructional Superintendent responsible for assisting 10 assigned schools. Research has demonstrated that there was little to no flexibility at the regional and school levels in implementing policy that came from Tweed, and participating principals agreed (Rogers, 2009).

**Effort to Increase Technology and Access to Information,
But Not the “Best” Information**

During the past 7 years there has been a large centralized effort, publically and financially, to improve technology within the NYC public school system. During the past 7 years, Chancellor Klein has frequently asked educators to analyze data as the basis for instructional decisions. The DOE signed an \$80 million contract with IBM to create a data system, called the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) to be utilized by principals, teachers, and parents to monitor and improve students’ assessment results (Public Advocate for the City of New York, 2009). In a survey of principals conducted by the Public Advocate’s Office in 2009, 60% of the principals agreed or somewhat agreed that the system was helpful, while an internal survey from the DOE supposedly demonstrated “broader support;” the DOE claims to have received a response rate close to 90%, whereas the Public Advocate’s Office response rate was significantly lower at 21% (Hernandez, 2009c). The CSA, early critics of the system, supported the changes and improvements that were made by the DOE in 2007 to 2009; “While we were skeptical in the beginning, we have come to understand much of its long-term value and importance,” said a spokesperson (as cited in Hernandez, 2009c, p. 10).

The existing research in this area already shows conflicting perceptions with regard to this technology. From the principals' perspective in a study commissioned by Ms. Gotbaum and the Public Advocate's Office, 60% of the principals predicted that ARIS would improve teaching and learning in their schools (Gotbaum, 2009). However, 56% of those principals stated that their staff had not been adequately trained, 54% cited many technical problems, 69% claimed that the city had overpaid for the system, and 26% stated that ARIS was not a good use of their time (Gotbaum, 2009). In contrast, an internal survey conducted by the DOE, with a higher response rate, showed that 72% of the principals found the ARIS system to be helpful or very helpful in increasing student performance (Hernandez, 2009e). Data from this study lie somewhere in the middle; the majority of participating principals did not say that ARIS was essential to their work one way or another. In fact, one small school principal was "not a huge believer in ARIS" because the high school data cannot necessarily be used on a daily basis; "it's static" and there is a "huge lag time in terms of what the data represents" (SSP1). In terms of the ARIS communities where school staff can share documents and information within and across school communities, "that could have been done easily through the DOE website, a shared port, a Wiki . . . you didn't have to spend \$80 million for us to do that," suggested one small school principal (SSP1). Overall, participating principals saw the value in creating technology that can be shared and viewed by multiple stakeholders, but did not the value in its cost and continuous use as it was not based on the most useful data.

From the teachers' perspective, there have been positives and negatives to the increased technology. There have been many technology changes that have "improved

things” and “given people access to a lot more information, but sometimes it is too much information” (MST26). One teacher commented on ARIS,

There’s good stuff on there, like with attendance and stuff like that, but there’s nothing on there that I couldn’t . . . maybe one or two useful pieces of information . . . for the amount of hours that I spent looking on it that I couldn’t have figured out without it. (LST16)

It was described as helpful in the sense that “they have all this [information] in place,” but even if they made it “incredibly user friendly,” the information would not necessarily be more helpful (LST16).

Overall, participating teachers and principals saw an increased amount of information available on the Internet but did not see a positive benefit in the available information. There is a difference between two empirical studies done on increased technology in the DOE, one by the Public Advocate’s Office and the other done internally by the DOE. It seems that principal participants in this study agreed more with the response rates on the Public Advocate’s report than on the internal DOE survey. The difference in results could most likely be explained by response bias and fear of confidentiality in the collection of information by DOE officials for their survey as compared to the data collected in this study and by the Public Advocate.

Useful But Not Perfect School Evaluation Tools

According to theorists, organizational learning is necessary for organizations to move forward on a continual basis. One way for organizations to learn about themselves is to receive regular feedback from professionals inside and outside of the organization (Senge, 1990). According to Rogers and Hawley (1974), it is necessary to improve the quality of information about the services being delivered in order to change the system. Under Mayor Bloomberg, all NYC public schools receive feedback and are held

accountable through three performance or school evaluation tools: the Quality Review, the Progress Report, and the School Survey. Providing both district and school personnel, along with the public, evaluation and performance data from each school helps to identify strengths and weaknesses in the system, an opportunity to revise and revisit goals and action plans, possible legislative review, and a means by which the public and citizen action groups can hold the government and school officials accountable (Rogers & Hawley, 1974). Participating teachers and principals saw value in school evaluation tools but identified more problems than benefits with these evaluation tools. Most principals and teachers found the school evaluation tools useful but stated they put too much pressure on school personnel to perform and judged schools only at a snapshot moment in time. Yet one principal stated, “You should take all data seriously” from the school evaluations, even the surveys; “Listen to them, they are a good indicator of whether or not people understand” (LSP3).

The quality review is seen as a “formative” qualitative evaluation procedure in which the reviewers spend 2 days examining all aspects of the school and highlight what schools do well and areas where they need to improve. All participating schools in this study underwent the quality review process during 2007-2008 or 2008-2009, during one of the 2 years prior to participating in this study. All participating schools received one of the top two of four possible scores on the review (*Well Developed, Proficient, Developing, Underdeveloped*; see Table 5).

From the perspective of teachers, the majority of the teachers support the philosophy behind the quality review but commented that it was “an all-consuming process” and very high stakes (LST65).

Table 5

Participating Schools' Most Recent Quality Review Scores

School borough	Small high school	Large high school	Magnet high school
Manhattan	Proficient	Proficient	Well Developed
Queens	Well Developed	Well Developed	Proficient
Brooklyn	Well Developed	Well Developed	Well Developed

From the teacher's perspective . . . they're using [school evaluation tools] as a way to determine what schools are doing a good job, what schools are doing a bad job, and if the schools are deemed unsuccessful or underdeveloped—there's some kind of nomenclature they're using, but it's all buzzwords; they're saying, "Now we're going to close this school down." (LST24)

Teachers described the Quality Review as very time consuming as "most schools spent more time preparing for the Quality Review" than anything else (MST28). While the process is meant to be formative, it does not seem to feel that way to some teachers; one stated that it "should be constructive, not 'I got you'" (LST65). Other teachers described the 2-day process to be ineffective because, during the quality review,

They talk to a few kids, see two classes . . . It is not a measurement, it's silly. . . . Ten people from England fly over; why is this how we measure it? This is what I don't like about the business model . . . either they [kids] are learning or not and a good teacher knows that.

Despite the fact that this review process is high stakes for schools in that it can lead to school closings or reorganization, teachers described the process as "for show" and suggested that "there needs to be more substance" and that the tools are "snapshot views of schools, not a good judge" and "too much is riding on the reports to be so flip about them"; they saw them as an "unfair way of assessing what goes on in schools 180

days a year” (LST57). Teachers commented that the “pressure was huge” during their quality review and noted that the reviewer is looking at “paper data . . . little snapshot is tough to judge whether or not they are doing a good job.” Despite the inauthentic feeling of the review, some teachers saw the feedback as good and suggested that the process could be even better if they “come in more frequently . . . once a year doesn’t seem important.”

There was a difference in teacher perceptions between schools as teachers in the magnet school were not as concerned about the quality review process because they noted that their schools tended to operate more efficiently and successfully than other types of schools. Teachers from magnet schools consider their schools to be very high performing and therefore commented that “to ask [them] to improve seems a little silly” (MST40). There is “too much emphasis on [school evaluation tools],” but the teacher commented that it could be attributed to “federal pressure” (MST39). In reality, most schools do not undergo a quality review every year, as there are certain criteria and a lottery system that determines which schools are reviewed each year; however, each school receives the other two school evaluation tools every year (a progress report and a learning environment survey).

While teachers mostly discussed the “high stakes” feeling of the review, principals stated that the quality review process was subjective and not a useful enough tool for their school’s improvement. Despite receiving a score of Proficient and being a “top school,” one principal called the process “not fair; they change it every year, the rubric is not realistic to schools, it is a waste of money and waste of time, and it narrows down the school, eliminating its uniqueness; it’s the most ridiculous thing I have ever

done” (MSP2). Another acknowledged that they are “working on” the system, but noted that for some schools the “grade depends on the reviewer and they are trying to make that more uniform” (MSP1). His school was used as a DOE test site for interrater reliability.

One small school principal compared the Quality Review process more positively to Tiger Wood’s golf swing:

Product is not always the only thing to look at. Sometimes you want to look at process. Tiger Woods would have never become the golfer he is (we’ll forget about the rest of his life) if someone didn’t sit and watch him swing. It wasn’t just about how far he could hit the ball . . . you’ve got to watch him swing and work on that. . . . So if the quality review’s goal was to look at how the school was swinging, so to speak, I think that’s a really good idea . . . to look at what processes go on in the school in terms of how teachers go about helping kids succeed. But, notice that expression: from how teachers use data to do this, to do that . . . in other words, I think that they overshot again, and may be emphasizing the wrong things too much. (SSP1)

The “subjective” nature of the review was a source of conflict between principals and the DOE, based on the qualitative nature of the review and the constantly changing rubric used to score schools during the review. The content measured by the Quality Review has changed three times and will be revised again for the 2012-2013 school year. At one time, “it was too stacked, though, in that direction . . . too much on how teachers use data. . . . Now I think it’s moved a little bit more toward instruction and toward teacher process” (SSP1). This principal stated that the Mayor and Chancellor have been more effective in “streamlining” and “refocusing” the school evaluation process (SSP1). The DOE has attempted to revise the process each year, pushing schools to improve continually. While early reviews were conducted by outside consultants for England, all current reviews are conducted by DOE employees, usually a school’s Superintendent.

The DOE also introduced the concept of a Progress Report for every school, released in the fall and based on the previous school year’s data; this is considered the

“summative” data of the school, measuring progress in increasing student achievement over the past year. Starting in 2006, all schools in NYC that have at least 2 years of test score data are evaluated and given an annual report card that measures academic performance (25% of their final grade), progress (60% of their final grade), and the school’s learning environment, based on student attendance rate and annual student, teacher, and parent surveys (15% of their final grade; Rosenberg, 2009). In determining the school’s “progress,” a school is compared with approximately 40 other schools in the city that have similar student demographics, as well as all other schools citywide that serve the same grade levels. During the 2008-2009 school year, 1,058 schools in the city were assessed; 84% earned an “A,” which is significantly higher than the 38% who had earned an “A” the previous year, and the standards were higher, according to the DOE (Rosenberg, 2009). Consequences for low-performing schools include leadership changes or even closure. According to one teacher, “the progress report forces all individuals to do better, regardless of what job they are doing” (LST55). All but one participating school in this study was demonstrating progress according to their 2008-2009 progress report, as shown in Table 6.

Principals did not consider the progress report calculations to be objective for all schools; one principal stated that the “process is skewed for the benefit of Bloomberg” because the weightings change by categories; “if you receive a B, C, F, in all three categories you can still get a B overall . . . the system isn’t fair” (SSP2). Transparency was an issue in the calculation of progress report scores for many participants in this study. One small school principal said that this nontransparent process does not benefit schools because the “numbers from the small schools are not necessarily true and in

Table 6

Participating Schools' Progress Report Grades for Academic Year 2008-2009

School borough	Small high school	Large high school	Magnet high school
Manhattan	B	D ^a	A
Queens	A	A	A
Brooklyn	A	B	A

^aThe Department of Education announced during the study that this school was scheduled to close.

terms of how they are evaluated; their comparison schools are peer schools, so it makes everything skewed and the mayor look better” (SSP2). For example, “My school isn’t compared with the best schools in the city, but they got an A on their progress report, but Stuyvesant got a B—that doesn’t mean [my school] is better than Stuyvesant, but parents don’t understand it” (SSP2). Most members of the community are unaware that schools are compared to peer schools, or 40 schools that are demographically similar to them—20 that are higher performing than that school and 20 that are lower performing than that school. This methodology, along with the fact that 60% is based on the amount of progress a school makes, not the percentage of students who are academically proficient, and that the score ranges have changed each year and are not prereleased to the public, creates a very murky process of judging school performance. One principal clearly did not understand the report’s metrics of comparing demographically similar schools, as he stated, “As much as they try to be value-added and fair, the progress reports should not compare large schools [such as his] to small schools, especially ones that don’t have the

special ed and ELL populations,” as his school does (LSP3). A principal who did not participate in this study, Dominick Scarola of Grover Cleveland High School, said, “The DOE’s grading system is flawed. It does not measure many of the challenges that some schools face. . . . The DOE does not take into account schools with high populations of students with learning challenges” (as cited in Mosco, 2010, para. 4).

The lack of transparency in how the progress report scores are calculated by participants has not gone unnoticed in the literature. According to the UFT Representative for Queens, James Vasquez, the DOE is about a “lack of transparency.” In 2009, 97% of schools received progress report scores of A or B across the city (Medina, 2009j). One large school principal agreed with the “idea of progress reports,” but not with changing the “cut scores” each year; “This year we got a B, but it would have been a different score last year” under those cut scores (LSP3). One magnet school principal said that he does not support the progress report calculations because “one size doesn’t fit all” in calculating progress report grades for all high schools (MSP2). This issue was raised again recently as 7 of the latest 33 schools in jeopardy of closing for poor performance received scores of A or B on their latest progress report, showing that they are improving—yet apparently not enough for them to remain open (Gonen, 2012). It is important to note that when the 2010-2011 progress reports were released in fall 2011, the DOE had designed a new presentation format, with each area on a separate page with an explanation of how to read the statistics, which was intended to make the progress report more understandable, as well as easier to read.

The timeliness of the data, such as the progress reports, was also a concern of teachers and principals. One principal cited the timeline as a problem: “They’ve spent

hundreds of millions of dollars on data and data systems and yet principals don't get their Progress Reports until November 15th," even though the data are available in July (SSP1). For the number of technological improvements that have arrived under Bloomberg, the timeliness of progress reports and therefore principals' annual reviews still lags:

If you're a bad principal, [that] is really, really scary. . . . If you're a bad principal, you're not even getting rated badly until December, until half of the next year is over. You're not getting reviewed in the middle of the year, so basically you've ruined kids for another year. (SSP1)

Whereas prior to Mayor Bloomberg, your annual review used to be done in July so that you could prepare for the next school year with the feedback, but now it isn't done until January of the following year, so the data is too far behind to be useful. (MSP2)

The Mayor and Chancellor have made collecting and using data a major component of their reform efforts, but data are useful only if they are reviewed in a timely manner. Principals recommended that the progress report be released prior to the start of the next school year so the data can be used effectively in planning for the new school year.

The third measure of school quality is the school survey, initiated in spring 2007, allowing teachers, parents, and secondary school students to provide feedback regarding four areas of the school. In an email to teachers, Chancellor Klein and UFT President Randi Weingarten said,

The DOE and UFT have jointly designed the survey process to provide teaching professionals with a genuine opportunity to share our knowledge about your schools—and to do so anonymously. Teacher survey results are an important part of the School Environment category on the Progress Report, with a direct impact on the grades schools receive. Reports on overall survey results are also made directly to the public. This assures that teachers' voices count. (not available online at the time of this writing, treated as personal communication)

The survey is mailed directly to parents and made available online for both parents and teachers to complete. The participation rate for schools is extremely important as it is

noted in the beginning of the report and compared to the previous year’s participation rate and to the citywide average participation rate. The DOE displays advertisements throughout the city to encourage participation in the survey, as shown in the subway advertisement in Figure 13.



Figure 13. The subway poster “Your school, your child, your voice” encourages parents to complete Parent Surveys. The DOE also released a radio advertisement campaign that encouraged parents to complete the school survey. Source: “Elvis Duran and the Morning Show,” by Elvis Duran, March 23, 2010 [radio broadcast, Z100), New York City.

At participating schools, participation rates for teachers on the learning environment survey for 2009-2010 were higher overall than the percentage of teachers participating in the survey citywide. Seven of nine participating schools had a lower parent participation rate on the survey than the citywide average, with all three of the participating small schools having a lower parent participation rate. One principal of a small school noted that the surveys were valuable because they are an “important to gauge other people’s perceptions of what you’re doing . . . an important informational

tool for principals” (SSP1). However, the use of the survey can be debated. The results of the survey are factored into the Principal’s Performance Review. One magnet school principal said that too much weight is assigned to parent surveys. Another principal agreed, “I’m not the hugest believer in—and the Chancellor and I can agree to disagree on this, I’m not a huge believer in survey data as the end-all-be-all for making decisions” because “surveys can be the most misleading things on earth” (SSP1).

The fact that they use surveys to rate the schools, and part of those surveys going to parents, with no guarantee that the parents can understand it. . . . How in the world can we use this data to rate a school? . . . It can be informational in some ways and it can be revealing, but it can’t be the end-all-be-all when it comes to making these kinds of major decisions. (SSP1)

While researchers see the benefits and advantages of school evaluation tools, such as the three tools initiated by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, participating teachers and principals had a few suggestions from the educator perspective to improve their usefulness. Most participants recognized some value in the Quality Review process, but noted that the process was stressful and subjective. In general, the process in which the progress reports were determined was confusing and lacked transparency, which made the report a difficult piece of data to consider. Most participants saw value in the learning environment surveys but cautioned that the data were used in overall principal evaluations. Overall, accountability of principals and schools in general has increased as a result of these school evaluation tools; thus, data should be more timely and the process of calculating the data should be made more transparent and understandable to all stakeholders. Unfortunately, most participants did not view the quality review, progress report, and learning environment survey as valuable learning tools for their organization. Instead, they reports were seen as high-stakes accountability measurement with consequences for not meeting outsiders’ expectations.

Decentralized Reforms

After centralizing the NYC public school system under mayoral control in 2002 and creating consistent curriculum, systems of accountability, and coherency across the city, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein looked to reorganize the school system so that individual schools could make even more progress by increasing their level of decision making and authority in their individual school buildings. In the largest public school system in the nation, each NYC public school serves a different type of population in their community; thus, the same curriculum, assessments, and processes may not serve all schools in the same way. Therefore, new programs were created to train school leaders in NYC public schools and offer well-performing schools the opportunity to pilot a program to provide principals with increased autonomy: the empowerment zone initiative and the NYC Leadership Academy's Aspiring Principals Program (APP). The Mayor and Chancellor contended that, with strong competent leaders running the schools, principals should have the authority and power to control their teachers' professional development to improve teaching and learning in their buildings. Therefore, professional development became decentralized to the individual school level during this phase of organizational change. Networks were organized to provide schools support, presented on a list of potential providers from which principals could chose. Table 7 summarizes how teachers and principals perceived reforms during the period of decentralization across types of schools, and the next section discusses each aspect in greater detail.

Table 7

Comparison of Teachers' and Principals' Perceptions of Reforms During the Period of Decentralization

Aspect of mayoral control	Small school teachers	Large school teachers	Magnet school teachers	Principals
Principal autonomy/changes in school leadership	Teachers believed principals have more autonomy			Saw no change in their level of autonomy; large and small school had more contact with district level
Professional development (PD)	Became more school-based; PD overall had either slightly improved or not changed at all during mayoral control; generally had not changed			PD Providers, improved from under regional structure

Changes in School Leadership Happened, But Principal Autonomy

Did Not Increase With New Leadership Responsibilities

Under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein there were two major school leadership initiatives: (a) one to provide principals with more autonomy and empowerment over their individual schools with regard to increased decision-making authority, and (b) the NYC Leadership Academy, an initially privately funded program to train principals to serve in NYC public schools. Through these two initiatives, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein sought to reorganize, retrain, and redefine the leadership role of the principal in the NYC public school system in order to meet their new standards for improving education in NYC.

NYC Leadership Academy

To fill multiple vacancies in principal positions created by reorganizing the high school system in NYC and creating many new small schools, there was a need to hire principals with the data-driven, business-minded organizational knowledge needed to direct the new version of NYC public schools. This style of educational leadership was also required as a result of the increased authority, autonomy, and responsibility that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein sought to place on new principals. With that, the demographic characteristics also changed, (O'Day et al., 2010). The Leadership Academy was founded in January 2003 by Chancellor Klein as one way to recruit, develop, and support principals working for the NYC DOE. The Academy focuses on recruiting and training new principals through the APP, as well as supporting current principals by emphasizing the need for principals to become strong instructional and transformational leaders through the use of data analysis, theories of organizational change, and improving student and teacher learning (NYC Leadership Academy, 2010). One principal stated that the Leadership Academy program and the New Leaders for New Schools program were basically the “unwritten rule” of how principals would be hired by the NYC DOE (SSP2). Figure 14 provides a snapshot of how the principal position has grown and changed demographically since 2002.

All but one principal interviewed in this study had become principal through a traditional pathway to educational leadership. The one principal who was not traditionally certified had completed an alternative certification route, not through the Leadership Academy. Principals who were certified through alternate means were not initially respected and supported by most teachers in the school system because their knowledge

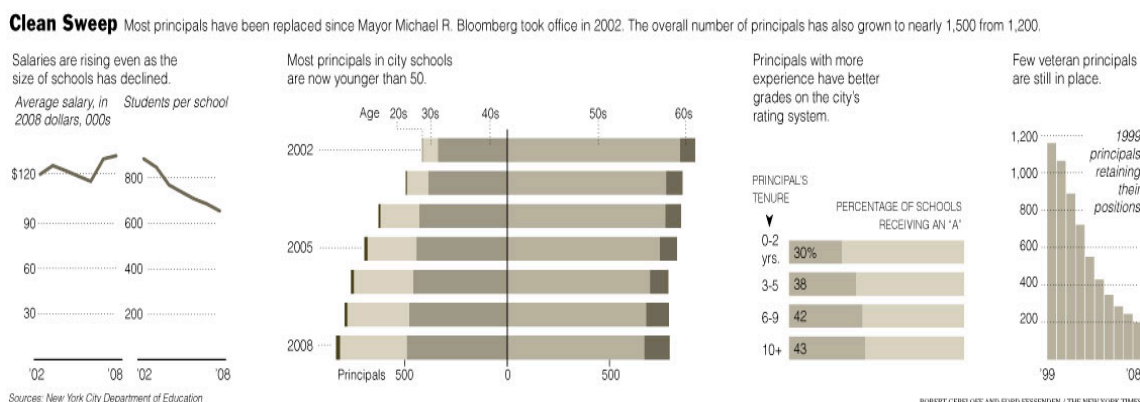


Figure 14. How principal demographics have changed under mayoral control. Source: “Principals Younger and Freer, But Raise Doubts in the Schools,” by E. Gootman & R. Gebeloff, 2009b, May 25, *New York Times*, retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/26/nyregion/26principals.html?pagewanted=all>

and pathway to school leadership positions went against the traditional “move through the ranks” philosophy and they generally lacked experience in education. These principals were referred to as “Tweeds,” were “dumped into these failing schools,” and “didn’t realize that they still had to face the issue of class size . . . [and] budgetary constraints,” making their jobs even more challenging (LST24). Teachers saw this new method of hiring new principals from programs such as the Leadership Academy as a way to train administrators to “break up the union” (LST24). Leadership Academy graduates were “favored” within the system, but not necessarily by teachers. In one instance, a teacher who worked for a Leadership Academy graduate described her principal as “crazy” and related that, despite poor support from her school community, the principal was removed and given a “higher” position within the DOE. This principal “was a friend of Mr. Bloomberg and she could do everything she wanted,” even though the “whole school went on strike, the teachers, the students, and the parents . . . [to] get rid of her.” The actions were published in the newspapers. Never the less, she gained a

“higher position . . . now she’s the one who teaches the principal, she is involved in the Board of Education” (LST8). In general, participating teachers believed the published news about this new type of principal and thus disliked the idea of these newly trained school leaders.

Principal Autonomy

While high schools are standardized to a certain extent according to local, state, and national policy,

[They] differ in their strength and character in significant part through the different ways in which principals construct their roles. For better or worse, principals set conditions for teacher community by the ways in which they manage school resources, relate to teachers and students, support or inhibit social interaction and leadership in the faculty, respond to the broader policy context, and bring resources into the school. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 98)

Therefore, it is important to understand and include teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of the level of principal autonomy in the reform process because their role greatly influences how teachers experience the reform efforts. In other words,

Principal leadership also spans school boundaries to mediate teachers’ experience of broader system, community, and institutional contexts of teaching. Among the critical roles that public school principals play is managing the school’s relations with the district, for better or worse. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 100)

School districts typically “manage resources and set expectations that can support or frustrate teachers’ school-level learning community” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 106). In NYC there has been an effort to make individual schools responsible for this management by increasing the level of principal leadership and autonomy, making the school leaders responsible for managing resources, establishing expectations, and providing professional learning opportunities. In a previous study, teachers identified ways that “downtown” has “disregarded and excluded them from fundamental district-level discussions” and commented that, once decisions were made, the “consequences

were dumped on us” (as cited in McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 108). Providing principals with more power to make decisions for their schools is one way to avoid having “downtown” decisions imposed upon local schools.

Researchers such as Ouchi (2003) have supported this vision, positing that, to change how school districts operate to improve student achievement, leaders must “uproot the existing top-down way of doing things,” which means that decision-making authority must be decentralized from the district level to the school level, allowing every principal to be an “entrepreneur” (Ouchi, 2003, p. 51). A principal’s decisions and behaviors influence a school’s structures and organizational features, such as the school’s instructional program, resources, staff, mission, and culture, all of which in turn impact teacher behavior and ultimately student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004). For this reason, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein experimented with giving principal’s more “autonomy,” essentially making them “CEOs” of their schools, in exchange for meeting increased accountability measures in 2004-2005, with approximately 29 well-performing schools under the direction of senior DOE official Eric Nadelstern. With more autonomy also came the possibility to earn financial incentives. Principals who managed top schools in the city received \$5.8 million in bonuses following the 2008-2009 school year, ranging from \$25,000 to \$12,000 (Medina, 2009j).

In 2004 the Mayor and Chancellor initiated the Autonomy Zone, in which 24 pilot school principals were given more control over staffing, curriculum, and budgetary decisions under the agreement that they would meet higher achievement levels. This pilot program was transformed into the Empowerment Schools program in 2005, growing to

include almost one third of all city schools. Since 2007-2008, all principals have been given greater “autonomy” over their schools, according to Chancellor Klein, who in an email to all DOE Employees on November 4, 2009, stated, “Principals have more authority than ever to make decisions that best meet the needs of their schools” (not available online at the time of this writing, treated as personal communication).

Overall, participating principals in all three types of schools in this study did not recognize that they had more autonomy under Mayor Bloomberg than they may have had under previous administrations. They commented that, if they were given more autonomy in one area, they were more constricted in another area, even though a strength of the mayoral control system has been that “at least on paper the principal is in charge of the school and runs the building” (MSP1). Literature has stated that, since 2007, principals have been given greater financial control of their operating budgets, according to the DOE (Otterman, 2009). Yet, from the principals’ perspective, the level of freedom in budget and personnel decisions has changed over the years due to the change in funding formula; the funds that they received are determined by the number of children and the “fudge factor” classes that each child takes and the DOE tells principals what those two numbers are (MSP1). Another principal stated that he had not noticed an increase in autonomy and power over his school building; rather, he reported that he has less power over personnel and budget decisions than he used to have (MSP2). For example, he wanted to hire a new science teacher, a “good teacher,” but was told that there was a hiring freeze. Apparently, that teacher was “able to get hired in a school in Queens,” and so the principal “complained to everyone in his network about why he wasn’t able to get that teacher” (MSP2). He noted that the DOE has “total control of my budget. . . . I can

come in and 32% of my money will be missing tomorrow morning,” whereas the BOE could not do something like that as quickly before mayoral control (MSP2).

The only difference between principals was that principals at magnet schools stated that they did not see any change in their level of autonomy or authority during these organizational changes. One principal with 11 years at a magnet school explained the difference between him as a principal and other types of principals in the city, as he commented that he “really hasn’t seen anything new, they leave me alone. . . . The only time they call me is if I didn’t have enough candidates in some large math or science competition” (MSP1). Principals of large and small high schools had more contact with DOE officials during the reorganizations. It was difficult for them to evaluate their level of authority; one principal said that he “doesn’t want people coming in telling me what to do, but at the same time, they want to tell me when I missed something. . . . They won’t let you struggle, they will shut down the school” (LSP3).

While the DOE has attempted to improve the level of decision making and authority assigned to principals, greater freedom means more accountability. One principal described it:

They’ve made some attempts, I think, to try and streamline a principal’s day [but] there are more surveys, there are more compliance issues, everything becomes a compliance issue now . . . everything is a survey. It’s a constant stream. In the end it may end up being more than it was before—good intention going bad? (SSP1)

There is also the feeling that principals are “CEOs of their schools and their support for everything is gone,” so while they are expected to do more, there is less assistance and there are more rules on how to do it (SSP2). According to one principal, “When principals want to hire positions,” they are restricted by the DOE. Despite the “autonomy,” they still have to go through all the vendors listed in the DOE system. The

principal commented that he “had more power to make decisions earlier in my career than I do now” (SSP2).

Whereas principals may not have experienced more autonomy, the majority of teachers in all three types of schools in this study agreed with the media position that principals have more control and autonomy over their schools under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein.

Despite principals’ perceptions that their level of autonomy was largely unchanged under mayoral control, the following teachers’ statements confirmed their belief in increased principal autonomy from their experience in large NYC high schools: “Principals used to be badly micromanaged, but that doesn’t happen here anymore” (MST26); the “central office gives more authority to the principal” and the strength of mayoral control has been “more flexibility to the principal” because they “can address the needs of the school faster” (LST61); “Principals have now more power and more authority . . . Bloomberg’s and Klein’s idea to give them the opportunity to build the community the way they see it” (LST8); the “central office gives more authority to the principal” and the strength of mayoral control has been “more flexibility to the principal” because they “can address the needs of the school faster” (LST61); and “principals have more autonomy and power than they did under previous administrations” (LST14). Ironically, teachers viewed this policy initiative as a positive aspect of mayoral control. One rated it as “very successful . . . we’re actually getting what we want. . . . But in some other schools the principal is not experienced, or [has] crazy ideas so it’s going to affect the school and the kids” (LST8). Teachers who worked at all types of schools agreed that principals should be making the decisions that affect their school. “Principals should be

more and more responsible for their building than Tweed” (MST42) and “Principals have more autonomy and power now than they used to” (SST52, SST6); there is “more principal control” now, along with “a lot more principals” and “giving principals more control is a good thing if you are holding them more accountable” (SST53). One teacher described the change in the role of principal:

It’s not that there’s not administrative oversight. . . . I think they make the principals “hop” more now than they did then. . . . I think the principals, because of their change in their status (they gave up tenure a few contracts ago), they have a much more tenuous piece and . . . not so much saying here . . . but in general. They’re answerable now both to the needs of their school and the requests of whoever is above them. And while that was always the case, the type of requests that people make of them, I think, were a little less onerous than they are today. (SST5)

Principals were the only people who had contact with district or city-level personnel under mayoral control and thus were the messengers for reform efforts, which is why teachers might perceive their level of authority differently. In one case in this study, the principal “buffered” teachers from the district by providing an “island of professional satisfaction” within the school. In this case the principal had “manned the boundaries between the school and the district, mediating district toxicity as much as possible and securing additional resources” to the extent possible so that “the teachers feel sheltered in a professionally enriching and satisfying community” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 105). Findings from this study reinforce the importance of the role of the principal in exposing and educating teachers on reforms and policy efforts, locally, nationally, and globally.

More School-Based Professional Development, Little Variation Under Different Reorganizations/Mayoral Control

While it is important to understand how teachers perceive their individual schools and how that affects their perceptions of school reform and student achievement, it is also important to understand how they perceive their own professional learning and development across their districts, or in the case of this study, the larger structure of school organization in NYC under districts, regions, networks, and the entire citywide structure, since professional development is provided at every level. As “local educational authorities,” districts establish baseline conditions for teaching and teachers’ careers and are responsible for hiring, firing, evaluating teacher performance, determining teacher compensation, controlling school assignment/transfer procedures, and supporting teachers’ professional growth. School districts establish the professional contexts for teaching through the governance strategies that they define, the professional development opportunities that they provide, and the norms that they establish for practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). The local school district, such as NYC, rests between state and national education policies and the individual schools in determining teachers’ professional development. Thus, it is important to look at how teachers perceive the district level or the organization responsible for providing them with professional growth and how that in turn can influence student learning.

As the bureaucracy and achievement aims of the NYC DOE system changed, naturally the manner in which teachers and principals were supported to grow professionally changed. Teachers’ ability to advance their career or professional growth

depends largely on individual motivation or their principal's ability to provide such opportunities.

Teachers' opportunities for professional growth and sense of career progress are tied up with the ways in which their school or subject department construes and organizes students' learning opportunities . . . teachers and administrators believed that they were doing their best, yet how they organized their work differed in ways important for teachers' success and sense of professional accomplishment. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, pp. 90-91)

Therefore, it was important to ask principals and teachers in this study about the nature of professional development opportunities within their schools, networks, and the city during the various organizational changes under mayoral control. Teachers' experiences in various types of professional communities affect how they perceive or "make sense" of other reform changes.

In weak high school and department communities, particularly those in poor urban areas, teachers often feel that they are less successful in teaching than they used to be and attribute their career decline to changes in their students . . . many burn out trying on their own to succeed, or they disengage from the job and profession.

Whereas in strong or collaborative professional communities, teachers have more opportunities for professional rewards based upon the academic success of their students and their course schedule, allowing for more or collective professional rewards and potential career progress as compared to their declining colleagues. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 91)

Under the district and regional structure, professional development was mostly centralized outside individual schools and offered through district and regional offices to ensure that DOE mandates were presented and implemented consistently throughout the city. After 2007, professional development was decentralized to individual schools with the help of school support organizations. The difference between professional development prior to and during the Bloomberg/Klein administration is the level of

accountability expected from teachers and principals as a result of professional development, as stated by one principal:

Back in the older days, . . . with Superintendencies there was PD [professional development] and you had to get it because they were pushing initiatives forward in a much more focused way [compared to today, when there is a feeling that] we offered you PD . . . and . . . what happened? “You had a bad quality review and we offered you PD for teachers in such and such an area, and you were cited for that, why didn’t you take advantage?” (SSP1)

The DOE has been using professional development to push their instructional agenda, but the view from principals and teachers differed in their experiences with professional development. Overall, both teachers and principals recognized that professional development has become more “in house” under Mayor Bloomberg, with the principal being responsible for providing professional development for the teachers. With that in mind, teacher participants rated that professional development had either slightly improved or not changed at all during mayoral control. Principals reported that they had become professional development providers under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, with professional development moving to the school level. The responsibility of providing professional development to teachers belongs with the principal. One principal said, “They’re looking for principals to know your staff, to know what your staff needs, and then to tailor PD according to that. And every school is going to be different. Every school focus is different” (SSP1). Another comment, “During the time of community school boards, they used their own district people, who would turn-key professional development to their schools” and that “it was typically a one shot deal” and “useless” (SSP2). Under mayoral control, “It is done on certain days of the year and you have to ‘pay for it’ and get substitutes to cover your teachers if it is during another time when you send them out to get training It has been done this way for the last 6 to 8 years”

(SSP2). Professional development depends on what the teacher needs but has “no connection to the governance structure;” it is determined by school administration based on teacher need (MSP1). One principal reported that he does not provide a “one-shot” workshop but plans something over the course of at least three or four sessions and provides in-school support or follow-up (SSP2).

Teachers get “pride in their work and sense of professional value” from their district’s professional community (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 106). This community has essentially been eliminated with the elimination of community district and regional offices in NYC, as most professional development and teacher interaction occurs at the school level. Some teachers commented that the change that allows professional development to occur at the school level has been a successful reform effort and has “drastically” changed with “better training and PD” (LST60, LST68). Specifically, only a small percentage of participating teachers noted improvement in the quality of professional development under mayoral control. One teacher explained that “outside professional development is offered” and, over his time at this school, the administration had “arranged personal professional development opportunities to meet my needs” (MST31). Another stated, “The focus on one continuous professional development has been seen on a positive change because administration has been more accepting of it and teachers have raised their standards,” whereas prior to Bloomberg and Klein, “professional development was more peer-to-peer turn-keying type professional development” (MST27). While professional development used to involve going to “more museums, which was good, now unless your provider pays for it or provides it, you have to pay for it or provide it” through “professional learning communities,” as it now comes

out of individual school networks or is provided mostly through the school's network or school support organization (MST28, MST45, SST51, SST50). One teacher stated that professional development is

taken very seriously . . . they have extra funds . . . they focus on best practices in this school. . . . I don't think it's like that every[where], it's the principal's preference . . . not a systemwide commitment . . . massive failure of mayoral control . . . he missed the boat on that one! (MST46)

While Mayor Bloomberg posited that giving principals individual control over professional development in their buildings would lead to an increase in professional learning, from the participants' perspective it is possible that some principals do not prioritize professional development for their teachers and therefore it could actually be a less effective reform under mayoral control citywide. "Professional development has gone downhill . . . it is a joke . . . done as a filler to occupy time once it got shifted down to the principal structure" (LST59). "Professional development is in the building and is as good as the principal makes it; Bloomberg had dismantled whatever support system had existed for teachers" (LST64).

Most teachers in this study agreed with that viewpoint. The majority of teachers stated that they could not identify any positive change in professional development during their careers, stating that "professional development has not changed much" (MST25, SST6, SST52) and that "professional development has become pointless" (MST30) and the "same waste of time" it has always been (MST39). Some teachers reported a "decline in professional development, quantity and quality, because there is not enough money" and described as a "reiteration of the same thing" (SST49). There was the general sense that professional development at the high school level has been "departmental for the most part" and "hasn't changed a whole lot" during the

reorganizations or that the school “has been isolated from most of the changes” (MST42, MST40). Professional development has been done “mostly in house” with a “sense of intellectual missing” (MST43). “People lecture at us” (LST66) or they “focus on the new hot thing, a lot of redundancy” (MST44). Another way to look at it is that “professional development is like getting poked in the eye with a sharp stick,” it is “boring, a waste of time. . . . they teach the same concepts with new names,” “what goes around comes around,” there is “no stability . . . everyone thinks they know something more . . . it’s basically the same, you have to know your kids and go from that,” professional development is “not doing much . . . had meetings . . . we listened,” professional development has not changed, the “jargon changes, the general approach stays the same,” but there is “more openness for teacher-requested professional development” (LST56, LST57, LST67, LST63, LST66). Another teacher agreed, saying that it has “always been terrible . . . they are all idiots. . . . It’s not relevant to us; they should go to teachers and ask what they need and then move forward” (MST41). On the other hand, some teachers saw professional development as something that they are “just concerned we make the hours and meetings . . . don’t go out and get people” (MST44). “PD is union-mandated . . . the contract dictates it” (SST53). Professional development is “more required . . . we get some useful ideas, programs, but some are bad” (SST54).

While teachers reported that professional development had not changed at all despite the various reforms and reorganizations, half of the participating principals stated that professional development was “better under the old system because you had long relationships” and the superintendent “provided real good professional development for us,” such as the proper techniques to use to complete teacher observations (MSP2). Half

of the participating principals in this study did not support professional development under mayoral control. They “didn’t like going to the required regional meetings once a month with elementary and middle school principals because they didn’t understand how high schools worked” (LSP3). Apparently, when school support organization meetings became optional, professional development was placed “in house” and the SSO meetings diminished because not many people attended (MSP2). The principal noted that there used to be the opportunity to call someone and ask them questions, but now “there are no relationships outside of the building” (MSP2). As a result, he has developed relationships with other principals though and “they will partner up to provide professional development for their teachers” (MSP2). From the principal’s perspective at this large school, the “previous principal bombarded professional development onto the staff,” but “didn’t follow through on any initiatives or training” so he has “tried to keep PD at a minimum this year . . . look at the data . . . make it more targeted” (LSP1). Professional development has not changed as the system has been reorganized; “today professional development is tailored to our needs” (LSP3). Similar to other principals, one principal “sends some people out or doesn’t send them out, but keeps them in house” and has them “turnkey” it to hold more people accountable for learning (LSP3).

Teachers’ ability to advance their career or professional growth depends largely on individual motivation or the principal’s ability to provide such opportunities.

Teachers’ opportunities for professional growth and sense of career progress are tied up with the ways in which their school or subject department construes and organizes students’ learning opportunities . . . Teachers and administrators believed that they were doing their best, yet how they organized their work differed in ways important for teachers’ success and sense of professional accomplishment. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, pp. 90-91)

Therefore, teachers' experiences in various types of professional communities affect how they perceive other reform changes, which under mayoral control is mostly affected by how a principal chooses to support or not support teaching learning. According to participating teachers and principals in this study, professional development was not making an effective impact on improving pedagogy and ultimately student achievement at all types of schools.

Decentralized Centralization

In theory, decentralization is designed to allow schools to have more “relevant programming and accountability, more flexibility, innovation, and efficiency, [and] more legitimacy for the agency” (Rogers & Hawley, 1974, p. 351). Following the period of decentralization in NYC DOE reorganization, the next phase of reorganization can be referred to as “decentralized centralization” because the DOE managed four school support organizations and vetted the other organizations prior to offering them as an option to schools, and funneled their policy initiatives to network teams who in turn shared them with school principals. These organizations replaced the middle-level layer of bureaucracy within the DOE and provided support to schools in many areas, including academics, operations, accountability, and professional development. As accountability increased for teachers and principals, school support organizations were also held accountable to their schools through online surveys that principals completed twice a year. While supposedly anonymous, the surveys were sent only to the schools in the network from the principal's email addresses, so the level of anonymity is questionable. Schools also have the option once a year to change SSOs if they feel that their needs are not being met. SSOs also serve as a mechanism for relaying and clarifying DOE policy

and direction to schools, thus serving as the “centralized” part of this decentralized structure. Table 8 compares teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of reforms during the period of decentralized centralization.

Table 8

Comparison of Teachers’ and Principals’ Perceptions of Reforms During the Period of Decentralized Centralization

Aspect of mayoral control	Small school teachers	Large school teachers	Magnet school teachers	Principals
School support organizations/ Children First networks	Lacked knowledge, relationship, understanding of this organizational structure and their role			Favored this structure over regions; unclear about chain of command
Closing and reopening “failing schools”	Affected by this more; negatively for large school; opposed the idea of closing and reopening schools; process lacks transparency		Not affected by this	Principals favored their type of school
Increase in charter schools	Perceived as a way to break up unions			
Parent involvement	No change in the level of parent involvement			

Contracting With School Support Organizations/Networks—

Mixed Reviews by Principals and Unknown to Teachers

Following dissolution of regional offices in 2008, schools had the opportunity to hire one of 11 (later 12) SSOs. Principals chose their school support organization based

on a variety of reasons. The purpose of the SSO was to provide individualized choice and support to all schools. In all cases in this study, the principals did not share the decision-making process with their teaching staff regarding the choice of the SSO. In this era of the Bloomberg/Klein reorganization efforts, it was more of a “decentralized” or bottom-up style of changing management, as individual school building leaders had the opportunity to identify their system of support at the level above them. This method sought to put administrative workers in closer contact with schools and thus more connected to their needs.

Teachers’ Perspectives

Various levels and types of support often accompany large scale reforms or standardization of the system and the level of teacher involvement in such support structures differs within and between schools. According to Seashore Louis in McLaughlin et al. (1990), the major source of support is the district office. Research suggests that district offices “rarely communicate with teachers at all, even when they have information relevant to the improvement of classroom practice (Louis, Dentler, & Kell, 1984, as cited in Louis, as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1990, p. 26). According to the teachers who participated in this study, almost all had no contact or communication with their SSO, yet that is the district level of support that has the ability to assist teachers in improving the educational process.

Teachers’ decision making is determined by their level of involvement and influence in the environment (Imber & Duke, 1984). There are three modes of participation in the decision-making process: (a) informal, (b) formal, and (c) ad hoc. Organizational factors affect a teachers’ decision-making role. In all of the sample

schools, the teacher's role in the decision-making process was ad hoc, if considered at all. No teachers who participated in this study had knowledge or connection to their SSO, which created conflict within the organization in terms of implementation of and compliance with the various levels of reform, professional learning, and support that they may have received.

The majority of the participant teachers expressed no knowledge of or contact with their SSO (MST29, MST25). At one small school, none of the six teachers could name their SSO nor could they identify how the SSO assisted them or the school (SS2). At one large school, two of seven teachers knew that they were "part of a network" and said that their SSO played a "very little" role in their building (LST58, LST60). Both of these teachers happened to be the two least experienced teachers interviewed in the building, with 7 and 8 years experience and both alternatively certified. At a large school, only one of eight teachers had knowledge of their SSO but knew that the principal chose the SSO, who worked solely with the principal (LST65). For most teachers, the transition from district and regional offices had gone unnoticed (LST12). Teachers had a "very weak" or nonexistent relationship with SSOs; they "deal directly with his Principal and Assistant Principal" (MST31). Only one teacher identified the school's network leader by name (MST30); this teacher was part of the only school in which the principal had "asked for the staff's input on the selection of an SSO, but she still made her own decision"; the teacher commented that the chosen network package was all for "administrative support, not teacher support" (MST30).

Principals' Perspectives

Principals' perceptions of SSOs were mixed, despite having the authority to choose the organization and switch at limited times if they were unhappy with their level of support and service. Their decision-making process was completely informal in choosing their SSO. According to one large school principal, support used to be “borough-based,” with no choice in the selection of an SSO because it had been chosen before he had been hired as principal and he “didn’t have the option to change” (LSP1). Principals also chose their networks for purely social reasons, not “scientific” reasons, because they may have “liked some of the other principals who were joining that network” (LSP3). In only one case did the principal make an attempt to include teachers in the decision-making process through informal conversations about it with staff members, including the UFT chapter chair and cabinet; “otherwise, the staff had nothing official to do with the selection” (LSP3).

Principals discussed the “business” side of choosing an SSO as “everybody was trying to get your business” and money and social networks were important factors in most principals’ decisions (MSP2). According to one small school principal, there was a difference in types of SSOs, as “the PSOs [professional service organizations] and college networks wanted to learn from you and didn’t demand” attendance at meetings (SSP2). One small school principal knew that he did not want to join any of the PSOs or university groups, so he joined the network that had someone who “had been an instructional leader” (SSP2).

The network structure was designed to give principals more autonomy and empowerment in their ability to manage their schools, while offering people who could

support them on a consulting basis if needed. Principals gave both positive and negative responses regarding this type of decentralized-centralized organization of the school system. On the positive side, one small school principal said, “they [SSOs] are very supportive and reactive when we need things, in terms of PD and things like that . . . and that’s the role that they’re supposed to play” (SSP1). The networks had meetings for principals “to keep [them] abreast of what’s going on with the quality review process” (SSP1).

The main difference between the “old structure” and the “network structure” was that “the networks are not our boss; they are in a supportive role” (LSP3). Under the network structure, principals are no longer required to attend meetings. “You can look at the agenda and determine whether or not you want to go,” which was viewed as both positive and negative by principals. One principal “missed seeing colleagues and I don’t like that the meetings are not regularly and consistently scheduled and coordinated around other meetings that I am required to attend” (LSP3). One principal actually compared it to how high school students feel: “Why do kids want to come to school, not to learn, but to see their friends? It is the same thing with adults; we want to go to meetings to see colleagues; with network meetings, you never know if they will be there” (LSP3).

A few principals said that the change to support organizations from district offices was seen as a weakness of the Bloomberg/Klein reforms because authority and the chain of command were not clearly delineated between the network and superintendent structure. Specifically, “even though they have set up these support organizations, you have the Superintendent separate from that . . . I think it’s not clear really how schools

generate support or get support” (SSP1). This principal explained that “they were supposed to provide professional development support . . . the superintendent, I don’t know what they’re supposed to do . . . but it seems that they need to merge the two” (SSP1). In his opinion, “There needs to be some merging . . . Maybe we need to go back to the old Superintendency model. . . . I just think that the organization chart of how schools are supported is not clear” (SSP1). Under the old system, a new principal would meet with the superintendent, but now new principals “don’t really have anyone to go to for help” (MSP1). The principal commented that the new principal has to “invite the boss [the superintendent] to visit you now, versus he or she visiting whenever they want to” (MSP1). In some cases they viewed the “school support organizations” as “useless” because they “provide what principals request, but don’t change the structure and culture within your school You have to work with your staff, not people outside of the building. . . . We pay their [SSO] salaries” (SSP2). This principal’s perceptions of this bureaucratic layer were mixed, as they felt that the structure and responsibilities were not clearly delineated.

More principals found the network system to be “very useful” because it allows the principal to “build up some very good connections with the other principals, and our network leaders are good” (SSP1). The principals also liked the “advantage of having a choice” in networks and commented that the network “always respond within a few hours,” providing professional development and legal advice (LSP3, MSP1). As the evidence demonstrates, some principals preferred this reform structure in which they were in charge of making decisions about their level of participation, while other

principals were not in favor of this organizational structure because they were not sure who and how they supported them.

**Providing School Choice: Revamping High School Admissions,
Charter Schools, and Small Schools or Small Learning Communities**

According to critics of traditional public schools systems, the systems have traditionally operated as monopolies and thus have not had much incentive to improve. Chubb and Moe (1990) argued that the solution to improving poor urban schools is to eliminate the monopoly in public education by creating a market system of schools, allowing parents to choose the school for their child. Some teachers and one principal of a large high school understood this reform in that a portfolio of school types was necessary to “mix it up” because “Mayor Bloomberg wants a competitive system of schools” (LSP1). To create a monopoly in the NYC public school system, there had to be a portfolio of schools from which parents and students could choose. Thus, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein sought to provide equity and access to all students in NYC by providing more school choice options to students and parents from Pre-K through grade 12 by redesigning the preschool and high school admission process, closing large ineffective high schools and replacing them with diverse, smaller, themed high schools and increasing the number of charter schools in the system. This method of reorganization was not the most favorable reform that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein had initiated, as perceived by teachers and principals

Specifically, the high school admissions process was redesigned after the medical school “matching” process in which students rank their top 10 school choices, and the prekindergarten registration was centralized away from individual schools. To enter high

school, every student in the city is required to complete an application in eighth grade, naming their top 10 choices of the city's high schools. Parents and students can attend open houses and fairs to gather information about more than 300 high schools across the city. The DOE claims that the majority of high school students are matched with one of their top five choices, but there have been instances in which students had to go through a second placement round (Hottman, 2009). In April 2009, 7,500 students were forced to look for alternate schools after not receiving one of their top five choices, which naturally angered parents (Hottman, 2009). Participating teachers commented that the admissions process should be revised to revisit the idea of neighborhood schools. One teacher stated that she "is against the idea of public education if this is it . . . the fact that you can live somewhere and not have a good school with families and friends who didn't get in anywhere and are going to a Catholic school" (MST43). Another teacher agreed that it is "ridiculous not to have neighborhood high schools . . . there are no anchors to the community Mayoral control has destroyed the middle-class piece of the city . . . parental input is gone" (LST66). With the elimination of the neighborhood school concept, students are traveling even greater distances to attend schools under the new admissions procedures (Security Guard at Springfield Gardens High School, personal communication, 2009). Teachers were frustrated that some of their students traveled more than an hour to and from school each day as a result of this new high school admission process. Prior to implementation of the new high school admission process, neighborhood students were "guaranteed" a seat; under the current system, they are only given "priority." Therefore, the new high school admissions system requires every high

school student to apply to schools, which in turn requires students, their families, and their guidance counselors to be knowledgeable and proactive in the application process.

While seeking to providing students with greater choice and access to high schools in NYC by revising the admissions process, Bloomberg and Klein began an initiative to offer more “choice” by dismantling large failing comprehensive high schools, otherwise known as “dropout factories,” and creating small high schools and small learning communities throughout the city based on research that small high schools provide a more intimate and nurturing environment and are more successful in graduating students. With \$51.2 million in support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 67 small high schools were created and more are opening in 2012-2013. According to Gates, NYC’s high school model was “outdated” and the initiative demonstrated “how we can bring our schools into the 21st century to make sure that all students, not just a select few, are prepared for college and the working world . . . our country’s civic, social and economic future depends on our ability to do this on a national scale” (Bótas, 2003, para. 3). Large donations, grants, and partnerships have funded opening of multiple small schools throughout the city. For example, following a previous \$31 million partnership of the Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Open Society Institute, New Visions for Public Schools, a nonprofit organization, had helped to create 40 new high schools in NYC and has continued to receive the largest portion of the money (\$29.2 million), to create and support 30 schools. Replications, Inc. received \$4.8 million to create eight new high schools, the Institute for Student Achievement received \$6 million to create six college-preparatory high schools, the College Board received \$4.4 million to create four high schools with an Advanced Placement curriculum, the Asia Society

received \$1.6 million to create a network of internationally themed high schools (three in NYC), Outward Bound received \$3.2 million to start eight expeditionary learning high schools, and LaGuardia Education Fund received \$2 million to create two international high schools to serve recent immigrants (Bótas, 2003). This external funding has allowed for restructuring and opening many small schools to replace the large comprehensive high schools that were closed.

While the claim that this reform strategy has been positive, it has become a source of conflict and controversial in NYC due to the manner in which school closings occurred. Participating teachers at large schools agreed with the literature and other stakeholders regarding this issue. During Mayor Bloomberg's tenure as leader of the NYC DOE, 91 schools have been closed. In January 2010, the DOE attempted to close another 19 schools, despite outcry from more than 2,000 parents and community members who attended a PEP vote at Brooklyn Technical High School. Despite testimony until almost 3:00 a.m. and Chancellor Klein being "booed so loudly by the audience that [he] couldn't be heard," the PEP voted to close the schools, citing low graduation and attendance rates (Salazar, Bain, & Gonen, 2010). According to Mayor Bloomberg, "Nostalgia is very nice, but nostalgia is not a reason to let a bunch of kids who we know are not getting a good education continue" (Shiller, 2010, p. 4).

Not everyone agreed with Mayor Bloomberg. The UFT, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and other advocacy groups disagreed with this reform strategy to the extent that they filed a lawsuit against the DOE claiming that the DOE had failed to follow three significant Education Law requirements in attempting to close the 19 schools. Justice Jan Lobis ruled in favor of the UFT, rendering

the DOE's decision to close the failing schools "null and void" due to the absence of educational impact statements for each school to describe the cost-benefit analysis of closing the school or statistics related to the school's academic performance (Fogarty, 2010a; Rosenberg, 2010). According to the ruling, the DOE was ordered to take "meaningful community input" into consideration and to hold another round of public hearings at each school before the PEP could revisit the issue (Fogarty, 2010a). In the long run, the suit was unsuccessful in preventing the schools from being closed but it required the DOE to improve procedures for closing schools. The UFT argued in 2011 that those procedures had still not been changed when the DOE planned to close 22 more schools because of poor academic performance and to establish 15 charter schools in those school buildings. Justice Paul G. Feinman of the New York State Supreme Court ruled that plaintiffs had failed to show that the city had acted improperly (Otterman, 2011).

Other stakeholders also had issue with closing schools. CDEC 26 President Rob Caloras was critical of the new schools, saying, "They're doing our children a tremendous disservice. . . . None of these schools are capable of providing our students what they need in our economy and society" (as cited in Fogarty, 2010b, p. 7).

This reform initiative was a source of conflict for the majority of teachers who worked at large high schools: "The school was great . . . the kids loved it. . . . When they decided [to close the school], the kids walked outside, demonstrating, and protesting, but it didn't help" (LST8). In opening a school, not only was the physical school space reorganized; the student body and staff members were newly hired, and there was a distinct difference in professional knowledge and time between veteran and new teachers.

The new small school teachers came to phased-out “experienced” teachers to learn; however, by rule, the new small school could not retain more than 50% of the existing school’s teachers. One teacher stated, “They will dismiss 50% of the teaching staff from the large high school, get rid of all the administrators, and put our people in from the Leadership Academy” in the new school (LST24). At the time of interviews, Bloomberg was threatening to lay off 8,500 teachers, which current teachers perceived as being “half of the teaching faculty in the 20 schools that [were] slated to close” (LST24). A common educator perception was that, while there may be bad schools, “fix them, don’t blow them up” (MSP2). The organizational reform strategy tied to rebuilding failing schools under NCLB was not viewed as the best reform strategy because “breaking down is not always a solution. . . . You may need something else” (LST61). Regardless of the reform strategy, stakeholder buy-in is necessary to make implementation of reforms successful and to decrease the level of conflict between stakeholders. One teacher said that she liked “small schools, but some large schools work, too, so we need to find out why. . . . If you don’t have teacher buy-in, it doesn’t work” (LST56). This was a common theme that coincided with published literature that school districts should focus on improving existing schools, not closing and reopening them.

Although teachers disagreed with the solution to close large failing high schools and open small schools as a method of improving student achievement, research on these new small schools of choice conducted by MDRC in 2010 and 2012 found increased graduation rates for all students, including subgroups; increased scores on Regents’ exams, reflecting an increase in level of college readiness; and an increased percentage of students who would graduate within 5 years, compared to a group of control students

who were not accepted to small schools of choice (MDRC, 2012). Only a few participants agreed with the idea of “small schools” improving student achievement. Those who claimed that small schools had positive academic potential for students were chiefly teachers who were newer to the system and or who were employed in a small school (MST27). From a new teacher’s perspective, there is more support for the initiative to open more small schools because teachers “don’t have contact with teachers who teach the same students” in a larger school building and because “it gives greater attention to students” (SST50, MST29). The consensus from a small group of newer teachers was to support the small school movement because “being a small school helps” because the “staff works better together and focuses on the kids” (SST53).

While the result of the reorganization to small schools and/or small learning communities may be positive according to the published literature, the process to get there has negatively impacted large schools from the perspective of principals and teachers. Participating teachers from large high schools explained that it “definitely [felt] like the move away from the big high schools has negatively affected their school because a lot of the smaller schools that are opening up on these campuses don’t take the Special Education population” (LST12). One teacher from a large high school described it as “having maybe 12% or 15% special education to up over 20% special education now because there is no where else for these kids to go” (LST12). This has become a problem in all large high schools, especially when teachers are not trained to work with these populations. The school’s performance data worsen down as the population changes. As the teacher pointed out, “They want to judge us the same way they did before and then ask, “Why are your scores going down?” . . . which is frustrating” (LST12). In one case,

“They had to add an additional special education class since that many more kids chose our high school because so many small schools don’t have the capacity to educate them.” One teacher noted “fewer supports for at-risk kids now . . . and more supports who need it, less paras, and more inclusion” (LSP3, SST54). According to James Vasquez, a UFT spokesperson, this reform “sounds good on paper. . . . The question is: Is it going to be what they say it’s going to be?” and most teachers from large high schools said that it was not (as cited in Fogarty, 2010b, para. 8). Many teachers stated that the outcome of this reorganization had not been as successful for all students, especially students with special needs, as originally intended.

While viewed as a successful organizational strategy for improving academic achievement for high school students, small schools were not seen by participating teachers and principals as the most successful reform effort. The two most commonly cited issues were related to student demographics and student needs being provided in a small school, along with issues related to the physical space in small schools. There was “incentive” to break up small schools to “take away the commonality and values that are developed within a large school.” Participants contended that the “campus model,” in which multiple small schools are housed in one building, “is not working” (MST44, MST27). Participating teachers stated that small schools “need to have separate buildings” and they “need to work differently” (MST44). Overall, participating teachers and principals agreed that small schools have not been implemented in NYC in the way that research suggests. When multiple new small schools are opened on the same high school campus, “You have four principals with one assistant principal, instead of one principal with lots of assistant principals,” which requires more administrative positions

and offices in the city overall (SSP2). Under the current organizational model of small schools in NYC, “four small schools in one building versus one large school” is not cost effective (LSP3). Again, while some participants agreed with the idea of small schools, “What the DOE is doing is not small schools; they are just putting different schools in one building . . . so safety is not going down, it is just getting separated” (MSP2). The small schools on one participating campus were not successful because the “leadership in some of the other schools is not good. . . . It would be better if you had one [leader]. . . . It would save a lot of money” (SST52). While it seems more “costly to have so many principals and APs, it does provide a smaller community to help students” and “knowing everyone” in the school was productive, which ironically is one of the main reasons to promote the small school movement (SST54, MST44).

Another negative connotation associated with this reform strategy was that it was creating competition within and between schools, as most new schools are not opened in their own building; it was said to create “pressure to get rid of big schools . . . [which are] judged unfairly” and it was noted that “small schools are creating competition within buildings” (LST24, LST64). Many teachers disagreed with the mayor’s decision to put multiple schools in one building. “We would be very concerned if [our building] went to charter schools” (LST60). While teachers supported the idea of “everyone having ‘equal opportunity,’” many teachers did not agree with “breaking down schools” and opening new schools as an effective way to create equity in the system and to increase academic achievement (LST60).

One participating principal who had worked to start his own small school said, “Starting new schools is a good idea when they are failing” but he reported that he

received “no support and not sufficient funding at the beginning. . . . For the first 2 years, I wasn’t allowed to have an AP” (SSP2). He stated that it was a “great idea to break up schools and develop the socio-emotional and academic sides of students, but children need to be read for growth or college requirements.” He commented that small schools “take away the flexibility and programs that a large school offers” (SSP2).

Participating principals generally agreed that larger high schools were culturally more productive than small schools for all students. One principal at a large high school said that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have “blindness on when it comes to small schools” and noted that large high schools can support more diverse populations because more staff members are available. “No child is marginalized in this school” and “kids don’t feel isolated because a few belong to every group in a large school.” Because the staff can “provide more to kids in a large school,” “small schools because they can’t offer what large schools can” (LST57, LSP3).

Although the organizational strategy to increase the number of small schools in the city was debated by participants, they agreed to disagree with Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein regarding the manner in which the DOE opened small schools. Participants stated that there was a lack of transparency in the closing and reopening process, in ensuring an equitable education for all students especially students with special needs, in finding enough physical space to open new small schools in separate buildings, and in preventing issues of overcrowding in the remaining high schools.

Participants identified a lack of transparency and “criteria” from the DOE regarding closing and reopening schools; “There is no clear formula for closing and opening them” (LST56). According to one teacher, the school system “seemed to get

worse as new high schools opened and large schools closed. . . . Our children changed and we weren't prepared to change" (LST56). The teachers reported that the strategy to close and open schools often caused more problems for an extended period of time and had ripple effects, versus fixing the "broken" school from the beginning. "The goal of eliminating large high schools has been problematic . . . There has been a large number of displaced students, especially special ed and ELL students"; "Closing schools, getting rid of large schools, is the wrong way of going about changing schools" leading to a "large influx of students from schools that shut down and they have all been ELL and Special Education students. . . . We have had 41 kids in a class" participants complained (LST57, LST60). This process of creating new schools has increased the level of segregation between schools by discriminating against certain groups of students, such as ELL students and special education students (LST56). In one example of a school closing, it was intended to add a school for ELL students because newly created small schools and charter schools are typically not required to take ELL and special education students during the first 3 years of operation.

The closing of large schools and reorganization into multiple small schools has negatively impacted neighboring large high schools by increasing the size of their student enrollment; many neighboring schools are already overcrowded. This is an area where participants agreed with the published literature. For example, Principal Cohen of Midwood High School said that his enrollment "rose significantly," to approximately 160% of its capacity, when Erasmus and Tilden High Schools in Brooklyn were phased out (Pena, 2010). Francis Lewis High School in Queens, pictured in Figure 15, is at over 200% of its capacity and holds several school sessions each day to accommodate the

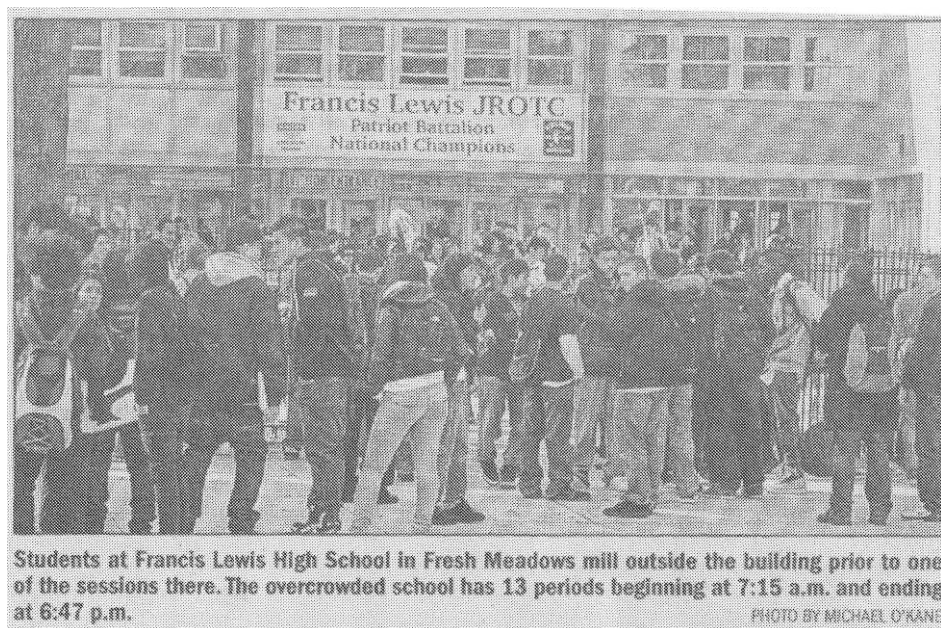


Figure 15. Students at Francis Lewis High School. Source: “No Quick Answers for Overcrowding: Northeast High Schools Need Remedy for High Enrollments,” by L. Rhoades, November 12, 2009, *Queens Chronicle*, pp. 5, 16.

increased student enrollment. When Flushing High School was next on the list to close, teachers at nearby Francis Lewis High School feared that closing Flushing High School would challenge their already overpopulated school.

Any large comprehensive high school in NYC that is still in operation is likely to have undergone a transformation by creating small learning communities or academies to develop the “small school” environment within a large school. Participating principals and teachers gave mixed responses regarding the small learning community initiative in general. Some teachers verified that this organizational change has made a difference for students; “Since we’ve gone to that . . . there’s so much more communication among teachers, so much more individual attention for students—I see a big difference” (LST12). Others stated that the communities are “run poorly . . . they are not successful at

all,” “get rid of them”; they commented that the plan had been “thrust on to teachers . . . the PD was rushed on them [with] no clear consistency” and the physical “structure of our building does not lend itself to SLCs [small learning communities” (LSP1). Teachers at large high schools still supported the idea of large comprehensive high schools as the best high school organizational model for students.

Charter Schools

Moves by the DOE to reorganize the high school system and create more “choice” involved more than opening small schools and closing large comprehensive high schools. Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein also sought to provide more school choice by increasing the number of charter schools in NYC. At the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the city’s first charter school, Mayor Bloomberg stated, “I strongly support charter schools for a very simple reason: they work. . . . Shame on us if we don’t take this to the next level” (Gonen, 2009a, para. 7). As of October 2009, there were 141 charter schools in NYC and Mayor Bloomberg announced that he would like to increase that number to 200, which is the current cap number established by the state Board of Regents (Gonen, 2009a; Gregor, 2009). In 2010, New York State raised the number of permissible charter schools to 460 in an effort to win federal Race to the Top funding (NYC Charter School Center, 2012). Most charter schools have been operating in space freed from schools in which the DOE closed the school due to poor performance. For example, 21 charter schools opened in fall 2009, but only two were in new buildings. The majority of charter schools have been built in the Bronx, central Brooklyn, and Harlem, which historically are neighborhoods with greater populations of lower socioeconomic status. While Mayor Bloomberg has supported the opening and operation

of many charter schools in NYC, participants saw the increase in charter schools as a method of dismantling the teachers union because (a) charter schools have displaced traditional public schools or have opened in existing school buildings, and (b) an increase in charter schools will almost certainly result in an increase in the number of nonunionized teachers who are willing to work outside the UFT contract.

Increasing the number of charter schools in the city also means an increase in the number of nonunionized teachers in the school system, creating growing tension with the UFT. Of 170 currently operating charter schools, only 18 are unionized, including two designed and opened by the UFT. Three other charter schools joined the union but have since dismissed their affiliation (Carroll, 2010). Most charter schools have a longer school day and/or school year and almost 60% of NYC charter schools have teachers some type of performance contract in which their pay scale is based on student performance and professional duties (Hoxby, Murarka, & Kang, 2009). Most participating teachers saw the increase in charter schools as an attack on the teachers union to decrease the power that teachers have as a union in labor negotiations or as a way to give middle- and upper-class parents more exclusive access to the system. One teacher explained this as the mayor's solution "to fix them [schools] is to shut them and open charter schools That's union busting and looking to lower costs. . . . In the new small schools, they ask teachers to do things that union teachers won't do" (LST57).

The majority of participating teachers in this study disagreed with the increase in charter schools in NYC, considering them to be "a way to dismantle unions, not to help kids Extra [work is] often done by younger teachers with no outside responsibilities" (MST40, MST38, MST43). In theory, the idea of charter schools sounds positive to many

participating teachers, but “in practice it seems like it is being done to break unions and add charters” (MST40). In other words, “Charter schools are effective from a parental point of view because they have an option, but they should really try to fix what’s broken” (LST56).

Teachers’ and Principals’ Perceptions of Parent and Community Involvement

One of the difficulties in understanding community and parents’ perceptions of educational reform is that “concerned parents do not automatically rally behind the reform principle that all children can and should have the opportunity to learn,” focusing instead on their own children, not the outcome of all children collectively (Stone, 1998, p. 7). Yet their children will be the unifying cause during a reform process and, for that reason alone, there are a variety of parental organizations that were formed both in support of and against the reauthorization of mayoral control in NYC. Increasing parent involvement and participation was a goal of the Bloomberg administration from the beginning with the implementation of the parent coordinator position in every school in the city and as another layer of accountability in improving student achievement. Mayor Bloomberg described it:

The entire school system, from principals up to the Chancellor, will be held accountable for effectiveness in engaging parents, and responding to their concerns. Every school will become parent-friendly. Administrators and teachers will be expected to exhaust every avenue in making parents part of the school environment. In each school there will be a ‘parent coordinator,’ whose sole job will be to engage parents in their children’s education and be the ombudsperson in the school. Parent engagement also will be a significant factor in principal performance reviews. (Bloomberg, 2003, para. 94)

Overall, participating principals and teachers in this study did not see the level of parent involvement increase during mayoral control. In general, they related that there

were fewer avenues for parent participation at the district or city level with the elimination of the community school districts and slightly more opportunities for individual parent participation at schools through increased use of technology, but that ultimately there was limited parent participation, especially at the high school level. The only exception to this was at this study's participating magnet schools, where parents seem to have a more vested interest in their child's academic performance as it relates to their postsecondary plans. If anything, parents are "too involved" at magnet schools, "mostly in trying to get grades changed" and therefore "so involved that it is difficult to meet their expectations" (MST41, MST48, MSP1).

Teachers saw no difference or "no major changes" in the level of parent involvement in relation to mayoral control, "only in the students you have from year to year and subsequently their unique parents or guardians, it's just who the parents are" each year (MST39, MST40, MST42, MST28). Some teachers saw parent involvement as "sadly lower" because prior to mayoral control, parents had some voice on the school boards, whereas now their voices on the SLT are "rubber stamps to the principal as the PEP is a rubber stamp to the mayor" (MST27, LST61). While the parent coordinator position was cited as a way to increase parent involvement, high schools were no longer required to maintain the position after the first few years and thus many high schools chose to use that money for other areas of their budget. Another possible reason for seeing no change in the level of parent involvement is that, as the high school admissions process was revised, many students chose to attend schools outside their residential neighborhoods and traveled more than 90 minutes to school every day, which would also be a greater distance for parents to travel to participate in school-based events. "You

don't see [parents] as much now as when the school system operated under local districts" (LST67, MST28). One principal stated that, under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, "parent voices have been totally eliminated." He reported that parents boycotted his survey the first year, which ultimately hurt his school on the progress report, since the survey counts for the school environment portion of the progress report score (MSP2).

While the level of parent involvement has not necessarily increased, teachers agreed that parents have more access to information about their school, teachers, and children under mayoral control, which teachers have identified as both positive and negative. The "biggest impact [parents] can have is to work with their child; the system has been working to bring people in and communicate with families" through making information more readily available on the Internet (MST25). With the increased availability of information, teachers also found parents' access to information to be "nitpicky" "get[ting] in the way of important things" (MST42). Technology has allowed parents with the access to technology to be "much more hands on now, very involved. . . . There is so much pressure, tests, applications . . . you have to learn, understand, and beat the system so much. . . . You can't take it for granted. . . . Here [a magnet school], parents try bribes" (MST43).

One principal summarized Klein's and Bloomberg's effort toward parent involvement:

I think Klein and Bloomberg have some very good ideas about things that can engage parents and things that can help teachers get more information about their kids. They've emphasized "knowing your kids." . . . I think the emphasis was right, not sure the vehicle worked out the way they intended. (SSP1)

This finding was supported by Rogers (2009) in that the vision was accurate but, unfortunately, the implementation was not accurate and/or still incomplete. As cited in the IELP (2010) mayoral control report, it is difficult to discern whether the views of public parent organizations that appeared during the reauthorization debate represent the views of the majority of parents citywide and therefore to conclude whether mayoral control has been effective in increasing the level of parent involvement. While we can continue to debate the effectiveness of parent vision from 2002 to 2009, Mayor Bloomberg and current Chancellor Walcott have continued to encourage parental engagement in the school system under several new pilot initiatives in the 2011-2012 school year, which could be a rich subject for future research investigations.

Chapter Summary

Under the period of centralization, the majority of teachers across all schools lacked knowledge of the organizational and curricular decisions made during this type as Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein attempted to standardize all aspects of the school system, thus removing some level of the principal's decision-making authority. Principals, being immediately affected by this change, had greater knowledge and understanding of reforms during this period. All participants saw an increase in technology during this period, along with an increase in the amount of information available to stakeholders, but did not view the technology or the information as the most reliable and useful information. The only aspect of reform during this period in which there were differences in perceptions across schools was related to participants' perceptions of school evaluation tools. Magnet school participants reported slightly less pressure from these tools because they were already "high-performing" schools in

comparison to large and small high schools. Just as teachers understood that these tools were “high stakes,” principals were more aware and concerned about their level of importance because the results of these school evaluation tools were directly tied to their performance evaluations.

During the period of decentralization, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein attempted to increase the level of principal decision-making authority and autonomy over individual school buildings. The majority of teachers, across all types of schools and demographic backgrounds, accepted the published literature about “increasing principal autonomy” and cited that their principals had more power and authority now than they did under previous administrations. In contrast, the majority of principals saw no change in their level of autonomy or authority over their school. However, principals of small and large high schools stated that they had more contact with their SSOs or networks than did principals of magnet high schools. As part of this change in school leadership style, professional development also became the responsibility of school building leaders during this period. Principals recognized that they had become professional development providers for their teachers and saw an improvement in the type and level of professional development that they received at this phase over that in the regional structure from 2002–2005. The majority of teachers across all types of schools stated that professional development had become more “in-house” during this period but that, overall, professional development had not really changed at all during mayoral control.

During the last phase of reorganization, decentralized centralization, there were extensive changes at the high school level. Many large high schools were closed and reopened as multiple small schools in one location. In general, while the teachers agreed

that poor-performing schools should be improved, they considered it a “bad idea to throw the baby out with the bath water,” meaning “cleaning out” the entire school and reopening new schools (LST56). This reform affected participants from small and large high schools to a greater degree than teachers from magnet schools, as the latter were isolated from this reform. While teachers from large and small high schools were affected, small schools benefited from this reform, whereas large high schools were negatively affected and thus discussed the reform negatively. Despite the DOE’s claims that the high school reorganization process is better for all students, participants perceived that the process had severely affected the existing neighborhood high schools through large population increases, with a large percentage of students requiring special education or ELL services. Several teachers reported having been negatively affected by a large population increase when neighboring high schools were closed. As predicted, principals favored their type of school building and presented reasons why the system should include all three types of schools.

With regard to the method of reform that focused on closing schools and opening new schools, teachers strongly asserted that there should be more transparency in the school closing process and that schools in general should have been supported more toward improvement, rather than closed and re-opened. This method of reform has been a source of great conflict in the school system since 2002. While there was no difference in teachers’ and principals’ perceptions across boroughs, participants preferred the idea of both large and small high schools over charter schools. Participants from large and magnet high schools, which had a larger percentage of veteran teachers, saw the increase in charter schools as a way to break up the teachers’ union. Overall, the teachers and

principals saw possibilities in the organizational model of small schools but not in the manner of organization in the NYC public school system. Despite the perception by participants in this study that small schools had been ineffective and organized poorly, two academic studies conducted by MDRC found that students who attended small schools scored better academically than peers who had been forced to attend other schools after failing to be accepted by a small school (Bloom, Thompson, & Unterman, 2010; Quint, Smith, Unterman, & Moedano, 2010).

Increasing parent involvement has been a major effort by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein as they have reorganized the system several times, eliminating multiple avenues for parent participation. Despite the published attempts to increase parent involvement, the majority of participants across all types of schools in this study saw no change in the level of parent involvement under mayoral control. This can be attributed to the fact that this study focused on high schools, where parent participation is typically lower than at middle and elementary schools. It may also reflect the fact that, after the new high school admission process was implemented, students may be traveling to schools outside their neighborhood and thus it is more difficult for parents to be involved because the school is not located within their immediate community.

Ultimately, what is learned from teachers and principals in this section is that principals are the “gatekeepers” to the majority of information that teachers may or may not receive regarding systemwide reforms and reorganizations. A principal’s decisions and behaviors influence a school’s structures and organizational features, such as the school’s instructional program, resources, staff, mission, and culture, all of which in turn affect teacher behavior and ultimately student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996,

1998; Leithwood et al., 2004). Principals' decisions to discuss knowledge about the various system reorganizations and reforms or lack of discussion influences teachers' perceptions and understandings of both systemwide and school level reform. When examining perceptions across schools, participants from small and large high schools had more knowledge because they were directly affected by some of these reforms and magnet schools were mostly isolated from the reforms.

CHAPTER 9

Teachers' and Principals' Perceptions of Roadblocks

to Improving Education in NYC

Urban school systems are impacted by multiple internal and external factors that cause conflicts within the system or organization. In undergoing various reforms, an organization such as the NYC DOE has experienced many sources of conflict, both internal and external. External factors may include changes in state or federal funding and high concentrations of poor and/or minority populations in urban areas as compared to suburban school systems (Rogers, 2009). Internal factors such as union contracts, system bureaucracy, poor parent involvement, scarce resources, low academic expectations, and issues around the hiring and retention of staff are more frequently cited when discussing and evaluating urban school system policies (Rogers, 2009). In debating the success of school systems and the issues that they face, many consider the external factors to be a “cop out” for educators and schools to avoid accepting full responsibility for the lack of progress to this point and to “blame the victim” rather than adjust internal school or educator operations (Rogers, 2009; Ryan 1971). Outside of a few teachers who cited their student demographics and an increased amount of testing, which could be related to federal regulations under NCLB, the majority of the teachers and principals in this study cited only internal factors or roadblocks that are preventing their schools and the NYC public school system from being more effective. This chapter discusses participating teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of the major problems or roadblocks under the current structure of school governance in NYC, as well as suggested implications and potential solutions for those problems.

McLaughlin and Talbert's (2001) research was designed to understand the "problems, and the potentials, of improving high school teaching by taking the perspective of teachers who were grappling with the challenges of preparing their students for lives in the twenty-first century" (p. 3). They sought to "inform education policy from the bottom, or the inside, of the system—asking not how school sector or size or reform policy affects teaching, but what contexts matter for teachers and teaching" (p. 3). Similarly in this study, NYC principals and teachers identified "challenges" or "roadblocks" and possible solutions that they deemed to be important contexts for teaching, learning, and ultimately improving student achievement even more.

Major Roadblocks at School

Participants identified issues that were areas of conflict that they perceived as "major roadblocks" that were preventing them from improving: class size, budget, school culture, and issues related to the teacher and the teachers union. Other roadblocks that were mentioned by participants but were not significant were too much test preparation, lack of parental involvement, lack of quality professional development, fewer "education-experienced" former administrators, and school closing (in the case of one participating school). These roadblocks confirm issues previously identified by parents in the 2010 IELP school governance report based on parent data in nine cities. The most frequent concerns expressed by parents were the increasing number of school closings and increasing number of for-profit and charter schools, as well as changing budget priorities.

The majority of participants from the nine participating schools cited similar concerns, but concerns were different across types of schools. From the magnet school perspective, teachers said that they were fortunate and hesitated to name major concerns

or sources of conflict in the system. As one teacher stated, “We work together” and “screen for successful students” so there is no major roadblock preventing the school from improving even more (MST46).

From one large school that is facing closure, the most commonly cited roadblock was related to the processes connected to the school closing and thus the need for new school leadership. The major source of conflict was “closing the school . . . too little, too late;” the school “got a new principal who has changed a lot . . . wish they had given more time with the new principal” (LST57, LST58). This is important to note because the teachers also identified as a roadblock the “old administration, every AP should be gone . . . while there is a new leader, it is the same people steering the ship . . . we didn’t get into this mess for no reason” (LST61).

The following challenges were the most frequently cited roadblocks across all participating schools in the study.

Large Class Size

Teachers from large, small, and magnet schools cited class size as one of the major roadblocks to increasing student achievement (MST47, SST51, LST60). The increase in size has led to students having more periods between classes, described as “a lot of free time, it’s noisy and disruptive because kids don’t all fit in the library or the cafeteria” (MST42). The major roadblock is “money,” which affects “class size” and the ability to offer “extra help for students”; “lowering class size would give more personal time to each student;” ultimately, “class size matters to teachers and students” (MST46) (MSP1).

At one large high school in particular, with a history of overcrowding, six of the eight teachers and the principal cited “class size” as the major roadblock to improving student achievement (LSP3). They said that there were “too many kids or maybe just more space” and suggested “having fewer students, fewer sessions, giving them more room to work.” They commented that the “overcrowding is horrendous” and that “four less kids in every class” would allow them to improve student achievement (LST24, LST66, LST68, LST62, LST64, and LST67). This is the only one of the nine schools where the principal and teachers agreed on a single factor that was preventing the school from improving even more.

The perception that class size is still an issue in 2010, three years after the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit was settled, was concerning because the lawsuit had provided NYC with over \$643 million dollars in 2008-2009 as an initial payment toward the estimated \$5.5 billion awarded to the city to provide a sound basic education to all students in New York State (CFE, 2012). Teachers’ and principals’ perceptions were confirmed by available class size data from 2007-2010. Class sizes increased in both elementary and middle schools. While class sizes remained the same at the high school level, they have not been reduced during this time period. CFE blamed Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein for not specifically asking principals to use the additional funding to reduce class sizes; as a result, most of the money was used to fill other gaps in their budgets caused by reductions due to the economic downturn (Otterman, 2010).

Insufficient Budget

Connected to the issue of class size is the financial opportunity to reduce class size by hiring more teachers. The roadblock most commonly cited by principals was money or lack of money in the budget, even though New York State and NYC spend more money per pupil than most other school districts and states in the nation. New York State has spent the most money per pupil for the past 3 years, an average \$16,195 in 2007 (Gonen, 2009j). However, at least one third of the participating principals, one from each type of school—small, large, and magnet—named money as their major roadblock: “more money is always nice and lifting the hiring freeze would also help to improve the school more” (MSP2, SSP2) and more “funding . . . Children’s First initiative equalized the money, but we could use more” (SSP2). More money was seen as the major roadblock to improving student achievement because “budget, more money” means “more security” (MST43, SST52).

Despite the budget problems and lack of funding being one of the most frequently cited roadblocks by both principals and teachers across all types of schools, Chancellor Klein claimed, “The Mayor has substantially increased the City’s investment in its public schools since he took office in 2002” by increasing the budget and making education a priority in NYC (May 29, 2008, not available online at the time of this writing, treated as personal communication). The mayor has increased education spending in NYC by 79% since 2002, as other city agencies only received only an increase of 42% and state education funding increased by only 55% (May 29, 2008, not available online at the time of this writing, treated as personal communication). Mayor Bloomberg increased spending \$5,000 per student from 2002 to 2008, which was a greater rate of increase than

the rest of New York State (O'Day et al., p. 58). Lack of funding and/or lack of resources has been a frequently cited roadblock or factor related to poor school system performance through history. Educators have historically made the argument that there is not enough funding for materials, curriculum, professional resources, facilities and space, and staff (Rogers, 2009). While education funding has consistently grown throughout history, student achievement has not increased at a similar rate or has remained stagnant, suggesting that additional funding may not be the answer unless it is accompanied by some type of systemic reform, such as mayoral control. In this study, despite empirical evidence that funding has increased, teachers and principals still reported lack of funding to be a major issue.

New York State settled the historic CFE lawsuit in 2007 that stated that New York schools were underfunded and thus unable to provide students with a “sound, basic education.” While teachers, principals, parents, and other stakeholders constructed proposals for how additional funding should be spent, without a larger structural plan and method of evaluation and implementation across the entire system, additional funding was not going to solve all problems, as history has demonstrated (Rogers, 2009).

Inability to Improve Teacher Quality

Participants frequently cited “bad teachers” as a roadblock for improving the system even more. Related to this, they saw the teachers’ union as a roadblock as well, because the union governs teachers’ working conditions and protects “bad teachers.” Coalitions and unions are often cited in management and organizational change literature as being either effective in holding city agencies more accountable or in acting as “barriers to change” (Rogers & Hawley, 1974). In NYC historically, teachers unions have

not supported any school system organizational changes from New York Teachers Association disagreeing with centralization in 1896 and the UFT protesting decentralization in 1968. While the UFT did not support the original authorization of mayoral control in 2002, they supported the reauthorization of mayoral control in 2009, with a few modifications. Their report and decision was based on five public community hearings and a series of group interviews. Despite the UFT's public support of Mayor Bloomberg, teacher participants in this study viewed the union as a source of conflict but were divided on the reason for the conflict. Some participants contended that Mayor Bloomberg aimed to dismantle the union; others stated that the union itself was a roadblock to improving student achievement. Teachers were divided over this issue in 1968 as well. The difference, however, is that in 1968 the union was composed mostly of young, well-educated, liberal, White teachers who supported whatever policies and reform led to improving student achievement for all students; in 2010, there was no racial or ethnic trend that supported negative perceptions of the union (Perlstein, 2004). The same teachers who had worked to keep schools open and students educated during the strikes of 1968 were the same type of teachers who now have gone to work in NYC charter schools and small schools, where many teachers work outside of union contracts.

When examining data across schools, there was a significant finding related to the teachers union. Teachers were in disagreement about the role of the union in the NYC public school system and the reform efforts. Some of the participants viewed the union under mayoral control as a target of destruction. They saw as a goal of mayoral control and Mayor Bloomberg's policy the intent to increase school choice as a way to dismantle the union because charter schools were not required to be unionized and new schools

consistently hired younger staff who were either not as knowledgeable about the union contract and/or possessed a different level of agreement with the union. Other participants saw the union as a major roadblock to improving student achievement because it protected poor teachers and created a climate in which teachers were unwilling to change, improve, learn new things, or do what has to be done at school.

Many teachers saw Mayor Bloomberg's attack on the unions as a roadblock because they viewed his policies, such as breaking down schools, increasing charter schools, and publicity regarding teacher contracts and layoffs, as a means of pitting teachers against each other to reduce the strength of the union. One teacher stated that Bloomberg's negative perception of teachers and the union stems from his school experience: "I think he probably, had a bad experience in high school or junior high" (LST8).

When I think of Mayor, I think he wasn't a good student, I think he hated school. . . . I think he was the student who wasn't successful in school. He probably didn't like teachers . . . this is my feeling! Because every time I hear from our Mayor, "Teachers are bad," who talks this way about teachers? Maybe one or two teachers, but teachers are best of our society. How can you go on the radio and TV and newspaper . . . and every time you hear from them about the teachers: "Teachers are bad, teachers aren't doing their work, teachers are that." Change all teachers if they're bad! Because if teachers are bad, you're going to get bad society, you're going to get bad students, you're going to get bad people in the end. We're not just teaching! (LST8)

In general, this group of teachers described Mayor Bloomberg's perception of teachers as very negative.

While some saw Mayor Bloomberg attacking the union, others saw the union as the roadblock to improving schools. These teachers suggested that the mayor should "take away the control of the union a little . . . it protects too many mediocre teachers . . . it has to be done in a fair way . . . if they were more transparent, there would be more

trust” within the system (LST56). The major problem within the system is “getting everyone on board . . . united front” and teachers’ attitude of “unwillingness to change things you are doing” to make improvements for students (MST48). The union “policies, paperwork, [and] lack of professionalism” pose a problem; “you don’t need a strong union” (LST56).

Naturally, principals cited the teachers union as a roadblock to school improvement because it prevents them from hiring and firing teachers at will. According to one principal,

There are some things that need to be reformed, that are out of their hands We have been granted better ability to hire (this year notwithstanding), but as long as we are forced to fire in an arbitrary way, we’ll never be able to mold the staffs in our building properly [referring to the union’s seniority rules]. . . . Until principals truly have the ability to hire and fire teachers who are not performing, and until we can shape staffs totally within our vision, schools will be limited in their growth; principals still lack complete “CEO-type” authority within their buildings, despite whatever level of “increased autonomy” the DOE has claimed to give principals. (SSP1)

At the same time, one principal stated that the union actually has less power under the Bloomberg administration. He commented,

[teacher] grievances are handled more black and white now . . . before, I [as a principal] never knew how something would turn out, but now I know if I do something wrong, I will lose, otherwise as long as I didn’t go against something spelled out in the contract I will win. (MSP1)

However, one of the nine participating principals said that he “doesn’t have problems with the UFT, I’m glad they are there,” but that under Mayor Bloomberg it may have “gotten slightly easier to remove bad teachers. . . . The most difficulty comes in changing the mindset of teachers” (LSP3). The issue of teacher quality and the union will continue to be a source of conflict as the Mayor, the State DOE, the UFT, and CSA

continue to negotiate a new system for teacher tenure and evaluation as a means of improving teacher quality.

Lack of Parental Involvement

Under the Bloomberg administration, the DOE has made parent involvement a priority in their reform process. Under the various reorganizations of the system, the DOE has attempted to provide parents with alternative pathways to access schools, district offices, and information in general as a means of ensuring their participation in the system. Teachers across all types of schools cited a major roadblock to be “parent involvement,” “lack of parental support,” and “failing parents” (SST50, SST51, SST53, LST60, MST45). One teacher said that the “school population is changing” and that one “can’t separate society from kids and school” (SST53). Another teacher said that, as much as teachers try to do everything possible during school, they still feel responsible for making sure that all children are successful despite outside environmental factors that they cannot control. “How do you blame the teachers if the kids aren’t getting on the bus on time, and the parents aren’t helping them at home?” (LST24). Increasing the level of parent involvement is necessary under mayoral control because it is “top-down instead of bottom-up and it has to start with parents, not teachers” (LST56).

Poor Students and School Culture

Several teachers cited factors related to students and school culture as being major to improving student achievement. Teachers cited their relationships with each other, with the students, and with administration as roadblocks to student achievement. This confirms a finding by McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) in a study that focused on high school teachers and principals. “High school teachers told us that their students are the

critical context for their teaching—that who comes to school ultimately frames their classroom tasks and experiences of success” (p. 6).

Results from another study confirmed some teachers’ responses in this study:

The majority of public school teachers . . . reported in a survey that students in their classes were less prepared than students they had taught in previous years (65%), that the attitudes and habits students brought to class greatly reduced their chances for academic success (73%), and that students in their classes had more serious social and family problems than students they had taught in previous years (85%). . . . [Participating teachers also mentioned] challenges associated with changed family circumstances first, whether the students are long-term neighborhood residents or recent arrivals by court order, family move, or immigration. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 14)

Other teachers cited problems with students at their schools as a roadblock, including “students’ attendance and lateness” and the “consequences of misbehavior . . . teach [students] how to behave in a certain social atmosphere” (LST55). Another cited roadblock was “poor reading skills” (LST60). It was reported that some schools have a “large number of undocumented students and parents who don’t want to fill out forms,” which prevents students from receiving extra services (LST61). One teacher complained that there was not enough time to address student issues in advisory sessions, which would to help improve student achievement (SST49). The literature confirms that “teachers emphasize the social and cultural diversity of contemporary students as a factor that complicates their job” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 16). Teachers identified difficulties related to educating students of different languages, social classes, and academic backgrounds from those of former middle-class Anglo American students whom they may have taught previously.

The principals cited changing the school culture as a major roadblock to increasing student achievement, specifically the intrinsic motivation of students and teachers to improve. One principal said, “Until the kids walk in the morning and their

focus is on “what do I need to do today to succeed?” rather than “what do I need to do to get through the day so I can go home and play?” schools won’t succeed” (SSP1). This principal gauges the change in school culture by an increase in the number of children on the honor roll, having an average above 90, and having perfect attendance (SSP1).

[Overall,] it has to do with the kids’ attitude. . . . I can train my teachers from now until doomsday. . . . I can do a lot of different things . . . but until the kids say “You know, I’m going to go for extra help this afternoon,” . . . you can’t artificially produce that, it has to come from within them. (SSP1)

Another principal attributed the poor instructional ability of teachers, which leads to poor student attendance, as a major roadblock. “Attendance is low because instruction is low” (LSP1). As Cuban (1984) and Tyack and Tobin (1994) discussed, teachers today still follow the traditional teaching practices that have existed throughout history. They also follow similar instructional and disciplinary routines, known as “reflexive conservatism” (Lortie, 1975).

Teachers agreed that a major roadblock is “changing the culture [and] the mentality of students and teachers” (LST61). Culture has to do with how teachers trust and view their colleagues and the administration, as the following quotes demonstrate: “Teachers who aren’t self-critical of the way they teach . . . not letting kids move on unless they have skills,” or “we put pressure on each other” (LST58, MST41). The mayor and chancellor should have “more focus on students in the classroom . . . add teachers aides . . . assistant principals . . . everyone is in the classrooms like in Catholic schools” (LST55).

Another cited issue was trust between teachers and administration. One teacher said that it was “not a problem in my school, but I heard from friends that the principal can put a letter in your file without telling you” (MST43). One teacher stated that the

principal was not supportive of teachers. “He’s more for the students than he is for his teachers. And I don’t feel he backs up enough . . . anything the kids want, he gives them, he gives them, he gives them. . . . We get no backing from him at all” (LST9). Another teacher recommended “more consequences for students who do the wrong thing” (SST54). One teacher suggest that teacher should

direct more attention to buildings and find out what’s really wrong with schools. . . . It doesn’t matter what changes at the administrative [level] if it’s a [problem] with school culture. [Reform should be] more individualized. . . . Reforms don’t work in all schools/boroughs. (LST61)

Issues with school culture were cited across all three types of schools, boroughs, and teacher demographic backgrounds as it relates to how teachers trust each other in the work environment, how teachers and principals view their relationship, and how teachers perceive issues with students affecting how they choose to evaluate and “make sense” of mayoral control in NYC.

Changes Suggested by the Principals and Teachers

The most commonly suggested change from both teachers and principals was that the person who controls the schools should have a background in education. Additional suggestions were to gain more input from teachers, especially related to decisions regarding day-to-day occupational operation, along with solving the issues that they had cited as major roadblocks.

Administrators Must Have a Background in Education

Participants specifically stated that that the next chancellor should have an educational background, but a large percentage of participants discussed the general lack of educational knowledge in the layers of NYC school system bureaucracy and suggested that future chancellors have a “background in education and different educational

systems” (SST6, MSP2). “If the mayor appointed a chancellor who came from an educational background, I would be less concerned . . . I don’t think he is very popular with the teachers . . . they are resentful he got a third term” (MST43). Teachers would like to see “a change” and a “new chancellor” brought into the system; “someone from the trenches” who would “listen to teachers” (MST31). It is important to note that these interviews were conducted from 8 months to 1 year prior to Chancellor Klein leaving and the arrival of Cathie Black and eventual appointment of Chancellor Walcott. The CSA and Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control also recommended that the mayoral control law be amended to require the chancellor to have an educational background, along with necessary certification required for a school superintendent without receiving a waiver from the State Commissioner of Education. They stated that knowledge of teaching and learning is more important to the system than managerial and organizational skills (CSA, 2008).

The principals were mixed in their opinions regarding whether the system should continue to operate from a “business” or “educator” perspective of management. One principal said that it is essential to “hire a chancellor that has experience in education and that the deputy chancellors should be educators as well,” noting that the chancellor can “hire a business group to make sure that money is allocated by the state appropriately” but should hire “people who are curriculum and academic savvy” to fill those needs (SSP2). He added that there should be “assistant deputies for all high schools and boroughs” who should “specialize all areas to support the educational environment,” specifically high schools (SSP2).

Teachers and principals generally discussed the lack of educational background in the top level of educational bureaucracy and participation in policy making in the NYC public school system. According to one principal, one of the major changes in the system has been the absence of educators at Tweed (MSP2). This has also been a frequently cited criticism of mayoral control in the media and in previous evaluations (Cramer, 2009b). In 2008-2009, only two of eight people reporting directly to Chancellor Klein had educational experience; this increased to four people at the start of the 2009-2010 school year (Cramer, 2009a). Participants stated that “people with educational experience on the PEP” would be beneficial because their absence “breeds resentment” (LST56). It was recommended that the DOE “hand over the schools to educators” and “don’t use data they way they use it . . . let educators run their business.” They recommended “a cabinet of educational people” because Bloomberg “didn’t have an educational background” (LST57, MST29). Teachers expressed strongly that the chancellor and/or mayor should have an educational background or they should “eradicate mayoral control” and create a “meaningful system with a panel of teachers, educational professionals Teachers need to be a central part of the discussion” (MST30).

[Within the DOE], the people that were central aren’t educators for the most part . . . they haven’t spent a whole lot of time in schools, if any They really don’t understand how schools work. . . . They understand how to analyze data and how to make recommendations based on numbers on a page, which is a very dangerous proposition. (SSP1)

This supports findings reported by Rogers (2009) that an increasing number of central DOE administrative staff do not have backgrounds in education.

Allow for Teacher Voice in Decision Making

Historically, teachers unions have served as the prominent pathway for teacher voice in educational policy decisions. Recently, several more organizations have emerged

in an effort to promote “teacher voice” across the United States, including NewTLA in Los Angeles as a caucus within the teachers union, Educators 4 Excellence in NYC (independent of the teachers union), Teach Plus as a nonprofit organization in Boston, and the Center for Teaching Quality based in Carrboro, North Carolina (Sawchuk, 2011). In order to join Educators 4 Excellence in NYC, approximately 2,500 members must sign a declaration stating that tenure policies should be revised and that teacher evaluations should be based on student progress (this group received \$160,000 in start-up funding from the Gates Foundation; Sawchuk, 2011). It appears that there is an increasing national divide between newer teachers who favor new evaluation procedures and increased participation in education and the historical teachers’ union method of participation in the policy arena.

Participating teachers in this study asked for more voice in educational policy decisions, especially ones that directly impact their day-to-day work. Under mayoral control, “[administrators] really don’t want to hear opinions from people doing battle everyday [teachers]”; “they don’t take constructive criticism, they have blinders on . . . Klein is totally doing what he is told”; they should “get input from teachers and principals” (LST58). They stated that the mayor and chancellor should “focus more on the teacher’s role and giving teachers more of a voice . . . we are blamed most of the time . . . we need more interaction in policy” (LST60). However, they noted that, with this administration in particular, teachers are “afraid to say something now . . . there is a fear from above . . . corporate mentality” (LST58).

Many teachers disagreed that Mayor Bloomberg had pursued a third term in office. They understand that “someone has to be in charge” but stressed that “teachers

should be part of the decision making, but that's tough . . . more teacher input would be ideal" (MST39). One teacher at a large school suggested that teachers be "involved in structure, in decisions" such as creating curriculum and determining student diploma requirements. She said, "Why not teachers? Why [doesn't] anyone ask us?" (LST8). Teachers expressed an interest in participating in the decision-making process, suggesting that that the Mayor and Chancellor "support teachers more . . . give them more respect, especially about decisions in the classroom" (MST41). The focus of teachers having a voice in policy decisions was decisions related to curriculum, now mainly driven by state standards.

If I would have a choice, I would change the curriculum and I think my students would do much, much better; so I really believe it's not who's on top of me, I believe everything comes from the teacher in the classroom, of course, if the teacher would have more choices, it would be much better. (LST8)

Teachers suggested that teachers have a chair in policy-making decisions that occur outside of the school level, since those decisions affect them as well. They suggested having a "committee of teachers who advise the decision-making process," noting that "decisions are so far removed from the classroom . . . blanket statements don't work for everyone" They suggested that this would allow them to "give more input into the reforms that are completed," or the "UFT should be part of the system . . . have a role in policy development" (MST45, MST31, MST47). The system is "very administrative heavy" and consultants "don't do anything" (MST45). There should be "more educators in the system . . . knowledgeable people" (SST52). One teacher suggested that the best way to approach this would be to "go to schools at all levels, get insights from teachers, parents" and to reorganize the system again to "give power back to local school boards; it should be a democratic process" (LST24).

The participants suggest that the mayor or chancellor should “convene an assembly of principals and talk to them one-on-one,” holding them accountable for tests and positive development of teachers (MST46).

We need to move away from talking about bad teachers to how we can improve quality instruction and recognize good teachers, retain good teachers, and not be afraid to spend money on things . . . schools rest on a community, not just the failure of teachers. (MST30)

With the move to standardize teacher evaluations across the city and state, principals and teachers will be discussing their development, how to improvement instruction, and how these evaluations can be tied to recognizing and retaining good teachers.

Fixing the Roadblocks

Many teachers identified roadblocks that were preventing them from achieving more with their students. Many suggested that the Mayor and Chancellor should repair these roadblocks before they attempt to bring more revisions to the system.

Reducing class size in one of the most frequently recommended changes. The teachers said that schools should be smaller, class sizes should be no more than 25 students, and there should be programs across the city to meet the needs of students, as the class size average in 2010 was 27 students at the high school level (LST67). Another teacher suggested “hiring more teachers,” “reducing class size,” remarking that if she had 20 students, “it would be amazing,” “cutting liaison jobs . . . getting rid of the bad teachers, don’t hire someone to help them” (MST45, MST28). One suggest that the major should “hire a lot more teachers to create smaller classroom sizes” and “remove administrative responsibilities from teachers such as scheduling, lunch duty, etc.” (MST25). Another teacher stated that the mayor and chancellor should be fired and that they should “follow the union’s directive to lower class size in the lower grades” and

“equalize the playing field . . . every kid should have a safe place to go to school” (MST43). The mayor should “make sure that the poorer districts are getting the money they are entitled to. . . . Schools need to be more diversified, racially, ethnically . . . have more schools that kids are interested in and smaller class sizes” (SST49).

Additional recommendations included equalizing funding, reducing test preparation, and adding or returning programs to supplement students’ basic education. Nationally, some teachers have expressed a desire to eliminate testing and move toward performance-based options such as “portfolio reviews instead of regents.” Some have advocated that, if students need 5 years to graduate, they should be grouped differently to allow that (MST48, SST49). One large school principal said that he would “focus on at-risk populations because you have to deal with them because they create the most problems . . . 20% of the kids create 80% of the headaches” (LSP3). One suggested that the mayor and chancellor should “mandate before 9th grade that every child goes to basic training boot camp . . . to develop their self-esteem, discipline . . . that would increase the graduation rate” (LST59). It was suggested to put “basics back in elementary school,” “teach character development on all grades,” and “survey teachers, administrators, and parents and listen with both ears” (LST64). The teacher said that she wished they would “stop changing everything” and “go back and develop children from the beginning” (LST64).

Alter the Types of Schools

A few participating teachers, mostly from large schools, recommended that the mayor examine more closely the success rate of charter schools and small schools and attempt to reestablish the concept of neighborhood schools and vocational schools that

would be available to families—all of which is in direct opposition to the Mayor’s and Chancellor’s current organizational strategy. They suggested that the “way in which they are creating it is a problem because they are pitting good schools against bad schools; if they are successful, he rewards them and if not, he gets rid of them” (MST25). It was suggested that, while they are creating more “choice” options for schools, they “should bring back vocational schools and trade schools” (LST24). Teachers urged the Mayor and Chancellor to “check on how efficient they [new types of schools] are” and determine whether “charter schools are good” (SST52). They stated that administration should “improve the neighborhood school concept, not starve them,” change the system of “haves and have nots with charter schools,” and change the level of control that the media has over the current system (LST66). It was suggested that the DOE should “distribute programs more across the city . . . be more proactive than reactive,” suggesting that the DOE should be more transparent in its decision-making process with educators and parents (LSP3).

Emphasis on Data

A small number of teachers suggested improvements to be directed toward the use of data and numbers. For example, one teacher stated that the “emphasis on numbers and tests are destroying public education” and “education is not a business and shouldn’t be treated as such” (MST40). Those teachers who did not “like” Bloomberg stated that they did “not want to feel the pressure to perform based upon data;” one said that she “wants to love my job, not be sweaty and nervous . . . I want to do well” (LST63). These suggestions reflect teachers’ perception that the DOE has been run from a “business” perspective since Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein took over in 2002.

Improving Teacher Quality

Several teachers focused on improving teacher quality through a variety of recommendations, but it should be noted that these interviews took place prior to the debate over the new teacher evaluation systems and the public release of the teacher data reports in 2012. Two teachers suggested more teacher training for their respective content areas, saying that no teacher single teacher in the biology department “has a biology degree They need to have teachers that know their subject” (MST42, MST40). One teacher said that the “number of bad teachers are really a minority . . . the problem is bigger than teachers who aren’t performing . . . Bloomberg and Klein need to focus more on teachers who have to be better” (SST54). One suggested that the mayor and chancellor should “provide support for new teachers,” and “get rid of ineffective teachers . . . the rubber room is ineffective” (LST68).

Look at the baseline . . . then ask people where the future of education is . . . benchmark your plan . . . 20 years with 5-year benchmarks . . . determine how we will assess, how we will change teacher education . . . the system is dynamic . . . [and should be] more global. (MST47)

During the 2011-2012 school year, the Mayor and Chancellor asked all principals and teachers throughout the city to focus on improving teacher effectiveness in their building and even postponed the first day of school to allow for one full day of teacher professional development in this area.

In conclusion, despite empirical evidence related to budget, class size, union contracts, and efforts to increase parent involvement and improve teacher quality, the majority of the participating teachers and principals still cited these concerns as areas for improvement under mayoral control. One principal wanted to remind them that the main

“problem they face at the moment is they are running out of time,” as Mayor Bloomberg’s term is coming to an end (MSP1).

They need to determine their end goal and figure out how to get their quicker . . . as a lame duck administration, they have three and a half years to finish fixing it. . . . The mayor has won, he is the boss, and he pushes through what he wants. (MSP1)

With less than 2 years left in the mayor’s term, future research can investigate whether any of these educator-suggested changes have been heard by the Bloomberg administration and whether any of the roadblocks have been removed.

Chapter Summary

Teachers and principals identified similar roadblocks, listed in Table 9, that, despite advances advertised by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, have not appeared to change under mayoral control.

Table 9

Participants’ Perceptions of Major Roadblocks That Are Preventing Their Schools From Increasing Student Achievement Even More and Their Suggestions for What Still Should Be Changed to Make the School System Better

Roadblocks	Suggested changes
Insufficient budget	Administrators background in education
Large class size	Teacher participation in decision making
Teachers’ union	Changing school choice
Lack of parental involvement	Reducing emphasis on data
Lack of student accountability and school culture	Improving teacher quality

While these were the most frequently cited roadblocks across all types of schools, findings were consistent at one magnet and two large high schools. Participants from magnet schools stated that they were more fortunate than teachers at other types of schools because their students were screened, largely successful academically, and had a strong level of parent involvement. Participants from large high schools frequently cited roadblocks related to the teachers' union and the processes connected to closing and reopening schools.

The most commonly suggested change to improve the school system, across all types of schools, was that there should be more personnel with educational experience in positions of power within the DOE. While participants suggested this in 2010, the next two chancellors selected by Mayor Bloomberg—Cathie Black and Dennis Walcott—both lacked educational experience and required a waiver from the state to become Chancellor of the NYC school system. Another interesting finding was connected to the fact that participants saw the teachers' union as a roadblock to improving the system more as the union works to protect all teachers, including poor-quality teachers, and suggested that the primary improvement to the system would be to improve teacher quality. This discussion took place prior to major discussions pertaining to creation of a new system of teacher evaluation and the public release of teachers' Teacher Data Reports in 2012.

CHAPTER 10

Evaluating School Governance in NYC

When asked to evaluate school governance under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, most teachers presented evaluations related to their general level of knowledge about the school system, how much they pay attention to local news, and their political affiliation and preference. The historical argument and source of conflict between schools and communities that asked to “take the schools out of politics” surfaced again under mayoral control when politics and schools became inherently connected. In NYC, the majority of the participating teachers and principals supported keeping schools and politics connected; slightly more than half of the participants agreed with the reauthorization of the mayoral control law. Participants who favored Bloomberg as a politician evaluated him positively, whereas those who did not favor him politically evaluated him negatively or recommended that the schools no longer be directly connected to the political arena. Unfortunately, this was not a formal question on the interview protocol and therefore is discussed as a limitation of this study, as well as an avenue for future research. Also, some participants were unable to evaluate mayoral control for a variety of reasons.

The following responses summarize the range of responses as to how teachers evaluated mayoral control in NYC. One teacher rated the system an “8” on a scale from 1 to 10 because she “liked his politics” (SST6). Another teacher did not think “it is working” but he did not “know how to fix it, but it hasn’t done well . . . the only fixture is that they will leave in 2 years” (MST39). Another stated that mayoral control is not an effective method of school reform because “it ties things more directly to politics” and

was a “big mistake” (MST40, MST41). Some participants apparently despised the mayor, describing him as a “control freak who legislates everything (fat, sodium, etc.),” as well as chancellor, who was described as a “puppet . . . I have no feelings about him” (LST57). Some teachers agreed, some disagreed, and some were unable to evaluate mayoral control in NYC.

Overall, while there do not appear to be significant differences in findings among teachers with regard to their evaluations of school governance, there was a finding of significant differences among schools. Magnet school teachers were more insulated from administrative changes from the Chancellor or Mayor than were teachers from small school or large school and thus were more likely to answer that they were unable to evaluate mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein. Teachers from magnet schools acknowledged that they had a “distorted view” because “it doesn’t affect me here” and because they don’t “see the system” (MST39). They described being in a “bubble” at a magnet school (MST40). Overall, most teachers perceived little direct influence from mayoral control on their work in the teaching profession.

How Would You Evaluate Mayoral Control in NYC Overall?

As noted above, teachers’ overall evaluations of mayoral control in NYC included responses that mayoral control was positive, negative, brought no change to the school system, was mayor-specific in that it was directly related to who the mayor was, the school system governance did not matter as much as the State Board of Regents, and that it was impossible for evaluate.

Mayoral Control Is Positive

Teachers supported research-cited descriptions of how mayoral control has changed the system of education in NYC as compared to other urban districts under mayoral control. They agreed that there has been an increase in accountability, transparency, equity, and teacher pay. One experienced teacher said that schools had “always been told by somebody how they should be run,” so this system of governance was not necessarily new in that sense, but it was different in the sense of the level of power that the mayor had given to each school (SST6). It was described as an “improvement over the Board of Education, because it was notoriously incompetent, unfair, just not good” (SST6).

Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein brought to the NYC DOE attention and awareness as the “spotlight has been on them and education, which was good” (MST47). Teachers who supported reauthorization also agreed with one of the findings reported by Wong et al. (2007) that having the mayor in charge raised the level of awareness of the education system. The mayor and chancellor are “concentrating . . . focusing on it . . . [the NYC public school system] is not an afterthought” (SST52). Mayoral control as a reform mechanism was described as “excellent because when you have a system of this size, the best thing to do is give it to a politician to fix the crises” and “mayoral control is more democratic and more equitable” (MST25). One participant called the system seemed “more organized” and noted that “they pay teachers more who go to low-performing schools” (MST26). One remarked that the “overall feel is positive” because all “decisions are made by him” (MST29). Mayoral control was seen as an effective

method of school reform, “more effective than previous administrations,” because the leaders were “doing a tremendous job” in managing the city’s school systems (LST55).

Mayoral Control Brought No Change

Some teachers commented that their schools had not improved very much over the 8 years and that they “did not notice any drastic improvement” (LST14).

I think that the New York City school system sucks compared to other schools. . . . When you hear about other states and what they’re doing with their urban schools, I just think we could do so much more. (LST9)

Another less-experienced teacher agreed: “A lot of big picture things have changed . . . but in all honesty, I don’t really see ‘success’ or ‘failure.’ . . . I almost think it’s just kind of neutral . . . it’s not really positive, it’s not really negative” (LST16). Others said that changes that had occurred in the schools “were the direct result of the changes that the school made [, not necessarily] a result of result of mayoral control” (LST16).

A few teachers commented that it was too soon to make a judgment as to whether mayoral control had been a positive change for NYC.

This is an entirely new set-up, and I think when anything is changed so drastically, to see if it works, it must require at least 10 years, until you have a history of seeing whether we are getting results, in other words, are the students graduating . . . are they graduating whole people, you know, well-educated, well-disciplined students compared with the school system under the Board of Education? I don’t think any real, true judgment can be made until then. (SST6)

“Change isn’t a straight line . . . it doesn’t work for all schools . . . the BOE is big and reform is slow . . . older teachers make it more difficult” (LST61). The size of the DOE is definitely an issue because it prevents the mayor and chancellor from knowing what is happening in all parts of the city. One teacher commented that the mayor and chancellor were “not connected to what is happening in each school” and that it “seems like a beautiful plan, but something isn’t connected” (LST61). Overall, “some things are right,

but some things need to be modified. . . . You can't adjust them across the board" (LST61).

Negative Evaluation of Mayoral Control as a Method of School Reform Due to Lack of Teacher Voice and Taking the Business Model Approach

Approximately one fifth of participating teachers cited mayoral control as a negative means of school reform. Teachers from all types of schools (small, large, and magnet), both male and female, from every age bracket and the full range of experience (2.5 to 39 years) cited opposition to the plan. Slightly less than half of the teachers who disagreed with mayoral control had more than 20 years experience. These teachers stated that mayoral control was a poor choice for school reform because it was ineffective, focused too much on data and the business mentality, was not controlled by educators, lacked transparency and participation, blamed teachers, and was "not good" and "not very positive" (LST64, LST58).

Some participants gave mayoral control a negative evaluation because they contended that the school system should be directed by an educator. They commented that the system is "not effective under mayoral control . . . maybe not as bad [as the BOE], but still horrible" (MST28). Mayoral control was not seen as an effective method of policy making "unless you got a teacher who became a mayor" or the "mayor or chancellor was an educator" (LST57, MST43). One teacher noted that "students are not learning" and "if the mayor is not an educator, what is he doing . . . the mayor is all about the budget and statistics. . . . Every child's needs are not being met in this system" (MST41). One commented, "the city is so beautiful and we have all this stuff, what about the schools? . . . Our kids can't compete" (MST43). Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor

Klein have worked to eliminate inequity within the NYC public school system, financially and academically, but teachers still noted differences between types of education that children receive in different parts of the city. One teacher said that her daughter was taking the ELA exam soon and that she was “worried . . . if she doesn’t do well, we will move to another school district” because the “discrepancy between a Greenwich village education and the rest of the city is a disgrace.” She added, “There is a human side of this whole process that is being lost” (MST43).

Participants who disagreed with mayoral control also claimed that running the system like a business was ineffective. While some teachers agreed that the business accountability approach supported improvement in academic achievement in the system, others claimed that the “mayor’s priorities are wrong He is not pro-teaching; he likes to be in charge because he is running the system like a business” (MST43). Some teachers expressed the hope that the mayor and chancellor would “stop thinking of schools as a business” and “realize how complex education is” (LST65). The same teacher commented, while the Mayor and Chancellor are “trying hard, there is no bottom line in education, you can’t fail in education” because all students must be served (LST65). One teacher commented that, with Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein in charge, there is an “emphasis on numbers as the bottom lines, which wasn’t part of the system before” (MST40). Those who gave mayoral control a “negative evaluation” did so because “it is more like a forced dictatorship” where they are “fudging scores to meet their needs” (SST49).

Some teachers gave the Mayor a negative evaluation of mayoral control because they saw his style of reform as an attack on teachers and a source of conflict with little

opportunity for democratic participation. They claimed that the Mayor was going “in the wrong direction, blaming teachers and ignoring the real social problems” (SST54). They saw mayoral control as a “guise for union busting” and therefore graded mayoral control as an F because the mayor “needs to listen to others” and the chancellor is “smart, but awful” (LST66). They claimed that the system is seeing only “one person’s point of view, very little input from everyone else. . . . You can make statistics say whatever you want. . . . I don’t know if they have improved” (LST58). One teacher described Klein as saying “It’s my way or the highway” (LST58). A similar sentiment was made by Michelle Rhee, former Chancellor of the DC public schools, who said that it is impossible to run a school system by consensus and that it is not always possible to consult with others (IELP Report, 2010).

Teachers Who Were Unable to Evaluate Mayoral Control

Several participants were unable to evaluate mayoral control in NYC for two reasons: (a) They were new educators to the system, and/or (b) they had no opinion or interest for a variety of reasons, usually because they chose to keep isolated from the larger world of education outside of their discipline and/or school classroom. Responses did not correlate between level of knowledge to evaluate and participants’ years of experience in the school system, borough, or route to certification. However, more newer teachers than veteran teachers stated that they had not worked under any other system of governance so they had no experience to use for comparison. Responses such as “I wouldn’t have enough information to evaluate them” or “I don’t know if it’s a direct correlation of them” were common (LST9). One teacher said, “All we’ve had is the BOE, which didn’t work. . . . It’s too early to judge, you can’t say that there isn’t a better way

out there” (SST6). One less-experienced teacher acknowledged that, as a new teacher, “My only goal was to survive . . . it’s only been the last few years that I even notice anything beyond what’s going on outside of my classroom . . . so I don’t really have anything to compare anything to” (LST16). Another commented that she did not have “enough experience to say whether or not” this system was effective or whether the “previous system was effective or ineffective” (LST60). One teacher stated that at his/her level in the organization, “by the time it gets to the teacher level, you are necessarily aware of what is going on, what’s being changed,” which removes the teacher from conflict or issues affecting or constructed in the organization (LST12).

Inability to evaluate mayoral control was not limited to newer teachers. Some veteran teachers had also chosen to ignore events in the larger organization or district and to focus on their classrooms, especially if they were satisfied with their school and administration. “Since I have no huge complaints, I wouldn’t know if I was disappointed in something and I really have no problems teaching. . . . I love teaching here, in this school.” This teacher rated the system of governance B/B+, saying “it’s not perfect” (LST13). Another teacher stated that “administration of the city schools covers so much, that they are so far removed (regardless of what the system is) from what actually goes on between teacher and student” and that her job “has been no different, the way I treat my students, my teaching, my supplies, nothing has changed,” except “I’m getting raises because of him” supporting Lortie’s findings that most teachers work in isolation (SST6).

Many teachers had difficulty in evaluating the Mayor’s and Chancellor’s performance as a whole. They agreed with aspects of their reform efforts and disagreed with others.

I don't think he's doing, necessarily, the best job. I think that, especially with the budget cuts, especially with this idea of almost lowering the standards to improve what looks like it's getting better When you're in charge of something, you want it to show that it was successful . . . and he has an agenda there, that's on top of what should just be student improvement. . . . He's not objective, because he's influenced by the party, so I guess that being said, that's the negative. . . . But he's forcing schools to look at themselves, so there's positives there, too. . . . I'd give him a C. (LST12)

It was also difficult to evaluate governance from some teachers' perspectives because all teachers who were interviewed were high school teachers who commented that they felt "almost out of the loop at the high school level, because all of that [reforms] were done before they get into the high school level" (SST6). Teachers related difficulty in evaluating Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein separately because the teacher was "relatively uninformed," "people constantly badmouth them" and it is "so political" (MST48, MST31).

Evaluation Not Related to Mayoral Control—

Things That Directly Affect Teachers

Some teachers' evaluations were based on factors that were not directly under the Mayor's or Chancellor's control, such as the distribution and writing of High School Regents Exams, which are controlled by the New York State Board of Regents. For example, one teacher rated the governance of the school system as poor because of the

problems with the Regents Exams. . . . If they want to change something, and help students they could do it in a different way, but if they just want to show everyone that they're doing something, and they needed good numbers, then they did what they did with the Regents Exams. (LST8)

Mayor-Specific Control

Some participants stated that their evaluation of mayoral control was based on who the mayor was. According to one teacher, mayoral control as a method of school reform or as a policy-making body "depends on who is charge. . . . You can't expect all

mayors to change. . . . It could [be effective] if I agreed with them” (MST48). Another teacher said that the success of mayoral control as a method of school reform “depends on the mayor” but added that it “hasn’t really worked here [NYC]” because “we aren’t a business” and it “should be a mayor who used to be a teacher” (MST45). This teacher was more aware of the available research and articles on the subject and reported that those sources had influenced her perception of the effectiveness of mayoral control. “The press says it has worked, the trenches say otherwise . . . very quick to blame the hardest-working people, teachers and principals.” She added that, if she were not in education she “would have been for it [mayoral control]” (MST45). Teachers also cited specific reasons Mayor Bloomberg was not the right candidate for making mayoral control effective in NYC: “He doesn’t listen to us,” he is “not a good manager,” and “Klein does whatever Bloomberg says” (MST45). Therefore, it “depends on who your mayor is . . . they are not usually an expert in education”; “We have to work with what we have. . . . The mayor wants to run it like a business and it doesn’t work that way” (LST57).

One participant stated that, under Mayor Bloomberg, mayoral control as a method of school reform or policy-making body “has not been effective, but it could be” (MST46). The participant pointed out that Mayor Bloomberg has the uniqueness of being a billionaire and having many political and financial colleagues. “He could have good intentions . . . he is selling the system, creating the products that fail” (MST46). This teacher contended, as other teachers and researchers have stated that Mayor Bloomberg has done a good publicity job. The teacher stated that “mayoral control has been a failure for going on 12 years, but the mayor is good at advertising” (MST46). Similar statements were made throughout the interviews.

Inability to Evaluate Chancellor Klein

The majority of the teachers from large, small, and magnet schools could not evaluate Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein's work individually, just as principals could not do so. These participants saw them "as tied together" or as "exactly the same—what comes from Bloomberg comes from Klein. . . . I don't really see a difference between the two" (LST12). One teacher called them "Kleinberg—the same person, one mouth talking who doesn't want to hear anyone else's point of view" (LST58). Therefore, from the teachers' perspective, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein presented a united front with regard to their level of agreement on educational policy or teachers assumed that Klein was a puppet for the mayor. As a result, most did not think that Klein offered positive value to mayoral control in NYC. "I know he's the Chancellor, but I never heard him to express his own thoughts and opinions. . . . I believe he's just a 'router' for Mayor Bloomberg" (LST14). Another teacher agreed that Chancellor Klein did not add anything to the school system because

Klein has no charisma . . . and in that position, representing the Mayor, in dealing with people that he needs the support of, has got to learn sort of more human behavior or charisma. . . . He should go to charisma school. . . . I don't think Chancellor Klein adds one iota. (SST6).

Klein was frequently described as a "messenger for Bloomberg."

I don't think he's part of the equation at all. . . . I think other people, who have more to offer than Klein, might be an addition for Bloomberg, but maybe Bloomberg doesn't want to have this charismatic and intelligent person between him and the school system. (SST6)

Others described Klein as a "puppet" who is "controlled by Bloomberg's strings" (LST64). Another stated that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have "failed the city schools" and "twisted the data to get re-elected" and thus that participant could not evaluate Chancellor Klein separately (LST24). Another teacher stated that Chancellor

Klein was “unprofessional” and “hasn’t taught a lot, so people don’t respect him” (LST56). One teacher commented that Klein should have more presence; that “the mayor has improved the schools, but the chancellor should be more involved . . . seems like the mayor has more input than the chancellor” (LST65).

Just as they judged that Bloomberg had no educational experience, teachers also did not like the fact that Klein was not an educator. Some said that Klein is “not an educator, he’s a lawyer, so everything is by the law. . . . He said there was hope with Levy because he had a business background” (LST59). This supports recommendations that teachers made for improving mayoral control, in that the Chancellor should have a background in education. Unfortunately, this recommendation was not heeded when Mayor Bloomberg chose to replace Chancellor Klein with Cathie Black and then Dennis Walcott, both of whom required a waiver to serve as Chancellor.

Principals’ Evaluations of Mayoral Control

Principals agreed with some aspects of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein and disagreed with others. With regard to the issue of principal authority under mayoral control, some principals reported that they had less power and were not being heard. “It has its plusses and minuses. . . . It can be a positive force if they get it right, but it can be an excuse for deafness, which Klein is accused of a lot, of just not really listening to people about what goes on, on the ground” (SSP1). Principals said that they were not being heard despite being granted “more authority” over their school buildings. One principal cited a situation in which he was forced to fill two ATR positions; they were just placed on his budget as the reason he could not hire a school aide or a librarian, and Chancellor Klein “turned a deaf ear. . . . I was just another person

complaining about my budget It's meaningless to him" (SSP1). Since that time, ATRs have been paid for by the DOE and have been rotated through schools during the 2011-2012 school year to serve as coverage for absent teachers and as a way to "try out" teachers needed to fill vacancies. Another principal said that the DOE has "too much control and are just doing what they want" and manipulate numbers to make them look good (MSP2). Overall, some of the principals agreed that they had not "done tremendous amounts for schools" and described frustration "to be sitting here, frustrating to watch them when you don't agree with the restructuring of the district" (MSP2, LSP1). The principals agreed that mayoral control is not an effective method of school reform because, while it "enforces accountability and state mandates because he is a city leader, it is strictly budgetary, it has fixed the DOE, but not the schools . . . the burden is on our ability to be instructional leaders" (SSP2).

Principals agreed with some aspects of mayoral control because "it goes back to accountability . . . who was the BOE accountable to?" (LSP3). This reinforces the Wong et al. (2007) finding that mayoral control elevates the perception of education in a city. One principal said that "education has been an intense discussion in recent elections" under mayoral control (LSP3). Other principals saw increases in authority as the Mayor's approach to schools, "giving them the freedom they have to reform . . . you just have to show improvement" (LSP1). One principal agreed with the "focus on accountability and policy of 'no excuses' and the new focus on 'what are you doing to help these kids'" initiated by Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein (LSP3). Overall, he rated mayoral control as "good" but did not deny that it had caused his job to be more difficult every year (LSP3). In his opinion, the Chancellor made it "no longer acceptable to have a 70%

graduation rate” and for it to be “unacceptable for 3 out of 10 parents to be unhappy,” which is a laudable goal (LSP3). One principal said that mayoral control is an effective method of school reform because the BOE had too much “infighting” and the “constant change of chancellors was never a good thing . . . no one was clear as to who was responsible for the schools” (MSP1). He agreed with their use of data as it is “the only way that you can figure out what is going on” (MSP1).

However, some questioned “some of the decisions they have made if they aren’t educators” and noted that in some cases,

There are some emphases that they’ve tried to push forward that I think were in the right place, but the vehicle to deliver it, leaves something to be desired It doesn’t seem to me that they’re quick to modify what they’re doing. . . . Maybe it’s harder publicly for them to make those kind of changes, I don’t know, but maybe we just agree to disagree. (LSP3, SSP1)

While they agreed with Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein’s “intentions,” they agreed about “how to do it” (SSP2). One principal summarized that, in the end, “Everything comes down to economics; communities determine student outcomes and places where there are active PTAs and can bring in an extra \$40,000 a month to hire school aids, makes a difference” (SSP2).

Similar to the issue that teachers expressed, it was difficult for principals to separate Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein when evaluating them. One commented that “they are better than the previous administration. . . . I don’t know who tells who what, but they agree, they are on the same page. Klein has been here so long . . . it makes it clear what’s going on” (MSP1). Many teachers and principals were unclear about the role of Chancellor Klein, described it as “very ambiguous” and thus difficult to evaluate (MST29). One principal identified Walcott as being in the picture in 2009 but was “not sure how Walcott fits in there . . . but he is there,” not knowing that 2 years later he

would be appointed the next Chancellor of NYC (MSP1). At the very least, this demonstrates a clear chain of command and communication between the mayor and chancellor in their reforms and initiatives.

Reauthorization of the Mayoral Control Law

On August 6, 2009, the New York State Senate voted 47 to 8 to extend mayoral control of the NYC schools for 6 years and granted more power to the city's Independent Budget Office over the manner in which contracts and grants are approved (Medina, 2009i).

The State Senate today took a major step that will benefit millions of public school children for years to come; it preserved a system of clear accountability for our schools that has produced clear and dramatic results for our students. [The mayor thanked the Senators for refusing to] let politics stand in the way of progress. (Medina, 2009i, para. 9)

Across New York City, individuals and organizations have supported or opposed the reauthorization of mayoral control. According to Gail Robinson of the *Gotham Gazette*, “Most—though not all—of the people weighing in on the issue support some form of mayoral control. . . . So the issue becomes not whether one eliminates the current system but how much one changes it, if at all” (para. 8). Bill Gates contributed approximately \$4 million in significant funding from his personal pocket to “LearnNY,” a group that supported the reauthorization of mayoral control, as did Eli Broad (Campanile, 2009a). Bill Thompson, the city comptroller and opponent of Mr. Bloomberg in the mayoral election stated,

With its top-down approach, the Bloomberg administration has sought to avoid public debate and scrutiny, while fundamental decisions regarding education policy have been made by central administrators with very little education background. . . . I hope that the new governance structure established by this new legislation will ensure that there is transparency, accountability and meaningful parental participation in decision-making. (Medina, 2009i, para. 10)

As discussed in Chapter 5, while the principals and the teachers union criticized many of the Mayor's reform initiatives, they supported reauthorization of mayoral control. An organization called Class Size Matters, a parent advocacy group, sought more changes to the legislation; founder Leonie Haimson said, "The point is that no matter what the law says, no matter how weak or strong it is, there is somebody who is willing or able to hold them accountable for anything" (Medina, 2009h).

Participants in this study were divided almost evenly on their support for the reauthorization of mayoral control, with slightly more participants supporting reauthorization. While there were mixed opinions among teachers at small schools regarding supporting the reauthorization of mayoral control, the majority of the teachers at magnet and large high schools did not support reauthorization. Frequently cited reasons against reauthorization included the historical arguments that education should be separated from politics, that schools should not be run like a business, that there should be more than one person in charge, that there should be people with educational experience in charge of the school system, and that there should be community involvement through the return of power to local school districts. The fact that mayor Bloomberg also chose to circumvent the city's two-term limit law did not appeal to many of the study's participants.

Participants who had supported reauthorization favored increased accountability and a reformed version of mayoral control with some checks and balances on the system. They gave as reasons for the support that one person should be in charge and increased accountability with "a line of command and responsibility" especially between the mayor and chancellor (MST42, LST55, LST59). One principal agreed that mayoral control was

“the only way to function. . . . You can’t have constant bickering. . . . School functions well when you understand who is in charge and that the vision is clear” (MSP1). Another principal agreed with the decision to reauthorize mayoral control. He said that he “definitely did not want to go back to the old BOE system” because “once the genie is out of the bottle, it is very hard to put it back it . . . it would be a complete disaster” (LSP3).

A small percentage of teachers favored reauthorization, but with a system of checks and balances as recommended by many community and parent organizations. They commented that the “mayor should be involved, but they should have checks and balances . . . key stress points should be controlled”; “control should be given to the system at points when it needs it most It should be apparent from the system where the control should be” (MST47). The teacher continued, “It is scary to have one person in charge of such a big machine” but “people talk about how the system was no better or worse under the board of education” so they should “spread the power around, but [he doesn’t] know how to do that” (MST47).

One reason that teachers did not favor reauthorization was the “business mentality” that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have used to govern the school system, including the reorganizations, lack of educator input and increase in business mentality, the push to “fire” teachers, and the initiative of closing low-performing schools, all of which have been sources of conflict in the organization. Participating teachers stated that mayoral control has gone “terribly” for NYC schools and that it is the “closest I have seen to dismemberment of the system . . . a planned attack to destroy the system . . . anti-teacher system” where the culture is “making everyone afraid . . . there is

a feeling of blame the teachers” (MST39, LST63). Teachers have felt attacked under mayoral control as there is “less professionalism now than there was before mayoral control” and “it is not governed by educators . . . the new generation is by statistics” (MST39). The reforms to the system involved “closing high schools . . . plan to get rid of teachers, which is a domino effect on other schools. . . . The goal is to have lots of charter schools, but he is killing it [the system] along the way” (MST39, LST66).

The system, in their opinion, should consider the human element in contrast to “running it like a business, . . . you can’t do that with schools;” the “focus is on the numbers, not on people” (LST24, MST39). Another teacher stated that “things are coming from a business point of view, not from the classroom, and decisions don’t pay out well in the classroom” (SST50). There is a “disconnect You used to hear about principals/superintendents and they seemed powerful,” but the people whom Klein brought in “don’t know” about education (SST53). The people currently in charge of the system are “out of touch with the problems teachers are facing” and should be replaced by “people who are really into teaching, not business people . . . people who really understand and know the public schools” (SST53).

Another teacher recommended that there be

a panel with more input from each borough. . . . They should appoint one person to advise the mayor . . . smaller group than the old BOE and the board should be independent of the mayor [because it is] not a democracy when he can dismiss you if you vote against them. (LST58)

One commented that it would have been helpful if the policy makers had “listed the responsibilities” of the mayor and chancellor (LST65). Another said that “they should restore a more accountable Board of Education, not a rubber stamp PEP” (LST66).

Despite three separate organizational systems between 2002 and 2009, the teachers

agreed that there should be one more—one that includes additional checks and balances under mayoral control.

The participants recognized NCLB as the major piece of school reform. “Mayoral control is only a symptom of the problem . . . taking education out of the hands of educators” (LST66). “Mayoral control is just control, not reform It’s going in the wrong direction” (LST66). One teacher pointed to the historical cycle of centralization and decentralization and predicted that, if he teaches long enough, “it will go back”; he “disagreed with the way they went about” reforming the system (SST54). Under the system of mayoral control with increased accountability, there is the constant “threat of performance” and “big brother watching you. . . . You want to fail a student and you really can’t due to their social promotion policy” (SST54).

Teachers stated that there should be a separation of education and the political arena; “Schools shouldn’t be a political thing. . . . I wished that the mayor was voted out. . . . Teachers don’t try to run the city, that’s his job” (LST63). Mayoral control as a form of school reform was named “not a good plan . . . the mayor has more important things on his plate than schools” (LST64). The teacher disagreed with the mayor’s plans to improve the schools and noted that he “needs to ask us [teachers] what we think” (LST64, LST66). One teacher does not consider mayoral control to be an effective method of school reform “because if it’s linked to the mayor’s reelection or politics, there is political gain as the motive, not children.” [It is] “terrible corruption because it is just one person who can buy his way through anything” (SST49). Others commented that the “idea of having education and politics attached is dangerous . . . it creates false data or the

push for data and costs a lot of money” and the mayor “doesn’t care for school community” (MST40, MST41).

Again, it is important to note that mayoral control “changes with every mayor and, depending on what the mayor’s vision is,” it can be effective or not effective; on this basis, some participants insisted that education “should not be tied to the mayor” (LST68). One small school principal asserted that mayoral control should not have been reauthorized and that they should “go back to having educators in charge” because “people would make better decisions if they were educators and not politically motive. . . . They can work with advisors in education and have budgetary support” (SSP2). Overall, the teachers favored “educators making decisions, not politicians” (LST24).

In terms of how the system should be organized, those who did not support reauthorization debated whether the school system should return to a decentralized community school district system. One said that the NYC school system should “come back into the neighborhoods . . . didn’t they meet their needs better?” (LST62). Another said that there should be “district board members” to create “more transparency by borough” (LST60) and favored a return to “an elected board and get more of what people want. . . . We are a democracy and it’s anti-democratic. Things have been taken out of parents’ hands completely” (LST56). Another recommended that the system return “what it was like in the early 1970s, the central BOE with the central HS superintendency model. . . . I just know it worked” (LST57). Another suggested that the system be “centralized in the sense that teachers are certified at the BOE, but that there is some community control . . . parents should have some say”; the teacher also recommended an “election between two qualified candidates” (LST67). Another teacher recommended

“maybe bringing back what they had before, not this [mayoral control]” (LST63).

Another suggested that mayoral control should not be reauthorized, but the BOE should appoint a chancellor, and some type of democratic community control should form the new organizational system (LST64).

Some public figures have claimed that the reauthorization debate was drawn along racial lines, as the majority of senators who voted against the law were Black and those who supported it were White (Madore, 2009b; Medina, 2009i). According to Senator Bill Perkins, “The elephant in the room: race and class. . . . Why are so many parents so against mayoral control if it is working so well?” (as cited in Medina, 2009i, para. 17). However, the issue of race in terms of the reauthorization law was not cited by teachers and principals as a factor in choosing whether to continue mayoral control.

The fact that the Mayor was Mayor Bloomberg and that he has a significant financial background was discussed. While some teachers cited their association with mayoral control only with Michael Bloomberg, some contended that the reauthorization of mayoral control was done with the belief that Mayor Bloomberg would not have won a third term as mayor.

The state legislature, unfortunately, looks back on the Board of Education, and it gets a bad rap. I believe when they voted for mayoral control, they weren’t voting for Bloomberg control, they were voting for mayoral control. I honestly believe they thought that Thompson was going to win . . . and that’s why the UFT backed it. . . . The UFT got behind it because they were figuring Bloomberg wouldn’t win another term . . . that there would be enough of a backlash over all the other crap . . . and they were wrong” (SSP1)

The mayor’s decision to take a third term was “upsetting” to many participants in this study (MSP2). The State Senate created a committee that would have subpoena power to oversee the system and force people to testify at hearings, as way to create some oversight within mayoral control under the reauthorization law (Lovett, 2009c). Senator

Kruger of Brooklyn stated, “We will do what has to be done in order to expose what’s happening at the Department of Education” (Lovett, 2009c, para. 4). Mayor Bloomberg’s response to this committee was, “I don’t think anybody thinks that the Senate should be getting involved in the details of running the schools, and I trust they will not do that” (Lovett, 2009c, p. 10). However, teachers agreed that Mayor Bloomberg should not be running the schools for the very same reason.

Teachers expressed the opinion that mayoral control was renewed only because of Mayor Bloomberg. Some teachers agreed with the decision to reauthorize mayoral control, but “only under this mayor” (SST52). Another teacher assumed that the law would be renewed because “it’s Bloomberg,” referring to the level of financial persuasion he has over others. “That’s the politics that you can’t ignore that comes into the equation” (SST6). His political and financial capital makes him a different candidate from others. The same teacher supported reauthorization because Bloomberg was in charge. “If the school system were falling apart and it was Bloomberg, then I’d say ‘No, don’t give the person control’ . . . but it hasn’t fallen apart. It’s just logical, then, if you’ve got someone and it hasn’t fallen apart, why would you change it back? To the Board of Ed? [laughs]” (SST6). One group of teachers was upset that the mayor had sought a third term of office by changing the term limit laws in NYC (SST49, LST56). From the perspective of another teacher, it did not matter, because “NYC could have voted him out and they didn’t” (LST24).

Chapter Summary

Teachers’ overall evaluations of mayoral control in NYC included responses that mayoral control was positive, negative, brought no change to the school system, was

mayor-specific in that it was directly related to who the mayor was, the school system governance did not matter as much as the State Board of Regents, and that it was impossible to evaluate. While many teachers were not supportive of Bloomberg's manipulation of the term limits law to run for a third term, even before being reelected for a third term, Chancellor Klein and Mayor Bloomberg had established the longest tenure as a NYC Chancellor and one of the longest school management partnerships in mayorally controlled cities. Those who favored mayoral control and its reauthorization supported increased accountability and its effects on this style of organization. Those who opposed mayoral control and its reauthorization contended that the system had enough avenues to resolve conflict created by a lack of democratic participation and community involvement under a business model of schooling. There was also an interesting finding related to the "Bloomberg effect" in terms of whether the law was "mayor specific" or reauthorized specifically because of Mayor Bloomberg's political and financial background.

CHAPTER 11

Conclusion

With changes in the global economy and a crisis in urban education, urban school systems have worked to find new reforms to improve educational achievement levels for all students. NYC, with the largest public school system in the nation, has historically battled a persistent achievement gap and low graduation rates as compared to other urban communities, and attempted many organizational forms of school governance and reforms in an effort to repair them. To build civic capacity in school reform and ultimately improve student achievement for all students, stakeholders and constituents must share their experiences, goals, and understandings, especially educators—teachers and principals—who have direct contact with students on a daily basis in a continuing effort to improve the educational experience of those students. Their roles and subsequently their perceptions of educational reforms and outcomes are essential to improving schools and student achievement in the future.

While mayoral control can be one avenue that creates the possibility for all voices to be heard because the Mayor is responsible to all constituents, it also has the potential to reduce democratic participation. With a strong form of mayoral control, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have attempted since 2002 to reorganize and reform the DOE to provide the most effective educational experience for 1.1 million children in five boroughs. Research has shown that this method of reform has been effective in increasing student achievement. During the mayoral control law reauthorization debate in 2009, principals' and teachers' perceptions of this reform effort were not widely captured except in cases in which a limited number of educators were proactive in attending and

speaking at public hearings held by other stakeholders or participated in their union's focus groups. Principals' and teachers' voices are important to consider in restructuring and reforming the organizational system because these people are responsible for implementing reform efforts on the front lines as they make day-to-day decisions on how to educate students. Therefore, understanding how they perceive the reforms is essential to the future success of changes in the organization and ultimately the level of student achievement.

This dissertation study was designed to understand (a) secondary school teachers' and principals' perceptions of mayoral control in NYC; (b) the differences in teachers' and principals' perceptions based on borough, school type, years of experience, and route to certification; and (c) how participants' (teachers' and principals') perceptions differed from the empirical evidence or the published evaluations of mayoral control in NYC.

In general, findings about teachers' and principals' perceptions revealed that their perceptions of school governance were based only on what they had personally experienced and how they had been affected by as teachers and principals in their specific roles and in their specific types of schools. Table 10 summarizes how teachers' and principals' perceptions of aspects of mayoral control have compared to the empirical evidence on mayoral control.

Summary of Findings

How did NYC secondary school teachers and principals perceive student achievement under mayoral control? There was no difference in teachers' and principals' perceptions of student achievement; the majority of participants stated that student achievement has increased since 2002. This perception of student achievement supports

Table 10

Comparison of Teachers' and Principals' Perceptions and the Empirical Evidence on Mayoral Control

Topic	Teachers' perceptions	Principals' perceptions	Empirical evidence
Student achievement	Student achievement has increased under mayoral control		X
Parent involvement	Has not changed under mayoral control		Decreased
Educator involvement in the system	Lack of opportunity to be involved	Different level of involvement during different phases of reorganization	X
Increased accountability	Majority saw it as positive; but also saw it as a source of conflict	Majority saw it as positive	X
"Business model" of school governance	Majority described it this way, but some saw this as a positive and others saw it as a negative		X
Improved financial stability/Lack of transparency and democratic participation	Majority agreed	Majority agreed	X
Principal autonomy	Perceived an increase	Experienced no change	
Public perception of education	Increased under mayoral control		X
Non-educator in charge	Frequently cited recommendation by participants		Common in mayorally controlled cities
"Bloomberg-control"—mayor specific	Some recognized this	More frequently recognized	X

quantitative literature that also concluded that student achievement has increased in almost all mayorally controlled cities, including NYC. The statistical significance of these gains in cities with strong mayoral involvement (control), such as NYC, and the gains on state examinations (2006-2008) in almost all the cities suggests that mayoral control is associated with increases in student achievement (IELP, 2010). However, the evidence is insufficient to argue for causality. The data certainly do not indicate that forms of governance with mayoral involvement have a negative effect on student achievement, but rather that governance may not be the most important factor or, at the least, may be only one of many factors related to raising student achievement.

Similarly, in this study there was no consistency across types of schools, boroughs, participant demographics, or route to certification in participants' perceptions that mayoral control had contributed to changes in student achievement. Overall, the structure or organization of urban school governance does not seem to have a significant impact on principals' and teachers' day-to-day operation of their schools, classrooms, and occupational responsibilities, based on 70 qualitative interviews with NYC secondary school teachers and principals conducted for this study. This supports previous research in this area:

High school professional communities differ in strength and focus of mission, in locus and culture of practice—differences that matter profoundly for students and teachers alike [but] the level of community that is closest to the classroom is the most salient for teachers, and thus most able to influence their practice and career experiences. . . . Key to the nature of teachers' community in both instances is the character of its leadership. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, pp. 93, 94)

In other words, principals and teachers are mostly focused on issues that affect them in their daily practice, and subsequently principals' decisions have the greatest impact on teachers' daily practice and career experiences. For principals in NYC, their contact with

the central DOE office was distanced as they reported to regional and network support specialists during various reorganization phases; the contact varied by type of school. Principals at magnet schools had greater autonomy and independence than principals at small or large high schools as principals at magnet schools were not directly affected by various aspects of reform under mayoral control. Teachers' perceptions and understandings were related to type of school in which they worked and the level of knowledge of the reforms that they shared with their principals.

While one goal of mayoral control is to centralize and standardize school system operations, there was a disconnect in how the mayoral or district-level organizational changes and subsequent reforms were implemented in NYC public high schools, as perceived by NYC secondary public school principals and teachers. High schools that were considered to be "specialized" or "magnet" high schools generally continued to operate in isolation of Mayor Bloomberg's reform agenda, whereas high schools that were part of Mayor Bloomberg's reform agenda, such as high schools that were in jeopardy of closing, the large comprehensive high schools, or the small schools that were created as part of small schools of choice movement, were impacted directly by the Mayor's reform agenda in both positive or negative ways. The degree to which subsequent reforms were implemented in those three types of schools varied by school and principal. Naturally, teachers and principals preferred to work in schools where they were currently employed. In other words, teachers and principals, especially those in large and small high schools, preferred their type of "school culture" over another type of school.

Empirical evidence frequently cites a decrease or lack of opportunity for parent involvement under systems of mayoral control because the systems are highly centralized, with little opportunity for stakeholder participation, especially for minority stakeholders (Chambers, 2006, Moscovitch et al., 2010). In contrast, data from this study showed no change in the level of parent involvement at the secondary level under mayoral control, according to teachers and principals. Participants generally reported that parent involvement had remained the same over the past 7 years. In some cases, additional parental involvement may have been gained through an increase in the availability of student and school information available online, but some involvement may also have been lost following the implementation of the new high school admission process which largely eliminated the concept of neighborhood schools.

Mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg has implemented both top-down centralized reform efforts and accountability measures, while simultaneously employing bottom-up school-based reform efforts and accountability measures. Participants in this study saw the benefits of the increased level of accountability at the top of the system but were still searching for true opportunities for bottom-up participation in school reform. According to Ouchi (2003), both are necessary: “We need tough accountability from the central office and flexibility at the level of each individual school. These two forces are not incompatible; both are necessary for healthy schools” (p. 259).

In examining the goal of standardizing and increasing the level of accountability for schools and principals during the various reforms under mayoral control, data showed that the majority of teachers and principals across all types of schools saw an increase in accountability under mayoral control, supporting the empirical evidence. The majority of

participants saw this as a positive aspect of mayoral control as the system under decentralization lacked accountability. Many participants, both teachers and principals, referred to mayoral control as a “business model” of school governance, which also supports the empirical evidence. With this “business type model,” school districts under mayoral control often experience improved financial stability, and teacher and principal participants in this study supported this empirical evidence. However, this type of system has also been known for decreasing the level of transparency and democratic participation within the system, as authority is centralized and does not allow for avenues of participation. Participating teachers and principals supported the empirical evidence in this area as well; while they noted that there was more money to spend within the system, they often questioned how the money was being spent and how contracts were approved. External funding drastically increased under mayoral control. The Gates Foundation played a large role in funding initiatives that became a source of conflict for participating teachers and principals, such as the transformation of large NYC high schools into small schools. Private funding also paid for the first 5 years of the NYC Leadership Academy’s APP to identify and train a new type of school leader to meet the increased demands and accountability of the Bloomberg administration, as well as to fill the increasing number of administrative positions that opened as a result of the increased number of schools in the system and their initial cohorts were not highly recommended by participating teachers and principals.

Empirical evidence supports an increase in principal autonomy under mayorally controlled systems. Despite the varied principals’ perceptions on change in their level of autonomy under the Bloomberg administration based on years of experience and type of

school, the majority of the teachers agreed with media reports that principals had been given more autonomy over their schools under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein. Principals, experiencing the changes and having the opportunity to make decisions as school building leaders, reported the direct effects and changes in the level of power that they possessed under the various system reorganizations and reforms. However, teachers, who were insulated from this layer of authority, were not directly affected and/or aware of the changes unless informed by their principal, and thus they accepted the published media reports that stated principal authority had improved.

One of the published benefits of mayoral control is an increase in the public perception and awareness given to education in cities. Both teachers and principals agreed with the empirical evidence in that the attention paid to education in NYC under mayoral control had increased. Participants also noted that the DOE press office had increased in scope because Mayor Bloomberg has extensive ties to the media industry, which could direct the type of attention that the educational system received and is important to consider when examining what is reported on mayoral control in NYC.

There was a perception among participants that, with an “educator” in charge, reforms and reorganizations would have gone differently. Empirical evidence shows that many mayorally controlled cities do not have an educator in charge of the school system. Despite this common model, the most frequently cited recommendation to improve the structure of school governance in NYC was to ensure that there were more “educational administrators” with power and decision-making ability at all levels of the school system.

Participants agreed with the empirical evidence in that the success of mayoral control is specifically related to who the mayor is. This form of governance is “mayor-

specific” and therefore operates differently in each city. Participants frequently made reference to the political and financial capital that Mayor Bloomberg had as a factor in how reforms and decisions were made about education in NYC. This is an important consideration to keep in mind when examining school governance in other cities or in looking to the reauthorization of mayoral control in NYC when Mayor Bloomberg is no longer the Mayor.

In the end, the majority of participants at the time of their interviews supported the reauthorization of mayoral control, but it was a very slight majority. Principals expressed mixed feelings about mayoral control, but the majority favored mayoral control over the former system of decentralization. However, there was a difference in the principals’ perceptions according to age: The most veteran principal participants in this sample were not in favor of mayoral control and the younger, less-seasoned principals were more supportive of the change to mayoral control. Slightly more teachers favored mayoral control over the previous system of decentralization. Participants from larger schools were more frequently dissatisfied with mayoral control because they were targets of reform. Many participants were upset that Mayor Bloomberg had won a third term and were dissatisfied with the school system under mayoral control because they felt increased pressure to perform, felt that the system relied too heavily on data and that there were no checks and balances on the level of power the Mayor and Chancellor possessed. This is important to note because more recent empirical evidence suggests that the majority of teachers are dissatisfied with Mayor Bloomberg’s governance of the school system.

Overall, principals and teachers confirmed the empirical evidence on mayoral control. This study has also shown that school demographics and the differences between schools matter in terms of policy implementation, whereas differences in teacher demographics are not as important to policy implementation and level of reform. This study has also highlighted the importance of the role of the principal in the school system and the school building as “gate keeper” to reform under the system of mayoral control. It is important to understand that school governance—mayoral control in this case—does not operate in isolation from larger state and national educational policy. Mayoral control in NYC is also directed by external factors such as NCLB regulations, the New York State Board of Regents, and the UFT.

How Do These Findings Support Conflict Theory?

While all participants agreed that student achievement had increased, they did not all agree with the manner of reform implementation in many cases. Some of Mayor Bloomberg’s and Chancellor Klein’s reforms and policy initiatives were sources of conflict for many stakeholders between 2002 and 2009. Conflict related to mayoral control of principals was heightened in relation to issues surrounding the school budget and union in terms of their ability to hire and fire teachers. For teachers, conflict arose in facing issues with students, parents, and administrators. Most principals and teachers did not report conflict regarding larger, citywide organizational policy issues but focused rather on local issues that they face in everyday practice. For example, teachers evaluated the changes that they had experienced with professional development from 2002 and 2009 at a deeper level than any of the other reform efforts or policy initiatives because that was a policy change that affected them directly at the school level. The majority of

these teachers were unable to describe changes in the structure or organization of the middle-level bureaucracy of the NYC public school system because the changes had happened at the district, region, SSO, or network levels. While Mayor Bloomberg may control and govern all of the city schools, several participants reported that they had been more affected by state-level policy, such as policy from the Board of Regents, which dictates their testing schedule, requirements, grading scales and policies, and even graduation rates.

Conflict will always exist within the system, whatever the organizational structure, and stakeholders will continually seek to “make sense” of the system and understand how it affects them. As a result, it is important for the system leader to create multiple pathways and opportunities for stakeholder contribution to the system. While teachers and principals seek participation in decisions that are made at the centralized level, teachers especially are not as impacted by system changes and reforms that occur outside of their classroom and/or they disassociate many of the changes that they are forced to make with the larger organizational structure (the district or the NYC DOE in this case). As a result, it is important that teachers and principals focus their time and energy on playing a meaningful role in school-based planning and initiatives that will lead to more successful schools, as many successful schools ultimately lead to a more successful district.

By including the teachers and principals in your planning group, you’ll have ready access to the natives who know the culture well—and once they’ve learned to trust you, they can tell you all about it, because you’re already decided that the problem is the system rather than the people, they will be inclined to trust you and to want to work with you. (Ouchi, 2003, p. 248)

Chancellor Walcott is working to regain his employees' trust as he seeks to push forward a rigorous instructional agenda and a new system of teacher evaluation during the 2012-2013 school year.

The Importance of Understanding Educator Perceptions

This study confirms previous evidence that there is a difference in how educators “make sense” of policy changes and implement them (see Spillane et al., 2002, for a review). Teachers construct their beliefs based on their preexisting beliefs, their interactions with colleagues, and the conditions of their school, which in this case were differences in school climates among small, large, and magnet high schools. Educators enact policies based on how they understand the policies, and educators in this study understood policies differently (Coburn, 2001; Galucci, 2003; Guthrie, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Siskin, 1994; Spillane, 1998, 1999; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). It was clear that how principals understood policies and chose to inform their teachers affected the teachers' perceptions, understanding, interpretation, and implementation of the policies (Coburn, 2005). Therefore, it is extremely important to consider the roles that educators play within the organization or the DOE, as their positions affect their level of access to and understanding of policies in the organization. If the policies are not clearly communicated to all levels of the organization, their effectiveness is lessened by the time they reach the people on the ground level, which in this case are the teachers across types of schools in NYC—those who have the most direct contact and influence with students.

In this study, participants' roles and subsequent understanding of the reforms did not differ according to their years in the system, their school's borough, or their route to professional certification. However, there was a clear difference between how teachers

and principals experienced reforms under mayoral control, as principals were the leaders in the reform rollout at the school level and thus in many ways the gate-keepers to the teachers understanding the reforms. There was also a clear difference in perceptions based on type of school: Magnet schools remained relatively “untouched” or unaffected by Mayor Bloomberg’s and Chancellor Klein’s reform efforts, whereas small schools and large schools were direct targets of the reform efforts.

Lessons for Governance and Policy Recommendations

Governance and policy matters only when one is directly affected by it. Principals and teachers largely discussed the policies and aspects of governance that had a direct effect on their day-to-day operation so it is important for school district leaders to share school- and classroom-level policy decisions with principals and teachers prior to implementation. This will create a greater level of understanding within the system and therefore a stronger level of implementation at all levels.

Teachers want to be informed and have the opportunity to participate in decision-making. Successful policy implementation requires stakeholder buy-in at all levels—not a new concept. Therefore, it is important to create the opportunity for teachers specifically to voice their opinions on educational decisions that will affect their job-related expectations. In a system as large as NYC, this can be difficult to achieve, but the attempt should be made to reach all types of schools throughout the city.

Principals are “gatekeepers” between policy initiatives and policy implementation. This study has confirmed existing evidence that principals are critical to policy implementation and understanding at the school level. Their role in supporting or not supporting reform is essential to whether teachers and therefore students benefit from

the reforms. School districts should ensure that principals are effective instructional leaders who will relay information to their school community.

Accountability matters, the type of governance structure does not matter, but it must monitor and enforce accountability measures at all levels. Increased accountability, an essential component of centralized school district leadership such as mayoral control, is important to create a successful system of governance. The number of people or the structure of that governance system is less important to the actual organization if their day-to-day involvement with teachers and principals is minimal or nonexistent. The governance structure's role in monitoring and enforcing accountability measures is critical to ensure equity and policy implementation through the system.

Future Research

Several areas for further research were identified in the course of this study. First, since there was a lack of consensus on many initiatives and policies related to the governance structure and organization, a larger sample size is necessary to verify this finding or to determine whether a consensus can be reached by a larger sample. Second, in addition to qualitative interviews, a more formal survey could be administered to all participants to provide a quantitative view of principals' and teachers' perceptions of school governance. Within that survey or the interview, additional questions should be asked of all participants: (a) Are you a NYC resident? And/or did you or your children attend NYC public schools? (b) What is your political affiliation? Did you vote for Mayor Bloomberg in any of the elections? (c) Do you like/agree with your principal regarding how your school is run and/or working to increase student achievement? (d) Are you proud to tell someone that you work in the NYC public school system;

(e) Are you happy with your job and/or school? and (f) What is it like to work as a teacher in this district? Connecting participant responses with political affiliation, neighborhood/residence preference, and motivation or level of effort/feeling about the job is necessary to understand their experience or context for evaluating mayoral control in NYC.

Participant responses could be compared across instructional departments within and across schools to identify trends as high school teachers take their subject context as primary to their work and professional identity. As Susan Stodolsky (1988) put it, the subject matters. Discipline cultures carry different assumptions about the nature of subject matter, student learning, and good teaching. High school teachers spoke of their subject area and particular courses within it as having “classroom goals, standards for how to teach, and more or less prescribed content” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 9). In addition, “academic disciplines are core organizing contexts also for policy systems and thus are channels through which teaching resources and professional development opportunities flow to teachers and classrooms” (p. 9). Some participating teachers in this study, especially math teachers, were concerned about how their content areas had been affected by the State Board of Regents. Teachers see their subject area as a “defining factor in their professional identity . . . they understand their subject area domain as largely determining how and what they teach” and all subjects are not considered “equal” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 55). For example, teachers who teach subjects that have a high level of “sequential dependence,” such as mathematics or foreign languages, claim to have more difficulty in motivating and teaching students, especially in schools with high student mobility levels, whereas science, English, and social studies teachers have

more freedom to design their curriculum around their students and teach subjects that are developing rather than static, which would impact their perception of student achievement levels (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 57).

Besides looking at academic departments, research could compare perceptions held by high school teachers with those held by elementary school teachers. Since many of the early Children's First reforms focused on elementary schools, they may have affected elementary school teachers more than other initiatives impacted the experiences of high school teachers.

A follow-up study could clarify how educators perceive changes in student achievement under a consistent definition, as well as how they perceive how student achievement has changed as compared to how student learning has changed under mayoral control. NCLB has mandated that all students be tested every year, and a debate has arisen as to whether students have been learning or just learning to take a test. This is an important distinction that should be examined from the educator's perspective and presents a valuable area for future research.

Future research could focus on teacher evaluation reports and performance pay contracts. While Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein were unable to enact legislation that would have introduced performance pay for teachers citywide, they initiated a UFT-supported program in 139 elementary and middle schools that pays teachers and principals for increasing student performance. While \$14 million in bonuses was financed mostly by private donations during the 2007-2008 school year, controversy arose when the city agreed to fund the program in the 2008-2009 school year, especially when the total amount of bonuses almost doubled to \$27 million and seven schools that received

bonuses were scheduled to close over the next few years (Medina, 2009l). The DOE was “surprised” by the increase but “pleased” that so many schools had met their target levels of improvement (Medina, 2009l). More recently, Mayor Bloomberg announced a new plan to reward high-performing teachers in his 2012 State-of-the-City address, with \$20,000 salary increases (NYC.gov, 2012). However, the current culture among teachers suggests that the weakness of the system as already described by one teacher is the plan to base these increases and tenure decisions “on test scores . . . kids are not widgets.”

Teacher Data Reports (TDRs), part of the larger Teacher Data Initiative, were created under Mayor Bloomberg as a means of evaluating the progress and performance of teachers in Grades 4 through 8. In fact, 12,000 teachers in Grades 4 through 8 were evaluated over 2 school years to measure their successful getting their students to make academic progress. The reports identified teachers as “low” (20% of teachers evaluated), “middle” (60% of teachers evaluated), and “high” (20% of teachers evaluated) compared to other teachers who taught the same grade citywide, as well as those teachers who taught students who were demographically similar (Medina, 2009l). The reports, produced by a group at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at a cost of \$1.1 million, were not required to be shown to teachers, and their use varied by principal. Some principals required teachers to view them in a meeting with the assistant principal, others offered it as a choice out of fear of “low morale” (Medina, 2009l). In February 2012, after losing a law suit filed by the UFT, the now 2-year-old TDR reports were released publically under the Freedom of Information Act, which allowed newspapers to publish rankings of individual teachers across NYC. Many community members, teachers, and even Chancellor Walcott expressed dissatisfaction, anger, and disgust with

the public release of these data because they were by then 2 years old and they carried more than a 50% margin of error.

These reports are not the end of teacher evaluation. More recently, as part of President Obama's Race to the Top funding and NCLB waiver, states and school districts across the nation are required to link student achievement to teacher performance. Therefore, New York State is currently negotiating a uniform teacher evaluation system and the TDRs of NYC will no longer be used. While the creation of this system will allow for millions in federal educational funding for New York State, both the UFT and CSA have filed lawsuits against the initial drafts. A coalition of public school principals and education researchers on Long Island has filed a statement against the creation of these systems. Future research could gather teachers' and principals' perceptions concerning the issue of a teacher evaluation system based on student performance and the idea of merit pay. Teachers and principals clearly have a great impact on student achievement and Mayor Bloomberg's next direction for reforms highlights the importance of hiring and retaining the most highly qualified teachers as a method of improving student achievement.

We will continue to improve our schools for 1.1 million students by recruiting, rewarding, and retaining the best educators, and providing students with the support they need to thrive. . . . Our administration is not going to stop until there is a great teacher in every classroom and a great school in every neighborhood. (NYC.gov, 2012, para. 2)

Therefore, a continuation of this study focusing on teacher and principal perceptions of teacher evaluation systems and performance pay would aid in the future direction of education policy.

Disclaimer

At the time that this research and data was conducted and analyzed, the author was not an employee of the NYCDOE. While IRB approval was received from the NYCDOE, the results, opinions, and writing of this dissertation is in no way connected to the NYCDOE.

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Appendix A: Demographic Survey**Teacher Interview**

Date: _____

Name: _____

1) What grade(s) and subject(s) do you teach?

2) For how many years have you been teaching?

Total: _____ In NYC: _____

3) How many public schools in NYC have you taught in?

4) Did you go through a traditional teacher certification program or through alternate route certification?

5) Race/Ethnicity: _____

6) Gender: Circle MALE or FEMALE

Email Address: _____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Dissertation Facilitator's Guide INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview for my dissertation at Rutgers University-Newark. As you know, the New York City public school system is currently under a system of mayoral control of schools, with Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein in charge. In August of 2009, the law was reauthorized by the NY State Legislature.

Your responses will shed light on my understanding of how teachers feel about how student achievement and reforms have fared working under the current structure of mayoral control as well as your suggestions for how the system could be improved. It is my hope that you will answer honestly, as I will keep all of your responses confidential and secured in a locked cabinet for three years. There are neither risks nor benefits to participating in this voluntary interview.

First, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the format and procedure for this interview. This interview may last between 45-90 minutes. If at any time you decide you no longer want to participate, you are free to leave the discussion. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this research study—here is my contact information with my cell phone number and email address—where I can be reached and will respond to you promptly. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

*Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of
Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 x 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu*

Do you have any questions?

Questions

- 1) What is your current understanding of how the NYC public schools are governed?
 - a. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the governance structure under Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein?
- 2) I'm interested in how you feel about whether student performance has improved in the last six years under mayoral control of schools. What can you tell me about this based on your experiences?
 - a. Probe: How, if at all, has the Mayor's improvements contributed to academic improvements in the schools?
 - b. Have your school's test scores gone up in the last six years?
- 3) Describe any past experience you have working under different forms of school governance.
 - a. Probe: What was your experience like under decentralization?
- 4) Considering curriculum, practice tests, and pedagogy, explain the extent to which you implemented the citywide reforms under mayoral control.
 - a. Was there a difference before 2007 and after 2007 when principals were given more autonomy?
- 5) How has the level of administrator assistance with professional development and the improvement of your school community changed during the governance changes in the last 6 years?
- 6) What role does the school support organization play in this school?
 - a. Probe: Did you have a say in which SSO your principal chose?
 - b. Are their goals/priorities consistent with your priorities?
 - c. Do they help address your needs?
 - d. Do they help or are they an impediment to the school's improvement efforts?
- 7) How do you perceive mayoral control as an effective policy-making body and or form of school reform?
- 8) What if anything did you agree or disagree with in Mayor Bloomberg's and Chancellor Klein's vision of how to improve the schools.
 - a. Why?
- 9) If you were the mayor or chancellor, what would you would you do the same or differently from Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein to improve the educational quality and achievement levels within your school?
- 10) What do you think is the biggest roadblock that is keeping your school from improving even more?

11) What is your overall evaluation of mayoral control under Mayor Bloomberg?

12) What is your overall evaluation of mayoral control under the leadership of Chancellor Klein?

13) Do you agree with the state legislature's decision to continue mayoral control in New York City?

14) Thank you very much for your honest responses. Is there anything else you would like to share or you feel I have left out?

Thank you for your participation in this project. I really appreciate your time and your responses. Please contact me if you have any additional questions or comments. I wish you the best of luck during the rest of the school year.

Curriculum Vita

Tara Beth Davidson

Education

Ph.D. (Urban Systems: Urban Education Policy Track), Rutgers University, Newark, NJ
 M.A. (Education), City College of New York, New York City, NY
 B.A. (Psychology/Education), Davidson College, Davidson, NC

Professional Experience

Assistant Principal, New York City Department of Education (2011-Present)
 Aspiring Principal, NYC Leadership Academy (2010-2011)
 University Instructor/Supervisor, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ (2006-2010)
 Education Consultant, State of New York (2006-2010)
 Classroom Teacher, Hudson Cliffs School, New York City, NY (2002-2006)
 Classroom Teacher, The Bronx Dance Academy, New York City, NY (2002-2005)

Professional Affiliations

New York State Teacher Permanent Certification in Secondary Social Studies (Grades 7-12)
 New York and New Jersey State School Building Leader Certificate.
 NYC Teacher Fellow, Rutgers Teaching Assistantship, Rutgers Dissertation Fellowship
 American Educational Research Association (AERA)
 American Sociological Association
 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
 National Council for the Social Studies

Publications/Reports

Listening and Learning From Educational Policy and Reform Governance, Mayoral Control, and Urban School Improvement: Lessons for Newark, American Educational Research Association (AERA), New Orleans, LA, April 8-12, 2011.

Decentralization of the NYC Public School System: Reflections on Control and Power. International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), Utrecht, The Netherlands, August 26-29, 2009.

Mayoral Control and the Politics of Popular Education. International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), Utrecht, The Netherlands, August 26-29, 2009.

Mayoral Involvement in the Newark Public Schools: 1953-2007. International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), Newark, NJ, July 23-26, 2008.

Pockets of Excellence: Findings From Effective Schools in Newark and Jersey City, USA. American Educational Research Association (AERA), Chicago, IL, Rutgers University-Newark, April 9-13, 2007.

POLICY REPORTS

School Governance in Nine Cities. (2010). Institute on Education Law and Policy (IELP). Rutgers University-Newark.

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