



EXCELLENCE FOR ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN NOW: OPPOSE  
MAYORAL CONTROL ...CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR AND AN OPEN  
CHALLENGE TO MAYOR de BLASIO

*[March 2014: This is the second in a series of writings (workshops and mobilizations) by The Coalition for Public Education / Coalición por la Educación Pública (CPE / CEP). As always, we call on NYC public school parents<sup>1</sup> to take on the responsibility of changing, and ultimately transforming the NYC public school system.]*

Fellow parents and rights holders, in an earlier writing, we called for the building of a large, energetic, well-informed peoples movement to transform public education and the creation of a public school system which offers excellence with equity to all of its children. In that movement parents must play a leading role.

***Opposition to Mayoral Control and Support for a Peoples Board of Education:*** Over the past few years, tens of thousands of New Yorkers voiced strong clear opposition to the abomination that is *mayoral control of the NYC public education system*. CPE continues to work for the ending of mayoral control and to develop a democratic, human rights based governance structure –a Peoples Board of Education-- for the NYC public education system. During 2014 we are increasing parent support for both of these popular grassroots demands. We also will attempt to galvanize the broad support these proposed policies have enjoyed among other public education “rights holders”, especially, students, teachers & education workers, union memberships, and concerned community

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<sup>1</sup> That includes current public school parents and also past and even future public school parents.

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members at large. While Mayor de Blasio has embraced mayoral control we will engage him and Chancellor Farina on the urgency of ending the autocratic madness of the current anti democratic governance structure for a structure that is sane and empowering to it rights holders.

***Critical Support for some de Blasio Initial Ed Policy Moves:*** CPE supports new mayor de Blasio's universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) policy initiative. If enacted, UPK will represent a breakthrough unlike anything offered during eight years of Giuliani or twelve years of Bloomberg bells and whistles. UPK's early exposure of *all* our very young 'students' to formal cognitive and affective development could be a very important step in bringing equity and –potentially— excellence to NYC's public school system. CPE also concurs with Mr. de Blasio's proposed method of funding UPK –a relatively very small tax on very high income New Yorkers. We agree with his call for well-funded charter schools to pay rent for any space they occupy in public schools and buildings. We also strongly support the mayor's (& Chancellor Fariña's) decision to reverse the Bloomberg (& Wolcott) policy, which permitted charter school mogul, Eva Moskowitz & her Success Academy network to displace the public school students in three schools. Many of the "saved" students have special needs and according to de Blasio-Farina, would have suffered 'unfairly' and 'too much'. CPE sees the policy of charter school co-locations as unfair, invasive and disruptive. Moskowitz has boisterously disputed de Blasio's blockage of the three co locations. First she paid for a reported 70 busloads carrying a few thousand charter school parents & supporters to travel from NYC to Albany to protest de Blasio in front of a sympathetic Governor Cuomo and a group of mostly Republican and some Democrat state legislators. The deep (financial) pockets of Moskowitz-Success Academy and the charter school backers, were easily able to out spend an estimated 800 plus NYC public school parents who contrastingly, came to Albany to support de Blasio on his UPK proposal as well as on his charter co location decision. As ongoing local media have evidenced,

Moskowitz-Success Academy is using a very costly television ad campaign featuring charter school students and parents questioning Mr. de Blasio's fairness and concern for the charter school students' educational wellbeing. Ironically, de Blasio actually allowed 14 of the 17 Bloomberg authorized co locations; disallowing only three of the most glaringly disruptive. We find Moskowitz protests to be hyperbole and without merit. The millions spent on TV commercials, are a rather cynical use of "education money". In fact, the signatories of one important grassroots petition circulating on the Internet, criticize Moskowitz's spendthrift behavior and point out that a more appropriate use would be for rent for charter schools currently utilizing public schools / spaces for free. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, Governor Cuomo and some of his state senate cronies disagree. In concert with Moskowitz, they have developed legislation, which if passed by the state assembly, would defeat de Blasio's proposed UPK tax on wealthy NYC residents and also override the de Blasio co location decision; probably permitting the 3 Success Academy charter schools to displace public school students after all.

***An Open Challenge To A New Administration*** We call on the de Blasio Administration to deal fairly, decisively and with principle on the immediate issues in public education, which you face.

1. On the following immediate issues we call on the de Blasio Administration to:
  - a. support the growing call by parents, progressive educators and organizations to "opt out" on much of the high stakes testing;
  - b. work to reverse charter school proliferation;
  - c. hear from and work with parents, educators and education activists to address the *problem* that is the "common core curriculum", and

- d. settle/complete negotiations on the public union contracts negligently left unresolved by Bloomberg.

However, as you address these and other immediate issues, we challenge you to place them in a progressive, holistic context of what our entire public school system must be, and how it ought to operate. Specifically, we call on you and Chancellor Fariña to work closely with your constituents, that is, public school “rightsholders” to identify the core problem areas within the school system and work collaboratively with us to address these problems in a comprehensive manner. **For us the goal is to re-envision the NYC public school system and to transform it into one that provides the opportunity of an excellent education to every student.**

- 2. To get “there” from “here”, the following Core Public Education Problem Areas must be addressed:
  - a. **Inherently Autocratic School System Governance:** Mayoral Control
  - b. **Finance and Operations:** Unequal Distribution Resources
  - c. **PreK-12 Curricula:** Euro-centric, High Stakes Test-dominated, etc.
  - d. **Pedagogy & Instruction**
  - e. **Teacher training & Professional Development**
  - f. **School Leadership Capacity Building**
  - g. **Principal, Teacher, Staff Recruitment, Hiring and Retention**
  - h. **School System Transition Period** (getting from “here” to “there” )
- 3. The listing below reflects *critical elements*, which CPE proposes for inclusion in a transformed NYC public school system:

**a. School System Governance**

- i. Democratic, Transparent, Human Rights-based System  
(Ending of Mayoral Control)
- ii. Parent and rightsholder-empowered *Peoples Board of Education* (Replacing PEP)
  - 1. System Oversight Authority
  - 2. Chancellor Selection Authority

**b. Finance and Operations**

- i. Equitable distribution of Resources
  - 1. Including “CFE allocations”
  - 2. Increased Classroom Staffing
  - 3. Strategic Allocations: Master, Veteran & Novice Teachers
  - 4. Expanded Special Needs Services
  - 5. Expanded Adult Education Services
- ii. “MWBE”, Small & Local Business Affirming

**c. PreK-12 Curricula** (Culturally relevant, enriching)

- i. Mandatory Historical & Contemporary Cultural Studies
  - 1. African-African American, Indigenous, Latino, Asian
  - 2. Critical Race, Class / Income, Immigrant
  - 3. Social Justice & Engaged Civics

- ii. Mandatory Arts & Humanities
- iii. Mandatory Sustainability Studies (3 Es)<sup>2</sup> ⇒S-T-E-M
  - 1. College Prep
  - 2. 21<sup>st</sup> Century “Green Collar” Vocations

**d. Pedagogy & Instruction**

- i. Nurturing
- ii. Student-centered (Reflecting Student Learning Diversity)
- iii. “Cooperative” & “Independent” learning skills
- iv. Interdisciplinary Subject / Course linkages
- v. Portfolio & Authentic Assessment

**e. Teacher training & Professional Development**

- i. Cultural Competency
- ii. Parental & Community Engagement Competencies
- iii. Gender and Identity (G & I) Competencies
- iv. Affective (attitudinal) Competencies & Subject Competencies
- v. Classroom Management
- vi. Teacher Reflection & Collaborative Teaming

**f. School Leadership Capacity Building**

- i. Principal and Assistant Principal (A. P.) Competencies

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<sup>2</sup> Will incorporate “Environment”, “Ecology” and “Energy (renewable)” Coursework

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1. Cultural, Affective, and Instructional
  2. Administrative and Fiscal Management
  3. Parental & Community Engagement
- ii. Principal and A. P. Leadership Skill sets
    1. Effective Assumption of Responsibility (ies)
    2. Judicious Delegation of Authority
    3. “Community” and “Team” Building
    4. Consensus Building
  - iii. PA and SLT Empowerment

**g. Principal, Teacher, Staff Recruitment, Hiring and Retention**

- i. Increase all Staffing of Color w/ the Competencies
  1. At least in proportion to NYC student demographics
  2. Emphasize local / neighborhood hiring
- ii. Increase all Staffing w/ the Competencies

**h. School System Transition Period (getting from “here” to “there” )**

- i. Democratically Designed & Installed: Over 18 - 24 months

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