

ChildrenFirst

A Bold, Common-Sense Plan
to **Create Great Schools**
for all Children



The magnitude of the continuing challenge

Current and future generations of New York City students will face unprecedented challenges — competing with well-educated students from across the globe and living in an increasingly diverse, multicultural, and, in many ways, divided world. More than ever, success depends on a high-quality education.

We've made a great deal of progress over the past several years and built a foundation for even greater strides in the future. But the enormous scope of the continuing challenge must be frankly acknowledged. Consider:

- **High school graduation rates** are up almost 8 points since 2002, but 4 in 10 of our students still don't earn a high school diploma on time.
- Student performance on the State's tests has jumped 30 points in **mathematics** and about 10 points in **English language arts** in the past four years. And we do well compared to many other large cities.
- But systemwide more than **4 in 10 students** still do not meet or exceed the standards in these basic subjects; in 8th grade, **6 in 10** remain below grade level.
- Moreover, the situation is far worse for our **African-American, Latino, and low-income students**, who on average score several grade levels below their peers.

We must always remember that these data measure real human lives. This nation is premised on the elegantly simple ideal of equality of opportunity, and public education is indeed the great equalizer. We betray that ideal every time we launch a child into life — rich or poor, African-American, Latino or white, native-born or not — who is not positioned to participate in the American dream.

The human stakes could not be higher. We recognized from the start that only by honestly facing the enormity of the challenge could we respond effectively to the moral urgency of our mission.

Please join us.

One Focus:

Student Success

In 2003, under the leadership of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, we began a **bold transformation** of New York City's public schools.

We call our plan Children First, and we mean it. Our goal is to focus everything we do on the only outcome that really matters: student success. As the saying goes, “the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

For all 140,000 employees in the system, there can be no question that the main thing is to help all of our 1.1 million students succeed in life — in their families, in their jobs, in their communities. This is our opportunity ... and our promise to all New Yorkers. This is the moral responsibility of every adult in this system. We have no time to lose.

Putting children's needs ahead of special interests

Getting there has meant putting children's needs first. Putting children first means putting their needs ahead of the special interest politics and bureaucratic inertia that too often drove decisions and got in the way of quality learning. That is why we spent the first few years of the Mayor's administration creating systemwide coherence and stability. We set new academic standards; implemented a core curriculum in reading and mathematics; built stability and coherence in the

system with a new, streamlined management structure; created the nation's finest Leadership Academy to train principals; put a parent coordinator in every school; and began holding everyone in the system more accountable for results, starting with senior leadership.

Having laid the groundwork for change, we took the logical next step by focusing on the three areas that are most likely to produce the bold improvements our system needs and our children deserve: leadership, empowerment, and accountability. Recognizing that a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach couldn't possibly serve all of our students well, we deliberately set out to find the best and brightest educators to lead our schools (leadership). We then gave them and their teachers the tools to do their jobs well (empowerment). And we made them responsible for the success or failure of their students (accountability). Today, the 332 Empowerment Schools are the most visible sign of this bold, achievement-centered approach.

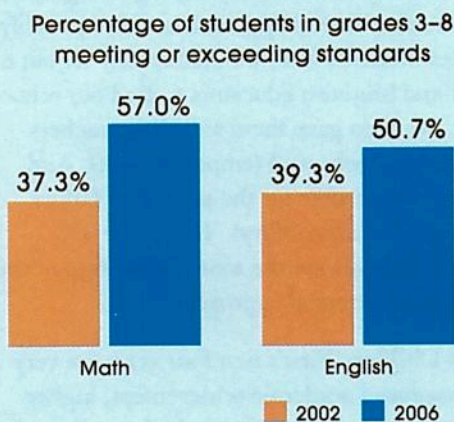
Results from Children First's first four years are very promising: improved academic achievement, higher graduation rates, safer schools, more high-quality school options, a smaller bureaucracy, higher teacher salaries, new buildings, and huge increases in private support. (See sidebar on page 4.)

A next wave of bold changes to accelerate reform

As heartening as these gains are, we still have a very long way to go. We must build on the groundwork we have laid. Now, we are poised to take the necessary next steps to accelerate student progress.

Accomplishments

- **58.2%** of students graduated on time in 2005, up from 50.8% in 2002
- **\$200 million** cut from DOE in first term, \$73 million so far in second term
- **11.6%** fewer major school crimes in 2006 than in 2002
- **184** new small secondary schools, 6 elementary schools, and 36 charter schools
- **200** new school leaders from the Leadership Academy
- **332** principals chose to become Empowerment Schools
- **43%** more pay for teachers
- **\$13 billion** facilities plan
- **\$345 million** in private contributions
- **Parent coordinator** in every school
- **Social promotion** ended in grades 3, 5, and 7
- **Class size** cut by up to 8%



Source: NYCDOE (2006)

There isn't a moment to spare. Not when 140,000 students, ages 16 to 21, have dropped out or are at risk of doing so; not when more than 60 percent of our 8th graders are still not reading or doing math at grade level; not when the average African-American, Latino, and low-income high school students perform several grade levels below their peers.

That is why we are introducing a new set of improvements that will shrink the bureaucracy even further and give educators even more capacity to prepare all children to thrive.

These changes represent a mix of *boldness* and *common sense*.

Bold because no other large school district in the country, let alone one as large as ours, has undertaken such comprehensive and coherent reforms.

Bold because incremental changes — piloting a program here and there, tinkering around the edges — will not deliver the results that the public has a right to expect and our parents have a right to demand.

And *bold* because we have to be, to change the culture of the system ...

- From a culture of excuses, where educators too often blame the kids and their families for low performance, to a culture of accountability, where adults take responsibility for ensuring that *all* children, regardless of circumstances, learn and achieve.
- From a culture of compliance, where educators waste too much time doing rote paperwork and following one-size-fits-all directions from administrators, to a culture of achievement, where the central focus is on doing whatever it takes to enable each and every student to learn.
- From a culture of top-down bureaucracy, where central and regional offices make most of the decisions, to a culture of great schools, where principals and their teams design the programs that their particular students need to succeed.

Common sense because all of our integrated improvements are based on solid evidence about what works.



Common sense because every plan, every program, every initiative is driven by a single, simple question: Will this help ensure that our schools are ones where each of us would want our own children to attend?

And *common sense* because each of these plans and initiatives is designed to help educators learn what works and what doesn't and adjust their teaching accordingly.

We need your help

The changes will not be easy. Defenders of the old ways of doing things in public schools have always found a million reasons for opposing real change. But we are not here to serve and satisfy the protectors of the status quo. Our job is to educate children to succeed in an increasingly competitive and diverse society.

Successfully carrying out our program will require honesty and transparency. We don't have all the answers. We are committed to telling the truth about

On the move

- From a culture of excuses to a culture of accountability
- From a culture of compliance to a culture of achievement
- From a culture of top-down bureaucracy to a culture of great schools

all of our outcomes, whatever they may be. Working closely with parents and educators, we will continue to strengthen our approaches to get it right for our children. Only one test applies: Does the idea work for students? If not, we will work with parents, teachers, principals, and others to find a better way.
Children First.

“Empowerment allows us decisionmaking within our own school. And who knows our school better than us?”

— Leslie Hammer, Health Coordinator, P.S. 43, Queens

Putting Children First Means Creating 1,400 Great Schools

We are accelerating our efforts to create a system of great schools led by great principals, with the authority, resources, and responsibility to teach all of our students well. We want our principals and teachers to be doers and decision makers.

We are continuing our commitment to high standards and effective teaching.

We are giving parents more quality choices for their children, along with timely information to help them make good choices. And we are creating a new sense of urgency among the adults in the system and the City — our kids can't wait.

Our plan rests on three big ideas:

1. Those closest to the students should get to make the key decisions about what will best help their students succeed

This means principals and their teams will have much broader discretion over what happens in their schools, including which teachers to hire and retain and which strategies to use. When principals and their teams have the right to choose services and practices that best meet the particular needs of their schools, they will improve the quality of education for students. And, since we know that education happens in classrooms, not in back offices,

This plan continues to shrink the bureaucracy and create a culture of **innovation**, **accountability**, and **fairness** in our schools.

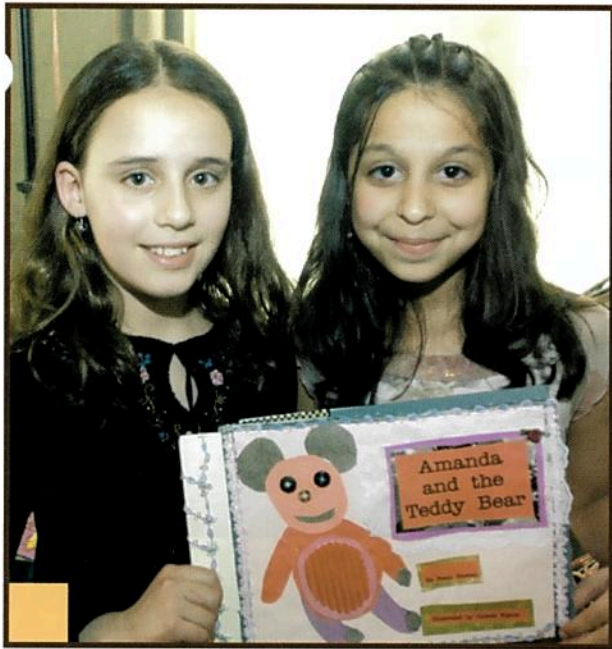
more money will flow directly to schools, giving principals and their teams greater flexibility to allocate resources in the way that is best for them and their students.

2. Empowered schools must be accountable for results

The flipside of empowerment is accountability. Principals, teachers, and parents will have better tools to monitor and evaluate student performance. Our educators will receive better training to help them use this information to improve instruction and identify the needs of each individual student. Information will become clearer and more transparent, so parents can better understand how their children are doing and make smarter choices about the best schools for them. We will reward strong school performance and enforce strict consequences for poor performance.

3. Our schools should be able to count on funding that is fair and transparent

We are introducing a bold new initiative to ensure that school funding is simpler and fairer. Funds will follow students to the schools they attend. Students with the same characteristics (grade level, poverty, special needs, etc.) will get the same funding.



School-based implementation, with systemwide standards

The Department of Education will continue to set and enforce standards, establish high expectations and ensure they are met, provide resources, and build capacity. One of our chief responsibilities also will be communicating with and engaging our broad school community to ensure that all New Yorkers — from parents to community-based organizations — can be involved in improving our schools. The Chancellor and his team will set clear standards and expectations about how much students must learn, and they will vigilantly measure students' performance and progress against those standards.

We will provide clear information to our community and train our professionals to ensure schools have what they need to teach students well. We will provide the basic systems (financial, human resources, data, and communications) to serve schools so they don't have to reinvent their own infrastructure. And we will set clear standards for who is accountable for what. This means holding everyone from teachers to principals to the Chancellor accountable for students' academic progress. Regardless of the support organization serving a school, the Chancellor at all time reserves the authority to intervene when a school requires help or is failing. The community superintendents will retain all the authority conferred by law.



1. Those closest to students get to make key decisions about

- Education programs
- Choice of partners and supports
- Staffing
- Budgets, including more resources from central office

2. Empowered schools are accountable for results

- Fair and comprehensive evaluation of schools
- Timely and accurate data to principals and teachers
- Clear reports to parents and the public
- Rewards for success; consequences for failure

3. Schools can count on fair, transparent funding

- Fair Student Funding that meets individual student needs

1.

Those closest to the students should get to make the key decisions about what will best help their students succeed

The only way we'll educate all students to high standards is by having a strong leader in each of our 1,400 schools. To attract the best and brightest, we must give them greater control over what matters most: staffing, instructional strategies, budget, and an entire system of external supports to meet their needs. It is not fair to hold principals accountable for the performance of their students without also giving them the freedom to organize their schools for success.

Principals need the ability to recruit and keep the best teachers

We know how important good teachers are. Research shows that an average student lucky enough to have three teachers in a row in the top 25 percent of all our teachers will improve, rising from the 50th to the 60th percentile. But a student with three teachers in a row in the bottom 25 percent will fall from the 50th to the 40th percentile. The difference between the 40th and the 60th percentile is enormous, often the difference between graduating from high school or not. And it's all because of the quality of the teachers the student had.

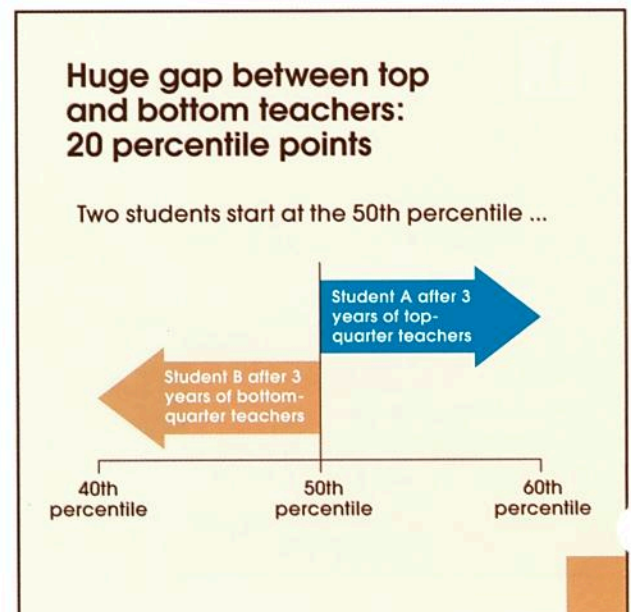
Thankfully, the vast majority of the 80,000 teachers in our schools are hard-working, competent, and committed. Our challenge is to make sure that *all* students are taught by successful teachers.

Over the past few years, we have made significant progress to improve teaching. Major efforts include: a 43 percent increase in teacher salaries; the creation of housing bonuses that provide a \$15,000 incentive to



help recruit teachers in shortage areas such as math, science, and special education; and the Lead Teacher program, which allows us to reward excellent teachers with an additional \$10,000 a year to mentor and coach other teachers. We also ended “bumping” and “force-placing,” practices that forced principals to hire teachers even if they weren't qualified or a good fit for the school. Now, through a new “open market hiring system,” more than 3,000 experienced teachers applied for open jobs and were selected by principals for vacancies across the system. And through our Teaching Fellows program and Teach For America, we have selected excellent teachers for some of our hardest-to-staff teaching roles.

Building on these gains, we will implement two new initiatives starting in the 2007–08 school year.



First, make teacher tenure a well-deserved honor, not a routine right

Today, tenure is all but automatic. About 99 percent of teachers receive it after three years as a matter of course. We want as many teachers as possible to receive tenure, but because tenure status makes it very difficult to remove a teacher for poor performance, we want to make sure teachers earn it with good teaching, not just the passage of time. Under the new policy, principals will be required to focus rigorously on how they support new teachers' development and on how they evaluate their performance. Principals will receive:

- **Intensive training** on how to work with teachers individually and in teams to diagnose the learning needs of all students, set meaningful goals and targets, assess outcomes, and adjust interventions as appropriate;
- **New tools** to help them work with teachers on their development;
- **Timetables and benchmarks** for providing feedback and support to teachers during their first three years. This feedback will occur throughout a novice teacher's time in the classroom;
- **More data** about how teachers are helping to improve student achievement; and
- **Timely notices and reminders** of the dates when teachers are scheduled to receive tenure. The most important notice will require principals, 120 days from the tenure date, to *certify personally* that a teacher deserves tenure. If the principal believes otherwise, he or she will be asked either to continue working with the teacher or to complete the materials for discontinuance.

Finally, an affirmative decision on tenure affects not only an individual school but the entire system. Accordingly, we will require that a principal's judgment be reviewed to ensure that the decision was genuinely based on Children First principles. Indeed, so critical is this process that Mayor Bloomberg will meet annually with each group of newly tenured teachers to celebrate their accomplishment.

Second, increase supports to help address poorly performing tenured teachers

The vast majority of our teachers are doing a good job, but those who do not stand in the way of student suc-

cess. And they undermine the morale of all the other hard-working teachers and professionals in the school.

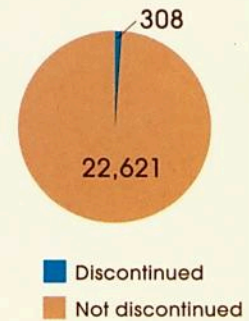
Today, only 1.2 percent of our tens of thousands of tenured teachers receive an unsatisfactory rating. Common sense — coupled with the low achievement of too many of our students — strongly suggests that this number is unreasonably low. Too often, principals don't bother giving an honest rating because in the past it hasn't led anywhere; because the process of removing an incompetent teacher takes too long and seems a waste of time; or because it is the path of least resistance to counsel a teacher to move to another school. We are changing that.

In our last contract negotiation, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) agreed to participate in a new peer intervention program for teachers who are struggling. We will work with the UFT to put that program in place. To make sure peer intervention works, we will provide principals with two other kinds of support:

- A small team of expert retired principals will help with observations, write-ups, and efforts to help teachers improve their work in the classroom, or if necessary, document continued poor performance.
- In cases where remediation fails, we will give principals additional support to help them remove the lowest performers.

These interventions will send an essential message to everyone: results matter. When dedicated principals, teachers, and parents see teachers who are consistently falling far short of expectations, they no longer will have to stand by in frustration while that teacher undermines the future of the children in their care. It's not fair to hold students accountable for high achievement without also holding adults accountable for their own performance. **Children First.**

1.3% of probationary teachers were discontinued in 2004-05



Source: NYCDOE HR (2006)

0.08% of tenured teachers were terminated in 2004-05



Source: NYCDOE DHR (2006)



Principals need the flexibility to select the school support organization that is the best fit for their students

A great school is the place where students are well served. To keep things running smoothly, all schools need support and assistance from people outside their building: help identifying best practices in education; help translating mandates into action; and help prioritizing among competing demands on resources and time. When expectations are clear for school leaders and schools, however, the educators in the schools need to be able to define for themselves what support they need to serve the needs of their students.

Imagine a system in which each school can shop around for the support services that give its students the best chance of succeeding and are most consistent with the priorities and focus of the school. Some will want high levels of support. Some will want support tailored to a particular part of their school operation, be it their curriculum, their educational focus, or perhaps their culture. They may need help revising their professional development program ... or rethinking how they use the school day and week ... or increasing the involvement of parents and families ... or using the arts to help reinforce literature and math. To ensure that the support from outside the school is consistent with and advances the priorities and focus inside the buildings, school leaders need the ability to choose the kind of support that best meets their needs.

Starting in the 2007–08 school year, *all* principals — not just those leading Empowerment Schools — will have that choice. They will have the power to partner with the support organization that, in their judgment as leaders and educators, will put their schools in the best possible position to meet ambitious student achievement goals. While the Department of Education (DOE) will continue to deliver many important services and operational supports, as we have for Empowerment Schools, leaders will have three options for choosing the level of support they need in planning and operating their school programs:

Become an Empowerment School

Already, 332 principals have embraced this approach, which features:

- Authority over key educational decisions in their schools, including instructional practices, professional development, organization, school schedules, and summer programs;
- Greater discretion over their budgets, including the power to buy needed services from outside vendors, universities, or the district;
- Significant additional discretionary funds. (Exact figures cannot yet be projected for 2007–08, but in 2006–07, Empowerment Schools received on average \$150,000 previously tied up in the bureaucracy and \$100,000 that schools previously had been told how to spend);
- Authority to select and evaluate an administrative support team and participate in a multi-school network of similar schools;
- Fewer administrative requirements — less reporting and paperwork, optional attendance at most DOE meetings, and streamlined communications with the system; and
- More accountability for results — performance agreements that spell out clear student achievement goals and guidelines.

Partner with an *internal* Learning Support Organization (LSO)

We will replace the 10 regions with four school support structures, which will be developed and led by our most accomplished regional leaders. These LSOs will

design their own distinctive support offerings, focusing on such areas as budgeting, program, scheduling, and professional development. Such opportunities will be designed not to meet the need of every leader, but for those who need and want the particular supports offered. These models will be developed in detail during the winter and spring.

Partner with an external Partnership Support Organization (PSO)

There are wide communities of educators outside the department that also can offer innovative ideas to our schools. If principals believe they can provide the support that best enables their schools to deliver for students, we will respect that choice. PSOs will bring talent to our public schools and leverage what's working elsewhere in our City and our country to help the students of New York City.

Like the internal LSOs, these models will offer a comprehensive range of services and technical assistance to support principals and their staffs. Partners might include any of the nonprofit intermediary organizations that are already partnering with many of our schools. They also might include other nonprofits or colleges and universities. Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, the DOE will screen prospective partners and develop a market of qualified external providers willing to support principals and schools as they pursue student achievement.

In the future, principals and schools, instead of spending their time filling out DOE paperwork and responding to outside requests that are not consistent with their needs, will now be in the driver's seat. They will have the freedom and expertise to choose the approach and/or partnership that will best meet the needs of the students in their buildings. **Children First.**

That said, all schools will remain public schools, subject to public authority and control. Under all the support options:

- DOE will continue to set and enforce standards and hold schools to a common and rigorous set of accountabilities;
- All employment decisions, including whether to hire or terminate principals, will remain with the DOE, and all collective bargaining agreements continue to apply;

Redirecting resources to schools

Cutting the bureaucracy and redirecting incremental dollars to schools

Pre-FY07	more than \$200 million
FY07	nearly \$89 million*
FY08	\$40 million identified to date

*nearly all of which was reallocated to schools

- Community superintendents will retain all the rights and authority conferred by law;
- The Chancellor will retain the right to intervene in a school if things are headed in the wrong direction; and
- DOE will continue to provide the basic systems (financial, human resources, data, and communications) to serve schools.

Principals need more resources and less red tape

A central focus of our leadership-empowerment-accountability agenda is to ensure that more resources go where they can make the most difference in improving student achievement: our schools.

Mayor Bloomberg redirected more than \$200 million from the DOE bureaucracy in his first term. And he has committed to redirecting an additional \$200 million to schools in his second term; already in this phase we have reallocated about \$73 million from the regional bureaucracies to schools and classrooms.

Other school districts talk about such bold downsizing; New York City is one of the few to have walked the talk. Principals are in a far better position than a distant bureaucrat to know what they need to be successful. And since they are accountable for results, it is only fair to give them the resources to chart their own path to student success. **Children First.**

2.

Empowered schools and leaders must be held accountable for results

In return for increased autonomy, flexibility, and resources, we are holding school leaders accountable for educating all of their students to meet our challenging standards. Our expectations are clearer, more transparent, and easier to understand by educators and parents alike. Our tools are more powerful, designed to help principals and teachers pinpoint weaknesses in instruction, then act expeditiously to close the gaps. And our commitment to deal forcefully with chronically low-performing schools is firm.

Our accountability system has three main components, which have been tested in the Empowerment Schools and now will be implemented citywide, starting in the 2007–08 school year.

Make it clear to parents how schools are performing and how they compare

Parents are our partners in helping make sure that every child succeeds. But to be effective advocates for their children, they need good information. Making school reports easier to understand and accessible will help parents make better choices for their children. And improved reports help us fulfill our commitment to honesty, transparency, and continuous improvement; no more surprises or mysteries about how well we are doing.

Progress Reports

Starting next fall, every school will receive an overall letter grade (A–F) and subscores that compare it both to similar schools and to the City’s best schools. The grade will be based on performance (numbers of students at or above proficiency on tests in reading and math), progress (how much learning has taken place since the



student entered the school, what educators call “value-added”), and the school environment (attendance, safety, and parent/student/teacher satisfaction). Schools will get additional recognition for improving the learning of low-performing students enough to close the achievement gap between them and other students.

Quality Reviews

Starting this year, all schools are being evaluated by skilled educators who spend up to three days observing the teaching that occurs in classrooms and interviewing the principal, teachers, parents, and students. A short report summarizes the observations, gives each school

“*I and my child have more of a voice in the school. More than ever, we are a community standing together to support our children and ensure their success.*”

— Mabelle Davis, Parents Association President, Nev Explorers High School, Bronx

n overall score, and scores subcategories of special focus. This year, schools can receive a score of “well-developed,” “proficient,” or “undeveloped.” Based on principal feedback, we will expand this to a five-point scale in Fall 2007. We are publishing the reports in 10 languages and making them available on the Web site for parents to read.

Evaluations such as these are fairer and make much more sense than the single snapshots used by the federal No Child Left Behind law. Principals and teachers get credit for *all* progress students make, including progress on a child’s way toward proficiency and progress *beyond* proficiency to full mastery. On-site observations by expert educators help overcome the limitations of barebones statistical reports and consider not only outcomes but how well schools are organized to succeed. Using parent, teacher, and student surveys to measure a school’s environment vastly expands what we can learn about our schools from the people most affected by them. Comparing a school to others facing the same challenges provides a much more reliable evaluation than comparing it to schools with highly selective admissions criteria.

Offer a broader set of tools to accurately measure and analyze student achievement

Periodic assessments

Instead of waiting until the end of the year to see how well students are doing in reading and math, schools will measure student progress in all grades four or five times a year. These diagnostic assessments will help teachers adjust their instruction when there is still time to make a difference; if Jane needs more help in vocabulary and Jose needs more help in fractions, it makes no sense to wait until June to have that information and act on it. By sharing this information with parents throughout the year, parents can work more closely with the teacher to help their children achieve. This doesn’t mean more high stakes testing; it means better and smarter diagnostics so that results reflecting each student’s strengths and needs can be used every day to make a difference in learning.

Powerful data system

Through our new Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS), principals, teachers, and parents will have at their fingertips information that allows them to answer questions such as:

- How well are students doing in each subject and subset (fractions, vocabulary, etc.) — sliced and diced by grade, by school, by classroom, by student?
- Are trends going up ... or down?
- Where do we need to intensify training and other support?
- Do certain school conditions, such as a specific curriculum or specific type of teacher development, influence student performance more than others?
- Which schools and classrooms are models of effective practice from which others can learn?

This online system, designed to be the most powerful in the nation, will help take the guesswork out of what good teaching looks like. It will allow us to closely monitor the progress of each individual student as he or she advances through the grades and moves from one school to another. And it will help principals and teachers to continue to transform our schools from a culture of uniformity, where every student gets the same

Progress Reports offer more balanced view

School environment

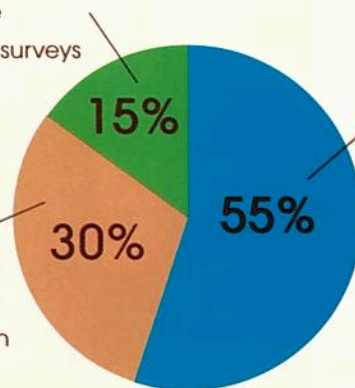
- Attendance
- Satisfaction surveys

Student performance

- Level 3 or 4 in ELA and math

Student progress

- At least one year gain in ELA and math



Plus extra credit for closing achievement gap for English language learners, and special education, Latino, and African-American students

Sample teacher report

Showing that students in this English class need more help on “predicting,” less on getting the “main idea.”

	Concept					
	Summary	Main idea	Facts vs. opinion	Context clues	Predicting	Paraphrasing
Student 1	On target	On target	On target	On target	Behind	On target
Student 2	On target	On target	On target	On target	Behind	On target
Student 3	On target	Caution	On target	Caution	Behind	Behind
Student 4	On target	Caution	On target	On target	Behind	On target
Student 5	On target	On target	On target	On target	Behind	On target
Student 6	Behind	Caution	Behind	Behind	Caution	Caution
Student 7	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target
Student 8	On target	On target	Caution	On target	On target	On target
Student 9	On target	On target	On target	On target	Behind	Behind
Student 10	On target	On target	On target	On target	Behind	Behind
Student 11	On target	Caution	On target	On target	Behind	On target
Student 12	On target	Caution	On target	Caution	Behind	On target
Student 13	On target	On target	On target	Caution	Behind	On target
Student 14	On target	On target	On target	Caution	Behind	On target
Student 15	On target	Behind	On target	Caution	Behind	On target
Student 16	On target	On target	On target	On target	Behind	On target
Student 17	On target	Caution	On target	On target	Behind	On target

On target
 Caution
 Behind

instruction even if he or she already knows the material, to a culture of customization, where teachers use the best methods and thinking available throughout the City to tailor instruction to the learning needs of each individual student.

Intensive support

Since September 2006, we have provided Empowerment Schools with intensive training to help them use the new data tools to improve student learning. Comprehensive ongoing training has been provided to teams of experienced educators in each school. Working with parents, students, and networks of other schools, the teams have identified the children most in need of improvement, diagnosed the problems, developed intervention plans, identified performance targets, and used the information in the other accountability tools (including the Progress Reports, Quality Reviews, and Periodic Assessments) to track forward progress and adjust quickly when plans are not succeeding. In the second year of the program, the teams extend the training to teachers and students in the school. We have already begun training principals outside the Empowerment Schools to use all of the accountability tools. Starting next year, this same Children First Intensive Training program will be made available to every school in the City.

An emphasis of all our work here is to transform data and information into action, focused on “the main thing”—improved student achievement. Too often in

“For me, as a parent, empowerment has meant freedom. We are now able to make specific choices with our budget that are best for our school community. I am grateful for these choices.”

— Christine Cirker, parent and former PTA co-president, Anderson School, Manhattan

In the past, principals, teachers, and parents either didn't have access to timely information, didn't understand it, or just as troubling, didn't know what to do with it. That will change.

Reward strong performance and enforce consequences for chronically low-performing schools

To be sure that powerful new tools change behavior, it is important that educators, parents, and the public know that we are serious about rewarding success and dealing with failure.

All schools will be graded based on their outcomes, focused heavily on year-to-year student progress and how well a school is progressing compared to schools serving similar students. Initially we will group schools as follows:

A	Top 15% of schools based on 2004–07 averages
B	Next 40% of schools
C	Next 30% of schools
D	Next 10% of schools
F	Lowest 5% of schools

We will evaluate and readjust the scale approximately every five years.

“A” schools with high Quality Review scores will have the opportunity to receive bonuses for serving as demonstration sites for others. Bonuses could amount to a 1 percent increase in the per-student allocation.

“A” and “B” schools with high Quality Review scores will be eligible to receive bonuses (\$750 to \$1,500) for every student they accept from schools identified as poor performing by City and State accountability measures.

“C” schools are not eligible for rewards and will not face consequences, although schools receiving three consecutive “C” ratings will be subject to “D” school consequences.

“D” and “F” schools face a four-year cycle of target setting and structured planning, potential leadership changes, more target setting, and ultimately school restructuring or closure if their performance does not improve. These interventions will be aggressive, but the needs of children must be paramount. **Children First.**



3.

Principals and parents should be able to count on funding that is fair and transparent

If we want principals to meet the needs of each and every one of their diverse students, then our funding system also must treat students as individuals. Common sense and research show us that some students need more funding than others to meet our high expectations. Funds should follow individual students, not be tied to arcane funding formulas that often have more to do with long-ago political deals than with meeting our current educational goals.

“*I can only say that I am proud that my parents, teachers, and school constituency made the decision to join the Empowerment Zone. We must continue to evaluate and make changes where necessary to best meet the needs of our students. Resisting change does not promote growth but prolongs the inevitable.*”

— Max Glover, Principal,
P.S. 178, Brooklyn



Today’s system is rife with inequities. Many schools (high poverty and low poverty) receive thousands of City taxpayer dollars *less* for every student’s basic education than other schools with very similar student characteristics.

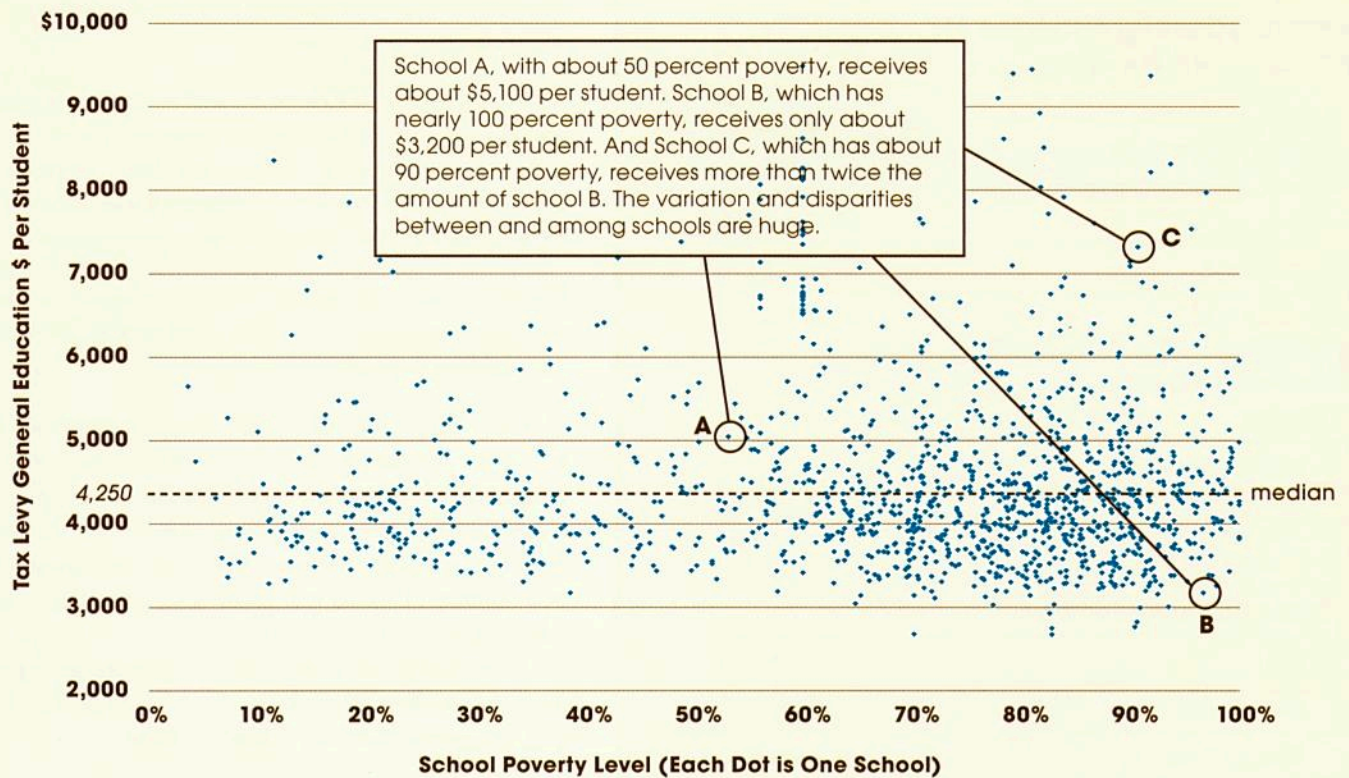
Two schools with similar student mixes can receive budgets that differ by more than \$1 million.

Moreover, our process for allocating funds is impossibly complex. School budgets are based on 90 separate funding streams, covering items from unpacking boxes to grading tests. Final budget allocations are often difficult to understand or justify and, in some cases, perpetuate political decisions made long ago. As a result, many students are chronically under-funded, most educators and parents are in the dark, and many principals feel their hands are tied by centralized budget mandates.

We cannot ask principals to lead — and be held accountable for results — unless they have their fair share of the City’s funds, unless they and their communities are clear about how much they have, and unless they have much more spending flexibility.

To transform this picture, we propose to join the growing number of school districts that are choosing to “fund the child.” All dollars will follow the student to the public school that he or she attends. Schools will receive a base allocation for each student, but some students will receive additional dollars, depending on their needs. On top of these additional, City-generated

Huge variation in school funding



Similar schools, different funding

Elementary school A		Elementary school B	
Enrollment	750	Enrollment	800
Poverty %	86%	Poverty %	95%
English language learners %	12%	English language learners %	10%
Tax levy general education funds	\$4,200,000	Tax levy general education funds	\$2,970,000
Tax levy general education per student	\$5,600	Tax levy general education per student	\$3,713

\$1,887 difference per student

Source: NYCDOE (2006)

Proposed weight ranges for Fair Student Funding

Dollars per student

Grade-level weights

K-5	\$3,000–\$3,750
Grades 6–8	\$3,000–\$3,750
Grades 9–12	\$3,000–\$3,750

Needs-based weights

Poverty

K-5	\$450–\$750
Grades 6–8	\$150–\$600
Grades 9–12	\$150–\$600

English language learners

K-5	\$180–\$300
Grades 6–8	\$270–\$450
Grades 9–12	\$360–\$600

Low academic achievement

K-5	N/A
Grades 6–8	\$450–\$1,050
Grades 9–12	\$450–\$1,050

Special education	\$1,500–\$6,000
-------------------	-----------------

Transfer under NCLB	\$750–\$1,500
---------------------	---------------

Under consideration for 2008–2009

Students with interrupted formal education

Gifted and talented students

NOTE: Fair Student Funding is a proposal for City tax dollars that are on school budgets. Figures do not include important school resources such as funds not on school budgets (like food and maintenance) or not from the City (federal- and state-targeted programs such as “Title I” for high-poverty schools or “Title III” for English language learners).

Source: NYCDOE (2006)

dollars, federal and state programs already providing extra funding for low-income and non-English-speaking students will continue.

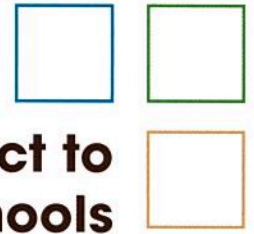
The Department of Education will work closely with parents, schools, and community groups around the City to host community discussions about the range of extra weights that we are considering for students. The table to the left illustrates how we might proceed.

We will phase in the system over several years in a way that preserves the core programs and services on which our children depend.

Our new Fair Student Funding system is equitable. It is easy to understand; about two-thirds of a school’s budget will be presented on a single, simple page. It is empowering; principals will have more control over their budgets and additional incentives to welcome new students. Parents will know that, no matter which school their child attends, the resources will follow. And it makes good common sense. If we are going to meet the needs of all students, we must do so with fair and transparent funding. **Children First.**

“To keep the dream alive, one must be empowered. The most significant thing at the end of each day is to know that I have been given the freedom to decide what’s best for my students.”

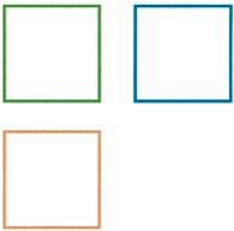
— Iris Zucker, Principal, Marble Hill High School for International Studies, Bronx



What you can expect to see in all of our schools

With the changes described in the previous pages, we will continue the bold transformation of schools that we began several years ago. In the process, we will fulfill our commitment to every student, every parent, and every New Yorker to create a system of great schools that will provide opportunities for each and every student to thrive in the 21st century.

Now	Under the new system
<p>All schools (except Empowerment Schools) are automatically supported by one of the regions, based solely on geography.</p> <p>Billions of dollars are spent centrally "on behalf of schools," even if the schools don't consider the resources useful for improving student achievement.</p> <p>Teacher tenure is virtually automatic, and removing even the lowest-performing tenured teacher rarely happens.</p>	<p>Principals will choose from an array of options: being an Empowerment School, working with an external Partnership Support Organization (nonprofit, university, etc.), or working with an Internal Learning Support Organization.</p> <p>More and more resources will be put directly in the hands of principals, who can decide for themselves which strategies and supports will best serve their students.</p> <p>Teacher tenure will be earned, not awarded by default.</p>
<p>Accountability is focused on one-time, year-end snapshots, with no credit for individual student progress and no incentives to attract needier students.</p>	<p>Schools will get credit for many kinds of improvements in student learning; narrative reports will supplement test scores; all schools will be graded; and schools will earn extra credit for gains by their neediest students.</p>
<p>Schools are funded by a dizzying array of complex "allocation of funds," which obscure the reality that schools are given much different levels of funds even if they're serving similar children in similar programs.</p>	<p>Funding will be fair and transparent. Schools will receive funds based primarily on the learning challenges of the children they serve.</p>



“ Our mission over the next four years will be: To create — from preschool through high school — a public education system second to none. We will strengthen the three pillars of our school reform: **Leadership, Accountability, and Empowerment**, putting resources and authority where they belong: in the schools of our City. And because the eyes of the nation are on our efforts, our successes hold the promise of hope for schools across the land. What a wonderful gift for New York to share with the rest of our country. ”

— Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg,
January 1, 2006



NYC Department of Education
Chancellor's Office
NYC Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007