



EDUCATION COUNCIL CONSORTIUM (ECC)
Resolution on School Governance and Mayoral Control
educationcouncilconsortium@yahoo.com
Approved by ECC members at a meeting on May 23, 2015

The Education Council Consortium (ECC) is a group of parents and community members who have been elected or appointed to serve on District and Citywide Community Education Councils, representing 1.1 million public school students, including children who are receiving special education services and who are English Language Learners. The ECC was formed to address issues that affect schools and communities throughout all the boroughs and meets regularly with the Chancellor to help shape, advise, provide feedback and comment on educational policies, visions and goals.

The NY State Legislature by Chapter 91 of the Laws of 2002, Education Law 2590, significantly restructured the governance of New York City Public Schools, effective June 30, 2003, giving the Mayor and the Chancellor greater authority over the school system. This law was to sunset on June 30, 2009 unless amended or continued by the New York State legislature. The law was amended and continued in August 2009 and is to sunset on June 30, 2015, unless amended or continued by the NYS Legislature.

The following resolution, offering amendments to the current law, should it continue, was developed with input from ECC members based on their experiences in their schools and their vast knowledge of the effects of mayoral control on what is happening in their school communities.

WHEREAS, restructuring a local district system that mostly worked in filling the needs of families in admissions and choice, and replacing it with a centralized system has caused confusion, frustration and destabilization; and

WHEREAS, under mayoral control, parents and the community strongly state that their concerns are not taken into consideration when the NYC Department of Education (DOE) makes policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, having members of the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) serve at the pleasure of the officials who appoint them undermines the independence of the panel; and

WHEREAS, the present system that only allows three parent association officers from each school in a District to select members to their Community Education Council, or a parent from each District's Presidents' Council to select members to the Citywide Councils is undemocratic, and

WHEREAS, the law limits District CECs Borough President Appointees to two terms, parents new to the councils are often untrained and inexperienced, while appointees are usually former educators or former parents from the school communities who have a wealth of experience and institutional memory and can serve as fonts of information to the councils; and

WHEREAS, there has been little training of council members to acquaint them with the powers, functions and duties of education council members, leaving some councils to sink or swim; and

WHEREAS, presently members of District Community Education Councils (DCECs) have very little say in choosing their district superintendent, they are still required to provide an annual evaluation; and

WHEREAS, there is confusion between the NY State established Citywide Council on Special Education, and the District 75 Council which was established by the NYC Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, Citywide Councils on English Language Learners, Special Education and High Schools are required to submit an annual report on the effectiveness of the provision of services in their respective areas but have not been provided with the adequate resources to develop the report to be submitted to the PEP; and

WHEREAS, under mayoral control, the increase of charter schools and the manner in which charter schools have been sited, have resulted in increased crowding, and loss of educational resources and opportunities for some high needs students, including English Language Learners and students with IEPs; and now be it therefore,

RESOLVED, that the ECC strongly supports returning to a system of governance similar to what existed before the restructure that took effect on June 30, 2003; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ECC recommends that The Law be amended to put in place strong checks and balances that are enforced to assure transparency and accountability to the public; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ECC strongly recommends that **if we do not return to the system of governance that existed prior to June 30, 2003, that the law should be significantly amended**, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to provide for the appointment of all the members of the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) to fixed, staggered terms, with no limits to the terms they may be appointed; that the majority be currently parents or formerly parents of children in public schools; that in addition to the five borough president appointees the Public Advocate, the Comptroller and the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC) appoint one member each, and that the majority of members not be appointed by the Mayor, with the Mayor having the power to appoint the Chancellor; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to provide for the nine parent members of the Citywide and District Community Education Councils to be elected by parents of children who are enrolled in NYC public schools in the 32 districts, with resources provided to inform and train parents and candidates on the new voting system; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the requirement for only one parent representative to be elected from a school or district be eliminated and that the parents with the highest number of votes be declared winners; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to allow parents of children who are former English Language Learners (ELLs), and received services at any time in the past, be deemed as eligible to serve on the Citywide Council on English Language Learners and the ELL seat on the district education councils, so as to preclude a vacant seat on many district education councils for the entirety of the term; and be it further

RESOLVED, that there shall be no term limits for Borough President Appointees to the CECs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to empower District Community Education Councils to establish educational policy in their districts, in coordination with the District Superintendent and staff, including zoning; reconfigurations; approving co-locations - including charter schools; and approving the opening and closing of schools - including charter schools, and that the PEP must provide an explanation as to why they are not following the recommendations of the District CEC regarding any significant school changes; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law, as set forth originally, clearly define the role of the District Superintendent, who must have extensive education experience, as the District Education Leader to assure his/her responsibility to hire, fire and evaluate principals, assistant principals and other district office staff within the geographical boundaries of the respective school district, so as to honor the integrity of the functions of the local school district, with adequate resources and support provided to assure compliance; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the District Superintendent staff shall contain curriculum specialists in all academic areas; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to assure that the Chancellor and his/her Deputy for Teaching and Learning must be an educator who does not require a waiver to be appointed; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to change the terms for Citywide and Community Education Councils from two years to three year staggered terms, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to allow members selected to any Citywide Community Education Council to finish his/her term, even if an individual's eligibility status changes during his/her term; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Citywide Council on Special Education (CCSE) membership be increased from 11 to 13 to allow more District 75 members to be a part of the CCSE; and be it further

RESOLVED, that adequate resources, including funding and consultation, be provided to allow the citywide councils to properly develop the required report on the progress of services provided in their respective areas and that the PEP be required to respond to these reports within a reasonable amount of time; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the PEP be required to consult with the respective citywide councils so they may comment on any policy changes; and be it further

RESOLVED, that District CECs be an integral part in the process of choosing a district superintendent, including interviewing and recommending of candidates to be chosen by the chancellor; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law be amended to provide for independent oversight to increase transparency and accountability of the school funding process; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the law be specific regarding training and resources provided to members of the citywide and district community education councils so they can function effectively and so that inexperienced and untrained members do not fall through the cracks; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the law fully reflects that the Chancellor is to be the voice and advocate for New York City Public Schools' students, families and communities.