

New York City Department of Education

District Profile

Rank among U.S. School Districts (by size):	1
Number of Schools:	1,450
Number of Students:	1,042,277
Number of Teachers:	80,000
Annual Budget:	\$17 billion, excluding pension and debt service

Superintendent: Joel I. Klein was appointed as chancellor in 2002. Prior to his appointment, Klein served as chairman and chief executive officer of Bertelsmann, Inc., and was assistant attorney general in charge of the U.S. Department of Justice’s antitrust division.

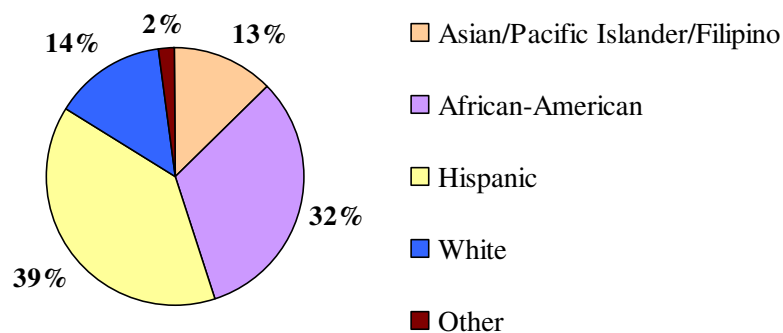
Governance: Mayoral control with an appointed board. Thirteen-member Panel for Educational Policy: eight mayoral-appointed members, including the chancellor as chair, five members appointed by borough presidents.

Teachers Unions: United Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers

Student Characteristics

Percent of students eligible for Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch:	75 %
Percent of students designated as English Language Learners:	13 %

Student Demographics



Student Achievement

The New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) student achievement gains are evidenced by publicly available data collected and analyzed by MPR Associates, Inc., a leading education research consulting firm. Among the reasons that NYCDOE stood out among large urban school districts:

- **Greater overall performance.** In 2006, New York City *outperformed other districts in New York state serving students with similar income levels* in reading and math at all grade levels: elementary, middle and high school, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- **Greater subgroup performance.** In addition, in 2006, each of New York City's *low-income, African-American and Hispanic student subgroups outperformed their peers in similar districts* in the state in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- **Greater overall improvement.** Between 2003 and 2006, New York City also *showed greater improvement than other districts in New York state serving students with similar income levels in reading and math at all grade levels*, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- **Greater subgroup improvement.**
 - Between 2003 and 2006, New York City's *low-income, African-American and Hispanic students all showed greater improvement than their peers in similar New York districts* in reading and math at all grade levels, according to The Broad Prize methodology.
 - Although New York City has a larger percentage of low-income students than the state average, the department's *low-income students achieved higher average proficiency rates than their statewide counterparts* in elementary school reading and math and in middle school math in 2006.
 - The department's *African-American students achieved higher average proficiency rates than their statewide counterparts* in elementary and middle school math in 2006.
 - New York City *increased the percentage of African-American and Hispanic students at the most advanced level of proficiency* in elementary school math, according to The Broad Prize methodology. For example, African-American students achieving advanced proficiency increased by 7 percentage points and Hispanic students achieving advanced proficiency increased by 9 percentage points.
- **Closing achievement gaps.**
 - New York City *narrowed achievement gaps between African-American and Hispanic students and their white peers in the city* in elementary and high school reading and math. For example, in high school math, the Hispanic-white achievement gap closed by 9 percentage points between 2003 and 2006. Hispanic student achievement gaps are also closing in middle school math.
 - New York City *narrowed achievement gaps between African-American and Hispanic students and the state average for white students* in elementary and high school reading and math. For example, in high school math, the Hispanic-white achievement gap closed 14 percentage points, and the African-American-white achievement gap closed 13 percentage points between 2003 and 2006.
 - In addition, New York City *narrowed achievement gaps between the department's low-income students and the state average for non-low-income students* by 6 percentage points in elementary school math and 4 percentage points in high school math.

Key District Policies and Practices

SchoolWorks, an education consulting firm based in Beverly, Mass., collected and analyzed evidence of the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) policies and practices affecting teaching and learning. This qualitative analysis included a site visit, hundreds of interviews and analysis of extensive documentation. The criteria for evaluation, available at www.broadprize.org/TBPSchoolWorksQualityCriteria.pdf, are grounded in research-based school and district practices found to be effective in three key areas: teaching and learning, district leadership and operations and support systems. NYCDOE demonstrated the following effective policies and practices:

Teaching and Learning

Research shows that effective teaching is the primary factor contributing to high levels of student achievement. NYCDOE has developed an approach to curriculum and instruction that mandates certain core practices, but generally provides school-level autonomy to develop programs that match specific student needs. NYCDOE's strategy to implement best practices in curriculum and instruction follows a pattern of first creating uniform practices across all schools and then releasing responsibility for decisions to the school level.

Curriculum

In the 2002-2003 school year, NYCDOE began curriculum reform across nearly all of its more than 1,000 schools. Previously, curriculum decisions had been made at the school level or at the level of one of 32 community districts. NYCDOE introduced non-negotiable core curriculum in literacy and math – with approximately 200 schools exempted based on past success.

- While many curriculum programs have been adopted by the NYCDOE since 2003, there are two central aspects to the core curriculum. First, NYCDOE adopted a balanced literacy approach at the elementary level. Within balanced literacy, students focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The department provided related curriculum guides for grades K-9, classroom libraries of leveled books and literacy coaches who assisted teachers in reshaping literacy instruction. Second, *Everyday Mathematics* (EDM) – a research-based program – was adopted at the elementary level. Curriculum guides have also been developed for mathematics, and mathematics coaches were provided to guide implementation. *Impact Math* was adopted at the middle school level.
- Adopting a core curriculum was a vital first step towards improving student outcomes because it began a process of truly managing curriculum to produce better results. Now decisions about curriculum are shifting to the school level so they reflect the needs of individual students. Though this shift is significant, many aspects of the original curriculum reform will remain in place, such as the balanced literacy approach and *Everyday Mathematics*.

Instruction

NYCDOE promotes instruction based on clear objectives and effective strategies to address the needs of all students. By emphasizing differentiated instruction in all classrooms, NYCDOE has made significant efforts to increase both interventions and enrichments.

- Schools are empowered to create guidance documents, syllabi and instructional materials that best suit their local needs. While general guidelines are provided by the department, individual schools are also granted autonomy regarding lesson planning. Schools use the general guidelines, along with their assessment of the student population they serve, to create a rich variety of instructional planning approaches. The non-negotiable part of the planning process is alignment to state standards.
- NYCDOE has systematically made progress in providing better opportunities for all students to learn. Each region has a director of intervention services, and the department provides intervention programs to assist struggling students with specific subject areas. Interventions occur through a three-tier model of escalating support, in which students are provided more robust interventions as needed. The intent is to address learning needs within the regular classroom before requiring special education services.

Assessment

Since 2003, NYCDOE has developed a useful array of interim benchmark assessments to guide teaching and learning, and has significantly increased its capacity to use assessment data. With curricular decisions shifting to schools, a robust assessment system is necessary so that schools can track how well their curricular decisions are serving students and so that the NYCDOE can hold schools accountable for those decisions.

- NYCDOE began to build a more robust system-wide assessment program from 2003 to 2006. Interim assessments in grades 3-8 were introduced in the 2003-2004 school year. Mathematics and English language arts interim assessments, aligned to state standards, enabled teachers, principals and others to assess student progress against state standards during the school year. Teachers have been able to access results through a web portal that also provides instructional resources to help address gaps in student learning.
- In the past year, extensive school quality reviews were conducted at each school to analyze how well each school is using data and assessment results to improve teaching and learning. The resulting reports drive decisions at all levels of the system and provide a beneficial third-party perspective on school quality.

Instructional Leadership

One of the hallmarks of NYCDOE reform from 2003 through 2006 was leadership development. Through its Leadership Academy, the department was purposeful in developing a pipeline of instructional leaders for each school. As schools take on more responsibility for teaching and learning decisions during the second phase of reform, it is vital that principals have the skills necessary to guide and implement key decisions that impact student learning and academic performance. Efforts to create instructional leadership in NYCDOE have been aimed at creating such capacity.

- The department added literacy and mathematics coaches, who serve as teacher leaders at every school and who provide important leadership to guide implementation of the core curriculum. Coaches work directly with teachers to help improve curriculum and instruction in accordance with each school's improvement initiatives. They also model best practices in instruction and lesson planning, help to design new curriculum and lead instructional and grade-level meetings.
- Principals in NYCDOE are designated as instructional leaders and are evaluated on student success. The department is in the process of developing an even more robust principal evaluation system based on academic performance data. As currently conceived, a principal will be held directly responsible for his or her school's performance as measured by annual school report cards.
- The NYCDOE's emphasis on principal development through the Leadership Academy has fostered a new cohort of school administrators. The Leadership Academy, a separate non-profit entity, builds leadership capacity within NYCDOE through three programs: one for aspiring principals that trains teachers and other educational professionals for school administration; one that provides new principal support for all first-year principals; and one that prepares and supports principals starting new small schools within NYCDOE.
- At the regional and NYCDOE levels, local instructional superintendents (LIS) conduct walk-throughs, evaluate principals and provide support and feedback to them. Regional instructional specialists (RIS), based in the central office, guide curriculum initiatives and work with each LIS to support individual schools.

District Leadership

District leadership must support the essential work of teaching and learning in schools. To communicate and realize a clear mission for student learning, research shows that district leadership must set clear strategic goals and hold the organization accountable for implementation. In New York City, mayoral control creates a unique district leadership environment. Much of what has been accomplished through *Children First*, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's educational reform agenda, stems from this system of mayoral control.

Mission, Vision and Values

After Mayor Bloomberg was elected in 2001, one of his first tasks was to win legislative control of the city's schools. Once he assumed responsibility for the schools, he first used mayoral control to bring a sense of order and coherence to the city's education department, which prior to mayoral control, was divided into 32 highly autonomous community districts. Bloomberg's appointment of Chancellor Joel Klein in 2002 and the mayor's re-election in 2005 has allowed for stability of leadership and a continuing advancement of an aggressive reform agenda.

- To create stability and coherence in the system during the original phase of *Children First*, Klein reorganized the department from 32 community districts into 10 regions. With the department fairly stabilized, Klein is now dismantling the regional structure, and the entire school system is moving towards a model of support and accountability for individual autonomous schools.
- NYCDOE clearly defines its purpose as advancing student achievement. This has been most concretely demonstrated through its aggressive steps to restructure chronically failing schools and establish new schools and charter schools, sometimes in the face of strong community opposition.
- With support from the mayor, the department eliminated social promotion – the practice of promoting a student to the next grade level whether or not he or she was proficient – in grades 3, 5 and 7. The end to this longstanding practice, however, required schools to determine how they would move all students to grade level in the course of the school year. These non-negotiable targets created a city-wide standard and clarity of purpose.

District Governance

Governance in New York City has a unique structure. The chancellor, deputy mayor for education and community development and the mayor together shape key initiatives and recommend policy to a 13-member panel for education policy, chaired by the chancellor. The majority of the panel's members, including the chancellor, are appointed by the mayor. Mayor Bloomberg also symbolically and practically moved the NYCDOE headquarters into the Tweed Courthouse – across the street from City Hall – to signal that New York City education was a priority of his administration.

- The mayor participates directly in setting the vision for NYCDOE and keeps abreast of key initiatives weekly through meetings with the deputy mayor and chancellor.
- The mayor also uses his position appropriately to support policy implementation and, for the benefit of children, to connect the NYCDOE with other city agencies.
- The Panel for Education Policy, consisting of eight mayoral-appointed members and five appointed by the borough presidents, meets monthly in a public setting to receive updates and approve department policies.
- The concentration of control with the mayor's office has created a unique and powerful decision-making paradigm in which decision-makers are highly congruent. Since 2002, this congruency has allowed for NYCDOE reform to occur at a fast pace and on a large scale.

Strategic Planning

Under NYCDOE's *Children First* reform effort, the department implemented several key initiatives – regionalizing the department, introducing core curriculum, and today, rolling out system-wide empowerment and accountability initiatives.

- NYCDOE examines a broad range of data to inform decisions – including data related to student achievement, demographics, equity of access to programs and human capital. The department is aggressive in making programmatic and structural changes based on its review of data. Examples of changes resulting from the department's use of data include closing chronically underperforming schools, special education program reform, gifted and talented program expansion and initiatives to improve the quality teachers and principals.

Performance and Accountability

Before 2003, accountability rested with each of the 32 community districts. Over the past four years, regionalization brought a more consistent approach to accountability, prompting the 10 regional superintendents to develop goals for their regions. The department is now beginning to phase out this regional focus in favor of a new accountability system focused on individual school performance. In the emerging system, performance will be defined through a school progress report that indexes a broad range of school quality factors and measures of student attainment and progress.

- Under the regional accountability approach, clear performance goals for schools were articulated in comprehensive education plans (CEP). The department required these written school improvement plans for all schools, approved by each regional superintendent. In addition, the chancellor set clear performance goals for each regional superintendent that articulated minimum targets for student achievement gains in that region, as well as “stretch goals.”
- Principals have been evaluated through performance reviews that measure their progress against goals to increase student proficiency on state tests. These evaluations align with the CEP and measure five strands: professional development, parent involvement, instructional leadership, community involvement and student support. However, during the 2007-2008 school year, local community superintendents will begin supervising principals, and the principal performance review will be aligned with new school progress reports.
- The school progress reports represent a bold experiment in school accountability. School results will be compared to those of similar schools across the department and to city-wide averages. As schools gain more and more control over their operations, the school progress report will hold them accountable, summarizing their performance in a letter grade. Schools with low grades over a number of years may face leadership changes or closure.

Operations and Support Systems

Research shows that the design and implementation of district operations and systems directly impact how well teaching and learning is supported. NYCDOE has made significant progress in reforming its fiscal operations, human resources and organizational structures. These changes have been necessary precursors to school-level decision-making. NYCDOE now has a clear and flexible budgeting process that provides funding based on each child's needs. The human resources system has placed more data about teacher applicants in the hands of principals so that they can make informed hiring decisions. And, as of the fall of 2007, schools are able to choose professional development from a marketplace of providers, rather than receiving mandated training from the ten regions.

Allocation of Financial Resources

NYCDOE has made a significant effort to provide equitable funding for its students. From 2003 to 2006, the department introduced school-based budgeting and made school budgets publicly available on the Internet. During the second wave of reforms, NYCDOE plans to take school-based budgeting to the next level of decentralized decision-making.

- Prior to the reorganization of the department into regions, all budgeting occurred at the level of the 32 community districts, each adhering to an idiosyncratic process. The first significant reform was to institute school-based budgets and then to make those budgets public by posting them on the Internet. The department established six regional operating centers to train principals in the budgeting process and to exercise fiscal controls.
- Since 2003, adjustments have been made each year to bring actual funding in greater alignment with student enrollment and demographic profiles. In the budgeting process for 2008, a new financial paradigm of "fair student funding" will be introduced. Funding will be provided per child, allocated according to each child's profile as a learner. Factors considered in the formula will be English proficiency, special education status, student achievement status and socio-economic status. Nineteen funding streams have been consolidated into one, leaving about 80 percent of the budget in some form of school control.

Human Resources

Extensive efforts to improve the NYCDOE's human resources services are widely viewed as successful. Teachers and principals are being aggressively recruited and prepared to staff the neediest schools.

- During the summer of 2003, teacher recruitment began to shift from a central process focused on simply filling teacher positions to a strategic, market-driven process based on school need. The human resources office made great strides to understand the needs of the schools and provide school leaders with real applicant data so school leaders – not just the central office – could make informed hiring choices. Through this effort, the department talked to principals about their needs and how to optimize the hiring process. The department also began several initiatives to collect and analyze data on applicants, including screening teacher applicants using a rubric and analyzing data from candidates attending hiring fairs. These first steps ultimately led to the creation of a web-based system through which principals now directly access relevant data about teacher applicants.

- Changes made to the teachers' contract eliminated involuntary transfers that had previously numbered in the thousands each year and increased the amount of instructional time available for students.
- The principal recruitment and induction process has also been significantly overhauled. With the entire hiring process online, the department has significantly decreased the time it takes to hire and place new principals. Vacancies that used to go unfilled for an average of 9.5 months are now routinely filled in three months under the new system.
- NYCDOE has also created a pipeline of new school leaders. An aspiring principal program, run by a non-profit leadership academy, provides a 14-month internship, followed by a year of coaching once principals are placed in schools. More than 160 principals have been placed since 2004. The focus has been on training and placing principals in hard-to-staff schools based on student needs.

Organizational Structure and Management

In many ways, NYCDOE reform from 2003 to 2006 stems from fundamental changes in the department's organizational structure. The pre-existing system placed most decision-making power at the level of 32 community school districts. Phase one of *Children First* centralized control at the department. The second phase of reform – now underway – devolves decision-making and resources to individual schools.

- The organization of the department in 2003 into 10 regions and six operational centers was, perhaps, the most important decision made in the first phase of *Children First*. It changed the power base for decision-making and created the necessary structure to implement the core curriculum. Ten newly formed regions assumed control of staffing and academic programming – decisions that had previously been made by community district boards. The department also established six operational centers to handle all aspects of facility management, budgeting and other necessary non-teaching and learning services. This six-to-ten ratio was purposefully chosen to break down the politics and deal-making that used to occur between operational centers and community districts, thus effectively dissolving the entrenched ways of doing business. The new structures also allowed NYCDOE to ensure fidelity of new core curriculum implementation by creating clear lines of accountability from the school to the central office.
- As part of the regional reorganization, the department placed a higher emphasis on staffing that was focused on teaching and learning. NYCDOE provided math and literacy coaches to every school, and local instructional superintendents (LIS) and regional instructional specialists (RIS) ensured that each school's academics were supported and monitored. Each school also received a parent coordinator to promote parent involvement.
- In 2004, the "Autonomy Zone" began the process of pushing power down to the school level. The Autonomy Zone was a group of 45 schools that received increased budget and program flexibility in return for agreeing to be held accountable for results. By the 2006-2007 school year, the Autonomy Zone – renamed the "Empowerment Zone" – had expanded to 332 schools. In the 2007-2008 school year, all schools will essentially be in the Empowerment Zone and will have substantial control over budget, staffing and the instructional program. Newly empowered schools will also be able to choose their own "service partner" for services ranging from data analysis to school operations to teacher professional development. In return for autonomy, the department will hold principals and service providers accountable through strict performance contracts.