

Overview of the District

Rank among U.S. School Districts (by size):	1
Number of Schools:	1,456
Number of Students:	1,055,986
Number of Teachers:	76,167
Annual Budget:	\$14.8 billion

Chancellor: Joel I. Klein was appointed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2002. Previously, 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.

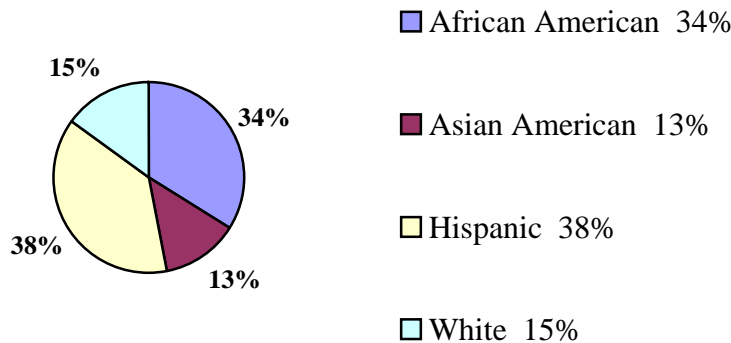
Governance: 13-member Panel for Educational Policy. Eight members, including the chancellor, are appointed by the mayor. The other five members are appointed by borough presidents.

Teachers Union: United Federation of Teachers (affiliate of American Federation of Teachers)

Student Characteristics

Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price School Lunch:	83 %
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners:	13 %

Student Demographics



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Consistent High Performance while Reducing Achievement Gaps

- ✓ Since 2002, student achievement has been on the rise in New York City, particularly by African-American and Hispanic students, making the New York City Department of Education a Broad Prize finalist for the second year in a row.
- ✓ Specifically, between 2002 and 2005, the achievement gap between African-American students and their white counterparts closed seven percentage points in elementary reading, and the Hispanic achievement gap closed nine percentage points in elementary reading.
- ✓ In 2005, New York City outperformed other New York districts serving similar income levels in five of six areas (elementary, middle and high school reading and math), using The Broad Prize methodology.
- ✓ In addition, New York City's African-American and low-income students outperformed their peers in similar districts in the state in elementary and middle school reading and math.
- ✓ New York City has reduced achievement gaps for low-income students in elementary and middle school reading and math. For example, between 2002 and 2005, the income gap closed seven percentage points in elementary reading and 12 percentage points in elementary math.
- ✓ In addition, the city is closing the income gap at a faster rate than the state in middle school reading and math.

RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

Curriculum and Academic Goals

- ✓ NYCDOE's goals are outlined in the 2003 comprehensive education plan Children First. The plan has four main goals: adoption of a core, system-wide approach for instruction in reading, writing and math; development of principals in the new Leadership Academy; reorganization of the department's management structure; and establishment of a parent support system to make schools more welcoming to students' families.

- ✓ NYCDOE uses the state standards as the basis for its curriculum and further articulates city-wide standards and regional units of study. Similar to “areas” in a traditional school district, the ten “regions” are defined by geographic location and contain elementary schools that generally feed into specific middle schools. The NYCDOE does not have feeder patterns for high schools as admission occurs through a large-scale system of choice. However all high school students must meet specific Regents standards through exams in five core curriculum areas. Therefore, curriculum can be aligned and guidelines and supports developed to strengthen academic rigor and instructional practice. For example, working backwards from the expected outcomes, teacher teams and instructional specialists from each region have developed units of study that can be implemented over six to ten weeks. Many of the units of study can be found on the department’s regional websites for easy reference.
- ✓ NYCDOE recently revised its science curriculum to address areas of weakness that were identified through the department’s analysis of performance data. The curriculum was written and revised by teams of teachers and instructional specialists from each region. The teams are paid to write or revise curriculum after school hours and during summer breaks. The teams also developed units of study for each grade level in science. Each unit of study consists of a scope and sequence map detailing instruction segmented into six-week blocks.
- ✓ NYCDOE emphasizes writing and the Balanced Literacy model to meet state standards. In practice, a teacher might teach a specific skill such as phonetic decoding, followed by students applying the skill in books at their own reading level (remedial, grade-level or advanced) instead of all students applying the skill to the same text.
- ✓ Curriculum implementation is a core responsibility of school principals. The deputy chancellor for teaching and learning, the ten regional superintendents and the local instructional specialists (10 to 12 per region) monitor curriculum implementation through walk-throughs of schools and monthly meetings among principals and superintendents to talk about curriculum and instruction. The monthly meetings are held in “model schools” that demonstrate high-quality instruction and learning. Training in specific curriculum topics provided to schools by each region is another method of ensuring that an academically rigorous curriculum is implemented in each school.
- ✓ NYCDOE has built a system of tiered supports to monitor teaching and learning. The first level includes the principals and school leaders who are the instructional managers for their schools. The expectation is that principals spend most of their time observing in classrooms, reviewing data and working with teachers to monitor curricular implementation. Traveling up the system, the same expectation holds true for local instructional superintendents, regional superintendents and all the way to the deputy chancellor. All are expected to visit schools and work with them to improve curriculum delivery through observations, data review and feedback.

Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

- ✓ The Children First reform is premised on the belief that strong school leadership is the most important lever for reaching increased student academic achievement across a large-scale school system. The NYCDOE created a Leadership Academy to develop internal candidates for the principalship and support and develop existing principals. The academy focuses on preparing recruits to be highly capable instructional leaders and organizational managers. The Leadership Academy gives aspiring principals a year-long program of standards-based activities to facilitate their learning process, mentors to help guide the recruits through the program and provide valuable feedback and a residency with an outstanding principal in the system. NYCDOE has also created the New Schools Intensive program, which is designed to address the needs of new principals of new schools.
- ✓ Both veteran and new principals are supported by their regional and local instructional superintendents. Regional superintendents hold meetings once a month to discuss progress on regional instructional initiatives and review student performance data to determine areas of improvement. Similarly, local instructional superintendents hold monthly retreats where principals focus on particular initiatives and share their best practices.
- ✓ NYCDOE recently developed a partnership with the City University of New York and New York University to provide a practical experience for university students pursuing educational certification by placing them in one of more than 60 schools across the city. NYCDOE is also attracting recruits for positions in hard-to-staff areas like math, special education and science through a bonus of up to \$15,000 for housing costs.
- ✓ For the past two years, NYCDOE has partnered with the United Federation of Teachers to support new teachers. The resulting teacher support model provides new teachers with a mentor trained by the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The assigned mentors coach and model effective instructional strategies and practices.
- ✓ The majority of K-8 schools in New York City have both a literacy and math specialist. These specialists bring the latest research-based best practices into the schools. NYCDOE has also recently created lead teacher positions for 100 schools identified as needing additional support. Exceptional teachers are recruited for these positions and are paid an additional one-time stipend of \$10,000 to work at one of the designated schools.
- ✓ In addition to the more formal training sessions, NYCDOE developed a professional development model around “exemplar” schools called Collaborative Communities of Practice. NYCDOE has designated more than 200 schools “Collaborative Communities of Practice” and provides them with additional resources to model their practices to other schools throughout the city.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- ✓ NYCDOE is committed to the Balanced Literacy model, in which teachers demonstrate literacy strategies during mini-lessons in reading and writing. Students then practice these strategies while the teacher coaches individual students and/or small groups. Similarly, NYCDOE has adopted a balanced approach to numeracy development that includes programs that focus both on math facts and reasoning such as Everyday Mathematics in the elementary schools, IMPACT Mathematics in the middle schools and Math A in the high schools. While these models were adopted system-wide, some schools were granted waivers to continue with their own instructional models, given their past success.
- ✓ A number of instructional programs designed to address individual students' learning needs are available for teachers. In the area of literacy development, NYCDOE uses Great Leaps, Ramp-Up Reading, Read 180, Orton-Gillingham and the Wilson reading program. In fact, the NYCDOE recently trained more than 3,700 teachers in the Wilson reading program, and department administrators indicate those schools that have faithfully implemented the program have seen dramatic progress.
- ✓ NYCDOE has a number of instructional non-negotiables, one of which is reading across the content areas. To facilitate this strategy, NYCDOE has invested significant resources in classroom libraries. Department administrators report that more than 25 million books have been purchased over the past few years for these libraries and core curriculum programs.
- ✓ NYCDOE has done a lot of work around creating supports for their special education programming. One of the main focus areas is providing training to teachers so they have multiple strategies to address student learning needs within the confines of regular education programming. Since this training began in 2004, the NYCDOE has dramatically reduced the number of students referred to special education from one year to the next.
- ✓ NYCDOE has created over 200 new schools since 2002, primarily small, academically rigorous secondary schools (9-12 or 6-12). These schools replace large, low-performing high schools and enroll a higher proportion of lower skilled students than the city-wide average for high schools. In June 2006, the NYCDOE reported that the first graduating class of these new secondary schools had a graduation rate of 73 percent as compared to the citywide rate of 58 percent. The NYCDOE has also launched 36 charter schools since 2002, predominantly in low-income neighborhoods.

- ✓ Within each borough of the city, NYCDOE has some career high schools that offer students the opportunity to specialize in a variety of fields such as health, engineering, law, performance and visual arts, business, technology, teaching and other subjects. High school students in NYCDOE have the opportunity to select 12 schools they would like to attend and are matched with one of their choices. Some 70 percent of students are placed in one of their top three choices.

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

- ✓ NYCDOE is currently revamping its accountability system to be consistent with the Chancellor's three "pillars" – leadership, accountability, and empowerment. A new position, Chief Accountability Officer, was created to improve school performance by holding all schools accountable for the progress each child makes every year and by identifying high-performing, innovative schools called Horizon schools to provide model instruction for teachers and administrators.
- ✓ The NYCDOE is using frequent formative assessments and retooling the reports it gives parents so principals, teachers, parents and students have a clear understanding of the skills each child has mastered and the skills needing improvement. Current mock-ups include a simple color-coding system to identify a student's skill level. The new assessments and reports will be piloted in 300 schools this year.
- ✓ NYCDOE is also creating progress reports to assess a school's performance relative to Horizon schools that are demographically similar but higher performing. Schools will be given a letter grade. Those that score a "C" or below will be identified for interventions and other consequences including leadership change and school restructuring or closure.
- ✓ Data for both student and school report cards will come from a new data management system currently under development. The new system will pull together data from a variety of sources into one warehouse. The system will include tools for administrators, principals and teachers to create customized reports that are disaggregated by a number of variables. It will also contain tools for designing and implementing school-created reports and assessments and for making each school's effective innovations available to all schools citywide.
- ✓ Feeding into the new data management system, NYCDOE will begin system-wide diagnostic assessments five times a year for grades K-12. Previously, NYCDOE used the bi-annual Early Childhood Literacy Development System (ECLAS II) diagnostic assessment for grades K-3 and city-wide assessments for grades 3-8 in English language arts and mathematics.
- ✓ NYCDOE has also created a tool for qualitative reviews that was piloted in 100 schools last year and will be used in all remaining schools this year. Through on-site observation, case studies and structured conversations with all segments of a school's community, these reviews evaluate and support schools, focusing on the use of data to differentiate instruction, drive curriculum and capacity building and promote cycles of innovation, evaluation and adjustment.

Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustments

- ✓ NYCDOE began an elementary school initiative last year that provided teachers with a toolbox of intervention programs as well as an intervention coordinator on each campus. Schools then created intervention teams to develop Personal Intervention Plans for every struggling student. NYCDOE has expanded this initiative to include two pilot middle schools in every region. The pilot schools maintain an open-door policy so that other schools can view how the model is being implemented. NYCDOE has plans to roll out this initiative to the other middle schools across the city.
- ✓ Building on the three pillars of school transformation, NYCDOE is extending its effort to provide certain principals greater flexibility over programs and budgets, hiring decisions and additional funds in exchange for stricter measures of accountability. Such schools are called Empowerment schools. Originally, 48 schools participated in the two-year pilot, and NYCDOE is now expanding the program to include 321 schools. Of the schools participating in the original pilot, department administrators report that 93 percent met their targeted goals the first year and, as a whole, outperformed the city.
- ✓ While the majority of school monies are tied up in categorical accounts and teacher salaries, NYCDOE has made a commitment to flow additional dollars to the Empowerment schools to support intervention strategies. Schools, especially the Empowerment schools, will have greater flexibility in how they use the funds to help drive performance.
- ✓ Schools with a long history of low performance are being closed and/or restructured to avoid sanctions from the state. With the restructuring and closing of schools, NYCDOE had a number of extra teachers in the system. NYCDOE worked with the United Federation of Teachers and reached an agreement that guaranteed principals their choice of excess teachers, regardless of seniority.
- ✓ NYCDOE has committed significant funds for programs and initiatives that directly impact students. Across the city, a number of summer success academies provide a half-day of intensive instruction for struggling students. NYCDOE has also established strategic partnerships with a number of community-based organizations to offer extended-day, -week and -year activities for students.
- ✓ NYCDOE has signed a new contract with the United Federation of Teachers that includes the addition of 150 minutes per week so teachers can work with students who are not proficient in academic areas.

Influential Factors

- ✓ The mayoral-controlled school system has led to greater accountability. Previously, principals were appointed by school boards, which frequently resulted in political decisions rather than instructional ones. Now with ten regions, principals are appointed by the regional superintendents who are held accountable for the performance of their schools.
- ✓ NYCDOE administrators meet monthly with the state commissioner of education to discuss state and city decisions. NYCDOE administrators say this creates needed opportunities for both parties to give and receive feedback about their work in educating the children of New York.
- ✓ The NYCDOE has added a parent coordinator in every school, making improved communication with parents a priority. Parent coordinators welcome parents to the school sites and field questions. NYCDOE provides parent coordinators with substantial professional development on how to refer parents to various resources and to answer various questions and concerns. In some instances, parent coordinators are in turn training parent volunteers who are interested in working in the schools.