

leaders and business groups. Using information learned from these meetings and other analyses, the Chancellor developed the “Children First” reform initiative, which has the following four core elements:

- Adoption of a single, coherent system-wide approach for instruction in reading, writing and math that is supported by strong professional development;
- Establishment of a new parent support system to make schools more welcoming to students’ families and to give families the access and tools they need to be full partners in the education of their children;
- Development of principals as the key instructional leaders of their schools through unprecedented leadership development programs at the new Leadership Academy; and
- Reorganization of the Department of Education’s management structure into a unified, streamlined system dedicated to instruction and designed to drive resources from bureaucratic offices into the classroom.²⁶

In pursuance of the goal to strengthen parent involvement, the Chancellor has established the new position of school based “Parent Coordinator.”²⁷ The duties and responsibilities of the coordinators, who will report to the principal of each school, include the following:

- Increases parent involvement in the school by working closely with all school, parent and community organizations.
- Works with the school parent association to provide assistance in establishing by-laws, holding elections and conducting their affairs in accordance with Chancellor’s Regulation A-660.

Over 1200 parent coordinators have been hired. As of the date of this writing, a parent coordinator is now working in almost all of the City’s public schools. The October 16 edition of a weekly newsletter to principals recently described the parent coordinators’ responsibilities as follows:

Overall Role: The Parent Coordinator position is focused on: (1) creating a welcoming school environment for parents; (2) working with the principal to address parent issues and concerns at the school; (3) conducting outreach to engage parents in their children’s

²⁶ The “Children First” reform agenda, attached hereto as Exhibit 33, is posted at <http://www.nycenet.edu/Administration/Childrenfirst/CFAGenda.htm> (emphasis added).

²⁷ The job description for this position is attached as Exhibit 34, and is posted at <http://www.nycenet.edu/parents/ParentCoordinators/PCPostingfall03final.pdf>.

education; and (4) strengthening parent involvement in their children's education. As a member of the school staff supervised by the school principal, the Parent Coordinator will accomplish these functions by partnering and supporting the work of their parent association/parent teacher association, school leadership team, community groups and parent advisory councils.

Responsibilities with examples of activities:

- Creating a welcoming school environment for parents.
 - Sending a letter to parents about their role as Parent Coordinator with their contact information and hours when they can be reached;
 - Posting signs, bulletin boards and other displays at school entrance and/or lobby to inform parents how they can receive assistance and information;
 - Working with bilingual parents or CBOs to assist in translating outreach materials and translation at meetings.

- Increasing parent involvement in the school.
 - Hosting parent workshops and meetings on issues of interest to parents;
 - Surveying parents on information they need from school;
 - Assisting in outreach to PA/PTA meetings and activities;
 - Providing information, resources and support for families to support their children's learning at home;
 - Providing meaningful opportunities for parents to become involved in the school.

- Support work of the PA/PTA as requested by the Executive Board.
 - Assisting in outreach for PA/PTA activities, meetings and elections;
 - Providing assistance, where needed, to establish PA/PTA by-laws, assist with nominations and elections;
 - Working with PA/PTA to assess needs of parents;
 - Coordinating with PA/PTA on Parent Coordinator's outreach activities and tools (i.e., jointly developing a parent survey, contact list, phone trees); Attending PA/PTA meetings as an observer when invited to do so.

Prior to the enactment of Chapter 123, the Chancellor announced plans to establish a new "Parent Academy." A "Parent Academy Concept Paper," which has been distributed to parents and community based organizations, is attached hereto as Exhibit 36. The Academy was launched in August 2003, and has conducted two weeks of training for the new parent coordinators. It will provide further training for the coordinators on a quarterly basis. The Academy plans to serve not only the coordinators, but also the parents in the public school system. As stated in the Concept Paper at p. 5, "We also envision a Parent Academy that offers leadership development opportunities to Parent Associations to enable them to become strong vehicles for influencing the culture of their schools." The "Core Objectives" for the Academy include "[providing] training to thousands of parent leaders and parents throughout the City and develop their capacity to engage other parents." *Id.* at 6. The Academy will also contract with community-based organizations to provide on-going training in governance and parent leadership. *Id.* at 10. Parent association and PTA members have recently been asked to complete a survey (a copy is attached as Exhibit 37) to help the Academy prioritize their training needs.

The Chancellor also distributed "A Guide for Parents and Families" to all parents via their children's backpacks, and citywide as an insert to a number of daily periodicals.²⁸ In a section entitled "Parents Take the Lead Here's How," the Guide urges parents to become involved in their parent association or PTA, and informs them of the creation of the CDECs pursuant to Chapter 123.

VI. REASONS FOR ENACTMENT OF CHAPTERS 91 AND 123

The provisions submitted herewith for preclearance are the result of two years of work by the Legislature, its Task Force, and other bodies to address decades of dissatisfaction with the poor performance, and often corruption, found in many of our community school boards. They respond to the desire articulated by many that parents be given a greater voice in the governance of the local schools. The urgent need for these reforms is demonstrated by the statement of City Council member Ruben Diaz of the Bronx during the Council's Education Committee hearing on school governance in 2002: "We all know that the local boards in the whole City of New York have been a net of corruption, political patronage, and political stepping stones, and that some

²⁸ The Parent Guide, attached hereto as Exhibit 35, was distributed as an insert to The New York Times, The New York Daily News, and India Abroad (in English). It was also translated into Spanish and distributed in El Diario, El Vocero, and Noticias Del Mundo. It was distributed widely to parents through their children's backpacks and has been sent to parent association and PTA leaders, elected officials, community and faith-based organizations. In addition, it is being distributed at locations such as the 200 Duane Reade pharmacies and 20 Red Apple supermarkets in the City. It will be translated into five additional languages: Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Urdu and Haitian.

people like that. They don't even care if our children [don't] have anything[,] they like to keep the stepping stone with the political patronage in the backs of our children. And I got elected to do something about this."²⁹

A. Reasons discussed in floor debates on Chapter 91

Similar criticisms of community school boards were voiced during the floor debates over the Assembly and Senate bills that became Chapter 91. Assembly member Roger Green, an African American from Brooklyn, stated:

First, I would like to thank the Speaker of the Assembly for establishing this advisory group that would do a critique of the public school system and then come up with some recommendations for what I believe are some necessary reforms. And then also for his leadership in fashioning a compromise that, I think, respected the interests of both parents and children in an attempt to put both parents and children first because that, I believe, was the most important mission that we have before us.

This is not a perfect world and, clearly, no one would suggest that the public school system, as it is currently structured, is perfect. I think a wise leader once said, I think his name was W.E.B. DuBois, who himself was an educator, and one of the icons of the African-American freedom movement, when discussing contradictions within our society, he said, "That people who stand for freedom and justice must never defend the indefensible."

When children fail at the level that they're failing today in the New York City public school system, we cannot defend the indefensible. *** Recent scores that came out of the State Education Department that showed the achievement gap, particularly between African-American and Latino children as compared to other children in the State, underscores the fact of what we know is wrong with the public school system.

²⁹ A transcript of this hearing was included as Exhibit 10 of our preclearance submission for Chapter 91, dated June 17, 2002. A copy of Council member Diaz' statement at the hearing is attached hereto as Exhibit 25.

We know that the system is broken, and so the challenge before us was how we should restructure it by at the same time maintaining some of the core values that many of us fought for during the turbulent struggle of 1969, which established the decentralized school system? First of all, the core values were that we should put our children first and put our parents first. I would suggest that if you looked at the school system as it's currently situated today, ... our children are not put first and, clearly, our parents are not put first ... In fact, there were few parents even on the local boards though that was the ideal that we fought for during 1969. If you were to look at most of the 32 school districts throughout the City of New York, what we saw on those boards were patronage brokers far too often who impeded the education of our children. We cannot defend the indefensible.

I ... grew up as a child in the 1960s. I graduated during this period of time with the turmoil and the establishment of the movement for decentralization. My mentor, State Assemblyman Albert Vann, ... was one of the leading architects of the movement for decentralization. Jetu Aousi, who is a close friend of mine, and other folks who I have worked with and lived with within my community, no one, any of those folks who I've talked to believe that the current school boards as they were currently constructed worked appropriately.

So what I hope is that through this commission, we will establish core values and ... an honest debate, in the marketplace of ideas to say that we need a system on the local level that is more parent-centered, that protects our children from the patronage brokers who have corrupted many of the school districts throughout the City of New York and, at the same time, move forward with a reform process that will eventually allow these children to achieve, to learn so they can be productive members of our society.

Transcript of Assembly Debate, June 10, 2002, pp. 179-187 (emphasis added).³⁰

Even opponents of Chapter 91 found fault with the existing community school board system. Assembly member William Scarborough, an African American from Queens,

³⁰ A copy of the Assembly Transcript is attached hereto as Exhibit 26.

commented that “the community school boards, as they exist, were designed to fail.” Transcript of Assembly Debate, June 10, 2002, p. 223. Assembly member William Colton, who noted that some community school boards are effective, also recognized that some are “notoriously ineffective.” *Id.* at 237. Mr. Scarborough and Mr. Colton both voted in favor of Chapter 123.

Senator Daniel Hevesi, who voted in favor of Chapter 91, was more pointed in his remarks concerning the quality of local school boards: “[This bill] does away with the local school boards. Which, you know, they’re good in some areas, a couple of areas, but they’re absolutely horrible, dysfunctional, and an incredible distraction to true educational reform. Not to mention the lost money that we have poured down the administrative drain on the local school boards. We’ve got to get rid of them.” Transcript of Senate Debate, p. 4493.³¹

B. Candidate and voter apathy

At the time Chapter 91 was enacted, apathy for the current system was manifest in the low participation of candidates for election and the miniscule voter turnout. During the last round of community school board elections, conducted in 1999, only one candidate for the board of District 12 in the Bronx garnered enough signatures to get on the ballot. For three other boards -- those of Districts 4 in New York County, 7 in the Bronx, and 26 in Queens -- there were less than 9 candidates who qualified to be on the ballot.³² (There are nine seats to be filled in each district).

There was a mere average 3.2% voter participation rate in the 1999 elections, down from a nearly as paltry 5.3% participation in the 1996 election. The 1999 turnout was below 2% in seven districts: Districts 3 (1.62%) and 4 (1.44%) in New York, Districts 9 (1.33%), 12 (1.22%) in the Bronx, Districts 13 (1.81%) and 16 (1.67%) in Kings, and District 29 (1.92%) in Queens. The participation rate was only 2.09% in District 7 in the Bronx. The highest turnout for any district -- District 10 in the Bronx -- was a hardly impressive 7.71%. As is starkly demonstrated by the following data extracted from Exhibit 44, the districts with the lowest voter turnout are among those with the highest percentage of minority parents:

³¹ A copy of the Senate Transcript is attached hereto as Exhibit 27.

³² Kershaw, “School Choice/ Apathy Shadows School Elections; Who’s Eligible to Vote; Info on Where and How.” *Newsday*, May 17, 1999, p. A07.

	% VOTER TURNOUT 1999 ELECTION	% MINORITIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT POPULATION FOR GRADES K-8
1 – NY	6.46	90.7
2 – NY	2.08	64.9
3 – NY	1.62	76.3
4 – NY	1.44	97.2
5 – NY	2.48	98.9
6 – NY	3.82	97.6
7 – BRONX	2.09	98.6
8 – BRONX	2.43	91.0
9 – BRONX	1.33	98.7
10 – BRONX	7.71	93.5
11 – BRONX	2.71	89.0
12 – BRONX	1.22	98.3
13 – KINGS	1.81	97.3
14 – KINGS	6.91	88.9
15 – KINGS	2.65	76.8
16 – KINGS	1.67	97.5
17 – KINGS	3.40	98.3
18 – KINGS	2.64	97.7
19 – KINGS	2.45	98.2
20 – KINGS	7.20	62.9
21 – KINGS	5.54	58.1
22 – KINGS	4.07	70.2
23 – KINGS	3.06	98.8
32 – KINGS	4.21	99.0

Exhibit 28 shows the number of candidates on the ballot and the number elected by write-in for the 1999 election. Exhibit 29 shows the voter turnout for that election. Exhibit 64 compares the numbers of voters who participated in the elections in 1996 and 1999. As these exhibits demonstrate, elections for community school boards are elections in name only.

Low public attendance at community school board meetings is further evidence that many boards have become ineffective vehicles for public involvement in the schools. Newsday reported that a meeting of community school board 25 in Flushing, Queens was attended by only four parents.³³

³³ Davis, "Local School Boards Try to Stay Relevant," Newsday, June 22, 2001, p. A41.

In 2002, Community School Board 2, which represents Chinatown, Battery Park City, TriBeCa, Greenwich Village, and the East Side, adopted a resolution calling for the “elimination of the current governance system in NYC that includes both the 32 local school boards and the appointed Central Board of Education,” and the “development of another governance model that ensures public involvement, maximum parental participation, and accountability by the Superintendent to all stakeholders in the system.”³⁴ A copy of the resolution is attached as Exhibit 30.³⁵ A *Newsday* editorial praised the board, noting that, “The boards ... have such peripheral influence over the schools that some of them tend to disrupt learning more than enhance it. But District 2 students have improved over the past decade to become some of the city’s top performers. That local board members are willing to step aside is a remarkable exercise in honest self-appraisal.”³⁶ Karen Feuer of Community School Board 2 and Anne Mackinnon of Community School Board 22 sent a governance proposal to Assembly member Steve Sanders, Chair of the Education Committee, recommending the dissolution of community school boards and their replacement with district advisory boards. The proposal is included in Exhibit 31.

C. Issues Presented at Task Force Proceedings

As provided by section 24 of Chapter 91, the Speaker of the Assembly and the President of the Senate each appointed 10 members to a Task Force “to develop a proposal and make recommendations regarding the community school boards and their powers and duties.”³⁷ Over a five-week period from December 10, 2002 through January 16, 2003, the Task Force conducted a public hearing in each of the City’s five boroughs. The transcripts, attached hereto as Exhibits 5 through 11, demonstrate a high degree of public dissatisfaction with the community school boards operating under current law, and a strong desire for a more effective governance system giving a greater voice to parents of children attending public schools. The overall tenor of the testimony is captured by this statement of Kenneth Cohen, President of the Northeast Queens Chapter of the NAACP, and member of Community School Board 25: “The time for reform is evident and necessary for the productive future of education in New York City.”³⁸

³⁴ Campanile, “School Board Votes to Shut Down,” *The New York Post*, February 16, 2002; Gendar, “Dist. 2: Ax School Boards,” *Daily News*, February 17, 2002, p. 41.

³⁵ As indicated in Exhibit 21, the members of Community School Board No. 2 at the time the resolution was adopted included three Asians, one African American, four Caucasians and one Hispanic.

³⁶ Editorial, “Albany Should Heed Community School Board 2,” *Newsday*, February 20, 2002, p. A32.

³⁷ The creation and membership of the Task Force are discussed in Part II B of this submission.

³⁸ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, p. 39.

1. Corruption, favoritism and other problems

Many speakers who appeared before the Task Force – including some community school board members and others who favored keeping the community school boards -- testified about corruption, favoritism and other problems in the community school boards.

- Altagracia Cruz, a member of the School Leadership Team³⁹ at P.S. 60 (Bronx) and President of its PTA, stated, “I do not think the job [community school boards] are doing is as good as could be. They don’t go to visit the schools, they don’t resolve the problem for our [sic] and parents. They don’t do the job they’re supposed to be. *** [T]he most percent of the board they have corruption and they got favorites.”⁴⁰
- Ellen Caldwell, former PTA president of P.S. 153 in District 6, (Washington Heights, Manhattan), favored retaining community school boards but complained, “You may go to some of the board meetings in the evening in the district and you ask for speaking time, and you don’t get the speaking time. It’s a lot ... favoritism going on there”⁴¹
- Dorothy Willner, a member of Community School Board 30 (Queens), noted that she had “worked for 20 years on a school board with people who did and did not have integrity having been a person who almost single handedly got a district superintendent thrown out because of his corruption ...”⁴²
- Lucretia Jones, of Mothers on the Move, stated, “I’m glad we’re getting rid of the School Boards because District 8 School Board did not work. It did not work for the parents or children in the failing schools.”⁴³
- Loretta Prisco, of the Parents Action Committee for Education, characterized the existing system as “corrupt, mired in nepotism, patronage and scandalous behavior.”⁴⁴

³⁹ School leadership teams are established pursuant to Educ. Law §2590-h(15)(b-1) to perform functions under federal and state law related to “school based management and shared decision making.”

⁴⁰ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, pp. 85-86. (Exhibit 5.)

⁴¹ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, p. 138. (Exhibit 5.)

⁴² Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, p. 59. (Exhibit 6)

⁴³ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 19, 2002, p. 282. (Exhibit 7)

⁴⁴ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 6, 2003, p. 240. (Exhibit 9)

2. Over-politicization

Speakers frequently criticized the community school boards for being overly politicized, at the expense of school children. For example:

- Richard Daniel, a member of Community School Board 13 (Brooklyn), testified that “decentralization failed because it [became] a patronage mill for corruption and political wannabees. School boards were used as springboards for political offices with no regard to children”⁴⁵
- Cynthia Sanchez, a parent from District 21 (Brooklyn), testified, “I’m against school boards totally. They have done nothing to aid the parents in the black, Latino, poor and low income minority neighborhoods. They have been political and principally [sic] ran. Peoples are still on the board for the personal interests rather than the issues that should be at concern. They know nothing about the children.”⁴⁶
- Dr. Gloria Black, Chairperson of Assembly member Scarborough’s Task Force on Education, who favored preserving community school boards, nevertheless had this to say: “[W]e fought hard, we meaning those of us who go back to the ‘60’s and the ‘70’s, for some kind of community control and ... we had decentralization and now we are faced with the dilemma of losing our enfranchisement and I don’t think that’s going to happen because we worked to [sic] hard for it. But, there has to be a change in terms of the structure, in terms of the functioning. Why? Number one: Because the boards as they exist ... are markedly, and that’s a generalization, some of the boards are markedly how [sic] politically influenced. Also if the boards so happen they may be used as stepping stones for just this, the Council, and that happens. And by the way, I serve as Vice President of Community Board 12 so I know about this networking. Not only that, there’s a lot of nepotism on those boards. If I have an aunt whose [sic] a counselor or what have you, then I’m likely to get an appointment.”⁴⁷
- Helen Marshall, Borough President of Queens, noted that “in some areas [community school boards] were just becoming steps for political people to advance, that’s not really the worst thing, but on the other hand, we want people who are knowledgeable of what really goes on in that system.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (evening session), p. 152. (Exhibit 11)

⁴⁶ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (evening session), p. 157. (Exhibit 11)

⁴⁷ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, pp. 76-77. (Exhibit 6)

⁴⁸ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, p.119. (Exhibit 6)

- Neyda Franco, who once served as a trustee of Community School District 7 (Manhattan), testified, “I fought to get the School Boards out. Because in this district, it’s all about politics. It’s not about children’s education.”⁴⁹
- Joan McKeever-Thomas, President of the Staten Island Federation of PTAs, and the Staten Island Borough President’s appointee to the City Board of Education, stated, “No longer can a community school board or its replacement be the spring board for people who have hidden agendas or just trying to further their own personal careers at the expense of our children. No longer can it be tolerated that when a member is elected or selected that they can sit back and do nothing because now the job is theirs and they can’t be touched.”⁵⁰

3. Disparity in quality

The testimony echoed the sentiments voiced in the floor debates over Chapter 91 that the community school boards have been, at best, a “mixed bag”:

- Juan Martinez, President of Community School Board 14, acknowledged that “school boards have been a mixed bag. They’ve been very good and they’ve been very bad”⁵¹
- Assembly member Roger Green noted “I have three school boards in my constituency, one I think ... is very effective and the other two are disasters, to be perfectly honest. We’ve been plagued by corruption and chonyism [sic], you name it.”⁵²
- Adolfo Carrion, Jr., Borough President of the Bronx, testified, “I believe that we have a unique opportunity right now to improve something that originally started out correct, and over time – I believe over time it has failed in some cases miserably and in some neighborhoods it has actually worked ... But I think for the most part, across the city, we saw a very small percentage of the adult population that was eligible to vote or just the adult population with kids in the schools participating. I think the number has come in around three percent.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 19, 2002, p. 373. (Exhibit 7)

⁵⁰ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 6, 2003, p. 165. (Exhibit 9)

⁵¹ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (day session), p. 222. (Exhibit 10)

⁵² Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, p. 137 (Exhibit 5.)

⁵³ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 19, 2002, p. 30. (Exhibit 7)

- Randi Weingarten, President of the United Federation of Teachers, stated, “There were some of the community school boards that were wonderful, but few will mourn in the passing of them, because of what so many of them did. While some boards functioned as places where parents had a reasonable chance, not just to air their views, but to see their problems got resolved, there were so many examples of patronage and other types of things, that people basically no longer look at them as a viable solution.”⁵⁴

4. Demand for greater role for parents

Most speakers stressed the need for greater parent representation on the local governance bodies. For example,

- Noreen Connell, Executive Director of the Education Priorities Panel, testified that her organization’s members “believe that the new governance structure at the district level should represent parents, community members and local business owners and business representatives.”⁵⁵
- Elizabeth Schnee, co-chair of the Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council⁵⁶, explained, “As parents, we want a school system ... that’s truly accountable to it’s [sic] students and parents. *** Parents would like to see a succession of leadership developed at school and district levels. *** Parents want schools that provide ... information about the performance of their child in their local school. Parents want more input into a system which has a direct effect on our lives and the lives of our children. Having parents play a greater role in district-wide decisions including district priorities, through the comprehensive education plan will help the system. *** We have to fight the ... backward thinking that says, parents are not capable of making education related decisions that will benefit their children. Parents ... need a public and open forum to express their concerns and recommendation about the education of their children. Parents need a mechanism for handling their grievance over their treatment or the treatment of their children, by the school district administration. With this in mind, we feel parents council’s should be the replacements for community school boards. Parent councils should be elected from each district or cluster of districts and parents should choose there [sic] partners.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (day session), p. 168. (Exhibit 10)

⁵⁵ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, p. 16 (Exhibit 5.)

⁵⁶ The Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council consists of the presidents of each District’s Presidents’ Council.

⁵⁷ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, pp. 268-270. (Exhibit 5.)

- John Fager, who was a teacher at the time of the decentralization of the school system, has served as a member of the school leadership team of the Bronx High School of Science, written an education column for the Daily News, and acted as education advisor to the City Council President, commented on the recommendations of the Mayor’s Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools, (the “McBundy Report”) issued in 1967:

“The [McBundy Report] ... proposed ... community school boards have 11 member[s] on it. The proposal was that 6 of them be parents of children in the public schools, in that district. And that it would be a parent election of those people, and the other five would be picked by the Mayor. ***

Think of how different community school boards and decentralization might have been had just that one aspect of the [McBundy] proposal been carried out. [The McBundy] panel rejected direct election of community school members, because they worried about the communities that you’re talking about not coming out to an election because of a lack of development, ... and that they anticipated the very problem that we then had in a majority of our school boards for the next 35 years.⁵⁸

- C. Virginia Fields, the Borough President of Manhattan, submitted written testimony urging that: “First -- parent involvement must continue, to assure a system of checks and balances that will benefit children, teachers, school staff, and ultimately – principals and district superintendents. Second – the Council must be a structured advisory body, composed of parents and representative of all schools in the district.”⁵⁹
- Dr. Gloria Black, Chairperson of Assembly member Scarborough’s Task Force on Education, recommended replacing the community school boards with borough boards to include five trained parents, two retired educators and two civic or business leaders.⁶⁰
- Helen Marshall, Borough President of Queens, recommended restructuring the community school boards to have a majority of parent-members, along with an educator, a community leader, and “someone from the business world.”⁶¹
- Maria Dapontes-Dougherty, co-president of the PTA for PS 2 in District 30 (Queens) and Vice President of the Presidents’ Council, stated, “First of all, the new community school boards, or councils ... should be composed of members that must be parents of school

⁵⁸ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, pp. 293-295. (Exhibit 5.)

⁵⁹ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002 (written testimony appears after the numbered transcribed testimony). (Exhibit 5.)

⁶⁰ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, p. 80. (Exhibit 6)

⁶¹ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, p.128. (Exhibit 6)

age children in the public education system. We are the ones with a vested interest in the system. We are the consumer. I strongly believe that the majority of those on these councils should be chosen by parent leaders. These parent leaders could be Presidents' Councils or committees formed from the parent members of School Leadership Teams in the District. These are the people in the trenches, who have the deepest understanding of school needs and more importantly student's needs. We are the consumer."⁶²

- Assembly member William Scarborough, who had voted against Chapter 91 (but later voted in favor of Chapter 123), testified that "My druthers would be a return of community school boards with modifications. *** Whoever gets involved, I think that the body should be a majority of parents ... who have children in that school."⁶³
- Karen Blanding, President of the NAACP Corona/East Elmhurst Branch, advocated for "a format inclusive of a parent advisory board, along with youth, community and business representatives that would give an input on curriculum, funding and to mediate issues pertaining to schools within their jurisdiction, meeting with the Superintendents on a monthly basis. The parents should be the one's [sic] that make the agenda. Parents should be selected by district PTA's and President Council's or by demonstration of outstanding educational involvement. Youth should be selected from high schools, CUNY schools, selected by their peers and would add a fresh view on what is needed in education."⁶⁴
- Adolfo Carrion, Jr., Borough President of the Bronx, advocated for "District Wide Parent Councils" elected from parent organizations in each school, and "Borough Boards for Education Planning," chaired by the Borough Presidents, and comprised of the presidents of District Parent Councils, three superintendents, the Borough President's appointee to the City Board, and 5 representatives from the community at large.⁶⁵
- Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, President of the Hispanic Federation (representing 75 not-for-profit organizations providing health and human services), and a member of the New York State Board of Regents, supported Borough President Carrion's proposal, adding that "because 47 percent of the students in the public school system are Latino students, that 47 percent of the parent participants throughout the city on any community boards must be Latino parents." In response to a question from the Task Force, she stated that

⁶² Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, p 260. (Exhibit 6)

⁶³ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, pp. 380-382. (Exhibit 6)

⁶⁴ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002, p. 402. (Exhibit 6)

⁶⁵ Written Testimony supplementing Task Force Transcript, Dec. 12, 2002. (Exhibit 6)

this percentage could be achieved by encouraging people to be candidates and changing the date of elections.⁶⁶

- Albert V. Tuitt, Sr., of the NAACP Special Committee on Internal Affairs, testified that “parents should be involved in elected positions in deciding school policy.”⁶⁷
- Alexander Betancourt, Deputy Executive Director of ASPIRA of New York, Inc., advocated that “the new district governance structure should consist of all key constituencies with no less than 50 percent parent representation...”⁶⁸
- Joann Makris Karna, a member of the Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council, and a past president of the Presidents’ Council, testified that the new governance bodies “should consist of parents of students attending schools in the district, representatives of community organizations in the district, pedagogical staff members who reside in the district. The representatives of that body should consist of a majority of parents, be elected by their constituencies, except for the representatives of the community organizations who should be selected by the local community planning boards.”⁶⁹
- Lila Levey read into the record a resolution of the Staten Island Federation of PTAs, which stated in part, “It is further resolved that the Staten Island Federation of PTAs require that at least half plus one of the members of any borough board be parents of children currently enrolled in a public school of that borough.”⁷⁰
- Jan Atwell, Program Director of the United Parents Association of New York City, said that in her organization’s survey, “most Respondents believe that [the new body] should contain a parent majority, with some representation from the wider community.”⁷¹
- A written statement submitted on behalf of Community School District 1 (Manhattan) recommended that new “District Education Councils” should have 11 members, consisting of 80% parents, 10% (or at least 1) interested persons who work in the community, and 10% (or at least 1) pedagogue.⁷²

⁶⁶ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, p. 57, 60. (Exhibit 5.)

⁶⁷ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 19, 2002, p. 140. (Exhibit 7)

⁶⁸ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 19, 2002, p. 241. (Exhibit 7)

⁶⁹ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 6, 2003, p. 55. (Exhibit 9)

⁷⁰ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 6, 2003, p. 154. (Exhibit 9)

⁷¹ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (day session), p. 33. (Exhibit 10)

⁷² Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (day session), written submission #40. (Exhibit 10)

- LeRoi Gill, executive director of Central Brooklyn Churches, advocated for “community school councils” comprised of a parent from each local school leadership team and four additional members of the community.⁷³
- Alan Dubrow, Secretary to Community School Board 20 (Brooklyn), testified that “whatever you decide to put in place, it should include parents and community representatives, and they should be accountable to the community.”⁷⁴
- Rosemarie Izzo, current president of Community School Board 20 (Brooklyn), testified that the new entities should consist of a majority of parents, and should also include community leaders, administrators and teachers.⁷⁵

5. Selection process alternatives

There were mixed opinions about whether the new bodies should be elected or appointed. Not surprisingly, current members of community school boards favored electoral systems. Other speakers advocated a system that would give greater emphasis to merit-based choice and eliminate the problems that have characterized the elections, as described above:

- Noreen Connell, Executive Director of the Education Priorities Panel, stated that “some of our member organizations favor elections, while other favor appointments by elected officials. There is no EPP consensus on selection, except in one area. Parents should be selected by other parents in their home schools.”⁷⁶
- Bijou Miller, co-president of the Parent Council for District 2 (Manhattan), recommended, “Whatever replacement you come up with and you should not leave a void. The members should come from the spectrum of active school groups. This includes parents, teachers, administrators and community groups. I agree with others that these new panels should not be chosen through election but should be appointed within the various representative groups. In other words parents who eventually sit on these boards should be selected by parents and teachers by teachers et cetera. Politicians should not have anything to do with this process, in my opinion, and these opinions are not just mine, they’re held by many parents in my schools.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (day session), p. 327. (Exhibit 10)

⁷⁴ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (evening session), p. 131. (Exhibit 11)

⁷⁵ Task Force Transcript, Jan. 16, 2003 (evening session), p. 135. (Exhibit 11)

⁷⁶ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 19, 2002, p. 17. (Exhibit 7)

⁷⁷ Task Force Transcript, Dec. 10, 2002, p. 52. (Exhibit 5.)