

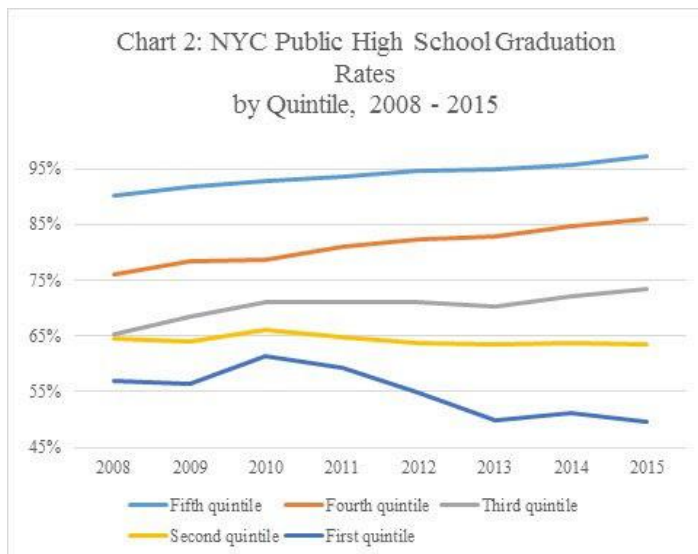
Please, I hope someone out there is actually reading this, we need help.

I'm not going to pretend like I have all the answers, but I have been teaching NYCDOE schools for eight years and conducted research about our education system that spans back to its inception. I will do my best to explain - with evidence - 1.) the alarming flaws in mayoral control, 2.) potential solutions to the corruption and mismanagement seen prior to 2002, and 3.) how a hybrid system might be the best chance at success.

### **1.) The alarming flaws of mayoral control.**

Mayoral control was a response to corruption that "was rife in many community school boards, which led to the state Legislature to limit the Board of Education's power in 1996 and ultimately led to the system's demise" (Santiago). When Mike Bloomberg was elected to be Mayor, he wanted Mayoral Control to reign in the corruption and streamline the DOE through the chancellor, and the Panel for Education Policy - a majority of whom are elected by the mayor - which is responsible for things such as reviewing and doling out juicy DOE contracts. First off, after digging into the PEP's records, I found it interesting that all the votes I reviewed were all unanimous. You've got to ask, how critical and thoughtful were these decisions if there were no alternative possibilities or perspectives? Bloomberg claims these changes led to higher graduation and higher test scores: "More centralized control of the education system allows the city to set broad standards that it says have contributed to higher graduation rates, greater college attendance," (Santiago) If we were to look at data presented by the Comptroller's Office and a 2017 study by the prestigious NYU Steinhardt, we will illuminate a narrative of political posturing that uses graduation rate data out context to gild over the decay that the DOE, and tragically the youth of NYC, have been suffering for decades. Big sad, I know.

Bloomberg touted higher graduation rates, and so did DeBlasio. On January 14, 2021 - The Official Website of the City of New York posted, "New York City's 2020 four-year high school graduation rate has reached a record high of 78.8 percent, with gains in every borough. The graduation rate has increased every year of this administration, and is up 10.3 percentage points since 2014". This would support Bloomberg's assertion that mayoral control enabled him and his predecessors to achieve consistent growth over in graduation rates, right? I guess it depends on who the mayors which students of NYC they were thinking of when they thought they were doing so well. According to the Comptroller Office's Report:



“Chart 2 displays the 334 schools that graduated students every year between 2011 and 2015. Among these schools, those with the highest graduation rates saw their graduation rates improve by an impressive seven percentage points over the last eight years, growing from 90 percent in 2008 to 97 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, schools in the second highest quintile gained even more ground, with rates increasing a full 10 percentage points (from 76 percent to 86 percent).

At the same time, graduation rates at high schools in the bottom quintile dropped in 2015 to a low of 50 percent, falling a full 11 percentage points from a recent high of 61 percent in 2010, and from 57 percent in 2008.”

And when we look at this data, we can see that those who were doing well improved, and those who already needed to most help actually decreased. Does that look like social equity to you? If we brought in the racial compositions of these schools, what do you think we would find? And if this weren't disturbing enough, it only gets worse when we take a look at the rise of graduation rates next to College Readiness scores and College Attrition. Because even though the mayors claimed their control led to greater college attendance, we can see that access doesn't matter if you don't have the skills to thrive.

According to the comptroller office's report "Diploma Disparities: High School Graduation Rates in New York City" from September 22, 2016 says "despite the fact that a higher percentage of students are graduating citywide, less than half of city high school graduates are determined to be college ready". Maybe it would be fair to say that, well maybe just because a student isn't "determined to be college ready" that doesn't mean they can't still figure it out when they get there. But when we look at the NYU Steinhardt Article "New York City Goes to College New Findings and Framework for Examining College Access and Success" from 2017. The conclusion of their finding were that "[a]lthough we have seen gains in high school graduation and enrollment among all students, regardless of background, more advantaged students have been able to maintain these gains as they have transitioned into college in ways that underrepresented students have not", which continues the narratives that we saw begin in the Comptroller's data - that social inequities continue to play a role in the outcomes of the youth of

NYC. So while the mayors are bragging about their higher graduation rates to claim they've improved the system, in the context of this other data - we can see that there hasn't been an improvement in long term educational outcomes and "Increased attrition during the early years of college, for example, suggests the need for further research on the changing meaning of the high school diploma". How I wish these were the only flaws in the current system that have not improved since the days of school board control.

Another reason why they claimed mayoral control improved the DOE because it stopped nepotistic or political appointments of unqualified principals. And I'll tell you, even in my limited experience I have seen a terrible administrator move up from an assistant principalship where they were literally maybe the most incompetent and harmful person I've ever worked with, and they were promoted to be a principal of a new school. It honestly terrifies me. Principals might be the most important people when it comes to success or failure of school, and we should be making the most qualified people possible are running our schools and not running the best educators that we have out of education.

## **2.) Some of the issues with this school boards and potential solutions**

- Corruption when it comes to principal appointments
  - Potential Solutions to deter corruption:
    - Principals should have to had teach to for at least 10 years in the classroom. Make the standard of experience indisputable and not a position easy to attain for those who truly aren't committed to education. Their experience will also
    - Principals can be picked by board of veteran teachers from the same district to prevent a conflict of interest, along with qualified alumni who have a strong understanding of the school's cultures and its needs.
  - People using school board positions as political springboards to other offices
    - don't allow folks who are on school board eligible for other political offices for a certain period of time (5 years, 10 years, or whatever deemed a big enough deterrent to anyone who only wants the job for political purposes) so it's not worth the trouble.

## **3.) Things that shouldn't change from the current mayoral control system**

- Transparency/Public Access to the budgets
- School boards shouldn't be involved in the hiring process because they aren't experts in pedagogical practices