

**DYKER HEIGHTS CIVIC ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED**

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**Testimony of Fran Vella-Marrone
President of the Dyker Heights Civic Association
The Assembly Standing Committee on Education**

March 20, 2009

Hearing on Governance of the New York City School District

The Dyker Heights Civic Association supports the extension of Mayoral control of the New York City public school system which is set to expire on June 30, 2009.

Having a central elected figure such as the Mayor responsible for the operation of our public school system is more desirable than the former Board of Education. Mayoral control provides the citizenry with a recognizable entity to hold accountable.

Under mayoral control the NYC public school system has made progress in the education of our children by improving student achievement, providing a safe learning environment and employing qualified, motivated faculty and administration.

However, in the area of local input there is room for improvement, specifically related to the local Community Education Council (CEC) and the local school superintendent. In this regard, we believe that local superintendent's should be given more authority on the operation of their districts and in personnel decisions and that in turn the local superintendents should not only be answerable to the central education office but also to the local CEC. In addition, there should be a screening process for principles and administrators that includes input from the community and staff.

There is also an area of concern for our organization that relates to the school curriculum. As a civic association, the Dyker Heights Civic Association believes strongly in civic involvement. However, in order to become civically active, one must learn about civics. Civics education is the study of government, politics and citizenship with the goal of informed participation. It seems that at present the school curriculum lacks an adequate concentration of civics. This includes educating our children with regard to the different branches of the federal, state and local governments as well as American, NYS and City history and what it means to be a citizen. In order for our children to grow up and become productive members of society and to lead our nation, state and city into a prosperous and free future, it is very important that they attain knowledge of civics. Civic involvement is paramount to our democratic form of government and way of life. As such, we feel very strongly about an increased concentration of civics into the curriculum for all NYC school children.

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

The civic association is the level where people function in government.

Visit us on the web at: www.dykerheightscivicassociation.com.