# Mayoral Leadership and Involvement in Education

## AN ACTION GUIDE FOR SUCCESS

# THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

**Beverly O'Neill**
Mayor of Long Beach
President

**Michael A. Guido**
Mayor of Dearborn
Vice President

**Douglas H. Palmer**
Mayor of Trenton
Chair, Advisory Board

**Tom Cochran**
Executive Director

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**Dear Mayor:**

I am pleased to present you with a copy of *Mayoral Leadership and Involvement in Education: An Action Guide for Success*. This publication provides information, strategies, ideas and examples to assist you in becoming more involved with education in your city.

As a mayor, you know how critically important good schools are in promoting the economic development, vitality, and image of your city. Many mayors like you have expressed a desire to become more involved in local education issues, policies and programs because you understand the consequences for your city if student performance stagnates and your schools are found "in need of improvement."

Education is a key issue mayors have used to improve public perceptions of their cities. Mayors have issued calls to improve their cities' school systems as a way to unify citizens to solve problems that affect every resident, whether or not they have school-aged children. Make no mistake: your involvement in education and school-related issues makes a difference, no matter what level of input you seek to have. This includes being an advocate for improvement, as well as partnering with and supporting the school system to make necessary changes.

I thank the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its support in making this publication possible. The U.S. Conference of Mayors continues to work closely with the Foundation to improve and expand mayoral leadership and involvement in education in order to ensure every child has the opportunity to receive a quality education.

This publication is a valuable addition to this organization's well-established efforts to assist mayors on issues that directly affect their cities. When important issues arise, please know that the Conference of Mayors will continue to provide you with the resources you need.

Sincerely

**Tom Cochran**
Executive Director

# INTRODUCTION

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*"We face the great challenges of education. I'll say it here and now: Reforming our public schools is the central public policy issue of our time. We all know that this is the one way we can give more of our people a meaningful shot at a better life."*

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa, New Mayors' Conference, Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, November 30, 2005.

Mayoral leadership and involvement in education is not new. In fact, from the development of the first public schools in the 1850s until the 1930s, almost every mayor had direct authority over education. In a few cities, mayors have maintained this formal role to the present day. Since the early 1990s, mayors of some American cities—such as Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Harrisburg and New York—have sought greater accountability over public education by calling for and receiving the authority to directly select their city's schools superintendent and school board members.

However, during this same time, mayors of many other cities—such as Louisville, Indianapolis, Long Beach, Nashville, San Jose, Akron, Columbus, St. Louis, St. Petersburg and Denver—have become more involved in education in variety of ways without changing their formal role in school governance. Mayors can make a difference in public education through informal involvement with local schools, and by exercising their leadership in multiple ways. By using their authority over public safety, health and social service agencies, parks and recreation facilities, and a host of other resources, mayors can make a direct impact on the lives of children—and improve their educational outcomes—without becoming directly involved in the governance of the school system.

Most American cities are facing rapidly changing demographics, more complex social problems, heightened calls from employers to properly prepare the future workforce, and increased scrutiny by state and federal governments to promote better outcomes for children. Combined with the needs of multiple constituencies who vary with respect to ethnicity, race, income, and citizenship, as well as the striking difference in background between those who teach and those who are taught in our cities' public schools, these issues have increased mayoral concern about local education. All of these issues are linked to the vitality and quality of cities— a fact that ultimately compels greater involvement in education by mayors. Citizens naturally look to mayors to provide leadership in the face of these demands, and are holding mayors accountable for their ability to provide solutions, no matter what formal authority over the schools the mayor may have.

The federal **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)** has also intensified the need for mayors to become more involved in public education. With its demand for higher standards and accountability, standardized testing, and measurable results, NCLB has dramatically changed the dynamics of public education and presents many challenges for urban school districts and the cities in which they are located. Student achievement is being scrutinized as never before in urban centers, and in many cities, those connected to public education are facing the painful realization that schools and their students are not achieving at high levels. As these challenges come to light, mayors will be asked to address the shortcomings of their cities' schools and will need to know what can be done to fix them. Increasingly, mayors also are being asked about the marked differences between the composition of the teaching force in their cities and the students these teachers serve, and how to achieve a better balance.

On a broader level, a mayor's already-existing responsibilities for public health, safety and welfare compel a greater role in education as well. Mayors are the key actors in formulating policies and programs that have a direct impact on children's lives, and have a unique ability to foster collaboration between school, health, and social services. Today, it takes more than a school or school system to educate a student—and mayors can make sure children have not just a quality educational experience, but appropriate health and social services that are vital to a child's opportunity to learn. Although some mayors are more interested in addressing core issues in school systems directly, others may want to become involved by supporting issues that are related—but no less vital—to school systems, such as out-of-school youth programs, workforce development efforts, social services, and library, museum, arts and cultural programs.

With all these possibilities for mayoral involvement, the two pivotal questions for mayors are:

- *What role should I have as the chief elected official of my city to ensure that every child has the opportunity to have a quality educational experience?*

- *What can I do to align my city's services and resources to provide that opportunity?*

This *Action Guide* will help mayors answer these questions. The purpose of the *Guide* is to:

- Help mayors understand the range of education issues and problems you may find yourself facing;

- Provide ideas and strategies for potential involvement in education;

- Convey specific information about school finance, management and education reform issues; and

- Give mayors advice on what to do and what not to do when becoming engaged.

Throughout this *Action Guide*, four central themes of mayoral leadership and involvement in education are emphasized: *advocacy, capacity, implementation, and sustainability*. The *Action Guide* is intended to provide useful information to mayors no matter what role they currently have or are considering in education.

This *Guide's* goal is to assist mayors in making choices in how they may get involved in the school systems of their cities. This may include recruitment of quality teachers, supporting new charter schools, smaller learning communities, other alternative learning settings, and providing adequate school facilities. The *Guide* provides principles, suggestions and ideas for mayoral leadership and involvement, and also explains the political, financial and bureaucratic problems with which mayors are confronted when they become more involved in public education. Even though one might think all cities and their education issues are the same, they are not: each city has its own unique political and cultural traditions. As such, there are an array of approaches and types of involvement from which a mayor can choose when deciding how to be engaged.

We hope you will use this *Action Guide* to see what solutions best fit your own city's particular education challenges and issues, and help provide a foundation for your role in educational change and improvement in your city.

# The Political Context for Today's Mayoral Role in Education

For the last 75 years, most mayors have not been directly involved in public education or have shown little interest in getting involved. In the last 10 to 15 years, however, there has been a sea change: mayoral interest in education has escalated because of a growing awareness of the impact public schools have on a city's economic growth and development. The reputation of a city's public education system affects the city's own reputation and prestige. The quality of a city's school system also influences many other indicia of a city's viability—or lack thereof—including crime rates, health issues, foster care involvement, gang problems, housing needs, employment and unemployment rates, business and investment development, construction, tax revenues, the arts, and population trends. All mayors now realize that education is a critical part of their cities' social and economic vitality.

As part of this trend, the prevailing norm of separation between city government and school system administration has been subjected to growing scrutiny in recent years. The traditional prerogatives and leadership of professional educators are now being reassessed, and increasingly have been preempted by civic and business leaders at the state and national levels. As frustration has mounted with the capacity or desire of educators to effectuate change, other government leaders have become much more forceful in pushing for higher standards and more rigorous assessments and accountability systems. Recently, for example, governors' education aides and advisers in the President's Domestic Policy Council have transcended the influence of state education departments and the U.S. Department of Education's professional leaders in shaping education policy for states and local school districts.

This growing involvement of non-educators in education has begun to spread through the ranks of mayors. Indeed, mayors—in whose cities are found the most complex educational problems—are in the front-line trenches of the battle to improve under-performing schools, in which student achievement is often disappointing.

Mayors have become frustrated by the failures of their school districts. They are being held accountable by the electorate for the weaknesses of their school systems, while at the same time having little authority or influence over urban school boards and administrators. Over the past 15 years, many mayors have reacted to these circumstances by becoming more aggressively engaged in school matters.

These dynamics, of course, continue to intensify as the saliency of education as a public policy issue escalates across the country. Elected officials at every governmental level can no longer detach themselves from controversial and seemingly intractable school issues. Although the most dramatic examples of mayoral involvement are found in cities like New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and Boston, where mayors have assumed direct control of the schools, there are hundreds of additional less visible examples of growing mayoral involvement in cities of all sizes across the country.

In considering whether and how to become more involved in public education, mayors need to consider not only the broad political context of their cities, but also the structural context in which they are working. The variation in a mayor's formal executive responsibilities, budgetary authority, term of office, city council structure, and level of state influence can affect the mayor's level of involvement in education. School politics also vary greatly as the result of factors like ethnic and racial diversity, budgetary issues, the influence of teacher's unions, and the formal governance structure of public education.

The specific way in which these factors come together in a city will affect all four aspects of a mayor's potential involvement in education. The political context in your city may suggest that mayoral advocacy in education is appropriate for some issues and not others, and may compel specific avenues for implementation of mayoral influence over the schools. Moreover, the political context of your city may be a bellwether of the city's and school system's capacity to adopt changes brought about by increased mayoral influence, as well as the likelihood that those changes will be sustainable.

In the sections that follow, this *Guide* details key issues and challenges mayors may face as they negotiate their own political and structural context. The *Guide* poses a series of questions mayors will want to answer to assist them in determining their level of involvement.

# Advocacy Issues and Challenges Confronting Mayors in Education

## Significant Education Challenges Mayors Face

In analyzing mayoral involvement in education, there are a number of significant education challenges school systems face when trying to improve student achievement and the school system overall. People may list the challenges in different ways, but these are among the most important ones mayors cite. Mayors are also confronted with these challenges and resulting citizen dissatisfaction no matter what their level of involvement may be: as community leaders, mayors are confronted with these issues by definition.

The challenges are:

- Unsatisfactory student achievement
- Political conflict
- Inexperienced teaching staff
- Low expectations and lack of a demanding curriculum
- Lack of instructional coherence
- High student mobility
- Poorly managed, wasteful or corrupt school district business operations
- The striking difference in background between teachers and the students they serve

## Addressing the Challenges

Because of their status as the chief elected official in their cities, mayors can address the above challenges by:

- Working with the school system to develop an array of opportunities to provide programs that help improve student achievement, such as out-of-school programs, mentoring and tutoring, and links to social services.

- Convening meetings of all parties involved in school issues. This approach may include using your bully pulpit, running a slate for school board to gain a majority, and mediating conflict.

- Assisting the school system in recruiting and retaining teachers, as well as working to develop strategies to support inexperienced teachers. To improve recruitment and retention of teachers, some mayors have implemented a real estate loan or subsidy program for purchasing or renting housing. Other mayors have called on retired teachers and citizens in the city to assist the schools by serving as mentors.

- Communicating a consistent message to the community at large that reinforces the theme that all children can learn.

- Discussing with business and education leaders the importance of aligning curriculum to rigorous academic standards and what students need to know and be able to do in the world of work. *(Do not get involved in the specifics of curriculum and instruction.)*

- Providing technical support to improve the school system's business operation or taking a pro-active approach to suggest that certain functions could be more effectively and efficiently be handled by the city. These functions may include payroll, information technology (IT), transportation, purchasing and contract management, and maintenance.

## EDUCATION ISSUES MAYORS MAY BE ASKED TO BECOME ENGAGED IN:

### SCHOOL SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

- School board and superintendent selection
- New school design and construction
- Authorizing and oversight of charter schools
- Length of the school day and school year
- School uniform policies

### DISTRICT AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS

- School safety
- School use beyond the regular school day and year
- Teacher recruitment and retention
- Changing and improving school management structures and personnel
- Back office functions such as technology, payroll, human resources, transportation, accounting, purchasing, building and grounds maintenance, and school construction

### SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Meeting the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Coordination of non-academic services being provided in schools with the academic program
- School organization and strategic priorities such as smaller classroom size and schools, magnets, charters, choice, and neighborhood schools
- Other curriculum and instruction issues

### DISTRICT AND SCHOOL BUDGET MATTERS

- School budget priorities and transparency
- Fiscal management and accountability

### CONSENSUS-BUILDING EFFORTS

- Provision of additional public resources and the solicitation of resources from the business and not-for-profit communities.
- Partnerships with outside organizations, groups, businesses, higher education and other educational institutions

## SAN JOSE MAYOR RON GONZALES

*On Mayoral Involvement*

*in Education*

**In Their Own Words**

Five reasons why mayors should be involved in education

1. A mayor's leadership means the entire community can work together to help schools and families be more effective and successful.
2. The long-term prosperity and livability of a city depends on the commitment and creativity of the next generation.
3. The continuing economic competitiveness of a city demands a well-prepared local workforce.
4. An educated community is a safer community for everyone—children, families, and neighborhoods.
5. The cost of ignorance for the whole community far outweighs the cost of investing in education.

Five important things a mayor can do for education (if they don't run the schools)

1. Help attract and keep quality teachers through innovative homebuyer programs.
2. Invest in pre-school and quality child-care partnerships to help our youngest residents get a smart start.
3. Celebrate success and recognize improvement using the mayor's "bully pulpit."
4. Provide after-school programs that are good, affordable and accessible to help extend the school day.
5. Encourage and support parent involvement in education through information and training.

*(San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales has included education as one of his priorities including helping start one charter school in the city. He has also been a pioneer in providing real estate incentives to recruit and retain teachers in the city's schools.)*

# Ways Mayors Can Address Education Issues:

Lobby at the state and federal levels to enhance the city's and school system's ability to obtain funds.

Negotiate for more programmatic flexibility and regulatory waivers to meet statutory requirements.

Establish programs that enhance community involvement such as student employment and internship programs, and other activities with the private sector.

Apply fiscal discipline and accountability to the school system in formal and informal ways.

# Political, Financial and Bureaucratic Challenges Mayors May be Asked to Confront:

## POLITICAL

- Election of school board candidates
- Redrawing school boundary lines and attendance zones
- Closing or restructuring individual schools
- Negotiation or mediation of teacher and administrator contracts
- School board decision-making
- School choice, charter schools and alternative schools
- Participating in or expanding parental/public involvement and engagement in education
- Improving education and related services for students with special needs such as those with disabilities, returning juvenile offenders, pregnant students, out-of-school youth, foster care and homeless students

## FINANCIAL

- Equity and adequacy of funding
- School bond issues and tax levies
- School construction, modernization and design
- School budget priorities and future fiscal needs
- Outsourcing of jobs and contracts management

## BUREAUCRATIC

- Hiring and firing of school principals and system administrators
- Ensuring that schools are staffed with a critical mass of quality teachers throughout the system
- Linking city services with education and the potential for co-location or joint use of social and related services within school buildings
- Providing school safety while preserving a hospitable teaching and learning environment

# Ways Mayors Can Address Political, Financial and Bureaucratic Issues:

Secure and leverage commitments and resources from non-partisan institutions and organizations to improve public schools.

Merge redundant school district services with city agencies that also provide these services to promote efficiency, effectiveness and savings. These activities might include transportation, food service, human resources, technology and data management, payroll and safety.

Issue public calls to increase parental and public engagement in education. This includes eliminating the feeling of some parents—especially in low income neighborhoods—that they are disenfranchised.

Link or coordinate education programs with other similar programs under the mayor's control such as housing, economic and community development, child welfare, juvenile justice and health.

# Determining A Mayor's Capacity for Selecting A Role in Education

**M**ayors' decisions about how deeply to get involved in education often are driven by their capacity—and the capacity of the mayor's office as a whole—to include this issue as one of their priorities. How do mayors determine their capacity to become involved?

Mayors always require information to gauge their ability to select a level of investment when they wish to take on any issue, especially complex school issues. Factors such as the mayor's experiences in the city, previous elected office, and the length of time they have been in office affect the amount of information needed to determine their capacity to augment their role in education.

The fundamental question mayors need to ask in gauging their capacity for involvement is *"What are my opportunities for investing in education?"* The following will influence how you answer this question:

- Your personal interest in education
- The community's feeling and general public opinion about increased mayoral involvement in education.
- The city's and the school system's willingness to accept greater mayoral involvement.
- The available opportunities for mayoral leadership under current governance structures.
- The electoral and political opportunities to change the education system, if the existing school governance structures do not allow greater mayoral involvement.
- The current performance of the school system in meeting state academic standards and public perception of the schools.

The questions posed below are based on conversations with mayors about what information they require to make a decision about whether to become involved in education. These are grouped in categories relating to the points above.

## City Governance:

**CITY GOVERNANCE AUTHORITY** -- Do state law or provisions of the city charter allow a mayor to have the authority to directly oversee the governance and administration of schools?

**STRUCTURE OF CITY GOVERNANCE** -- Does the formal structure of city government enable this involvement?

**FORMAL MAYORAL EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY** -- What is the formal executive authority of the mayor in governance?

**EXECUTIVE RESOURCES** -- What is the range of expertise available from the mayor's immediate staff for education and related issues?

**TERM OF OFFICE** -- Since change in education takes a long time, will the mayor be in office to see changes through? Are there term limits in the city, and how long does the mayor plan to be in office?

**ELECTION CYCLE** -- Are the mayor and city council elected at the same time or on different cycles?

**BUDGETARY STABILITY** -- Since priorities can change and planned investments in education can be dramatically affected by swings in revenue, has city revenue been stable over several years?

## Education Governance and Organization:

**OVERLAPPING BOUNDARIES** -- Are the boundaries of the school district contiguous with the boundaries of the city?

**BOARD MEMBER ELECTION** -- Are school board members elected at-large, by district, appointed or by some combination? How representative is the board of the community, and do any specific interests dominate on the board, such as the teacher's union?

**TEACHER'S UNIONS** -- How active and powerful is the teacher's union in the school district? Is it influential in school board elections?

**SUPERINTENDENT'S TENURE** -- Does the district have a history of very frequent turnover in superintendents?

**SCHOOL ENROLLMENT** -- Has enrollment been increasing or decreasing? What are the district's demographics?

**SCHOOL BUDGET** -- Has the district had problems passing bond and/or millage increases to cover its budget needs?

**DISTRICT AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY** -- Is the district likely to be labeled as a district "in need of improvement" as determined by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)? Have there been other issues that have stimulated public concern over the district's management of education and student performance?

SCHOOL BUS

## Non-Governance Determining Factors

**PERSONAL INTERESTS AND PRIORITIES** --
Are there specific education issues, interventions or services that you feel are not being provided or emphasized?

**PUBLIC SENTIMENT AND PERCEPTION** --
What is the current public perception of the school system and its ability to provide a quality education and manage its day-to-day responsibilities?

**BUSINESS COMMUNITY CONCERNS** --
Has the business community questioned the quality of the school system's graduates? Do business leaders doubt that the schools are producing local graduates with the skills businesses require to meet their workforce needs?

**PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS** --
Has working with the district's leadership been hard or easy in such areas as creating partnerships, providing access to social services for students, safety issues, pre-K programs, schools as community assets, and out-of-school programs?

**SCANDALS OR LEGAL ISSUES** --
Have there been any scandals or legal questions related to the handling of business matters within the school system, including transparency regarding the budget and contracts?

**EDUCATION AS A POLITICAL ISSUE** --
Was education an issue discussed during recent political campaigns? Have promises been made that require action or a leadership role on the part of the mayor?

## Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer

*On encouraging public engagement and what Mayors should do when they get involved in education*

**In Their Own Words**

How a mayor can encourage public engagement in education?

- Hold town hall-type meetings and invite parents, teachers, school administrators, school board members, business and community residents to attend and talk about their recent experiences with and concerns about the education system, as well as make suggestions for improving the schools

- Make sure the public notices clearly describe the purpose of the meeting, time and place

- Provide bilingual translators

- Listen to the comments, ask questions and take notes

- Be responsive to reasonable requests, suggestions and comments

- Take action oriented steps after assessing the meeting by forming working groups and create a new coalition in partnership with the school superintendent and other local or statewide advocacy organizations to address the issues raised

- Enable the work groups to develop a set of school improvement priorities and short- and long-term recommendations to be addressed during the school budget process

- Allow mayoral staff and education experts to act as a resource to help working groups obtain needed information to support the recommendations and priorities

What should mayors do when they get involved in education?

- Do what it takes to ensure constructive problem-solving.

- Build and value partnerships

- Listen carefully and engage fully to identify the key issues

- Emphasize evidence-based problem-solving

- Maximize working group participants' learning about issues and solutions so they are equipped to address the most difficult ones with care and thoughtfulness

- Access outside resources such as law centers, experts and others who can assist in doing research and framing the issues, priorities, options and recommendations

- Follow up by monitoring progress toward implementing the recommended action steps

*(Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer has served as mayor for 15 years and currently chairs the Conference's Advisory Board. Education has been one of his highest priorities. As a result of public involvement, the mayor recently established the Education CHANGE Coalition which focuses on improving the city schools in partnership with the school system.)*

# TYPES OF MAYORAL LEADERSHIP
# AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Once a mayor has determined his or her capacity for involvement in education, that capacity will suggest the type of leadership role that is best suited for the mayor's situation. As noted previously, mayoral involvement can take a variety of forms. Here are the major types of mayoral involvement, paired with examples of how actual mayors have exercised their influence and leadership within these types by implementing specific strategies for school and school district improvement.

**TOTAL CONTROL --** The mayor selects the school board and school superintendent, and controls the budget.

The primary city examples of this type of involvement are Chicago, New York City, Cleveland, Boston and Harrisburg (PA). In each of these cases, state legislation enabled a mayoral takeover of the schools, but the reasons motivating the legislative action were not always the same.

- Mayors Richard Daley (Chicago), Michael Bloomberg (New York) and Thomas Menino (Boston) each asked their state legislature for the authority to take control of the school system to select the school board and the superintendent.

- Mayoral control in Cleveland was included as part of larger state oversight of the school system. Several years later, voters reaffirmed the legislative action to have the mayor in control of the schools.

- Harrisburg's mayoral takeover was a special provision in a larger statewide school reform bill that established an accountability system for Pennsylvania schools. In Harrisburg, the mayor was given control because of an especially poor record of management and student performance in the district.

**PARTIAL CONTROL --** The mayor selects part or all of the school board, which in turn selects the superintendent. The mayor also sometimes has oversight over the budget with the city council. This type of involvement and control is different in each city:

- In Philadelphia, Mayor John Street and the Governor of Pennsylvania jointly select members of the school board.

- Providence Mayor David Cicilline selects the school board, which in turn selects the superintendent.

- Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer selects the school board and is also part of the selection process for the superintendent.

- Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown gained the authority to select three of the school board members.

- Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson has a unique form of partial control: he is the only mayor who has been given charter school authority by the state legislature. As such, he oversees a system of public charter schools that is separate from and parallel to the traditional public school system.

- Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez has the authority to appoint five of the nine members of the school board. He has just appointed himself to the board and was elected chair of the school board by its members.

**PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP** -- The mayor and school superintendent work together to address common issues and initiatives to improve education.

- St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay has made education a priority and has run two different slates of candidates for the school board. He worked with the school board during its process to select a new school superintendent.

- During three terms as mayor, Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill's key priority has been establishing and maintaining a working partnership with the superintendent, the city, business and higher education.

- San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales works not only with the San Jose Unified school district superintendent, but all of the superintendents in the school districts located within San Jose to ensure that the city's policies don't adversely affect students and teachers.

- Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz has a hands-on working relationship with the Miami-Dade County school superintendent, even though Miami-Dade is a county school system, and encompasses more than the city of Miami.

- Akron Mayor Donald Plusquellic and the school system are working closely together to plan the construction of new schools so they will be joint use facilities. The city is co-funding this project with the state.

- Bridgeport Mayor John Fabrizi works closely with the city's new school superintendent so that education is part of the city's strategic plan for economic revitalization.

**MEDIUM INVOLVEMENT** -- When the mayor may want to do more but is stymied by the political environment, political structure or relationship with the school system.

- In Des Moines, which has a mayor-city manager form of government, Mayor Frank Cownie has developed a strong relationship with the school superintendent to address the challenges of the city's changing demographics.

- St. Petersburg Mayor Richard Baker has worked with the county school system on a number of issues confronting the schools in his city, which include reading, after-school and youth issues. The fact that he is mayor of the largest city in the county makes a difference, but the county-based governance system for education limits his ability to have a greater formal leadership role.

- Charlotte Mayor Patrick McCrory finds himself in a similar situation as Mayor Baker. Mayor McCrory has been very active within Charlotte on education issues including afterschool, reading and mentoring but he, too, is limited by the county school system governance structure.

## Approaches for a Mayoral Role in Education

Mayors can choose from a variety of approaches to become involved in education. Depending on their policy agenda and priorities, mayors may select one or more of the following roles as they increase their engagement in education.

**CONVENER** -- brings various people to the table from across the city who would not necessarily meet together or talk.

**FACILITATOR** -- makes things happen that cannot always be done by others.

**MEDIATOR** -- convenes parties that disagree and achieves compromises.

**RESOURCE PERSON** -- uses access to generate additional resources from state and federal sources, foundations, and business.

**COMMUNICATOR** -- offers transparency to topics that are very complicated or even obtuse to the general public such as school finance, accountability, and contracts.

**CATALYST** -- serves as advocate for change and improvement by speaking out, offering ideas, promoting initiatives, starting partnerships and challenging the community.

**LEADER** -- uses the mayor's office resources and bully pulpit to raise and communicate policy issues and problems that are important to the city and offers leadership in promoting education improvement.

**MANAGER** -- provides the capacity to manage activities that are not done efficiently by the school system, including back office functions that are not part of education's core business of teaching and learning.

# CREATING CONSTRUCTIVE CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Leadership qualities and skills are critical to the success of a mayor's involvement in education. A mayor's abilities can make all the difference in creating an environment for change, and are critical for sustaining changes over the long term. Below are some examples of mayoral leadership that have driven change in city school systems.

**CREATING THE CONDITIONS** to improve schools whether they are in the instructional, managerial, budgetary, financial, recruitment or contract realms.

- New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's leadership drove governance changes and a massive reorganization of the district.
- Boston Mayor Thomas Menino provided vocal support for education and publicly staked his re-election on his ability to improve the schools.
- Chicago Mayor Richard Daley provided the environment for activism and change by calling attention to the school system's faults and demanding that the status quo be jettisoned.

**PROVIDING A POLITICAL BUFFER** to get things done that others have been unable to do, and to avoid hitting the political and bureaucratic roadblocks that often confound educators.

- Boston Mayor Menino's support of the superintendent provided flexibility for the superintendent to act, and bolstered the superintendent's reform package.
- Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper has supported and helped obtain very strong public support for a new teacher's contract based on performance.
- St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay successfully backed a slate of school board candidates and has been instrumental in driving a fast pace of reform in the city's school district.

**FACILITATING THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS** of the educational process, including back office issues and mediating contract disputes.

- Stamford (CT) Mayor Dannel Malloy's office provides IT support and purchasing, payroll and maintenance services for the public schools at cost savings to the school system.
- Mayors Daley (Chicago) and Hickenlooper (Denver) have taken a major role in negotiating teacher contracts.

**PROVIDING A LOBBYING ARM** with a different powerful voice.

- Indianapolis Mayor Peterson successfully lobbied the state legislature for the authority to authorize charter schools, which give parents more educational options for their children.

- Providence Mayor David Cicilline led an effort to change the state education funding formula before the state legislature.

**ACTING AS A POLITICAL ADVOCATE** for funding and testifying on issues.

- In Ohio, the mayors of the state's 21 largest cities are working together to develop a ballot initiative to change the education funding formula, since the state legislature did not act when ordered to do so by the state's highest court.

- In New Jersey, the mayors involved in the *Abbott* school funding decision continually lobby the state legislature for funding to meet the requirements of the court's order.

**FACILITATING AN OUTCRY ON AN ISSUE** for the whole city.

- Akron Mayor Donald Plusquellic facilitated and promoted the approval of a new city tax that provided funding for new school construction and renovations to match state dollars when another tax proposal had failed.

**MAKING WHAT HAS BEEN IMPLICIT** for too long explicit through their personal involvement.

- Chicago Mayor Daley forcefully criticized the school system's management problems, spoke out passionately about the need to improve student achievement, and built public and legislative support for his plan to make the system more accountable.

- Denver Mayor Hickenlooper immediately became involved in the teacher contract process and helped lead the process to gain public support for changes.

- New York City Mayor Bloomberg's leadership drove governance changes and reorganization of the district, and made the entire process visible and transparent.

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## HARTFORD MAYOR EDDIE A. PEREZ

*On Mayoral Leadership and Involvement in Education*

**In Their Own Words**

What three key things from your experience are most important for mayors to recognize as they become more engaged in education?

- Education has so much to do with the quality of life and the future of a city; in fact, it is the driving force. The educational system is so crucial that mayors have to have input.

- Transferring the idea of accountability that mayors work with every day to a Board of Education bureaucracy is probably the biggest issue to confront.

- At least one-third of my time, energy, and effort as Mayor is already focused on education. The unexpected is to be expected.

Why the Mayor decided to appoint himself to the school board and accept being its chair.

- I'm willing to provide that leadership, because it's needed. This means that the buck has to stop in my office.

- This additional role is to build a solid plan for the future and serve as a critical link between the school system and the city government.

- It is a critical time for the board of education which faces numerous tough choices. Decisions need to be made without distractions that could undermine our efforts to provide the best possible education for our children.

- During this pivotal year, several important actions need to be considered by the board including deciding on a school superintendent, moving forward on new school facilities, shifting to a K-8 school configuration, and managing school finance litigation.

*(Hartford Mayor Eddie A. Perez appoints five of the nine members of the local school board. He appointed himself to the Board in late 2005 and was unanimously elected to be its chair.)*

## Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill

*On the mayoral role in the education arena and reflections on her positive education experiences as mayor*

**In Their Own Words**

### What can a mayor do in the education arena?

- If there are issues in education, the mayor is the only person who can typically bring all the stakeholders together to identify solutions. This is the most important role a mayor can play regarding education.

- Stay in touch with the education community. I accomplished this by creating and convening a Collaborative Conversation with the Long Beach Unified School District. This involves quarterly meetings between the city and school officials to discuss current issues and solutions. Often this conversation will include the higher education community, too.

- Education and public safety are the two most important issues that a mayor must deal with. A mayor must know what is occurring within the community's education system.

### What were some of your positive education experiences as Mayor of Long Beach?

- Nothing will ever match the feeling I experienced when the Long Beach Unified School District won the 2003 Broad Foundation award as the best large urban school district in the nation.

- The completion of two new schools — Cabrillo High School and Cesar Chavez Elementary School, the latter being located in downtown Long Beach.

- The passage of a ballot measure which provides funding to enable the school district to renovate existing school facilities and construct new buildings.

- The growing national reputation and recognition of the Long Beach Unified School District's innovative school reforms. These include school uniforms, single gender classes, night school for working high school students, and the opportunity for students to gain college credits while still enrolled in high school.

*(Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill is serving her third term as mayor. One of the Mayor's highest priorities during her 12 years as mayor has been education and making sure through her office that there is an ongoing conversation among all education stakeholders. Mayor O'Neill is serving as the President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors from June 2005 through June 2006.)*

**CALLING FOR TRANSPARENCY** on district finances because all citizens of a city, whether parents of children in the schools or not, fund the district with their tax dollars.

- St. Louis Mayor Slay took the lead in making sure that information about the school deficit and future school budget conversations became more public and transparent.

**COORDINATING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY** to support students and their families including coordinating children's services that includes education.

- Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson established "Neighborhood Place," a program that links education and related social services focused on children and families.

- Under Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels' leadership, a Families and Education Levy was revised. The levy funds activities that focus on closing the achievement gap, as well as investing in student health services through school-based health centers in all of the city's public comprehensive high schools.

**ORCHESTRATING** the use of many distinct education-related resources of the city, including cultural institutions, universities, museums, business, parks, and other governmental offices.

- In Minneapolis the mayor in partnership with the school system located a public school at the zoo.

- Chicago Mayor Daley's efforts included adding a school at the city's aquarium.

# Issue in Focus:
# School Budgets and Finance --
# A Must-Know Issue for Mayors

Traditionally, public school budgeting and finance have not been transparent to anyone in the community, including mayors. No matter what role mayors may decide to take in public education in their city, they must be aware of and prepared for financial management issues and questions about how the school system's budget is developed and how funds are allocated.

Two persistent problems school districts face are the over-commitment of school funding in the long term, and inadequate or redundant financial accounting systems. The latter often paints an inaccurate picture of the school district's financial health, and makes it very difficult to track funds. The former is a result of the difference between a school district's sources of income and the system's operating and retirement costs. For example, long-range pension commitments are one reason why school systems are experiencing structural budget deficits. Mayors should be aware that many school systems have negotiated retirement benefits for which they no longer can afford to pay given increased costs of education, decreases in student enrollment, and inadequately (if not reduced) revenue from local, state and national sources.

Many urban school districts are experiencing declines in enrollment due to overall declines in the school-age population, increased numbers of charter schools, and parents' decisions to move to the suburbs because of the low quality of a city's public school system. Recently, some larger school districts are seeing increases in enrollment related to new legal and illegal immigration, temporarily placed families, and business growth. Unfortunately, however, the cost of educating many of these new students exceeds the amount received from the state and the local tax base.

When mayors get involved in education, they must be prepared to address accounting and financing issues in the school district, as well as district academic and management efforts. This may even necessitate hiring additional expert accountants and lawyers familiar with regulations and collective bargaining to conduct independent assessments.

Mayors need to ask the following questions related to district financial management, accounting practices, school revenue, school financing, as they contemplate increasing their involvement and leadership roles:

## District Financial Management

- How much money is spent on individual schools – in actual salaries and benefits of people assigned to work there?

- How does real-dollar spending on a per-pupil basis vary among schools?

- What amount of the school system's budget is being allocated to the central office versus individual schools? Are these allocations developed strategically or based solely on number of personnel?

- Do individual schools control their budgets, or does the central office?

- How can the school budget process be handled more transparently?

- How rapidly will total district spending escalate if the current teacher pay scale remains in place? How does this practice affect teacher placement policies and practices?

- How many different offices deliver professional development, and how much money could be made available if their funding were pooled?

- What do unused assets (closed school buildings, underutilized school buildings) cost the district, and how much income could be generated if used differently? How existing assets could be used differently to generate income?

- Who is responsible for providing such backroom services as IT, payroll, school maintenance and grounds, transportation, food service, and human resources? Could these be more efficiently and effectively provided by outsourcing or combining such services with similar ones in the mayor's office?

## Accounting Practices

- Who is responsible for school accounting and how is it managed?

- How does the school district organize its accounting? Does it account for funds by source of income or by use?

- Do the district's current accounting procedures paint an accurate picture of the fiscal viability of the district?

## School Revenue

- What are the primary sources of income for the school system – local, state, federal, philanthropic, special projects and services, and other?

- Does the system anticipate funding levels to be increasing, decreasing or stagnant over the next few years? How does this compare to the cost of both current operations and long-term pension or retirement commitments?

- What are the enrollment numbers for the last five years, and what are the projections which impact funding from state and federal formula-driven support?

## School Financing

- How does the current funding strategy by the district affect equity and adequacy of funding for individual schools? Are poorer neighborhood schools and poor performing schools adversely affected?

- How has collective bargaining affected the long-range outlook for the school system's budget and requirements for income? What are the implications for current negotiations?

# Issue in Focus:
# Creating A Portfolio of Schools --
# How Mayors Can Help

------------------------------------------------

The most pressing challenges confronting urban public school systems today involve promoting the ability of students to meet or exceed grade-level standards, reducing the racial achievement gap, and ensuring that all students continue to make academic progress at each school level. To do this, school systems must create interesting and exciting learning environments that meet the needs of all students, no matter what their age, background, or interests. In recent years, many school systems have responded to this call by creating a "portfolio of schools" that offer students and families an expanded array of learning environments, either within a school or schools throughout the system.

Mayors have played a strong role in promoting the development of these new schooling options in many cities. Responding to the needs expressed by diverse constituencies of parents, students, and other education stakeholders, mayors have used their advocacy role and their relationships to secure foundation funds, commitments from business and industry, and agreements with grass-roots community agencies to develop these new types of schools. In many instances, the mayor's involvement has led to new schools that include social services within the building, and create schools as centers of the community.

Portfolios of schools within a city can take many forms, but typically include some arrangement of the following:

- Independent public charter schools organized around specific themes or student interests

- "In-district" charter schools that technically remain part of the public school district, but have unique themes or academic orientations

- Magnet and theme schools within the public school district that offer specialized curricula or prepare students for specific professions

- Alternative schools that focus on specific student populations and provide enhanced social services geared toward those populations

- "Community schools" run in partnership by the school district and community-based organizations

- Smaller learning communities within a larger school building, or as a stand-alone school

- Expanded school choice options within the public school district through the use of more flexible student assignment and transfer plans

- "Contract schools," or public schools which are privately-managed by an education management organization.

With the help of mayors, school systems have also entered into new types of partnerships to develop a more diverse array of schools to respond to students' needs. These include partnerships with:

- Municipal agencies
- Higher education institutions
- Community development agencies
- Community-based organizations and other non-profits
- Business and industry

Nowhere has the influence of mayors in expanding portfolios of schools been more strongly felt than in high school reform efforts. Mayors—along with school officials, prominent foundations, and others—have recognized that all too often, students feel warehoused, ignored, and lost in traditional large urban high schools. During what are often the most difficult years of an adolescent's life, traditional high schools can fail to provide the personalization, support, and engaging atmosphere students need to thrive. As a result, many large urban high schools have found themselves grappling with low attendance and graduation rates and poor student behavior that often manifests in gang participation, juvenile crime, school violence, and dropping out. Ultimately, all of these factors have a broader adverse impact on communities in a city, and have compelled mayors to take action. Responding to the concerns of business communities and higher education institutions, mayors also have become especially interested in improving their cities' high schools because of the increased need to align high school academic programs and standards with the requirements of the world of work and postsecondary education.

The mayors of New York, Providence, Cleveland, Boston and Chicago—along with many others—have led the way in reforming large urban high schools by promoting smaller learning communities. Under this model, traditional comprehensive high schools typically are restructured into several smaller schools occupying the same building. This is called schools-within-schools. Other variants of the model include constructing new, stand-alone schools for smaller enrollments, and restructuring existing schools to combine different school levels (elementary, middle and high school) in one building. Typically, smaller learning communities enroll 350-400 students at the high school level and 250-300 at other grade levels, and feature special academic themes, subject specializations and career preparation pathways.

Although the movement toward promoting smaller learning communities is still relatively new, early results suggest that this model is producing positive results. This is especially true at the high school level, where smaller learning communities have been linked to better student attendance rates, fewer discipline problems, greater achievement on standardized tests and high school exit exams, and higher graduation rates. Mayors who have been involved in these efforts believe that smaller high schools are among the most effective ways to increase student engagement, reduce adolescent substance abuse and violence, and ensure that students graduate high school with the skills they need to move on to higher education or the workforce. Indeed, many mayors believe this model even compels some students who have left school to return, because it offers disengaged students increased options and opportunities.

# Issue in Focus:
# Mayors and the School District Central Office --
# A Delicate Balance in the Politics of Change

When anyone—including mayors—discusses school district reform, the conversation must address not only the imposing task of fostering change that produces tangible results for students, but also must address the structural and operational shortcomings of many school district central offices. While improving student achievement quite rightly should be the primary goal of a mayor's involvement in education, a mayor's involvement will be incomplete if he or she does not attempt to address entrenched bureaucratic practices at the central office level. Indeed, since central office practices are sometimes organized around the interests of the adults in the system, rather than the interests of students, a mayor's efforts to reform central office practices can positively affect student outcomes in the long term.

When mayors issue a call to improve their school district's central office, they are entering sensitive terrain. Often, these calls can create political tremors within the school district and among other education stakeholders because of their potential to change existing political, social, bureaucratic and economic arrangements. Therefore, in order to successfully reform central office affairs, mayors should seek multiple partners in their effort, including parents, students, community advocates, business leaders, teachers and administrators. Mayors should also frame their involvement as motivated by a genuine desire to share technical and managerial expertise the school district central office may not always have. A mayor's message should be clear: mayors are responsible for making cities run better, and that includes making the school district run better as well.

One approach to address the need for change is to vest authority or responsibility for the district in the mayor or state government. Chicago, New York City, Boston, Philadelphia and Cleveland are all examples of cities with school systems under some type of mayoral control. In these instances, the school district has shifted from being an independent agency to a department under mayoral control such as similar to the police, fire, housing and health departments. One benefit in these cases is that this approach allows the mayor to coordinate and support reforms in education with those occurring in such related areas as housing, child welfare, and community and economic development. However, this is not the only approach that mayors can use to make a difference.

## Tom Payzant's
### *Ten Points*
### *for a Successful Mayor-*
### *Superintendent Partnership*

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According to long-time Boston schools superintendent Tom Payzant, these are the characteristics and qualities necessary for a successful relationship between the mayor and the school superintendent so the mayor can be involved and be a leader in education:

- There must be agreement on the top 2 to 3 goals for improving schools.

- The mayor and the superintendent must understand the strengths that the other has and how they complement the performance of both.

- The mayor and the superintendent both must be able to defer to the other, and cannot have big egos that need to be fed constantly.

- Continuity of leadership is important: when the terms of mayors and superintendents don't overlap, there can be problems.

- The staffs of the mayor and superintendent must know each other and work well together.

- Superintendents and mayors must understand that citizens with children in the public schools are might view your education initiatives differently, compared to taxpayers without kids in schools.

- The basic rule is NO SURPRISES – good communication.

- The mayor's and superintendent's press people must work together.

- The superintendent must understand that it is necessary to participate in events with the mayor.

- The mayor needs to enjoy being in schools.

*(Tom Payzant is the current Boston Superintendent of Schools, working in close partnership with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino. He was recognized in 2005 by* Governing Magazine *as one of the nation's outstanding public sector leaders.)*

When mayors pledge greater engagement and involvement in public education, they naturally will ask for more accountability from the school system in return. Mayoral involvement in education has often included a call for the school system to:

- Create a new vision and mission
- Establish standards and strategically align resources and policies to support them
- Monitor, analyze and report data
- Provide instructional leadership
- Create incentives for improvement
- Provide greater options for children and families through the use of charter and magnet schools, and student assignment and transfer policies
- Engage parents, partners (public and private) and the broader community
- Revitalize the central office and rethink business operations

Mayoral involvement also calls for more transparency in the areas that have long been the sole responsibility of key central office staff and the school board. These include:

- Recruitment and assignment of teachers (new and with seniority)
- Other human resource functions, including payroll
- Professional development strategies and curriculum resources
- Teachers' and principal contracts and agreements
- Individual school budgeting and aligning resources based on school and student needs
- Purchasing contracts
- Systems for gathering and sharing data
- School construction plans and alignment with learning environment requirements to support new education technologies, pedagogical strategies, and learning opportunities

Reform efforts also require a re-examination of who should be performing which function, or how functions can be conducted in a more effective and efficient manner. In essence, this involves restructuring who is responsible for specific functions and where they may be housed. The restructuring does not always have to mean that the function will be eliminated, outsourced or transferred to the mayor's office.

Examples of possible mayoral roles are:

- Including the mayor in efforts to recruit and retain teachers
- Combining school district payroll with city payroll
- Obtaining assistance from the city's human resources department on hiring strategies—not only for teachers and principals, but also other school system staff
- Requiring public involvement during the school construction or modernization process. Also include the city's architect and maintenance staff in the planning process
- Turning over school system purchasing and IT support to the city government
- Negotiating and mediating contracts in joint venture between the school district and the mayor's office
- Ensuring student needs are being met by aligning school and city resources for these purposes (i.e., social services, security, and transportation).

In each of these cases, when a cost savings occurs, the savings should be returned to the core business of education—teaching and learning. This means returning the savings to the school budget, not to the general fund.

Certain functions should remain primarily in the central office, no matter what the degree of mayoral leadership or involvement. However, even these can be refined to provide more targeted services to schools, principals and teachers. Examples include:

- Professional development strategies
- Curriculum and instruction resources
- Individual school budgeting and aligning of resources
- Teacher assignments tied to individual school budgets and school needs
- The gathering and utilization of school and student accountability data for use by principals and teachers.
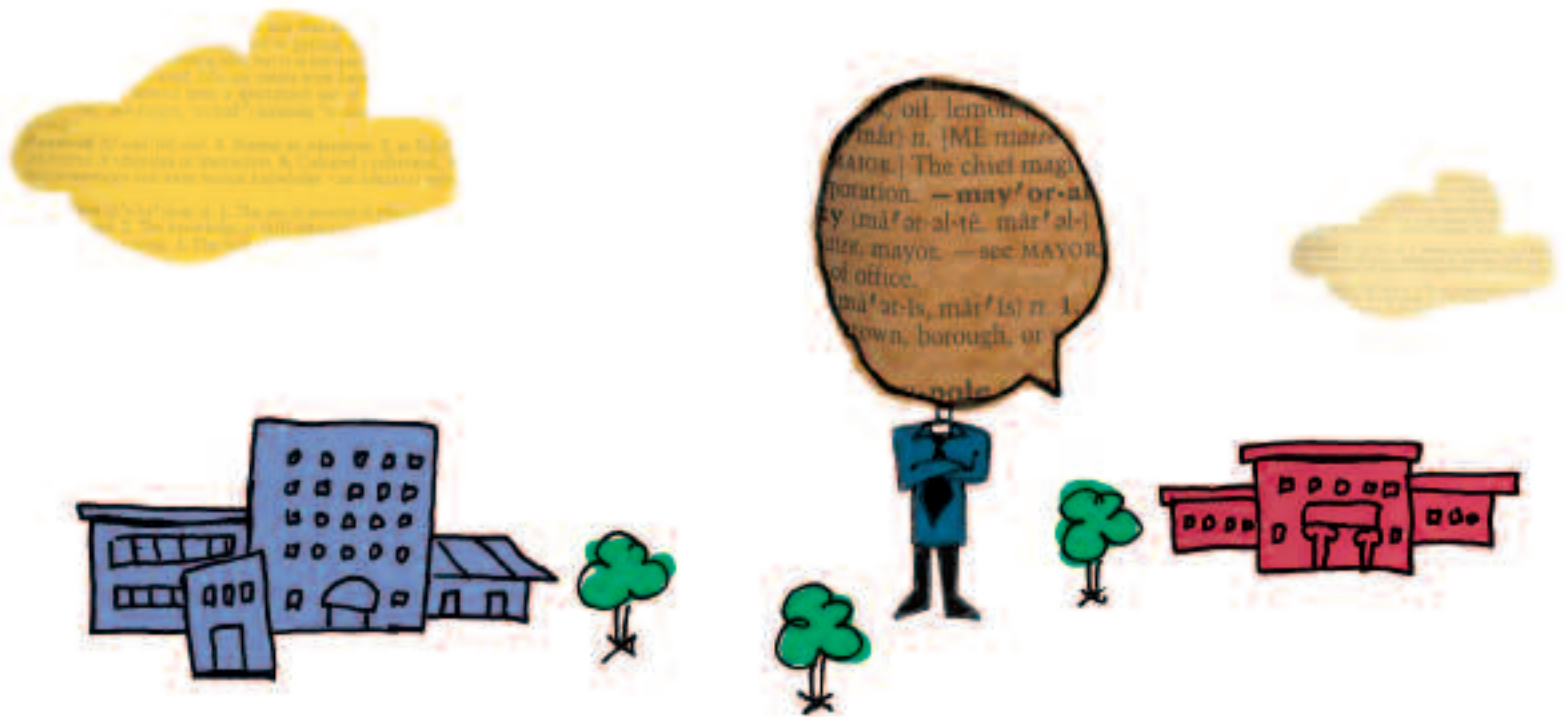
# Mayor to Mayor: Do's, Don'ts and Words of Wisdom

T hese **do's, don'ts** and **words of wisdom** come directly from mayors who have been engaged in education in their cities. This is not a comprehensive list, but captures the sense of the many lessons mayors have learned about what they did right—and not so right—when they become more engaged in education.

## What a Mayor can or should "Do"

- Recognize that there are many things you can do in education
- Be an education advocate – the chief catalyst for change and improvement in education in your city
- Make use of city resources as an education resource (i.e. parks, playgrounds, and police)
- Be creative in your problem-solving strategies in education
- Always give others credit and keep the spotlight off yourself
- Ensure schools are safe
- Address challenges related to the changing demographics of your city's schools
- Recognize the prevalent role of politics when dealing with education groups, especially school board politics

- Create and maintain a solid line of communication between your office and the superintendent's, and understand the reforms being undertaken
- Have a coordinated plan that is inclusive of others who can play a role in initiatives besides yourself
- Use the power of the bully pulpit and use it positively
- Always watch for opportunities and openings for your leadership and involvement
- Focus on equity and fairness
- Visit schools regularly to generate good publicity about your education efforts
- Use the local media to your advantage and be consistent in conveying your message
- Have a strong understanding of where you want to go and what you want to accomplish before announcing anything
- Use school board elections for the support of reform efforts or special initiatives rather than support for you as an individual
- Keep the focus narrow and targeted
- Rely on both public and private partnerships
- Look at your assets and know what you can bring to the table so you can plan and collaborate with others successfully
- Call for transparency with respect to school district finances

## What are "Don'ts" in mayoral involvement?

- Don't forget that you are to be of assistance and a resource in improving education

- Don't overstep boundaries, especially in the beginning, unless you know the consequences

- Don't forget you're there to help and get them more human and fiscal resources

- Don't take political action that will jeopardize your relationship with the superintendent

- Don't let schools struggle by themselves

- Don't get involved in issues you don't understand, and don't offer solutions without sufficient information or resources to handle the issue

- Don't take any major steps without first being sure that there is public support for your efforts

## Words of Wisdom

- Education is about the future of children and they come first

- Remember, education is more than just "schooling"

- If schools don't work, the city does not work. You, the mayor, pay the price whenever you are not involved in education.

- Understand that people often love their neighborhood schools but may not be happy with the overall system

- Be more engaged by exerting leadership at all levels of the school system

- Any real success has to push down through the bureaucracy to the grassroots and school level where teaching and learning occur

- Effective school systems and economic stability go hand in hand

- Learning is a "womb to tomb" experience

- Schools are community assets

- Recognize the dynamics and make sure you get everyone involved

- Changing education takes credible leadership and one must build partnerships and have public or community engagement

- To be successful at enacting reforms, you must get the top business leadership in the city to buy in and then suggest specific, defined roles for each business in the effort

- Be prepared: there will be controversy and opposition!

- Remember, yours is the voice for the weakest segments of the population and you must stand up for their needs.

- Make sure that transparency and accountability are part of your message and are built into your involvement.

- Make sure you communicate with parents and that they understand and support your role in education.

- Hold town hall meetings to talk about specific education issues to ensure that you receive public feedback on your efforts as well as the school system's. Make sure you include the superintendent and school board in such efforts.

- The task of improving education works on a significantly longer timetable than the political cycle. Once a mayor establishes publicly a commitment to education, you become responsible, but education will not instantaneously change or improve.

# Conclusion

A s the preceding pages make clear, the ways mayors can become more involved in public education are as diverse as the cities they lead. However, by surveying the political landscape surrounding education in your city, assessing your capacity to make change, deciding the issues for which you want to advocate, focusing on specific strategies to implement your ideas, and developing a long-term plan to sustain your efforts, you can make a positive difference in your city's schools—and by extension, to your city.

Improving education is difficult. Even though it has been more than fifteen years since education leaders across the country started taking up the call for "standards-based accountability" in earnest, there are relatively few examples where school districts have managed to institutionalize systemic improvements in student achievement, teacher quality, and school districts' financial and operational domains. Because education is such a complex enterprise, even the savviest superintendent, the most harmonious school board, and the most engaged parent community can benefit from the additional capacity a mayor's leadership can provide to a school system.

Your leadership—whether through direct forms of involvement such as assuming formal control over a school system, or through informal means like using your bully pulpit to build political support for education improvement—can provide the impetus school districts need to speed reforms and foster student achievement. At every level of involvement, mayors can make significant contributions by bringing visibility to important issues, increasing

public participation, enhancing funding and resources, supporting existing priorities, and setting new ones when necessary. The bottom line is simple: *Mayors can help make their city's schools more productive and successful in providing quality educational opportunities for all children.*

Even so, taking the first steps toward greater involvement can be politically risky. Because the traditional separation of public education from general-purpose government is so deeply engrained, well-intentioned mayors may find themselves being criticized for intruding in school district affairs, and even accused of trying to subvert the democratic process by involving themselves in issues others may view as being under the purview of elected school boards. Your best defense against such potential criticisms is simply to state the obvious:

- As the chief elected official of your city, you have a rightful role in promoting the interests of public school students and parents who live in your city, as well as the interests of taxpayers who help fund the school district;

- Since your office already has authority over so many agencies that affect the lives of children and families, it makes good sense for the city and the school district to align their efforts;

- No matter what the initial political perceptions may be, at the end of the day, you are getting involved in education for the same reason as the school district: to improve the lives and educational outcomes of the children who attend the public schools.

Nearly every mayor who has taken a greater leadership role in education has faced initial concerns about the political and substantive difficulties they might face. However, as the examples in this *Action Guide* clearly show, every mayor who has become more involved in education—at whatever level—has made a positive difference. We hope the examples and strategies in this *Action Guide* will motivate you to do the same.

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# Additional Resources

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### Academy for Education Development (AED) -- http://aed.org
AED works on a variety of education issues including high school reform, workforce development and early childhood education. Its work involves both policy research and evaluation, and on-site program implementation.

### Achieve -- http://www.achieve.org
In an effort to bridge the gap between the skill requirements for high school education and those of college and the workforce, Achieve offers information on such topics as assessments, standards, graduation requirements and more. Most information concerns state level education. Mayors will find publications that are useful under "Achieve Publications" or "Other Publications." The latter covers topics such as accountability, school governance, and high school redesign.

### Alliance for Excellent Education -- http://www.all4ed.org
The Alliance is a great resource for case studies on best practices at the local level and state level. These case studies primarily focus on adolescent literacy and high school reform.

### American Enterprise Institute (AEI) -- http://www.aei.org
AEI conducts timely and issue-focused reports and studies on education, and provide a good understanding of key education policy issues confronting state and local leaders.

### American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) -- http://www.aypf.org
AYPF has information on issues such as juvenile justice, youth and community development, and youth with disabilities, and often offers a unique perspective on these issues. In the "Research & Evaluation" section of the website, there is a drop-down menu that leads to a list of documents that can be downloaded.

### Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation -- http://www.gatesfoundation.org
This website provides information about the Foundation's efforts to recreate high schools and improve libraries, as well as its other philanthropic investments. For education htpp://www.gatesfoundation.org/Education/ResearchAndEvaluation/.

### Broad Foundation -- http://broadfoundation.org
The website describes a variety of education-focused programs that are supported by the Foundation. Specific initiatives include efforts to expand the pool of superintendents, improve skills of current school board members, increase mayoral leadership and involvement in education, and conduct policy advocacy research.

### Carnegie Corporation of New York -- http://www.carnegie.org/sns
"Schools for a New Society" is the Carnegie Corporation's school reform initiative. The website lists cities that are participating in the initiative, and discusses their specific efforts in high school reform. Additional information can be found entitled "Creating a New Vision of the Urban High School," "The Urban High School's Challenge: Ensuring Literacy for Every Child," and "Immigrant Students, Urban High Schools: The Challenge Continues."

### Center for Education Policy (CEP) -- http://www.cep-dc.org
The Center conducts education policy research on a variety of issues including the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. It is one of the leading organizations analyzing the effects, successes and concerns being raised about the Act.

### Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) -- http://www.crpe.org
The Center's site offers mayors new ideas, models, and tool guides on various education issues such as school boards and school choice. Paul Hill is the director of the Center, which is located at the University of Washington.

# Additional Resources *(continued)*

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### Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) -- http://www.cpre.org

Mayors can find education-focused research and publications on such topics as school finance, teacher quality, accountability, school reform, and connecting school to work. It provides supportive evidence for reform initiatives and efforts.

### Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) -- http://www.ccsso.org

CCSSO represents the lead education official in every state. The website provides comprehensive information on state school reform efforts, and an extensive list of projects and federal education programs. It is a resource for mayors to examine what is happening in their state and to link to their individual state department of education site.

### Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) -- http://www.cgcs.org

The Council represents the major urban school districts across the country and is considered a leading voice in urban education. The website includes best practices, reports on urban education, and other services it provides to urban school systems. This is a useful resource for mayors in learning about what other urban school systems are doing and how they are achieving.

### Education Commission of the States (ECS) -- http://www.ecs.org

The site provides links to education issues and resources from early childhood to higher education. This is primarily a state-focused site. The most useful part of the site for mayors is "Education Issues, Publications, and Projects and Centers."

### Education Sector -- http://www.educationsector.org

This is a new independent non-partisan education think tank that will publish research and commentary on a wide range of education issues.

### Education Week -- http://www.edweek.org

Education Week is the nation's leading education newspaper. It is noted for its annual reports, "Quality Counts" and "Technology Counts," which provide state comparisons of student achievement and technological advancements by state.

### Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) -- http://www.iel.org

This site has publications that address a wide range of issues in education, such as high school reform, community schools and linking social services to schools.

### Jobs For the Future (JFF) -- http://www.jff.org

The site can assist mayors in developing programs and initiatives that bridge the transition from high school to college and work. It features best practice and highlights small school efforts in Boston, as well as strategies for improving youth transitions and building economic opportunity.

### Learning First Alliance -- http://www.learningfirst.org

The "issues and initiatives" section of the website is a place to begin learning about general education issues and legislation. It includes publications relating to each area and can serve as a resource for mayors seeking a general understanding of such topics as the No Child Left Behind Act, math, reading, and science.

### National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE) -- http://www.ncee.org

The organization focuses on examining best practices in education and training systems. It is currently revising America's Choice School Design, a comprehensive school reform strategy widely used across the country. NCEE has a workforce development program and an institute for school leadership.

### National Governors Association (NGA) -- http://www.nga.org

The education portion of the website focuses on state-level education efforts. It is useful for mayors to learn more about governors' priorities and includes a section on best practices that addresses K-12 education. The K-12 site provides a link to education policy issues, including high schools, reading, teacher quality, and turning around low-performing schools.

### National League of Cities (NLC) -- http://www.nlc.org

NLC represents municipal leaders, including mayors and the website is a resource for learning about best practices and initiatives in education. These are included in "toolkits" available on the website. Topics include early childhood, literacy, K-12 improvement, high school reform, and after-school programs.

### Public Education Network (PEN) -- http://www.publiceducation.org

PEN represents, provides technical assistance and support, and works with all the public education funds in cities and communities across the country to build public support and mobilize resources for quality local public education for all children. This includes working on public policy issues at the national, state and local levels.

### School Matters -- http://www.schoolmatters.com

This is a project developed by Standard and Poors and supported by the Broad Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education, and has several other partner organizations. The website provides access for parents, teachers, administrator, students, elected officials and interested citizens on the academic performance of individual schools, school districts, and states, and other research on public education.

### Thomas B. Fordham Foundation -- http://www.edexcellence.net/education

The Foundation supports research, publications, and action projects of national significance in elementary and secondary education reform.

### Wallace Foundation -- http://www.wallacefoundation.org

The Foundation's mission is to enable institutions to expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. To achieve its mission there are three objectives: strengthening education leadership to enhance student achievement; improving after-school learning opportunities; and expanding participation in arts and culture. The Foundation supports programs in each of these areas.

### U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) -- www.usmayors.org

Throughout its website, USCM provides information about mayoral leadership in education and the policies of the Conference. For stories on what mayors are doing go to the "US Mayor Newspaper" section. For a list of Conference's education policies, go to the education subsections of the "Washington Update" and "USCM Projects and Services" sections of the site.

### U.S. Department of Education -- http://www.ed.gov

This website provides information on federal education programs and initiatives, federal policies and legislation, press releases and speeches from the U.S. Secretary of Education, and general information on grants. The drop-down menu provides links to such topics as reading, early childhood, faith-based initiatives, and high schools, as well as fact sheets on key programs including No Child Left Behind.

**cit·i·zen** (sĭt'ĭ-zən) n. [ME citisein < AN ... of OFr. citeain < cite, city.] 1. A person owing ... by birth or naturalization to the protection of ... resident of a city or town, esp. one permitted ... privileges there. 3. A civilian as distinguished ... state. **—cit'i·zen·ly** adj.

... mâr] n. [ME maire < OFr. < Mod. Lat. major ... ation.] The chief magistrate of a city, town, borough ... oration. **—may'or·al** adj. **—may'or·ship** ... (mâ'ər·al·tē, mâr'əd-) n., pl. **-ties.** [ME munial... ... mayor. —see MAYOR.] 1. The office of a mayor. ... office.

... (mâ'ər·is, mâr'is) n. 1. A woman who is the chief ...

**city** ...fer n., pl. **-ies.** [ME cite < OFr. < Late Lat. ... ] 1. A center of population, commerce, and culture. 2. a. An in... corporated U.S. municipality with definite boundaries and leg... powers set forth in a charter granted by the state. b. A high-ranking ... Canadian municipality, usu. determined by population but varying ... province. c. A large incorporated town in Great Britain, usu. the s...

< Lat. *educare*.] —*vt.* **1. a.** To provide with training or knowledge, esp. via formal schooling : TEACH. **b.** To provide with training for a specific purpose, as a vocation. **2.** To provide with information : INFORM. **3.** To stimulate or develop the mental or moral growth of. —*vi.* To teach or instruct another or others.

▲ **word history:** It has often been said that *educate* means "to draw out" a person's talents as opposed to putting in knowledge or instruction. This is an interesting idea, but it is not quite true in terms of the etymology of the word. *Educate* comes from Latin *educare*, "to educate," which is derived from a specialized use of Latin *educere* (from *ē*–, "out," and *ducere*, "to lead") meaning "to assist at the birth of a child."

**ed·u·cat·ed** (ĕj′ə-kā′tĭd) *adj.* **1.** Having an education. **2. a.** Exhibiting evidence of schooling or instruction. **b.** Cultured : cultivated. **3.** Based on experience and some factual knowledge <an *educated* opinion>

**ed·u·ca·tion** (ĕj′ə-kā′shən) *n.* **1.** The act or process of educating or of being educated. **2.** The knowledge or skill obtained or developed by such a process : LEARNING. **3.** The field of study concerned with teaching and learning pedagogy.

**ed·u·ca·tion·al** (ĕj′ə-kā′shən-əl) *adj.* **1.** Of or pertaining to education. **2.** That educates : INSTRUCTIVE <an *educational* tour>

**ed·u·ca·tion** (ĕj′ə-kā′shən) *n.* **1.** The act or proc of being educated. **2.** The knowledge or skill obtain such a process : LEARNING. **3.** The field of study con ng and learning pedagogy.