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The Legislature should restore Community School Districts and Reinstate District Superintendents' authority under state law

Despite the fact that NYC District Superintendents remain in state governance law, the NYC Department of Education has ignored this mandate and given nearly all their supervisory and oversight functions to an unaccountable organizations called Children First Networks. These networks, whose expense and staff are growing each day, have no basis in law or geography and are unaccountable to parents and other members of the community.

Proposal: Restore the Community School Districts to their lawful place in the New York City school governance structure, with responsibility for zoning, enrollment, programming, school sitings, and parent and pupil support. **Reinstate District Superintendents' rightful responsibilities and authority under state law**, including supporting and improving instruction in the schools in their districts and helping to address parental problems and concerns. District offices must be built back up to a level that will enable them to perform all the services for families on a local level that they once did. Community School Districts should foster parent engagement and once again become the centers of education in the community.

Rationale: At present, Superintendents can only visit a district school for which he or she is the nominal rating officer by getting permission from the principal. Parents have no recourse beyond the principal to address issues in their schools. In 2003, the New York City Department of Education eliminated all 32 community school districts and replaced them with regions, despite the fact that school districts were specifically maintained in the new governance law. When several members of the State Legislature protested, then-Chancellor Klein responded that they should sue him, which they proceeded to do, in a lawsuit known as *Kruger, Sanders, Levy et al. v Bloomberg*.

In a consent decree dated May 2003, the city agreed to reinstate school districts and superintendents in their legally mandated roles. But when the city refused to comply with this agreement, the plaintiffs sued again, and in July 2005, the city signed yet another consent agreement, reaffirming that community school districts and their respective superintendents would continue to exist with all the statutory powers and duties assigned them under state law. In 2007, the DOE once again violated this consent decree by creating School Support Organizations that would have the authority to supervise and support principals.

In 2009, in the new governance law, the state passed legislation that again strengthened the superintendent's role; provisions which have largely been ignored. In 2010, Chancellor Klein reorganized the school system once again, collapsing School Support Organizations into Children First Networks, which have now come to supplant the district offices in their responsibility to support and supervise schools, but lacking any geographical basis and remaining wholly unresponsive to parents and other members of the community.

Endorsed by Class Size Matters and the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council, 3/8/12.