Who calls the shots?

Schools Are Us

Who makes decisions in our public schools?

It’s me!

I make them.

I’m in on it!

Could be me.

Us, too!

And me.

Who calls the shots?
You are an expert when it comes to your child’s needs.

Maybe you care about

- Graduation rates
- Student diversity
- School safety
- Art programs

These are just some of the things that directly impact the quality of your child’s education. There are lots of decisions to be made about priorities for our public schools, but it’s not always clear who makes them.

How are the decisions that impact my school made?

In most U.S. cities and towns, local school boards made up of community members make decisions about priorities for their public schools. But not in New York City.

In 2002, New York State legislators voted to approve “mayoral control” of public schools. That means the Mayor has direct control over how the city’s schools operate. Decisions are made citywide by a central authority.

Mayor Bloomberg had to seek approval from the Justice Department for the 2002 mayoral control law because it diminished the representation of communities of color in city government, in violation of the Voting Rights Act.

These decisions can be about or who gets contracts to the work with the Department of Education on things like:

- Test prep materials
- Test scoring
- School buses
- Database management

But what about my school?

Not all decisions about public schools are made centrally by the Mayor. Decisions can also be made by the students, parents, educators, and administrators that make up a school community.

Beyond and you can play a leadership role in shaping your school’s priorities.

State education laws require that every public school have something called a School Leadership Team (SLT). School Leadership Teams are made up of parents, teachers, students (in high schools), and administrators. Each year, SLT members identify priorities for their school and a plan to achieve their goals. In the best-case scenario, everyone’s voice in the school community is represented by someone they have elected to work on this team.
There are many kinds of goals the SLT can set:
- Improve classroom spaces
- Fix the bathrooms
- Bring more arts into the curriculum
- Reduce suspensions
- Find ways to support struggling students
- Increase your school's diversity
- Increase your school's overall performance
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I'd like to be on my School Leadership Team.
You can start by sitting in on your SLT’s next meeting to see what it’s like. Just ask your Parent Teacher Association (PTA) President, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Chapter Leader, or Principal when the next meeting will be.

If you want to become a member of your SLT, talk to your PTA President, UFT Chapter Leader, or Principal to find out your school’s process for selection and representation.

I just want to have input on my SLT.
Check the SLT meeting agenda and minutes, which must be posted in a visible place in your school. The best way to be represented is to be an active member of your PTA or UFT chapter. That might mean attending meetings when you can, helping to make phone calls, or just having conversations with other parents in the school community who are able to participate more. Talk to your PTA President or UFT Chapter Leader to find out how you can be involved.

I want to be more involved in our city’s schools.
Grassroots organizations across New York City bring students, parents, and teachers together to give voice to community concerns about our schools. Not sure where to start your search for a group that matches your interest? Contact Teachers Unite at info@teachersunite.net for tips on organizations doing great work.

Consider running for your school district’s Community Education Council. Find out how to get involved by visiting: schools.nyc.gov/Offices/CEC

The mayoral control law will be up for re-authorization in 2015. Let your New York State Assemblyperson and New York State Senator know how you feel about mayoral control by sending them a letter, putting together a petition, calling them, or tweeting them. Better yet, arrange a meeting with your representative and a group of your community members to discuss your position.

What can I do next?
Get involved! I’d like to be on my School Leadership Team.
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