



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pedro Espada Jr.

Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada, Jr. Announces Senate Passage of New School Governance Reform Package

PEDRO ESPADA, JR. August 6, 2009

"The new school governance reform package will hold New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg accountable for the performance of the city's public school system, but equally and most important it will allow greater parental involvement in their children's education, increased curriculum oversight and strengthened role of superintendents, and decision-making input at the school level by principals and parents on such issues as academic programs, transportation, school safety and nutrition," Majority Leader Espada said: "It will also increase transparency and fiscal oversight, address concerns over school safety procedures, enhance arts curriculum, improve programs such as English learning for our large immigrant population, and further strengthen areas that have experienced success. This new school governance reform package creates a network of support for our children and will result in greater student achievement," added Sen. Espada, a former bilingual education teacher in the city's public schools.

In addition, he characterized the school governance legislation as the first of many opportunities for the new Senate Democratic majority leadership and Democratic-led Assembly to work in tandem on legislation and policy that will have a positive impact on the State's 19.5 million residents.

Sen. Espada said the centerpiece of the school governance reform package is empowerment of parents over their children's education and the increased autonomy of superintendents

over curriculum, programs and staff in their district's schools.

"The Senate and Assembly have now taken school governance and changed it dramatically from the 2002 version. This new legislation is far more democratic and student-centered.

While it preserves Mayoral control and ultimately holds Mayor Bloomberg fully accountable, it also brings other stakeholders into the process in a meaningful and significant way – most importantly, parents and district superintendents," Sen. Espada said.

For those who remain apprehensive, Sen. Espada said the new legislation "brings total transparency to school governance," including a select committee to oversee implementation of the legislation to protect parents, taxpayers and students. It also provides a built-in mechanism, through the creation of parent and other councils, for concerns to be voiced and addressed.

The Senate Majority Leader said that while the Assembly version of the bill provided a solid foundation and framework for school governance, the Senate's amendments were "necessary critical components" to address the need for parental access to the school system and greater autonomy for superintendents at the school level.

"The Senate reform package truly empowers parents because it allocates \$1.6 million for parent training centers at a community college in each borough to provide them with the skills and information they will need to effectively become engaged in their children's education. It also fortifies the role of the most experienced professional in the system – superintendents – on the local school level, providing them with the autonomy to review and implement curriculum and supervise every aspect of the schools in their districts," Sen. Espada said.

Other key amendments, he said, include an arts initiative that will enrich the educational experience and growth of students, and a study that will measure the impact of law enforcement presence in the schools.