DISASTER FROM ABOVE:
NEW YORK CITY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL REFORM

BY ELIZABETH BAKER

MAY 10, 2013

INTRODUCTION

For my study I interviewed eight teachers and administrators. My in-depth interviews with participants are reflected in the research I have done, as all of the research is on the specified topics presented to me in the interviews. I asked my interviewees what they felt were the most serious issues and, although their issues do vary slightly, they are generally consistent. I did not ask specific questions to my interviewees, but instead I asked them to tell me what their top five issues with the New York City school system are. Once they listed their most important issues, I asked them why they are important issues, examples of the issues, the effects that the issues have on students and teachers, who or what is responsible, and what they feel needs to be done to fix the issue. I was able to work very organically from there, because I was lucky enough to have interviewees who are very eager to talk and have plenty to say. I have narrowed down five issues to focus on, which work together to create the catastrophic state of the New York City school system. I have chosen the most prevalent issues that they have made clear to me and created five chapters that study each issue in-depth.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: The Business of Education.....1

CHAPTER 2: Testing Pays.....16

CHAPTER 3: Closing Schools and The Small School Initiative.....27

CHAPTER 4: Special Education.....46

CHAPTER 5: Teacher Bashing.....58

MATT

Matt is a special education teacher and assistant principal at a New York City high school. The Antiquity School* is a small school in a building that holds five other schools.

PAULA*

Paula has been a teacher for 10 years. She has worked at Bronx Elementary* as a special education teacher for 4 of those 10 years.

KIM*

Kim is a retired middle school social studies teacher. She spent 6 months of her career in New York City before heading to wealthy, suburban New Jersey, where she worked at Roseville Middle School*, in one of the top performing school districts in the country, for twenty years. As this study focuses on New York City schools, her testimony will be used as a comparative tool to see how the same issues affect suburban and urban areas in similar and different ways.

JANET

Janet is a published writer and retired high school teacher. She taught English in the Bronx for more than thirty years.

BRAD*

Brad is an Absentee Teacher in Reserves (ATR) who has worked in the New York City public schools for more than thirty years. Brad worked at Johnson High* in the Bronx for twenty-nine years, eventually became a dean in the 90s, until the school was closed so that the building could house a campus of eight small high schools in 2010.

JOE*

Joe participated in Teach for America in the Bronx for one year before resigning from the program. After his resignation he enrolled in a program to obtain his master's in teaching on a more traditional track.

ANTHONY*

Anthony is a Teach for America participant who teaches 7th and 8th grade history in a 6th to 12th grade small school in the Bronx. He is currently in his first year of teaching.

DAVID

Dan is a retired teacher who taught social studies for 38 years at Stevenson, Woodlands, and Scarsdale high schools. David began working as a consultant for Fordham University, which had partnered with Teach for America, but soon left the position and now works with the WISE program and the Save Our Schools organization.

* names have been changed

CHAPTER 1: THE BUSINESS OF EDUCATION

America is losing the "American Dream" to "Corporate Greed" by way of the once tremendous American public education system. Disguised as "reform" through propaganda and voracious agendas, the American school system is being demolished. What may appear to be a well-intentioned attempt to "fix" the school system, is in reality a scheme to privatize yet another public sector, for the benefit of the few and to the detriment of the most innocent, undeserving, and most valuable victims, the youth, the next generation, the future. The school system is not the first, and unfortunately, won't likely be the last, public sector to be turned over to private institutions. However, given the expense that past privatizations – our jails, public housing, etc., have cost our nation, the privatization of the public school system will likely turn out poorly, and considering the fact that our public education system is what provides a viable generation for the future, this should be far more alarming to the public than it seems to be.

Unfortunately there is a growing movement to dismantle public education and replace it with a "choice-based" system of vouchers and charter schools, which argues that market and choice are the only instruments that can produce high achievement. High achievement, that these reformers, many of whom are public school graduates themselves, seem to argue this country had in the nostalgic past – when public school was...*public*. They argue that government has failed, and that an open market would let good schools succeed and bad ones would die[1]. As Diane Ravitch argues, education is not a private good or commodity, but a public good that we have a legal, moral, and social

[1] Ravitch, 2010

responsibility to provide to every child, as a society, and that to leave such a fundamental task to the free market is irresponsible, if not criminal[2].

Why should the public be alarmed? Privatization is argued to have benefits for the public because it creates "competition", but what is left out of this argument is the fact that when public institutions are privatized, the citizen turned consumer is generally left without mobility. Meaning that the "market" these schools are competing for is generally guaranteed to them, similar to cable companies – and we all know how much that works in our favor.

David Greene, a retired high school Social Studies teacher and public figure, agreed:

> "Education is the only public industry left in this country, and just like all the others, the railroads and the airlines, and everything else that is deregulated. And then it was entrepreneurship 100% of the way. That's where it's going right now. So anybody who wants to make a killing, literally and figuratively, has now decided where to put their money into the political arena and support candidates from both parties because it's an apolitical issue in that regard. To pass the kinds of laws that will allow them to do the privatization, depending upon their area of expertise is, so you have the great American charter system which has now been created as a result of that[3]."

Janet Mayer, a retired high school English teacher and author, concluded:

> "These corporate giants have made as much money as they can and continue to make in technology. And they looked around and they said, "Where else can we make money? What field is dormant and is right for making bigger money?" And education was the answer. Bring technology, bring their expertise to schools and they can make money. It is money. Follow the money. It has a lot to do with money[4]."

---

[2] Ravitch, 2010
[3] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[4] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

"It's funny," David Greene said, "I used to sit with colleagues and we used sit and look at stuff and we'd say, "If we had the opportunity to open up our own school what would be do." We were always thinking, if we had the opportunity of saying, "If you became the principal and I became the assistant principal of a public school, what would we do to make it right?" That's how we thought as opposed to, "Let's create a hell of a school, we'll only take the kids we need, only the kids that make us look successful, you know, "Come up with a formula and sell a book![5]"

What privatization of schools allows for is growth, not in the minds of the students, but in the corporate sector. Saltman explains that, "[t]hese market-oriented reforms targeting especially poor schools and communities for corporate takeovers are hardly about free markets. They are more characteristic… of a "moneyocracy" but perhaps even more specifically of a "kleptocracy," in which the state increasingly is being captured to funnel public wealth to the richest people[6]". As the American education system is being stolen from the public for the benefit of Corporate America, it seems as if no one is paying attention. Swept up in propaganda, few people have been able to criticize, organize, and take a stand. Unfortunately too many of the people crying out are teachers and not enough parents and students, who have become disillusioned in the age of bad test scores that represent false data.

Without the ability to chose a different school, despite campaigns claiming that this new system will allow for "more choice", the privatized schools do not have to answer to the people by way of a local school board or elected official. What this privatization in reality creates is a dictatorship. There is no consumerism, because the

[5] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[6] Saltman, 2012; 390

consumer is bound to the product, and there is no democracy, because the citizen cannot speak out.

Matt Miller, of the American Center for Progress, argues that local school boards are the basic cause of poor student performance and that the federal government should "take control of the nation's schools, set national standards, eliminate teacher tenure, and tie teacher pay to student performance... scrap local boards and replace them with mayoral control, especially in urban districts[7]". Miller's argument however ignores the fact that, public school systems with mayoral control are among the lowest-performing districts in the country. His argument also doesn't address the fact that some districts have high achievement and some have low, "the difference is economics and demography, not democracy. There is not a shred of evidence in Miller's article or in the research literature that schools improve when democratic governance ends[8]".

Bloomberg has followed this model that Matt Miller praised, and replaced the local school boards, and the Board of Education as a whole, with a panel for education mad up entirely of his own allies. Janet Mayer explained the issue with this:

> "There's no dissent in the Bloomberg administration. Originally, there was a Board of Education, and he took over and did away with them and put in this Panel on Education. He had two dissenters on this panel. And the first year he came in, these two dissenters said he was for leaving back more and more kids. Studies over a hundred years show you that leaving back kids does not help. Most of the people said, "Well if Bloomberg wants it, we'll go along." These two said, "No," and they brought in the studies to show him that it doesn't work and so he got rid of those two dissenters. And since that time, in almost 11 years that he's been mayor, there has not been one dissenter. Nobody dissents; people who were getting their teacher's salary, for example, $80,000, $100,000. They gets bonuses of $400,000 at Christmas time. No dissent. It's a disaster. The studies show that the cities that have mayoral control do much worse than the cities that

[7] Ravitch, 2010
[8] Ravitch 2010; 25

> don't have mayoral control. So I was hoping the UFT would push to get rid of that law. It can't be that hard. It only came into existence 11 years ago. Many years ago it had been tried and was a failure. Diane Ravitch writes about it. It had been a total failure. So all these mayors pick out programs that have been total failures[9]."

Brad, a veteran teacher of more than thirty years, agreed with the notion that mayoral control does more harm than good, stating:

> "No mayor should get mayoral control because if in the best case scenario a mayor will remain mayor for at least two terms, well that's eight years, but then what happens the next year? A new mayor comes and says "I don't want to do it that way" well then you have no continuity and the one thing I can tell you that kids need, if they need one thing, it's continuity. The education system has to have continuity and it doesn't. and if giving mayoral control means killing continuity then it makes no sense… it should never have been a political issue ever, education[10]."

However, Matt, an assistant principal in Manhattan cautions that jumping off the bandwagon too quickly could be just as detrimental as jumping on to quickly:

> "Let's try somebody else. Let's try some new models. Let's try new leadership. Let's see how it works under somebody else before we throw it away. I also don't think we're in a position as a city to completely scrap mayoral control and go back to a Board of Ed. I think it would be total chaos for years because to get that system up and running again, I don't even know how that could work. It would be so disconnected. I think there's a balance. So I think you have the Panel for Education Policy that is the mayor's sort of checkpoint, except that the mayor nominates who's going to be on it. I think that's where that change is. So the panel should be nominated by districts, by boroughs, by people that aren't with the mayor. That becomes a check and balance. Or maybe the mayor gets two people of the eight, so there's some voice on there but not the majority. Right now he nominates the majority of people, so of course whatever he wants goes through. That's a problem. I think even if we just adjusted that thing it would create a much better system for negotiating ideas and topics and all of that stuff. People would feel like again they had a shot at having a voice[11]."

---

[9] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[10] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[11] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

LEGISLATORS, NOT EDUCATORS –

A major problem with this new system, promoted by the federal government, and happily enacted by Bloomberg, is that the decision makers are not educators. They are not trained in education and they have never worked in a school; many of them have not been in a classroom since they were in school themselves. As Brad explained, "my number one issue is, having people who know nothing about education, in charge of education. That includes the mayor, that includes the lawyer who was the chancellor for like five years, Joe Klein, that includes Cathie Black who was the publisher, the magazine publisher, and that includes Dennis Wolcott who taught like two years of third grade or something like that, but has no expertise as it were in education[12]".

Why is it that legislators and businessmen have been entrusted with this responsibility and not those who are professionally trained to do exactly that? As Brad put it, "you don't hire a doctor to run a fire department. He's a smart guy, but you don't do that. You don't hire a gym teacher to run JP Morgan Chase, why not? Just because he's a gym teacher, doesn't mean he's not smart – He doesn't have expertise in that area[13]. What these legislators are saying by choosing business men over trained professionals, is that teachers do not know how to do what they have been trained in as well as business men know how to do what they have not been trained in, which is insulting to say the least.

Aside from the insult, teachers are frustrated that they are now evaluated by people who cannot advise them on how to improve. People without any expertise are

[12] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[13] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013

benefiting off of taxpayer dollars. This has a direct effect on students and teachers. Brad explained what these non-experts have caused:

> "It's hurting kids because when you come to my class as an assistant principal to observe me, you say, "this was a bad lesson, if really didn't educate." And I say to [them], "well, okay so what would be a suggestion you would have?" [They would say] "well I don't have it, I will bring in a consultant. I will get a consultant to help you." That's what they tell you. Now I've got a problem with that because you're evaluating me, you're telling me that it wasn't good. Well, logic dictates if you're telling me it wasn't good, you know how to make it better. If you can't tell me how to make it better, why should I value your evaluation that it wasn't good? Then when you bring the person in as a consultant – I will tell you I was in a school and we were sitting with the consultant and she said, "I have a great idea of how we can help the kids to raise their ELA writing scores." I said, "Well tell me because I've come up with systems, and you've got a better one, fine." She said, "we're going to give all the kids who are going to take the ELA laptops. We're going to have them [practice writing] essays on their laptops." I said, "I like it, I just got one question, bear with me…on the Regents, they'll be able to use their laptops?" She said, "no they can't use the laptops on the Regents." I said, "oh, then bear with me, I have another question: then why the hell are we giving them laptops then, if they can't use them on the Regents?" Why would you practice a skill that you cant [use] later? She makes $5,000 a day. You know what she said to me? "That's an excellent point, that's an excellent point. You know what I said to her? "So here's my question, why the hell am I here listening to you?" She said, "you shouldn't be. You should be a consultant." …And she was from another country; Australia or India, we don't have any consultants from New York. They're all from London, Australia, India – we don't know jack; all the people we educated, we don't know a damn thing[14]".

These are taxpayer dollars paying the salaries of, not only these consultants from abroad, but the assistant principal, whose job description includes: "charting progress and offering feedback to staff members[15]". If the assistant principal cannot perform the basic tasks required for the position, why is he or she being paid?

[14] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[15] "The Roles and Duties," n.d.

Janet Mayer explained that while her husband became a principal after becoming a master teacher, now there are big companies that provide alternate route principal training;

> "He was a master teacher; he was able to teach new teachers. And then he became a principal. Everybody in the building had the chance to become a wonderful teacher because they knew people who could train them. Well that fell apart. Now you don't need to know anything. And that's one of the biggest problems is that nobody knows what they're doing. But the arrogance is they think they do. But it's an act they're putting on. Who was the broad? LA Broad is one of the big corporation giants like Gates, who gives a lot of money to education – funds a lot of these – he doesn't know what he's talking about because he's not an educator. But he runs the superintendents in the school …[They] trains superintendents on weekends. [They] take them from their big corporations, train them on weekends, and then send them only into the urban schools. Last time I read there were 30, 40 superintendents. They were transit CEOs. Like you wouldn't find them in Danbury, and you wouldn't find them in Scarsdale, and you wouldn't find them in Cherry Hill. Nobody would hire except the urban districts that have no choice. So here you have superintendents who have no background in education; nothing whatsoever. Then you have principals who go for 90 days training. My husband had a year's training before he became a principal. He shadowed very fine principals. He took all the courses. There were two years of tests in New York City where you had to observe teachers and write them up and you have two years of training before you became principal. Now you get 30 days…The words they use are such business words. You don't use them in schools. It drives me crazy. They're being "calibrated." Principals should have already been trained and certainly they're not going to be teacher trainers by this four-day calibration. At the end, it's sponsored by Gates Foundation[16]".

What this new system has successfully created is schools that were already under resourced, understaffed, and underfunded, and replaced the experienced staff with an inexperienced staff. It doesn't need to be argued that these schools were not performing well in the first place, they weren't, but the point is that by ignoring the issues that are causing low performance, and instead replacing the experienced staff with an inexperienced staff, logically can only make the problem worse. These are schools that

[16] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

have very little in the way of intangible and tangible resources, like a students coming from a supportive home environment, who visit the doctor when they are sick, etc. These are schools with little funding; they have difficulty providing new textbooks, new desks, and even making enough copies of a worksheet. These are schools who are already understaffed, because most teachers don't want to work in a school with the problems listed above. So what this creates, is a low performing school.

When legislators take out the teachers who are there and say, "it is your fault that this school is doing so poorly," what they are doing is adding to the problem. Yes, some of the teachers are poor teachers; many of them wouldn't be working in such an environment if they were wanted anywhere else. However, many of them are good teachers, they are the teachers who stayed in that type of environment, not because they had to, but because they wanted to – and those are the kind of teachers that these schools need. To throw those teachers out, and replace them with a bunch of inexperienced former CEOs, does nothing for the students, the school, or any of the problems that have caused the low performance. Why not instead, spend this wasted taxpayer money on programs that actually address the issues that are driving so many of the good teachers out?

One can only imagine what intentions a CEO has when they become assistant principal, or principal, or superintendent of school. They have never been teachers themselves, but they are advising teachers, and on top of that, they are taught to have a mentality that the teachers are the problem. The teachers, who have made a career out of helping other people. Since when are teachers considered to be more ill intentioned in their profession than money-hungry CEOs? This, Janet Mayer explained, is a recipe for

disaster, "you can't be a superintendent or a principal and have the students hate you, the teachers hate you. You need to walk with everybody. We're all in this together. How are we going to solve the problems?[17]"

A prime example of this type of situation, is the disgrace that is, Michelle Rhee. Janet explained:

> "She was interviewed on either 20/20, or Dateline, or one of those where they showed you her firing a principal. She says to the reporter and the camera man, "Come up. I'll show you how I fire a principal." And the camera followed her, and she went into her office, and there's a man – you could see his body, but they blurred his face, and she fired him right on TV. She thought that was wonderful. That's part of her toughness, you know, that you – and you could see this person has no humanity. She has no sensitivity; no humane skills. She thought that was wonderful and nobody said anything. The person who was interviewing her… She taught in Maryland for three years, Teach for America… So you know right now she had no training. Her kids seemed to have done okay on standardized testing. When she left Maryland, though, a few years later, a scandal broke that there was cheating. There were multiple erasures and she didn't go right into Washington D.C. schools. She did something else. I was waiting for her to say she had to leave. I was glad to see she was hurt because she hurt so many kids, and teachers, and a whole school district that was looking to her for salvation and they got more terrible, terrible conditions[18]."

Educators are supposed to be a supportive character in students' lives, so why is it that this woman feels she should be praised for harshness in a profession that should illuminate the very opposite qualities? Of course, teachers and principals need to have a certain degree of sternness when it comes to disciplining their students and teachers, respectively, but the degree to which she displays harshness is way off of any chart a teacher or principal should be using. In addition, by avoiding working through the issues that these teachers and principals might have, and trying to improve their skills, and firing

[17] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[18] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

these people, one is left with a crop of inexperienced stand-ins who will no doubt have just as many, if not more issues that will need to be dealt with. Michelle Rhee has made a spectacle of something that should be far from entertainment. "If you were an educator," Janet explained, "you'd never pick Michelle Rhee. All she has is three years of teaching to become superintendent of schools. When she left the Washington D.C. schools, she had a couple of schools that she said were her best examples of success of standardized testing, but right after she left, the Washington Post and other newspapers picked up that there was widespread scandal; cheating on the test scores. So how can they use this person to go around the country?[19]"

Bloomberg made a similarly bad decision as DC did in picking Michelle Rhee when he picked Cathie Black to be the New York City Schools Chancellor. Janet explained the absurdity in this decision:

> "She had never even gone to public school and so arrogant. And what did her in, she had a meeting with parents, and they were talking about overcrowded schools, and she said, "Well if you practice birth control, you wouldn't have to worry about overcrowding." ...Yeah, she tells that to parents. All the TV stations caught it and everything, too, and she resigned. She realized she was over. She knew nothing about education. She worked for Hirsch Publications. She had never been in education; never sent her kids to public school; knew nothing about public schools and Bloomberg chose her. He didn't meet with anybody; not even the Board of Regents. He chose her[20]."

The fact that Bloomberg appointed this woman shows how out of touch he is with what is actually going on in education. He has declared war on teachers, and for what reason? Teachers make about half of the salary of a superintendent[21]. Most teachers did not become teachers for the money. Teachers usually become teachers because they

[19] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[20] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[21] "Public School Teacher Salary," n.d.

genuinely want to make a positive difference in the lives of their students. So why are teachers being villainized, when it seems more likely that their motivation to become a teacher was because they felt they could help students? Is it not obvious that superintendents and principals are more likely to be in it for the wrong reasons? The education system is administratively top heavy and for some reason, the people making the least money are being blamed. Paula*, a Special Ed teacher in a Bronx elementary school, exclaimed, "It's the people on top that are screwing it up, and they're looking at the teachers and saying, look what you're doing. It's like, no, look what you're doing. You're the ones who are screwing it up! That makes teachers just feel like they want to give them the finger[22]."

If Bloomberg wants to use a business model for schools, he might as well go at it whole-heartedly; in a business, if the company is performing poorly, you either modify the product or you reevaluate the administration of the company, you don't fire the factory workers. In this situation, you cannot modify the product; students cannot be changed into different people, so you must reevaluate the management. Some might argue that it is the factory workers jobs to produce better products, but teachers are not there to create *products*, they are there to inspire *people*, and that is why this whole "business model" is flawed, and aside from the flawed premise, the new policies being enacted do the very opposite of inspire. "You know it's not a factory," Janet explained, "Schools are not factories. The kids are not piecemeal goods and you can't measure things the way you would piece of goods in a factory[23]."

[22] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[23] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

SAVING MONEY AT A HIGH COST –

One of the many reasons Bloomberg listed for school reform was to save money. He claimed that too much money was being spent and that the schools were not producing results worthy of such a high amount of money. Now he is spending more money on education, and the same results are being produced. Brad explained:

> "It's not saving money, which mayor Bloomberg said it would. He said that if we broke the big schools up and the smaller schools they would be more productive and it would be cost effective. ...Xerox machines, when we worked at Stevenson we had one contract he could fix 50 different machines, but we only paid for one contract. Now there's eight schools, there's eight Xerox contracts. There are eight schools; there are eight Staples contracts. See before, you just sent Staples paper to [Johnson], but now it goes to every one of those different schools, that's eight different contracts. The budget when he started was 8 billion dollars and the mayor said, "this is too much money. This is wasteful. We need to reduce this budget." He's reduced it so well that today the budget is 24 billion dollars[24]".

For the record, Bloomberg's current budget of 24 million is three times the original budget of 8 billion when Bloomberg took office in 2002[25]. One of the statistics the mayor points out to justify this increase in cost, is that the graduation rate has improved. However, with the encouragement from about to give failing students passing grades in order to remain a passing school, graduation doesn't necessarily imply the mastering of any set of skills. Brad explained,

> "Mayor Bloomberg last year, big thing...they were proud of the fact that they had an 85% graduation rate, they were so proud of themselves...only 29% of those kids were able to get through their first semester of college... I talked to some Special Ed kids – I was covering a class – and I said listen, I'm having kind of a hard time, maybe you guys can help me, I got a little problem, and I said here's my problem: When you graduate from high school, does that mean you're not supposed to be able to do college work, or does that mean your supposed to be able to college work?

[24] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[25] "Budget Publications," n.d.

> And I wish you could've seen the look that they gave me… The look was like, "and you're a teacher? You're a f---ing idiot. You're asking us that? Everybody knows the answer to that question." And then one of them said, "Mister, that's a stupid question, of course you should be able to do college work." I said, "okay, I was just checking[26]."

The students are not being prepared for live after high school, because they spend their entire school career taking tests that prepare them to do nothing but take other tests. Bloomberg and other officials and administrators have ignored the actual problems and created entirely new problems. Janet concurred:

> "I blame it all on Bloomberg. And it's not that schools were perfect before he came in. I think all along we only hit half the kids; that for half the kids, we're not solving their health needs, and their nutrition needs, and their home needs. We're not. And the one that does it is the Harlem Children's Zone. It's those wrap-around services…Well they do the wrap-around services, which are – they provide whatever is needed for the family: counseling or job training for the parents, whatever health needs for the families and the kids. I had so many kids that couldn't see. I would put them in the front and they still couldn't see. They had no money for glasses, or they have hearing problems, or they have asthma without medicine. Wealthy children are given every opportunity to succeed… But the city kids have no opportunities and yet so many do [succeed]. That's why they're my heroes. So many do and everything is against them. Nothing is being done. They have less money than any of the other schools. They have more needs. And unless we recognize poverty plays a big part in this…You'll see if you go into reading that the kids who are coming from impoverished backgrounds, come to school with 1,000's of words fewer in their head. It doesn't mean the man is all bad. He has done some good things for the city. Those people who don't know anything about education think he's been one of our finest mayors. But I think education is very important and I judge him by how he ruined the schools, by how he refused to listen; he refused to look at evidence; he refused to see the research and just kept on doing what other cities across the country have abandoned he's still doing[27]."

We cannot place the blame solely on Bloomberg; to do so would be scapegoating him the same way his policies scapegoat teachers. He is not alone in the blame. He has

[26] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[27] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

done positive things for the city and this is not an attack on him as a human being. It is not only George Bush's fault, and it is not only President Obama's fault. It is a collective blame on the people who have allowed money and politics to outweigh reason and respect. Pearson, McGraw-Hill, and all of the corporations who have sought to profit off of the mis-education of the American youth, and succeeded in doing so, they are to blame as well. This is not a single person who has terrible judgment, this is a movement of people who have allowed dollar signs to blind them from reality.

CHAPTER 2: TESTING PAYS

After the Bush administration implemented No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the public school system began transforming into a privatized system that declares public schools as "failed" and in need of business reforms[28]. Kenneth Saltman explained that, the new public school system:

> "being created through privatization and corporate reform models does nothing to challenge the legacy of segregation, funding inequalities, and it largely runs counter to the development of critical dispositions for democratic education. However, these corporate reforms do target poor and working class schools and communities to create short-term profit possibilities for rich investors by skimming out public tax dollars in numerous "reform" schemes from private management of schools through EMOs (education management organizations) and CMOs (charter management organizations), rapidly expanding chartering, contracting, and destroying good conditions for teacher work and union-busting to set the stage for lucrative privatizations, taking teacher preparation away from universities and turning it over to clinically based, antitheoretical, anticritical for-profit programs[29]."

John Dewey insisted that the public school system has a duty "to educate individuals capable of criticizing and recreating society – not simply reproducing the status quo," but unfortunately, our addiction to standardized testing has left us doing exactly what Dewey cautioned against[30]. Saltman's analysis of another study explains that, "under the new structural feudalism, "schools assume the task of standardizing human capital as a commodity suitable for ready exchange that fits docilely into the

[28] Saltman, 2012
[29] Saltman, 2012; 390
[30] Saltman, 2012; 389

existing sociopolitical-economic order rather than democratic individuals charged with challenging and changing the status quo"[31]."

Instead, what over testing is doing is creating a society of drones who do not have the ability to think, but the capacity to memorize. David Greene concurred:

> "The vast number of people are being trained to be obedient workers… When the factory system was being created some odd years ago, the idea was give them the basic skills, let's make a lot of workers, and that's what we teach them – reading, writing, and arithmetic. Just enough so they can go to a factory, go to work, do as they're told, and be productive… That sort of has been in place in the background for a long time, and this system has re-sparked it, rejuvenated it, recreated it to even higher levels[32]."

Anthony*, a TFA teacher explained that over testing has left him teaching ELA during his social studies period, because the ELA teacher cannot fit all of the units into her forty-five minute period:

> "The timing of it is kind of ridiculous that basically everything you have to teach is done by April. And then May and June you're like, "okay, I guess we're going on field trips," because I'm in a 6 through 12 school so in June were basically told that we need to go on field trips to make room for the high school to take Regents, and then high school is going on field trips [in April] basically just to make space for us to have all of our Special Ed accommodations [for testing]. It basically makes it so that since January, we've basically been teaching to the test, and in American History I've been doing test prep for ELA. Which I think takes away a lot of, basically the organic lesson planning that I don't feel like when I do test prep that I'm actually teaching, I'm basically just babysitting and giving out workbooks and being like, "please do this, and then were going to go over it." So we basically have been teaching to the test because a lot of people are like, "well, my job is on the line so why should I think outside the box?" …and then people are like, "teachers aren't teaching effectively and students don't know *x*, *y*, and *z*," and we're like "well, we don't have time to teach it." And then we lose all of these days because we have to do all of these acuity exams and benchmarks, that I don't even know the difference between the two to be honest, but there's a

[31] Saltman, 2012; 389
[32] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013

> benchmark and then there's the acuity which is supposed to help you on the test prep and what they need to know for the ELA test[33]".

Aside from rushing through units, the kids are missing the basic skills that should be present in the units, he explained, "now she's introducing poetry because poetry is always on it but she hasn't had time to, so now she's doing it like a week before the test. So she's like, "how in-depth do they think I'm going to get on this poetry unit in like a week?"... [but] the part that the kids aren't understanding, is that you can interpret [a poem] in more than one way[34]".

Kim*, a retired teacher in New Jersey resolved that, "everything, all education is going to be geared towards testing and not learning. And somewhere along the line, this is the new thing that they think this is the way that schools are going to be more successful; all the blame it on the teachers therefore test the children to hold the teachers accountable[35]."

Testing has taken over a large portion of the average school year for students in New York City, as well as across the country. Kim explained, "they come up with a new test every year that the math teachers have to give up a massive amount, *massive* amount of their class time, so they can't teach math, because they have to monitor, proctor these. First of all, I don't know why they're doing it in math, it should be in homeroom, or it could even be in social studies or science, where there's a little less accountability, but math is getting it[36]." So, instead of teaching math during math class, math teachers are

[33] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013
[34] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013
[35] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013
[36] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

testing students on math – and this doesn't strike any of the people at the top as backwards.

Not only are these tests taking up class time when they are being administered, but they are also ruining the learning environment throughout the year. Kim explained:

> "No Child Left Behind, if you explain that out on paper, it is officially the dumbest thing that's ever been created. All it does is panic the schools, and all it does is make everybody teach to the test. [Roseville*] used to have the most innovative academic skills program and it was 45 minutes in the morning – and you could call it homeroom, it was 5 minutes of homeroom and then it was all learning styles and what you would do is take other subjects during the day and say okay I'm going to teach outlining research skills or study skills or whatever, a skill and then you'd use some of the content from what they were learning and they would apply these skills. It was genius. They also did analogies and sequences and everything was just to get the brain engaged. [Roseville] was amazing at this. They also paid for – Long Island had it as well, instrumental enrichment, it was very expensive, and also tons and tons of paper work that's now in a closet, because we did it for about 2 or 3 years. It was good but then it gets phased out. At least though that was about learning, I mean it really was all about the learning styles. And then No Child Left Behind came in, the 8th grade teachers stopped all of that, took out the New Jersey ASK workbook, and every day did workbook pages so the kids would do okay. I mean it *killed* it. Kids dreaded going to homeroom, where we would have really fun brain games and things to stimulate learning and it just killed it. Academic skills became the most dreaded class of the day, because it was just workbook pages[37].

What has all this testing provided to our students; higher literacy rates, math proficiency, or general improvement? Nothing but stressed out students and teachers. "The testing situations are ridiculous, it stresses out the kids and they get to the point where they don't care anymore[38]," Kim explained. Janet put this into perspective saying, "[Kids are] so curious and into everything, and they learn so much in five years. Then you send them to school and they're not curious. So it's the schools that kill it because

[37] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013
[38] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

they start all the testing and the whole stuff that they[39]." And David concluded that school reformers ignore this and instead pile on more tests, "so we take gym away, we take recess away; we take playtime away, forgetting that experiential learning is an important part of learning a skill, even learning content[40]."

Testing has done little in the way of creating a national student body of literate, proficient, and capable students. Kim continued, "we all know that more tests don't make better students and the money going into these tests is killing everybody, they're not putting money into education, they're putting it into testing. And these kids are already tested to death. How they're going to come up with valid tests I do not know. Already, the New Jersey ASK and the tests that [students] are given are so bizarre and so poorly created that they're not really – you know that alone could be a study, the kind of tests they are having[41]".

Paula* a Special Ed teacher in the Bronx concurred, that the tests are poorly created and are not valid measures for deciding a child's knowledge:

> "Everything is data. They think they can prove and solve everything through data… they'll break it down to skills like main idea, comprehension skills, compare/contrast, inference. They'll break down, like question one was an inference question and the child got that wrong. Question two was a main idea question. She got it right. Question three was a main idea, got it wrong. So it's like *x*-amount of questions of main idea she got wrong, so she needs help with main idea. So and so questions are this; she needs help. It's like you only put two questions on there that were main idea. Don't tell me that she has issues with main idea. Or even if there were a million questions, if all those questions were more complicated questions or the story was more complicated, then it's not because of the fact that it's main idea. It's the fact that it was a more complicated question. …Then the comprehension or compare/contrast, it might have just been a really easy question. You can have a really easy

[39] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[40] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[41] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

> question. I think they try to base it on critical thinking and Bloom's taxonomy, like what's more higher order thinking versus what's not. So like inferring and drawing conclusions would be higher on the spectrum than say like knowledge-based stuff. But I could draw a very easy conclusion. I could say that no one told me it's wintertime, but I could conclude it's winter because people are wearing sweaters. If you ask a kid a question like that, that's not like, oh my god, it's rocket science[42]".

In science, psychology, sociology, etc., test validity is crucial. Without it, a study is not considered to have proven anything. If these test makers do not consider the validity of the tests, why are we considering them valuable? They do not conclusively prove anything other than the fact that corporate money outweighs student needs.

Janet and Matt explained how much money is really being spent on these tests. Janet explained one case of the amount of money wasted on poorly created tests, "The Pearson Testing Company, New York City gave them $35 million last year to do all these terrible tests where every question was wrong. You had to throw out so many questions. There are huge amounts of money. Huge amounts of money[43]." The point is that a simple glitch in a test booklet can cost 35 million dollars and who knows how much classroom time on re-administering the test; a simple glitch in a text book can be fixed with proper classroom instruction, the city doesn't need to buy $35 million worth of new books and spend any extra classroom time re-administering a lesson plan, and that is the difference. Wouldn't the money be better spent on new classroom materials and learning tools instead of test booklets?

Matt explained that the test booklets barely make up the entire the cost of these tests:

---

[42] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[43] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

> "I think it depends on how you look at it. I mean millions of dollars are going to just the production of the test, so just making the physical test. Then there are millions of dollars this year, if we speak just about high school, in the way that they did the grading of those tests. So it used to be that you graded the Regents Exams within your own school with your own department. Now, that costs you money because you have to pay people per session to grade. But this year what they did is you had to send people to another location along with couriering your Regents to other locations, so you're paying for all the courier costs, all the overtime costs. Your teachers are now in another building, so you have to get coverage for your teachers who aren't here for the classes that are going on. It had to have cost so much more to do that. We don't know yet what the numbers were for this year, if we can even actually get them. I don't know if they'll really share them, but I imagine that it was much more than they've ever paid before because of the new system… But then how much money are you spending in test prep? So where teachers aren't teaching curriculum to students on a broad level, they're teaching very much to the test. The workbooks they get, the practice tests they get, the time that they spend on instruction to the test, that's all money spent toward one test. So I think it depends on how comprehensive they are when whoever looks at what that cost is. I would say that any time spent in a classroom on test prep is time misspent, so that's money spent that we're not going to get back. It's classroom instruction that we don't get back. It's independent thought, critical thinking, all of that stuff that is lost in these exams that we don't get back. So it must be hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars a year for these exams[44]."

Why implement this new system of grading if it cost so much more? High stakes testing as led schools to cheating. No school wants it's funding cut and the obvious way to avoid that is to fudge the numbers on the tests. Matt explained:

> "I know what we were told, so I don't know what the truth is. I know we were told they thought there might be some discrepancies in grades. In theory I could understand that, that if we're grading our own kids and our school report card and sort of how the school looks is predicated upon the success we have with those tests, then we're more inclined to fudge numbers. I don't know that that really happens on a broad level as a system. I think there are definitely schools that have taken advantage of it. We know that, and we've seen that. I don't really know that that's a practice across the city, so I don't know that it makes sense to spend that kind of money for the numbers that that might be occurring at. I think it's probably easier to pay for people to be more oversight captains or

[44] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

> whatever in schools. Certainly, at the very least we're a campus. There are six schools in the building, so why pay to send our stuff somewhere else? Why not just have us trade with schools within the building? There are multiple campuses throughout the city. That, in and of itself, saves money[45]."

Janet concluded, "and why not look at evidence? We don't see any results saying the schools are doing better; except where there's cheating and lying, they're doing better[46]."

A study in 2007, by Robert Balfanz, Nettie Legters, Thomas C. West, and Lisa M. Weber, reveals the inefficiency in state standards and NCLB's incentives and sanctions program. NCLB depends on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to determine if a school is performing to standards. Between states it was "difficult to discern whether schools achieve AYP because they actually improve or because improvement targets and proficiency standards are more easily met in their state[47]". In addition, they found that there were regional differences in AYP. In the South, half of low-performing schools made AYP in 2005, while only one third of low-performing schools made AYP in the North and West[48]. What this indicates is that the testing methods and standards that NCLB allows for are too varied to ensure accurate data on school performance improvement.

What they found when studying the schools that were categorized as low-performing, was that the majority did not make AYP, and of those who did report gains, only 44% made AYP, while nearly 38% of those who reported declines made AYP[49]. If

---

[45] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[46] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[47] Balfanz et al, 2007; 561
[48] Balfanz et al, 2007
[49] Balfanz et al, 2007

almost the same amount of schools that report decline can meet AYP standards as the schools that report improvement, then what is AYP measuring?

When the study reviewed the impact of the incentives and sanctions that NCLB implements on low-performing schools, they found that the sanctions correlated with decreased performance rates. The schools that repeatedly failed to make AYP, they suggested, may have done so in part because they lack the capacity to improve, which would then imply that schools facing higher sanctions and interventions would be less likely to meet AYP[50]. The study found this theory to be highly probable; of the schools in the study, low-performing high schools with the lowest improvement pressures were likely to make AYP, while less than 5% of the low-performing schools facing the most severe sanctions achieved AYP[51].

Race to the Top (RTTT), President Obama's version of NCLB has virtually the same, slightly more severe, incentives and sanctions program. Like NCLB, RTTT uses penalties and rewards based off of AYP standards to foster "good business" in schools. AYP is not only an inaccurate assessment of "progress", but this strategy has the potential to turn a passing school into a failing school in the span of a year. Diane Ravitch noted on her blog, that a small public school she visited, the University Park Campus School in Worcester, Massachusetts, which collaborates with Clark University, is facing closure despite its high marks on the state exams, not to mention its wonderful culture of teaching and learning[52]. It did not make AYP and now holds federal stigma and a failing mark which is the first step toward closure. What AYP allows is for top-performing

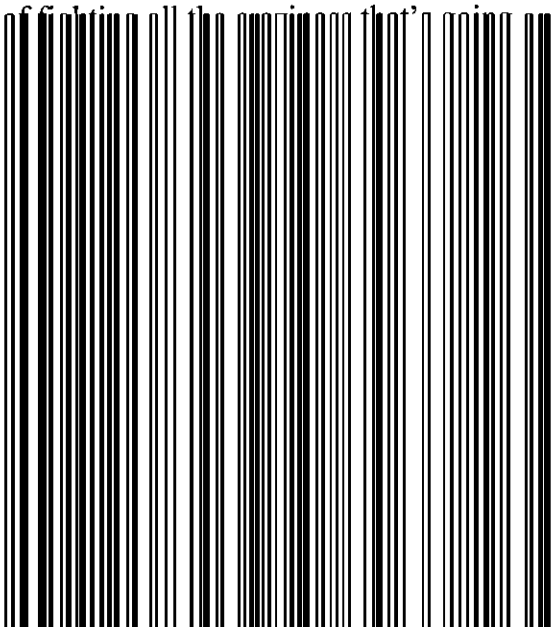
[50] Balfanz et al, 2007
[51] Balfanz et al, 2007
[52] Ravitch, 2012

schools to become failing schools, so that RTTT can cut funding for the said school, and thus, the school will fall deeper and deeper into a decrepit state, until finally it is closed and replaced with a charter, or eight "small schools".

Why are these tests being used to decide the fate of a school? Janet Mayer put it simply, "I have no idea because you have insane people. You have people that know nothing about education setting the rules and regulations, and now they're going to evaluate teachers based on these crazy rules that make no sense.[53]." Kim agreed, saying, "whoever is deciding that testing makes children more intelligent is missing something[54]."

However, principals, teachers, students, and parents are slowly picking up on the damage over testing is causing. Janet shared that a Long Island high school principal, Carol Burris has spoken out:

> "And she was the first one to get 150 principals from Long Island to sign a petition to the Board of Regents saying we are against standardized testing. It's defeating the purposes of education. This year they brought standardized testing into Kindergarten kids too. There are 30 days of testing in Kindergarten now... and you're stigmatizing kids before they even start school. It's horrible. But she started this letter. By the time this letter circulated she had 150 principals. The principals were very weak on Long Island. They weren't tenured and they were scared stiff that they would be fired...By now, there are six or 7,000 signatures they've gotten teachers, parents to sign on against standardized teaching. And it went to the Board of Regents, whether it did anything, but she's on the front lines of fighting all the engine that's going on[55]"



> that the metrics for the report card change every year, and so you can't track progress over time. You can't say, well, this is where we were, and now we're here. Now we're here because the questions are different. The data is different. The way that they decide what they're using is different. So it's hard for a school to use it as a tool. It's much more of just like here's a rubberstamp of what you got. I can't do anything with that to make it better for next year because it's not going to be the same thing next year. So it becomes more of an "I got you" tool instead of "let's move the schools forward[70]."

SMALL SCHOOL INITIATIVE –

The Balfanz study (Chapter 2) found that small schools perform better because they generally have fewer subgroup standards to meet for AYP[71]. AYP does not only account for a school's overall improvement, but it requires that achievement gaps between subgroups decrease; meaning that if a school has a certain number or students that fit into a specific subgroup (the number varies between states), that the school must categorize those groups (ie. Hispanics and non-Hispanics) and show yearly reduction in the achievement gap between those two groups. Thus, schools with fewer subgroups have fewer achievement gaps to be held accountable for, which inherently means they are more likely to meet AYP. Obviously, smaller schools have fewer subgroups and are consequently more likely to achieve AYP. The apparent advantage of fewer students in a high school, the study suggests, may reflect that high schools with fewer students face less subgroup accountability[72].

Small schools do not necessarily signify improved students, they instead, signify less accountability. Small schools *appear* to make a difference in student performance, but what the study found made a genuine difference in low-performing schools was the

[70] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[71] Balfanz et al, 2007
[72] Balfanz et al, 2007

classroom size. High schools that made AYP appeared to be "better resourced" and on average had two less students per classroom[73].

Instead of researching the cause behind data that suggests small schools have higher performance ratings, Mayor Bloomberg, backed by billionaire Bill Gates, implemented radical changes to the largest high schools in the New York City school district. "Our education system tends to embrace "reforms" too quickly, without adequate evidence of their value" Diane Ravitch explains[74]. A former proponent for Bloomberg's initiative, Ravitch changed her stance quickly after the changes began to be executed. She cautions making radical changes to the education system without adequate research. In one of many examples she could cite, Ravitch explains that James Conant, the president of Harvard University, led a campaign against small high schools in 1959:

> "He said they were inefficient and unable to supply a full curriculum. He called for consolidation of small districts and small high schools, so we could have the advantages of scale. Conant was featured on the cover of Time, and suddenly large high schools were the leading edge in education reform. In our own time, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation poured $2 billion into breaking up large high schools and turning them into small high schools. Now, the Gates Foundation has decided that wasn't such a good idea, and it's off on another tangent, offering rewards to districts that evaluate teachers by their students' test scores[75]."

Despite the fact that school reforms should be highly researched, as they affect students and thus the future of our country, they are implemented on a whim often with little or no research to justify it. Janet Mayer explained that the premise itself was wrong, that Arne Duncan's model was flawed, "The studies, the research, the reports all indicate this doesn't work. It didn't work when Duncan did it in Chicago. He left the schools a

---

[73] Balfanz et al, 2007
[74] Ravitch, 2010; 25
[75] Ravitch, 2010; 25

disaster. And then he came here and did the same thing and said he would do it for even more schools. He closed big schools and made small schools. And the testing after five years showed they were terrible. And yet he came here and did the same thing[76]."

The major problem most people cite with the small school initiative is it's failure to fulfill its promise of improvement, as Brad explains, "You [Bloomberg] opened schools saying the reason why you closed [Johnson] was you said, "you know what this school doesn't work, but we know how to make schools work." Then you open schools and the schools you open, you are now closing. You really have no credibility with me at all now. You didn't have much before, but you've got none now. And I don't understand why other people can't see that[77]."

Another factor that is thrown to the wayside is the fact that these schools, which are supposed to specialize in specific fields, usually do not employ a staff with an expertise in that field. Janet Mayer explained:

> "They make up these bogus names; the Law and this and that, and they have no people. I had five different schools in [John Murry*] that I was mentoring teachers from each school. Each school had a different name and there was nobody there that knew anything about law. There was nobody there who knew anything about engineering. One of the schools was health services. There was no – there were teachers who majored in English, Math. They had no background in this kind of career and yet they were called – and parents who didn't know, and half or more of the parents in New York City are not well versed enough to choose the school or know that it's not going to work. So you bamboozle the parents. You give them bogus names of schools. You don't provide the education that the kids need, and it's been a terrible thing that Bloomberg has done[78]."

[76] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[77] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[78] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

Matt agreed that the mayor's intentions are not always clear or in the right place;

> "I don't know how much of it is that he actually thinks this is the right thing to do, or is it that he's just saying I'm the mayor and I can do what I want and so this is how I'm going to do it. So for me I feel like if you really thought it was the right thing to do, you'd be much more willing to have conversations around it to explain it. But you just say no kid should go to a failing school, and that sounds great. I get it, and I agree. But how do you fix the problem? Is it that every year we're going to close 30 more schools and 30 more schools and 30 more schools? …How are we solving why they're failing? That's the piece. It's a huge gap. So anybody can close schools. Great for you, you did a great thing. How are we going to make sure we don't have 30 more to close next year? That's the piece that's missing, and I don't think he knows how to fix that. I mean he's not an educator. He's never worked in schools. I don't think he has to, necessarily, to get it, but he doesn't work with people that do. He's not willing to listen, and that's the problem for me[79].

Matt explained some of the reasons he felt small schools could be successful, "I think that there are drawbacks from it [but] I think the positives are that you can definitely do a better job of building a positive culture and school community and you know the students better, you know the parents and families better, you're able to provide some more individual support for kids, because you really know them as learners over the four years[80]."

Mayor Bloomberg might have read the 2002 study by Linda Darling-Hammond, Jacqueline Ancess and Susanna Wichterle Ort, that studied the outcomes of coalition campus schools in New York City. Their study mostly found positive outcomes in the smaller high schools that replaced a large high school in Manhattan. However, many of the factors that led to the success and failures of these schools have clearly been overlooked.

---

[79] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[80] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

The former Julia Richman High School was closed and the campus was restructured to hold multiple small high schools. The study found that increased attendance and reductions in misbehavior are common outcomes in efforts to downsize schools, but that when evaluating performance outcomes, it is important to examine the extent to which the school's performance is due to the ability to prevent or remove difficult students, rather than the actual ability of the school to improve performance[81].

In addition to the fact that much of the performance ratings may be skewed due to advantages in student pools, another factor that is ignored is the facilities that were provided to the students attending the schools in the study.

Matt explained the problems this creates, "the downside is that you don't have the capacity to offer every kid exactly what they need, because you don't have that large of system within your school. So if we get two kids that come in here and need to be in self-contained classes, we can't exactly have a teacher. I mean there's not going to be class with two kids. And maybe they legitimately need that service but we really can't provide it because we can't afford to have a teacher in the room with two kids. So those things get tricky. You know, sports are by campus, they're not by individual school, there's certain activities and clubs, you know our teachers are pulled in different directions to do everything because there's only 34 of them to do everything, as opposed to big school that would have a hundred, or two hundred. And so there could be a lot more options and clubs, and activities, and afterschool things. So there are drawbacks. We can offer two languages; other schools can offer five or six, if they're a big comprehensive school[82]."

[81] Darling-Hammond, Ancess, Ort, 2002
[82] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

Instead of cutting art and music classes, the Julia Richman campus provided a "performing arts program, a special education program for junior high school students, a small vocational technical program, and the and the Ella Baker Elementary School; a day care programed coupled with a Teen Parenting Center; medical services offered by a neighborhood teaching hospital; and a professional development institute that collaborates with universities and the teachers union to provide seminars for teachers across the city[83]." Instead of incorporating these programs into the new "small school" initiative Bloomberg is implementing, or even providing programs like this in existing schools, Bloomberg has cut extracurricular programs in order to provide space for more small schools and charters.

Matt concurred that Bloomberg had missed something when implementing his small school initiative: "Before New York City moved to small schools, there was the movement for small learning communities, which essentially was [like Julia Richman]. I think New York City was just such a disaster that they couldn't figure that out, that the schools were so big and such a mess that it couldn't be figured out from where they were existing then[84]." He concluded on a more positive note:

> "Could that happen now? Could this re-morph into that? Yeah I think it possibly could. We have sports by campus now, so in that way we do it. There's a school upstairs, which is for all ESL students, and so they provide Regents prep for our ESL kids, but that's because as a campus, we work really well together. We work really [well] with all the other principals; we meet every week, our safety committees are together, like every thing is together. But most campuses do not – the principals don't like each other, they don't get along, they kids hate each other. We don't have those issues; the kids generally get along with each other, for the most part. But that's about leadership and they get to that place. If we're eight years in as a campus – and some of the schools were here before we

[83] Darling-Hammond, Ancess, Ort, 2002; 653
[84] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

> got here, so they've been here 10, 11 years, and we've just always worked together to make it happen[85]."

But as Matt explains, not every campus is so well adjusted to compromising:

> "I think part of it is that in [small] schools, you're always fighting for space, you're always fighting... because you don't ever have enough of anything. So it leads to that "mine is mine and you can't touch it because I'm not about to lose anything" and I think that you really need well-intentioned people that are open to compromise to sit at a table and be able to say – you know for us, we have 18 classrooms, we have no classrooms... if we want to offer another class, you know art class, we don't have an extra classroom. We can say to [the other principals], "are there any classrooms you aren't using second period this semester that we can borrow?" And so we'll borrow that space – it's not ours, it's still theirs, but for a semester, we'll trade off certain things. But that's because we trust one another, we want to help one another. When we're doing observations, we're the youngest principals in the building and so we'll go to other principals and say, how would you write this, how would you word this? And so they'll sit down and work with us. We're just really supportive of one another. And everyone says we are the total opposite, and we do things that nobody else does as a campus[86]."

Despite the success the schools at the former Julia Richman High School campus had, they were endangered by the districts effort to mandate an increase in all school sizes to 600 or more students, which suggests that it is not small schools, but small class sizes that make the difference in school performance[87]. One teacher explained, "Our numbers in classes have gone up. This is extremely difficult to handle. If we want to assign writing and... revise [it], then the numbers must remain small, [otherwise] we have to dilute our writing assignments because it is too much for teachers to grade."[88]. As

[85] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[86] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[87] (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, Ort, 2002)
[88] (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, Ort, 2002; 669)

the researchers put it "[t]he attempt to standardize [the school's] work could threaten the practices that have enabled them to be effective[89]."

Matt concurred, "I think people thought when we moved to campuses, and to small schools that we were going to have smaller classes, but the space is such an issue. So every school here, was told what their total enrollment was going to be, and we're all over that every year. They never hold to what the enrollment they told us we were supposed to be is. So if we're over enrollment, there's no way that we're ever going to have small class sizes. Initially when all of this started, they thought "small schools, small class sizes" – the small class sizes thing went right out the window. That just doesn't happen because we don't have enough rooms. I don't know that large comprehensive schools do much better with that because I think the DOE also fills them over more than what their supposed to have. So I don't think that issue, I don't think class size has anything to do with – whether it's comprehensive schools, small schools, charter schools, whatever – it has to do with how the DOE places kids[90]."

CHOICE-BASED SYSTEM –

One of the things that Bloomberg boasted would be a benefit of his school reform is a "choice-based system," but studies have shown that this notion of "choice" is false[91]. This "choice-based" system, which has more than two million participants in New York City alone, as of February 2013, assumes that using a market-based environment will

[89] Darling-Hammond, Ancess, Ort, 2002; 669
[90] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[91] Olson Beal and Hendry, 2012

foster competition among schools and improve the quality of the "educational product[92]." Posing education as a product, however, is a flaw in itself because education cannot be bought, it must be attained – it is a quality, not a product.

In addition to the flawed premise of education as a product, this market-based model relies on the ability for consumers to choose, but research shows that this system does the very opposite. A study by Allison Roda and Amy Stuart Wells found that this choice based system allows for less choice for both highly privileged and underprivileged parents. This "choice-based" system was originally popular in southern school districts prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and was implemented specifically to assure that schools remained racially segregated[93]. In today's usage of the model, it is presented as a route for underprivileged children to find educational opportunities outside of their neighborhoods. However, what the research has found is that there is a strong positive correlation between increasing racial/ethnic segregation in public schools and the growth in market-based, "choice-based" school policies[94]. What is perhaps most astounding about this research is that this correlation appears in a time when 66% of white parents say that ethnic diversity is important when choosing a school for their children (Roda and Wells, 2013).

If parents have a choice, and they feel that ethnic diversity is important in a school, why aren't parents choosing to send their children to diverse schools? Either the parents do not have choice, or they do not want their children to go to diverse schools. The study found the former was the case. In a qualitative study of randomly selected, and

[92] Olson Beal and Hendry, 2013
[93] Roda and Wells, 2013
[94] Roda and Wells, 2013

ethnically diverse parents, the study found that white parents were conflicted about the "separate but unequal choices that were available[95]."

Matt explained how the system actually works, and why what is presented as "choice" often provides student's and parents with the very opposite of choice:

> "The choice system is that 8th grade students write 1 to 12 different schools. So the ones they put closer to the top are the ones they want to go to most. We then as a school write them "yes" or "no." No does not mean no, no just means – we rank "yes" if we met them, maybe they came to open house, or they came to visit, so we put "yes," like, "we know that they know what they're getting into when they get here." And then anybody we haven't seen, generally we rank "no", because I don't know if they know what we're even about. Then that sheet gets put into a machine and the computer decides where they end up based on a whole bunch of other things, the numbers, the seats, the locations, where they live, do they have brothers or sisters that go there, all of that. So there have been lots of kids that have ranked this number one and they haven't gotten here. Or kids that rank all 12 schools and got into none of them and nobody knows why, it just didn't happen. I would say that probably a large majority do get into their top 3, so they're generally somewhat where they wanted to be. But there's certainly a lot of kids that don't. They're not required to visit, and a lot of parents aren't involved, and so parents don't really know what their kids are getting into; the eighth grade guidance counselor is the one that fills out the form for them, based on what they think might be a good school for them and so the parents don't even know. So then the kid gets here and the parents like, "I don't want them here". So all of that plays into it[96]".

In addition, this choice system prevents students from transferring. Matt explains, "It's not an option after 9th grade. So if in 9th grade you decide you're at the wrong school, it's not working for you, you can reapply like you did in eighth grade for a new school, but you're not guaranteed that you'll get out. And in any other point in you're career after that 9th grade reapplication piece, you want to transfer, you cannot. Unless you go to an

[95] Roda and Wells, 2013; 268
[96] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

alternative school, an over age, under credited type of program[97]". While some might argue that in suburban areas students aren't able to transfer out of their district, such an argument ignores the differences between suburban and urban school systems. The main one being that most of these students are not going to school in their neighborhood, and if a student moves, it doesn't necessarily mean their school will. This creates a whole other set of issues for the student and for the school explains Matt:

> "Some kids have real legitimate reasons that they want to transfer and we can't get rid of them. They might have issues with friends, family, moving; they used to live 10 minutes away now they live an hour away – unless they're an hour and a half away, that doesn't qualify for a transfer. So if they're an hour and 15, too bad. I mean they play it to the minute. So then you have a lot of kids who file fake police reports, and do safety transfers and say they got jumped, beat up, cut, whatever, on the street going to school and they don't feel safe. They file a police report and they get transferred because of that. Which goes against the school's record as being an unsafe place to be, or the neighborhood's unsafe, which causes another problem, but it's because that's the only way the kid can get out of here and they know that. And there's only so much questioning we can do. We can look at you and be like there's not a cut on your face, this didn't happen, but if they say that's what happened, that's it[98]".

Once a student is granted a transfer, the student and the school they are placed in are generally left with no choice. The DOE shows little interest or understanding of the needs of each individual student and what each particular school can offer or provide for that student's needs. Matt explains, "[they] need to look deeper, and beyond the fact that [they] need a seat. [They'll] find a seat; there's always going to be a seat. Where is the kid going to be most successful? The reason we exist is to make sure kids are successful;

[97] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[98] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

so all systems have to be with that mindset. What's the best place for this kid to do the best that they can? Not just, where's a seat[99]".

"The enrollment process is a disaster," explains Matt. "Those are the people that I argue with the most on a daily basis – I mean yelling at people on the phone, sending nasty emails back and forth, they don't care about your school, they don't know about your school, they don't care if it's a good fit for the kid that's coming, none of that matters[100]". The way that the DOE handles transfers, Matt says, is that:

> "They have a kid, they have a transcript, the transcript says they're supposed to be in 11th grade cohort, they look at a computer, you have a seat, [the kid] goes to [The History School*]. Did you ask the kid if they're okay with a uniform policy? Did you ask the kid if they would be better at portfolio based assessment or Regents? If they're better at Regents they should go to a Regents school. Did you look at the transcript? I know you said that they're 11th grade – I love when they call us and say yeah we have a student that's in 11th grade and we do have seats in 11th grade, and then [the student] gets here and we look at the transcript, and they're a 9th grader because they failed everything – so they're not an 11th grader, you lied, or you are so dumb that you didn't actually take the time to look at the transcript. So now we have an over aged, under credited kid entering 9th grade, and so our graduation data will reflect that to no fault of our own. Last year we got 4 [students] in the spring semester that were senior cohorts that were all 9th grade by credit. That's like 2% per kid when you're graduation class is about 65. So 8% of our graduation rate was affected because of transfers that we have zero control of[101]".

If the DOE showed more flexibility, Matt might not be so frustrated with this system, however, as he explains it, "On the few times that I call and say, "this really isn't going to work. [The student is] already fighting us over uniform, the parents don't care, they don't want them to be in uniform, they don't want to do project based assessment – when the basics of who we are as school is an issue for the kid the minute they get here, you should

[99] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[100] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[101] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

say, "alright, I got it. We'll move [the student] somewhere else," and they'll just say, "sorry, that's where they go"[102].

[102] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

CHAPTER 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION

UNDERSTAFFING –

Special Ed in the Bronx, like many other departments, is vastly understaffed and without enough space to accommodate the growing needs of the department. Recent reforms have given the department more work, and more students, but most budgets don't have the extra money to hire more teachers, and if they could, there is little room in most schools for extra classrooms. Paula, a Special Ed teacher in Bronx Elementary* explained these new reforms:

> "So RTI …as far as I know, it's only been like a few, three, four, five years, not even five years, where – it's like the last resort is the way they basically broke it down, the last resort before you place a child in special ed. Prior to it, if a parent wanted to have their child evaluated, all they had to do was send a letter: I want my child evaluated. Then they go through the process of testing them and whatever. Then they make a determination as to whether or not the child needs Special Ed. In most cases, they would throw them in Special Ed. So now with the statistics of black and Latino boys in Special Ed, I guess people have been making complaints or whatever. So they're like, okay, we have to not be so fast with throwing their children in Special Ed[103]."

Despite the efforts for the new reforms to curb the number of students being thrust into Special Ed, the method to off set this requires certain abilities that are not afforded to many schools in the Bronx. Paula explained:

> "All this means is more paperwork, which everyone hates. Because it's like, how much paperwork can you pile on one person? So if the schools are doing it right, basically their children are supposed to be broken up into like three tiers…within the Special Ed tiers you have General Ed, then you have SETSS. So those kids are in General Ed class, and they get pulled out for like a period, go back. That's what I do. Then if that doesn't really work, the more restrictive environment would be an inclusion class, where you've got General Ed and Special Ed kids together with two teachers, one Special Ed, one General Ed. Then the last tier in a community school is the 12:1 class where there are only 12 kids. That's

[103] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

> when the kids think of Special Ed: Oh, he's in Special Ed. They're talking about that class because it clearly looks different. There are only 12 kids in the class[104]."

The need for this tier, as Paula pointed out, arose from the fact that disproportionate numbers of black and Latino boys were being placed into Special Ed. While many of the students placed in Special Ed in the Bronx are placed there because they are not performing well on tests, much of this performance issue can be traced back to reading skills, or a lack there of, and RTI was created to prevent such situations from occurring. Paula concurred, "I don't think they really realize when [parents] sign off on that that they're making their children Special Ed kids. I'm like, I don't think that just because you're failing an exam that you should automatically be placed in Special Ed. You're right. A lot of it is because they can't read, and they have reading disabilities. We don't have a reading specialist. We don't have reading tutors or anything like that. We just have Special Ed. They're trying to kind of really force the whole RTI thing, but that's still not even practical[105]." The reason this isn't practical, Paula explained, is because they do not have the staff to implement the proper steps of RTI:

> "So basically, you're supposed to get some kind of intervention. So they're supposed to be pulled out for help, like for tutoring, but not by the Special Ed resource room teacher, by the other bodies that are intervention teachers. But there really are no intervention teachers. I don't know if at some point, but now we have Ms. [Cats*] as one. That's pretty much like the only teacher who doesn't have an actual position because she does like budgeting and stuff like that. So she's like the AIS teacher, but we only have one really on staff that's named the AIS teacher. She can't pull out but so many kids. So then you have other people that they try to use as AIS, so we have the librarian; we have the math coach; we have those types of people that are supposed to pull the kids. So what happens in our

[104] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[105] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

> school is there's no time because everyone has other jobs to do, so there really is no real RTI going on[106]."

The purpose of RTI is to prevent students from continuing on a path to Special Ed. While RTI has a good intention, according to Paula, it isn't taking place at Bronx Elementary:

> "There is no reading help... I guess if you were to ask anyone that works in DOE, they would say that the reading help is RTI now. That would be the extra help that's not Special Ed, but it's not just for reading... So if you're in RTI, you're not in Special Ed. You're at risk of being in Special Ed, but the thing is you have to have the body...Then in that group, if they're still not getting it, you want them to have like one-on-one instruction. That doesn't even exist. Do you know how many kids in that small group probably still need extra help? When are we going to do it? They have me down to do RTI even though we didn't start. I already have my SETSS kids. Last year they were trying to get me to incorporate the RTI kids with SETSS kids. It was like, but these are other Special Ed kids and these aren't. I don't think that kids should be in the same program because that's, first of all, not fair to the kids that need the help because that's more bodies in my group, which is going to take away from our instruction time and our one on one and stuff like that. So there was really no time. I could only get in one period out of my schedule that I could say, well, I could pick up one group a day during RTI. Then another teacher's like, "I could only do like one period." So it's like depending on how many teachers they had, that's as many people that would get seen. That would only be third, fourth, and fifth because those are the ones that really matter[107]."

Obviously a recurring issue that Paula continues make clear is the fact that all of these different type of intervention programs aren't possible without a sufficient number of staff members to implement them. Instead of piling too many tasks on one teacher, the school should hire more teachers, but that leaves another problem, there is no space. Paula explained this, "it's a name, and there are no bodies. We don't even have any

[106] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[107] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

space. We're sharing the room[108]." While sharing a room might seem ridiculous in a regular classroom, the issue seems even more absurd when it is applied to a Special Ed classroom. Paula shared her concerns:

> "I feel messed up because I actually like the people that I'm sharing the room with, like personally we're no problem... So the D-75 girl, she comes with six D-75 kids, which are deemed smart enough and stable enough emotionally to be in a community school... Sometimes she comes out here, and it's like, how do you expect me to run another program? Aren't I supposed to pull them out of their class so that they could have small instruction and we could all be focused and pay attention? Then there's like another program right there [in the same room]. Then, at least when you have 20-something kids in a class it's one teacher, one voice... You expect these Special Ed kids to like focus and pay attention to me while there's another whole thing going on right behind us? I just don't understand how that makes sense... I just think it was stupid to have a program where you've got no space. There's no space, but there was money involved and we don't have any money. So as soon as money comes into the picture, it's like, oh sure, we can try it out. Like is [the principal] just not handling the money properly? But I still feel like it couldn't be enough per child to just boom, get another teacher and space[109]."

Moreover, if there is not enough staff or space to implement a program, shouldn't the DOE look for a way to prevent the need for such a program in the first place? Instead of being proactive, the DOE insists on being reactive, "so even though we haven't started RTI, I was like, "Okay, if we are going to start RTI, this is for third, fourth, and fifth. What about K-2, like PreK-2?" Nobody said anything to me about that because there's no space. We would see them too, but we just don't have enough people to do it. We don't even have enough rooms[110]." The problem is that the DOE isn't looking to help students, they are looking for ways to make students pass the state exams, which don't begin until

[108] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[109] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[110] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

third grade, so why have programs to help students until the students are needed to help the City look good on state exams?

The DOE piles on programs with the appearance of caring about the students, but what they care about is test scores and money. While they claim to be improving Special Ed with their attempt to curb enrollment with the use of RTI, Paula explained that they try and cut corners by refusing to properly place kids who are deemed in need of 12:1, "prior to this Special Ed reform that they keep calling it, say you had a fifth grade class that was 12:1 and there were already 12 students slotted for that class. Then a new student comes in and their IEP says they're 12:1 fifth grade. We don't have that spot. There's only one Special Ed fifth-grade class, and it's already full. They would bus that kid somewhere else. Now they're saying, nope, you keep him. It's like, but there's no other Special Ed class. What do you mean?[111]" It costs money to send students to schools out of their district, Paula continued, "I'm not sure… as far as budgeting and how much money comes with each Special Ed child to the school and how much of it is a problem, like a school issue, versus like a system issue[112]."

UNREASONABLE DEMANDS –

When it comes to the state exams one might think that Special Ed kids are held to a different standard, but as mention in Chapter 2, NCLB and RTTT both require that children who are specified as Special Ed be held to the same standard as students in regular ed. "At first it was like, all right, that's why we're Special Ed teachers," Paula explained, "but now they're like, how come the kids are failing the test? It's like okay, so

[111] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[112] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

you expect me to deal with the fact that Johnny over here is mentally whatever and this, but then you also expect me to be held to the same standards almost as a general Ed teacher. That doesn't make sense[113]."

To those that might argue the Special Ed teachers are supposed to bring their students to the same level as regular Ed students, they should be aware that while some kids are simply not capable of reaching that level, the teachers are doing their best to make sure that those who can reach that level do:

> "The whole point now, especially with RTI, is you don't want children in Special Ed for no reason, so if they show any bit of a glimmer of hope we're pushing them out. We're doing flexible scheduling. We're saying, "you know what? We can mainstream them. He doesn't do [well] in math, but in ELA he soars; so he's not going sit with me during ELA, he's going to go to a general Ed class for that." They're not in their 12:1 all the time. So if you do have someone who is in 12:1 all the time for every period, they're there for a reason. Don't ask me about why they got a one on the test because if they were getting threes and fours, then we would've taken them out. I've taken kids out...When I had kids like that, [I] was like, okay, clearly this child is not as low. I got them out. I was like, what the heck are they doing here? They don't need to be here. They might've needed it at one point, but if you just follow the IEP every year and just put the same thing down, they get stuck. But hopefully they find a teacher that actually pays attention to their progress and realizes, wait a minute, this child doesn't need this anymore[114]."

However, with the demands of federally mandated education standards, wouldn't it seem obvious that many Special Ed teachers would keep high performing students in Special Ed even if they have improved beyond it, so that they aren't put at risk of losing their job?

---

[113] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[114] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

In addition to the state testing standards, Special Ed teachers are now required to document every minute of their day, to ensure they are doing their jobs. Paula described the task in detail:

> "It's just all that for every kid. So if you're a 12:1 teacher, for your 12 kids. I have like 26 kids that are in SETSS because every five seconds they're adding another kid in Special Ed. Of course, I'm the first tier of Special Ed, so they usually come to me. So now that's 20-something IEPs that I have to do. So now they're in SESIS, but then also within SESIS is service capture, where you're supposed to plug in when you pick up the kids... Because of SESIS, I was supposed to be on the computer every day saying from 8:30 to 9:20 I picked up this kid, da, da, da, da... This is so time consuming. Then last year we did it. Everyone still was backed up. Nobody was on point because there's no time in the day. My principal actually gives us a period out of the day to do it, but I'm like, look how twisted this is... So during [extra] time the lower grade teachers come up and help the upper grade kids and teachers because their kids in lower grades don't stay [as late]. So the extended time is only for third, fourth, and fifth. If you're a second-grade teacher, your kids leave at 2:50, but you have to stay the same time as everyone else. All the lower grade teachers pushed in, and they would help. They would break the class up, so now it was smaller group instruction. If you were a cluster teacher or out of classroom teacher, you would push in. So Mr. [Cannoll*] had Ms. [Stans*], the speech teacher, and I push in; but [all of the service people] were complaining that we couldn't do SESIS. When are we going to do it? We don't have any time to do SESIS. So he was like, "All right, you guys don't have to push in. You can do SESIS." But I'm like, "So instead of helping kids, we're on a computer typing in when we picked them up. Does that make sense?" It doesn't make sense. He's one of the few principals that's actually giving you time to do it. Even with that extra time you still don't have time to do it, so you're doing it at home. So there actually was just a court decision to pay teachers for the time that they spend on SESIS because like UFT was complaining[115]."

The DOE has become so concerned with holding teachers accountable that they have forgotten that the purpose of teachers is to teach, not report on teaching. Anyone who has to sit down after a long day of work and write out, in excruciating detail, what they did all day would hate going to work in the morning, which is why no other job

[115] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

requires such a mundane task. It is not as if teachers don't already have to go home everyday and correct papers and create lesson plans. All this type of "accountability" work does is take away time from teaching and lesson planning. Paula explained the SESIS website in detail:

> "The direct service is when you actually pick up the kid and you see the kid. Indirect service is the planning time that you've done your lessons plans to plan for that group. Apparently, they want you to do that too. At so and so time to so and so time I planned out a lesson or whatever instruction I was going to do for that group. The only reason I know this is because the D-75 woman, she went to an IEP training meeting, and she just learned that this year. She was like, "did you know that this means this?" Because we always were like, "why do they even have indirect service in the dropdown?" Nobody talks about indirect service... I'm like, you just took away from my lesson planning time...Then luckily, for some reason they said SETSS teachers don't have to write notes, but if you're a speech teacher you have to write session notes on top of that for every single one of these things. So they never, ever, ever are done[116]."

The DOE had implemented SESIS as a program to prove to Medicaid that the teachers were providing the services that Medicaid pays the City to provide. However, after a year of spending countless hours filing out SESIS, Paula was informed it was not even being checked:

> "She was like, "They're still doing the SESIS? You know that was never confirmed or approved by any whatever, whatever. Medicaid won't even hold or attest to that to prove anything because they're probably saying you can write whatever you want to write." She was like, "No, no, Medicaid never even accepted it as a whatever. They still haven't really figured out whatever they want to do. That's why no one's checked it." So I was like, "Are we just doing this for nothing?" Could I do this for five years and then no one has ever checked up on this and I wasted hours of my life doing this? So I told my principal, "I'm not doing it anymore." He just laughed. I was just like, "What's the worst that could happen?" I said, "You've got teachers in here that are horrible. You can't get rid of them." I was like, "What's going to happen? Am I going to get fired because I refuse to do SESIS?" He was just like, "I don't even want to touch it right now." If he felt that someone would come after him, he'd have been like,

[116] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

> no, you need to do it. But he knows that no one's even looking at this, so I was like, I'm not doing this because it's ridiculous[117]."

OVERSTAFFING –

If one wants to look at the other spectrum of the Special Ed situation, one needs to look no further than Roseville*, New Jersey. While it is clear that much needs to be changed about Special Ed in New York City, and assumedly other urban school districts, there are vastly different issues with Special Ed in suburban districts.

Kim explained her issues with Special Ed in Roseville, "I have to tell you I have a real prejudice about what has been done in the education system for Special Ed. And I'm sure it's very different [in New York, but here] I would say, most, I mean huge amounts of money in these districts who have a lot of money, goes to accommodate the Special Ed kids and it's usually due to parents that are so demanding[118]." The money that the urban districts desperately need to provide Special Ed, is obviously found in abundance in suburban districts like Roseville; however, it seems that when there is money to allow the system to work the way that Paula explains it *should* work in the Bronx, it seems the system is taken advantage of. Kim explained the situation that Special Ed had created in her classroom:

> "I think the system is not right. I mean, when I retired I was making $106,000 a year, I had a Special Ed teacher in two of my classes who also made $106,000 a year... so two of us are up there for $212,000 a year. I would have one Special Ed kid in that class of 26-27 regular Ed kids. So, I'm up there teaching – Social Studies is not the kind of subject where you need to be leaning over and helping every two seconds. I'm up there teaching, we're in group problem solving, we're doing Geography, where they need to search [for places], there is not much for the Special Ed teacher to do, so she hands out papers, and if I have to run to the bathroom she'll cover the class. She desperately wants to teach; because she's

[117] Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013
[118] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

> qualified… she wants to earn her money, but we're stumbling over each other trying to share a class. Not necessary. I do get it for Math, I do get it for English, Science I could see somebody helping you with the labs. I do not get it with History and I do not agree that you need two teachers there for that kind of money. Now if they had aids, the aids get paid nothing, and they aids have no education background, only have to have a high school education, and so the aids that you get in are pretty terrible and I've had aids who read a book and did virtually nothing, or who I wouldn't dare have them help because they would make things worse[119]."

What Kim explains causes a need for all of this is similar to a problem Paula pointed out, kids are misplaced into Special Ed. Of course, in Roseville there are very different causes for these misplacements than the causes that were mentioned earlier for the Bronx. Kim clarified what these causes are:

> "This is called collaborative teaching, so if your kid qualifies for a collaborative class, his IEP says he needs a collaborative class [he gets one]. So what happens is, the learning disabilities instructor will sit there and go, "Oh you're concerned? Oh I'll tell you what, if you're concerned I'll make sure he goes into a science and social studies collaborative class," "Oh, you're concerned Ms. Smith? I'll make sure he goes in too," "You'd like some extra help? I'll make sure." None of this legal or anything! So 27 kids are supposed to have a collaborative teacher, now it's written in the IEP, now it's the law. So, 27 kids, they mix them up into the schedule and now what happens is, you have to make sure that those kids have an extra teacher in those classes. So now you're adding all these extra teachers in there and it's so poorly done and it costs so much money[120]."

According to Kim, the parents' demands don't end with collaborative classrooms (or what Paula called "inclusive classrooms"); parents of children with IEPs expect special treatment, and rightfully so if the need is warranted, but as Kim explains, many of the kids placed in Special Ed tiers at Roseville have advanced placement on test scores. Kim explicated, "So [this mother] said, "you know the twins," because they both have IEPs – smart as hell, they both have scored advanced proficient on their exams, "no, no,

[119] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013
[120] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

no, they have [special needs]," because the mother says so. So she says, "When the teacher hands back a worksheet that's double sided, it's too much for them to deal with. I need teachers to make all their work on single sided [sheets], so make extra copies so that it's single sided and not on both[121]."

Aside from the fact that such requests seem excessive, at best, they are often followed with other parents feeling cheated, and making similar demands. Kim shared her experience with such situations:

> "So sure enough there was another mother a week later who came in – and this is the kind of stuff you see with Special Ed, she came in with her binder that her child advocate and her lawyer – she had hired a child advocate – and her lawyer had put together her rights, and she said, "you know what, I'm allowed, I'm entitled to this. He started taking his test, and he didn't do the other side. You know what, that's definitely part of his learning disorder, that he wouldn't know to turn the paper over. So I would like the teacher to go back every time you have a double sided paper and write at the bottom of the sheet, please turn paper over." ...I said that I refuse and you could tell her that, she can take me to a judge. Because what child in his life is going to have someone walk up to him in a business and go, "by the way remember to turn the paper over." These are smart kids, we're not talking about mentally retarded or anything like that. We're talking about [kids who are] fine, I mean *fine*[122]."

Kim explained that on top of the excessiveness of the demands, many of the demands create problems in the classroom, "She also said, "you know he can't handle taking notes it takes him too much time, I would like you to copy them all." So we said, "how about he starts to copy them and whatever he doesn't get, the Special Ed teacher will then give him a copy of afterwards. But she said, "Nope, no he shouldn't have to[123]." Kim continued, "so we said, "we don't even care if he only copies ten words, we'll give

[121] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013
[122] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013
[123] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

him the correct notes afterwards but he should be sitting like the other children." So instead he becomes a discipline problem because he has nothing to do[124]."

Kim replayed an explanation for this that had been shared with her by her pediatrician, and consulting doctor for Roseville, "parents have discovered their rights and when parents discover that the law allows this this and this, they want to win[125]." In fact, it seems that winning is such a priority for parents that they have lost sight of the purpose of Special Ed. Instead of accommodating the child's needs, Special Ed in Roseville accommodates the parent's needs to take advantage of a system in their favor. Kim concluded:

> "We're at a time where you don't want to pay teachers; I think we have too many teachers… We're starting to almost have as many Special Ed teachers as regular teachers. When I first started, you did not want to be classified, it was taboo to be classified. And then everybody started discovering their rights and now everybody gets extra testing time, you get all this extra help, you have support class when they make them do their homework, so parents now desperately want their kids to be classified and it's like their favorite thing to say, "my child is classified, that's why." And it's like when did this become the thing, they shouldn't even be classified[126]."

Obviously, Roseville has quite the opposite problem from the Bronx, but what this suggests is that the Special Ed laws aren't helping the rich or the poor, the urban or the suburban, and clearly need to be reformed, yet again.

---

[124] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013
[125] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013
[126] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

CHAPTER 5: TEACHER BASHING

New education reform policies target teachers, blaming them for any inadequacies within a school. As Brad explains, "the kid would say, "well if I don't pass, it's not my fault, it's gotta be your fault." That's what kids started to say because Mayor Bloomberg, when he got elected said, "if you're not learning, it's the teachers fault[127]". This notion is problematic for a number of reasons; the fact that only teachers are being held accountable for a student's education suggests that students, parents, administrators, and society in general, have no responsibility in the matter. What Bloomberg is saying defies the very definition of the word student, which Dictionary.com defines as "a person formally engaged in learning, especially one enrolled in a school or college; pupil: *a student at Yale.* / **2.** any person who studies, investigates, or examines thoughtfully[128]". Notice, that neither of the former suggest that a student is someone who is given information, but instead that a student is someone who seeks to understand information. If students are no longer responsible for studying, then they are no longer students. In addition to removing the responsibility of the student, many of Bloomberg's new policies effectively remove the responsibility of the parents and administrators. Brad continues;

> "Now they want you too call parents, email them – this whole thing about putting the grades online and the parents can look at any time. If you have 100 parents, and 7 of those parents bother to look online that's a lot. They don't look. And the proof they don't look is they come in on open school night and say, "How the f--- did my kid fail?" It's online every day, what do you mean "how did they fail?" So you're not looking. So why are we doing it? Why are you putting it on me? It's crazy, it's crazy. You've actually removed the responsibility of the parent, of the assistant principal – as an educator, of the principal – as an educator, and of the kid – as a person who's supposed be trying to become educated. You removed all of their responsibilities and said, "the only reason you don't learn, is because

[127] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[128] "Student," n.d.

of the teachers[129]".

This teacher-blaming rhetoric has become an easy way for politicians to scapegoat teachers in an attempt to deflect attention off of the real issues. There is propaganda in nearly every political campaign blaming teachers and teacher's unions for the failure of the school system. Teacher's unions have done little in the way of defending themselves, and much of the public – not entirely unjustifiably – has lost respect for, and trust in, the teachers unions. Matt explained what he felt the issues with teachers unions are and how he feels they could have dealt with their current situation better:

> "I also think that when you look at what happens to those teachers, the union needs to lead on that fact that some of them should not be teachers. It is a small number. This is really a union issue. This isn't my issue. If they want to look bad, they can look bad. But the reality is if you are seen as protecting the worst and they're so obviously the worst, like we've had ATRs here that were literally drunk and passed out in the other room, and you go out of your way to protect them, it then looks like from a public view standpoint like you just will protect anybody no matter what and that you don't care about teacher quality. I don't actually think that's the case, but because of their own system of protection and policies and the way that they map things out, that's how it looks. That's a problem for them. That's a super PR problem, and that's why, quite frankly, the union outside of teachers and even within their own teacher system, they now have different caucuses that are running against each other. Internally, they have some issues. But outside if you're not a teacher, not that many people look fondly on the union. They don't necessarily look bad on teachers, but the union they don't see as someone pushing the ball forward. They very much see them as sort of blocking, and I think the union has to figure out how they lead on issues. They should've been the first to put out their own version of an evaluation system, and they waited until they could say no. That was dumb. Yours should've been on the table first. You should've been pushing it. It should've been on the TV. It should've been all over the place. You should've been driving that home before anybody because you knew it was coming, so what were you waiting for? Did you really think it wasn't going to happen?[130]"

However, in this "big money" world that is being forced down the throats of the

[129] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013
[130] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

American public, unions are not exactly welcomed. Janet Mayer explained that despite the fact that the union may not be working to its potential right now, it is an important part of teaching that contributed to the professionalism that the career now provides:

> "So the unions have been weakened, especially in New York City. Across the country there's a whole trend to wipe out unions. The problems with America are union workers. Do you understand that? ...That's the feeling. And if you drop the unions, everything – I started teaching before the unions were fully functioning. I had 50 in a class. I had no lunch period. You were called to teach a sixth class during your lunch period. There were no books. They were horrible conditions. I didn't know I was going to join a union. Teachers didn't join. It was like unprofessional to join a union. Teachers didn't do that. No professional did. But when you saw how terrible conditions were, and I was in a Queens New York Middle Class School, my kid brother was in the building and I saw there were so many things that could be better. And the union came in, and within a year or two we had a grievance procedure. You had a limit on class size. You didn't have to have 50 in a class. You didn't have to teach [0:08:47.9] to every subject. You could only teach in license, whatever you were trained to do. It made major improvements and it made teachers professional. The irony was that teachers had not joined the union because it's not professional. The irony was that joining the union made it into a profession because you had someplace to complain to and the unions got stronger and stronger and were wonderful for many years. We need unions and we need them in the schools or teachers will be teaching 50 in a class and doing things. I'm a "No" person. If I see something going wrong, I say, "No." But you can't do that if you have no tenure left. If you have no union grievance procedure to go to who will back you, who will investigate, and do justice by whatever the problem is. So having a union, you're at the beholden of a boss[131]."

Matt explained that even though the teachers unions has terrible PR, their reasons for resisting making deals with the government aren't entirely unwarranted, "I actually think most teachers in New York City would be okay with lots of changes across the board if the value was there at the end of all of that change, but the history of New York City hasn't been that. So there have been changes, changes, changes, and it's actually

[131] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

moved to more of a devaluing of teachers; so there's a lot of mistrust[132]." He explained the specifics that ruined the deal between Bloomberg and the unions:

> "I think the DOE is starting at a much larger—I think they were at 40% or something originally of test scores, which I think is ridiculous. I don't know. There was a plan on the table that most people were going to agree to, and it's my understanding that even the mayor's negotiators had agreed to it. The stipulation was that there was a time that this was going to run out so that it would be a model for two years or three years—I don't know what the exact number of years was—but that in that time they would get to review it and revise it. The mayor didn't want anything that could be reviewed or revised. He wanted it to be the model for the next 100 years, which just isn't good practice anyway. So he's the one that pulled it off the table at the last minute, but they thought they had a deal. Both sides thought they had a deal. So I don't know what's going to happen with that[133]."

Kim explained that in New Jersey, where the teachers unions managed to make a deal with the state, the new evaluation policy that looks a lot like the one debated in New York City:

> "So they've created a new evaluation policy – I don't know if it's the same thing in New York... all it is, is accountability. So teachers, basically every moment of their free time, have to go online and show what they are doing. So instead of creating new lesson plans, innovative learning things, they are now "oh God, I'm on free break, I have to write down what I did because somebody's going to check whether I did it." So they're on the computers every free moment, now they're going to be observed three times – even the administrators are like, "we physically cannot observe an entire school three times, there's too much stuff going on," so that costs more money. You know, it's like how are you going to implement all these new evaluations? We know that it'd be better if they just popped in and saw teachers spontaneously, because these rehearsed evaluations are not a good indication of what makes a good teacher. And all it does is add stress[134]."

Most teachers don't disagree with the fact that the policies need to change, but there are discrepancies in their opinions of *how* they should change. Matt explained why

---

[132] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[133] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[134] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

they need to change, and how he thought they should be changed:

> "Well, the issue now is that they only really exist like an S or a U. So you're either satisfactory or you're not good. Well, there's a huge gray area in between all of that, which is to show growth every time. There is no room for that, so that's just a horrible evaluation tool. It's bad for principals because it puts you in a really bad spot because you have to decide, do I give a U? But they're not the worst. They'll grow. But they're not good. It's bad for teachers because you don't really know where you're actually at and what you're working toward. You think an S means you're good, but it doesn't necessarily mean they've got it all together. It just means that you're not the worst. So there has to be a new model, and I think everybody sees that. The problem is, I think, mostly right now around—I don't even think it's around Danielson, which is interesting because we had a workshop today on it. I think most teachers could wrap their head around that model. It's a little bit tricky in that it was built to be more of a support system as opposed to an evaluation tool, so the wording in some of the rubrics and the points is a little bit weird when you're trying to make an evaluation tool[135]."

However, Anthony*, a current Teach for America participant, and 7th and 8th grade history teacher in the Bronx, explained why he didn't feel the Danielson model was good rubric to follow:

> "Right now, two of your unit assessments have to be aligned to a common core standard, but our school, because we're part of... the Danielson rubric pilot... Charlotte Danielson is this woman who wrote basically a rubric for... how to grade a teacher on their effectiveness, except it has very interesting language, where if you get an ineffective – and you're school, as part of the Danielson pilot needs to write your observation for the informal observation exactly as using the Danielson rubric language, they can't interpret it. So I read my observation from like the first couple of weeks of me teaching – they just uploaded it a few days ago, and I was like, "oh my God, the assistant principal and principal think I don't care about the students' dignity and that I don't attend professional development and all of these things, and then we got an email from our principal like, "we've just input all of your stuff using the Danielson rubric, I don't agree with the language so please bare with it because we have to do that." And I was like "thank God, because I thought they thought I was like a horrible human being." The language is very like if you're not doing [it right], you're just garbage, you hate kids, why are you doing this? And I think it's very targeted towards making people feel like

[135] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

> it's their fault the kids are doing bad. Which, as a first year teacher, just observing, [I can see that there's] so many different environmental factors that contribute to that[136]."

What evaluation rubrics like the Danielson method and other "calibrations" forget to factor in is the fact that most teachers are trying their best and need guidance to improve, nobody starts a job doing everything right. Rubrics like these seek to push forward the political agenda targeted at blaming teachers. Anthony explained his surprise when he realized the politics involved in education:

> "I wasn't expecting the political aspect of teaching to be as extreme as it is. Most teachers who have been doing it for a long time feel villainized by the media and especially the mayor's office, teachers are not very big fans of Mayor Bloomberg, or mayoral control of schools. It's even some teachers who I look up to. I visit their classrooms to look for best practices to apply to my own classroom, and they say that there has just been a huge shift in the last 5 years towards kind of esoteric things that don't really help the kids and they're very focused on basically who's responsible for them – they're kind of just trying to find someone to blame for like everyone having low test scores, not being able to read and write, instead of finding the problem. So the policies now are very much focused on like, "who are we going to blame this year," and for the most part it kind of has the unfortunate result of blaming teachers. And I think a lot of the teachers are really frustrated with the fact that they don't have enough resources, they don't even have – my school especially, we're like any second that we have free is taken away because our school is so small where we can't get substitutes all the time so if one person's absent, that's my prep period gone – so a lot of teachers just feel that they're over worked, they go home and all they do is grade and then lesson plan, and then the mayor's office is telling them that the reason that schools are awful is because they're not doing their job correctly. So there's a lot of pushback I've noticed between teacher's who have been doing it for a while and then this new grading system of teaching[137]."

"That's the process that needs to be put with individual teachers," David explained:

---

[136] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013
[137] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013

> "Instead of coming in and saying, "You stink, good bye," the idea is, "Here's what you do well. Keep doing it. Here's what you don't do so well. Let's work together to get you to be better at those things." Now understood that you're not going to be perfect because everybody has their strengths and their weaknesses, but if we can move your weaknesses from here to here, you're going to become a stronger teacher. That's supervision. That's not evaluation. That's the difference... So those are all the processes to develop it instead of coming in and saying, "You are failing as a teacher. You are failing as a principal," because there should be the same process for administrators. And as a school, if you work with the teachers getting better and you work with the administrators getting better, you have a better chance of dealing with the s--t that the kids come in with. But that's not going to happen as long as people are looking to make a buck off of this to sell testing material or to develop entrepreneur school, and I don't mean the School for Entrepreneurship, I mean the school as an entrepreneurship. That's not going to happen because it doesn't make sense to them in terms of profit and budget. So all of those things are contributing to making the mess even worse[138]."

Kim shared her disapproval of the effects of over-testing, not only on the kids, but the teachers' motivation and ability to actually teach:

> "I almost wonder if we're not fostering their creative juices anymore, that it's just, "sit down and do your work." Like when I did my stuff, my wild stuff, [it was] way harder for me to do, way more exhausting, and the kids, because they'd be so pumped, and when I did these races to the West, and they had to come up with all of this stuff, and if I went and did rope memorization, it was easy, I could just go in and teach and they sit down and they do what they're supposed to, but the wilder I got, the wilder they got, so why not do calm boring stuff? I mean I didn't do that, but I was going to soon and that's probably why I wanted to retire so much. I will tell you, I retired because I was so depressed at what was happening to the education system... the minute I stopped, I realized I had been depressed about the state of what was happening to my school. I mean really depressed about it. Because I was like, once I washed my hands of it I was like, "I'm done, I don't have to watch it anymore, I can't watch it anymore." I still love the kids[139].

David explained the how the best type of programs to foster teacher improvement, work:

> "So those kinds of programs, teachers new to the school district, whether they're brand new to teaching or have 20 years of teaching, get a mentor,

[138] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[139] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

> somebody who can walk them through what this place is like, not just any place, but this particular place and be there as a mentor... If you incorporate all of those, and the best districts do that, then you're going to make everybody work in teams. People are not isolated. They said, "Okay, you're teaching seniors together. Let's come up with a way that we want to develop our economic classes. The way to make sense for us to them is if they can get the most out of it[140]."

Kim concurred with David's notion of teaming, but unfortunately even in one of the best districts in the country where she worked, Roseville, "teaming" is being phased out:

> "Always make sure all the teachers are always working, and they're exhausted. The one thing was, this teaming. My principal who designed it 25–30 years ago – honestly [Raytown*] came, people came from all over and [Rayville] still does it, but [Roseville's principal] was like one of the things I want, is that the team and the Special Ed teacher all have a common lunch period so that for 45 minutes we would have lunch and we would always end up talking about the kids. So not only on the one time a week where we could meet and talk about them, also on every lunch period we were talking about the kids. And we did, you just couldn't help it, that's what we had in common. And we would work on lesson plans that we were doing, projects, interdisciplinary activities, and now because every teacher is off teaching something else, we have a 20 minute lunch, and there's no talking about students, teachers don't see each other, and morale is awful. Teachers don't want to go school. You need each other; teachers need each other desperately. I was just telling [my husband last night] because I went out to dinner with two of my friends, and they are best friends, and I retired in October and they haven't seen each other since then, and they still work at the school! You need to sit and laugh and talk about the awful things that happen, and the good things that happen, because it rejuvenates you. No one cares like they used to because everyone's so afraid, they're just tip toeing around like, "what's the government going to do?[141]"

In New York City, what the government did was take over the schools, and closed them to open new ones that effectively forced out hundreds of teachers. David explained this situation, and the problems it created, very clearly:

---

[140] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[141] Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

"So that connects us to [Brad*], ... so here's a master teacher, okay, who when he moved from [Johnson*] to [Mini School*], which was now one of these sort of "free budget" semi-public schools, the principal has her own budget and has the right now to hire and fire to fit the budget. So now it's quite easy to take Brad*, because his ideas on teaching conflicted with hers, and say "goodbye" because I can take you who's at the top of the salary scale hire three new people for that, who wont last more that five years – and this is sort of an allegory for the whole thing – who wont last more than five years anyway, so I'm never going to have to pay large salaries, and the system benefits because none of these new people who's going to vest in pension. So, long-term costs are going to go down too, because salaries are going to go down and pension costs are going to decrease, as the people they're paying are going to die off, and there is not going to be anybody to replace in terms of paying out pension. So all those are all connected... And because of that, you're never going to ever get career teachers, who get better with experience. And so you're going to get this revolving door of transient, temporary, in some case scabish – although they don't think of themselves as scabs, they're not union busters, but you know, TFA kids, who are being sent into schools. The fact that they are being hired in lots of districts, and not because they admire TFA kids, but because it's a cheap way of getting rid of their veterans. So that's how it all ties together[142]."

Brad explained this in his own words as well:

"Well what happens is, when the mayor closes schools, he can't fire teachers. Like he can't fire me, I have like no U ratings, letters from the chancellor, superintendents, principals, vice principals, people who have asked me to run professional developments for their districts, how can you fire that? So you have to keep him, but his school is closed so we make you what they call, an "absentee teacher in reserves", that's what an "ATR" is. And then what they do is, every week, we get on our email and they tell us where we're going for the following week. It's like mission impossible... they contact you, tell you where to go, and then you go there for five days. Then the next Thursday they send you somewhere else. Last year – there are 40 weeks in a school year – I went to 34 different schools... Basically [it's subbing], if they have something for you to do, and if they don't then you just kind of sit around and do nothing.... Well I think they move you around just to get you to quit, because if we keep moving you every single week, and you can't make any relationships, and every week you move someplace else, it's very annoying... and so you'll quit. But that didn't happen, and it didn't happen with a lot of people[143]."

[142] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[143] Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013

Instead of using teachers like Brad, who had outstanding performance records, to help improve the new schools by offering experience and ability, the mayor decided to use them as ATRs. The mayor is still paying their salaries, but he is getting half of what they could offer.

TENURE –

An important point that David made, was that many of the best teachers left the city because teaching conditions were so bad;

> "And so there was always a mixture of good and bad. But what ended up happening is that a lot of the people who would turn into the best teachers because they were bright, and intelligent, and creative, and all of the good, wonderful things we know, thought, "I could make a hell of a lot more money going into investment banking." And so this huge pool of talented people went this way, which didn't help the situation. And so as more and more, and I hate to be egotistical about this, but as more and more better end teachers who were really good, and compassionate, and understood, and who were really good educators left... I recognized when I saw it happening, except in the districts that could afford to pay. So districts that could afford to pay would get the best. And the districts that couldn't would get the leftovers.[144]."

Matt explained how not being compensated for so much of the extra work they do, is affecting teachers' performance:

> "When teachers know what their roles and responsibilities will be and they're being paid for it, they're being treated like professionals, it's not like oh, I need you to do me a favor and do this club because the kids really need it; I can't pay you, but it's really important. So now you're doing community service. It has a very different feeling behind it. So I *think when you start to do those things, you can then have those* conversations with teachers about what it means to be professional and what the expectations are of their practice and growth and professional development, and they're consistently working to get better. It's kind of hard to throw all the extras on people and then throw on all these different standards and just sort of say like, I need you to do this. A teacher's

[144] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013

> thinking, are you kidding me? I'm getting paid peanuts at this point, but you want to keep throwing more on the plate. It just doesn't really work, and it shouldn't. It shouldn't be an expectation. It just should never work like that, but people have to be willing to move differently on that[145]."

A common issue people bring up when they are bashing teachers is tenure. However, most of the people who cite this issue are unaware of the actual purpose of tenure. Documentaries, like *Waiting for Superman,* are filled with propaganda that lead the viewers to believe that tenure means a teacher has a guaranteed position. Janet Mayer explained what tenure actually is and why it is so important:

> "That means you're allowed to have investigation. I would have been investigated all of the time because I was a big dissenter. So they investigate to see what kind of a teacher you are. The problem in New York City was they took years. And that was partly Bloomberg's fault also that rubber room. He could have ended it earlier by hiring more lawyers so that teachers who were brought up on charges could be investigated with due process. Without tenure, you again are beholden to the mercy of any boss and you must have tenure to teach. You cannot do without it. It's a terrible thing to take it away and teachers must pay for it. If you can't speak up, if you can't complain that your kids aren't being treated – if you don't have the right books for them and they're not getting the help they – and you dissent, well if you have no tenure, goodbye. They could fire you because you're Jewish. They could fire you because you're black. They could fire you because you're Hispanic. They could fire you because they want to bring their cousin in. They don't have to tell you why you're being fired. With tenure, they would have to have you observed by your principal, by your assistant principal, by the superintendent. And that does take time, but it shouldn't be five years. So the way to get rid of bad teachers, the first approach is to help them improve. Make every effort to make them improve, and then after a legitimate amount of time, if they show no signs of improvement, then you bring them up on charges. Due process, tenure, does not mean they can't be fired. It just means it's more difficult and that's the way it should be. Nobody should get fired without some difficulty. Before I started the system, every principal in New York City was Irish and so that if you were of a different ethnic background, you never had a chance[146]."

Janet was not alone in her defense of tenure, "The treatment of teachers in this

---

[145] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[146] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

country is miserable," David exclaimed, "until Unions came about and said, "This should be a safe and secure position," because you are entrusting your child to these people. You can't just screw the people who are dealing with your kids[147]." It seems that the public has forgotten than teachers are public servants who have dedicated their careers to improving the skills and abilities of the youth. Instead, people, mainly the DOE, Bloomberg, and the majority of his colleagues, are treating teachers as if they are conmen, trying to somehow cheat a system that is already working out of their favor. None of the people I interviewed denied the fact that there are plenty of teachers who do not deserve the position. The issue, David explained, is the premature granting of tenure, which almost every teacher cited as the problem:

> "This goes back to supervision again. This is where the fault lies in my opinion. There is plenty of time in three years to either help a teacher go from I don't know what the hell I'm doing to competent and then move from there, or decide that no matter how much help you're going to give this person, they're never going to be competent, and it's time to say to them, "You should find another profession." If that's done, the rest of it is easy. The other piece of that is what I said before. Developing a don't rest on your laurels, practical policy in every school districts, you're on your laurels, which is I have tenure now, I don't have to do anything to get better. So if you create a culture in the school and a culture in the district where resting on your laurels is not the norm, the norm in my job is to grow as a professional. You also solve the problem because that happens a lot and I've seen that... There were just too many people who were rest on your laurels people. I got my job. I got my security. I got my paycheck. I'm in at nine. I'm out at three. I don't care. I'm done. Those people, in my mind, we need to find a way to get rid of them or prevent that from being acceptable by their peers. Those are more complex, but they can be solved without this Draconian kind of process that's now being dumped on everybody because the Draconian process is frankly simpler than getting supervisors, and administrators, and teachers to work together collegiately to develop a better entry process and a better don't rest on your laurels policy and process[148]."

[147] David Green, Interview; February 1, 2013
[148] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013

Matt concurred:

> "Tenure, I don't think tenure should happen in year three. I don't think any teacher is at the level they should be at, anyone, I don't care how great you are, is at the level you should be at in order to say you have tenure. It should probably be year seven, five, eight, somewhere in that range.... We give tenure so early, like three years, they're still leaving the system even with tenure. It's not actually keeping anybody here. So I just think there needs to be a shift. Again, I think the union should lead on that. So people are saying take away tenure. Well, the only way to start that conversation is to say not take it away, but we're going to shift how we do it and lead on that and look like the group that's being proactive and progressive. But instead you fight the issue and never put anything on the table[149]."

The issue is not tenure; it is the process by which teachers attain tenure. Once a teacher has tenure, it is already too late to deal with the problem. Instead of being reactive, there needs to be a proactive policy that prevents problem teachers from becoming tenured in the first place. David explained:

> "And a better means of saying, "You know, let's look at that first three years of your work." We need to do a better job of weeding out people before they become tenure. Tenure has been used the wrong way. Basically, tenure's supposed to provide for you. It's due process that you can't be thrown out because somebody doesn't like the fact that you talk back to them. That's what tenure was created for. It was not created as nah, nah, nah, I can do anything I want; you can't fire me kind of thing. The problem is that and this is going to get even worse because everybody who has tenure now is being treated as if they don't have tenure. And then they're saying, "That's it. I'm gone." And even the most talented people will say, "That [getting rid of tenure is] right. That's exactly right[150]."

Matt proposed a way to solve the issue of tenure, by implementing a more proactive process of granting tenure:

> "Again, another one where you need a clear process to that. So how do I get it? What's the process for getting it? What do I need to show each year? Being very clear with teachers, this is the progression we want to see, and if you do this you're going to get it. It shouldn't be a secret. It shouldn't be some mystery that you're like, I don't know if I'm going to

[149] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[150] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013

> get it. If you've done these things, you know you're going to get it. That's it. There should be a significant salary increase that comes along with tenure. To me, that's where you make the salary jump. So be clear about it. Create a process for it. It should and could still exist. I don't think tenure needs to go away. Then make it so valuable to a teacher's career that they all want that, so there's a push. So if you spend that first seven years having to do all this PD and have it all been proof of expertise, then by the time they get tenure they're actually probably going to be really good teachers. They've already stayed for seven years, and they got tenure. They're staying; they're not leaving[151]."

TEACH FOR AMERICA:

"The next piece of this," David shared; "is where TFA fits in and City Fellows and all those other kinds of alternative certification processes fit in, to save money – because now its all about bottom line and budget… because money is controlling everything, and so much money is now being allocated to non-teaching – testing, being the most expensive of these, the division of big schools into smaller schools, which adds more administrative levels who are not… dealing directly with kids, having to in a sense, figure out how to maintain budgets for staff[152]." David elaborated on the specifics of the program:

> "Now, another good idea gone bad; I loved initially the idea of including, to use the Kennedy Administration idea "The Best and the Brightest" to go into teaching because we had lost that so, okay, if you can find a way to bring more kids out of investment banking and into teaching, what a great idea. If it's just to give them a taste and nurture them to stay, that's not what TFA is. Even on their own documentation they don't say anything about teaching as a career. They talk about leadership because they want to create policy makers who think like TFA politics. And it's all about becoming something else. The other thing is, the way that TFA is structured isn't going to help them become career teachers because the five-year preparation is inadequate. And you must take Grad school immediately because you're only in the program for two years and you're going to get your MAT in two years. So that's where I came from. I was hired as a field specialist for what I thought were student teachers. When I

[151] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013
[152] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013

> was hired, I think probably the reason I was hired was because they needed extra hands because they just signed a TFA contract. So you're fresh out of college, alright, you have no idea how to teach, except this silly thing you went through. You're in the worst schools possible. You have no help and then you're told, "Alright, you're going to go to school and get 30 credits this year." And then how are you going to be productive as a teacher if you have all this other stress on you? And you're put in areas that need good teachers the most[153]."

Janet Mayer also leant her opinion on the program:

> "These Teach for America Young people, they go in with the best intentions I think. They're sold a bill of goods that they're the best in the world; that you're going to save these poor kids; that you're the only ones that can save them. [They] chose very few compared to the 1,000's that applied. So they're built up to think that they're God's gift to the urban schools until they find out [they're not] and they're devastated... You're plucked out of a classroom; you're sent into the most difficult schools. The good schools will not take these people. And so you can't train teachers. There's nobody training teachers... So to top that, you don't have people anymore who know what they're doing[154]."

With the newfound dependence on teaching fellowship programs, like Teach for America (TFA), many new issues are presented. After interviewing two former TFA participants, one thing is clear: TFA does not adequately prepare its participants to head into high poverty schools. A major criticism of TFA is its "Ivy League Elitism," because of the program's clear favoritism towards Ivy League applicants, and with this comes an interdependent issue: many of it's participants have a difficult time dealing with the culture shock of a high poverty school. One of the TFA participants I interviewed, Joe* contributed to the former conclusion, saying, "I'm a white suburban kid from New Jersey, so I had no idea how to talk to kids who were black and Latino and grew up in the Bronx and Harlem. That was a big challenge, they don't do cultural education, to give

[153] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[154] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

you a clue as to how to speak to kids, how to speak to families[155]". Joe even presented his issue to his superiors at TFA, saying,

> "I felt like they didn't properly prepare the teachers to teach in high poverty schools... the school that they placed me in, obviously, was a high poverty school and the administration was dysfunctional. So right before I tendered my resignation with them I told them as much; that I don't think they should be placing people in these schools because they're not preparing them properly. And their response was well if we didn't place people in these schools then we wouldn't be Teach for America[156]".

If TFA defines itself as an organization placing top college graduates in high poverty schools, then it is clearly blind to the issue that they create by merely existing as such. "I just think they're really bad at it," current TFA teacher, Anthony explains of TFA's cultural awareness training:

> "It was really basic level, they would kind of talk about people as if like, "oh if you know this one way of approaching other people's culture, you can talk to anyone in the world," and I was thinking, "that's not true," just because someone is of another culture doesn't mean I'm going to be like, "oh you're Dominican? Oh, I got this," ...we kept doing these workshops, and it would get very awkward, because we would talk about sexual orientation and the conversation would always move towards any person in the room that was gay and see how they felt. Or even some of the conversations were just plain awkward, because they just weren't run very interestingly, and we kept asking the question, "how does this help us?" It would be different if everything was rooted in "how is this going to make me an effective teacher," but some of the conversations just snowballed into talking about life and our feelings and I was just like, "still don't really get [how this helps][157]."

Anthony concluded that the veteran teachers were more effective in helping him with classroom management, saying:

> "They tell you, never go into the teachers lounge, you don't want to be indoctrinated in the negativity of other teachers that have been doing this for a while, because Teach for America is kind of also in line with this

[155] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[156] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[157] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013

> whole "veteran teachers are the reason why educations bad, stay away from them they're going to poison your mind," meanwhile, Teach for America didn't really teach me how to be a teacher, its more of these veteran teachers, who will watch me and be like, "oh, if you do this tomorrow, they'll respect you more, so *x*, *y*, and *z*." Whereas Teach for America was more like, "this is how to be a good person, there are these things called races and there are these things called ethnicities and you're going to have to cross boundaries," and I'm like "really? I could've learned that in Intro to Anthropology class, didn't really need you to tell me that there are people of different genders, different sexual orientations, and I'm going to have to encounter them – that's called life." So we did much more cultural awareness workshops, which I thought were interesting for like a day or two, but then I kind of really wanted to be like, "okay, well I need to know how to be a teacher also[158]."

While TFA asserts the idea that veteran teachers are the problem, veteran teachers are better suited to help TFA graduates, and recognize the fact that many of the TFA graduates don't want to be associated with veteran teachers because they are being blamed for all the problems. Veteran teachers like Janet Mayer see that the TFA kids aren't ill intentioned, but misguided by political agendas that are being forced on them. "You don't want to be associated with teachers who aren't doing their job," Janet explained:

> "The TFA teachers tried so hard. The math teachers I felt so sorry for them. They couldn't control the kids in many cases. Many times they had been engineers or mathematicians, and they'd come into the urban high schools where kids took one look at them and threw the books at them. And these teachers would go on teaching while the books were being thrown at them. And I would come into the next period class and have to step over the books. And I didn't know how terrible he was because I came in after the bell rang, but I saw the books all over and I more – not really yelled. I said, "Couldn't you get your kids to at least pick the books off the floor?" And he looked at me like he was going to cry. And then I spoke to his mentor and she didn't help. There should have been more help for that. But there are people who don't recognize they shouldn't be teaching. And so there are ways if they can't leave on their own that you help them. There are bad doctors, and bad lawyers, and they stay in the

[158] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013

profession too. Who's getting rid of them? Why is it only teachers that are bad?[159]"

Aside from not preparing its participants with adequate cultural education before hastily placing them in high needs schools – where the stakes couldn't be higher, it doesn't seem they adequately prepare their participants in any subject, including: classroom management, lesson planning, and professional development.

Joe expressed that he felt his issues with lesson planning and classroom management "arose because, in my opinion, Teach for America only trains their teachers for 5 weeks in the summer before they send them into the classroom. And while you're training for those 5 weeks you teach with someone else and in my case I only had a class of like 9 kids and we'd teach for 45 minutes a day. You only teach 4 days a week and you only teach for 4 of the 5 weeks. So 16 hours total teaching time before they just give you your own classroom with these poor kids, with lots of different needs and that's a problem for a lot of reasons[160]". Anthony concurs, "And then the actual teaching part, they taught us how to write a lesson plan, and they kind of gave us a general spiel about how you run a classroom and then they just set us free in a summer school. And they watched us very closely and gave us feedback but there was never a moment at the end of the "institute" where I was like, "I'm ready now to have my own classroom[161]."

Joe, who also happens to serve in the U.S. military, made a great point about the irresponsibility of placing participants into the classroom so prematurely, explaining, "I like to go back to the army as an example, because I had to do 4 years of ROTC and then I had to do 6 months of job training for my job as an army officer, and I had to do all of

[159] Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013
[160] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[161] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013

that before I could tell people what to do. Whereas with alternate route, it's like you can just kind of show up and if you have the bachelor's degree, and the certificate, then you can be thrust into a classroom, even though you don't know what you're doing[162]".

Even if their training had been more in-depth, as Anthony, who now teaches 7th and 8th grade American and Global histories, respectively, later explained, after his training at the TFA "institute," he had a month off with little information to prepare him for his approaching job:

> "I had a month off where they were like, "you should be thinking about *x*, *y*, and *z*," and my thing was, how do I think about *x*, *y*, and *z*? How do I do that? Because they would talk about planning curriculum, do this, and do that, but I didn't even know what I was teaching so none of those things could happen.... I knew I was going to be teaching history, but I could've been teaching Geography, American, Economics, I didn't know what grades, because I'm certified 6th through 12th. I was also terrified if I got economics because I haven't had an economics class myself since senior year of high school. And then I found out two days before the first day of school at the professional development at my school. The only reason I knew that I was teaching Global [and not just American], was because I accidentally mentioned, "oh yeah, I'm doing 8th grade American History," and the person was like, "whoa, no one told you? This year eighth grade is global history[163]."

The irony in this is the fact that TFA – according to Joe – focuses their five-week program on lesson planning, but he explains, "it's based off of this education model, teaching to the test. They expect you to make tests based off of the state tests and kind of pull objectives," he continues, "They give you that but then it's kind of void of context; like how do I make that interesting, how do I make it meaningful to kids who are either

[162] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[163] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013

coming from here and then going to work, or taking care of their little siblings, and this is probably not their top priority right now[164]".

This disconnect between the organization's training method and the ability for it's participants to utilize such methods effectively in a classroom might stem from yet another issue Joe presented, "my supervisor only had 2 years in the classroom, the big gun had like 5 years in, which is like just enough time for you to figure out your a-- from your elbow in teaching. So out of necessity, they have to rely on a lot of these studies, because [TFA doesn't] have the cumulative institutional knowledge [among its supervising staff] where they can tell you what works and what doesn't intuitively[165]".

Further exemplifying the organizations disconnect, are the teaching methods they suggested to Joe: "it was based off education studies but not really based on the real life so to speak. So they'd tell you to be very neutral in tone, so if kids were being rowdy, you know, count backwards from five. Then you take points off if they're being bad still and I was trying that for the first month or two, and it just wasn't working[166]". Joe worked with 7th and 9th graders, so it seems understandable that a count down from five would not be taken seriously. In addition, teachers should be emotional about teaching; neutral tone and emotional disconnect can be perceived as uncaring and not invested, which is the opposite of what a teacher should be. A 2010 study by Scott Titsworth, Margaret M. Quinlan, and Joseph P. Mazer, and a 2011 study by Keith Trigwell, both concluded that

[164] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[165] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[166] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013

teaching with emotion is the most productive, and student-centered approach to teaching[167].

Joe continued about this idea of using a "neutral tone" saying the TFA encouraged, "not really getting very emotional, you know, not displaying a lot of emotion about things, and so like going to a point system and being like "oh well Divaly, you just told me to f--k off, so that's going to be negative five points for the day" and then by the end of the day you have negative three hundred points, so what the hell do I do with that? So to me that ended up being kind of absurd, and the kids reacted a lot better, when they would get angry with me about something and front and put on a show, and then I put on a show back to them, and I would get as loud as they were, if not louder, and they would respond and say "oh yeah, I'm sorry about that" and they would settle down and do some work[168]".

Another seemingly absurd classroom management tactic TFA suggested to its participants was to tell the students how much money they could make with a college degree. Joe explained,

> "Since TFA was very research oriented they would always have something to back this stuff up; so the one thing they did was show the kids how much money they're going to make if they have a bachelor's degree. Maybe it's just me, but that's not the reason that you should get a bachelor's degree, it's important, but it shouldn't be the only reason. So, I [explained it to the students] and they would be like, "yeah, uh huh, I can make *x* amount of dollars, whatever" and then they would go back to doing whatever bad thing it was that they were doing. So there's such a wide disconnect I think, as far as that kind of motivation goes[169]".

[167] Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010; Trigwell, 2011
[168] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[169] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013

Aside from poor classroom management training, as mentioned earlier, is the failure to provide proper lesson planning training. What TFA encouraged, Joe says, is teaching to the test, "every moment of the class is going to be regimented and it's not a new concept, it goes back to the 1920s, but their just taking it and shining it up and putting a new brand on it and making it sexy[170]."

Like Anthony, Joe concluded that veteran teachers helped him more than his TFA training, explaining that David Green had helped him create a successful unit plan:

> "I was really fortunate I was able to be successful with a unit plan that... I started with an article about a girl who got shot in the head – It ended up being like a block away from one of my student's homes. So we start with this classroom discussion about neighborhood violence and then from there we were able to really kind of bridge it into discussions about like, why violence? Why is it violent in the Bronx? Why is it violent in say, Afghanistan? Why is it violent in the 1940s in Germany? And so it was really cool to see them get hooked on that and to really see them you know, draw their own conclusions and be more critical of the world around them in that sense[171]."

Without good classroom management skills or adequate lesson planning skills, TFA participants are unlikely to find much success. One of the best examples Joe gave, exemplifies how poor classroom management and poor lesson planning can work together to create a disaster:

> "I had this one girl who was – she was fourteen but she was in the seventh grade and she had some kind of emotional disturbance. I would characterize it as PTSD because she had seen her father get shot in the face. So you have to figure out a way to deal with the child that doesn't patronize them and say "oh well you've had this bad thing happen to you so you can be a jerk in the classroom". She was very aggressive and she was loud and it was really like a kind of battle for custody of the classroom between me and her, because she was the oldest kid in the class and you know she was obviously the meanest. So the kids who were on the fence – who were a majority of them... it was kind of like watching a

[170] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[171] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013

> tennis match. You know, watch her see what she does, and then watch me and see how I would react. So initially I would have this silly little kid stuff and she would be like "aw mister that's bullshit, that's bullshit mister. Yeah whatever, whatever" and she would just keep talking while I was trying to teach the class. But then after I got more upfront and direct with her and I got her father… I got him involved because he was her guardian. Then, that's when I figured what her soft spot was. You know cultivating those relationships, and being more assertive and more direct with her was stuff that I learned from Dave. And so that was 2 or 3 months in that I really figured that out[172]".

Two or three months, or 40-60 days in the classroom, is a long time for a teacher to go without a qualified mentor. It's 30% of the school year that the students miss out on learning. It's also important to note the TFA did not provide this mentor, but the university Joe attended, that had partnered with TFA, provided this mentor. When asked if he threw out of what he learned from Teach for America, Joe replied, "yeah and it sucks because there's this trial and error period where you lose time because you're using what you trust – you trust them, and you use what they've given you and then you realize it doesn't work and then you have to find your own way by talking to teacher or talking to graduate school mentors or just doing your own trial and error period[173]".

While some of the pros for New York City working with TFA include saving money by eliminating the issue of increased salary scale and pensions – as many of the "teachers" leave immediately following, and often before, their contract with TFA expires, there is a lot of money wasted because of TFA and other alternate route programs. In her book, *As Bad As They Say?: Three Decades of Teaching in the Bronx*, Janet Mayer explained:

> "One of my wonderful, extremely hard-working interns was told, on the very first day of the new term in September (I was appointed in

[172] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013
[173] Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013

> November, once again, as were all the mentors), to order $50,000 worth of new English textbooks. She had no English chairperson or any other experienced English teacher to ask for advice. Everyone was inexperienced, and so she did the best she could; however, when the $50,000 worth of books arrived, she realized they were too difficult and not appropriate for her students. Not only was all that money wasted, but the students had no books[174]."

Janet was quick to insist that this was not the teacher's fault because she shouldn't have been given such a huge responsibility without any experience, and that it was the fault of the administration and DOE. TFA barely prepares its participants to run a classroom, let alone handle an entire department's curriculum materials.

In addition, Anthony explained how TFA's "institute" left him unprepared for professional development workshops at his assigned school, stating:

> "They'll mention stuff in professional development and because TFA hasn't really given us the language... they've given us some but it's more like "TFA language," because no one uses it except for TFA so you'll say stuff in professional development and people will be like, "what the hell is that?" and I'm like, "I sound like an idiot, I'm just going to stop talking and just nod," and then they'll say stuff in professional development... and I'm just like, "what the hell is that? ...But I've noticed even the veteran teachers at professional development sometimes have no idea what's going on because there's like so much happening now because of the federal government that we're all doing this common core stuff which TFA did not warn me about. And my school is aligned to the common core and I was like, "what is that?" and people were like, "how long have you been a teacher?" ... and everyone was just really shocked that we [TFA grads] didn't know what the common core was, like we were living under a rock[175]."

In total, every person I interviewed agreed that Teach for America had serious flaws. Matt offered some positive changes that might help to improve the program:

> "I think the program sucks, across the board, for Teaching Fellows and Teach for America, and that's not to blame the teacher at all. They're not prepared; they're set up for failure the minute they step into a school. I

[174] Mayer, 2011
[175] Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013

think though, we shouldn't trash the systems; I think we should rework the systems. So I think if the city says, we really need these programs and this is an investment we're going to make, then make the investment: pay people for a semester of interning, pay them to intern for a semester to give them some real practical experience before they come to our schools and don't have a freaking clue what they're doing. They haven't taken one class yet, so they have nothing, they haven't even taken a class – or they took one in the summer, they took one class in the summer before they started, they're not prepared. And it's ridiculous to think that you're totting this as the model to create new teachers in the city and they're less prepared than anybody in a traditional track – like way less prepared. So for me I don't think that we need to get rid of it, because I think we have – the structures are there, so why get rid of it to open up a new thing? But lets revise the way that we work the current structures we have. And if we want to invest the money in those types of programs, because we need the teachers, fine and then pay for people to do an internship. If you think that they wont do it because they need money, you got it, one semester, pay them ahead. If you're goal is that they're going to stay, require them to stay in the city longer then, get the bang out of your buck. If you pay for that semester, they have to stay for eight years. And you know what, if less people apply, then they probably weren't staying in the city anyway and it wasn't really going to be a helpful tool because in three years they were going to leave[176]."

[176] Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

CONCLUSION

"Well that's what's going on now in education." David explained, "It takes a crisis to come up with solutions and the crisis has gotten to proportions where now there are incredible social network groups; Facebook pages, organizations that exist. I was just elected Treasurer of SOS – Save Our Schools March. Two years ago the organization started up to try to get people from all over the country; students, teachers, parents, grandparents, politicians, anybody who wanted to join in, to go to Washington and say, "Enough of this[177]." In a time when it seems that money is more powerful than logic or reason, it is encouraging that everyone I interviewed had hope that it would eventually get better; that the school system will be restored to it's "glory days" that may have never really existed. That even though the schools were never perfect, one day we will be able to learn from the mistakes made in the past instead of repeating them. Yes, there were problems in New York City's schools long before Bloomberg came, and while he is brave for trying to fix them, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The important thing is that people are catching on; when teachers speak out alone nobody listens, but when students and parents take a stand, they cannot be ignored. In the words of Deepak Chopra, "All great changes are preceded by chaos[178]."

[177] David Greene, Interview; February 1, 2013
[178] Chopra, n.d.

Works Cited

Anthony*, Interview; April 11, 2013

Balfanz, R., Legters, N., West, T. C., & Weber, L. M. (2007). Are NCLB's measures, incentives, and improvement strategies the right ones for the nation's low-performing high schools? *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(3), 559-593.

Brad*, Interview; February 19, 2013

Budget publications. (n.d.). Retrieved from NYC.gov website: http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/html/publications/publications.shtml

Chopra, D. (n.d.). Quotes. Retrieved from Personal Excellence website: http://personalexcellence.co/quotes/110

Darling-Hammond, L., Ancess, J., & Ort, S. W. (2002). Reinventing high school: outcomes of the coalition campus schools project. *American Educational Research Journal, 39*(3), 639-673.

David Green, Interview; February 1, 2013

Dillon, S. (2009, June 22). Education chief to warn advocates that inferior charter schools harm the effort. *The New York Times*, sec. A, p. 10.

Kim*, Interview; March 8, 2013

Janet Mayer, Interview; February 12, 2013

Joe*, Interview; March 3, 2013

Loveless, T., & Kelly, A. P. (2012). Comparing new school effects in charter and traditional public schools. *American Journal of Education, 118*(4), 427-453.

Matt*, Interview; March 4, 2013

Olson Beal, H. K., & Hendry, P. M. (2012). The ironies of school choice: empowering parents and reconceptualizing public education. *American Journal of Education, 118*(4), 521-550.

Paula*, Interview; February 7, 2013

Public school teacher salary in new york, ny. (n.d.). Retrieved from Salary.com website: http://www1.salary.com/NY/New-York/Public-School-Teacher-salary.html

Roda, A., & Wells, A. S. (2013). School choice policies and racial segregation: where white parents' good intentions, anxiety, and privilege collide. *American Journal of Education*, *119*(2), 261-293.

Ravitch, D. (2010). Why public schools need democratic governance. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *91*(6), 24-27.

Ravitch, D. (2010, December 7). We need public schools and democratic governance [Editorial]. Retrieved February 26, 2013, from Education Week website: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/BridgingDifferences/2010/12/we_need_public_schools_and_democratic_governance.html

Ravitch, D. (2012, August 9). My view: Rhee is wrong and misinformed [Editorial]. Retrieved February 26, 2013, from CNN: Schools of Thought website: http://schoolsofthought.blogs.cnn.com/2012/08/09/my-view-rhee-is-wrong-and-misinformed/

Saltman, K. J. (2012). Democratic education requires rejecting the new corporate two-tiered school system. *American Journal of Education*, *118*(3), 389-393.

Student. (n.d.). In *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved from http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/student?s=t

The roles and duties of an assistant principal. (n.d.). Retrieved from The University of Scranton website: http://www.uscranton.com/teaching-career-resources/assistant-principal/

Titsworth, S., Quinlan, M. M., & Mazer, J. P. (2010). Emotion in teaching and learning: Development and validation of the classroom emotions scale [Abstract]. *Communication Education*, *59*(4).

Trigwell, K. (2011). Relations between teachers' emotions in teaching and their approaches to teaching in higher education [Abstract]. *Springer Science+Business Media*.