

**Stony Brook University  
The Graduate School**

Doctoral Defense Announcement

**Abstract**

**Reforming Urban Schools Through Systemic Policy Change: The Adoption,  
Efficiency and Performance of Mayoral Control**

By

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As the performance of America's urban schools continues to be one of the main domestic policy problems facing federal, state and local governments, municipalities with strong-mayor systems have pushed for previously autonomous schools boards to be placed under mayoral control. To begin this study, mayoral control is compared to other popular educational reforms including market-based reforms and is then incorporated into the public policy change literature. A case study of mayoral control in New York City is included to demonstrate one example of how mayoral control can come to be adopted. The empirical portion of this dissertation uses event history analysis to identify the characteristics of urban schools that lead to a mayoral takeover and from there analyzes the outcomes brought about by mayoral control. The latter is done first by using a Bayesian linear regression model to assess whether mayoral control creates greater efficiency in educational production and second using a Pooled Cross-Sectional Time Series model to find whether mayoral control increases per-pupil expenditures and decreases class size; two indicators that have been shown to increase student performance. I find that school systems in states with republican legislatures and a high percentage of disadvantaged students are more likely to adopt mayoral control. While limited evidence is found that mayors improve efficiency, I find that they are successful in providing more resources to their city's classrooms. The dissertation concludes with a review of these findings and recommendations for future research in the study of mayoral control.

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**Dissertation Advisor:** Scott Basinger