



News Release

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Education Advocates Call on Mayor Bloomberg to Respect the Human Right to Education and Demand Participation in the Reorganization

**Thursday, January 25
Noon - steps of City Hall**

New York-The Human Rights Project of the Urban Justice Center is joining the Independent Commission on Public Education (ICOPE) on the steps of City Hall to demand that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein apply human rights standards to the policies and practices of the NYC school system.

"Forty years ago Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said 'I think it necessary to realize that we have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights'" said Ramona Ortega Director of the Human Rights Project.

"The human right to education requires real decision-making powers on the part of public school families and communities" said Ms. Ortega.

"We shouldn't be waiting like spectators at City Hall to hear about how the system affecting the daily lives of our children is being changed."

Mayor Bloomberg announced the latest reorganization of New York City's school system not to a room full of parents whose children will ultimately be affected but in his last state of the city address where he could highlight his successes and ignore concerns over parent participation. He spoke about upholding the fundamental civil right of education but he has failed to see that education is a human right that requires among many things participation and transparency in the decision making process.

Fulfilling the human right to education is more than calling for one reorganization after another but consists of putting forth fair and equitable standards that fulfill the right to a quality education and give parents and communities opportunities for meaningful participation.

Under international human rights law, particularly the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, government officials, including the city of New York, have the obligation to redress racial disparities through special measures when it is proven they exist. In this instance it is no secret that disparities exist. The Mayor admitted that the racial achievement gap is still wide but failed to put forth a plan to correct this persistent problem.

“The underachievement of low-income students of color should be a top priority in this administration, it amounts to a human rights violation under ICERD and calls for urgent action” said Ms. Ortega.

Parents and communities want accountability yes, but they also want to be able to participate in setting the standards of accountability and not to be reported to after the fact. Real reform must include a plan to lessen the achievement gap under a special measures program and create meaningful avenues of participation.

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