

## Media Addendum

### The Mayoral Debate and the Media: The Campaign for Better Schools and other Actors in the Public Lens September 2008 – May 2010

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#### Introduction

Using analysis of media coverage, this addendum examines the visibility of the Campaign for Better Schools and other actors in the public debate on mayoral control of New York City schools. Media analysis provides an important perspective on what information the public heard about the discussion of mayoral control, and how that changed over time. In particular, a media analysis offers a key tool for assessing achievement of the goal of the Donors' Education Collaborative (DEC) in funding the Campaign: to bring parent and community voices into the debate on the future of mayoral control and to facilitate a broader and more vigorous public discussion. DEC provided specific supports to advance these goals—in particular, helping the Campaign hire a communications consultant. By observing the media attention the Campaign received and by tracking the evolution of media reflections on mayoral control, we can demonstrate how the Campaign contributed to the public narratives about school governance and education reform. The addendum relates to two separate reports—a Year One Report on the Campaign, covering the period from May 2008 to May 2009, and a Year Two Report that briefly reviews and builds on the Year One research and findings to focus on the period from May 2009 to May 2010. The Year One report includes analysis of media coverage that was available at that time. This addendum extends the media analysis in the Year One Report to December 2010, in order to assess a longer trajectory of the Campaign's media presence and influence.

#### Methodology

##### *Media scans*

During the period of September 2008 to December 2009, media scans were performed at least two to three times per week. The primary method for our scans involved searching Google News<sup>68</sup> for the keywords listed below. We chose Google News because it is widely used by the general public, searches articles from a wide range of sources, includes articles almost immediately after they are posted, and is user-friendly. In order to capture a wide range of articles, we included both general and specific search terms. As new issues were covered in the news, more terms were added. The dates that new terms were added are listed beside the search terms, along with the date from which we retroactively searched.

- New York public school
- New York public school control
- New York mayoral control
- New York school governance

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<sup>68</sup> Google News indexes over 4500 English language news sources. Sources are either added by Google employees or are added by request. Once a source is included, its stories continue to be scanned and included in Google News results. To be included, news sources need to meet certain technical requirements: one page per article, web addresses not reused for multiple articles, and web addresses must have a three digit number in them.

New York school Klein  
New York “Bloomberg” school<sup>69</sup>  
“Bloomberg” public school  
Mayoral control  
Mayoral control school  
Mayoral control “Bloomberg”  
Mayoral control Klein  
School governance “Bloomberg”  
School governance Klein  
Klein public schools  
“Fund for public schools”  
“Learn NY” – November 6, 2008  
“Class size matters” – November 6, 2008  
“Research alliance for New York City Schools” – November 6, 2008  
“Keep it going” New York – November 6, 2008  
“Campaign for Better Schools” – November 16, 2008  
“Coalition for Educational Justice” – March 12, 2009 – Retroactively from August 2008  
“Alliance for Quality Education” – March 12, 2009 – Retroactively from August 2008  
“New York Immigration Coalition” – March 12, 2009 – Retroactively from August 2008  
Dennis Walcott – March 12, 2009 – Retroactively from August 2008

For each search, the first four pages of results (40 articles) were examined, and any articles that referred to mayoral control in New York, Bloomberg or Klein’s school policies, or New York school governance were saved in a Microsoft Word document. Because Google News casts a wide net in its searches, most of the results did not relate to mayoral control of New York City schools. For example, searching for “Mayoral control” might result in an article about a mayoral campaign in another city. Articles that did not refer to mayoral control in New York were not coded, although many were retained and analyzed to help understand contextual events during the tracked period. Articles were then organized in a spreadsheet according to whether they were news articles from what we called *primary* sources or *secondary* sources; or *opinion* articles from both primary and secondary sources. We identified primary sources as those we thought would have the greatest number of New York City readers. They initially consisted of the major New York papers, and also included the *Gotham Gazette* because it began to follow the mayoral control debate earlier than the other primary sources. However, the *New York Sun* ceased publication at the end of September 2008, so it is excluded from most of the following analysis. We later added the *Gotham Schools* news site after the *New York Sun* closed and its main education reporter, Elizabeth Green, moved to *Gotham Schools*. The following were considered primary sources: *New York Times*, *New York Post*, *New York Sun*, *New York Daily News*, *Gotham Gazette*, and *Gotham Schools*. With the exception of *Gotham Schools*, only articles from these sources that were published in print were analyzed.

What we called *secondary* sources included both local New York papers and non-local sources that had devoted coverage to mayoral control in New York. These secondary sources were also captured in our regular Google News scan or recommended to us as news sources of interest at the time of our Year One Report in June 2009. For consistency, we chose not to expand this list to include new sources after the publication of the Year One Report. Our secondary sources include the following

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<sup>69</sup> Initially, “Bloomberg” was always put in quotation marks to prevent Google News from searching only in Bloomberg media. This was eventually not necessary, but we continued to put “Bloomberg” in quotation marks for consistency.

local sources: *Black Star News*, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, *Chelsea Now*, *City Hall News*, *City Journal*, *City Limits*, the *Columbia Spectator*, *Crain's Business News*, the *Downtown Express*, *El Diario New York*, *Empire State News*, *Epoch Times*, *Greenwich Citizen*, *Independent Press*, *Lower Hudson Valley News*, *New York Examiner* (online), *New York Magazine*, *New York Observer*, *Norwood News*, *Politicker New York* (online), *Public News Network* (online), *Norwood News*, *Riverdale Press*, *Queens Chronicle*, *Queens Gazette*, *Queens Tribune Online* (online), *Queens Village Times*, *Staten Island Advance*, *Village Voice*, *Wall Street Journal*, *YourNabe Local News* (online).

Our secondary sources also include the following non-local sources: ABC News (online), the Associated Press Newswire (online), *Baltimore Sun*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Education Week*, *Forbes*, *Houston Chronicle*, *LA Times*, *Lansing State Journal*, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Newsday* (online), and *Reuters* (online).

All opinion articles (including both op-eds and editorials) were separated and grouped together, although we included in our analysis only those opinion articles appearing on our primary and secondary lists. Analysis presented in this report referring to “primary” or “secondary” articles excludes opinion articles unless otherwise noted. Other sources, including radio, television, and internet-based media, were also tracked and analyzed qualitatively, but are not included in our overall data. From these sources, we culled 863 articles about mayoral control in New York that met our criteria for inclusion during the September 2008 to December 2009 period: 557 primary, 160 secondary, and 146 opinion.

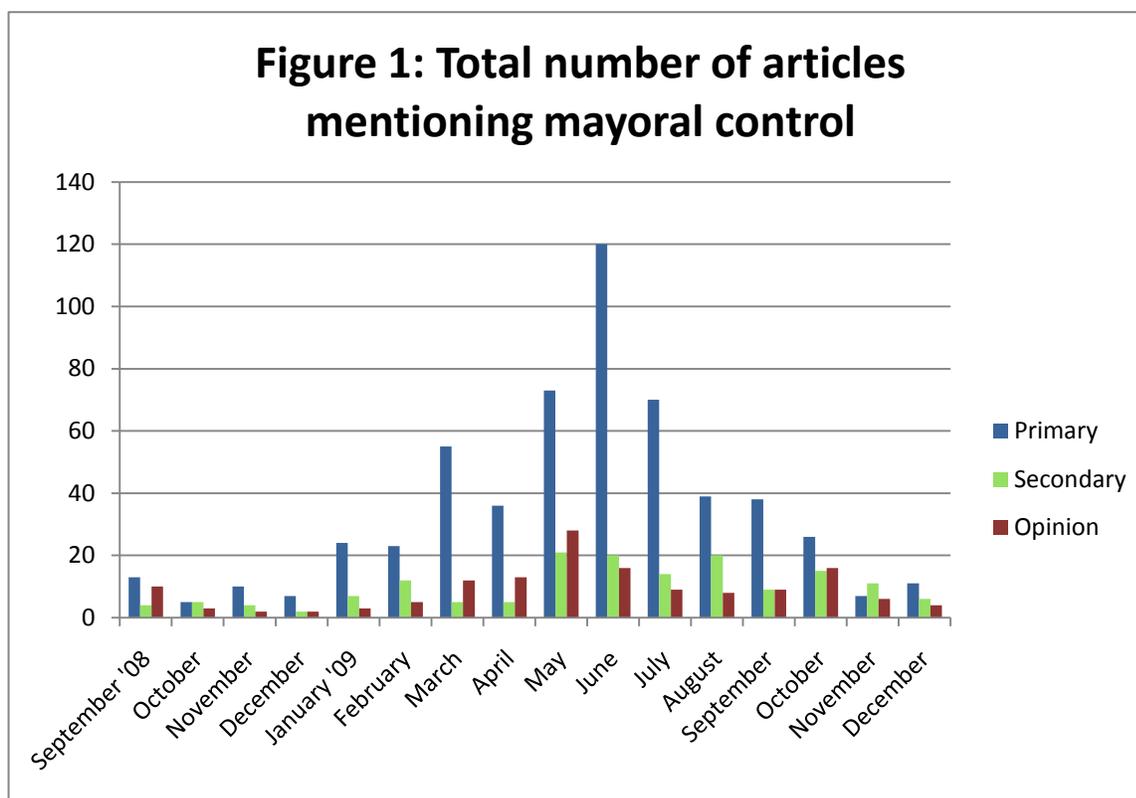
### *Media coding*

The media analysis involved several categories of coding. First, we identified all the individuals quoted in each article discussing mayoral control, as well as the major groups and actors referenced in the context of mayoral control (see the section “Major Voices in the Mayoral Control Debate” later in this addendum). Next, we coded each article according to the relevant concepts discussed in the article (see the section “Concepts Relating to Mayoral Control”). In addition to this coding, we also took notes regarding important areas of content and context in these articles; these notes were later condensed into monthly memos summarizing important issues and trends in the media coverage of mayoral control. Finally, opinion articles were coded according to the opinions expressed about mayoral control. Opinions were classified as: (a) supporting mayoral control renewal *without* major revisions; (b) supporting mayoral control renewal *with* major revisions; (c) opposing mayoral control renewal; or (d) relating to mayoral control but not expressing an opinion one way or the other. Most opinion pieces fit into one of these categorizations, although some subjective judgments had to be made.

Because primary media coverage was both more prevalent and more likely to capture public attention, the remainder of this analysis will draw predominantly on primary sources except where otherwise indicated.

### **Evolving Attention to Mayoral Control – General Factors**

Figure 1 shows the numbers of articles—primary, secondary, and opinion—collected and analyzed between September 2008 and December 2009. See the end of this report for a detailed breakdown of the media scans and results.



As the figure shows, overall media attention increased through June 2009, but then decreased just as sharply over the remainder of the year. There were several major factors behind the specific trends depicted in this graph. In September 2008, mayoral control received some attention due to the start of the school year and publicity for several groups, including the Public Advocate’s Commission on School Governance, the Parent Commission on School Governance, and the newly-formed Mayoral Accountability for School Success (MASS, which later became Learn NY). For these reasons, September marked the unofficial beginning of the mayoral control renewal debate. The fall of 2008 also marked a period of increased public scrutiny of Mayor Bloomberg, thanks to his decision to push the City Council to revise New York City laws, which allowed him to run for a third term. The DEC-funded groups, which received a planning grant in January 2008 and an implementation grant in May 2008, had coalesced into a coalition of 20 groups by early fall. However, the Campaign did not emerge formally until November 2008 when it strategically positioned itself among other groups and sought an optimal time to announce its platform.<sup>70</sup> Attention to issues of mayoral control remained low through the fall and winter, although a few articles were written about the developing debate (later sections of this addendum will devote more analysis to the specific groups that participated in the debate).

Figure 1 shows a general rise in media attention as the deadline for renewing mayoral control approached. Coverage spiked in March 2009, which coincided with Assembly hearings, as well as major statements from prominent figures including Bloomberg, Comptroller William Thompson, and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The pinnacle of coverage was in May and June—

<sup>70</sup> Their emergence closely followed Bloomberg’s announcement that he would pursue a third term, which provided them with an unexpected opportunity to focus specifically on the way Bloomberg had used the law to concentrate power and exclude parents and community members—which became a major focus of the Campaign’s media strategy.

months featuring considerable maneuvering by political and community actors; increasingly tense rhetoric surrounding the turmoil in the State Senate;<sup>71</sup> and the looming deadline for a legislative renewal of mayoral control, which was set to expire on June 30. Between June 30 and the Senate’s passage of renewal legislation on August 6, coverage declined and the media presentation of mayoral control shifted from stories about the broader policy debate to stories about the legislative process (or lack thereof) in the Senate. Once the Senate finally passed renewal legislation at the beginning of August, coverage dropped off significantly, but recurred over the remainder of the year, due especially to Bloomberg’s decision to make education one of his major campaign planks. Other salient factors included the release of test scores and other data from the 2008-09 school year, and various policy decisions made by Bloomberg and the Department of Education (DoE) and the public response to these decisions.<sup>72</sup>

*Editorials* followed a similar trajectory to that described above (a steady rise until the late spring, then a steady fall for the rest of the year) with two key exceptions: the highest number of editorials came in May, as opposed to June for primary sources; and there was a spike in October that didn’t exist in primary sources. Both of these moments were prime points for opinion writers to influence decision-making processes – in May, shortly before the Assembly renewed mayoral control; and in October, when endorsements and commentaries on the candidates appeared on opinion pages in advance of the November 3 election.

*Secondary sources* followed a much less consistent trajectory than either primary or opinion sources. These sources, which included local and niche media, appear to have been more responsive to specific events (PEP meetings, rallies, etc.) that may not have fit in the broader narrative of mayoral control often followed by the primary media sources.<sup>73</sup>

## Major Voices in the Mayoral Control Debate

During the period analyzed in the media scans, there were a number of actors and organizations seeking to influence the discussion and the legislation that emerged. In this section, we examine the contexts and trends in media exposure for the Campaign, as well as two other organizations that sought to provide a community voice in the discussion—the Parent Commission on School Governance and Learn NY. We also consider the media presence of individuals associated with the government and the DoE, including both members and critics of the Bloomberg administration.

### *Campaign for Better Schools*

The Campaign for Better Schools emerged publicly in November 2008 (see Figure 2 below), and was featured in articles in *New York Daily News*, *Gotham Gazette*, and *Gotham Schools*. In its earliest

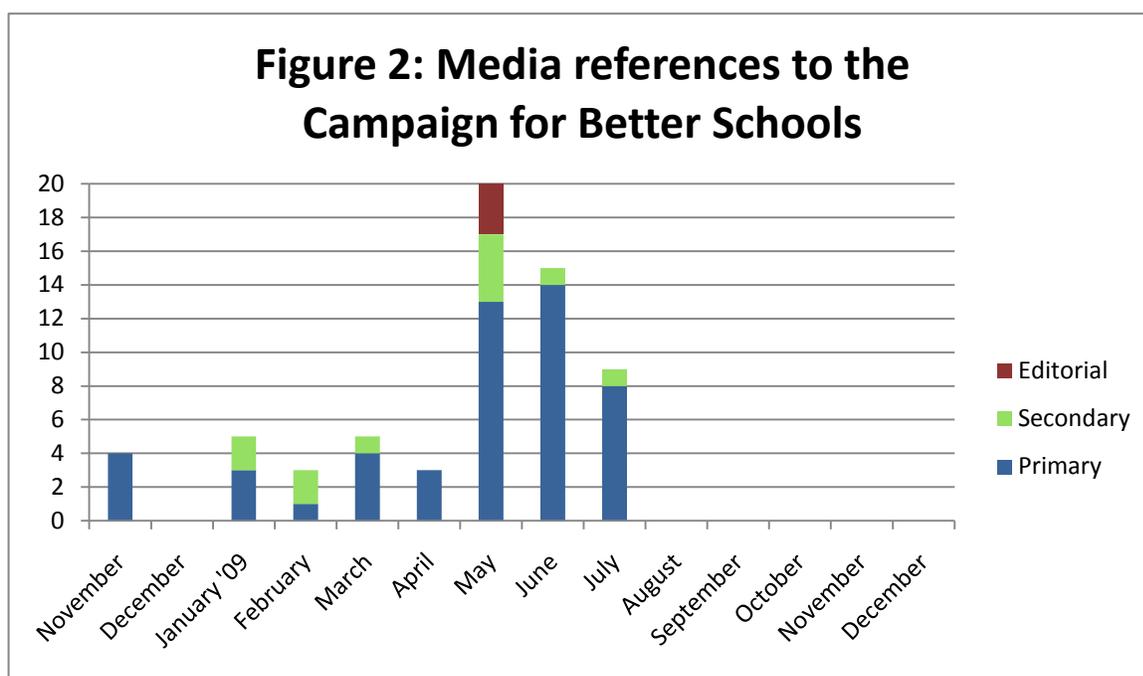
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<sup>71</sup> On June 8, 2009, two Democratic senators crossed the aisle to caucus with the Republicans, thus giving the Republicans a majority in the Senate. This ushered in a month of tensions, negotiations and challenges of legitimacy. During this period, the Senate was unable to act on any of the issues before it, including mayoral control. By July 8, both of the senators had rejoined the Democratic caucus and the Senate was able to resume work on many stalled issues. However, by this point two major shifts had occurred in the debate over mayoral control: the existing mayoral control law had expired, and the Democrats had installed a new leader, John Sampson, who was much more critical of mayoral control than his predecessor.

<sup>72</sup> For example, mayoral control was mentioned in articles discussing the Bloomberg administration’s decision to press the state government to raise the cap on charter schools; the decision to close numerous schools in late 2009; and various areas relating to the implementation of policies agreed to in the bill to renew mayoral control.

<sup>73</sup> In this sense, *Gotham Schools* could be seen as behaving like both a primary source (which tended to provide a major amount of coverage and attention on school policy in New York City, and typically followed the overall “narrative” of mayoral control) and a secondary source (because it fulfilled niche purposes and was more likely to track local stories).

press coverage, the Campaign was typically described as a “coalition of 25 community groups.”<sup>74</sup> It was mentioned at a low level (3-5 articles per month) in early 2009 in a variety of contexts, including public events<sup>75</sup> hosted by the Campaign and interviews and testimonies by Campaign members.<sup>76</sup> In May, however, attention to the Campaign surged, with 20 mentions in primary, secondary, and opinion sources. Most of this attention came in direct response to rallies, press releases, speeches, and appearances by Campaign members at public forums. The level of attention continued in June, although many of the articles about the Campaign shifted from coverage of events to interviews with Campaign members to get their perspective on the unfolding legislative process. The Campaign received diminishing attention from primary media sources in July, when most news sources were focused more on the turmoil and negotiations in the Senate—a story which seems to have strongly overshadowed the kind of public debates over mayoral control associated with the Campaign.<sup>77</sup> Still, members of the Campaign—most frequently Billy Easton and Zakiyah Ansari, who were often cited as spokespersons for the Campaign—were periodically interviewed about the evolving status of mayoral control in the Senate. There were no further mentions of the Campaign after the end of July, although individuals associated with constituent groups did occasionally appear in the context of mayoral control in August through October 2009.



<sup>74</sup> Although several articles use this general description, this precise phrasing is used in both Green, E. “Like DOE, mayoral control foes will focus message on results.” *Gotham Schools*. November 17, 2008; and Kolodner, M. “Foes vow to loosen mayor Michael Bloomberg grip on schools.” *New York Daily News*. November 17, 2008.

<sup>75</sup> E.g. Gentilviso, R. “Better Schools Campaign Wants Reforms.” *Queens Gazette*. January 21, 2009. Medina, J. “Debate on Mayoral Control of Schools Is Renewed.” *New York Times*. January 29, 2009; Cramer, P. “Communities must be involved in school governance, group says.” *Gotham Schools*. February 6, 2009.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. Kolodner, M. “City schools work way off failure list.” *New York Daily News*. March 2, 2009; Hernandez, J. “A Diverse Set of Voices Struggles to Be Heard on School Control.” *New York Times*. March 21, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> The decline might also have been related to the end of DEC’s funding for the Campaign, although many of the Campaign groups remained active through the period of legislative negotiations using sources of support other than DEC.

Throughout the period depicted in Figure 2, coverage of the Campaign appeared in a diverse array of media sources, with multiple news citations in each primary source (*New York Times*, *New York Post*, *New York Daily News*, *Gotham Gazette* and *Gotham Schools*), as well as nearly a fifth of its coverage from secondary sources. In June and July, *Gotham Schools* accounted for a vast majority of media attention to the Campaign. The media coverage the Campaign received varied considerably. In some cases, articles portrayed them as opponents of mayoral control in general,<sup>78</sup> but other articles presented a more nuanced view of their position, with Campaign members presented as advocates of specific areas for improvement of mayoral control.<sup>79</sup> Articles frequently identified the Campaign as a community-based organization,<sup>80</sup> but in some cases it was identified erroneously with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT).<sup>81</sup> Campaign members were often shown leading rallies and trying to push for change from the outside, but in other places they provided commentary on the behind-the-scenes deal-making process. When the media was focused on negotiations in the Senate, the Campaign was identified as a proponent for a parent and student training center, whose central function was to provide training and leadership skills to under-represented parents, including low-income African American, Latino and immigrant parents.<sup>82</sup> Beginning early in July, however, few media articles mentioned the Campaign in their coverage of the parent training center, referring to it as a negotiating point on the Senate table.

Despite its success in attracting media attention, the Campaign's experience demonstrates the difficulty that any group can have in controlling the ways the media presents them. Trying to cultivate a media presence in the midst of a heated debate, the Campaign had to deal with media depictions that frequently missed the nuances of their positions, occasionally distorted their opinions and motives, or included their ideas without attribution to the Campaign. Nevertheless, the data shows that the Campaign had success in cultivating a strong, broad media presence; received numerous media citations; and was identified with specific areas of the debate.

### *Parent Commission on School Governance*

Although the Parent Commission on School Governance was also presented in the media as a community organization seeking changes in New York's mayoral control law, their media coverage differed from the Campaign's in several ways (see Figure 3 for details on the Parent Commission's overall coverage). First, the Parent Commission was never covered by the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, or the *New York Daily News*. Rather, its coverage came primarily from *Gotham Schools*, which provided 76% of the total media coverage of the Parent Commission (as opposed to 40% of the Campaign's coverage). The remainder of the Parent Commission's media attention came from *Gotham Gazette* (five articles, including one opinion article) or secondary sources (three articles). However, this count understates the Parent Commission's overall media exposure, much of which came from sources—particularly online media—that were not included in our list of tracked media.

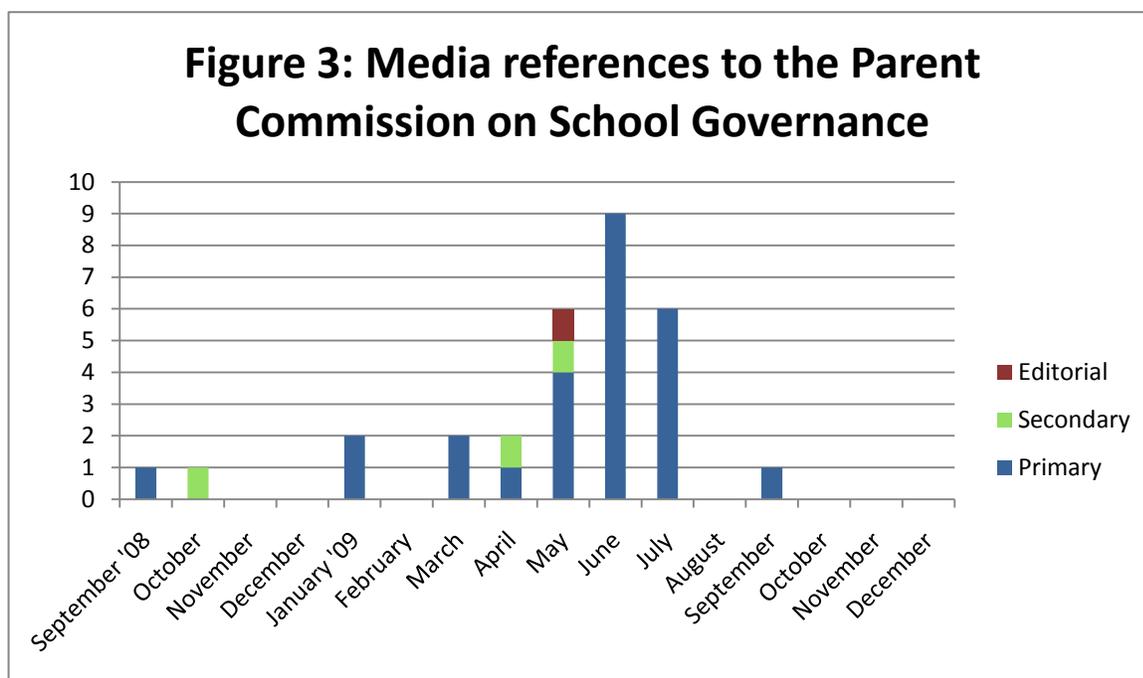
<sup>78</sup> Although the *Post* was not the only news source to present the Campaign as a strong critic of mayoral control, they presented this perspective more frequently and in stronger terms than other media sources. Campanile, C. and Bennett, C. "Control Enemies Go to Albany." *New York Post*. May 5, 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Medina, J. "Bloomberg's Control of Schools is a Hot Topic." *New York Times*. January 29, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> Gormley, M. "Albany pushed mayoral control of NYC schools." *Associated Press*. May 18, 2009.

<sup>81</sup> This narrative about the Campaign—that it was working in concert with the UFT—was pushed by the *Post* in multiple articles in spring 2009; although other sources mentioned connections between the Campaign and the UFT, no other media sources so explicitly claimed that the Campaign was working for the UFT. Bennett, C. "Hidden Ties Link Randi's Regiments." *New York Post*. April 27, 2009.

<sup>82</sup> Phillips, A. "Next debate: what should more parent involvement look like?" *Gotham Schools*. July 8, 2009.



The media depicted the Parent Commission in opposition to mayoral control and less willing than the Campaign to make compromises in exchange for reforms to the mayoral control law.<sup>83</sup> Like the Campaign, the Parent Commission was identified with specific proposals to increase parental participation—proposing an Independent Parent Organization with elected representatives from each district who would lobby and train other parents, for example. However, this proposal was rarely mentioned in the media, and, like the Campaign, it ceased to be identified with the negotiations on parental involvement by July. Like the Campaign, the Parent Commission received scant press coverage after the end of July. However, Leonie Haimson, a prominent Commission member and executive director of Class Size Matters, was frequently quoted in the fall on education issues other than mayoral control.

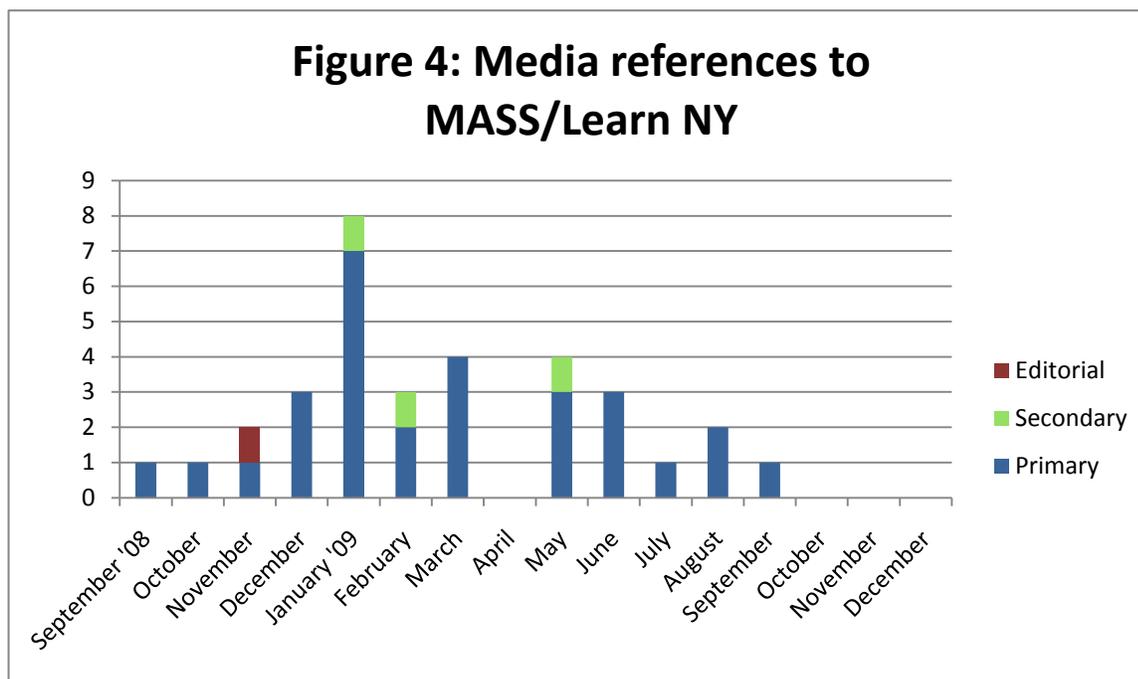
### Learn NY

Learn NY, an organization that sought to provide community-based support for the continuation of mayoral control, saw its coverage follow a sharply different trajectory than either the Campaign or the Parent Commission (see Figure 4). Having initially launched as Mayoral Accountability for School Success (MASS), the group reorganized and changed its name to Learn NY in November 2008. With considerable support from major establishment figures, Learn NY received significant early coverage as new endorsing organizations came on board, and as it conducted parent recruitment drives. However, by the early spring, Learn NY’s media attention was lagging, and where the Campaign and the Parent Commission surged in May through July, Learn NY’s coverage decreased and never matched the height of its coverage in January. As with the Parent Commission, a strong majority of the articles across all sources about Learn NY (61%) came from *Gotham Schools*.<sup>84</sup> A few articles late in the summer argued that Learn NY seemed to have a lesser impact

<sup>83</sup> The two organizations were rarely directly compared, but many articles featured spokespersons from both groups offering different perspectives.

<sup>84</sup> Notably, many of the *Gotham Schools* articles reporting on Learn NY indicated significant skepticism of Learn NY’s support and impact. See, for example, Green, E. “Pro-mayoral control group has new name and will get a blog, too.”

than had been anticipated, and many speculated that, although it had strong establishment support, many of the parents and endorsing organizations weren't invested in Learn NY or its activities.<sup>85</sup>



#### *Other Actors in the Mayoral Control Debate*

Many other people drew significant media attention for their opinions, comments, and activities relating to mayoral control. Members of Community Education Councils (CECs), as formal DoE “community representatives,” received some media attention, but rarely more than a few articles per month. Officials within the DoE and the Bloomberg Administration, unsurprisingly, received a significant amount of attention. Mayor Bloomberg, after making some public comments surrounding the launch of the mayoral control renewal campaign, made few media appearances relating to mayoral control until the high-stakes months of June and July. During these months, he made numerous public appearances in support of the renewal of mayoral control, and delivered several statements criticizing members of the State Senate that were heavily repeated in the media. Bloomberg was quoted more than 30 times across all sources in June, and more than 20 times in July.

Of the many establishment figures (influential officials, particularly those in government) who weighed in during the debate—even those who might have been expected to be critics of the administration—few took a strong stance against the existing incarnation of mayoral control. As described in the Year Two report, for example, Randi Weingarten, then president of the UFT, and Sheldon Silver, Speaker for the New York State Assembly, both had a history of opposing the mayor, but both endorsed the mayor’s “bottom line” of renewal of mayoral control with no change to his ability to appoint the majority of members to the PEP. William Thompson, the city Comptroller and Democratic mayoral nominee, was faced with the balancing act of separating his

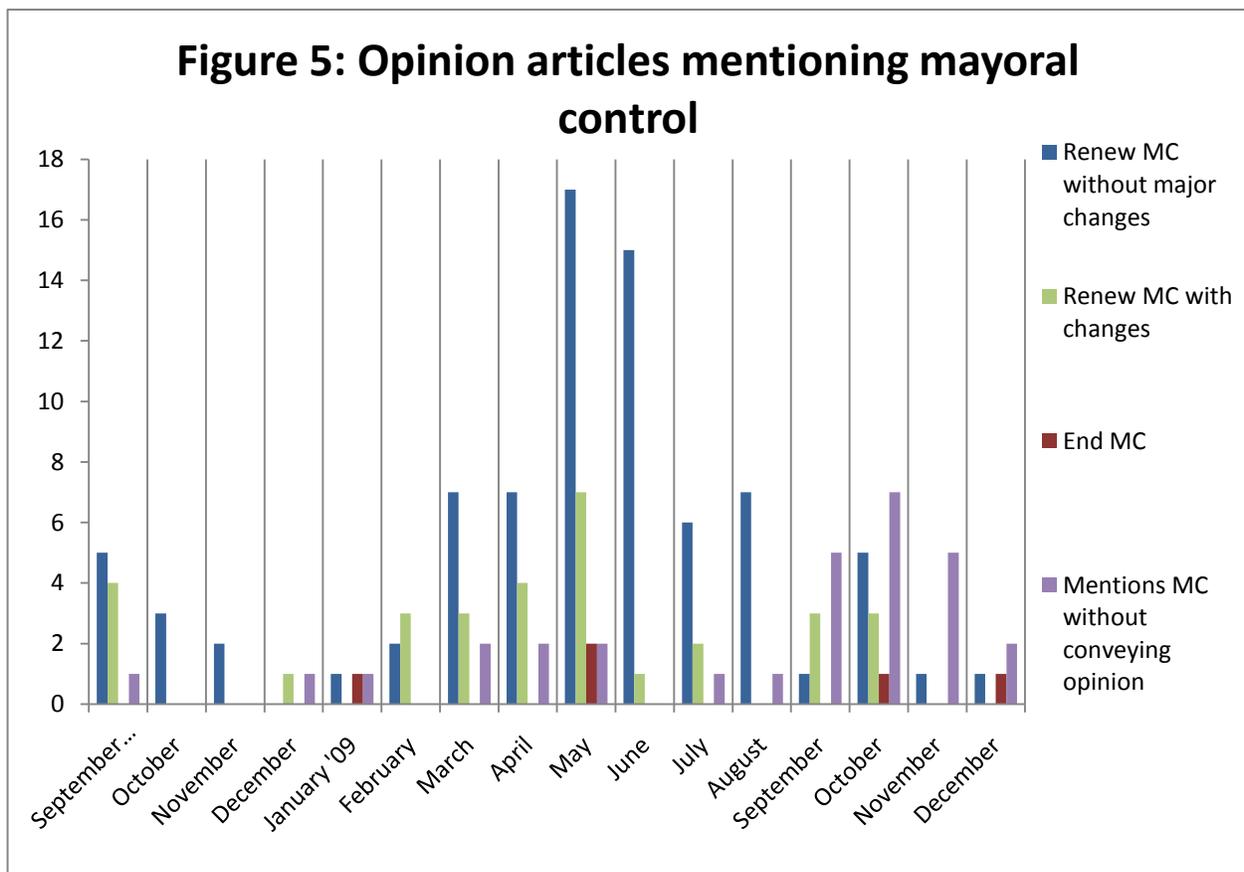
*Gotham Schools*. November 24, 2008; Green, E. “Hispanic Federation says working together is not same as agreeing.” *Gotham Schools*. February 3, 2009; Green, E. “Chris Cerf and the charter school parent vote.” *Gotham Schools*. September 16, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Green, E. “Chris Cerf and the charter school parent vote.” *Gotham Schools*. September 16, 2009.

criticisms of Bloomberg’s school management from his support of mayoral control in principle, and had a relatively small public presence on the issue during the run-up to mayoral control’s renewal. On the other hand, both John Liu and William de Blasio, who in November 2009 were elected New York City Comptroller and Public Advocate respectively, incorporated criticisms of mayoral control into their campaigns and vowed to use their positions if elected to place a check on the Mayor’s authority. Overall, there were no establishment figures criticizing mayoral control that played as consistent and major a role in the media as did establishment mayoral control supporters.

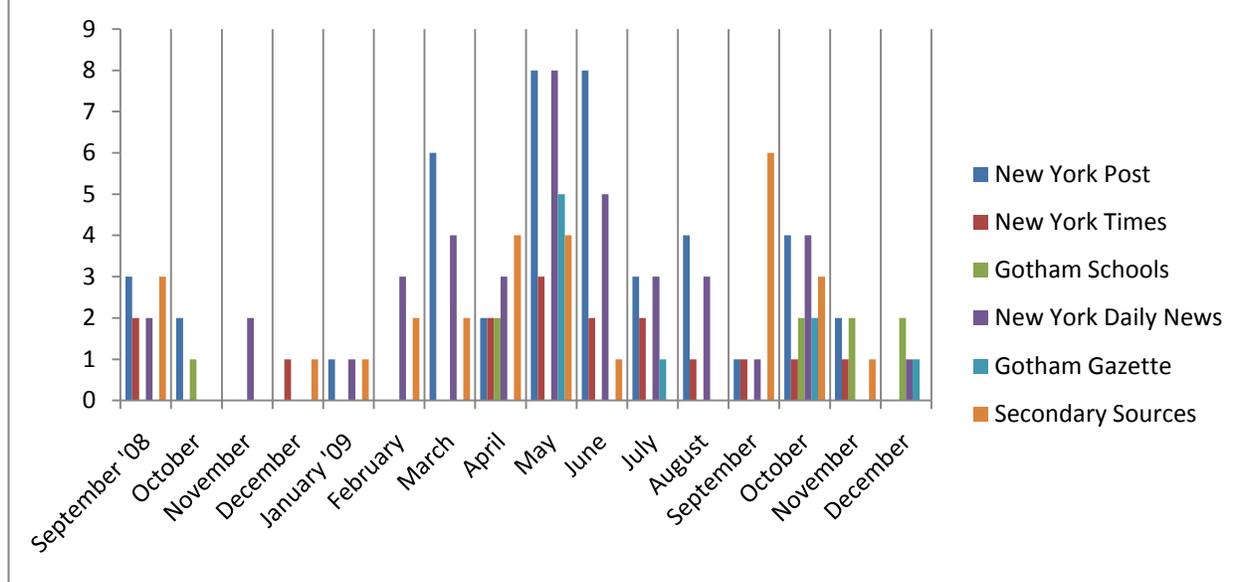
### Opinion Articles about Mayoral Control

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of opinion articles by opinion expressed.



As Figure 5 shows, opinion articles tended to be quite supportive of mayoral control—55% of these articles were coded into the category of “support mayoral control without significant changes.” However, a closer scan reveals a more nuanced picture. As Figure 6 shows, the majority of opinion articles captured in the media scan came from two primary news sources: *The New York Post* and *New York Daily News*.

**Figure 6: Number of Opinion Articles, by Media Source**



Not only were the *Post* and the *Daily News* the most prolific sources of opinion articles about mayoral control,<sup>86</sup> but they were also very heavily supportive of mayoral control renewal without changes—76% of their opinion articles were coded in this category.<sup>87</sup> Omitting the *Post* and the *Daily News*, only 26% of opinion articles presented this strongly positive position.

Looking at these data, it is clear that even though the majority of opinion articles were supportive of mayoral control, it is not necessarily true that all media consumers would have gotten the same impressions of mayoral control from the opinion pages. Non-readers of the *Post* and the *Daily News* might have encountered a relatively neutral or even negative impression of mayoral control.

### Concepts Relating to Mayoral Control

In addition to tracking the actors and organizations involved in the mayoral control debate, we also followed the salience of key concepts associated with mayoral control. We then analyzed trends in the use of these concepts over time, paying particular attention to the context in which they were mentioned and the actors and media sources who most commonly raised them. The concepts we tracked included:

- Accountability
- Public participation
- Checks and balances
- Transparency
- Student achievement

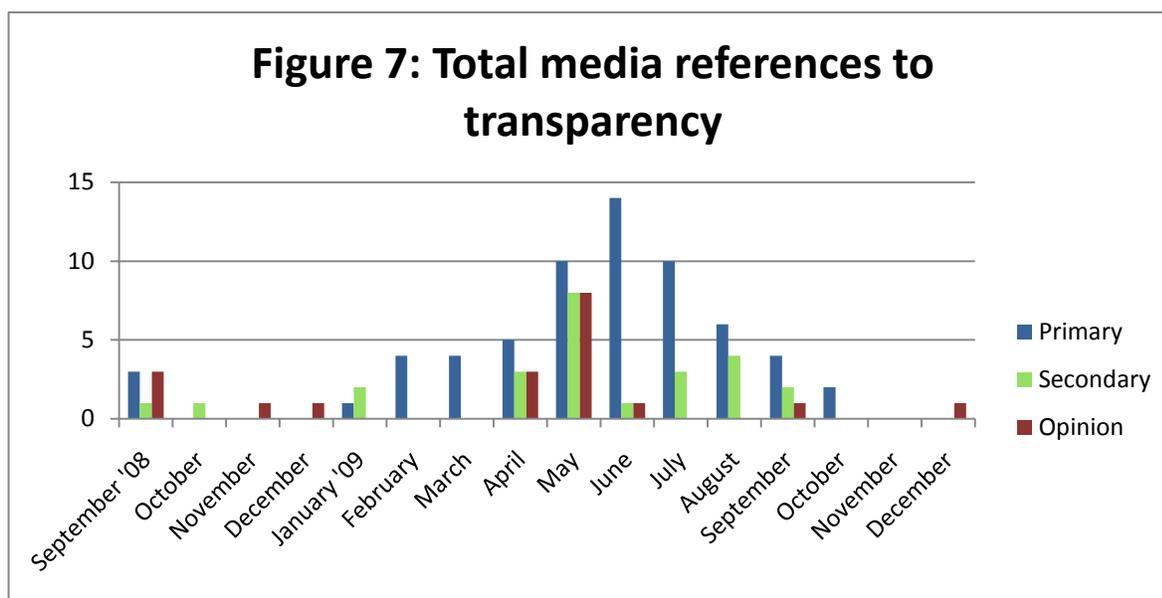
<sup>86</sup> The *Post* and the *Daily News* provided 30% and 27% of all opinion articles respectively; the next most prolific source, the *New York Times*, represented only 11% of opinion articles; all secondary sources combined represented 19%.

<sup>87</sup> These two papers were outspoken in their support of mayoral control renewal; the day after the Senate voted to renew mayoral control, the *Post* ran an article (not in the opinion section) highlighting its own role in pushing for renewal: Haberman, M. “Post Saluted for Class Act.” *New York Post*. August 7, 2009.

School crime/School violence  
Retaining Chancellor Klein

### Concepts Pushed by the Campaign for Better Schools

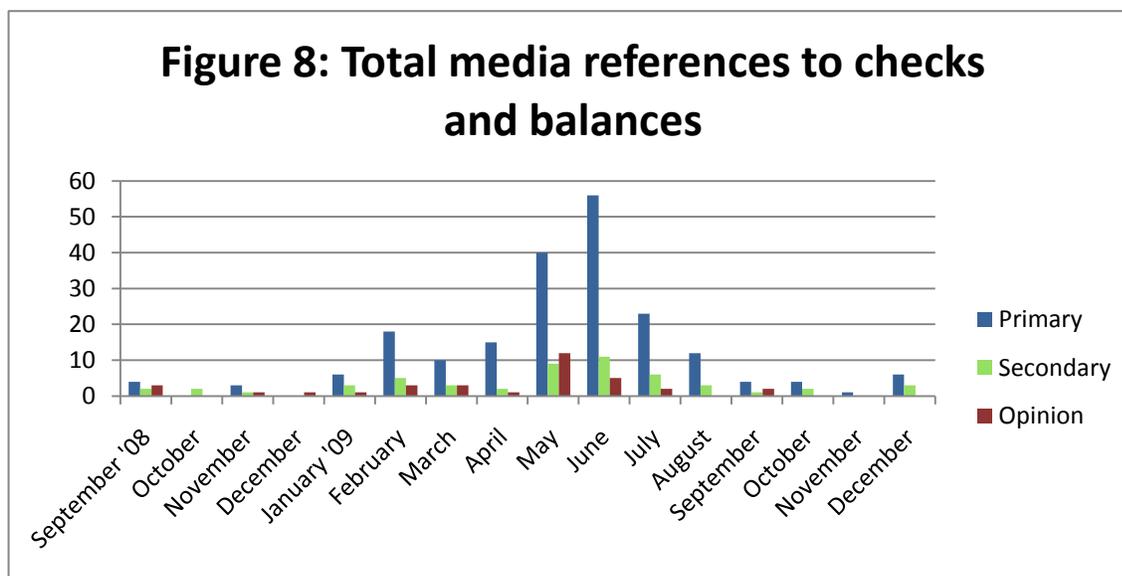
The Campaign sought to direct focus to three key concepts which they believed drew a clear picture of the limitations of mayoral control as Bloomberg had implemented it: checks and balances, transparency, and public participation. All of these concepts were discussed throughout the media scan period, and all of them at various points were associated in the media with the Campaign. Of the three, transparency (which referred primarily to criticisms of the administration’s monopoly of data and called for independent control and dissemination of budget and student performance data) was mentioned the least frequently in the media (12% of scanned articles; see Figure 7).<sup>88</sup> The concept of transparency was frequently acknowledged as a basis for criticism of Bloomberg’s approach to education. Improving transparency was an issue pushed by the Campaign, and also part of the critique of Bloomberg by Thompson and Democratic legislators. However, transparency had a relatively low media presence, perhaps because it was a matter of relative consensus: many supporters as well as critics of mayoral control believed that transparency should be increased, and generally agreed that the Independent Budget Office (IBO) should be the agency entrusted to provide an independent interpretation of financial and student achievement data. As a result, it is possible that neither critics nor supporters of mayoral control felt a need to build a public dialogue around transparency.



The concept of checks and balances, by contrast, was more commonly discussed, appearing in 33% of all scanned articles (see Figure 8). However, checks and balances as we defined it encompassed a broad range of ideas and viewpoints. The Campaign’s advocacy frequently came in the form of references to adding more checks and balances on the mayor’s control, whether by restructuring the PEP to alter the Mayor’s majority of appointments or by increasing the power of parent voices.

<sup>88</sup> Figures 7-11 show the total number of articles from all sources mentioning a given concept over time; these same data are presented as percentages of articles by category in Appendix A.

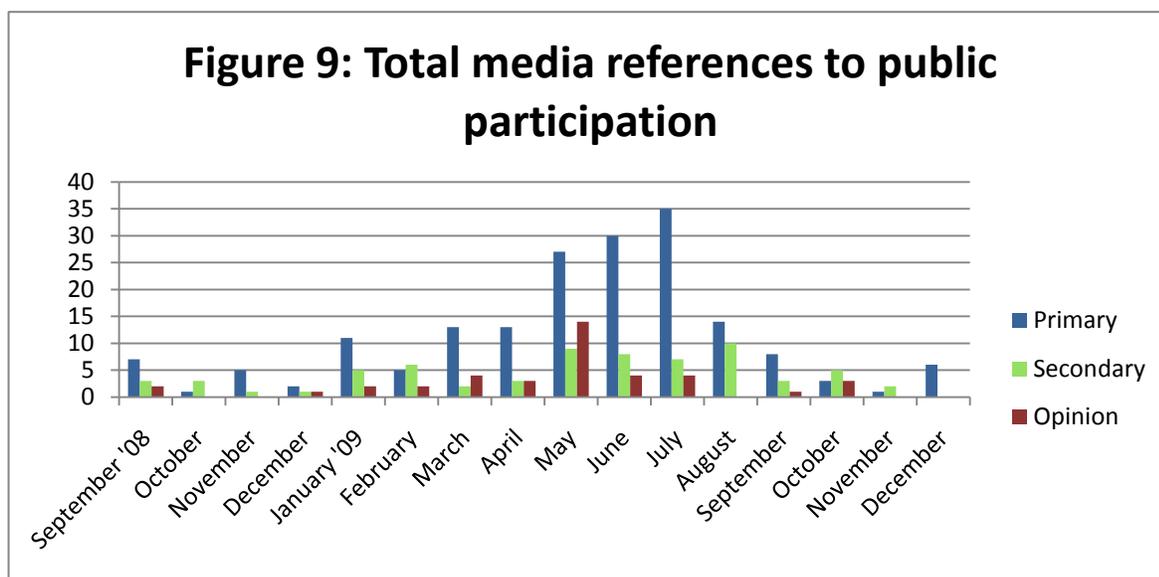
Similarly, the Parent Commission’s calls for the removal of the mayor’s majority on the PEP fell under this category, as did vows from political candidates (e.g. Bill deBlasio, who was running for Public Advocate, and John Liu, who was running for Comptroller) to serve as counterweights to the mayor’s power should they be elected.. In many cases, checks and balances became the focal issue in news articles when referring to the controversies surrounding mayoral control—particularly in the primary media, where checks and balances was the most commonly-cited concept of all that we tracked. This media focus reflects both Bloomberg’s “bottom line” that his authority on the PEP should not be checked if mayoral control was to be maintained and the Campaign’s strategy of making the authority of the mayor and the need for checks and balances its “leading edge” issue.



Like checks and balances, public participation was discussed in about a third of articles (33%), but it followed a different, and perhaps more revealing trajectory than the other concepts advanced by the Campaign (see Figure 9). During the early part of the media scan (September through April), public participation was raised as an issue by both critics and supporters of mayoral control. Elizabeth Green of *Gotham Schools* speculated that public participation was a “safe issue” to criticize about the existing mayoral control system, because there was a broad consensus that Bloomberg’s school governance model needed more public participation,<sup>89</sup> although there seemed to be little consensus on any particular reforms to address this criticism. Unlike transparency, an issue on which there was consensus about both the problem and the solution, public participation had consensus only about the problem but different perspectives on how to address it.

In May 2009, the issue of public participation began to appear frequently in conjunction with the Campaign and, to a lesser extent, the Parent Commission. By June, the Campaign and the Parent Commission were pushing hard on public participation, while supporters of mayoral control had mostly stopped discussing it. In July, as mentions of the Campaign and the Parent Commission dropped, the total number of references to public participation continued to rise. In this case, the majority of mentions of public participation were in the context of either describing the criticisms of mayoral control or discussing the proposed parent training center. Both of these issues were ones the Campaign pushed in their efforts to ensure increased public participation.

<sup>89</sup> Green, E. “3 things we know about Thompson’s schools view; more we don’t.” *Gotham Schools*. March 5, 2009.

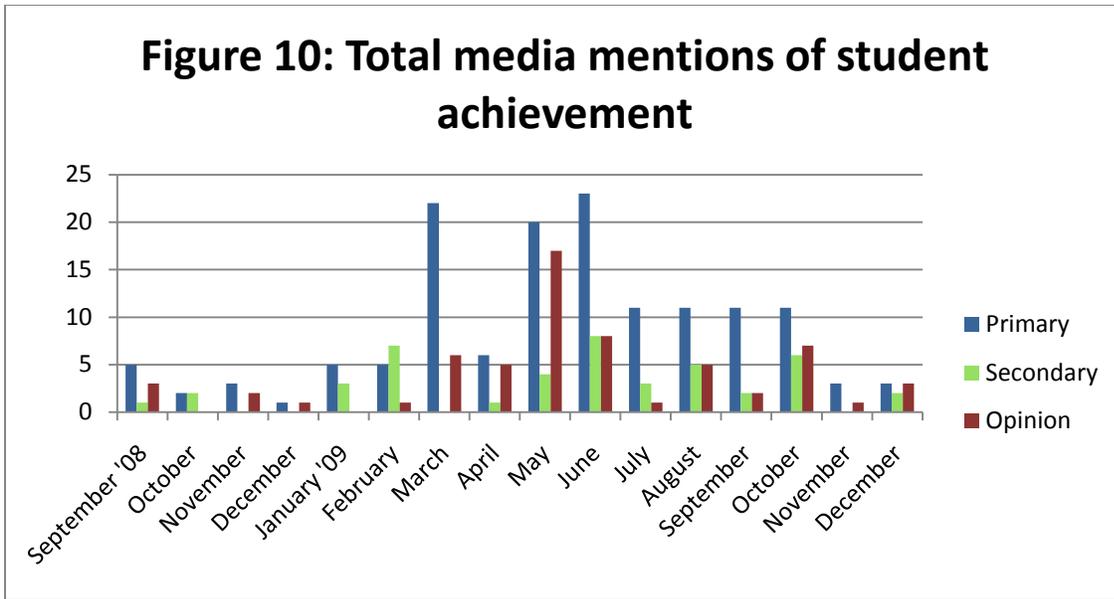


### Concepts pushed by Mayoral Control Proponents

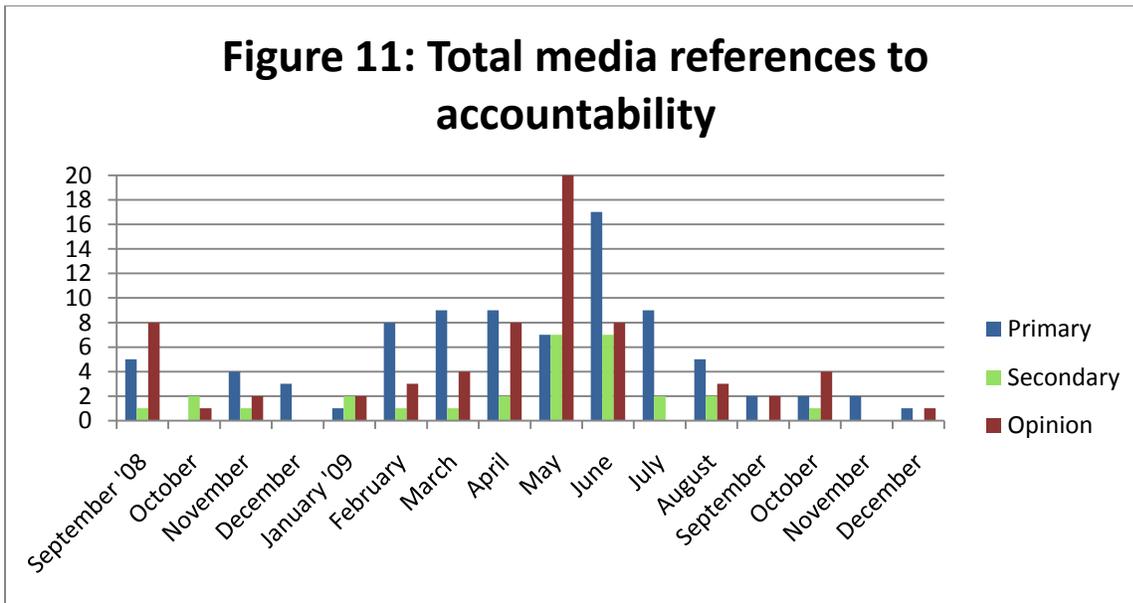
The main narrative advanced by supporters of mayoral control renewal both in and outside the Bloomberg administration relied on two of the concepts coded in our media scan – student achievement and accountability. Student achievement was the more commonly discussed of these two concepts, mentioned in 29% of scanned articles (see Figure 10). In the earlier period of the media scan, however, student achievement was not consistently emphasized as an argument in favor of mayoral control. The discussion of student achievement generally involved two sides: supporters who claimed that the data showed improvements due to mayoral control, or critics who claimed that the data exaggerated the success of mayoral control. From its inception in November, the Campaign added a third perspective. They were able to perform their own analysis of student achievement data—such as data showing weak graduation rates and achievement gaps—in order to actively criticize mayoral control, making the case that these data revealed that mayoral control had exacerbated problems in these areas. As a November 17 *Gotham Schools* article stated, “Rather than portray the mayor and Chancellor Joel Klein as dictators...they [the Campaign] are zeroing in on the pair’s results—and calling them failures.”<sup>90</sup>

Each of these perspectives added to discussions of student achievement through early 2009, especially in regard to the Assembly hearings in March. However, by May, student achievement had become one of the administration’s key talking points. In June and July, nearly all of the quotes about student achievement came from members of the administration, building on the fact that the only major student data release during this period was a set of positive graduation statistics. Although Thompson was later quoted accusing Klein of inflating these numbers, the majority of coverage on graduation statistics was positive. Beginning in August, however, this trend again reversed. The administration’s focus on student achievement gains declined, but student achievement continued to be discussed at a level consistent with that during the debate. The mayoral campaign spurred a renewed focus on student achievement gains by both administration supporters and critics, with increased debate over student data released during this period.

<sup>90</sup> Green, E. “Like DOE, mayoral control foes will focus message on results.” *Gotham Schools*. November 17, 2008.



Accountability was a less frequent topic for media discussion, appearing in 21% of all articles (see Figure 11). Like student achievement, it was not exclusively a pro-mayoral control talking point; critics at various points invoked this concept in accusations that the mayor was unaccountable. Nevertheless, by summer the accountability argument was most often raised in the media by members of the administration and its defenders. They argued that mayoral control brought new accountability to the educational system, and that it made educational policymakers accountable to the mayor who was, in turn, accountable to the public through the general election process.



If there is one area of the media where student achievement and accountability were pushed most successfully, it was in the opinion pages, where they were mentioned in 42% and 45% of articles respectively. By contrast, these concepts were discussed in only 25% and 15% of non-opinion

primary articles (see Appendix E). As discussed previously in this report, opinion articles tended to be supportive of mayoral control (see Figure 5), with 55% coded in the most positive category. However, opinion articles that mentioned either student achievement or accountability were even more disproportionately positive, with 69% and 65% supporting renewal without major changes. By contrast, the three concepts pushed by the Campaign were common in opinion articles that did not support unconditional renewal: 41% of articles mentioning public participation supported renewal without changes, as well as 52% of articles that mentioned checks and balances and only 20% of articles that mentioned transparency. Much of this distribution can be attributed to the *Post* and the *Daily News*, with the vast majority of mentions of student achievement and accountability in opinion articles (64% each) coming from these two sources.

## Aftermath

Mentions of the Campaign receded from the media beginning in August of 2009, the month when the State Senate finally passed mayoral control renewal legislation. Many of the issues that had been covered throughout the period of Campaign activity continued to resonate in the months after the renewal of mayoral control. There was clear pushback reflected in the media against some of the Mayor's messaging and policies, especially in areas of test results, school closings, and implementation of the new legislation. Some of the primary criticisms during this period involved invocations of public participation and checks and balances. The sections in this addendum that analyze those terms may understate their prominence in late 2009 and beyond, because the terms were cited frequently in articles that we reviewed but did not code because they did not directly discuss mayoral control or fell after December 2009. Perhaps the most concrete example of public readiness to rebuff Bloomberg on the issue of schools came in the November election results. Mayor Bloomberg was reelected in November after making his administration of schools a major part of his campaign. However, exit polls indicated that Bloomberg only received the votes of 43% of public school parents, compared with 55% for Thompson.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusions

Through the use of a media analysis, this addendum allows examination of the public narratives in the mayoral control debate, and allows us to better understand the role of the Campaign in shaping those narratives. The Campaign faced obstacles not only in getting media attention, but also in controlling the messages that were attributed to them. Despite these obstacles, the media scan reveals that the Campaign had clear success in shaping the dialogue in the mayoral control debate. Our analysis highlights issues that were prominent in Campaign advocacy, and analyzes the media coverage they received. The Campaign played a significant role in developing the public narratives about the importance of checks and balances and public participation that contradicted the Mayor's narrative and engaged a spectrum of community and political players. The media began to cover public participation in education reform with greater breadth and depth, both during the mayoral control debate and after.

A media analysis proved to be a useful tool for examining the larger questions about the effectiveness of community-based campaign coalitions and DEC's support of those groups in the mayoral control debate. Although the Campaign no longer functions as a formal group, as the Year Two Report demonstrates, Campaign participants remain committed to participation in the

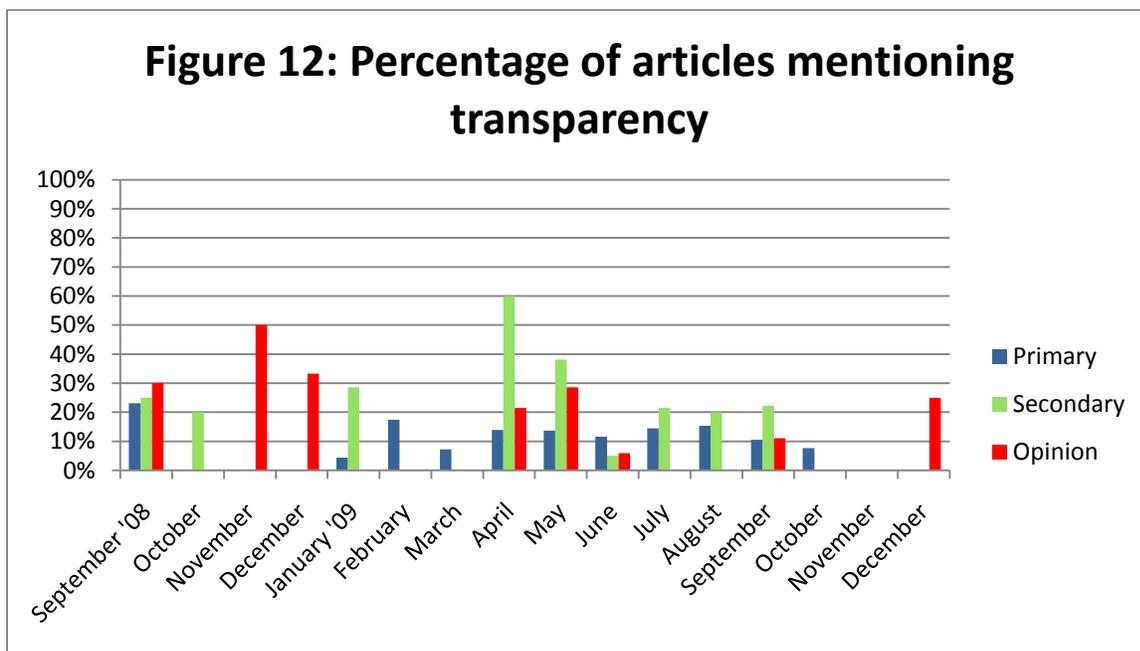
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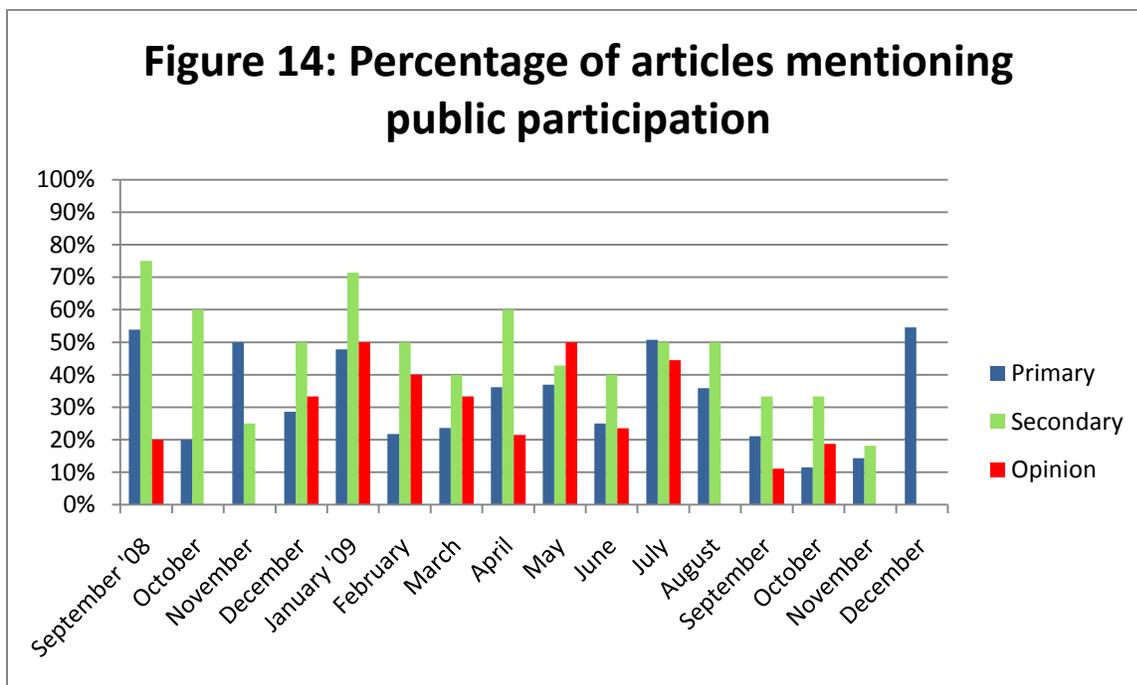
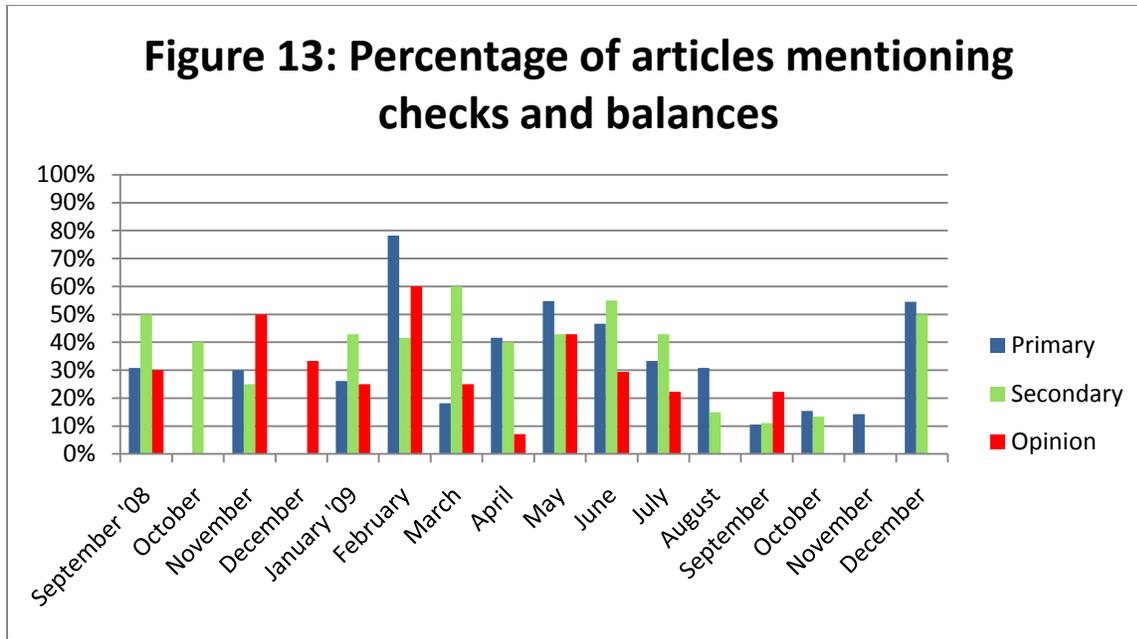
<sup>91</sup> "Profile of New York City Voters." *New York Times*. November 4, 2009.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/11/04/nyregion/1104-ny-exit-poll.html>.

education reform dialogue. It will continue to be valuable to examine media coverage as an indicator of that participation, particularly in response to decisions by the DoE and PEP, the run-up to the next mayoral control sunset period, and the next mayoral election.

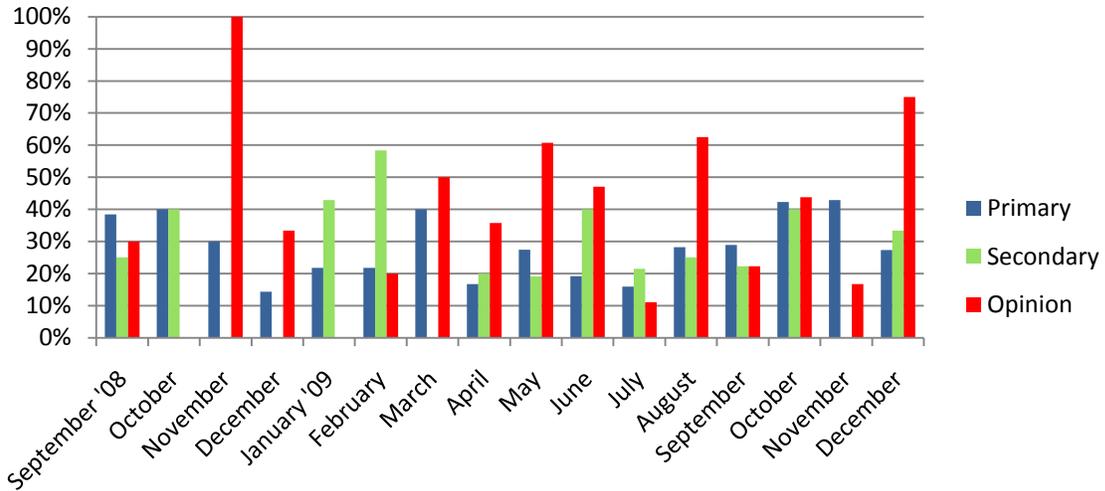
### Detailed Breakdown of Media Scans

The following graphs quantify the media mentions of the concepts discussed in the media addendum (see Figures 7-11 in the media report), but presents them as percentages of the total number of articles in each source category per month. These data allow us to examine the relevant prevalence of terms in each category, while controlling for the overall numbers of articles. For instance, looking at the month of May in Figure 12, we see that transparency was mentioned in 38% (8 out of 21) of all secondary articles in that month, versus only 14% (10 out of 73) primary articles. In contrast, Figure 7 also showed transparency, but only revealed that the concept was mentioned in eight secondary articles versus 10 primary articles. This distinction helps us understand how different categories of publications dealt with these subjects differently, and to highlight the fact that readers of various media sources might have seen mayoral control depicted in vastly different lights. In this case, a reader of primary sources would find transparency to have been a relatively minor issue in the context of all articles they read about mayoral control, whereas a reader of the smaller, often locally-oriented secondary sources would have seen it presented as a much more significant issue.





**Figure 15: Percentage of articles mentioning student achievement**



**Figure 16: Percentage of articles mentioning accountability**

