

At final forum on governance, residents say elected school board is best option for St. Louis

- [By Ashley Lisenby St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)

11/13/2017

At the final public meeting to discuss governance models for St. Louis Public Schools, residents again said they wanted a fully elected school board.

Those who spoke told members of a task force set up to recommend school governing options to state officials they want the people they elected last year to represent them and not someone appointed by state officials.

"I've listened to the presentations, and even before I came was pretty strong on elected boards. And after listening to all three of your presentations, I still feel that way," Lew Moye, president emeritus of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, said at the forum Monday night at Northwest Law Academy. "And it's very difficult for me to be on the side of history that says that the St. Louis community is not capable of electing a board that can govern our school system."

Moye urged the crowd to look at the elected school members' credentials adding, "I really think our current elected board can serve and do what we need here in St. Louis."

"Get behind the elected board because the voters have spoken," he said. "We elected them last year."

The first of the three forums focused on the option of an elected board and the second on appointed boards.

Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, presented Monday's report on hybrid models.

Casserly outlined three types: those with elected and appointed members, those with some members are elected citywide and others by ward, and those with members appointed by different people such as the mayor and the governor.

He said any model depends on other factors such as school leadership, goals, accountability and strategy. While the hybrid model can ensure certain levels of political and regional diversity, it runs the risk of being easily fractured.

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"The track of hybrid schools, I have to say, is typically poor," he said. "Particularly when the term 'hybrid board' means a combination of elected and appointed board members. That is a structure that, by and large, members of the commission, does not work."

Casserly acknowledged concerns about the state having control over city schools.

"There's a whole lot of conflicting interests that are likely involved in the state's interest in taking over a city school system, that doesn't necessarily exist when it comes to a smaller school district that doesn't have the money, power, the clout, the visibility..." he said.

Residents said they have already made their preference known through voting.

State Rep. Bruce Franks, D-St. Louis, thanked the task force and expressed his support for transferring power back to an elected board.

"As a legislator, the parents and all the supporters have my word that me and other legislators that have been talking across the board will support making that legislation... to bring back the power to our elected school board."

"We know how to hold folks accountable," Franks said, noting hundreds of days protesting in Ferguson and most recently the weeks protesting the not-guilty verdict in the Jason Stockley case. "If we protest for that, we're damn sure gonna protest for our kids."

St. Louis Public Schools is conducting a survey through Nov. 28 to collect more public input on the governance issue. The task force plans to make its recommendation to the state Board of Education and post it on its website on Jan. 8.