



A National Invitational Conference on
Emerging Models of Governing School Districts

Selected Readings

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The Relationship Between School Boards and General Purpose Government

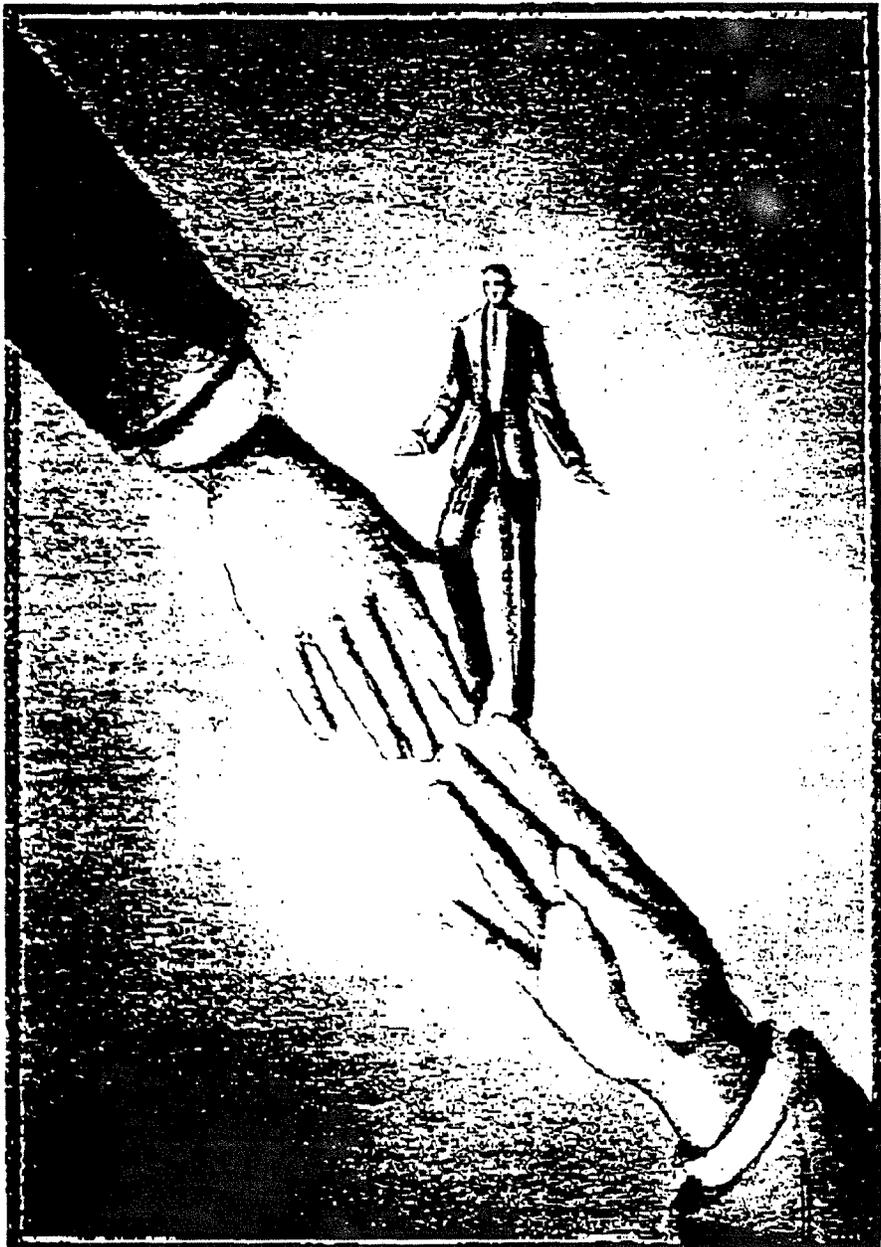
The schools must be major players in collaborative initiatives to provide more flexible, comprehensive, and coordinated services to needy children and families, Mr. Usdan maintains. And school board leadership will be vital to any efforts to develop alternative governance structures and/or closer inter-sector collaborations.

By MICHAEL D. USDAN

AS THE 20th century dawned and public education began to expand throughout the country, some fundamental decisions about school governance were made that have profoundly shaped the role and functions of local boards of education. There is growing evidence as the 21st century approaches that we may once again need to assess our basic structure for education governance.

Early in this century, municipal reformers spearheaded the movement to create a separate governance structure for schools in most jurisdictions. Schools were deemed to be of singular importance in socializing and shaping the civic attitudes and vocational competencies

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bers provide compelling evidence that local governance needs to be reassessed. Boards of education and general government must establish outreach activities as a major priority and must work much more closely with each other. New collaborative leadership styles must evolve not only in school systems but also in social, health, and all other public agencies. Early efforts to promote inter-sector collaboration indicate how difficult and time-consuming a process it is. There will be no quick fixes or structural panaceas, and the development of more responsive delivery systems for education and human services will differ from locality to locality in our fragmented and decentralized federal system. There seems to be little question, however, that — as difficult as it may be to implement — change is badly needed in local governance structures.

At every level of government there are growing numbers of encouraging initiatives that are promoting closer inter-sector collaboration. At the local level numerous examples of interagency cooperation are "bubbling up" as the result of resource constraints and the inadequate services being provided to growing numbers

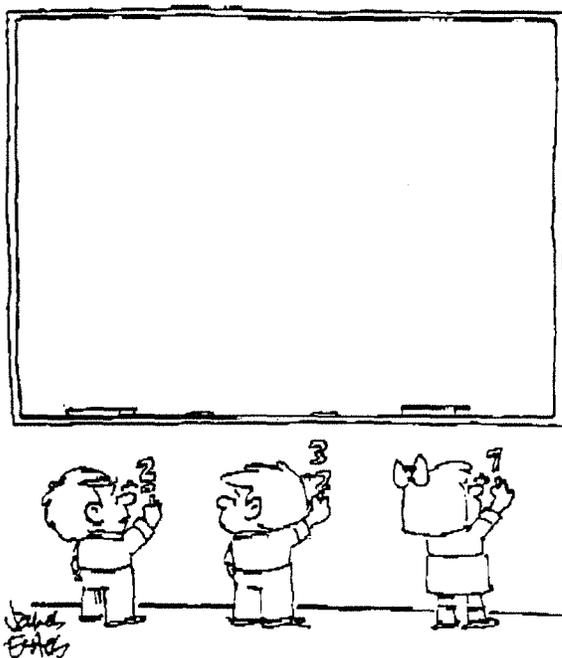
of needy children and families.⁷ Indeed, a recent joint publication of the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services analyzes the grassroots strategies necessary if meaningful inter-agency collaboration is to occur.⁸

DEL has reconfigured many of its programs to focus on collaborative leadership at the local level and the urgent need to connect schools more effectively with other agencies. IEL's historical flagship activity, the Education Policy Fellowship Program, has been redesigned to accept leaders from the health, social services, and juvenile justice systems as well as traditional educators. Other new, more broadly based programs for the development of collaborative leadership have recently been initiated with the aim of addressing issues that transcend the capacity of single agencies to resolve (e.g., teenage pregnancy, preschool education, and the school-to-work transition).⁹

A number of major organizations with national memberships are also supporting efforts to enhance collaboration at the local level. In 1991 the National School Boards Association (NSBA) convened seven organizations that represent the governance and management of school

districts and other units of local government. In addition to the NSBA, the participating organizations include the American Association of School Administrators, the International City/County Management Association, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Towns and Townships, the National League of Cities, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. These seven organizations meet periodically and have created a coalition that is designed to maintain a dialogue on issues regarding children and youths and to promote collaborative activities in areas in which there is common interest.

No other institution has the social penetration of the public schools. With physical facilities in every neighborhood, offering unique access to citizens at the grassroots level, the schools must be major players in collaborative initiatives to provide more flexible, comprehensive, and coordinated services to needy children and families. School board leadership will be vital to any efforts to develop alternative governance structures and/or closer inter-sector collaborations — be they the creation of new children's policy boards, the expansion of school-based health centers, or the partial or full integration of the current education function into general purpose government.



"Do you sometimes get the feeling that this classroom was designed for older students?"

1. National Center for Children in Poverty, *Five Million Children: 1993 Update* (New York: School of Public Health, Columbia University, 1993), p. 2.

2. Editors of *Education Week*, *From Risk to Renewal: Charting a Course for Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Editorial Projects in Education, 1993), p. 209.

3. Lila N. Carol et al., *School Boards: Strengthening Grass-Roots Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986).

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

5. Jacqueline P. Danzberger, Michael W. Kirst, and Michael D. Usdan, *Governing Public Schools: New Times, New Requirements* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1992).

6. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

7. Atelia I. Melaville and Martin J. Blank, *What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1992).

8. Atelia I. Melaville and Martin J. Blank with Gelareh Asayesh, *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1993).

9. *Leadership for Collaboration: A National Dialogue* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, forthcoming). K

children in school; a veritable revolution in new technology; an increasingly competitive, interconnected worldwide economic system; changing family structures and social mores; high rates of student turnover; an information explosion; and collective bargaining coupled with unprecedented spending constraints. In addition, urban school boards and superintendents face all the challenges that are unique to urban public education.

Urban school districts are inevitably larger systems. While size may afford certain economies of scale, it also makes such districts more complicated to oper-

ate. They exist in the midst of an eroded and further eroding property tax base, on which virtually every one of them relies for part of its funding.² They deal with concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities; their overall enrollment is 75% nonwhite. They confront concentrations of poverty: they have over 50% of all youngsters who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. They are awash in a flood of crime and other social ills, including violence, drugs, robberies, burglaries, teenage pregnancy, suicide, infant mortality, malnutrition, homelessness, and unemployment. They must cope with

aging infrastructures and deal with much more diverse and much more organized special interest groups. They must respond to growing immigrant populations and unprecedented numbers of students with limited ability in English. And they must go about their Sisyphean task with their performance continually monitored by every form of news media known to humankind, as well as by politicians and pundits with limited knowledge, unlimited criticism, and hidden agendas.

In such an environment, it is no wonder that the relationship between an urban school board and an urban superin-

School Boards and Superintendents in Urban Districts

Board members and superintendents must remember that history and tradition are working against strategies to open communication, to build trust, and to clarify respective roles, these authors point out. Nevertheless, the times require these strategies.

By BARBARA McCLOUD AND FLORETTA DUKES McKENZIE

IN THE PAST, school board members were charged with administering all aspects of the schools. However, as city populations grew between 1920 and 1960, members of urban school boards were overwhelmed by the enormity of their task. As a re-

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sult, the office of the superintendent was created in the 1840s. From that day to this, there has been tension — and, often, strained relationships between the board that makes policy and the superintendent who implements it.

The tension has been highlighted during periods of education reform. In today's reform-minded environment, citizens and educational leaders point with concern to the high rate of turnover among urban superintendents and to the large number of vacancies in city superintendencies that attract few candidates. They point to inefficiencies of local boards of education and superintendents as a major part of the problem, but they all seem to ignore the fact that this problem is mired in the history of local school governance.

Board members and superintendents are not reluctant to discuss their mutual problems. Many contemporary urban superintendents say that the biggest problem in school governance is that school boards "micromanage" and inappropriately intervene in the administration of schools. They point out that boards don't know or practice their proper roles. A former superintendent from Tucson, Arizona, noted in *Education Week* that the role of boards should be limited, adding that his board had met 172 times in a single year and had approved a wide range of administrative matters.

School board members offer a countervailing perspective on school governance and on board/superintendent relationships. Many say that superintendents too often attempt to exert too much control and think their decisions should not be questioned or challenged by board members. Board members also assert that some superintendents don't understand that elected board members are obliged to represent and respond to their constituents. Board members note that parents and others ask them to solve myriad school problems and expect results.

In 1992 the Council of Urban Boards of Education of the National School Boards Association released a report, *Urban Dynamics: Lessons in Leadership from Urban School Boards and Superintendents*, which demonstrates that board members and superintendents are aware of their mutual problems. In that report both board members and superintendents agreed that open communication, trust, and understanding of role differences are the three factors most important to effective board/superintendent relationships.

Both groups also agreed on the major factors that destabilize the relationship: board members the superintendent, and the superintendent, and political agenda.

School board members and superintendents know — as watched, worked served as urban superintendents — superintendents' views of the board and administration

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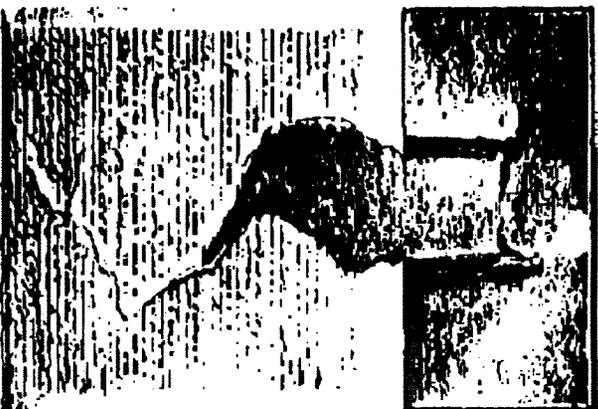
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its divisive impact on the board remains the same. The situation is sometimes exacerbated by personality conflicts between members of rival board factions. And the superintendent is often caught in the middle.

In many urban districts, racial and ethnic



the differences among board members are a second and perhaps even more acute source of internal conflict. Too often, representatives of different racial and ethnic groups engage in battles — each holding to his or her point of view, unwilling to collaborate. Indeed, we have observed that, in some urban districts, the power on boards has shifted. When the shift is perceived as a threat to the status quo, intense debates, some overt and some subtle, are likely to make the board's work harder and to test the superintendent's ability as mediator.

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The internal and external forces that bear on board/superintendent relationships are embedded in urban school environments that are growing ever more complex. The challenges in these districts are enormous and not likely to lessen in the foreseeable future. Intensifying levels of poverty, the changing conditions of families, declining resources, increasing numbers of children in poor health, low achievement among minority students, and escalating violence and crime in and around schools all serve as sobering examples. These conditions are widely known, and they underscore the critical need for more effective governance and management of urban schools.

There is a moral and political mandate, albeit largely unspoken, for improving the relationships between boards and superintendents. Both parties must be willing to rise above history and work to promote change. There must be increased opportunities for continuous review of the school's mission, goals, operations, and operational oversight. School boards and superintendents must engage in ongoing dialogue — not raucous debate — about their respective roles in policymaking and administration. Equally important, they must bring others in the community into the conversation. This will increase community involvement in the schools and promote a stronger partnership and mandate for change. Above all, board members and superintendents must remember that history and tradition are working against strategies to open communication, to build trust, and to clarify respective roles. Nevertheless, the times require them. □



FORMER COLORADO GOVERNOR Roy Romer, now Los Angeles schools chief, solicited Levy's ideas



HAROLD LEVY, a Wall Street lawyer, is now chancellor of the New York City school system

The Outsiders Take Over

LAST WEEK ROY ROMER, 71, FORMER GOVERNOR OF COLORADO, was appointed to what might be the second most difficult job in America: superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Only a month ago, another educational outsider, Wall Street lawyer Harold Levy, 47, was officially named New York City schools chancellor, No. 1 on the mission-impossible list (he had been serving as interim chancellor since January). The two had never met, so last week TIME introduced them through an early-morning conference call. Excerpts:

ROMER: How long have you been on this job?

LEVY: Almost 140 days.

ROMER: I've been on the job here 18 hours. You and I have a similar problem. We might have management experience, but we're not professional educators. How do you structure your relationships from your office to your 32 superintendencies?

LEVY: When I got here, there were 16 people reporting to the chancellor. There are now six. It's better to identify half a dozen people who are responsible than to leave it go, shall we say, in somewhat "collegial" a fashion. Another thing that I found invaluable is to come in with not a big team but two or three people who you could turn to. I know your reputation within your state is such that you will attract a lot of people willing to do that with you. That is a powerful place you should pivot on.

ROMER: I'm interested in how you focus on long-term professional development.

LEVY: Let me be blunt: I think you need ruthless leadership that is prepared to tackle really ancient problems of management in order to get the best teachers teaching those who are less able to get performance out of students. I have intentionally used the language of management for the reason that I think it evokes a whole different response. If you've got branches or distant offices that

don't work well, you put your strongest managers there. In this industry—if I can call it that—we do the opposite. We take our youngest teachers, our weakest managers, and we put them into the weakest schools. Our weakest schools here in New York City are the schools with the most uncertified teachers, with the least experienced principals.

If you believe the data that certified teachers do better at getting children up past these objective exams than people who are perhaps not as well qualified, then you've got to put a whole bunch of money into professional development. It is also a question of salaries. We're going to need to pay the prevailing wage so that we make teaching a valued profession again. Twenty-five years ago, the difference between the starting salary for young lawyers going into the big firms and the starting salary for teachers going into the New York school system was \$2,000. Today the incoming class of lawyers is getting \$156,000, and our beginning

THE EDUCATORS HAD THEIR CHANCE

Here are some of the U.S. school systems now directed by people who, while not professional educators, are regarded as tough chief executives

NAME	AGE	CITY	APPOINTED	LAST JOB
Alan Bersin	64	San Diego	July 1998	U.S. Attorney
Alphonse Davis	49	New Orleans	July 1999	Colonel, U.S. Marines
Benjamin Demps Jr.	66	Kansas City	July 1999	Federal Aviation Administration
Harold Levy	47	New York City	May 2000	Corporate lawyer, Citigroup
Joseph Olchefske	41	Seattle	Feb. 1999	Investment banker, Piper Jaffray
Roy Romer	71	Los Angeles	June 2000	Chair, Democratic Nat'l Committee
Paul Vallas	47	Chicago	July 1995	Budget Director, City of Chicago

salary is \$31,000. It should surprise no one that we're not going to get the best people.

ROMER: Let me turn to the issue of social promotion.

LEVY: Last year the Board of Education voted to do away with social promotion on the theory that children were not being helped by simply being passed along. Starting in third grade, children can be held

back. We now have almost a quarter of the system going to summer school. Unfortunately it's only four or five weeks. I wish that it were longer so that those children who need it could get year-round help.

ROMER: Here in L.A. I've got a pretty steep mountain to climb in terms of space limitations, leaving little flexibility for summer.

LEVY: What are you going to do with that building [a new school built atop a toxic-waste dump]—your \$150 million white elephant?

ROMER: Chancellor, that is an answer I don't have yet. It needs to be removed from the scene.

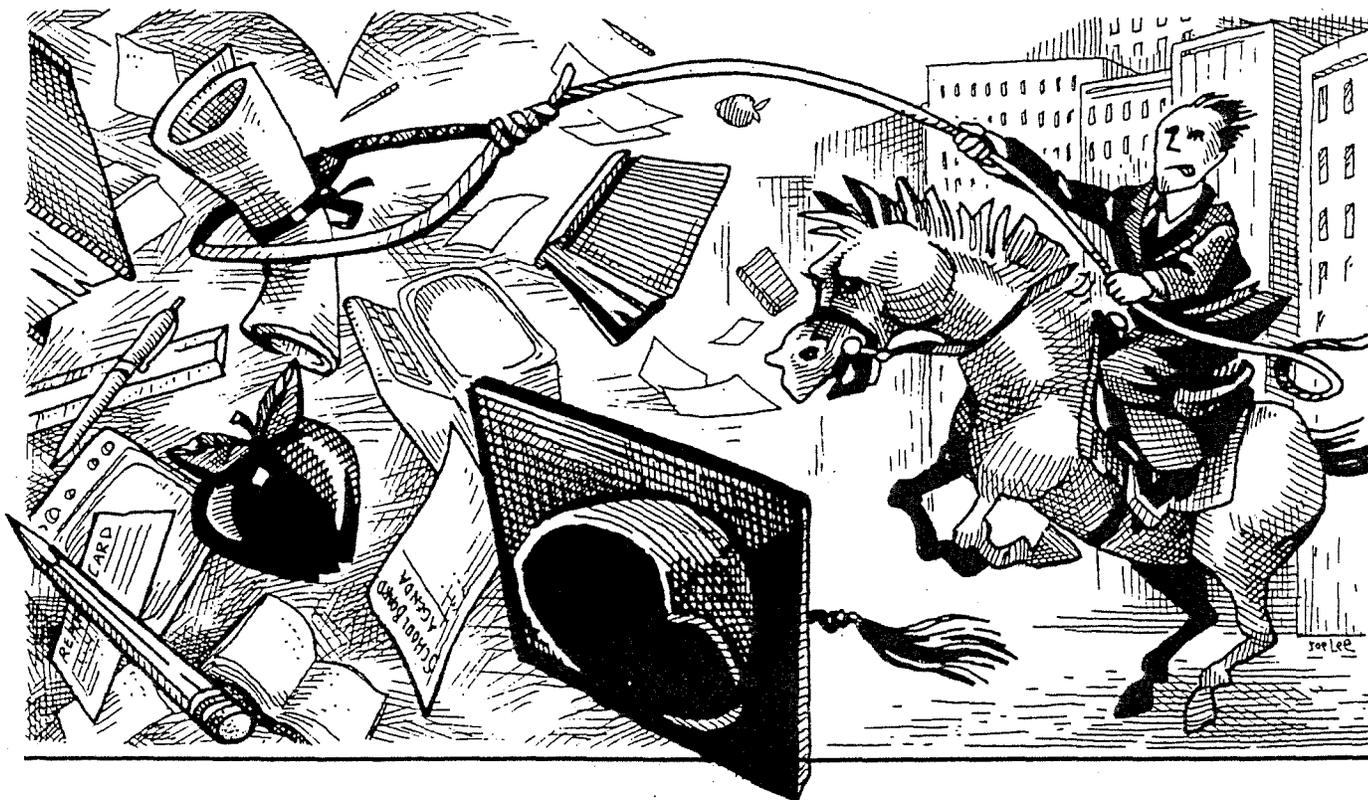
LEVY: We've spent \$165 million to get rid of asbestos in this city.

ROMER: Part of my effort is trying to explain to my family that I'm not certifiably crazy. People say, "Why are you doing this?" The simple answer is: 712,000 students.

LEVY: The language of altruism is absolutely gone from the political debate. It is astounding to me. If you have to talk other than money, if you say, "I'm doing it because it's the right thing, because it's important," people look at you like you're nuts. How did you answer that when you were in government? You could have done other things.

ROMER: Yes, I know. But nobody believes you when you use that—so you don't get into it.

'New, Improved' Mayors Take Over City Schools



More efforts at mayoral takeovers seem likely, Mr. Kirst and Ms. Bulkley predict. Reformers will continue to use governance and organizational changes in an effort to improve the performance of education, even though these mechanisms may offer an indirect and uncertain strategy for improving classroom instruction.

BY MICHAEL KIRST AND KATRINA BULKLEY

FOR MOST of the 20th century, even the nation's most powerful mayors held little sway over their cities' schools. Influential as they might have been with business, political, and community leaders, they were wary of meddling with highly autonomous local public schools that, during the years 1890-1920, were largely divorced from city government and mayoral control. But this long-standing inde-

pendence of the schools from city hall is now being reexamined in some of the nation's major cities, where policy makers, often with the support of the electorate, are putting the mayor in charge. Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Cleveland have completed the transition to mayoral control of the schools, while smaller cities such as Oakland, California; Washington, D.C.; and New Orleans are considering doing so. Moreover, even without substantial formal changes in governance structures, mayors

in New York, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia now exert much more influence over school policy than their prede-

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cessors would have thought possible.

According to a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, several big-city mayors have "touted mayoral control over education as the most promising way to turn around troubled school districts."¹ In this power shift, school boards are the big losers. Mayors increasingly make major decisions that were once the sole province of school boards, including the selection of superintendents in Chicago, Boston, and Cleveland. Mayor Richard Daly, Jr., of Chicago moved roughly a hundred people from his office to the school district's headquarters in order to take over all the key administrative functions, while Boston Superintendent Thomas Payzant became a member of Mayor Thomas Menino's cabinet.

What underlying political and institutional theories are policy makers embracing as they approve these new mayoral regimes? What has fostered this recent reversal of the century-old progressive effort to remove mayors from school governance?

To help readers understand these issues, we first offer an overview of the governance changes in their historical context. Then we provide a framework for examining institutional choices that cities have made with regard to school governance. Finally, we examine recent literature on urban governance and mayors for the insights it gives into why these changes in favor of mayoral control of the schools have been made and what impact they might have.

Historical Perspective on Urban School Governance

Herbert Kaufman presents three alternating priorities for urban governance: executive leadership, professional neutral competence, and legislative representation.² Prior to 1900, large-city school governance eschewed executive leadership in favor of legislative representation. This representation was embodied in a ward-based committee system that was responsible for administering the public schools. Often large and unwieldy, the committee system provided opportunities for extensive and complex political influence. In 1905, Philadelphia had 43 elected school boards consisting of 559 members. By contrast, there were only seven members on the Minneapolis board, while Hartford, Connect-

icut, with a third as many people, had 39 school visitors and committee members. Despite such wide variation, 16 of 28 cities with more than 100,000 people had boards of 20 members or more at the turn of the century.

The solution to the problems posed by excessive representation was to install a nonpartisan school superintendent — hence the turn toward executive leadership and neutral competence. By 1910, a conventional wisdom had evolved among school and business leaders that smaller boards in conjunction with professional superintendents were needed. The watchwords of reform during this era became centralization, expertise, professionalism, nonpolitical control, and efficiency — all of which would help create "the one best system."³ The governance structure rooted in ward-based committees needed to be revised so that schools would operate "above politics." To achieve this end, school boards had to be small, elected at large, and free from all connections with political parties and regular government officials. School districts in this new design would raise their own property taxes so as not to become fiscally dependent on city hall.

The most attractive models for this new organization were the large-scale industrial bureaucracies that were rapidly emerging in the turn-of-the-century economy. These bureaucracies relied on hierarchy and scientific management. Similarly, school governance would be improved by relying on professionals, not politicians. A board elected by citizens and divorced from political leaders was viewed as less susceptible to graft and job favoritism. The centralized power of the superintendent would overcome the bureaucratic tangle and inefficiency of board subcommittees. This new model of school governance spread rapidly from the large cities to smaller cities and towns and garnered major support from the National Education Association.

In the early years of the century, then, urban school reform was part of a broader pattern of municipal change. Public rhetoric at the time pitted corrupt politicians against community-oriented citizen reformers. Several historians have since questioned the underlying motives of these citizen reformers. For example, David Tyack has emphasized that financial and professional leaders deplored the decentralized ward system largely because it empowered members of the lower and lower-middle classes (many

of whom were recent immigrants).⁴ Reformers wanted not simply to replace bad men with good: they wanted to change the occupational and class origins of decision makers.

Many large cities never completely implemented the model of the progressive reformers. Richard Daly, Sr., longtime mayor of Chicago, was a major player in such Chicago school policies as desegregation and collective bargaining and participated in appointing the board of education. Both Chicago and Boston schools also depended on the city government for much of their revenue. In addition, Boston's elected school board was a major policy maker in city politics. Nevertheless, leaders in Chicago and Boston did follow the ideals of progressive reformers by creating large professional bureaucracies that used exams and classifications like those of the civil service. Benjamin Willis, the general superintendent of schools in Chicago in the 1960s, was a model of the professional CEO in education.⁵

However, considerable research suggests that professional hierarchies are not politically neutral, because different ways of organizing school bureaucracies necessarily bias allocations of scarce school revenues in favor of particular outcomes. For example, in the 1980s the elected Boston School Committee did not truly insulate the schools from politics; instead, it was a fractious body that distributed patronage to electoral supporters.

In any case, while the agenda of the progressive reformers was never carried out completely in such cities as Boston and Chicago, the progressive ideals of leadership by professional educators and the separation of education and politics have long been a part of their school governance systems.

Mayors and Institutional Choice

Over the past two decades, frustration mounted in many cities with regard to the state of public education and especially the governance of the city school systems. Policy makers responded by looking into different institutional choices to address the perceived problems. The concept of "institutional choice" focuses on the crucial policy decision of which institution should be the key policy decision maker and what authority should be vested in different institutional actors. As David Plank

and William Boyd note, "The politics of institutional choice is preeminently concerned with 'deciding who will decide' about issues of public policy."⁶

New institutional choices have a long history at all levels of government. For example, in the quartercentury between 1960 and 1985, courts were reluctant to delegate civil rights protection to local school districts in Mississippi. The state education reform movement (1983-93) included an institutional choice to enhance the curricular and testing role of state government. Another type of institutional choice is involved in deciding whether to place various functions in the hands of markets (e.g., through vouchers) or politics (e.g., through school board elections). The institutional choices that are made may reflect concerns about policy goals, about the ability of the existing system to address goals, and about the relative political power of various actors. In most cases, however, institutional choices stem from a combination of policy and political forces.⁷

We suggest that new ways of approaching city problems, along with a changing

vision of mayoral roles, may have been central to the school governance overhauls in Chicago and Boston. Institutional choice is complex, uncertain, and subject to continual political change. The balance of control in education will never be settled by policy makers making a purely logical analysis but must rather be part of a series of evolving political bargains and changing perceptions about the capacity of alternative institutions.

In selecting the mayor as the primary institutional actor in education, policy makers implicitly asserted that the mayors were capable of making the changes needed to improve school performance. Moreover, there was a clear choice in both Chicago and Boston to decrease the influence of the school boards — boards that were seen as incapable of making necessary changes or as having goals that differed from those of the policy makers who made the governance changes.

An essential question policy makers must ask is "Who gets what, when, and how under different institutional arrangements?" In recent years, actors outside the

traditional educational governance structure, including business leaders and mayors, have exhibited greater interest in participating in educational policy making. While placing pressure on the existing system is one method that these new actors have employed to try to exert control over education, a powerful alternative, used in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Boston, is to circumvent existing decision makers by changing the governance structure itself. Plank and Boyd argue that this tactic is particularly likely when there is uncertainty about the goals of education. "When agreement on goals is lacking," they argue, "institutional choice is far more likely to be based on assessments of political advantage, with reformers seeking to restrict the power of institutions that they regard as hostile in favor of those more congenial to their interest."⁸

Why Mayoral Takeovers?

There are a number of different reasons for the shift to mayoral takeovers of the public schools. We examine here several definitions of the problems in urban education during the time when the institutional choices for mayoral control were being made, including bureaucratic dysfunction, decreasing faith in existing governance structures, the new demands placed on mayors and urban governments, and the perceived need for direct mayoral involvement in schools. In addition, we consider the increased pressure these problems have placed on mayors, the use of enhanced mayoral power as the solution to these problems, and the idea of a "new breed" of city mayors who can take on issues such as education.

Bureaucratic dysfunction. During the years 1890-1920, progressive reformers operated on the assumption that professional bureaucracy would guarantee efficiency, accountability, and neutrality. However, critics point out that professional bureaucracy often leads to the very inefficiency and political power without accountability that reformers had sought to eradicate. Professional education bureaucracies can create unanticipated consequences and tensions between written rules and reliance on expertise.⁹ In many cases, these conflicts can lead to near paralysis. For example, the inability of dysfunctional city education systems even to provide adequate school facilities was illustrated in a 1997 analysis of Washington, D.C.¹⁰



Abbott

"The teacher said I was trying today — very trying."

Ironically, this sad state of affairs can be viewed as the legacy of reforms enacted at the turn of the century by progressives who favored executive centralization. That model makes the flexible responses that education requires almost impossible, generating instead the red tape associated with rigidity and dysfunction. At the school level, bureaucratic routines often become a way to protect authority and to deal with inadequate resources, but this typically occurs at the expense of innovation and productivity. Indeed, bureaucracy may create "trained incapacity," or an inability to think beyond narrow specialized roles.¹¹

Professional educators can capture control of an education agency through control of employment and civil service protection. Theodore Lowi characterizes as "new machines" such city agencies as school systems:

The New Machines are machines because they are relatively irresponsible structures of power. That is, each agency shapes important public policies, yet the leadership of each is relatively self-perpetuating and not readily subject to the control of any higher authority.¹²

Progressive reformers in the early 20th century argued that a single chief executive was more visible and so more easily held accountable for agency actions. Yet these same reformers also argued for reliance on bureaucratic "experts," which, in public education, meant experts who were trained educational administrators. Thus they encouraged the use of educational governance systems run by central offices and expert superintendents who were appointed by elected school board members.

Electoral mechanisms of popular control, including those involving school board members, are predicated on the assumption that officials voted into office are in full command of policy and program and that other governmental machinery exists primarily to execute their collective will. But the control exerted by the educational bureaucracy and the fragmented political power in cities like Chicago and Boston together undermined the progressive model: no one seemed to have real command over systems perceived as spiraling out of control. Reformers in the 1990s contended that it would take the mayors to restore central executive

accountability of the progressive ideal. These reformers alleged that city school boards had lost control of school bureaucracies, leaving the mayors as a clearer locus of accountability and a better link to voter preferences.¹³

The growth of school bureaucracies and independent school boards created discrete islands of functional power in fragmented city governments. Mayors and educators could not work together to integrate city policy for children, a fact that ensured that children's protective services and health services were separated from school policy. Adding to the fragmentation was the fact that progressives, while supporting executive centralization, had also promoted numerous independent local government functions and districts that had their own sources of revenue (e.g., 6,000 local governments in California). Many of these local government units control a piece of the fractured landscape of children's services.¹⁴

During the 1980s, integrating children's services became more of a priority. Many analysts stressed that the separation of schools from city government hindered the coordination of services and restricted the ability of educators and city officials to use school sites as one-stop centers for providing services. The hope has been that mayors might be better able than school systems to overcome fragmentation of services.

Federal and state grants exacerbated the problem of the independence of school systems from central leadership. Categorical grants, such as those for special and vocational education, created vertical bureaucracies including everyone from local educators to the federal and state grant-making units. A 1995 study of Detroit, Gary, Indiana; and Newark, New Jersey, found that attempts by mayors to influence schools were thwarted by a coalition of educational administrators, teachers, school boards, and community activists.¹⁵ Moreover, the dispersal of local power to unelected bureaucrats has made it extremely difficult for low-income people to influence policy. In short, the progressive reformers cleaned up big-city corruption, but they may have destroyed the basis for sustained central action and mayoral accountability in education policy.¹⁶ A recent study of Los Angeles demonstrates that problems with bureaucracy are not confined to the older eastern and midwestern cities.¹⁷

Diminishing faith in existing governance structures. Another explanation for

large-scale changes in city school governance is the perception that there is a "major operational failure" in the existing system.¹⁸ James Cibulka argues that dismal performance of and negative publicity surrounding big-city education has undermined the legitimating values upon which the old governance structure was built.¹⁹ Prior to the 1995 legislation that gave the mayor more power over schools, the Chicago school district, for example, had considerable negative publicity as a result of frequent teacher strikes and budget deficits that often kept schools from opening at the expected time. As David Easton put it, the failing political system in Chicago lost its "diffuse support."²⁰ One effect of this diminished support may be increased infighting and dissension among school board members, such as that found prior to the mayoral takeovers in Chicago, Cleveland, and Boston.²¹ Media reports of dismal test scores and school violence also undermined the legitimacy of the old regimes.

New demands on city governments. In addition to both real and perceived problems in urban education, new pressures have been placed on urban governments that can affect school governance structures. As Peter Beinart points out, two of these added pressures have come from reductions in federal aid and changing racial coalitions.²² In recent years, federal aid to cities has declined drastically. This loss of funds has increased the pressure on urban governments to compensate for diminishing federal support for children's services, spurring frequent school budget shortfalls in such cities as Chicago and Boston, where schools are dependent on the city treasury for funds.²³

In addition, as the traditional civil rights coalitions have disintegrated, the public has become less tolerant of large-city employee costs.²⁴ Alliances of Democratic mayors with business evolved in such cities as Detroit and Cleveland. Where blacks had once been the foundation for liberal coalitions, black votes in many big cities declined significantly as a percentage of the total vote.²⁵ It became easier politically to depose black city school boards and black central administrators. Consequently, the focus of some big-city mayors has changed from providing municipal employment to improving student test scores.

Moreover, increasing political fragmentation along ethnic and racial lines has led a variety of groups to demand better ser-

vices directly from urban governments. This fragmentation had been catalyzed in part by the loss of federal funds that helped hold together the older coalitions that supported Democratic mayors. Hence, the broad coalition of generally Democratic voters — including poor people, union members, school employees, and neighborhood and civic reformers — has been weakened. Into this vacuum have stepped Republican mayors in New York and Los Angeles, who have pressured the school boards to appoint different central administrators.

Perceived need for direct mayoral involvement. The growing problems in urban education and the increased pressures placed on urban governance created a crisis situation in many cities, leading the public and policy makers to demand a major overhaul. James Cibulka posits that from such pressures will emerge hybrid forms of governance that are not conceptually coherent. He identifies seven distinct organizational principles that, according to different lines of advocacy, would provide the foundation for overhauling city governance: political integration, service integration, consumer sovereignty, citizen sovereignty, geographic decentralization, professional sovereignty, and state interventions.²⁶

In Boston and Chicago, multiple changes in city governance have been enacted, but our focus is on the political integration that has placed school governance under the command of mayors. The use of mayoral control as a solution to problems and demands such as those discussed above can be explained by examining why mayors wanted control over education, why policy makers were interested in granting them this control, and how the mayors themselves were recast as a “new breed.”

In the past, mayors avoided the political tangles of education, but this has become more difficult in the current climate that focuses on the role of education in a city’s overall health. Mayors can no longer avoid school-related issues politically because of the growing belief among business leaders and others that schools are a critical factor in urban economic development. In addition to their interest in using education as part of a broader urban improvement plan, mayors have financial incentives for becoming more involved with education. As Cibulka notes, “Increasingly tight city budgets also place pressure on mayors to keep taxes down. Schools con-

sume a large portion of that tax dollar, and in some cities the mayor has little direct control over decisions made by urban school officials.”²⁷ Thus there are both ideological and budgetary reasons for mayors to seek greater control over their city’s system of public education.

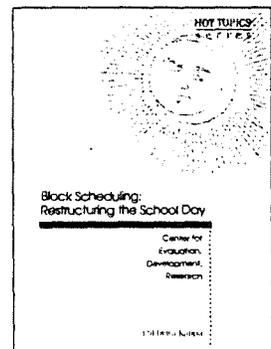
Current mayors such as Daly in Chicago, Menino in Boston, and Michael White in Cleveland have received support at both the city and state levels for their efforts to assert more control over education. One

reason they have received this support is the belief that highly visible mayors are more likely than relatively unknown school board members to be held accountable by voters for the state of public education. Political integration, with mayors at the head of urban governance, “is premised on the notion that the policy works most effectively where there are clear and direct lines of accountability from public elected officials to the public. This is achieved by having fewer officials to elect and on-

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ly one set of elections."²⁸ In addition to such policy reasons as greater accountability, city and state politicians have political motives for removing control of education from a publicly elected local school board that they cannot direct to a mayor over whom they may have some influence.

Proponents of mayoral takeovers can point to the limited impact of Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith, a mayor who never got the authority that Chicago or Boston mayors obtained.²⁹ Despite repeated and aggressive efforts to improve the Indianapolis Public Schools, Goldsmith has been thwarted and has now essentially given up. One problem that Goldsmith faced was with the design of the Indianapolis metropolitan area government called Unigov. The dozen suburban communities that agreed to join the enlarged entity, known as Indianapolis, all insisted on maintaining control of their schools. Even within the core city, where Goldsmith has some influence, he has made little headway:

He failed to persuade the board to cut costs. He failed to persuade the teachers union to relax its work rules. Supposedly the paragon of a popular conservative mayor, he was even unable to generate enough support for those old conservative standbys, vouchers and for-profit schools. Even his small victories

— getting two new candidates elected to the school board on a reform slate, persuading the board to select his choice for superintendent, persuading the state legislature to give superintendents more power to hold schools accountable for poor performance — have yielded few real results. This year, the board got rid of his hand-picked superintendent. Yet Goldsmith didn't even bother to endorse anyone in this year's school board races.

Today, his only ongoing work to improve education in Indianapolis is as chairman of a committee for the local archdiocese, raising money for Catholic schools.³⁰

'New, Improved' Mayor Gains Control

The impetus for turning to mayors to solve problems in urban education systems stems in part from the belief that there is a "new breed" of mayor who can improve education and avoid past mistakes. The new, improved mayors are

largely about managing city government efficiently in the public interest rather than using it as a mechanism for arbitrating competing interest groups. . . . They have an ideology: that cities can dramatically alleviate seemingly endemic urban afflictions without a massive redistribution of wealth, that the way to

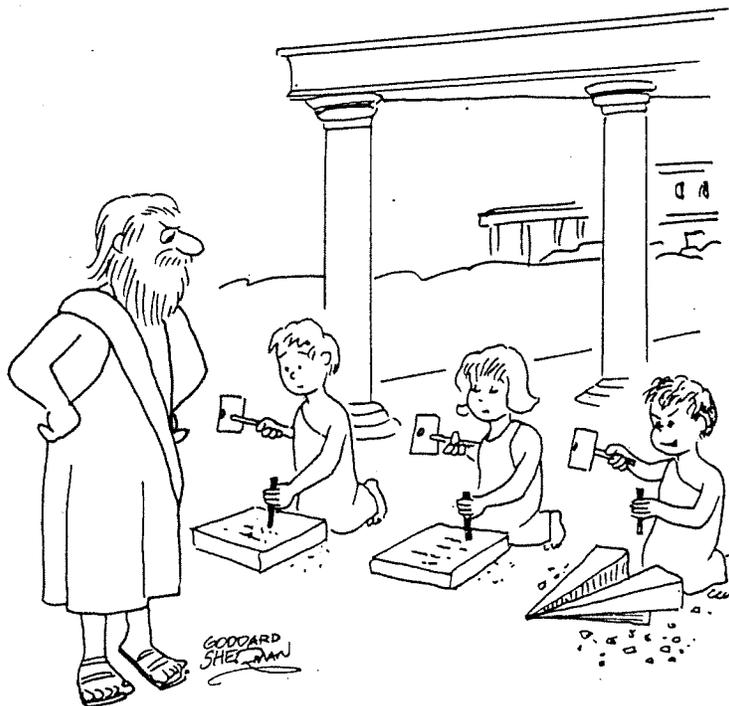
achieve this is by using competition to make city services radically more efficient.³¹

These "new mayors" have formed an informal network and symbolize a radical break with their predecessors. Some of these mayors include Daly (Chicago), Edward Rendell (Philadelphia), White (Cleveland), Goldsmith (Indianapolis), Richard Riordan (Los Angeles), Rudolph Giuliani (New York), and John Norquist (Milwaukee). These mayors allegedly realize that, in a tight budgetary climate, more city jobs to pay off constituencies will not work, so part of the answer is to privatize and contract out services. They are a marked contrast to the old-style "civil rights mayors" of the era from 1970 to 1990:

While calling for dramatic change nationally, the civil rights mayors preserved the status quo at home — appeasing the municipal employee unions with generous contracts, using city jobs to cement their coalitions, and leaving education, that most intractable and politically dangerous of problems, to elected school boards.³²

Peter Beinart suggests that changes in the urban environment discussed above — including the decline in federal aid, disintegration of the civil rights coalition, and formation of new coalitions that include larger numbers of Hispanics and recent immigrants — can help to explain big changes in mayoral behavior and ambitions. New policies have caused these reform mayors to become estranged from their political parties, which cling to older visions. For example, Daly's 1995 takeover of Chicago schools would not have happened had members of the Republican opposition who supported him not also controlled both houses of the Illinois legislature in 1995.

These new mayors appear willing to confront strong interests on both sides of the political fence, including teacher unions, civil rights leaders, and the Christian Coalition. The new mayors speak the language of modern public management: reinvention, innovation, privatization, competition, strategic planning, and productivity.³³ They hope these concepts will enable them to make the most of the dwindling resources that they control and that privatization will provide better services.³⁴ Mayors such as Daly in Chicago and Meni-



no in Boston use their sophisticated media skills and staffs to reiterate these new public management approaches and to contrast them to the approaches of fractious school boards.

In sum, giving mayors control of or an increased role in the schools is justified by proponents as providing a single point of electoral accountability, more integration of children's services with schools, and better pupil attainment. Such developments will spur city economic development, stimulate more middle-class people to live in cities, and forge a closer alliance between city government and businesses. Political losers in this shift will be the central school district professionals and the school board. Opponents assert that a school board appointed by the mayor will result in less democracy because the voters will have fewer electoral choices and cannot vote for a board member from their section of the city.

Risks of Mayoral Control

Some observers of the move to mayoral control have suggested that this institutional change has been regarded as a panacea for education problems but is not likely to improve the education system. Skeptical educational administrators point to mayoral control of schools in Baltimore, where the mayor never lost much influence over schools as a result of progressive reforms. Richard Hunter, a former Baltimore superintendent who has served in a number of cities, observed:

The best way to gain the [mayor's] support is to do something for the mayor: contribute to the campaign fund; work on the re-election effort; deliver votes or support from a constituency; or convince the mayor his or her support of your project will attract political advantage, positive media publicity, or additional campaign contributions. In short, you must help keep the mayor in office. When public education becomes part of the political process, education policy decisions become commodities bought, sold, bartered, and bestowed like patronage positions and building permits.³⁵

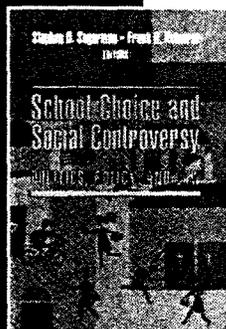
Hunter believes that the spread of interest in mayoral control stems from "scapegoating educators," which began in earnest with the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and the efforts to placate business

leaders insistent on school reform in 1985. Hunter and others stress that control by the mayor of Baltimore, where mayoral control of schools has always been the case, has not led to better school performance. In 1997, the Maryland legislature reduced the power of the mayor, creating a CEO appointed by a new "board of school commissioners," appointed jointly by the mayor and the governor from a list submitted by the state board of education.

This new CEO can change the personnel system of the Baltimore schools. In Baltimore, "political control of the schools [by the mayor] has not proven to be a panacea."³⁶

Critics of mayoral control contend that the use of contracts by mayors for such services as building repairs will lead to "machine" politics, whereby school contracts will be traded for campaign contributions to the mayor. The idea of a "new

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breed of mayor" does not carry much weight with these critics. Despite their concerns, though, favorable publicity about the Boston and Chicago school systems under mayoral control has led state politicians and other mayors to think more about mayoral takeover. In Los Angeles, Mayor Riordan successfully formed his own slate of candidates to overthrow the incumbent school board. In Milwaukee, Mayor Norquist led a movement to allow the city to establish charter schools.

However, some mayors remain hesitant and stress that a mayor's attempts to change schools can be politically risky. As Mayor Goldsmith of Indianapolis observed: "I don't mind tilting at windmills, but I like to win every now and then. It's funny: the best thing for my career is to be Pollyannaish. The more I agitate for change at Indianapolis Public Schools, the more I get blamed for the problems."³⁷

The Future of Mayoral Control

The new reliance on the mayor as the primary elected official overseeing a city's education system may lead to changes in the effectiveness and efficiency of the affected urban school districts. However, it is always difficult to predict the effects of governance changes. Those effects are subject to ongoing interpretations by different actors. Then actions are taken, based on those interpretations, and those actions cause new political stresses. Inevitably, this feedback process leads to new demands that the administrators and creators of the governance change must then try to meet.³⁸ The theory underlying the shift to mayoral control may be reinforced through this feedback process, or the institutional change may lead in unexpected directions. Mayor Daly's school control was reauthorized by the Illinois legislature in 1999 without significant opposition. Boston voters, by a 70% majority, approved extension of mayoral control in 1996.

Some research suggests that efforts to change institutions often lead only to permutations of the institutions that previously existed.³⁹ Thus schools controlled by mayors may well end up operating in a similar manner to the institutional structures that they replaced.

A key issue is whether mayoral control can improve classroom instruction and the everyday lives of teachers and students. Historically, changes in school governance

have not had much impact on classrooms, but the recent experiences in Chicago and Boston demonstrate the differential impact of local context on school improvement strategies.⁴⁰ In the short run at least, Mayor Daly has had a significant impact on schools and students scoring below the 15th percentile on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Mayor Menino has opted for a strategy that includes staff development and a new curriculum.

Whatever its impact, there are political and geographic limits to the spread of mayoral control. Many cities are not contiguous with school districts. For example, San Jose, California, has 20 school districts within its boundary, and southern cities are part of county school districts. The decline in the number of teacher strikes has also removed a crucial trigger for mayoral takeover. But test scores in many cities have not risen sufficiently to offset state and local dissatisfaction. More efforts at mayoral takeovers seem likely. And, if the mayors do not succeed in cities like Chicago, Boston, and Cleveland, voucher advocates will have a stronger case — at least for the worst-performing big-city schools. In sum, reformers will continue to use governance and organizational changes in an effort to improve the performance of education, even though these mechanisms may offer an indirect and uncertain strategy for improving classroom instruction.

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D.C. Mayor Majoring In Reform Of Schools

By Robert E. Pierre and Justin Blum
Washington Post Staff Writers
Monday, September 11, 2000 ; B01

Mayor Anthony A. Williams spent the first day of school last week behaving much like a superintendent, visiting classrooms, inspecting graffiti on playgrounds and chatting with teachers and parents about boilers, school lunches and curricula.

At Anne Beers Elementary, in Southeast Washington, where parents and corporate sponsors are plentiful and classical music is piped into hallways, Williams ran into PTA Vice President Juan Manuel Thompson, who is pleased but guarded about the mayor's involvement.

"We've heard the promises before," said Thompson, who has two sons and a daughter at the school. "We want to make sure [the administration] follows through."

With his newly won authority and outspokenness on education, Williams (D) has put himself on the hook for the state of District schools far more than his predecessors. He's taking the risk because educators, business leaders and parents agree that lasting reform of the District can take place only if city schools are educating children.

"It's the master key for revitalizing the city," said John R. Tydings, president of the Greater Washington Board of Trade. "It's clearly important for preparing the work force in the 21st century, and it's a quality-of-life issue for families."

Halfway through his second year in office, Williams has his hands in numerous aspects of city schools. In June, voters gave him the authority to appoint four of nine school board members. Now, he's pushing for a technology-focused college-prep school and wants to recruit principals to low-performing schools and attract and certify new teachers. He's sponsoring an education summit next month.

"Education is a community responsibility, and the bottom line is that our city will fail if our schools fail," Williams said in his monthly radio address, which aired last week and was devoted to education.

Fixing public schools is among the mayor's most ambitious goals, one that is fraught with political risk. District schools have suffered from years of neglect, with students posting poor test scores and many school buildings in disrepair. Williams and his top staff are convinced that the best way to move the system is with him--instead of the school board--as the galvanizing force for change.

Williams has been knocked around for promising but not delivering, as when he failed to manage utility companies' digging up downtown streets and to respond quickly to reports of abuse and neglect in city-monitored group homes for retarded residents. Although those missteps do not seem to have hurt Williams's popularity, he may be graded differently on how he affects schools.

The mayor said he's well aware of what's expected of him.

"There are heightened expectations of me, period," Williams said. "I've succeeded in raising the bar. Now I have to meet that standard."

The city is watching.

"Everybody is going to be looking for results," said D.C. Council member Kevin P. Chavous (D-Ward 7), who ran unsuccessfully for mayor and chairs the council's education committee. "It's like the expression 'Be careful what you wish for' If the public gets the sense the mayor has dropped the ball, it's going to impact on his job approval."

Williams is taking more responsibility for the public school system at a time when its population is

declining--as parents move out of the city or transfer their children to charter schools or private schools. The projected enrollment of 69,707 in the regular public schools is down about 1,000 from last year, while charter schools are predicting an enrollment of 9,450 students, 1,500 more than last year, or one of eight public school students.

At schools such as Beers Elementary, parents have long raised money to buy what's needed and sought sponsorships through corporations or government agencies, such as NASA. Now, they want some help from the top, to know that the grass will be cut on time, that classrooms will have enough teacher aides and that kitchen workers will have the proper equipment to prepare lunch.

"So far, it's been a bottom-up sort of push," said Terry Lynch, executive director of the Downtown Cluster of Congregations, who has two children in public school. "What we need is the mayor, along with Congress and private industry, to help from the top down."

But there's this caveat: Few want the mayor to dabble in day-to-day affairs. They want him to provide the direction and resources but focus his attention mainly on making sure that other functions of city government don't get in educators' way.

"The mayor's primary mistake so far is that he can't run everything," Lynch said. "He can't plow each of the streets or be the principal in every school. His primary role is seeing that the schools have the resources, direction and facilities."

The heightened interest in the public schools comes as the D.C. financial control board prepares to return power to the Board of Education. Nearly four years ago, the control board declared an education crisis and stripped the board of most of its authority over the schools. The new school board will assume power when it takes office in January.

Day-to-day management of the school system falls to Paul L. Vance, who was hired by the control board in July after Arlene Ackerman left to run the San Francisco schools. Vance, who was superintendent in Montgomery County for eight years, has agreed to stay in the job for a year or two.

Jerome B. Jones, a professor of educational administration and policy at Howard University, who has been a school superintendent in several cities across the country, said the mayor should give Vance whatever support he needs but stay out of day-to-day operations.

"My experience is that where mayors have gotten directly involved in the schools, it has not worked well," said Jones, who serves on the financial control board advisory committee that recommended hiring Vance. "Having chosen a competent chief educational officer, then what we need now is support for that individual."

Vance is not fazed by the mayor's involvement. He and Williams meet occasionally on school issues, and Vance regularly touches base with Williams's staff. Among other issues, he said they recently had discussions about strategies to recruit teachers.

"He is going to be a major player," Vance said of Williams. "He is going to appoint four members of the newly constituted Board of Education. . . . He has really major responsibilities with the city. The fact that his aides have been able to focus on the school system as much as they have has been very productive."

But some council members are already questioning whether the mayor--known to lose interest quickly--can retain his focus. Council members complain that after Williams narrowly won support for his effort to appoint board members, he dropped the ball by not recruiting strong candidates for the elected board seats.

"I thought that's what we were looking for: some new, exciting leaders to come forward," said council member Sharon Ambrose (D-Ward 6), noting that many of the school board candidates are incumbents and people who have run for public office unsuccessfully in the past. "Instead, we're getting reruns."

"I don't see much leadership here" by Williams, Ambrose said.

Gregory M. McCarthy, director of the mayor's office of policy and evaluation, said that Williams never said he would consult with council members and agree to back school board candidates in advance of the Sept. 1 filing deadline.

"They did agree how important it was to urge quality people to run," McCarthy said.

Williams has said he is pleased with the candidates who have filed to run, though some council members and school activists said there are few outstanding choices. And, for now, he's optimistic about his ability to change things, beaming from ear to ear on the first day when all District schools opened on time.

"We've come a long way from where we were three or four years ago," he said. "We want to continue to work towards the goals we outlined."

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September 6, 2000

Corporate-Style Team Sought To Take Charge of Philly District

By Karla Scoon Reid
Education Week

Rather than seek a new superintendent, the Philadelphia school board is working to assemble a corporate-style management team to lead the 217,000-student district.

As Superintendent David W. Hornbeck's six-year tenure ended last month, the board spread his duties between two executives who will manage the district's business and academic affairs.

Deidre R. Farmbry, a veteran Philadelphia educator, will serve as the chief academic officer. Along with chief operating and financial officers who were appointed in May, she will report to an interim chief executive officer, whom the board hopes to name by the end of the month. The board is screening regional candidates for the position of interim CEO and intends to conduct a national search to fill the post permanently.

"Our objective is to have a chief executive officer who is responsible for managing the district in a way that focuses and leverages all district resources toward our core mission of educating children," Pedro Ramos, the president of the school board, said recently.

Philadelphians greeted the decision to abandon the traditional superintendency with both optimism and some apprehension.

"The superintendent job in an urban district is so monumental," said Nancy J. McGinley, the executive director of the Philadelphia Education Fund, a nonprofit organization. "It might be that we're at a time that a team approach will work better."

But educators won't be pleased with a "bottom-line person," cautioned Ms. McGinley, a former Philadelphia principal.

"Frankly, they need a CEO who will be respectful of people who have firsthand knowledge of what works in the classroom," she said.

Cohesion Needed

Establishing a cohesive administrative team could be difficult since the players will be selected without the new executive, said Sam Katz, the chief executive officer of Greater Philadelphia First, a coalition of businesses that helped raise \$100 million for Philadelphia schools.

"This is not the way a business functions," Mr. Katz said. "That's the inverse way of doing it."

Mr. Katz, a Republican who was narrowly defeated for mayor by Democrat John F. Street last year, said the board might find a business executive who can pull the administration together. But the task will be difficult, he said, because the schools chief will have only temporary control.

For Ms. Farmbry, 48, a former Philadelphia teacher, principal, and administrator, the new position of academic chief was more appealing than serving as a superintendent, she said, because it plays to her strengths: curriculum and instruction.

"There are competing and conflicting demands in the traditional role of a superintendent," she said. "This provides the opportunity to focus in one area."

The new structure is similar to those in Chicago and San Diego, where the districts' business and academic functions have been separated. It marks the latest change in Philadelphia.

Voters last fall gave the city's new mayor the power to appoint school board members concurrent with his term. In the past, mayors had to work with board members selected by previous administrations. Mayor Street then appointed former board member Debra Kahn as his education secretary to serve as a liaison between the board and the city government.

Mr. Ramos called the administrative shake-up inevitable.

"To expect one person to provide educational leadership to the district and also have the burden of running an organization this size, that is bigger than most companies CEOs are in charge of—something has to suffer," he said.

Relations with State

To many observers, however, what suffered most during Mr. Hornbeck's six-year tenure was the district's relationship with key politicians in the state capital. Mr. Hornbeck's constant battling with the legislature and Gov. Tom Ridge for more money featured lawsuits and charges that the state's school funding system is racist.

Test scores in the district are up, but money woes, including a multimillion-dollar budget crisis that threatened to shut down the district this year, haven't improved. Mr. Hornbeck resigned in June, just days after Mr. Street made a budget deal with Gov. Ridge that avoided a state takeover.

Under the new arrangement, Mr. Ramos said, the board and mayor will take care of lobbying.

Although the Republican governor is hopeful the changes will boost achievement, titles alone won't spark improvement, said Gretchen Toner, his spokeswoman.

"Of course, the new structure is inseparable from the people who will make it up," she said. "So it's hard to pass judgment until the new CEO is in charge."

For the city's teachers, whose union is negotiating a contract, the management team remains removed from daily concerns.

"I don't think governance is the issue," said Barbara Goodman, a spokeswoman for the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. "It's getting resources into the classroom."

On the Web

Review "[Evaluating Whole-School Reform Efforts: A Guide for District and School Staff](#)," a report from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Schools and Society presents a collection of [stories](#) about the Philadelphia School System.

Experts say Dallas not alone in superintendent problems

Nation's big cities struggling to find, retain qualified leaders

07/23/2000

By Charles Ornstein / The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON - Milwaukee schoolteacher Paulene Copeland said she knows all too well what can happen when a school district loses its superintendent: Priorities change, students suffer and problems remain.

Milwaukee is on its fourth permanent superintendent in five years.

"Even though they're changing this person every year or two, the school system stays the same," said Ms. Copeland, president of the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association. "I don't care who the superintendent is. I don't care how good the superintendent is. He or she is not going to go into a school system and change it overnight."

As Dallas leaders embark on their third superintendent search in four years, educators and parents begin a process that has become commonplace around the country.

Since April 1999, 14 of the nation's 25 largest school districts have replaced their superintendents or launched searches for a new leader. In at least eight of those cases, the deposed superintendents had trouble getting along with school board members or other elected officials.

"If misery loves company on this issue, Dallas has lots of company," said Michael D. Usdan, president of the Institute for Educational Leadership, a Washington group that helps develop leadership skills among educators and superintendents. "Every city in the United States would have some egg on its face."

Turnover has always been a problem in big-city school districts. But the situation is worse today, experts said, because of the public's unrelenting demand for higher test scores, the renewed political focus on education standards, the aging pool of superintendents and a shortage of qualified principals and teachers who want to take their place.

The revolving door raises concerns about the ability of urban schools to innovate, focus on struggling students and improve test scores.

"I'm reminded of an old African proverb: When the elephants fight, the grass gets trampled," said Paul Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators in Arlington, Va.

"The adults are fighting with each other, and the children are getting trampled in the process," he said. "When you get into that kind of turmoil, you have huge negative implications on the system, on the kids in the system. That's the tragedy right now."

Consider New York City. Rudy Crew was ousted as schools chancellor in December after public disagreements with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani about school vouchers and budget priorities. Dr. Crew's predecessor, Ramon

Cortines, quit five years earlier after accusing the mayor of meddling in the school system's budget and activities.

Or take Philadelphia. Superintendent David Hornbeck announced his resignation last month after he and state lawmakers quarreled over financial support for his district. Rather than trigger a state takeover of the city's schools, the district had agreed to cut \$30 million from its budget, jeopardizing Mr. Hornbeck's school-reform agenda.

Or look at Detroit. The Michigan legislature passed a bill last year that dissolved the school board and transferred control to a reform board appointed by Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer and Gov. John Engler. One candidate for the district's top job failed to win the support of the governor's board appointee. After a second round of interviews, the board chose Kenneth Burnley, who had been superintendent in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Leadership experience

Paul Vallas had no school leadership experience when Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley tapped him to head the city's public schools in June 1995. The Illinois legislature had just given the mayor control of Chicago's embattled schools, and Mr. Daley turned to Mr. Vallas, his budget director, to bring about stability.

Mr. Vallas has achieved tangible results. After inheriting a projected \$150 million budget deficit, he produced five annual balanced budgets, and the district received 11 upgrades from bond-rating agencies. He also inked two consecutive four-year labor pacts with the city's teachers, following 15 years of labor unrest. Test scores have improved five years in a row.

Mr. Vallas' colleagues around the country call him a success story, and his tenure is twice the average of an urban superintendent. Yet, Mr. Vallas said he operates at the mayor's discretion and compared himself to Walt Alston, the longtime Los Angeles Dodgers manager who never had more than a one-year contract.

"If you perform, you stay. If you don't perform, you go," Mr. Vallas said. "I've never accepted a contract, and I just operate from year to year. As long as I've got public support, I'll stay. As long as I've got the mayor's support and the mayor thinks I've done a good job, I'll stay."

Like Chicago, other cities have chosen leaders from outside the education profession. Just last month, the Los Angeles school board selected former Colorado Gov. Roy Romer, who had also served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

Mr. Vallas attributed some of his success to the fact that the school system's seven-member corporate board is appointed by the mayor, not elected by the public. That eliminates internal board politicking, he said. And because the mayor is ultimately responsible for the performance of the schools, he devotes significant time, money and lobbying to ensuring success.

"School board elections don't generate a lot of involvement," Mr. Vallas said. "You think you've got public input in the electoral process, but you really don't. Many school board members have close ties to interest groups. And usually people who vote in these elections are only a minority of the registered votes."

Mr. Vallas pointed to Chicago's test scores as proof that improvements don't have to take years. He credited his district's results to eliminating social promotion, raising expectations and making sure that schools had enough supplies and books for all students.

"If you move to impose high standards, if you begin to institute even a modest system of accountability, and if you provide just a minimal system of support programs, there's no reason you can't begin to show some signs of academic improvement right away," he said.

In Milwaukee, the changing makeup of the school board has brought about a rapid succession of superintendents. Two of the four most recent leaders resigned after elections that produced a new board majority demanding major changes.

Bruce Thompson, the current school board president, defended the election system even if it means regularly searching for new superintendents. He said the previous boards lacked a consistent focus, a problem that is gone now that his board is in control.

"Elections should mean something," Mr. Thompson said. "When board members go out and say, 'If I'm elected, this is the direction I'm going to take,' then what they promise should mean something."

Ms. Copeland, president of the Milwaukee teachers' union, sees recent events differently.

One superintendent came into office promising to emphasize early childhood education. Another pledged to focus on multicultural education. The current superintendent is working to create more neighborhood schools and decentralize district operations.

"Each time someone new comes in, they have new ideas," Ms. Copeland said. "You don't get to complete anything. You start on one trail, and then they change superintendents and they ax everything you have been doing."

Mr. Houston of the school administrators group echoed those sentiments.

"It's very difficult to get improvement when you have that much turmoil at the top of an organization, regardless of what the cause might be," he said. "Good people look at this and say, 'I'm going to be there a year or two years and then I'm going to be used up.' It's like a Kleenex approach to leadership."

Stiff competition

If Dallas chooses to look outside the district for a superintendent, it will have stiff competition. Among the large districts looking for superintendents are Philadelphia, Memphis, Denver, Palm Beach County, Fla., and Orange County, Fla.

Since the start of the year, New York City, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Detroit, Baltimore County and Tucson, Ariz., have filled vacancies.

Urban schools face challenges unknown to some suburban districts: poverty, entrenched teachers unions, a high level of social mobility, diversity and a lack of parental involvement.

"Even though superintendents have to be concerned about instructional leadership and student achievement, the social agenda hasn't disappeared in the cities," said Mr. Usdan of the Institute for Educational Leadership. "They have to juggle all this stuff now – the politics, the student achievement, the instruction."

It comes as no surprise to education leaders that the number of applicants for superintendent positions has

dropped dramatically from just a few years ago.

Then, districts could count on 50 or more candidates when their top spot opened.

In Broward County, Fla., which has more students than Dallas, last year's search netted 18 candidates, only three of whom had been superintendents.

The aging of the superintendent pool compounds the problem, researchers said. The average age of today's superintendents is 54, four years older than the average a decade ago. Potential successors aren't applying for the superintendent positions, experts said, because they don't want to deal with the daily headaches of the job or the increasingly nasty squabbles with elected officials. Throughout the education profession, there's a shortage of teachers, administrators and principals as people choose more lucrative professions.

Brian Cram, superintendent in Clark County, Nev., retired this month after more than 11 years on the job. Montgomery County superintendent Paul Vance retired in June 1999 after eight years in the position. And Baltimore County, Md., leader Anthony Marchione retired last month after four years.

Mr. Vance came out of retirement this month to lead the District of Columbia's school district. Mr. Cram now works at a foundation.

Widespread crisis

The turnover of superintendents in Texas mirrors the crisis elsewhere. Nearly a quarter of the state's 1,048 school districts search for a new leader each year, said Johnny Veselka, executive director of the Texas Association of School Administrators in Austin.

Of the state's eight urban school districts, only Fort Worth and Houston have long-standing superintendents.

San Antonio, Austin, El Paso and Ysleta have hired leaders in the past 18 months; Dallas and Corpus Christi are searching. The former superintendents of all six districts quarreled with their school boards before leaving, Dr. Veselka said.

"There is certainly a revolving door, and what I would term a crisis in terms of instability of leadership," Dr. Veselka said.

"Boards and communities need to come together around a leader and give that individual an opportunity to provide leadership over an extended period of time."

Some of Dallas' outspoken school board critics maintain that the city's problems are worse than elsewhere.

"Dallas just doesn't seem to quite get its act together, unlike Chicago or Houston, which appear to be turning their districts around," said Texas state Rep. Domingo Garcia, D-Dallas.

"There's sort of a vacuum of power where nobody's in charge and nobody's accountable."

School board President Roxan Staff said she agrees with some of what Mr. Garcia said. But instead of blaming the school board, she pointed a finger at the residents of Dallas who don't vote in elections.

"In May, we had trustees elected with fewer votes than a high school student council election," she said. "When

you have a district of 90,000 voters and only 1,400 come out and vote, what kind of accountability is that?

"If time after time, board members run unopposed or their opposition is so weak they can't even put out yard signs, we have a public that has disengaged."

Houston superintendent Rod Paige, who has held his position for six years, said the key to a leader's success is the involvement of business groups and civic leaders in the district's affairs. That will ensure stability, he said, and will prevent infighting among board members.

"The same guys that come together to bring a professional football team or the Olympics to the city have to be in place to get a good school system functioning," Dr. Paige said.

"All these groups come together, and they set aside their individual interests to support a common cause. That's the kind of support the public school system needs."

That advice does not appear to be well-received in Dallas, where a coalition of community groups last week condemned the role of local business leaders in the superintendent search.

Dr. Paige said the leadership job takes its toll. "This is a big responsibility. You have to have a screw loose somewhere to try to do this."

Testimony of Dr. Tom Jandris

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Committee on Education and the Workforce U.S. House of Representatives

The Impact of Federal Policies on State and Local Efforts to Reform Education

January 25, 2000

Nearly two decades of intensive reform and innovation have dramatically altered the landscape of American public education. Standards are in place in most states and districts, providing the basis for new ways of measuring and attaching consequences to the performance of students, teachers and schools. A variety of promising new national and state initiatives focused on improving teacher quality are under way. Charter schools, classroom technology, comprehensive school reform models and other innovations have changed the look and feel of public education, providing parents and students with a greater range of options and opportunities.

The nation's aspirations for public education have changed, too. Added to the traditional goals of broader access to schools and increased attendance is the belief that all students can and should be expected to achieve at high levels. As the public education system attempts to fulfill this new aspiration, some schools and districts are performing closer to the mark than others. While there are numerous school districts in which many students are achieving at satisfactory levels, few people believe that schools are as good as they can and ought to be, particularly in urban districts.

With the move to a standards-based system, the focus of policymakers and the public has shifted from which children fail to which schools and districts are failing children, why they are failing and what should be done in response. At the same time, there is unprecedented interest in the lessons to be learned from the experiences and accomplishments of districts and schools that are doing a good job of preparing students for the world that awaits them.

Over the past two decades, research has yielded a strong and growing body of evidence on what makes a successful school. The key elements are:

- A clear focus on academic learning in a climate of high expectations
- A safe and orderly school environment
- High standards for teachers, coupled with ambitious and ongoing professional development activities
- Collegial decisionmaking and a supportive professional environment organized around a common mission
- A partnership with parents and others in the community in support of students' high achievement
- Accountability for student performance.

Conditions vary among school districts, typically along social and economic lines, and seem to affect the degree to which the elements of successful schools are present within a district. Given the higher demands on public schools and the different conditions among districts, one way to increase the number of successful schools may be to alter public education governance - that is, change who makes what education decisions within states, districts and schools.

Governance arrangements establish the rules of the game. They determine, through statutes,

collective bargaining and other legal agreements, regulations and court rulings, who is responsible and accountable for what within a system. In the education system, the real work of learning happens in the classroom, in the interaction between teacher and student. But as the Committee for Economic Development noted in its 1994 report, *Putting Learning First: Governing and Managing the Schools for High Achievement*, "this interaction is affected by innumerable large and small decisions made by principals, school boards, superintendents, state legislatures, education department officials and the federal government. These decisions and their implementation can either aid or hinder quality education in the classroom. This is the heart of education governance." Without good governance, good schools are the exception, not the rule.

With this in mind, in January 1998, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) began work under a multi-year grant from the Joyce Foundation to examine K-12 public education governance. The major purposes of this project, called the Governing America's Schools initiative, are:

- To produce information about public education governance to help policymakers, educators and the general public make informed decisions about how to improve governance
- To promote a national dialogue among policymakers, educators and the general public about how states, districts and schools can improve governance.

As part of this initiative, in February 1999, ECS formed the National Commission on Governing America's Schools to develop options for improving K-12 public education governance. The National Commission's charge was to present ideas and strategies concerning modifications in K-12 public education governance that may lead to improvements for all students.

ECS invited a variety of individuals to serve on the National Commission. Members included current and former state and local school board members; current and former state and local superintendents; current and former teachers; for-profit education and charter school representatives; governors; business leaders; education, social services and public-sector reformers; a state legislator; and a teachers' union leader. Many National Commission members are parents as well.

The National Commission considered several approaches to governance and chose to develop two for consideration by states and districts seeking improvement in their schools. These two approaches are based on available research about the relationship between governance systems and educational results; the experiences of states, districts and schools in changing their governance systems; and the various perspectives of National Commission members on this issue. The two approaches are:

- A system of publicly authorized, publicly funded and publicly operated schools, based on some of the more promising trends within the prevailing system of public education governance
- A system of publicly authorized, publicly funded and independently operated schools, based on some of the more promising alternatives to the prevailing system of public education governance.

These two approaches to public education governance are evolutionary, rather than revolutionary. Far from dismantling current structures and processes, they seek to preserve public education and build on the strengths of the prevailing system, and to infuse it with a greater capacity for adaptability, flexibility and accountability. In fact, many of the ideas and strategies embodied in these two approaches already are being implemented in states, districts and schools across the country: school-based decisionmaking, performance-based accountability, school choice and new kinds of relationships between schools and districts, as in the case of charter schools.

But thus far, too few states and districts have been able to put all of these ideas and strategies

together into a coherent whole and to grapple successfully with the two trends that have dominated education reform for the past 15 years: the push to establish high standards and use them to improve performance and strengthen accountability, and the push to decentralize decisionmaking, shifting greater authority, and the ultimate responsibility for results, to the school level.

The challenge of balancing these two trends and making them work together, rather than at odds, is crucial to realizing the full potential of reform. After all, how can people on the front lines be legitimately held accountable for results unless they have real control over managing, staffing, allocating resources and other day-to-day decisions? And how can state and district leaders do a good job of steering the boat when they are so bogged down in rowing?

To be more specific, the first approach developed by the National Commission accelerates the promising changes already under way, moving from the traditional one-size-fits-all *school system* to a more dynamic, diversified and high-performing *system of schools*. As in today's system, this approach calls for public authorities (primarily school districts) to fund, authorize, operate and oversee schools, although some schools are permitted to operate independently as charter schools.

Roles and responsibilities are redefined to focus states and districts on establishing clearly defined goals for schools, and providing them with the resources, tools and support they need to succeed. School staffs have greater autonomy and flexibility, but are held more strictly accountable for producing results. There are incentives for success and consequences for failure, and schools that do not meet established standards can be reconstituted. There is an emphasis on high standards, capacity building, collaboration, school choice, and diversification of educational opportunities and experiences.

The National Commission's second approach goes much further, significantly redefining the roles, responsibilities and interrelationship of states, districts, schools, communities, and public and private organizations. In this system, public authorities (primarily school districts) fund, authorize and oversee the performance of schools, *but do not directly operate them*. Instead, districts contract with independent entities - nonprofit and for-profit organizations, sole proprietorships, cooperatives - to run schools in much the same way they currently do charter schools.

In this system, teachers, principals, parents and others have considerable freedom to design, create and operate schools, limited only by state and federal laws and the terms of their contract with the district. Parents are allowed to enroll their child in any publicly funded school in the district (including private and parochial schools that come into the district).

This system has rewards for success and consequences for failure. It gives districts the authority to withdraw funding from schools that do not work and reward those that do. There is a strong emphasis on actively mobilizing all of the community's resources around the goal of educating children and on drawing on the energy and fresh ideas of public and private organizations.

The two governance models share significant common ground. Both call for the following:

- Strengthening, not discarding, the public system of education
- Allowing money to follow the child to the school he or she attends
- Granting individual schools control over their personnel and budget
- Giving parents more choice about where their children attend school
- Providing good information on student, teacher and school performance for parents and the community
- Redefining labor/management relations

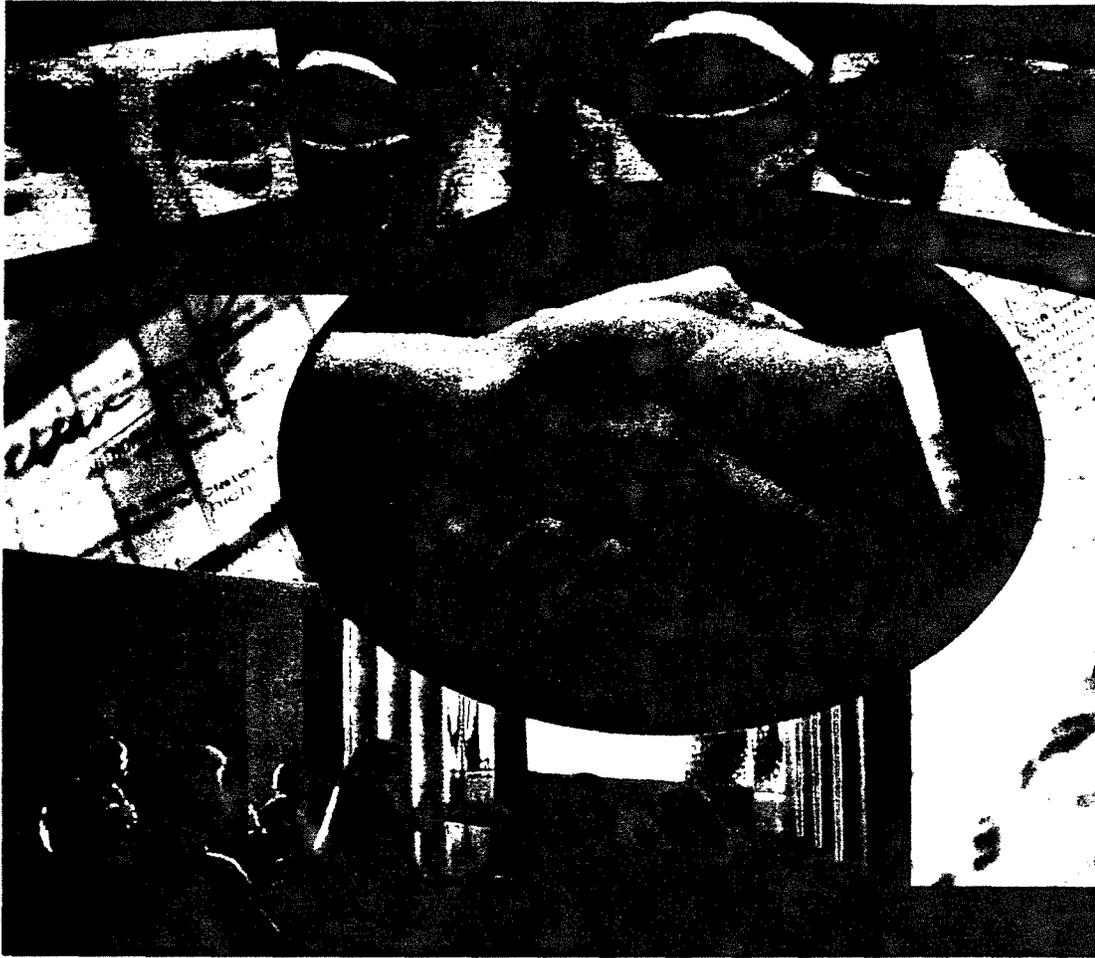
- Focusing accountability systems on improved student achievement
- Strengthening local school boards.

In conclusion, the United States' commitment to public education has served the nation well in the past and must continue to do so in the future. As the country enters the 21st century, its K-12 public education system must provide all students with an education that will prepare them to participate in the democratic political system and to compete in the economic workplace.

What distinguishes the task for the education system in the new millennium is the commitment to all children, not just the privileged few, not just the majority, but all children. The education system cannot exacerbate the differences between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Instead, all children need to be taught to high academic standards.

Therefore, an essential task for policymakers, educators and citizens is to create governance systems that are capable of creating and maintaining successful schools for all children. Improving governance arrangements can allow states and communities to balance core values underlying education, allowing American political communities large and small to be responsive to students, parents, educators and citizens and to enhance opportunities to realize higher student achievement.

Remaking Governance



The creator of 'Policy Governance' challenges school boards to change

BY JOHN CARVER

The familiar—even cherished—practices of school boards are strangling public education. Most of what school boards currently do is a travesty of their important role. Much of what is published for boards—including advice appearing regularly in these pages—reinforces errors of the past or, at best, teaches trustees how to do the wrong things better. In my opinion, school boards don't need improvement so much as total redesign. And they are not alone in this predicament, for governance is the least-developed function in all enterprises.

Preparing people for contributing, satisfying adulthood is

worth the most effective governance a board can achieve. If school boards must completely reinvent themselves to be worthy of their mission—as I'm convinced they must—then so be it. If that means much of current board training must be discarded—as I'm convinced it must—then let it be done. No role deserves transformation more than that of the nation's school boards.

A new governance model

For two decades I have studied and taught governance—the process by which a small group, usually on behalf of others, exercises authority over an organization. I have found that

although boards work hard to solve practical problems as they arise, the crucial missing element is credible theory. The Policy Governance model of board leadership that emerged from my work is arguably the only existing complete theory of governance, whether of businesses, nonprofits, cities, or schools. Its philosophical foundations lie in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social contract, leadership philosopher Robert K. Greenleaf's servant-leadership, and modern management theory.

The model redesigns what it means to be a board, challenging other approaches as founded more on anecdotal wisdom than good theory. A tightly reasoned paradigm, the model must be used in total to achieve its promise of greater accountability. Partial implementation sacrifices the model's benefits, for it is a complete, logical system, not merely tips for improvement.

Using this new paradigm requires a school board to exercise uncharacteristic self-discipline, but it enables the board to govern the system, rather than run it; to define and demand educational results rather than poke and probe in educational and administrative processes; to redirect time from trivia and ritual actions to strategic leadership; to give a superintendent one boss rather than several; to grant administrators and educators great latitude within explicit boundaries; to be in charge of board agendas instead of dependent on staff; and to guarantee unbroken accountability from classroom to taxpayer.

Space here does not allow full explication of Policy Governance. I can, however, list seven characteristics that differentiate this model from governance as now widely practiced and taught.

1. Primacy of the owner-representative role. The board directly touches three elements of the "chain of command": the general public, the board itself, and the superintendent. Although the succession of authority within the system is best left to the superintendent, the board must maintain the integrity of the initial three elements. Let's consider the first link in that chain.

The board's primary relationship is with those to whom it is accountable—the general public, the "shareholders" of public education. The board is the public's purchasing agent for the educational product. The public-board relationship supersedes the board's relationship with everyone else.

The central task of a board is to assimilate the diverse values of those who own the system, to add any special knowledge (often obtained from experts, including staff), then to make decisions on behalf of the owners. The formal link from owners to trustees is the election process—a tight link with respect to a trustee holding office, but a very loose link with respect to knowing the public's mind. Typically, boards rely on open meetings, public hearings, and constituent phone calls for the bulk of public input. These methods not only fail to fulfill the board's obligation to connect with the owners, they are misleading in that the "public" is self-selected and typically expresses not its owner role, but its customer, vendor, or operator role. Boards rarely hear from a representative sampling of owners. Because the general public is so large, a continual sys-

tem of focus groups, surveys, and advisory mechanisms is required to achieve even a semblance of fulfilling the board's owner-representative role. The time is overdue for putting the public back into public education.

Cultivating a principal-agent relationship between the public and the board holds great promise for the position of education in society, but this relationship has been impaired by decades of conventional practice. For example, boards promote an inappropriate direct link from public to superintendent. This connection circumvents the board's role as sole owner-representative and lets the board off the hook for poor system performance. If the public can blame poor school performance on the superintendent, then the fact that it is the board that has let the public down might go unnoticed. Making the hiring of a superintendent into an affair of high-profile community involvement is part of this same aberration. Superintendents are instruments of the board, not of the public. The public's instrument is the board.

Another mistake is behaving as if parents are the system's owners and that the board is their representative. Boards historically have shortcut the owner-board-organization-customer circuit, partly because parents are the most vocal subgroup of owners, and partly because they are fewer and easier to identify than the true ownership. Consequently, both politics and logistics induce boards to act as if parents own the system. Parents might resist losing any part of this role, but public policy (and, in the long run, parents and students) will benefit by facing the fact that parents, *as parents*, do not own the public schools. Parents are owners by virtue of being part of the public, but they constitute only a percentage, not the whole. The same is true of teachers, administrators, and the media.

This is not to denigrate the importance of parents. Parents and their children are customers/consumers of the system and, as such, are no less important and no less to be courted and pleased than customers of any other enterprise. Nor does this formulation minimize the central role of parents in their children's education. In fact, failing to give parents an integral role in the educational process would be unconscionable.

2. One voice from plural trustees. Trustees have authority only as a full board—but few boards behave accordingly. Staff members take instructions from and answer to individual trustees and board committees. Individual trustees judge staff performance on criteria the board as a body has never stated. Superintendents seek to keep individual trustees happy quite apart from fulfilling board requirements. Trustees enjoy getting things "fixed" for constituents. There is often unspoken agreement that "you can meddle in your district if you'll let me meddle in mine." It is not enough to dismiss these phenomena as simply politics and personalities. Whether the board intends it or not, the realpolitik of school systems demonstrates regularly that staff members do, in fact, take direction from individual trustees.

If a board seriously intends to speak with only one voice, it must declare that the staff can safely ignore advice and instructions from individual trustees, that only the explicit instructions

of the board must be heeded. Excellence in governance will not occur until superintendents are certain that trustees *as a group* will protect them from trustees *as individuals*.

Commitment to the authoritative unity of the board in no way compromises board members' right to speak their minds. Vigorous disagreement among trustees does not damage governance, but allowing intraboard skirmishes to affect the staff is irresponsible. In short, trustees who disagree with the vote may continue to say so, but may not influence organizational direction. It is in boards' interest that superintendents treat a 5-4 vote as a 9-0 vote.

3. The superintendent as a real chief executive officer. Boards frequently give direction to subordinates of the superintendent, degrading the chief executive role and the board's own ability to hold the superintendent accountable. Only if the board expresses its aims for the system as a whole—rather than part by part—can the powerful utility of the chief executive role be harnessed, simultaneously simplifying accountability and saving board time.

In other words, the superintendent is the only person the board instructs and the only person the board evaluates. The superintendent should be authorized to use any reasonable interpretation of instructions the board gives. This requires the board to take full responsibility for its words and enables the superintendent to take the board at its word.

4. Authoritative prescription of "ends." The board's greatest and most difficult responsibility is to clarify and reclarify why the system exists. This requires the board to be both proactive and authoritative—to define expected results for students and to demand system performance. The public is buying specifiable results for specifiable groupings of students at specifiable costs or priorities.

Informed obsession with the system's "ends"—that is, results, recipients, and cost of results—should be the dominant work of the board. Involvement in curriculum, special reading initiatives, or testing programs will not suffice. To the contrary, holding a system accountable is impeded by board involvement in these and other internal processes. Instead of demanding ends performance, boards routinely fail to describe the ends and then intervene in what they've hired professionals to do. No amount of telling people how to run the system can substitute for simply demanding designated results and getting out of their way.

5. Bounded freedom for "means." Boards struggle with the dilemma of being accountable for others' work. Con-

trol is necessary, but so is empowerment. Authority not given away does little good, but too much given away constitutes rubber stamping or dereliction. How can the board have its arms around the system without its fingers in it?

If ends expectations are met (right results, right recipients, right costs or priorities), the "means"—that is, other decisions, such as methods, practices, and conduct—must have worked. So the board does not have to control means prescriptively. In fact, to tell staff how to accomplish ends impedes creativity and innovation. Why does the board need to control means at all? Because not all means are justified by the ends—some means would be unacceptable even if they work. The achievement of

ends demonstrates that means are effective, but it doesn't prove that means are acceptable.

To address the acceptability of means, the board need only define the boundaries of acceptability. The board limits the superintendent's latitude regarding certain situations, activities, or risk. In effect, the board does not tell the system how to operate, but how *not* to—an approach that is simpler and safer for the board and freeing for the staff. The message from board to superintendent, then, is, "Achieve these ends within these restrictions on means." This instruction

embraces the whole of board-staff delegation, which is to say, the superintendent's job description.

6. Board decisions crafted by descending size. There is no way the board can determine every result for every child and the cost appropriate for that result. Similarly, it is impossible to state every unacceptable action or situation. So what prevents the seemingly simple protocol of prescribing ends and proscribing means from deteriorating into maddening detail?

Boards must manage the sequence of different sizes of decisions. First, the board defines ends and unacceptable means in as broad a way as possible. For example, the broadest version of ends might be, "Students acquire skills and understandings for successful life at a tax rate comparable to that of similar districts." The broadest version of means limitation might be, "Don't allow anything imprudent or unethical." This is broad indeed—which is to say it is open to a wide range of interpretation. If the board were willing to allow the superintendent to use any reasonable interpretation of these words, the board could stop with these two short instructions.

But no board would allow that. Instead, the board must define a bit more, perhaps adding, "Don't allow assets to be unnecessarily risked or inadequately maintained," along with similarly narrowed prohibitions about personnel treatment.

In effect,
the board does not
tell the system
how to operate,
but how not to.

compensation systems, parental involvement, and so forth. As to ends, the board might augment its initial, broad statement with, "Students will be literate above age-level expectations." This is also too broad for most boards, so the next step is to define still further. The process continues step-by-step into more detail until the majority of trustees are willing to accept any reasonable interpretation of the words used to that point. At this level the board stops and superintendent authority begins.

7. System-focused superintendent evaluation. The only reason to have a chief executive officer is to ensure system performance. Consequently, board expectations of the system (ends and limits on means) are the *only* criteria on which a superintendent should be assessed. The board actually evaluates the entire system (not the superintendent personally) and "pins it" on the superintendent. Most discussions of superintendent evaluation—including articles in recent issues of *ASBJ*—miss the power of this simplicity, falling back on such nonperformance, personalized irrelevancies as "leads by example" and "proficient in educational thinking." It is archaic and spurious to evaluate a superintendent on anything other than whether the system produces and operates as it should. It is *system performance* for which the board is accountable to the public.

Annual board approval of the superintendent's objectives is another testimony to poor governance. If the superintendent accomplishes the board's expectations, it is immaterial whether he or she achieves his or her own as well. Typically, boards have not expressed system expectations sufficiently to enable recognition of success and failure on their own. In the Policy Governance model, ends to be achieved and means disallowed embrace all the board's expectations. Moreover, they are targeted at system accountability, unaffected by how a given superintendent retains or delegates the various elements of management.

Monitoring data are reviewed throughout the year, as frequently as the board chooses. Because these data directly address performance on ends and means limitations, they constitute a continual evaluation of the superintendent. Although there might also be a summative annual evaluation, the criterion-focused monitoring system is the most direct measure of superintendent performance—a seamless process through time rather than a sporadic event.

This comparison of reality to expectations must be fair as well as uncompromising. Trustees should not judge the superintendent's performance on criteria the board has never stated. Expectations not incorporated into the board's ends or means limitations cannot be admitted into evaluative monitoring. Further, "any reasonable interpretation" of the board's expectations must mean just that—not the interpretation of the most influential trustee or what the board had in mind but didn't say.

What it looks like

What does the public see the board doing differently under Policy Governance? The board gets out of the superintendent's job

and takes responsibility for its own job. Because agendas are no longer staff-driven, board meetings are the *board's* meetings—not the staff's meetings for the board. The steady stream of documents for approval disappears from the regular agenda due to more sophisticated delegation. (Criteria that would have led to disapprovals are known and monitored, so the "approval syndrome" becomes inconsistent with proper delegation. The consent agenda is reserved for decisions the board would delegate, but on which law requires board action.) Freed from endless crowding of its agenda by managerial material, the board does its own work instead of pretending that looking over the superintendent's shoulder *is* its work.

Board meetings are not characterized by shoot-from-the-hip instructions to the superintendent, much less to the staff. Board meetings are not to help manage the system, nor to go over operational details. The board no longer struggles through extensive reports unrelated to preestablished criteria. It has learned that what it previously thought was monitoring was merely wandering around in the presence of data.

Board meetings are not parent and vendor complaint meetings. Any system in which customer complaints must go to the board for resolution is poorly designed. (Envision having to take your cold hamburger to the fast food chain's board.) On the contrary, the board expects the superintendent to have parents taken care of as courteously and effectively as possible. If a parent problem gets to the board, it is considered symptomatic of a system flaw rather than an opportunity for trustee involvement. Parents get their say in the way the system affects their children, but not by supplanting the owners' meetings.

Most board committees disappear. If a board has committees, it does so only for help with *its* job—never to help, advise, or instruct staff, lest it destroy the clarity of delegation. The board does not believe that the kind of internal involvement described in an article about board committees in a recent issue of *ASBJ* is related to governing the system. For a board committee to focus on staff activities is probably the most intrusive of board practices and the most wasteful of staff and trustee time.

Liberated from hours of preoccupation with system operations, trustees have more time to meet with community groups, other public boards, and pertinent authorities. Raising its visibility as a governmental leader, the board demonstrates its focus on ends and its long-term perspective by the language it uses, questions it asks, and topics it schedules. Joint meetings with city councils, hospital boards, social service boards, and other organs of the public become commonplace.

Board meetings are spent learning diverse points of view on what is most important for schools to produce, differing projections of future needs of students, and any other wisdom that helps in making wise long-term decisions about ends. The public is integral to these meetings, but carefully organized so the board gets representative input.

Many board meetings are not meetings in the usual sense at all, but take place in community settings where certain segments of the public can be heard. Wherever the meeting, the atmosphere is tailored for listening and entering into dialogue.

Board meetings are places of thoughtful dialogue and debate rather than the trivia that commonly besets conventional agendas.

Through focus groups, the board assesses public values about priorities and costs of educational products. This is not a sporadic or single-purpose effort, but an unending process. These carefully planned interactions are not for public relations, but for the dual purpose of enhancing board understanding and reinforcing the public's sense of ownership of its schools. Trustees are perceived as the public's servant-leaders in the great challenge of preparing citizens for a democracy.

What schools are for

The critical role of education in a democracy demands exceptional governance integrity. Commitment and intelligence cannot overcome our institutionalized hodgepodge of traditional practices. Conscientious, detailed preoccupation with what schools *do* can never compensate for failing to define clearly what schools are *for*, then demanding system performance from a chief executive officer. Visionary leadership is not

forged in a flurry of trivia, micromanagement, and administrative detail. If school boards are not the place for serious, perpetual community debate of how much this generation is willing to pay for which skills and understandings of the next generation, what other place does the public have?

Earlier, in illustrating flaws of conventional wisdom, I cited two articles from previous issues of *ASBJ*. I'll close by quoting a refreshing article ("Changing the Entitlement Culture," Paul McGowen and John Miller) in the August 1999 issue. "The challenge is for leaders to change the culture. ... It is time for public school leaders to seize the initiative." If there is to be a renaissance of public education, it will begin when boards discard the conceptually incoherent practices of today for a public leadership founded on sound governance theory.

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