

# Big City Mayors and School Governance Reform: The Case of School District Takeover

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As the *Peabody Journal of Education* celebrates its 80th anniversary, educational policymakers and practitioners are keenly aware of the many changes in the way public schools have been governed in large urban districts over the last 80 years. Among the most significant changes is the role of the mayor. Although the 1920s saw partisan politics in retreat because of the reform efforts of the Progressive movement, mayors (and governors) have felt the political pressure to mediate intense interest-group competition since the 1960s. By the 1990s, mayors in several big cities, with gubernatorial support, decided to lead the public school system. Clearly, the relationship between the mayors and the schools has been reconfigured in the last 80 years. This article aims to analyze mayoral takeover as a reform strategy.

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Regardless of who is in charge, there are significant challenges to improving public education in American cities. Thirty percent of the children in urban areas are poor, compared to 18% for the nation as a whole. Urban schools are twice as likely to enroll minority children than the national average. When compared to the national level, students in urban areas are three times as likely to live in extremely impoverished neighborhoods. Clearly, urbanity and poverty intensify the magnitude of constraints on teaching and learning. Although only 23% of the fourth graders in high-poverty schools performed at the basic level or higher in the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading tests, almost 70% of their peers did so in schools with less poverty outside the urban setting (Wong, 1999).

It is thus clear that public education in American cities faces major structural challenges at the beginning of the 21st century. Of special concern are those underachieving urban school districts that have failed to improve, even after reform policies have been implemented. Despite coordinated efforts to turn themselves around, these school districts continue to perform dismally in raising student achievement, practicing fiscal responsibility, and effectively managing their operations. In these cities, the public is increasingly demanding that the school district be held accountable for their sustained failures.

In response to this call for accountability, states and cities have begun to allow for takeover of the school district, either by a state authority or by the mayor. A growing number of state and city governments have developed policies to deal with failing school districts or failing schools (Cibulka & Derlin, 1998; O'Day, 1997). Most states have had provisions for state takeover of local school districts, but states rarely invoked them, except in cases of clear financial mismanagement or illegal activity (Cibulka, 1999). Some of the more recent state takeover laws have focused more on breaches of academic accountability. Twenty-four states allow state takeover of local school districts, permitting state officials to exert authority over a district in the case of academic bankruptcy, or woefully low-performing schools, but only 11 states have exercised the law.

School district takeover is currently becoming an important political and policy issue in many states. In Missouri, for instance, school districts in both St. Louis and Kansas City have faced possible takeovers by the State Board of Education ("Lawmakers rue," 2001; "Most candidates," 2001). In New York, there was discussion of a takeover by state education officials of the Roosevelt school district on Long Island (Keller, 2001). In these and other instances, state or mayoral takeover seems to be an attractive option to turn around failing school districts.

In light of the growing trend of city and state takeover of school districts, this article examines the potential for school district takeover to turn around low-performing schools. Special emphasis is placed on big city mayors, who face the greatest challenges in dealing with some of the nation's largest and most troubled school districts. Consequently, this article is organized into four sections. The first section presents the organizing principles behind takeover reform and also discusses the reasons why big city mayors have been especially eager to integrate education policy into their political agendas. In the second section, we place the current mayoral involvement in schools in a historical perspective, arguing that the latest shift in the balance of power seems to signal an institutional reconfiguration in the history of urban education governance. The third section is an analysis of the current state of school district takeover, offering capsule descriptions of each case of comprehensive school district takeover currently in progress. Finally, the last section identifies several key facilitating factors and the barriers to improving schools under takeover reform. Using the integrated governance framework, we examine the variations in institutional arrangements that have been established in mayoral and state takeovers. Differences exist among the takeovers run by state officials and those in which state education officials are in control. By comparing the variations in takeover reform, this study offers researchers and policymakers a better understanding of the political and economic factors that affect the implementation of school district takeover.

Like other major reforms, city or state takeover suggests both promises and limitations. On the one hand, the takeover strategy has the potential to turn around low-performing communities. Takeover initiatives tend to hold schools and students accountable to systemwide standards. To restore public trust, takeover reform maintains a strong focus on low-performing schools and students, including allocating additional resources to those schools. Takeover reform also recruits nontraditional leaders to top management positions to change existing organizational practices and cultures. On the other hand, professional educators view takeover initiatives as an infringement of their professional autonomy. Mayoral- or state-appointed administrators might lack the expertise on instructional and curriculum issues. Too often, takeover reform pays primary attention to standardized test achievement as the most important measure of school improvement. Questions have also been raised about the role of race in determining the takeover of districts (Reinhard, 1998). Given these potential strengths and limitations of takeover reform, this article examines the design, institutional arrangement, and implementation of this reform initiative.

To date, school district takeover has remained a relatively low-profile topic for researchers. Only a few reports have considered school district takeover from a cross-district perspective (Bushweller, 1998; Seder, 2000; Ziebarth, 2001). Part of this lack of study on school district takeover is likely due to the fact that there is extensive localized research on each takeover district. Chicago, Illinois; Boston, Massachusetts; Baltimore, Maryland; Compton, California; and other takeover cities have been the subject of many thorough reports and analyses, authored by academics, research institutes, and internal accountability departments.

To be sure, readers interested in specific questions, such as, "What does takeover reform look like in city X?" and "What has been the experience of city X with takeover reform?" have many places to look for those answers. But there is not an extensive set of studies interested in more generalized questions, such as, "What can be said about the nature of takeover reform? Is city X the exception or the rule? If a new city were to engage in takeover reform, what might we expect to happen?" Thus, this article focuses on these more generalized questions, which will help researchers better understand the nature of takeover reform. It will contribute to the procedural knowledge of designing and implementing this strategy in different settings. This may be of use to policymakers who are currently considering turning to takeover reform to fix their city schools.

### Organizing Principles Behind Takeover Reform

What is meant by takeover reform? Considering the variety of ways that takeover has been implemented, it may first seem hard to arrive at a single definition of takeover. It is certainly a difficult task to generalize about a reform model that must mold itself to a unique set of political and educational institutions in each urban setting within specific parameters established by the state legislature. In Chicago, Illinois, for instance, Mayor Richard M. Daley and his first appointed chief executive officer (CEO), Paul Vallas, exercised considerable control over the public school system as granted by the reform legislation. A different kind of takeover exists in Baltimore, Maryland, in which the state and city work in a partnership. State takeovers, in which state-appointed officials direct district operations, also vary. In Jersey City, New Jersey, the state is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school district. In Lawrence, Massachusetts, the state allows local authorities to run the district but holds veto power over financial and administrative decisions.

However, behind this variation in the implementation is a consistent set of organizing principles. City and state government takeover as a

school reform model focuses on district-level capacity to reduce institutional fragmentation and raise academic accountability. Takeover reform can be conceptualized as a systemwide restructuring based on organizational principles. These principles are as follows (Wong, 1992, 1999):

- Recognize that the existing political structures are not easily alterable.
- Empower the district and state-level administration to intervene in failing schools.
- Enable city hall to manage conflicting interests and reduce fragmentary rules.
- Integrate political accountability and educational performance standards at the systemwide level.

The structure of takeover reform can also be understood as it compares to an alternative set of reforms, broadly labeled *choice based*. The choice strategy relies on parental preferences as the primary driving force to improve school performance. Choice-based reform values school autonomy and competition in a marketlike environment. It begins with the premise that government need not make all the decisions. To be sure, there are variations in the design and implementation of the choice-based arrangements. A popular strand of choice reform maintains the schools' public character but departs substantially from the traditionally bureaucratic organization of educational services. Examples of this innovation include charter schools and contractual arrangements, both of which may involve nontraditional service providers (Chubb, 1997; Hill, 1997). Another type of choice reform tends to redraw (or even to eliminate) the line that traditionally separates the public from the private domain. School voucher experiments that enable parents to choose private and parochial schools constitute the most radical examples ("Norquist delivers," 1999; Peterson & Noyes, 1997).

In contrast to choice, takeover reform can be understood as belonging to the broad category of integrated governance that enables the mayor or state officials to rely on systemwide standards to hold schools and students accountable for their performance. To improve outcome-based accountability, integrated governance often imposes sanctions on and provides support to low-performing schools. Failing students are no longer promoted to a higher grade but are required to attend summer instructional programs. Indeed, integrated governance has gained national attention. A clear example is President Clinton's educational improvement plan, as announced in his State of the Union message in January 1999. With a sharpened focus on accountability, the president proposed an end to social promotion, a phasing out of teachers who lack subject area

competence, and an effort to reconstitute low-performing schools. States and localities were encouraged to develop strategies to help students meet promotion standards.

### A Historic Shift

Urban school governance in the 20th century was dominated by reform efforts that kept mayors and other political leaders from interfering in public schools. Over the past 80 years, school governance has gone through three phases, each of which can be broadly differentiated by the degree of mayoral control. The Progressive reform of the 1920s was designed to use scientific management to keep partisan (mayoral) politics out of the school sector. By the 1960s, school boards and superintendents allied with the mayor to manage intense conflicts over educational issues; many of them were further complicated by racial and income inequities in big cities. The emergence of accountability-based reform during the 1990s created a new set of political realities for a more active mayoral role. Although reforms adopted in each of the three phases took on a process of incremental accumulation, in which previously enacted reforms were slightly modified and then layered onto the current ones, the role of the mayor has become increasingly visible and assertive over time.

The Progressive–corporate governance paradigm dominated the reform phase that roughly covered the period from the 1920s to the mid-1960s. During the first quarter of the 20th century, urban centers were growing rapidly as the manufacturing and industrial sectors created job opportunities for waves of working-class immigrants. The urban population, according to the 1920 U.S. Census, exceeded its rural counterpart for the first time in American history. In this context of social and economic changes, public schools became a contested terrain. Banfield and Wilson (1966) characterized reform politics as a conflict between private regarding and public regarding civic culture. The working class and immigrant groups, according to these political scientists, relied on community networks and precinct captains of the political machines to gain access into the political and economic mainstream for jobs, services, and other tangible benefits. Middle- and upper-income classes, in contrast, wanted an efficient governmental system accountable to the taxpayers at large. By the 1920s, businesses and their Progressive allies were able to institute far-reaching reforms to insulate the school system from partisan intrusion. The new model that originated from the Progressive Era continues to dominate many districts even today. The main features that are traceable to the reform of the 1920s include the following:

- The school district was governed by a citywide, nonpartisan, elected board that appointed the school superintendent as its professional chief executive.
- The district's administrative hierarchy and delivery of services were led by a professionally credentialed school superintendent and his or her professional cabinet.
- The district's personnel policy was codified in details to guard against political interference.
- Schooling services (such as instructional time) were organized in terms of age-specific grade-level and subject matter knowledge.
- The district's taxing authority was autonomous from city hall.

Although mayors continued to exercise informal influence on particular issues and interests, an insulated school system was able to build and maintain its own institutional rules.

Throughout the 1960s and into the 1980s, changing urban school politics created new opportunities for mayors to mediate competing demands. Among the key factors in contributing to heightened school conflicts were racial tension over the pace of integrating schools, taxpayer dissatisfaction with the local property tax burden, readiness of teachers unions to strike when collective bargaining failed, and the declining political influence of the urban population in the state legislature. These challenges clearly outmatched the capacity of an independent school board and its professional superintendent. As a result, mayors found themselves in a new role, namely crisis management. For example, Chicago's mayor, Richard J. Daley, repeatedly became involved in bargaining with the teachers union to keep labor peace during the 1960s and the early 1970s (Grimshaw, 1979). New York's mayor, John Lindsey, was instrumental in decentralizing the city's school system. Mayors also lobbied on behalf of the autonomous school districts for additional funding at the state capital. Intergovernmental agreements over an increasingly complex federal grants-in-aid system often benefited from mayoral guidance. In other words, mayors began to reenter the realm of school governance during this second politically contentious phase of reform.

By the 1990s, big city mayors saw public education as an important investment to improve the city's overall quality of social and economic life. They wanted to improve safety, parks, schools, and recreational services for families who lived in the city. From a broader policy context, mayors were increasingly skeptical of traditional strategies to turn around declining schools and depressing neighborhoods. Instead, they were willing to take political risks and move away from their own political party policy platforms. Although mayors in previous decades wanted to control the school

district for patronage purposes, an increasing number of mayors of the 1990s focused primarily on raising the performance of the schools. To improve academic and management performance, some mayors were willing to lead the school district themselves. In other cases, mayors were supportive of charter schools and were mobilizing a broader reform coalition to circumscribe the influence of the teachers union. In short, with the emergence of formal mayoral control over schools in the 1990s, the boundary between mayors and schools was redrawn. Clearly, the 1920s' model of insulating school governance from mayoral influence has been significantly revised.

### *Emerging Mayoral Leadership in Big City Public Schools*

Why have mayors decided to play a more active role in governing the public schools? The more activist role of mayors can be understood in the current climate of outcome-based accountability and greater emphasis on human capital as an economic development strategy. Since the 1990s, big city mayors have become more interested in managing their local schools. We believe this trend is likely to expand. The changing relationship between the mayors and the schools gained national attention in 1995 when Chicago's mayor, Richard M. Daley, gained complete control over managing the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). William Bennett, President Reagan's Secretary of Education in 1987, characterized the Chicago Public Schools as "the worst system in the nation." A few years after Daley took over, President Clinton mentioned Chicago schools as a model of school improvement in two State of the Union messages. City takeover reform is currently established in Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Ohio; Boston, Massachusetts; Oakland, California; Baltimore, Maryland; and Detroit, Michigan, among others. This reform enables the mayor and mayoral appointees to rely on systemwide standards to hold schools and students accountable for their performance. To improve outcome-based accountability, mayoral control often imposes sanctions and provides support to low-performing schools. Failing students are no longer promoted to a higher grade but are required to attend summer instructional programs (Wong & Jain, 1999).

The link between the mayor's office and the board can facilitate political support for the school system. In the case of mayoral takeover in Chicago, Mayor Daley has been visibly willing to invest his political capital in turning around low-performing Chicago schools. To restore public confidence, the new administration has projected an image of efficient, responsive, and clean government (Wong, 1999). Further, Wong, Jain, and Clark (1997) suggested that mayoral control in Chicago has had a significant effect on improving overall management of the CPS. The CPS uses accountability

driven outcomes to measure performance. However, we know less about the reengineering aspects that are less readily quantifiable—the more subtle changes in work climate, student morale, and characteristics of student of institutional resilience.

In terms of classroom impact in high school, Wong and Anagnastopolous (1998) suggested that outcome-based accountability policies under mayoral control can redirect the allocation of resources across the multiple levels of school organization to produce a certain degree of change in curriculum and instruction. Schools and teachers, however, respond to a narrow focus on standardized test scores by targeting resources in ways that fragment the curriculum and undermine improvements in teaching. Teachers' routine curricular and instructional practices remain largely unchanged. Although outcome-based accountability policies may expose the failure of these routines, they may have limited potential to address these failures unless teachers themselves are prepared to integrate the higher expectations into their daily practices.

The emergence of mayoral involvement in education can also be seen as an institutional response to the decline in public confidence over the current state of urban school leadership. Based on a 1998 survey, the National School Boards Foundation (NSBF) found, "There is a consistent, significant difference in perception between urban school board members and the urban public on a number of key issues" (NSBF, 1999, p. 12). Although 67% of the urban board members rated schools in A and B categories, only 49% of the urban public did. Whereas three out of four board members rated the teachers as excellent and good, only 54% of the public agreed. The public seemed half as likely as the board members to agree that the schools were doing a good job in the following areas: preparing students for college, keeping violence and drugs out of schools, maintaining discipline among students, and teaching children who don't speak English. Subsequently, the NSBF called on urban leaders to sharpen the focus on student performance.

Mayoral involvement in education represents an institutional effort to fill the confidence gap by addressing the performance challenge. In this regard, mayoral leadership in education occurs in a policy context in which years of decentralized reform alone have not produced systemwide improvement in student performance in big city schools. Reform advocates who pushed for site-based strategies may have overestimated the capacity of the school community to raise academic standards. Decentralized reforms are directed at reallocating power between the systemwide authority and the schools within the public school system. Decentralized initiatives, however, often fail to take into full consideration powerful quasi-formal actors, such as the teachers union and other organized interests. Decisions made at the school site are constrained by

collective bargaining agreements. In addition, decentralization may widen the resource gap between schools that have access to external capital (such as parental organizational skills and grants from foundations) and those that receive limited support from nongovernmental sources.

For example, the 1988 CPS reform was guided by the belief that parent and citizen empowerment through local school councils (LSCs) would improve educational performance. The law specifically links LSCs to better academic outcomes, including a significant reduction in dropout rates and an increase in test scores. However, several years of LSC reform did not produce satisfactory improvements in student performance. Although the school-by-school trends in reading on standardized tests showed a fairly sharp decline, math and writing performance did not worsen between 1989 and 1995. Whereas only one third of the elementary schools seemed to have improved, most elementary and high schools were falling behind in the decentralized reform. With bipartisan support, the state legislature granted mayoral authority over the CPS in July 1995.

Chicago was not the first system in which the mayor has taken over in recent years. With less national attention, Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston, Massachusetts, assumed authority over the school district in 1992. In Baltimore, Maryland, the school system has long been a department of city hall and the superintendent a cabinet member of the mayor's team (Wong 1990). Daley's control over the CPS, however, has generated broader policy implications. Daley not only focused on improving education as an important revitalization strategy in Chicago itself (Wong & Jain, 1999), but as the chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, he also brought greater nationwide attention to the role that mayors can play in improving their city school systems. Prior to Daley's term as its chair, the Conference of Mayors lacked a division on education. Under Daley's leadership, the conference issued a major report on Best Practices in Education, held a joint conference of mayors and big city school superintendents, and created a task force on public schools that was chaired by Daley and Boston's Menino. Clearly, the conference activities seem to have promoted the notion of mayoral leadership in public schools. As we will discuss later in this article, an increasing number of mayors have expressed an interest in gaining administrative powers over their local schools.

An increase in mayoral involvement in schools is closely related to the multiple functions that public schools serve at the local level. From a fiscal perspective, public schools constitute one of the largest local employers. For example, the CPS ranks as the second-largest public employer in the state. Further, education dominates the local budget. Though it is not a part of the city budget in most cities in a technical sense, education expenses range anywhere from 25% to 35% of total city expenses. Schools'

heavy reliance on local property taxes highly affects a city's taxing and spending capacity.

From the perspective of the city as a service provider, education remains one of the most important issues that voters want their local leaders to address. Although preferring to receive more federal and state funds, the public continues to define education as primarily a local responsibility. In the 1990s, mayors demonstrated their fiscal prudence and initiated administrative reforms to improve city government performance. Consequently, mayors see the bureaucratized school system as their next key challenge for service improvement (Wong et al., 1997). Nonetheless, mayoral interest in education can be frustrated by existing structural barriers, such as a nonpartisan, elected school boards that stop politics at the schoolhouse door.

Local schools remain an important neighborhood institution. For high-poverty neighborhoods, schools serve as social buffers that create opportunities for children and parents of low-income backgrounds to connect to the social and economic mainstreams (Wilson, 1987). In neighborhoods that are marred by constant warfare among rival gangs, schools offer signs of stability and provide an accessible safe haven for the local students. Increasingly, urban politicians are willing to allocate funds to build up schools as community centers for local activities, such as afterschool and summer recreational programs.

In the context of intercity competition for economic gains, city leaders find schools an important developmental tool (Peterson, 1981). As cities are making an economic comeback in the 1990s, a major task for mayors is to retain middle-class families. It is commonly known that young professional couples stay in the city until they begin to raise their school-age children. Concerns about the quality of education and crime often contribute to the out-migration of the urban middle class. To maintain a taxpaying labor force in the cities, public schools will have to be improved to attract middle-class students. Similarly, businesses also choose cities that have a good record of school performance so that they can attract a pool of talented employees. These interrelated factors in today's urban economic reality suggest that the pressure is building on mayors to tackle the problems of their educational systems. Mayors, in other words, can no longer afford an educational system that is largely isolated from the economic futures of their cities.

#### *Mayoral or City Versus State-Run Takeover*

In analyzing the facilitating factors and barriers to success in takeover reform, the most important distinction to make is between city or mayoral versus state takeovers. In one sense, this is an artificial distinction. In all

cases, state officials authorize takeover. Mayoral takeovers are unique because instead of granting power to a state-selected oversight board, the state allows a mayor and mayor-appointed officials to run the district.

Although city takeovers are authorized through the state and share much in common with state takeovers, the four prominent big city takeovers (Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Cleveland) present a special group for analysis. One reason is the aforementioned importance of mayors within an integrated governance system, but there are also significant size and sociodemographic differences, which are presented in Table 1. Although the racial makeup of the student body is similar across city and state takeovers, city districts have more than four times the number of schools that the state takeover districts do and about five times the number of students to handle (Table 1). Thus, when mayors decide to take over the educational system, they take on an enormous challenge.

Mayoral takeover cities also differ from state takeovers, because unlike state-appointed superintendents, mayors are politically accountable to their constituents. If parents and residents are unhappy with the progress of educational reform, they can choose to vote the mayor out of office. When state-appointed officials are put in charge, however, it is sometimes difficult to see who is accountable if the district does not improve.

Another important difference between city and state takeovers is the balance of revenue coming from city versus state sources. As seen in Table 2, mayoral takeover districts receive a significantly larger percentage of their education revenue from local sources (Figure 1). With more revenue from local sources, mayors in these districts have more leverage to ask for and gain increased local control of the schools. In the state-controlled districts, state revenue makes up about 70% of total revenue, and this number grew over the period 1992–1997. In contrast, the mayoral takeover districts receive approximately 50% of their total revenue from the state. We can also interpret this difference in terms of increased accountability. State takeover districts are more accountable to the state than city takeover districts because in the state takeover districts, states are funding a greater portion of total district revenue. In city takeovers, there is greater accountability to local taxpayers because local taxpayers are funding a majority of the district's revenue.

### Analysis of Takeover Reform

The seven in-progress city takeovers (excluding Harrisburg, Pennsylvania) provide a spectrum of takeover implementation (see Appendix A). In the first four cities, the mayors secured a takeover of their failing school dis-

Table 1

*Size and Demographic Characteristics of Districts Under City and State Takeover*

	State	Year of Reform	Size of the School District		
			National Rank	State Rank	Schools Students
<b>Group 1: Mayoral Control</b>					
Boston*	MA	1992	53	1	130 63,043
Chicago*	IL	1995	4	1	592 430,914
Cleveland*	OH	1998	41	1	124 76,500
Baltimore	MD	1998	23	3	182 106,540
Detroit*	MI	1999	11	1	269 173,557
Oakland	CA	2000	71	6	89 54,256
Washington	DC	2000	45	1	164 71,889
Harrisburg	PA	2000	814	18	15 8,300
*Four Major Cities Subtotal			27.25	1	279 186,004
All Mayoral Takeover Averages			132.75	4	196 123,125
<b>Group 2: State Control</b>					
Jersey City	NJ	1989	159	2	38 32,505
Paterson	NJ	1991	243	3	35 24,499
Compton	CA	1993	192	30	39 29,409
Newark	NJ	1995	104	1	75 43,609
Hartford	CT	1997	271	1	37 22,466
Lawrence	MA	1999	648	9	21 14,044
State Takeover Averages			269.5	7.67	41 27,755
<i>Student Demographics</i>		% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian
Four Major Cities Subtotal		12.5%	66.1%	17.6%	3.5%
All Mayoral Takeover Averages		10.3%	69.5%	14.8%	5.0%
State Takeover Averages		21.3%	38.9%	36.1%	3.4%

*Note.* Data represent status of districts in the 1998–1999 school year. In the case of the smaller districts, some of the data available was 1 to 2 years older. For the state takeover districts that are not in the “Top 100 Districts” by size in the nation, the sociodemographic data are from the 1996–1997 school year. Data source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Characteristics of the 100 largest school districts 1998–99* [Common Core of Data, 1999 Digest of Education Statistics, and 1990 U.S. Census]. Washington, DC: Author.

tricts. Chicago, Illinois; Boston, Massachusetts; Detroit, Michigan; and Cleveland, Ohio, are examples of an integrated governance structure. Integrated governance in the four cities has been facilitated by the following factors:

- Mayoral vision on outcome-based accountability
- Broad public dissatisfaction, with a crisis in school performance over several years preceding integrated governance

Table 2

*Sources of Revenue for Mayoral and State Takeover Cities, 1992–1997*

	Academic Year					
	1991–1992	1992–1993	1993–1994	1994–1995	1995–1996	1996–1997
<b>Mayoral Averages</b>						
Revenue from Local	39.2%	41.8%	38.2%	38.8%	37.4%	37.7%
Revenue from State	49.4%	47.8%	51.5%	51.0%	52.5%	52.1%
Revenue from Fed	11.4%	10.4%	10.2%	10.2%	10.1%	10.3%
<b>State Takeover Averages</b>						
Revenue from Local	21.3%	20.0%	21.3%	22.1%	19.4%	17.5%
Revenue from State	67.3%	69.1%	69.0%	68.9%	71.8%	74.4%
Revenue from Fed	11.4%	10.9%	9.7%	9.1%	8.8%	8.2%

*Note.* The figures here record the percentages of total revenue derived from local, state, and federal sources, as determined by the Department of Education. Data source: National Center for Education Statistics [Common Core of Data]. Washington, DC: Author.

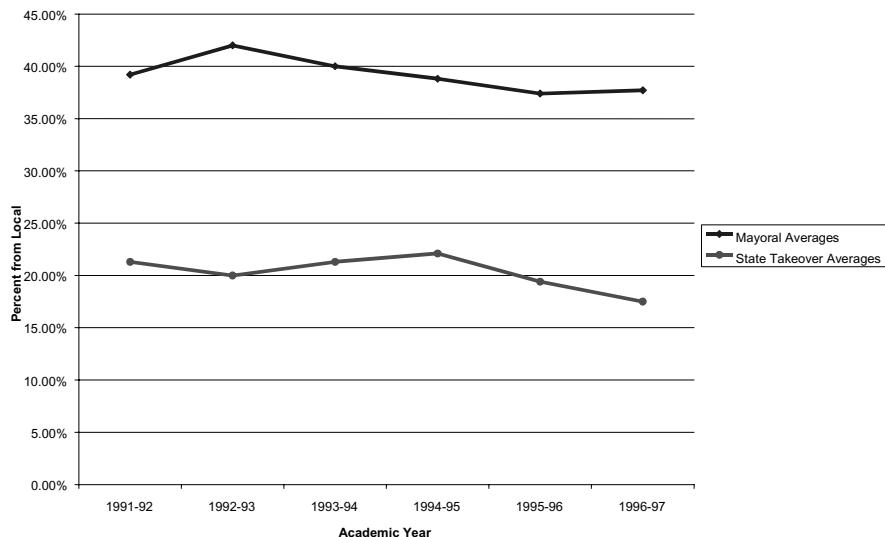


Figure 1. Percent of revenue from local sources.

- State leadership that is dominated by Republicans, who are willing to empower the mayoral office to address school problems
- Strong business support that has translated into adoption of corporate management practices to address complex bureaucratic problems in school districts

- Weakened legitimacy of traditionally powerful service provider groups (unions) and service demand groups (racial and neighborhood-based groups)

The four mayors who maintain integrated governance have indicated a strong commitment to enhance management efficiency in their city services. These mayors are keenly aware of the Tiebout-like (1956) challenge of retaining productive resources within the city. Unless city services provide the optimal level of cost-benefit ratios to the middle class, cities are likely to face a declining revenue base in the long run. To stem the Tiebout-like dilemma, these mayors have decided to bring public schools into the overall city strategy to improve the service quality and management. An insulated school system would mean business as usual, in which the mayor lacks direct control over the use of about one third of the local property tax revenues. To the extent that schools can become a developmental strategy, these mayors may be able to restore public confidence in public schools, thereby changing the marketlike dynamics of middle-class out-migration to the suburbs.

In the final three cities, Oakland, California; Washington, D.C.; and Baltimore, Maryland, the takeovers look a little different. Washington, D.C., and Baltimore can be characterized as maintaining a quasi-integrated governance system. In these cases, the mayor, or in the case of Washington, D.C., a citywide reform board, exercises some formal control over the school system as a whole. Yet the degree of control, when compared to the three cases of integrated governance, is less than complete. These two quasi-integrated systems are still dominated by traditional politics in education and are not moving toward an accountability-based policy framework. Several political barriers exist in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore for integrated governance to take hold. For example, in Baltimore the legislature is not willing to give power directly to the mayor because of partisan and territorial politics, and the mayor actually lost some of his authority, sharing it now with the governor and the state department of education. In Washington, a higher level legislative body, Congress, stripped the city of major functional authority and would not relinquish it until D.C. rid itself of its image of mismanagement. In Oakland, Mayor Brown is still trying to establish control over the school district. He has made progress but is not yet capable of avoiding the political quarrels that prevent systemic change in the district.

State takeovers in Compton, California, and Lawrence, Massachusetts, have led to bitter fights between the state and local authorities. Assessing the state takeovers in New Jersey and elsewhere before 1996, *Education Week* observed that "in case after case, when state administrators have tried to

elbow out local officials and run a failing district themselves, improvements have come at the heavy cost of lawsuits, bitter media battles, and confused and angry teachers and parents" (Hendrie, 1996, p. 2). Our analysis of standardized testing calendars highlights a difference in accountability between mayoral and state takeovers, and a lack of accountability in a different form may be a cause of disagreement in the state takeover cases. In the state takeover of Hartford, Connecticut, for instance, the public had little to say about the future of superintendent Tony Amato. The state-appointed board of trustees made the hiring decision, and many residents believe that Amato will leave for a larger district. This rumor started when, in spring 2000, Amato was "caught applying for the superintendent's post in San Francisco even though his current contract had not expired—and in spite of his pledges to stay in Hartford for a while" ("Investing in Mr. Amato," 2000, p. A8). Also at issue is the perception that the state is infringing on local control. Again in Hartford, Amato angered parents and local residents when he "made sweeping generalizations about the inadequacy of music programs" ("Amato's shooting," 2000, p. C3).

### Key Facilitating Factors

Whether mayoral control can be widely adopted beyond a few cities depends on various conditions. First, the political capital of the mayor is a key element. Second, the appointment of competent administrators and board members by the mayor is a political process. Third, governance improvement needs to permeate through a complex multilayered school policy system. For example, mayoral control in Baltimore has recently been constrained by gubernatorial involvement in school board appointments. Finally, governance reform needs to facilitate effective educational practices to improve student performance.

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### Appendix A: Brief Summaries of Takeovers Currently in Progress

In this appendix, brief capsules are provided for 14 school districts. Each of these school districts is currently involved in a comprehensive school district takeover. The term *comprehensive* refers to the fact that these districts have failed in three key areas: financial, management, and academic.<sup>1</sup> The descriptive capsules that follow are divided into mayoral and state takeover districts.

#### *Summary of Mayoral Takeover Districts*

Comprehensive mayoral takeover has occurred in eight cities: Boston, Massachusetts (1992); Chicago, Illinois (1995); Cleveland, Ohio (1998); Baltimore, Maryland (1998); Detroit, Michigan (1999); Oakland, California (2000); Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (2000); and Washington, D.C. (2000).

*Boston, Massachusetts.* The Boston school community was highly polarized during the busing controversy in the 1970s. Since that time, the district's racial composition has changed dramatically from about 50%

<sup>1</sup>There are other cases of takeover in which the state intervened for purely financial reasons (e.g., to take control until the district could get itself out of debt). For a full list of these districts, please see Ziebarth (2001). In this study, the focus is on comprehensive takeovers because they are the most involved; thus, they hold the greatest potential for improving the entirety of the school system.

White to over 80% minority in the 1990s. Although Boston still retains some very prestigious schools, such as Boston Latin, the school system overall has been widely perceived as too politicized with declining quality. In this challenging context, Mayor Flynn supported the passage of a referendum in 1989, which was approved by a very narrow margin of 50.8% to 49.2%, that gave the mayor direct control over the city school system. As a result, Boston's mayor appointed a 7-member board as opposed to the previous 13-member elected board.

Mayor Menino, Flynn's successor, is among a new group of mayors who has successfully reformed management practices in city agencies. He sees improving education as an important strategy in retaining middle-class residents in the city. In 1992, Menino appointed the 7 members to the first postreform school board. Since then, Menino has proclaimed himself an education mayor. His strong educational platform gained voters' approval in 1996, when 54% of the electorate opposed the referendum that called for a shift to an elected school board. The 1996 election saw an unusually high turnout of 68%. The 32% turnout in 1989, when the reform was adopted, pales in comparison.

In his 1996 State of the City speech, Mayor Menino tied his political future to the success of the city's school system, urging Boston residents to judge me harshly if goals for schools were not realized. Mayor Menino has invested financially in the schools as well, adjusting the city's entire budget to ensure that educational reforms have priority. Since Menino took office, the school department's operating budget has increased by \$60 million. Its capital budget increased by \$43.2 million, a 255% increase. Menino also appointed the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, Thomas Payzant, as the school superintendent. Payzant has worked closely with Menino on a 5-year reform plan, and after 5 years on the job, he is one of the longest serving urban district superintendents. Menino's school board voted to end busing and moved the schools back to a neighborhood-based system.

Menino sees the promise of policy coherence because he exercises direct authority over the public school system. The business community strongly supports the mayor, and although the teachers union initially opposed the move to mayoral control, they, too, have come around to support Menino. Among the mayor's first accomplishments was a 5-year contract with the teachers union. Several neighborhood and minority groups, however, complain that they are not adequately represented as a result of mayoral control and continue to oppose Menino's authority over the school system.

Since gaining control in 1992, Menino has focused on the implementation of learning standards and standards-based student assessments.

Overall, Menino is probably the most involved mayor in terms of making educational policy. In fall 1996, his administration launched a 5-year Focus on Children plan, with strong accountability at the classroom and school levels. The mayor also initiated a high school restructuring plan and has since placed an emphasis on ending social promotion, improving afterschool programs, and wiring every school to the Internet.

*Chicago, Illinois.* The Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act, which took effect in July 1995, reversed the trend toward decentralization of authority over school operations and redesigned the governance arrangement so that power and authority were integrated. The 1995 law suspended the power of the School Finance Authority, eliminated the School Board Nominating Commission, and diminished the ability of the LSCs to operate independently of board policy. Mayor Daley sought greater control of schools because he considered quality public education essential to retaining the city's middle-class residents. A strong public school system, in his view, can also attract businesses to Chicago.

Integrated governance in Chicago is characterized by (a) a reduction of competing authorities (such as the School Board Nominating Commission) and a coordination of activities in support of systemwide goals and standards, (b) mayoral appointment of school board members and selection of top administrators, and (c) powers granted to the school board to hold local school councils accountable to systemwide standards of professional conduct.

Although the 1995 legislation left intact some features of the previous decentralized arrangements, it reduced competing institutional authority and recentralized administrative authority. As a result of the 1995 reform, appointment decisions emanating from the mayor's office closely link the board, top administration, and the mayor's office. The law decreased the size of the 15-member board to 5 and put the mayor in charge of appointing board members, the board president, and the CEO in charge of the schools. Daley picked Paul Vallas, his former budget director, to be the schools' first CEO. The Vallas administration, with about 60% of the top managers coming from a noneducation career path, restored public confidence and gained strong support from the media, businesses, and civic groups.

Since the mayor took over the schools, social promotion has been eliminated, and standardized test performance has steadily improved year after year at both the elementary and the high school levels. Although the mayor's board has signed two 4-year teachers contracts that sustain labor peace, the Vallas administration has implemented a more rigorous aca-

demic curriculum in the high schools. Because of Chicago's academic success, President Clinton praised the district 2 years in a row in his State of the Union message. Other cities considering takeovers often cite Mayor Daley's efforts in Chicago as a model for success. The CPS emphasizes the combination of accountability with support as a major key to their upward trend since the takeover.

*Cleveland, Ohio.* Cleveland presents a unique case. The state took over the school district administration in 1995, when the federal district court removed the powers of governance from the local elected board of education and placed those powers in the hands of the state superintendent of public instruction. The Cleveland Municipal School District was in a crisis situation. Of all the students from the 1990–1991 eighth-grade classes, only 33% actually graduated from high school in 1995, and only 7% who graduated performed at grade level. During this time, Mayor White used his office to support school board candidates and to seek broader support from the business community.

Cleveland regained local administrative powers in 1998, when the federal court lifted the previous orders. An Advisory Committee on Governance of the Cleveland Summit on Education proposed a bill in 1997 that gave control of the district to the mayor. During the legislative session, Mayor White negotiated with a Republican governor and a Republican legislature to gain control over the schools. Seeing the potential of success in Chicago, the legislature granted Mayor White control of the Cleveland Public Schools in 1998. As a result, Mayor White appointed a nine-member school board in 1999. That board hired an experienced school administrator who served as interim superintendent for 8 months. He was replaced by New York City educator Barbara Byrd-Bennett in November 1998. In fall 2000, Byrd-Bennett introduced new academic standards. Byrd-Bennett believes that "by putting standards in place, we will be able to better create a school system" ("New academic standards," 2000). In September 2000, the district also avoided a strike by negotiating a new contract with the Cleveland Teachers Union.

*Baltimore, Maryland.* Baltimore presents an example of shared power between the state and the city over educational policy. Former Mayor Schmoke enjoyed extensive administrative powers over the district, which is a cabinet department in city hall. However, the school system relies heavily on state funding, and its repeated fiscal crises threatened to result in state takeover. Twenty percent of all state school aid goes to

Baltimore, and the city receives 58% of its funding from the state government. It receives more state school aid than any other district in Maryland, which has county-based school districts. In an attempt to solve both the schools' fiscal and performance problems, Schmoke contracted out several of the city schools with an education management agency, Educational Alternatives, Inc. (EAI) in 1993. As expected, the teachers union was not supportive of his contracting-out efforts, and, hence, the EAI contract lacked teacher accountability. After the failed experiment, Schmoke began pleading with the state legislature for increased funding. The city even sued the state, alleging that a lack of financial resources had kept Baltimore's schoolchildren from receiving an adequate education.

Schmoke was generally supportive of the locally elected school board and dismissed concerns about inefficient management in the city's school system, arguing for more state funding instead. In 1998, however, the city schools met state standards in only 2 of 31 areas of student performance measured by standardized tests—attendance and other indicators. The dropout rate, for instance, was about 14% in 1995, the worst in Maryland. In January 1999, State School Superintendent Nancy Grasmick said that 35 Baltimore schools were performing so badly that they were eligible for direct state intervention and restructuring; only two other schools in the state were deemed eligible for such reconstitution.

The state first recommended a complete takeover of the school district. In a political bargain made in 1997 with Democratic Governor Glendenning, Mayor Schmoke agreed to share power with the state legislature and the governor. In return, the state would allocate additional money to the district. The mayor and the governor jointly appoint a nine-member Board of School Commissioners to lead and execute reforms over a 5-year period. The new city-state partnership made the schools' CEO accountable to the state legislature, instead of local politicians. Working together, the new Board of School Commissioners and the Maryland State Board of Education created a 4-year master plan for turning around the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS). This plan was first implemented in the 1998–1999 school year.

Today, control of the BCPSS is still largely under mayoral control. In selecting a school district superintendent, the state superintendent generates a short list of candidates. The mayor and governor then make a joint appointment. Once appointed, however, the superintendent remains a member of the mayoral cabinet and works for the mayor. Both the mayor and superintendent positions have changed over the past few years. Former Mayor Schmoke decided not to run for a fourth term, and in November 1999, at age 36, Martin O'Malley became Baltimore's youngest mayor. The superintendent position has also changed hands. Robert Booker

replaced interim CEO Robert Schiller, and Booker wasted little time before taking action. Three weeks before the start of the 1998–1999 school year, Booker placed 103 teachers on probation and demoted 11 principals (“Shock therapy,” 1998). Booker also placed new people in key positions, such as chief academic officer.

The results in Baltimore are an interesting mix of good and bad. In spring 2000, Booker stood with Mayor O’Malley and announced that test scores in every one of the city’s 122 schools had improved. On the negative side, however, the district continued to find itself in financial trouble. When Carmen V. Russo became the new CEO in July 2000, she found that Robert Booker had run a deficit. School officials announced in September 2000 that they were facing a \$5 million deficit from the previous year’s overspending, and that they would have to do some budget trimming. It remains to be seen what effect these budget cuts will have. The declining state of Baltimore’s schools and what to do about it are perennials in Maryland politics. During the earlier state-city negotiations, the Democratic legislature remained suspicious that the city might be wasting hundreds of millions of dollars of state aid and so geared up efforts to monitor the system. With this latest financial challenge, spending remains an issue that the BCPSS has yet to resolve.

*Detroit, Michigan.* In 1997, Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer strongly opposed Republican Governor John Engler’s proposal for the state of Michigan to take over the Detroit Public Schools. Governor Engler was frustrated with the city’s low-performing schools and with the fact that the school district consumed a major portion of the state budget. The school district received 64% of its revenue from the state and 11% from the federal government. The state share and Detroit’s education expenses were expected to increase under Michigan’s restructured school finance system, which equalized funding across school districts. The school system was widely perceived as in crisis: only half of Detroit’s high school students graduated. Even basic supplies—from textbooks to toilet paper—somehow had trouble making it into schools. Teachers routinely walked out on strike.

In 1998, Mayor Archer offered to participate in a local reform plan that would have engaged a broad spectrum of the Detroit community, but the elected Detroit School Board tabled the proposal. Seeing Chicago as a success story, the mayor negotiated with Engler to gain greater control over the school system. Governor Engler and the Republican legislature gave the mayor control over the Detroit schools in 1999. In April 1999, the mayor appointed six of the seven board members. The seventh member of the

board is the state superintendent. Mayor Archer also negotiated several outcomes-based accountability measures with the state legislature, including a proposal for reduced class size, mandatory summer school, substantive afterschool programs, and technical training for teachers, among others.

Detroit's initial experience in mayoral control was highly contentious. Although business leaders supported the mayor, the teachers unions opposed him. The local community groups and civil rights groups were split, with the Detroit National Association for the Advancement of Colored People opposed to the change but the Detroit Urban League supporting it. In May 2000, Kenneth Burnley was named as CEO. Burnley previously served as a superintendent in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and believes the bottom line is achievement. Burnley promised that he was "not going to take a long time to start doing things" ("School chief," 2000). Burnley seems to have broad community and political support in the CEO role.

*Oakland, California.* Jerry Brown became mayor of Oakland in June 1998 and inherited a school system that "embodies the failure of public education" (Coburn & Riley, 2000). An independent report found that despite efforts at reform, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) had "produced ineptitude, mediocrity, and failure on a massive scale" (Coburn & Riley, 2000). Faced with the challenge of turning the OUSD around, Mayor Brown established a Commission on Education, which issued a final report in 1999. In addition to Mayor Brown's commission, California's Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team performed a districtwide audit in 1999. The reports highlighted many areas for improvement, including better management and accountability, a more challenging curriculum, and more flexibility for schools to make their own hiring decisions.

Mayor Brown's attempts to exercise more control over the school district accompanied significant changes to the Oakland school board. In 1999, Brown forced then-superintendent Carole Quan to resign, and George Musgrove was hired as interim superintendent. When it came time to make the permanent hire, however, the board and Brown did not agree. Brown supported Musgrove for the position, but the school board voted to elect Musgrove's opponent, Dennis Chaconas. Since assuming his position, Chaconas has engaged in a massive overhaul, laying off central office employees, changing principals, and making demotions. He has also forced some members of the school board to resign. After other voluntary departures in September 2000, "all but one of the top administrative positions in the school district has turned over." Through a vote in March 2000, Mayor Brown also

gained the power to appoint 3 members of the now 10-member school board. With these changes in the district's power structure, the school board and Mayor Brown hope to implement many of the reports' recommendations.

*Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.* The Harrisburg School District is scheduled to undergo a state-approved mayoral takeover, but the timing of this takeover is uncertain because of legal complications and a high court ruling that places power in the hands of the school board (instead of the mayor). This new legal twist follows the Education Empowerment Act, which former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge signed into law in May 2000. The act is designed to improve the state's lowest performing districts. Under the act, the state determines empowerment districts and then works with the local authorities to "improve student performance, and the management and operation of the school district" ("New release," 2000).<sup>2</sup> A special provision in the proposal, however, will put the Harrisburg School District immediately under the control of a "five-member board appointed by Mayor Stephen R. Reed to assume day-to-day operations of the district" ("New release," 2000). This board will replace the current nine-member Board of School Directors. Because the Education Empowerment Act is new legislation, it is difficult to assess the success of this takeover. Once the takeover is fully operational, however, Harrisburg may prove an interesting case study in future research.

*Washington, D.C.* Mayor Williams is interested in exercising greater control over the public schools, but the District of Columbia represents a unique setup. Congress stripped the local government of most of its powers and in 1997 granted the functional authority of the school district to the D.C. Emergency Board of Trustees, overseen by the Congress-appointed Control Board. The emergency board appoints the superintendent and is in charge of the budget and district policy. The district still has a locally appointed school board, but it lacks most basic functional powers.

The school board, in spite of lacking any substantive control, continues to be highly political. The board was involved in a political battle

<sup>2</sup>"Empowerment districts" are defined as "districts with a combined average of 50% or more of students scoring in the bottom-measured group of students statewide in math and reading for the previous two years" ("New release," 2000).

over the post of the president, who was fired by a majority of the board members. Washington, D.C., now has nine members in the school board, four of whom are appointed by the mayor. The other five are elected. Under this new governance structure, Mayor Williams has significant influence on the D.C. public school system. In October 2000, Superintendent Paul Vance also announced a restructuring that resembles the takeover models elsewhere. Vance “replaced the deputy superintendent and two associate superintendent positions with a Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff” (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2000).

### *Summary of State Takeover Case Study Districts*

Comprehensive state takeover is currently in place in six cities: Jersey City (1989), Paterson (1991), and Newark (1995), New Jersey; Compton, California (1993); Hartford, Connecticut (1997); and Lawrence, Massachusetts (1999).

*Jersey City, Paterson, and Newark, New Jersey.* In 1987, the State of New Jersey took over the Jersey City School District because the district was not providing a “thorough and efficient system of education” (New Jersey Department of Education, 2003). State takeovers subsequently took place in Paterson (1991) and Newark (1995). The state emphasizes that “state-operation is reserved for those districts that cannot meet standards *and* do not demonstrate a willingness to improve their performance” (New Jersey Department of Education, 2003). The New Jersey takeovers, then, are examples in which the state is clearly disappointed in the existing local leadership. When the state steps in, state officials have a significant amount of control over the state-operated districts, including reviews of “finance, facilities, programs, assessment, certification, [and] data collection,” and approval of “personnel actions” (New Jersey Department of Education, 2003).

All three districts remain under state control in 2003. Evaluations of the longest running state takeover have been mixed. When the plans to end state operation in Jersey City were announced, Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler highlighted the varying results: “Are operations more effective under the state? Absolutely. [But] we’ve only seen a marginal improvement in test scores, and more than half of our kids are still dropping out of school” (N.J. plans, 1999). In each of the three state-operated districts, there have been similar mixed results. There are some improved perfor-

mances on achievement tests, but the overall effectiveness of the takeovers remains to be seen.

*Compton, California.* Citing both fiscal and academic concerns, the State of California took over the Compton Unified School District in 1993. The takeover was prompted after the school district found itself with \$20 million in debt and in need of state loans. This gave the state an opportunity to move in. Throughout the duration of this takeover, the relationship between the state and the local community has been tension filled. A documentary made about the Compton takeover describes it as an "ongoing war that takes place in the city of Compton between the State of California and members of the community" ("School takeover," 2003). The state has seen lawsuits and protests, and the Compton School Board (which has little power) has been generally uncooperative. Many of the problems stem from the fact that the performance of Compton's students has improved only modestly since the state took over in 1993. The current state administrator, Randolph E. Ward, has improved the district's finances and management, but before he arrived in 1997, there was great turnover in the superintendent position. Even with his achievements in other areas, Ward has not been able to make a significant improvement in student achievement. Like many of the other takeover districts described in this article, there were some small gains in achievement but not enough to constitute an unconditional success story.

In September 2000, the state announced plans for a gradual return of the district to local control. The Compton School Board criticized the plan for taking too long to return power, and Compton Mayor Omar Bradley commented, "the sooner the better" ("State to end takeover," 2000), but even if it takes a while to fully return local power, the state takeover of Compton will eventually be phased out. Evaluation of the 7-plus-year takeover is sure to vary among the different parties. State officials are pleased with the improvements they've seen, but local officials will point out the deficiencies that still remain.

*Hartford, Connecticut.* In 1997 Connecticut decided to take control of the city school system in Hartford because it saw a failing district. Part of this failure was the dismal performance of Hartford Public High School, which almost lost accreditation in 1997 and has continued to be a serious problem in the school system. In April 1999, Tony Amato was brought in from New York City to serve as superintendent. Amato has drawn both praise and criticism as he implemented the "Success for All" reading program and a

number of tests and drills in Hartford's elementary schools. Amato has also rearranged his staff, and "his supporters acknowledge he has a tight inner circle" ("A driven man," 1999). Amato has pressured some administrators to resign their posts and has selected replacements more suited to his own tastes.

*Lawrence, Massachusetts.* The State of Massachusetts had its eye on the Lawrence school district for a while, but after Lawrence High lost its accreditation in March 1997, the state began threatening a takeover of the district. Lawrence Mayor Patricia Dowling and the Lawrence Schools Committee fought for close to a year with the state to avoid a full takeover. During that time, the superintendent was fired over allegations of financial mismanagement, and an interim superintendent was assigned. Narrowly avoiding a takeover deadline of January 22, 1998, the city and state finally negotiated an agreement. As part of the compromise, a new nine-member committee was created, with the local schools committee appointing five members and the state selecting the other four. Even though Lawrence retained some control over its schools, this can be considered a state takeover because the state retained veto power over the appointment of key administrative officials and financial decisions. Once a superintendent, Mae Gaskins, was selected, the chairman of the state board of education commented that even though the Lawrence school district could legally choose their own path of reform, if they went against state advisors, "they better be right."

Unfortunately for the Lawrence schools, the choice of Superintendent Gaskins turned out to be unproductive. Although they began in a cooperative relationship, Mayor Dowling and Gaskins soon found themselves in strong opposition to each other. An investigation was launched in response to some of Gaskins' hiring and spending practices, especially large consulting fees. In January 2000, Dowling called for Gaskins' resignation and for the state to intervene. In response to the controversy, the state appointed Dr. Eugene Thayer to "guide the management and governance of Lawrence Public Schools" (Massachusetts Dept. of Education, 2000). Thayer quickly became the interim superintendent when Gaskins was officially fired on at the end of February 2000. Wilfredo Laboy was hired as the new superintendent during summer 2000, but with Thayer's presence and the most recent failings of Gaskins, the state is sure to play a large role in determining the future of Lawrence's public schools.