PEABODY JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, *78*(4), 89–119

Measuring the Effectiveness of City and State Takeover as a School Reform Strategy

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An increasing number of states and cities are allowing for the takeover of school districts, either by a state authority or by the mayor. 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. School district takeovers have occurred in 19 states and the District of Columbia. In light of the growing trend of city and state takeover of school districts, the key question for researchers to answer is, "Does school district

This research is supported in part by a grant from the Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University and a grant from the Field-Initiated Studies Program at the U.S. Department of Education.

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takeover work?" This study is designed to offer a preliminary answer to that question.

This study examines the potential for city and state takeovers to turn around low-performing schools, focusing roughly on the period from 1992 to 2000. At issue is how effective a city/state takeover can be as a strategy for promoting higher quality teaching and learning, improving management, and enhancing public confidence. This study utilizes a diverse set of empirical measures to gauge the initial impact of city/state school district takeover reform. We have created a new multilevel, integrated database to compare takeovers across districts. As additional states and cities consider takeover reform as a potential school reform option, it is important that they be aware of the effects that takeover reform has produced thus far in the states and cities that have already implemented it.

Like other major educational reforms, city/state takeover of a school district suggests both promises and limitations. On one hand, the takeover strategy has the potential to turn around low-performing communities. Takeover initiatives tend to hold schools and students accountable to system-wide 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 culture. On the other hand, takeover initiatives are viewed by professional educators as an infringement of their professional autonomy. Mayor- or state-appointed administrators may 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. There have also been questions raised about the role of race in determining the takeover of districts.[1]

Given these potential strengths and limitations of takeover reform, this study presents a strategy for measuring the effects on schooling outcomes in this reform initiative. We attempt to integrate into one study comparable information on a number of city and state takeovers. Although individual states, cities, and districts produce their own internal evaluations, these reports focus primarily on only one school district. These reports are useful for assessing a particular district, but comparative analysis across school districts is necessary to assess broader, national trends.

The drawback to such an approach is that it necessarily skims the surface of these districts. The story of school district takeover is certainly more

[1]For a discussion and brief analysis, see "Racial issues" (1998) and "African-American group" (2001).

than a set of numbers. However, in choosing a broad, quantitative focus, our study intends to serve as an empirical backdrop against which discussion of school district takeover can be further debated and discussed.

The remainder of this article is organized in four sections. First, we present an introduction to school district takeover, noting the structural framework and emergence of takeover reform as a means to address academic, management, and financial crises. We next describe our research design in examining the implementation and effectiveness of comprehensive city/state takeovers. Using a national, multilevel database that we created, we find that nationwide at the district level, takeovers have produced modest and sometimes mixed achievement gains. Using school-level analysis in Chicago and Boston, however, we find evidence to suggest that at least in these two cases, mayoral takeover is not leaving behind the lowest performing schools. We also find that mayoral takeovers may lead to the infusion of nonteacher administrators to management and to increased fiscal responsibility. State takeovers, however, tend to produce mixed results in both academic and management issues. Finally, we conclude with a discussion on improving accountability and its implications for policy and practice.

Introduction

Structural Framework Allowing for School District Takeover

City and state government takeover as a school reform model focuses on district-level capacity to reduce institutional fragmentation and raise academic accountability. This kind of system-wide restructuring is based on organizational principles that (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 system-wide level.

Recognizing these structural challenges, policy makers have adopted two diverse, innovative approaches to improving student performance, broadly labeled as "choice-based" and "integrated governance." The choice-based strategy relies on parental preferences as the primary driving force to improve

school performance. Examples of this innovation include charter schools and contractual arrangements, both of which may involve nontraditional service providers (Chubb, 1997; Hill, 1997). Choice-based reform values school autonomy and competition in a market-like environment. In contrast to choice, the integrated governance approach enables the mayor or state officials to rely on system-wide 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 (Wong, 1999). 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. The hallmark of the Bush Administration's education plan is to "increase accountability for student performance" through a system in which "states, districts and schools that improve achievement will be rewarded [and] failure will be sanctioned" (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). In light of the growing prominence of the choice-based and integrated governance approaches, school politics is likely to be shaped by the ways in which the current, largely insulated, school bureaucracy moves toward either one of the two models. This article is concerned with the takeover aspects of the integrated governance school reform model.

Emergence of School District Takeovers

A growing number of states and city governments have developed policies to deal with failing school districts or failing schools (Cibulka & Derlin, 1998; O'Day, 1997). Most states have provisions for state takeover of local school districts, but rarely invoked them, except in cases of clear financial mismanagement or illegal activity (Cibulka, 1999). Some of the more recent state takeover laws focus 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. Even when intervening, states often refrain from entirely dismantling the local school district administration, such as the school board and the superintendent. A majority of state takeover laws allow state administrators to influence decisions behind the scenes in a more limited fashion in academically troubled districts, first giving schools or districts an opportunity to improve before more drastic measures are taken (Cibulka, 1999).

In Maryland, for instance, schools can be reconstituted if they have been falling below a certain standard of performance and have been

declining in performance over several years. Schools can develop a transition plan to avoid reconstitution by the state. State monitoring and some initial additional funds are provided until the school has improved sufficiently to warrant being taken off the list (none have been thus far). If a school fails to improve, the state reserves the right to reconstitute the school, including instituting management by an alternative provider (Cibulka, 1999; Michaels & Ferrara, 1999).

Implementation of takeover reform has increased over the past decade. Table 1 details the incidences of takeovers over time and separates them according to the reason for takeover. Implementation of takeover policies has become more popular over time, with a peak of takeovers coming during the 3-year period from 1995 to 1997. Thirty-eight percent (15 of 40) of takeovers occurred during these 3 years, including highly publicized takeovers in Chicago (1995), Cleveland (1997), and Baltimore (1997).

Takeovers have also grown broader in scope over time (Table 1). Before the 1995 to 1997 takeover peak, 60% of takeovers were for purely financial and/or management reasons, whereas only 27% were comprehensive takeovers that included academics. In the 3 years after 1997, however, the percentage of comprehensive takeovers rose to 67%, and the percentage of takeovers solely for financial and/or management dropped to 22%. The general trend, following on the heels of the big-city takeovers in 1995 to 1997, is for city/state takeovers to involve more than just financial management.

Consistent with the trend seen in Table 1, some of the more recent state takeover laws focus more on breaches of academic accountability. When takeovers do occur, the duration of the takeover is linked to its scope (Table 2). The overwhelming majority (10 of 14) of completed takeovers (where local control has been re-established) are takeovers that do not involve academic reform. Table 2 bears out the conclusion that state policymakers arrived at in 1997: "Improving student achievement takes time" (Lewis, 1997). This is seen in the fact that only 4 of the 23 takeovers involving academics have been completed. The rest remain in progress and may remain in progress for a long time. The comprehensive takeovers, which include financial, managerial, and academic components, last the longest. Only one of the comprehensive takeovers has been completed: the oft-cited state takeover of Logan County, West Virginia.[2] In that case, Ziebarth (2002), Bushweller (1998), and Seder (2000) all quoted local officials who

[2]For discussion of the one completed comprehensive state takeover, in Logan County, West Virginia, see "W.Va. leaves" (1996), "W.Va. board" (1992), Ziebarth (2002), and Seder (2000). The West Virginia Department of Education also publishes detailed district Report Cards, available at http://wvde.state.wv.us/data/report—cards. A current picture of Logan County can also be found from the West Virginia Board of Education (2000).

Table 1

Number of City/State Takeovers, by Type, 1988 to 2000

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*Total*
Financial only	1			2	1		1	1	5	2		1	1	15
Financial and management		2			1		1							4
Academic only												1		1
Academic and financial						1	1	1	1					4
Academic and management								1						1
Comprehensive		2		1	1			3		2	2	1	3	15
Total	1	4	0	3	3	1	3	6	6	4	2	3	4	40

Note. Classification is for all takeovers that began before 2000, based on data reported by Ziebarth (2002). Takeovers were only counted at the point of initial state involvement. For example, the Pennsylvania state takeover of the Chester-Upland School District is counted once, in 1994, when the district was taken over for financial reasons, even though in 2000 a new panel was created to further oversee the district. "Comprehensive" refers to those cases in which the takeover occurred for a "variety of reasons," encompassing financial, academic, and managerial issues.

Table 2

Duration of City/State Takeovers, by Type, 1988 to 2000

	Takeover Still in Effect						*Takeover Complete : Return to Local Control*					
	1 yr	*2 yr*	*3 yr*	*4 yr*	*5+ yr*	*Total*	*1 yr*	*2 yr*	*3 yr*	*4 yr*	*5+ yr*	*Total*
Financial only	2			1	3	6	4	2		1		7
Financial and management			1			1	1		1	1		3
Academic only	1		2			3						0
Academic and financial					1	1		2			1	3
Academic and management					1	1						0
Comprehensive	3	2	2		7	14				1		1
Total	6	2	5	1	12	26	5	4	1	3	1	14

Note. Classification is for all takeovers that began before 2000, based on data reported by Ziebarth (2002). In several cases, school districts were taken over, returned to local control, then taken over again. In these several cases, the takeovers were counted only once (at the time of initial takeover). "Comprehensive" refers to those cases in which the takeover occurred for a "variety of reasons," encompassing financial, academic, and managerial issues.

"credit the success of the takeover to working collaboratively with the local school board during the takeover" (Seder, 2000). The remaining comprehensive takeovers are still in effect, and 7 of the 14 have been in place for more than 5 years. This study focuses on the effectiveness of 14 comprehensive takeovers.

Research Base on Effectiveness of City/State Takeover as a Reform Strategy

Research on the effectiveness of state takeover strategy is lagging behind the pace of policy and practice. In a Policy Brief for the Education Commission of the States, Todd Ziebarth (2002) wrote that "there is a scarcity of research on the effects of state takeovers" (p. 2). Most studies suggest that it is far easier to clean up district-level finances and management practices than it is to make a dent in student achievement. In a study for the Reason Public Policy Institute, Seder (2000) examined a sample of takeovers and found that "from a financial-management standpoint, most of the different intervention strategies tend to be successful … however, these intervention strategies have not consistently turned around academic results" (p. 27). One study of state takeovers emphasized that successful districts should "align the local curriculum with state standards and tests" (Bushweller, 1988, p. 8). This study also suggested that low administrative turnover and open communication with the community are keys to improvement.

Other studies have found mixed results. A study of the New Jersey takeover of Newark, for example, found that "while test scores have risen since the 1995 takeover, clearly defined priorities and effective leadership remain elusive" ("N. J. takeover," 2000, p. 17). In 1999, when the state of New Jersey announced it would return local control to Jersey City 10 years after taking over the city's school district, David G. Sciarra of the Education Law Center commented that, "What's so tragic here is not the takeover but the fact that in ten years we know very little about what happened, what works, and what didn't work. All you're left with are anecdotes from different interest groups" ("N. J. plans to end," 1999, p. 11). This study begins to fill the empirical gap on the issue of school district takeover.

Focus on 14 Comprehensive Takeovers

We examine 14 school districts in which "comprehensive" takeovers have taken place. "Comprehensive" refers to those takeovers in which the

city or state has assumed control for academic, financial, and management reasons. The districts fall into two categories: 8 city (mayoral) takeovers in Chicago; Boston; Cleveland; Baltimore; Detroit; Washington, D.C.; Oakland, California; and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and 6 state takeovers in Compton, California; Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson, New Jersey; Hartford, Connecticut; and Lawrence, Massachusetts.

The distinction between "mayoral" and "state" takeover is not always clearly delineated. State legislatures, for example, must approve legislation to give mayors more control. Furthermore, the cooperation of both state and local authorities is frequently seen in these cities. As described by Wong and Shen (2003), takeover reform looks different in each school district because each case of city and state takeover involves a unique set of political and educational institutions. However, despite this variation, all takeover reform has at its core the goal of turning around failing schools. Thus, although the line between "mayoral" and "state" takeover may be open for debate, it is still appropriate to assess the overall effectiveness of takeover reform.

Research Design

Assessing the Effectiveness of Takeover Reform

As discussed in the Introduction, many states and cities have turned to school district takeover with the hope that it will improve performance. Whether or not the takeovers will make their promised improvements, however, is unknown. Because this phenomenon is relatively new and even the oldest takeovers are not that old, there is a general lack of systematic study on the changing relationship between mayors/state officials and the public schools. To address both the conceptual and empirical needs, we create a national database that includes information from two local policy systems (i.e., the school district and the city/state) that have traditionally been insulated from each other. In most big cities, the school district overlaps with the city in terms of their geographic boundary. Yet their affairs remain independent from each other, and direct communication between the two is minimal.

Hypothesized Effects of Takeover Reform

Our empirical analysis is based on the integrated governance structure: Mayoral and state takeovers are understood in relation to the current

climate of outcome-based accountability. Faced with a public that demands an improved district, we predict that mayors and state administrators will attempt to enact changes that can be measured and serve as proof of school improvement. With increased power over the school system, we further expect that mayors and state officials can potentially improve the academic performance, the financial/administrative management, and the public image of the school district. Finally, the "takeover rhetoric" from mayors and state officials suggests that school district takeovers place special emphasis on improving the lowest performing schools. Aggressive school takeovers (e.g., reconstitution) within larger district takeovers illustrate the desire of leadership to turn around failing schools.

Given these hypotheses about the potential effects of district takeover, we create a data set designed to address three key potential effects from state takeover:

1. Higher student performance, especially in the lowest performing schools.
2. More effective financial and administrative management.
3. Increased accountability to improve public perception of the school district.

Evaluating the effectiveness of takeover reform in each of these areas involves two types of questions. First, is there evidence to suggest that takeover reform has produced positive results in each of these three areas? Second, if some takeovers are proving successful and others are not, what are the differences between successful takeover implementation and takeover reform that proves ineffective? In this study, we focus on the first question, drawing on a diverse set of measurements to empirically assess the outcomes of city/state takeover reform.

Although there are many variations in how takeover reform has been implemented in different school districts, this variation does not prevent us from answering the first type of question. Rather, it is only after we have a strong set of measured outcomes for each school district that the variations become meaningful. Before we can identify the factors that produce successful takeover reform, we must first establish which takeovers have been successful and which have not.

Data Sources and Analytical Methods

Using publicly available data from the U.S. Department of Education, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, state departments of education, local school

districts, and a variety of other sources, we gathered data in five key areas: socioeconomic/demographic, politics/partisanship, management/resource organization/arrangement of services, school quality, and student achievement.

Our analytical method consists in compiling and synthesizing data from across districts as well as examining several school districts in greater detail. To study the effect of school district takeover on student achievement, we examine student achievement at both the district level and the school level. At the district level, we considered recent trends in student performance on state- and district-administered standardized tests. To further investigate the relationship between takeover reform and academic performance, we turn to school-level analysis. This study focuses on four districts: Boston, Chicago, Lawrence, and Compton. We chose Chicago and Boston because they are the longest running and most extensive mayoral takeover programs. We chose Lawrence and Compton because they compare and contrast with each other well. Compton was taken over by California state authorities in 1993, whereas Massachusetts state officials have only been involved in Lawrence since 1998.

A further note of introduction may be useful to understand the Lawrence context. 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 1 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.

In both cities, however, there has been much political fighting between local and state authorities (Wong and Shen, in press). Further, in September 2000 the state of California announced plans to gradually return control of the Compton Unified District to local authorities. This creates another interesting contrast, as Compton is headed toward the end of its state takeover and Lawrence is still in a relatively early stage of its implementation.

In each of these four districts, we gathered test score data and examined the change in the lowest performing schools relative to the overall

district change. Our data are from a particular period in time—the middle to end of the 1990s. Because the goal of the article is to introduce a set of measures we can examine, we leave it to future research (both ours and that of others) to continue to augment the database. It is important to note, however, that over time, there have been some noticeable changes. In Lawrence, for instance, test scores have risen each year since 1998, as new leadership has taken over. The analysis in this article focuses roughly on the period from 1996 to 1999, when takeover was emerging on the scene as a school reform strategy. Future studies that incorporate new rounds of data collection will be able to see whether the trends we find are short-term or persist over a longer period of time. Analysis of achievement data can also be carried out in additional cities that have undergone takeover reform. However, setting aside these caveats, we proceed with our analysis.

In Boston, we analyze the change in test scores on the new Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). This test, which places an emphasis on state standards in English, math, and science, was first given in the 1997–98 school year and then again in 1998–99. All 4th, 8th, and 10th graders in the Boston public schools took the test. Although it does not give a "pre-takeover" and "post-takeover" view of the Boston public schools, it does serve to reflect the current state of learning in the system. In Lawrence, which also uses the MCAS to assess its students, we make the same comparisons. The years 1998 and 1999 were tumultuous in the Lawrence school district. Using the 1998 and 1999 test score data looks at the results produced as a result of this unsettling environment.

In Chicago, we look at elementary school performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and high school performance on the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP). Because these tests have been administered for many years in Chicago, we are able to make two comparisons over time. First, we compare the change in test scores from the 1993–94 and 1996–97 school years. This is a comparison of roughly 2 years before and after Mayor Richard Daley's 1995 takeover. We then compare the test scores from 1996–97 to scores from 1998–99 to look at more recent trends in student performance. In Compton, we use data from the Stanford 9 exam, administered annually as part of California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. In Compton, we look at changes from 1997–98 to 1999–2000.

In addition to improvements in student achievement, takeovers also focus on improved management and fiscal responsibility. Using data from the U.S. Department of Education, we examine changes in per-pupil expenditures (adjusted for inflation) and the distribution of administrative and support staff. We look at these two measures of resource allocation over time to see how they change (or remain constant) in reaction to

mayoral or state takeover. We also looked at student–teacher ratios over time, but did not find significant variations in relation to the mayoral and state takeovers.

We also examine trends in staffing distributions. Using National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, we developed two measures of nonteacher resource allocation: Percentage Nonteacher Administrators and Percentage Nonteacher Support. NCES classifies the full-time employees serving in various categories in a district into 11 categories besides teachers: Aides, Coordinators/Supervisors, Guidance counselors, Library/media, Library/media support, LEA (local educational agency) administrators, LEA support, School administrators, School administration support, Student support, and All other support. The measure Percentage Nonteacher Administrators represents the percentage of all nonteacher employees who are listed in the NCES Common Core of Data as LEA administrators, School administrators, or Coordinators/ Supervisors. The measure Percentage Nonteacher Support represents the percentage of all nonteacher employees who are listed as support Staff (Library/media support, LEA support, School administration support, Student support, and All other support). These measures represent the percentages of all nonteacher employees who are being utilized in either administrative or support roles. We focus on these two indicators to see whether mayoral and/or state takeover creates a new management structure.

The NCES data also allowed us to consider the ratios student/teacher, administrator/teacher, teacher/nonteacher, administrator/student, and support/student, but we did not find significant variations across time in these measures.

Finally, we focus on accountability to gauge public confidence in the school district. To assess the level of accountability, we use as a proxy the nature and frequency of standardized tests administered per year. Our assumption is that for public perception to become more positive, a school district must become more accountable to its constituency. Although not sufficient in itself, we believe strong accountability to the public is a necessary condition. Further, we assume that standardized testing serves as a good proxy for estimating a district's level of accountability.

Our assumptions are strengthened by a parent survey conducted by Public Agenda (2000). The survey focused on parental reaction to standardized tests and stronger academic standards, gathering responses from parents nationwide. They also gathered sample information in three of our case study cities (Boston, Chicago, and Cleveland) as well as Los Angeles and New York. Responses in our case study cities indicate that there is a strong relationship between accountability (in the form of content

standards and standardized tests) and parental perception of the school district.

In the survey, parents were asked, "Requiring schools to publicize their standardized test scores is a wake-up call and a good way to hold schools accountable. Do you agree or disagree?" Parents could choose from four options: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. In Boston, Chicago, and Cleveland, parents overwhelmingly agreed that tests scores are a good way to hold schools accountable. In Boston, 80% of parents agreed (with 57% strongly agreeing); in Chicago, 78% agreed (with 52% strongly agreeing); and in Cleveland, 76% agreed (with 56% strongly agreeing.) All three case study cities had a greater percentage of parents strongly agreeing with the question than the national average of 49%. The Public Agenda survey thus supports our assumption that parental (and thus public) perception of districts is tied to standardized test performance.

Empirical Analysis and Results

We now report results from our analysis of mayoral and state takeovers. We examine three potential effects that takeovers are designed to produce: (a) higher student performance, especially in the lowest performing schools; (b) more effective financial and administrative management; and (c) improved public perception of the school district through greater accountability.

Higher Quality Teacher and Student Performance

Aggregated to the district level, it is difficult to make generalizations about whether takeover reform is working as a means to improve student achievement (Table 3). On one hand, there are many examples of improvement in student performance after both city and state takeovers. On the other hand, however, there are also many counterexamples of recent decline. In Cleveland, for example, from 1998–99 to 1999–2000 there were improvements in reading proficiency in Grades 1, 3, and 5, but at the same time declines in Grades 2, 4, 7, 8, and 10. Cleveland also saw gains in math in Grades 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9 during the same period in which Grade 11 declined.

These ambiguous achievement trends can be visualized by examining the percentage of students proficient or passing in our takeover districts.

Table 3

Selected Highlights of Mayoral and State Takeover Districts' Recent Changes in Achievement on Standardized Tests

Nature of Control (Year of Reform)	*Standardized Tests Analyzed*	*Evidence to Suggest Improvement*	*Evidence to Suggest Stagnation or Decline*
Mayoral control			
Boston, MA (1992) Chicago, IL (1995)	Stanford 9; Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)	From 1996–97 to 1997–98, almost all grade levels improved on Stanford 9, and largest gains were at high school level; reduced percentage failing MCAS in all grade levels tested for reading and math in 1999–2000	1996–97 Stanford 9 results indicate a growing inequality in achievement by race; also, less than 50% of high schoolers were proficient on the 1996–97 Stanford 9
Chicago, IL (1995)	Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP); Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS); Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP)	From 1996–97 to 1997–98, improvement in 16 of 18 subject areas on IGAP; from 1996–97 to 1997–98, 3rd and 6th graders improved ITBS in both math and reading	From 1998–99 to 1999–2000, 11th graders at proficient or above on TAP fell 12.4% in reading and 7.9% in math
Cleveland, OH (1998)	Ohio State Proficiency Test	From 1998–99 to 1999–2000, improvements in proficiency for reading in Grades 1, 3, 5; for math in Grades 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9	From 1998–99 to 1999–2000, decline in proficiency for reading in Grades 2, 4, 7, 8, 10; for math in Grade 11
Detroit, MI (1999)	Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, 7th grade MEAP math went up 2.3% and 7th-grade reading also was up 2.3%; 8th-grade science up 2%	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, 4th grade math down 6.1%, reading down 7.2%; 5th grade science and writing declined, as did 8th-grade writing

(*Continued*)

Table 3 (*Continued*)

Nature of Control (Year of Reform)	*Standardized Tests Analyzed*	*Evidence to Suggest Improvement*	*Evidence to Suggest Stagnation or Decline*
Baltimore, MD (1998)	California Test of Basic Skills/4 (CTBS/4)	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, improvements in Grades 1 and 2 on reading portion of CTBS/4	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, no improvement in other grades on reading CTBS/4 and no improvement in any grade in math portion of CTBS/4
Washington, DC (2000)	Stanford 9 (percentage of students scoring at basic or above)	From 1996–97 to 1998-99, 13% gain in math Grades 2 and 4 and reading Grade 8; 5+% gain in math Grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 and reading Grades 3, 6, 10	From 1996–97 to 1998–99, no gain in math Grades 1, 10; from 1997–98 to 1998–99, negative change in math Grades 1, 6, 10, and 11 and reading Grades 1, 6
Oakland, CA (2000)	Takeover still beginning		
Harrisburg, PA (2000)	Takeover still beginning		
State control			
Jersey City, NJ (1989)	New Jersey 4th Grade Assessment, New Jersey High School Proficiency Test (HSPT)	On HSPT: percentage passing writing improved by 8%	On 4th-grade test: from 1996–97, percentage meeting state standards fell 2.9% in reading, 2.9% in math, and 2.1% in writing
Paterson, NJ (1991)	New Jersey High School Proficiency Test (HSPT)	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, percentage passing math up 9.4%; from 1996–97 to 1997–98, percentage passing reading and writing both improved (before falling in the next interval)	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, no high school met its benchmark and percentage passing in reading fell 12.2%, in writing 4.1%; before rising, math scores fell from 1996–97 to 1997–98

Newark, NJ (1995)	New Jersey High School Proficiency Test (HSPT)	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, percentage passing improved 2.7% in writing	From 1997–98 to 1998–99, percentage passing declined 10.5% in reading and 1% in writing
Compton, CA (1993)	Stanford 9	From 1998–99 to 1999–2000, reading scores went up by more than 10% in Grades 3, 5, 7; language scores also up in Grades 3, 5, 7	District performance, even in 1999–2000, however, was considerably lower than state averages.
Hartford, CT (1997)	Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)	From 1997-98 to 1998-99, made double-digit gains in both reading and math CMT scores	On the CAPT, only small gains in district from 1995 to 1998, and no gains in the science component
Lawrence, MA (1999)	Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)	From 1998–99, some small gains in the bottom 20% of elementary schools on MCAS	From 1998–99, percentage failing the MCAS grew in both English and math

Note. This table offers a quick comparison between districts based on their recent improvements (or nonimprovements) in student achievement. It is not an exhaustive list of all changes in these districts. Although most of the takeover districts test their students with more than one standardized test, in this table we focus on only one test, as noted in column 2. Data sources: school district and state department of education Web sites.

Figure 1 presents such a graph. Although comparisons across districts are not possible because of the use of different achievement tests, it is enough to note that there are not consistent year-to-year trends across districts. Although districts may gain significantly in 1-year's time, these gains are not necessarily sustained. In short, at the district level there is no clear story on achievement and either mayoral or state takeover. We next turn to school-level analysis.

Our findings from school-level analysis in Boston, Chicago, Lawrence, and Compton lead to four broad conclusions regarding the relationship between academic performance and school district takeover. First, mayoral takeover in Chicago and Boston may be linked to increases in student achievement at the elementary grades. Second, gains in achievement in

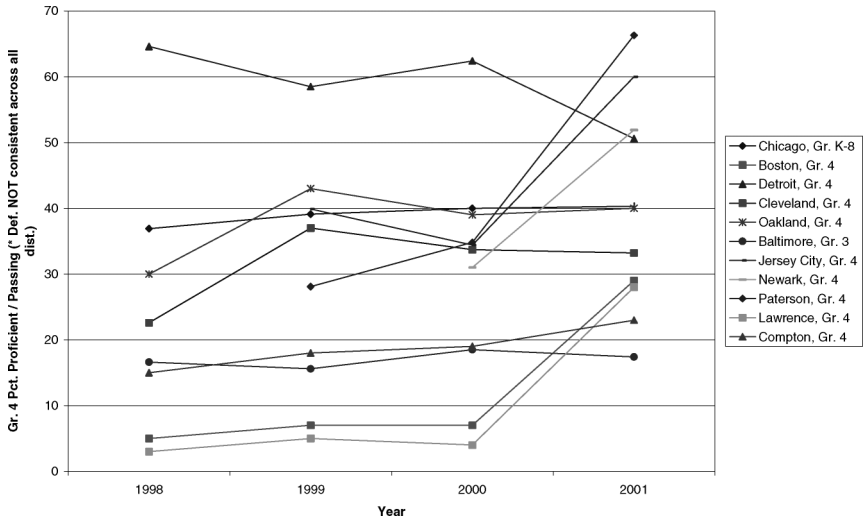

Figure 1. Elementary (~Grade 4) reading achievement, 1998 to 2001. Calculations are based on state-specified norms for Passing and Proficient, and achievement cannot be compared across districts. Achievement is for Grade 4, with two exceptions: Chicago data are for the average, K–8, and Baltimore data are for Grade 3. Districts used the following examinations: Chicago: Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS); Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP); Boston and Lawrence: Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS); Detroit: Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP); Cleveland: Ohio Proficiency Test; Oakland: California Standards Tests, using Stanford Achievement Test, 9th ed (SAT-9); Baltimore: Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP); Jersey City, Newark, and Paterson: New Jersey Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA); Compton: California Standards Tests, using Stanford Achievement Test, 9th ed. (SAT-9); Hartford: Connecticut Mastery Test, 3rd generation.

Chicago and Boston are especially large for the lowest performing schools, suggesting that mayoral takeovers involve a special focus on these failing schools. Third, mayoral takeover in Chicago and Boston seems less effective for the upper grades, where the cumulative effects of many years of poor schooling are not easily reversible. Fourth, when state takeovers produce administrative and political turmoil, student achievement suffers. After a period of adjustment, however, state takeovers may also be able to produce positive achievement gains.

Mayoral takeover is linked to increases in student achievement at the elementary grades. In Boston and Chicago, elementary schools were improving their standardized test scores in the late 1990s. In Boston, the percentage of students failing the MCAS fell in all three grades (4th, 8th, and 10th) for both English and math (Table 4). In Chicago, the percentage of students at or above national norms on the ITBS/TAP rose in all but one grade level from 1994 to 1997, and across the board from 1997 to 1999. In 1999, this meant that the percentage of students at national norms was 9% higher in math and 6.6% higher in reading than it was in 1997 (Table 5).

Gains in achievement are especially large for the lowest performing schools. In Boston and Chicago, the lowest performing elementary schools were making strong improvements as well. Compared to all schools in Boston, the lowest performing schools reduced the number of failing 4th-grade students by almost 10% more in English (–17.95% for bottom 20% vs. –7.99% for all schools) and almost 5% in math (–17.58% for bottom 20% vs. –12.87% for all schools). This comparison should not be interpreted as a negative comment about the rest of Boston's public schools (outside the bottom 20%). It is likely that the other 80% of schools had a smaller *change* in percentage failing because they had fewer failing students to begin with. This comparison is used to isolate the lowest performing schools to assess their progress. It is not a given that the bottom 20% of schools will improve, and that is why the comparison is necessary. It is conceivable, for instance, that the bottom 20% of schools could have seen little change while other schools in the district contributed to a large change in the district average.

In Chicago, the bottom 20% of elementary schools made greater improvements in all grades in both time intervals. Looking, for example, at 4th-grade performance, we see that Chicago's bottom 20% of schools bettered the average for all schools by 5% in reading (16.1% for bottom 20% vs. 10.9% for all schools) and by almost 7% in math (19.4% for bottom

Table 4

Boston City Public Schools' Change in Achievement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) From 1997–98 to 1998–99 for Grades 4, 8, and 10

	English		*Math*	
	Percentage Proficient or Above (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)	*Percentage Failing (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)*	*Percentage Proficient or Above (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)*	*Percentage Failing (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)*
4th grade				
All schools	2.09	–7.80	5.66	–10.25
Bottom 20% schools	4.05	–16.43	8.96	–14.00
8th grade				
All schools	3.28	–5.08	2.48	–9.88
Bottom 20% schools	4.57	–10.71	0.33	–10.00
10th grade				
All schools	–0.78	–1.94	2.44	–3.06
Bottom 20% schools	–1.75	–1.75	0.50	–3.75

Note. MCAS classifies students in one of five categories: Advanced Level, Proficient, Needs Improvement, Failing (tested), and Failing (absent). Here, Percentage Proficient or Above includes those students who are either advanced or proficient, and percentage Failing includes both those who failed due to testing and those who failed due to absence. These figures are for Regular Students, which includes those students who are not identified as Disabled or Limited English Proficiency. Bottom 20% schools are those schools who performed in the lowest 20% on the 1997–98 MCAS (the first year of the testing.) Lowest performing schools were determined separately for math and English (i.e., the "bottom 20% of math schools" may be different from the "bottom 20% of English schools"). Data source: Massachusetts Department of Education.

Table 5

Chicago Public Schools' Change in Achievement on Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Grades 3–8) and Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (Grades 9 and 11) for the Academic Years 1993–94 to 1996–97 and for 1996–97 to 1998–99

	Percentage of Students at or Above National Norms			
	Change From 1993–94 to 1996–97		*Change From 1996–97 to 1998–99*	
	Math	*Reading*	*Math*	*Reading*
District total				
All grades tested	7.8	3.6	9.0	6.6
Bottom 20%	12.7	7.2	15.5	9.3
Grade 4				
All schools	7.8	3.1	12.5	10.9
Bottom 20%	12.2	7.6	19.4	16.1
Grade 8				
All schools	13.5	3.0	10.0	7.5
Bottom 20%	14.7	9.6	16.0	13.8
Grade 11				
All schools	9.1	3.8	7.3	5.0
Bottom 20%	8.5	4.3	9.0	5.9

Note. Bottom 20% schools were determined by taking the lowest performing schools at each grade level and in each subject area from the base year. For example, the subgroup "Bottom 20% of 4th graders" in the first column represents the set of 4th graders at the schools that performed the poorest in 1994 (the base year for comparison to the 1996–97 school year). The results presented here include all schools tested in each of the two comparison testing years. Results from all grades are similar to Grades 4, 8, and 11 shown here. Data source: Chicago Public Schools Web site: http://cps.k12.il.us.

20% vs. 12.5% for all schools). Our school-level analysis strongly suggests that in these two mayoral takeover cities, the lowest performing elementary schools were making gains on their standardized test scores.

Mayoral takeover seems less effective for the upper grades. Achievement levels in the upper grades in both Boston and Chicago raise the possibility that in the upper grades, student achievement has not improved as much, and the bottom 20% of schools have not performed better than the district average. In Boston, the percentage of students (across all schools) failing the MCAS English section fell 7.99% for 4th graders, 5.36% for 8th graders, and 1.61% for 10th graders. In math, the percentage failing fell 12.87% for 4th graders, 9.08% for 8th graders, and 2.06% for 10th graders. This trend in student performance suggests that the greatest gains in student achievement are realized in the lower grades. When we look at the

percentage of proficient students, we see a similar trend. In Grade 10 in Boston, in fact, the percentage of students proficient in English falls 0.61% from 1997–98 to 1998–99. In addition, we find that the bottom 20% of schools no longer perform better than the average for all schools. Compared to the 0.61% fall in proficiency in Grade 10 English, for example, in the bottom 20% of Boston's high schools, the 10th grade saw a 1.5% drop in proficiency. In math, the average for all schools went up almost 2%, but the lowest performing schools made no improvement from the previous year. This is an example of the district average being driven by the higher performing schools while the bottom 20% remain stagnant.

In Chicago, the same phenomenon arose in Grade 9. From 1993–94 to 1996–97, the average for all schools went up 10.3% in math and 2.9% in English; the average for the bottom 20% of schools only rose 5.8% in math and 1.4% in English. In Grade 11 in Chicago, the bottom 20% of schools performed about the same as the average for all schools, performing slightly worse in math and better in reading. From 1996–97 to 1998–99, the lowest performing schools did a little better in comparison with the overall average. In Grade 9, their rate of improvement was almost identical to the overall average, and in Grade 11, they performed 1.7% better in math and 0.9% better in English. The data we analyze for Boston and Chicago suggests that in the upper grades, the improvement in student achievement lessens overall, and the lowest performing schools no longer improve more than the average for all schools.

When state takeovers produce administrative and political turmoil, student achievement suffers. In the state takeover district of Lawrence, we find that between 1997–98 and 1998–99 there was little improvement overall on the MCAS (Table 6). Averaging across all grades and all schools, the percentage of students proficient or above on the MCAS fell 0.7% in English and 0.9% in math. In addition, every grade saw an increased rate of failure in both English and math.

Analysis of the lowest performing schools suggests that the lowest performing schools may be improving modestly amid the larger district failures (Table 6). In 8th grade, for instance, the bottom two schools improved their proficiency rate in both subject areas while the overall eighth grade average declined. However, because Lawrence has a small number of public schools, the "bottom 20%" lowest performing schools included only 2 (of 7) schools at the 8th-grade level and 4 (of 13) at the 4th-grade level. Thus, it seems safe to conclude that the primary result from the Lawrence achievement data is that during a period of superintendent turnover and state–city squabbling, student achievement declined. That district

Table 6

Lawrence Public Schools' Change in Achievement from 1997–98 to 1998–99 on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

	English		*Math*	
	Percentage Proficient or Above (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)	*Percentage Failing (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)*	*Percentage Proficient or Above (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)*	*Percentage Failing (Change From 1997–98 to 1998–99)*
All grades				
All schools	–0.1	2.6	–0.4	0.6
Grade 4				
All schools	1.5	5.3	1.1	–1.8
Bottom 20%	2.3	4.5	1.0	–11.3
Grade 8				
All schools	–3.7	–1.7	–3.3	4.1
Bottom 20%	0.5	–1.5	1.5	–1.5
Grade 10				
All schools	3.0	–2.0	0.0	7.0

Note. See note to Table 4 for MCAS classifications. Lowest performing schools were determined separately for math and English (i.e., the "bottom 20% of math schools" may be different from the "bottom 20% of English schools"). For the 4th-grade data, the Bottom 20% represents the lowest 4 (of 13) performing schools. Data source: Massachusetts Department of Education.

achievement has improved since that period is further indication that once turmoil subsides, gains can be made.

After a period of adjustment, state takeovers may also be able to produce positive achievement gains. In Compton, where state takeover has been in place since 1993, we find that students are improving their academic performance and the lowest performing schools are in most cases improving as well. From 1997–98 to 1999–2000, all grade levels in the Compton Unified School District saw improvements on the Stanford 9 test (Table 7). Similar to Boston and Chicago, the largest gains were in Grades 2 and 3, where reading scores went up 12.8% and 6.7%, respectively. Math scores also rose. The bottom 20% of schools in Compton improved, and sometimes more than the average for all Compton schools. The gains seen in Compton suggest that state intervention may be more effective after it has been established for a prolonged period of time. This would be consistent with the idea that after an adjustment phase, state takeover can establish effective strategies for improving achievement.

Table 7

Compton Public Schools' Change in Achievement From 1997–98 to 1999–2000 on the Stanford 9 as Part of California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program

	Percentage of Students Scoring at or Above the 50th National Percentile	
	Reading	*Math*
District total		
All grades tested	4.3	6.5
Bottom 20%	6.5	7.9
Grade 4		
All schools	1.7	6.1
Bottom 20%	11.0	9.3
Grade 8		
All schools	2.1	3.0
Bottom 20%	6.5	6.0
Grade 11		
All schools	3.3	3.3
Bottom 20%	0.0	–2.5

Note. For Grades 6, 7, and 8 the Bottom 20% are only the bottom 2 (of 8) schools. There is no Bottom 20% reported for Grade 9 and Grade 10 because there are too few schools. In Grade 11, the Bottom 20% represents the lowest 2 (of 6) schools. The grades shown here are representative of the whole. Data source: California Department of Education, STAR Reports 1998 and 2000.

More Effective Financial and Administrative Management

When we consider the change in per pupil expenditures (PPE) in those cities where takeover occurred, the data suggest that resource reallocation follows mayoral control. In Chicago, current PPE fell from $6,389 in 1994–95 to $6,179 in 1995–96, and then fell again to $5,784 in 1996–97 (Table 8). In Boston, after takeover in 1992, current PPE fell by 1.3% from 1991–92 to 1992–93. This is the only decrease in PPE in Boston over the time interval we study (1992–1997). After the initial decline in PPE, it may be that the public began to approve of the mayor's reform actions and therefore allowed for greater spending. The Chicago data also suggest a reversal of allocative decision on instructional activities. By 1996–97, the Chicago percentage of current expenditures spent on instruction (64.1%) was the highest in the 7 years. Finally, state takeover in Compton may also have instituted fiscal discipline. The largest decline in PPE occurred between the 1992–93 and 1993–94 school years, after state takeover in

Table 8

Mayoral and State Takeover Districts Current per Pupil Expenditures (Constant 1997 $) and Percentage of Expenditures Spent on Instruction and Support, 1991 to 1997

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*
National averages						
Per pupil expenditures (PPE; $)	6,205	6,206	6,247	6,311	6,288	6,392
Change in PPE (%)		0.0	0.7	1.0	–0.4	1.6
Mayoral averages						
Per pupil expenditures ($)	7,024	7,266	7,239	7,296	7,257	7,148
Change in PPE (%)		3.9	–0.5	0.5	4.6	0.8
Spent on instruction (%)	58.6	59.4	57.6	57.0	60.6	62.4
Spent on support (%)	37.0	36.2	34.0	32.6	35.5	33.6
State takeover averages						
Per pupil expenditures ($)	7,544	8,507	8,591	8,693	8,802	8,900
Change in PPE (%)		11.5	4.7	1.0	1.1	1.1
Spent on instruction (%)	61.8	61.7	57.1	55.1	61.6	63.6
Spent on support (%)	34.2	34.5	30.4	29.7	34.6	32.3

Note. We have adjusted the PPE figure for inflation using the Consumer Price Index annual averages, but we have not adjusted for regional inflation or cost-of-living differences. PPE represents the current expenditures per student, and the percentages spent on instruction and support represent the percentage of current expenditures spent in those areas, respectively. National averages are provided by the annual National Center for Education Studies reports on Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education, various years. These reports calculate a national average after imputing for missing expenditure data. Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Elementary-Secondary School System Finance Data Files, utilizing Form F-33; National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

1993. Furthermore, since state takeover, current PPE has continued to decline every year. Compton also has the lowest per-student spending among all the takeover districts we studied.

Analysis of the distribution of administrative and support personnel also suggests a new trend after mayoral takeover: the infusion of nonteacher administrators to management. This change was most evident in Chicago, where the percentage of administrators rose significantly from 1995–96 to 1996–97 (Table 9). This was matched by a drop in the percentage of support staff. These changes were greater than 30% and suggest that a more diversified management team is being put in place to run the school district; for example, Chicago recruited a former city budget director, Paul Vallas, to act as chief executive officer during the first 6 years of its takeover reform. In Chicago, more employees are being recruited from the private and not-for-profit sector. The change in staffing distribution indicates that these new employees are being recruited to manage the district. Baltimore also had consistently greater percentages of administrators than most other takeover districts, a possible indication of a more diversified management team. In the other mayoral and state takeover districts, evidence of change in management structure was less conclusive. Given our finding in Chicago after mayoral takeover, it will be interesting to see new data from Detroit, Cleveland, and other high-profile mayoral takeover districts. Our analysis suggests that we will see more administrative staff recruited from noneducational sectors.

Increased Accountability to Enhance Public Confidence

Looking at the types of tests that districts give to their students, two trends are evident. First, all of our takeover districts are in states that administer content-standards assessments (Table 10). Although the states vary in the number of grades they test, it is clear that all of the states in which takeovers have occurred are concerned with measuring student performance against state-defined standards. Our second finding, however, is that in the mayoral takeover districts, there is also a strong emphasis on additional tests administered by the local authorities. In Chicago, for instance, the district created its own Chicago Academic Standards Examination (CASE) to better test its high school students. Chicago also uses the ITBS to further monitor its progress. In Detroit, the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) is used in addition to the MEAP. Baltimore employs the CTBS, and Boston uses the Stanford 9 (SAT-9).

The use of these additional measures of evaluation in the mayoral takeover cities suggests that state standards are not the only benchmark

Table 9

Change in Distribution of Nonteacher Administration Versus Nonteacher Support Staff in Mayoral and State Takeover Districts, 1992 to 1998

Takeover	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*
Mayoral						
Chicago						
%NT Ad	8.1	8.5	9.3	9.4	47.6	48.2
%NT Supp	61.0	59.0	57.3	55.0	23.7	24.2
Boston						
%NT Ad	5.7	5.4	5.1	4.3	4.0	4.1
%NT Supp	68.5	70.2	69.8	70.9	71.1	70.0
Detroit						
%NT Ad		13.7	10.8	10.8	8.6	9.1
%NT Supp		76.6	68.2	83.8	78.1	76.2
Cleveland						
%NT Ad	5.5	5.2	7.2	9.5	9.5	9.7
%NT Supp	79.9	76.3	77.8	75.6	72.8	72.7
Oakland						
%NT Ad	7.5	7.9	53.3	8.1	10.2	7.8
%NT Supp	68.3	67.2	26.7	67.2	68.6	69.1
Baltimore						
%NT Ad	11.5	13.4	14.0	15.9	16.6	20.2
%NT Supp	61.9	51.9	53.9	46.0	51.5	55.0
Washington, DC						
%NT Ad		21.3	20.6	20.7	19.2	9.5
%NT Supp		61.0	61.3	62.5	59.4	74.2
State						
Jersey City						
%NT Ad	10.3	9.0	9.6	9.6	8.8	8.8
%NT Supp	60.0	63.5	65.0	64.9	66.1	64.7
Paterson						
%NT Ad	11.4	9.0	9.5	8.4	9.4	10.5
%NT Supp	60.6	69.7	68.2	71.4	63.1	57.5
Newark						
%NT Ad	10.1	10.7	9.6	9.7	10.2	9.5
%NT Supp	67.7	69.8	68.5	69.7	67.9	69.3
Compton						
%NT Ad	4.6	7.6	64.8	10.1	11.0	9.9
%NT Supp	61.8	63.3	15.9	57.4	56.4	66.1
Lawrence						
%NT Ad	11.5	8.3	5.9	11.0	3.4	2.6
%NT Supp	48.2	44.0	50.2	46.7	67.7	60.8

Note. Figures from Harrisburg and Hartford were similar to those shown. %NT Ad = percentage of all nonteacher employees listed in the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data as LEA administrators, School administrators, or Coordinators/Supervisors. %NT Supp = percentage of all nonteacher employees listed as Support Staff (Library/media support, LEA support, School administration support, Student support, and All other support). The changes given are from the previous academic year. Data source: National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

Table 10

State and Local Standardized Tests in Takeover Districts

Takeover	*State Assessment?*	*Name(s) of State Assessment*	*Additional Tests?*	*Name(s) of Additional Tests*
Mayoral				
Boston	Yes	Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)	Yes	Stanford 9 (SAT-9)
Chicago	Yes	Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP); Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)	Yes	Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Chicago Academic Standards Examinations (CASE)
Detroit	Yes	Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)	Yes	Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT)
Cleveland	Yes	Ohio State Proficiency Test (OSPT)	Yes	Stanford 9 (SAT-9)
Baltimore	Yes	Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP)	Yes	Curriculum Based Assessment, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills/4 (CTBS/4)
Oakland	Yes	California Achievement Test (CAT)	Yes	Stanford 9 (SAT-9)
Washington, DC	—	—	Yes	Stanford 9 (SAT-9)
State				
Harrisburg	Yes	Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)	Yes	Stanford 9 (SAT-9)
Paterson	Yes	Elementary/Eighth Grade/High School School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA, GEPA, HSPT)	Yes	Stanford 9 (SAT-9), Local Assessment
Hartford	Yes	Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)	No	—
Compton	Yes	California Achievement Test (CAT)	Yes	Stanford 9 (SAT-9)

districts are concerned about meeting. Because they use more than one set of standardized tests, the mayoral takeover districts test their students more than state takeover districts do. When we summed the number of tests administered over Grades K–12, mayoral takeover districts administer an annual average of 19.29 tests, whereas state takeover districts administer only 16.67 per year. Using testing calendars made available by each school district, we calculated the total number of standardized tests administered per year in each district for all grades. For example, in Chicago during the academic year there are a total of 22 tests given across all grades. In Grades 3 through 5, 7 and 8, students take 2 tests per year. In Grade 6, they take 1 test per year. In Grades 9 through 11, they take 3 tests, per year, and in Grade 12, they take 2 tests per year. We made similar calculations for each of the takeover districts. In the state takeover districts, the smaller number of standardized tests is consistent with the hypothesis that for state takeovers, state-administered tests are most important for district evaluation.

Improving Accountability: Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

Our analysis of city and state takeovers suggests the following conclusions. First, there are significant differences between mayoral takeover and state takeovers, and mayoral takeovers in Chicago and Boston appear to be more productive in terms of academic improvement. Mayoral takeovers may make a significant impact on the lowest performing schools. Second, takeovers may also produce more efficient financial and administrative management, and in the case of mayoral takeover lead to a broadening of management expertise. Third, both city and state takeovers bring with them a heavy emphasis on academic accountability, and mayoral takeovers are more likely to utilize additional tests beyond state-mandated exams.

Although it is still too early to know where takeovers will lead (whether to sustained improvement or falling back), the components for success include clear and attainable goals, working together with the existing administration for a smooth transition, and making the takeover heads (i.e., the mayor) accountable as well as the teachers, students, and so on. When this happens, our findings offer preliminary evidence that support mayoral takeovers as a reform that can improve failing school districts. Our findings also suggest that where there is political or administrative turmoil, school districts will not see as much improvement.

From a research perspective, the emergence of school district takeover within the integrated governance framework calls for more systematic studies that link district-level reform to the school and classroom. What arrangement of integrated governance (i.e., mayoral, state, or some combination) takeover is most effective in improving learning opportunities in the most disadvantaged, inner-city schools? Will the new vision of accountability improve teaching practices? Can a mayor sustain his or her commitment to education in a system of competing constituencies? As school district takeover becomes more frequent, these are the sorts of questions that policy analysts must continue to address.

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