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Mayoral Control of Schools: Concepts, Tradeoffs, and Outcomes

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Introduction

After many decades of a limited role in education, some city mayors began to take control. Boston initiated this changed mayoral role in 1991, followed by Chicago in 1995, Cleveland in 1998, Harrisburg, PA in 2000, New York City in 2002, and D.C. in 2006. Mayors in Baltimore and Philadelphia had considerable control in the 1990s, but later lost most of it to the state. Oakland, CA, Washington, D.C., and Detroit initiated partial control by the mayor that failed, and was subsequently abandoned. This pattern suggests that the local context is crucial in determining the characteristics and sustenance of mayoral control of schools. For example, Los Angeles, Fresno, and Albuquerque mayors have all been frustrated in their attempts to take charge of schools, in part because their school districts are larger than the city boundary.

A basic rationale for mayoral control has been the assumed linkage between improved schools, city economic development, and retention of middle class families. An implicit policy assumption is that mayors are better equipped than school boards to

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[1] Paper prepared for the Commission in School Governance in New York City, 2007 by Professor Michael W. Kirst, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University.

highlight school problems and mobilize the personnel and resources to solve them. Cuban and Usdan posit a three pronged theory for why mayoral control might succeed.[2]

(1) Linking urban school governance to existing political structures (including the business community) will produce organizational effectiveness, that will improve teaching and learning as measured by standardized test scores and enhanced coordination with city-provided offerings in recreation, arts medical, and social services. (2) Better managers will make urban school systems more efficient and effective by tightly aligning organizational goals, curriculum, rewards and sanctions, professional development of teachers and principals, and classroom instruction to academic achievement. (3) When non-educators who lead urban districts are connected openly to existing state and local political structures , chances of improving and sustaining students' academic achievement will increase.

Another theory of action concerning the success of mayoral control places greater emphasis on accountability enhancement. Success is partly based on streamlining governance so that fewer people are held accountable by more voters. A single person the mayor is accountable rather than several board members elected by subdistricts in staggered elections. In these theories of action, the basic hypothesis is that mayors are better able than school boards to spotlight attention on problems in their districts, and increase resources to address them.

[2] Larry Cuban and Michel Usdan, Powerful Reforms With Shallow Roots (New York City: Teachers College, 2003).

However, most policy analysts would doubt whether governance changes in and of themselves can directly improve classroom teaching and learning.[3] There is a complex multi-directional flow of influence and resources that flow from governance to students. But without new central governance many urban districts cannot adopt major reforms or improvements.[4] Mayors can influence classrooms in many ways by adopting curriculum standards, hiring better teachers, and providing high quality instructional materials.

Trade Offs Among Conflicting School Governance Values

Herbert Kaufman has provided an insightful analysis of the evolution of local governance.[5] He demonstrates that city governance has been a historical search for an accommodation among three competing governance values (objectives): representative democracy, centralized executive leadership, and technical nonpartisan competence. Control by a large subdistrict elected school board such as New York in 1970 would exemplify the first; mayoral education control like New York City the second; and the third was the civil service system in 1950 that empowered trained and qualified nonpolitical civil servants who made decisions based upon technical and professional considerations.[6] At various stages of New York City's history each of these three governance values has been ascendant. The three values compete and cannot all be maximized simultaneously. The crucial decision is which one should be traded off to

[3] Michael Kirst, Mayoral Influence, New Regimes, and Public School Governance (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, CPRE, 2002).
[4] Donald McAdams, What School Boards Can Do (New York: Teachers College, 2006).
[5] Herbert Kaufman, Politics and Policies in State and Local Government (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963).
[6] David Rogers, 110 Livingston Street (New York: Random House, 1969).

make another ascendant. This could depend on the specific conditions and context of the city, like NY, at a particular time.

The reaction to Tammany Hall spurred the creation of 110 Livingston at the beginning of the 20th century. Nothing exemplifies the goal of professional civil service teacher hiring in the 1950s more than the New York City Board of Examiners. The civil rights movement was an important impetus for the decentralized elected boards in 1970. In the 1990s, the shortcomings of the New York City schools performance and dissatisfaction with the "community controlled boards" assisted mayoral takeover. The excessive emphasis on one of the three tends to set in motion demands for redressing the balance. For example, a July 26, 2007 Quinnipiac University poll indicates that New York public opinion favors more representative democracy with shared control by the next mayor, and a board of education. The same poll, however, concludes that most voters think Bloomberg's takeover of the public schools is a success.[7]

Theoretically, one could diminish the need for trade-offs by trying to emphasize all three values at once. Mayoral control could be mitigated through decentralized school site councils like Chicago did in 1992. More decisions could be delegated to professional educators selected through civil service examinations and graduate degrees. But this fight power with other power approach would likely lead to stalemates, so choices need to made among the three values and right balance crafted for a particular local context.. This decision can be informed by a review of mayoral control in other cities.

[7] http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x271.ml

How can one evaluate the arguments favoring redistributing power from school boards to mayors? One useful concept called "institutional choice" focuses on the crucial policy decision of which institution should be the decision maker. For example, courts in the 1960's were reluctant to delegate civil rights protection to local school boards in Alabama. Another type of institutional choice is whether to place various functions in the hands of markets (e.g., parental choice of schools) or politics (e.g., school board elections). Both of these institutional choices could be problematic. There may not be many good schools for some parents to choose from , but many big city school elections have turnouts of less than 15%. The recent state accountability movement included an institutional choice to enhance the curricular and testing role of state government by overriding local decisions on what to teach.

There are two general characteristics that help guide institutional choice for making decisions: agreement on substantive goals and the capacity to achieve them. Substantive goals are crucial because of the need to insure support for a policy. Courts may be more supportive of civil rights than some school boards, but the courts substantive goals must be buttressed by capacity to implement its decisions in the local school context. Courts cannot run school districts very well.

So which institution should be chosen to control the schools? A method for choosing can be called "comparative institutional advantage," that is, "the distrust directed at one decision-maker (e.g. a school board) must be carefully weighed against the advantages of that decision maker. Both the advantages and disadvantages of alternative decision- maker(e.g. the mayor) also must be carefully analyzed. The logic of comparative institutional advantage implies the futility of seeking perfect or ideal decision maker or implementation of a policy favored by local citizens . The real world offers a least worst choice of imperfect institutions to make and implement policy.[8]

The Connection Between Governance and Improved Education

[8] William H. Clune, Institutional Choice as a Theoretical Framework for Research on Education Policy (Philadelphia, PA: Center for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania, 1987).

Education research does not provide many clues about this connection. For example, in 2002 Deborah Land reviewed research published since 1980 on the role and effectiveness of school boards. Her comprehensive analysis stressed "the limited number of data based studies."[9] Land found conjecture and scattered case studies as the only basis for evaluating the effectiveness of appointed versus elected school boards. In 2007, Hess surveyed 400 books, articles, and papers that addressed appointed school boards and mayoral control.[10] He concluded that:

> "fewer than a dozen explicitly considered the impact of board reelection on local school reforms in more than a cursory fashion. Most of the research is the work of a small group of scholars replicating and repurposing a small number of case studies. In the end, there were not even a handful of rigorous, systematic studies that examined the effect on some dimension of school improvement. (p. 7)[11]

Even in case studies that find some impact upon test scores from mayoral takeover, the tradeoff issue is highlighted. Chambers 2006 book asserted that test scores increased in Chicago and Cleveland, but the cost was fewer opportunities for grassroots participation in the school system by minorities.[12]

Although the overwhelming weight of the evidence is inconclusive, a 2007 book by Wong et al contends that integrated governance by mayors "will lead to statistically

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[9] Deborah Land, "Local School Boards Under Review," Review of Educational Research, 72,2 (2002): 29.
[10] Frederick M. Hess, Looking for Leadership: Assessing the Case for Mayoral Control of Urban School Systems (St. Louis: Show Me Institute, 2007).
[11] Hess, op cit, p. 7.
[12] Stefanie Chambers. Mayors and Schools (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2006).

significant, positive gains in reading and math, relative to other districts in the state."[13] Wong et al also claim that mayoral districts focus on fiscal discipline by containing labor costs and reducing bureaucratic spending, and are more likely to stress outcome performance goals. These bold assertions that the governance structure is crucial should be reanalyzed to make sure that the multiple correlation statistical techniques are sufficient, and controlled adequately for alternative explanations. For example, a new curriculum could be the cause of test score increases, and Wong cannot control for many education initiatives that differ between the cities.

Wong's book is somewhat more convincing concerning the positive impact of mayoral control upon new policy and administrative coherence, continuity, and civic support compared to the prior regimes. The research summary by Hess also ends on a positive note because mayoral control:

> "does provide good reason to think that replacing an elected board…is a promising way to jump-start coherent and sustained school improvement. The experience of cities like Boston and Chicago illustrates that sustained mayoral leadership can make a difference. An appointed school board may be less susceptible to narrow demands and better able to summon the focus, patience, and unity to support tough minded reform. Moreover, replacing an ineffective board atop a dysfunctional system offers an opportunity to 'reshuffle the deck', upend

[13] Kenneth K. Wong et al. The Education Mayor: Improving America's Schools (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown, 2007).

routines and political understandings that can hinder improvement, and create the opportunity for focused and responsible governance (p. 21)."

But even this conclusion may imply that mayoral control should be a temporary arrangement to jolt the system, and then revert back to a higher priority for representative democracy or professional neutral competence.

Local Context Matters: Chicago and Boston use Different Initial Strategies

A closer examination of two cities will demonstrate the importance of local context in balancing the three competing values discussed above. The new powers granted to mayors in Chicago and Boston have resulted in fundamental changes in the governance of the large urban education systems in these two cities – these changes could easily be labeled "regime changes." Chicago enrolls 450,000 students in 600 schools with a $6.7 billion budget, while Boston enrolls 58,000 students with a $73.4 million budget. The systems in both cities are now governed by leaders closely affiliated with the mayors, and largely answerable to them; Boston now has a school policy committee appointed by the mayor, while Chicago has a corporate style board, also mayorally-appointed that oversees the city's schools. Out of these governance changes have emerged significant policy changes that have, for the most part, received considerable public support compared to previous governance systems. This analysis encompasses the initial years of mayoral takeover in both cities.

Despite similarities in the changing shape of governance in Boston and Chicago, the mayors and the leaders of the school systems opted for substantially different styles of school reform. In Boston and Chicago school districts were fiscally dependent, but the mayors did not have full control of the school board process before takeover. Superintendent Payzant and Mayor Menino of Boston focused on a "professional" model of reform, aligning education standards and building teacher and administrator capacity. In Chicago, on the other hand, Mayor Daley and initial Chicago Public Schools CEO Vallas emphasized a top-down model (layered over a previous school site decentralization reform model) in which the managers create a vision with clear accountability mechanisms, while schools and students receive sanctions if the achievement goals are not met.

Formal governance changes enhancing the role of the mayor were introduced in Boston and Chicago in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In Boston, a series of decisions between 1989 and 1996, both legislative and electoral, gave the mayor the power to appoint the School Committee. Up until this time, the School Committee had been directly elected in some form. This change gave the mayor a much stronger role in the operations of the school system, and created a direct line of authority to him.

Mayor Flynn in Boston spearheaded the charge to alter the governance structure of the Boston Public Schools. He was supported by the state legislature, which was becoming increasingly concerned with the Boston schools, and by the business community. Much of the African-American community was skeptical of eliminating an

elected School Committee, and the Irish of South Boston (who had long held power on the elected committee) also opposed the change.

In Chicago, the governance changes of 1995 granting an enhanced role to the mayor were layered over earlier reforms instituted in 1988. The 1988 reform, which was supported by state Democrats and civic activists, shifted power from the district towards Local School Councils (LSCs). In this legislative change, the mayor's ability to appoint the city's school board was decreased. However, the impetus for this decentralization was not a desire to increase the influence of educators. Rather, Shipps argues, it was designed to enhance the influence of parents and community members; she comments that, "Educators were blamed for the problems and their discretion curtailed".[14] At first there were many candidates for the local site councils but over time fewer ran and competition decreased. Moreover, the system lost considerable central direction , so over time the value of democratic representation became less urgent and a stronger executive at the center a higher priority

While the 1988 reforms pushed control towards the school-site, the legislation passed in 1995 shifted power up the ladder to the mayor. These changes gave the Chicago mayor more authority than any mayor since before the Progressive Era, effectively turning the system into a department of city government. Specifically, the legislation in 1995 eliminated the school board nominating committee, which had effectively minimized the mayor's ability to select school board members, and replaced

[14] Dorothy Shipps, School Reforms Corporate Style: Chicago, 1880-2000. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 2006).

the traditional board with a new corporate style one. In this new structure, only one member of five was to be focused on education (the Chief Education Officer) and the mayor appointed all members. The legislation also temporarily limited the right of the unions to strike and reduced the number of bargainable issues.

In both cities, primary initiators of the governance changes that granted more power to the mayors were the business community, the mayor (especially in Boston), and state legislators. Local groups, such as community activists and minority group representatives, were not directly involved, and educator organizations including the teacher unions were also peripheral to the debates or opposed the change. Reformers in the two cities had similar reasons for supporting these governance changes. The primary goal in both cases was to establish clearer lines of political authority and responsibility, making the city's mayor ultimately accountable for the progress of the public schools.

While the goals of those who pushed through the governance changes in Boston and Chicago had certain similarities, there were also some important differences. In Chicago, there was a strong emphasis on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the public schools – particularly the fiscal efficiency of the district. While improved efficiency was also a factor in Boston, it was not nearly as central to the discussion in that city as was improved classroom instruction.

Another difference between the reforms in these two cities involved the role and purpose of the district's "leader." Reflecting the focus on efficiency, the Chicago Public

Schools were to be led by a business-style CEO, rather than a traditional superintendent. In Boston, on the other hand, Flynn and Menino explicitly wanted a strong educator-leader at the head of the school system. While Mayor Flynn wanted to be held accountable for the state of the Boston Public Schools, he claimed he was not interested in being directly involved with the district's operations. Boston Mayor Menino made Tom Payzant a member of his cabinet, but the mayor often spoke for the school system at contentious community meetings. Payzant had been a superintendent in San Diego and Oklahoma City.

Finally, the view of city and state leaders about the capacity of educators to reform education was rather different. In Chicago, there was continual skepticism about the ability (and motivation) of educators to improve schools – both the 1988 reforms that shifted power towards parents and community members, and the 1995 reforms that granted additional power to the mayor moved control away from educators. While Boston leaders shared some of these concerns, they were still interested in vesting considerable authority in public education professionals.

Similar Change, Different Directions: Boston and Chicago

In Chicago, Paul Vallas, a former budget director for the city, moved to the new position of CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. The selection of Vallas supported the business and other community interests in having someone from outside of traditional public education at the helm of the city's schools. In this top-down change model,

management creates a vision and defines clear sanctions for individuals and schools that do not make progress towards that vision.

Superintendent Tom Payzant in Boston was a much more traditional choice for a district leader, and his selection reflected the mayor's interest in having a professional educator who would stay away (at least to some extent) from the political issues that had consumed much of the time of previous superintendents. Payzant's approach was much more within the framework of traditional education reform, and his primary focus reflected a professional education model involving higher standards and professional educator capacity building.

In 1996 roughly 100 Chicago City Hall employees came to work in the central office, displacing more traditional education staff. While school site councils still exist at all the Chicago public schools, their influence has been minimized, and the new central office leaders have increased their role in the functioning of the city's schools. Due to the combination of no budget crises, no strikes, and a generally positive view among the public of the reforms that Mayor Daly instituted, the legitimacy of the school system improved.

The direct impact of the governance changes in Boston on the actual governance structure of the public schools has not been as marked as in Chicago. The most notable change has been the elimination of the bitter battles within the Boston School Committee and between the Committee and the mayor – a logical outcome of having the School

Committee appointed rather then elected. As in Chicago, labor relations, particularly with the teachers union, have improved in recent years. Also similar to Chicago, some of the most blatant budget problems have disappeared in Boston. While the Boston mayor has always influenced the amount of money spent by the public school system, governance changes have allowed him to also impact how those dollars are spent. Unlike in Chicago, however, there have been no dramatic changes in the structure or staffing of the school district's central office by installing city employees in key units.

The style and substance of the education reforms that are taking place in the context of these governance changes is quite different in the two cities. While Chicago accountability measures have generally focused on minimal standards, and raising the educational outcomes of students faring the worst in the city's schools, there have also been changes for those students at the upper end of the performance spectrum. For example, created alternatives such as magnet schools, accelerated programs such as International Baccalaureate options and charter schools. Alongside efforts to remove "troublesome or slow-learning students" from regular public schools to other settings such as transition centers and alternative high schools, the push for more "upper-end" options is linked with the goal of bringing middle-class families back into the Chicago Public Schools.

One hope for increased mayoral control of schools was that mayors would be more able to link together currently fragmented programs designed to support students and families. In Chicago, Daley has been able to help schools through support from a

variety of other city agencies. But there has not been as much integration between schools and children's services as some had wanted.

Overall, two assumptions underlie the initial Chicago strategy. The first is that much of the capacity necessary to improve performance was already available within the public school system, and that incentives and sanctions were necessary to draw out this pre-existing capacity. Thus, there has been less emphasis in Chicago than Boston on building additional classroom instructional capacity through professional development. The second is that test scores, while perhaps not a perfect measure, are the most logical means of assessing progress in the provision of quality education.

The style of the education reforms being undertaken in Boston, while arising out of a similar governance change, is quite different than in Chicago. Payzant emphasized his long term commitment to a decade of steady, resolute progress through central district staff training, new materials, and high standards. Chicago left choices about reading curriculum to each school and provided options.

Some of the methods Payzant has used include leadership development, whole-school change, diagnostic classroom testing, and creating a Reorganization Plan that focused on student performance. His focus on teaching and learning issues has included relying to some extent on professional educator norms as a means to increased performance, rather than sanctions. Unlike Chicago, there has been little change in the

tenure of administrators or teachers in Boston, and no talk of radical reconstitution of failing schools.

The different directions taken by leaders in Boston and Chicago were not simply the whims of individual mayors and school district chiefs. Rather, they reflected to some extent the different historical and political contexts of these two cities, especially the desires of powerful constituencies within these cities and states. In particular, the regime changes in Boston and Chicago reflect the different emphases of the business communities. For example, due to the role of the business community and Republican legislative leaders in initiating the 1995 reform in Chicago, it is not surprising that a business-style leader like Vallas was initially brought in to lead the school system. Initially, the Boston business community was concerned with fiscal issues, but after mayoral takeover it tended to focus more on issues of curriculum, school quality and teacher improvement.

Thoughts on the Impact of Mayoral Control

One city, Detroit, retreated from mayoral influence over schools. The Detroit mayor (Archer) never wanted control, and the Republican legislature's inclusion of a state official on the Detroit board with a partial veto failed to gain much public legitimacy for the enhanced Detroit mayor's role. So it was no surprise that in 2005 the Detroit voters approved an 11 member school board elected by sub districts. Even though different city contexts are crucial, there are a variety of standards for assessing

overall mayoral impact. A reasonable standard for success is the one used by Ronald Reagan in a 1980 televised debate with President Carter, “are you better off now than you were four years ago”. Reagan knew the record of inflation, Iran hostages, and other issues inclined the voters to say no.

Boston and Cleveland voters overwhelmingly reauthorized mayoral control as well as the Illinois legislature for Chicago’s continuance. Partial control by the mayor in Oakland and Washington never worked, and was dropped. Mayor Jerry Brown added three members to a 7 person board, and the D.C. hybrid model of 4 mayor appointees and 5 elected was characterized by former Mayor Williams as “trying to drive a car with one pedal.” Full control won by D.C. Mayor Fenty in 2007 has some new features such as an ombudsman for citizen complaints, and might be instructive for other cities.

Cleveland’s three mayors have never been the public face of the school system. They have worked behind the scenes with a prominent superintendent. A nominating committee screens board candidates, and the mayor appoints them to four year terms and selects a board president. The mayor and the board appoint the superintendent. This system began in 1998 and voters agreed to keep it in 2002. The board is not very active in public engagement or public questioning of the superintendent’s decisions. The public is only allowed to speak at one of the two board meetings per month. Board committee meetings are private.

In sum, none of the mayor controlled cities wants the old system back. Boston does not pine for the fractious and ineffective school committee, Cleveland’s board was

characterized by "nonstop confrontations, intrusions, chaos, and showmanship."[15] Chicago's 15 member school board could not operate effectively in 1994 and was too large. New York's central school board appointed by Borough Presidents and the Mayor, also included 32 decentralized elementary districts. Although there has been no widespread public support to restore this pre 2002 complex system, there is dissatisfaction with current school governance arrangements in New York as evidenced by the July , 2007 Quinnipiac University poll.

This does not imply that there is no dissatisfaction with mayoral takeover. Negative arguments include: the mayor cannot fundamentally improve classroom instruction, and ends up with marginal changes in buildings, budgets, labor peace, textbooks, supplies, new teachers, etc. Moreover, some analysts are disappointed in mayor's progress in combining education with children and youth policies and services. There are no comprehensive studies of mayoral impact on unions and collective bargaining. Critics contend that mayoral control has been implemented in ways that overstress executive centralization without sufficient attention to representative democracy or citizen participation. Some specific city examples will provide a more in depth treatment of these allegations.

Assessing Mayoral Control: Cleveland Case

[15] Joseph F. Wagner, "School Board Seats Filled Quietly," Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 24, 2007.

Cleveland's evolution under mayoral control highlights the difficulties and complexity in assessing the impact of mayoral control.[16] Cleveland enrolls 55,000 students with a budget of $700 million in 2007-2008. Mayor White appointed Barbara Byrd-Bennett from the New York City school system in 1998 and she stayed through 2006. She was clearly in command of the district with the school board and the mayor in the background. She assumed leadership of a $150 million debt ridden, deeply troubled system that recently had been taken over by the state. Observers described the system as in chaos and despair. Prior to her coming in 1996 an operating tax increase was approved by Cleveland voters, and she was able to gradually pay off the debt and had clean audits since 2001.

Byrd-Bennett focused on academic improvement using budget increases from state, local, and foundation resources. The elementary school day was increased 30 minutes with 80 minutes specified for literacy. She recruited a large group of new young teachers along with instructional specialists in math, English, and technology. Teacher training, support services, and computers were added along with summer schools. She reconfigured the grades into a K-8 structure. Cleveland's expenditures grew by 53% from 1998-2003, slightly more than the statewide average. These were significant gains in the proficiency pass rates for grade 4 and 6 reading and math tests. In 2001 Cleveland passed a $335 million school repair bond. Mayoral control continuation was approved by the voters in 2002 by a significant majority.

[16] Cleveland analysis based on review on interviews and articles in Cleveland Plain Dealer, Cleveland Catalyst, and Aspen Institute.

But in 2003, Cleveland's budget turned around and fell from $670 million in 2003 to $558 million in 2004. About 1,200 teachers were cut; nearly all of them were young, and hired after Byrd-Bennett tried to staff low performing schools. Class sizes increased substantially, but assistant principals, social workers, and security officers were cut. In 2005 voters turned down a school operating tax by 55% to 45% with white voters highly negative and black voters (who turned out less) the reverse. The district touted an increase in fourth and sixth grade reading scores at a rate twice the state average since 1998.

Perhaps Byrd-Bennett stayed too long in the job (she thinks so in a 2006 newspaper interview).[17] Her compensation and some underpayments to the state created a whiff of a scandal. But Cleveland is the poorest city in the nation, and by the time she left, falling property values resulted in local tax revenue declining by 17% between 1998-2006. Ohio's school finance system is not equalized and relies heavily on local property values. Enrollment has declined by 15% and achievement scores turned flat after 2004.

While there is no groundswell to repeal mayoral control, there is rising criticism that the board is too much of a rubber stamp for the administration. In July 2007, the new mayor Frank Jackson was criticized by the Plain Dealer.

> Five of the nine members expired June 30. It was bad enough that City Hall did such an abysmal job of publicizing the openings that only seven candidates initially applied. It is unforgivable that the mayor chose to reappoint four of the

[17] Lonnie Timmons, "An Exit Interview," Cleveland Plain Dealer, February 12, 2006.

members, three of whom could be poster children for the term "ineffectual," and at the same time ousted John Moss.

Rather than embrace a board member who is both articulate and engaged in a district business, Jackson instead rewarded members who question little and lead less.[18]

Moreover, more citizens are turning to the city council for help, but Council members have no direct authority over the school system so they are uncertain about their role. Council members attend community meetings about school closures and reorganizations, but cannot do much about citizen concerns.

In an exit interview, Byrd-Bennett said that meaningful reform will not take place until community leaders address the deep-seated economic and social problems in city neighborhoods. But early studies of mayoral control concluded that mayoral integration of children, youth, and family policies with schools had not been very impressive.[19]

What can we conclude from this brief Cleveland history? Did mayoral take over help create the initial student attainment gains? Did more and then less money make a difference in system performance? Is the balance between central executive leadership and democratic representation right? In 2005, an Aspen Institute report praised the Cleveland literacy system and stated, "by every measure, the Cleveland Municipal

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[18] Editorial, "A Nice, Compliant School Board," Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 4, 2007.
[19] Larry Cuban and Michel Usdan, Powerful Reforms With Shallow Roots (New York City: Teachers College, 2003).

School District has made steady progress since 1998."[20] The paper illustrated how Cleveland aligned assessment, curriculum, and instruction. Cleveland created an extensive classroom formative assessment to provide early feedback. In order to provide more consistent classroom implementation, Cleveland received funds from the Stripski Foundation and the State of Ohio to integrate human and financial resources into a specific implementation plan. Teachers and principals were provided with pacing charts and standards specific to each grade, along with extensive professional development. Cleveland's instructional approach for standards alignment has significant research support. But as we have seen, other factors intervened and its future is unclear. Cleveland also demonstrates how different mayors have different views about their role, and the risks in basing mayoral control on the attributes of a single mayor. Mayor Jackson has been much less active and assertive than Mayor White.

Evaluation of Boston Implementation

Boston enrolls 58,000 students (45% black, 32% Hispanic) with a per pupil expenditure of about $13,000. The school system has always been fiscally dependent upon the city government. Over $100 million has been provided in recent years by private foundations and donors. Mayor Menino has been in office since 1993 and in 1995 appointed Tom Payzant as superintendent. Payzant has been a federal official and superintendent in several other cities. He became part of Mayor Menino's cabinet and implemented an aggressive program for change. Payzant became Boston's third superintendent in five years in 1995, but he remained until 2006.

[20] Helen W. Williams, The Cleveland Literacy System (Washington, D.C.: Aspen Institute, 2005).

In 2005, the Aspen Institute commissioned a team of experienced researchers and educators to evaluate the Boston experience.[21] The study was mostly positive but pointed out there is still a long way to go. Boston has a clear theory of instructional improvement and educator capacity building. It has strong central leadership and some noteworthy test score and college transition gains. But graduation rates are low and the achievement gap among race and ethnicities remains. Stronger central executive leadership has been greatly enhanced, but Boston struggles with how to provide grassroots representation and impact upon school policy.

Boston has a clear strategy for classroom improvement including:

- A single math program for each grade level and a few central reading programs for schools to select.
- A pedagogical approach based on the Reader and Writer workshop applicable to all subject areas.
- Extensive professional development, coaches skilled in content areas, teacher time to collaborate, and formative assessment

BPS utilizes several local partners to school based distributed leadership that includes teachers and an alternative route to teacher certification. The Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) codesigned key reforms including: Whole School Improvement,

[21] Aspen Institute, Strong Foundation Evolving Challenges A Case Study in Boston (Washington, D.C.: Aspen Institute, 2006).

Collaborative Coaching, and Writer Workshop. The Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) convenes a Boston Compact an agreement among city's elites to commit resources to reach education goals. Compact Members include the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, college presidents, the Human Services Coalition and Cultural Partnership. The Compact helps support an extensive after-school initiative.

Boston's test results on the demanding Massachusetts state test (MCAS) have been significantly positive. For example, Boston's pass rates for African Americans and Hispanics have risen in middle and high schools which is rare among cities. African American tenth graders increased MCAS pass rates from 15% in 1998 to 62% in 2005; and Hispanics increased from 13% in 1998 to 65%. On NAEP, Boston's minority 4th and 8th graders scored better than other large central cities, particularly for African Americans. Aspen researchers found a "remarkable" improvement in the culture and climate of the district (p. 10). Aspen noted : consistent messages from the district, stability, a sense of accountability, and a school based view that district instructional strategies were not going to change.

Boston's relationship with grassroots community leaders, citizens, and parents has evolved. The school board's role is advisory and not a good forum to hear parent policy. The board does not view its role in the takeover legislation as representing or responding to citizen views .In 1996, 70% of the voters approved continued Mayoral takeover, but Menino and Payzant were aware that there was no effective transmission mechanism for citizens. Some citizens approached Boston city council members, but council members

were unsure how to react, because they had so little authority.[22] However, the superintendent launched regular informal meetings with a group of community leaders to listen to their concerns.

A Boston Parent Organizing Network (BPON) formed by a diverse group of parents, activists, and community members began to advocate for improvement in BPS. BPON helped create a new position of Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement and a reorganization of BPS Family Resource Center. Parents continue to express concerns about the uneven quality of Boston schools, as well as instructional quality for English learners and handicapped students. Aspen Institute noted:

> But from parents and community groups we also heard concerns about inclusiveness. There is a sense that the city's elites – the political leadership, the business community, and the universities have greater access to decision-making authority than other groups…But many city residents and grassroots groups feel left out. They feel they have opportunities for input but are not at the table when decisions are made.[23]

These statements demonstrate the trade off between central executive leadership and democratic representation in Boston. But Boston has many elements in place for

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[22] Gary Yee, "From Court Street to City Hall: Governance Change in the Boston Public Schools," in James G. Cibalka and William L. Bryd (eds), Race Against Time (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).
[23] Aspen Institute, op. cit. p. 13

education reforms, and its ability to stay the course has made a difference for many students. Mayor Menino was elected to his fourth term in November 2005.

The school board before mayoral takeover was considered to be fractitious and ineffective. The newer mayor-appointed seven member School Committee takes two hours for its meetings twice a month. Non policy matters such as contract, personnel and day to day operations are delegated to the superintendent. The mayor handles much of the external politics for the BPS. Boston's school governance system has produced only moderate improvements in the coordination of children's, youth, and family services with BPS. Boston's test score gains would probably not be labeled "dramatic," but they certainly are impressive.

Boston and Cleveland raise the uncertain role of city councils in all the mayoral takeover cities. No city has a clear idea of what the council should be doing in terms of representation. The thirteen member Boston City Council retains its approval of the entire amount of the school budget, and holds hearings on school issues. But these Council hearings are largely symbolic and theatrical. There is scant impact of the Council upon school policy or operations , except a few minor concessions by the mayor on the budget to get the total amount approved. Mayor Villaraigosa's Los Angeles plan had no formal role for the Council, even though the Council has major operational responsibilities for city departments. In sum, if there is no traditional school board, citizens turn to the City council for redress of complaints, but with scant impact. The Richmond, VA mayor is proposing a city council role in nominating school board

member and the superintendent in a new mayor/council school takeover plan. These type of divided power arrangements, however, raise questions about who is in charge similar to the partial mayor control structures in Oakland, D.C., and Detroit.

Mayoral Governance and Influence Options

There are numerous options for mayoral involvement in schools. A useful summary was compiled by the U.S. Conference of Mayors Action Guide (see Appendix I. [24]) The U.S. Mayor's Conference Action Guide suggests that the mayoral role needs to evolve as the city context changes. Some examples of mayoral roles include: complete takeover of school boards, authorizing charter schools, creating slates of school board candidates, working partnerships with school districts on specific issues, and operating as a convener and facilitator to bring various stakeholders together for school reform. Again, we see the importance of distinctive local contexts as an important determinant of the mayor's role.

An assessment by New York City residents can determine the mayor's proper role with respect to the schools. Some factors would be:

- Personal Interests and Priorities of the Next Mayor
- Improvement in Student Outcomes and District Operations

[24] United States Conference of Mayors, Mayoral Leadership and Involvement in Education. (Washington, D.C.: US Conference of Mayors, 2006).

- Public Sentiment and Perception About the Takeover That Began in 2000
- The Evolving Context of New York Politics

Governance is not a panacea for all the school systems problems, and empirical data such as test scores cannot be the only indicator of progress. Choices among governance alternatives must be made, but no alternative will satisfy all demands that confront school systems. Governance choice is a pragmatic process that must set priorities among the three competing concepts on page 3: decentralized executive leadership, representative democracy, and technical nonpartisan competence. Chicago went through all of these priorities between 1987 and 1997. In 1987, Chicago had a powerful General Superintendent of Schools in charge of a large centralized bureaucracy. In 1988, Chicago passed a law to devolve considerable decision making discretion to each school site including selection of the principal by an elected site council. The site council had significant influence over curriculum and some budget categories. The site councils were partially governed by a 15-member school board. In 1995, however, the Illinois legislature gave the mayor dominant power, and Mayor Richard M. Daly reasserted his control over many aspects of the school sites former direction. Chicago's school site councils lost many of their perogatives through a complex array of problems such as :fiscal deficits, low voter turnout, lack of support from teachers and principals organizations, business dissatisfaction, and some poorly performing councils.

One viewpoint is that strong centralized leadership by the mayor is needed to "jolt" a complacent ,and ossified school system. Election of two board members every two years cannot shake up the school system sufficiently. Mayor Fenty of Washington, D.C. assumed control of the schools in summer 2007, and found dilapidated facilities that required 379 days for responses to "urgent requests," flags with 49 stars, and a backlog of 10,000 work orders.[25]

Putting together the Chicago and D.C. examples suggests a potentially useful pattern. Mayoral centralized control to jolt the system could be followed by a new balance of mayoral control with democratic representation. The three competing governance concepts could be rebalanced as the city context changes. But the historical lessons of institutional choice also must be kept in mind—what governance array can best help accomplish the objectives of the school system such as improving classroom instruction and pupil attainment. Moreover, the more school governance is divided, the more difficult it becomes to locate accountability. In sum, some of the key determinants of the preferred governance arrangement depend on which of the three competing values (representative democracy, centralized executive leadership, technical nonpartisan competence) are most appropriate for a city at a specific time within a specific historical political and educational context.

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[25] Education Week: "D.C. Schools Get Blitz of Repairs," 9/15/07, p. 7.

Appendix 1: Options for Mayoral Roles in

Education

Types of Mayoral Leadership and Strategies for Implementation

Once a mayor has determined his or her capacity for involvement in education, that capacity will suggest the type of leadership role that is best suited for the mayor's situation. As noted previously, mayoral involvement can take a variety of forms. Here are the major types of mayoral involvement, paired with examples of how actual mayors have exercised their influence and leadership within these types by implementing specific strategies for school and school district improvement.

TOTAL CONTROL -- The mayor selects the school board and school superintendent, and controls the budget.

The primary city examples of this type of involvement are Chicago, New York City, Cleveland, Boston and Harrisburg (PA). In each of these cases, state legislation enabled a mayoral takeover of the schools, but the reasons motivating the legislative action were not always the same.

- Mayors Richard Daley (Chicago), Michael Bloomberg (New York) and then Boston Mayor Ray Flynn each asked their state legislature for the authority to take control of the school system to select the school board and the superintendents. In Boston Mayor Thomas Menino has implemented the authority requested by Mayor Flynn.
- Mayoral control in Cleveland was included as part of larger state oversight of the school system. Several years later, voters reaffirmed the legislative action to have the mayor in control of the schools.
- Harrisburg's mayoral takeover was a special provision in a larger statewide school reform bill that established an accountability system for Pennsylvania schools. In Harrisburg, the mayor was given control because of an especially poor record of management and student performance in the district.

PARTIAL CONTROL -- The mayor selects part or all of the school board, which in turn selects the superintendent. The mayor also sometimes has oversight over the budget with the city council. This type of involvement and control is different in each city:

- In Philadelphia, Mayor John Street and the Governor of Pennsylvania jointly select members of the school board.
- Providence Mayor David Cicilline selects the school board, which in turn selects the superintendent.
- Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer selects the school board and is also part of the selection process for the superintendent.
- Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown gained the authority to select three of the school board members.
- Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson has a unique form of partial control: he is the only mayor who has been given charter school authority by the state legislature. As such, he oversees a system of public charter schools that is separate from and parallel to the traditional public school system.
- Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez has the authority to appoint five of the nine members of the school board. He has just appointed himself to the board and was elected chair of the school board by its members.

PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP -- The mayor and school superintendent work together to address common issues and initiatives to improve education.

- St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay has made education a priority and has run two different slates of candidates for the school board. He worked with the school board during its process to select a new school superintendent.
- During three terms as mayor, Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill's key priority has been establishing and maintaining a working partnership with the superintendent, the city, business and higher education.
- San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales works not only with the San Jose Unified school district superintendent, but all of the superintendents in the school districts located within San Jose to ensure that the city's policies don't adversely affect students and teachers.
- Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz has a hands-on working relationship with the Miami-Dade County school superintendent, even though Miami-Dade is a county school system, and encompasses more than the city of Miami.
- Akron Mayor Donald Plusquellic and the school system are working closely together to plan the construction of new schools so they will be joint use facilities. The city is co-funding this project with the state.
- Bridgeport Mayor John Fabrizi works closely with the city's new school superintendent so that education is part of the city's strategic plan for economic revitalization.

MEDIUM INVOLVEMENT -- When the mayor may want to do more but is stymied by the political environment, political structure or relationship with the school system.

- In Des Moines, which has a mayor-city manager form of government, Mayor Frank Cownie has developed a strong relationship with the school superintendent to address the challenges of the city's changing demographics.
- St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Baker works with the county school superintendent and consults with him prior to starting any initiative within his city including scholarship and recognition programs, joint use facilities, mentors and tutors, teacher recruitment and providing teacher housing loans. He is the mayor of the largest city in Pinellas County has helped in this regard, but St. Petersburg's county-based governance system limits his ability to have a greater formal leadership role.
- Charlotte Mayor Patrick McCrory finds himself in a similar situation as Mayor Baker. Mayor McCrory has been very active within Charlotte on education issues including afterschool, reading and mentoring but he, too, is limited by the county school system governance structure.

Approaches for a Mayoral Role in Education

Mayors can choose from a variety of approaches to become involved in education. Depending on their policy agenda and priorities, mayors may select one or more of the following roles as they increase their engagement in education.

CONVENER -- brings various people to the table from across the city who would not necessarily meet together or talk.

FACILITATOR -- makes things happen that cannot always be done by others.

MEDIATOR -- convenes parties that disagree and achieves compromises.

RESOURCE PERSON -- uses access to generate additional resources from state and federal sources, foundations, and business.

COMMUNICATOR -- offers transparency to topics that are very complicated or even obtuse to the general public such as school finance, accountability, and contracts.

CATALYST -- serves as advocate for change and improvement by speaking out, offering ideas, promoting initiatives, starting partnerships and challenging the community.

LEADER -- uses the mayor's office resources and bully pulpit to raise and communicate policy issues and problems that are important to the city and offers leadership in promoting education improvement.

MANAGER -- provides the capacity to manage activities that are not done efficiently by the school system, including back office functions that are not part of education's core business of teaching and learning.