Building Conditions for Sustainable School Reform in the District of Columbia

Jeff Henig

Building Conditions for Sustainable School Reform in the District of Columbia

This paper considers the current state of the school reform process in Washington, DC, with one central question in mind: What can and should be done—by chief executive officer Julius Becton, the appointed board of trustees, the financial control board (1) *and others*—to increase the likelihood of a substantial and sustained improvement in the quality of education available to the District's youth. I emphasize "others" here for an important reason. Although media and public attention unsurprisingly are focused on the newly created agents for reform, a major thrust of my argument will be that the long-term success of education reform in the District will depend upon the development and nurturing of a broad, informed, and readily mobilizeable indigenous constituency to support such efforts once the hot glare of attention fades.

After providing some background on the control board's intervention, I offer an overview of extraordinary intervention efforts in other school districts and reflect on findings from the eleven-city Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project in order to highlight three major themes: First, the record of external interventions is mixed; although some appear to have fared well, others have been disappointing, and some may have made things worse than they were before. Second, in spite of the general perception that reform depends primarily upon breaking down walls of parochialism and bureaucratic resistance to new ideas, the real challenge to meaningful reform is not how to get it started, but how to sustain it over time. Third, because external interventions typically are temporary, due either to the external actors' limited attention span and resources or to deliberate design, a key to whether reforms will be ephemeral or long lasting is whether a local, indigenous constituency exists or can be formed that is willing and able to take back the baton.

This paper does not take on directly the question of whether the control board should have intervened in the first place, or in the particular manner it did. I take these matters as given, and ask where we should go from here. Given the fatalism and despair that seemed to mark many Washingtonians' attitude towards schools, it is possible that some form of dramatic intervention was a necessary catalyst. Whether necessary or not, I think it is critical to understand why the establishment of the new and presumably temporary governance structure is not sufficient, and to consider how the manner in which this new governance structure operates could be counterproductive in important respects. The paper concludes with some broad recommendations.

The Control Board Steps In

On November 15, 1996, three days after it had declared that DC public schools deserved a grade of "an absolute F," the financial control board appointed by Congress to bring the city back from the brink of bankruptcy took dramatic action (2). Declaring that "In virtually every area, and for every grade level, the system has failed to provide our children with a quality education and safe environment in which to learn. . . . This failure is the result not of the students—for all students can succeed—but of the educationally and managerially bankrupt school system," the control board fired Superintendent Franklin L. Smith, hired retired Lt. Gen. Julius W. Becton Jr. to replace him, reduced the elected school board primarily to an advisory body, and transferred most of its authority to a new board of trustees (3).

A few important public voices denounced the move as an unjustified intrusion on local prerogatives. DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, for example, labeled the takeover "unconstitutional, unnecessary and a violation of home rule (4)". Delabian Rice-Thurston, director of Parents United, one of the longest lasting and most visible voices for education reform in the District, complained that local citizens had no way to ensure that the new board of trustees would be responsive to their needs. "We can't say, `In two years, we're going to vote these people out of office,' " she said. "They're not accountable to us. They're accountable to the control board, who is accountable to Congress (5)". Lawrence Guyot, a well-known civic activist, put things more strongly: "We are now being disenfranchised by a predominantly black group operating under the banner of the Republican wing of the federal government"; Congress, in setting up the control board, was seeking, in his words, to "humiliate, abuse and co-opt the local government (6)".

Yet in DC, where the principle of home rule is deeply felt and carries potent symbolism tied to issues of civil rights and racial justice, what was most striking was the relative absence of public protest or even openly voiced indignation. For many residents this lack of response may have reflected a weary fatalism, a sense that there was no point in challenging a Congress and control board that held the reins of real power (7). Others, though, welcomed the intervention. After years of frustration with poor test scores, crumbling buildings, and the apparent inefficacy of the school board and superintendent, they expressed a willingness to cede local power, at least temporarily, in return for the promise of speedy and systemic reform. "We've heard it all before," one public official told the *Washington Post* when asked about Norton's concerns about home rule. "What we are interested in now is results, especially improving the schools" (8). "I believe it was needed. I mean, I have a strong belief that it was needed," a mother of an athlete at predominantly black Cardoza High told the *Post*. "I'm a strong supporter of home rule," a father at racially mixed Lafayette Elementary insisted. "But I'm also among those . . . who believe the state of affairs of the school system requires some immediate and tough actions." While not ideal, the imposition of a new decision-making structure "is probably the best and fastest way to get the right mechanisms in place," he said (9).

External Interventions in Local School Policy: A Mixed Record

But will this extraordinary intervention into school governance succeed in the District? Although DC's situation is unique in some important ways (10), the strategy of attempting urban school reform through extraordinary intervention by nonelected or nonlocal actors is not unusual. Efforts to depoliticize American schools and put greater authority in the hands of those with organizational and management expertise have deep roots; during the Progressive era, in the early decades of this century, it was manifested in a movement to take control over schools and the money to pay for them out of the hands of politicians and put it into the hands of professional educators and nonpartisan school boards with heavy representation from the propertied class and business interests. During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the federal courts became perhaps the most forceful and visible source of change; although many local districts accommodated or even welcomed the federal initiative to desegregate, other dramatic cases saw federal judges and locally elected officials square off against one another in intense and often messy confrontations (11). About the same time that more conservative

appointees to the US Supreme Court began to chart a less intrusive role in enforcing local school desegregation (12), state courts and legislatures were becoming more aggressive. State Supreme Courts have forced major changes in school financing in states like New Jersey and Texas; in Kentucky, a case that began with a focus on financing ended with the state court ordering a massive overhaul of the system. New Jersey set standards by which the state could take over failing local school districts, and has acted under those standards to take control in Jersey City, Paterson, and Newark. In Chicago, the state legislature has played a key role in two waves of dramatic school reform. First, in 1988, the legislature initiated a major movement toward decentralization, by shifting substantial authority over budgets and personnel to elected Local School Councils. Then, in 1995, the Illinois legislature stepped in again, this time to eliminate the elected school board and dramatically centralize power in the hands of Mayor Richard M. Daley. In Milwaukee and Cleveland, similarly, state legislatures stepped in to institute voucher programs allowing low-income children to attend private schools at public expense.

Although they are linked by the fact that they involve extralocal intervention into policy-making for the public schools, there are also many important differences among these specific illustrations—too many, in fact, to permit simple, straightforward, or easily generalizable conclusions about whether they tend to be a good or a bad idea. But the lack of simple answers is not the same thing as no answers at all. Based on the historical record, several observations seem warranted.

First, *many interventions fail to generate results that are as speedy and substantial as the public was led to expect from the rhetoric with which they were announced. Brown v. the Board of Education* was arguably the single most dramatic example of federal judicial intervention in local school affairs, but for nearly ten years after the decision virtually no integration took place in the eleven Southern states that were its primary target (13). The New Jersey Supreme Court issued its *Robinson v. Cahill* decision calling for greater fiscal equity in 1973; more than twenty years later the state is still struggling to deal with a system in which spending per pupil across the state's districts ranges from $5,000 to $16,000 (14). Five years after the inauguration of the nation's first publicly funded program to send children to private schools, analyses of test scores leave it debatable whether there has been any impact at all on student achievement (15).

Second, *even among those that are implemented aggressively and for which early results are encouraging, some external interventions tend to lose steam or to stimulate a reconsideration or backlash that leads to their unraveling.* For example, Prince George's County, Maryland, was frequently cited as a national innovator in the use of magnet schools as a tool for integration and educational improvement; the magnet program was initiated in 1985 as part of a court-ordered settlement of a lawsuit originally filed by the NAACP. In January 1988, President Reagan declared them "one of the great success stories of the educational reform movement (16)." Two years after that, the *Washington Post* editorialized: "Test scores are up. The specialized magnet programs are of generally high quality, and their presence has sparked a new influx of interest and investment in the schools (17)." But by 1991, the superintendent who had been celebrated for fashioning the magnets had left, dissatisfied with the support he was receiving. By 1993, a prestigious panel appointed to review the system declared "Our schools are failing, our children are falling behind (18)," and, by the following year, the *Post* observed that the "business community in the county, which only a few years ago

was so enamored of the county schools that it paid for an advertising campaign on their behalf, is now openly critical of the school system's leadership (19)." In 1996, the local school board pulled the plug on some key aspects of the program, voting to soften some of the regulations intended to ensure that the magnets desegregated, in spite of some concerns that this risked losing state financial support and could eventually lead to the program's total demise (20).

New Jersey's implementation of laws permitting state takeover of failing local districts also was roundly applauded (in subsequent years a number of states have passed similar legislation, including Maryland, which has instituted a rigorous system for evaluating school performance and which has already identified a number of schools, mostly in Baltimore city, as possible candidates for state intervention). Yet, in the spring of 1995, about six years after its takeover in Jersey City and four years after its takeover of the Paterson schools, New Jersey's Commissioner of Education told a state senate committee that the improvements in test scores in both cities "is not as high as we hoped (21)."

When the Kentucky Supreme Court declared on June 8, 1989 that the existing system failed to meet constitutional standards and would have to be fundamentally redesigned, the state superintendent celebrated: "Today the court has propelled us from the 19th century to the 21st," he said (22). Former Assistant Secretary of Education Chester Finn declared that, on paper, the state plan designed in response to the judicial mandate "represents the greatest advance toward a public education system designed around student outcomes and institutional accountability that I've seen on American shores (23)."

But more than five years later, the effort is beset by political and implementation problems that may or may not prove crippling in the long run. According to one Kentucky official "the question is, Are we going to throw this out and start something else, or are we going to maintain this? And it's a real touch and go issue (24)."

Why have these extraordinary interventions had mixed, uncertain, and frequently disappointing impacts? One credible explanation is that we tend to expect too much. Anthony Downs has argued that American politics frequently reveals a pattern of enthusiastic attention to a newly recognized social problem, followed by a period of alarmed discovery that the problems are more complex and intransigent—and the solutions more costly and problematic—than imagined; rather than dig down deeper for the resolve to meet the challenge, the typical response is a brief sense of disappointment quickly displaced by a new wave of enthusiasm for addressing some different social problem (25). This pattern may be exacerbated by the pressure on those promoting dramatic intervention to over-sell their plans in order to build enough support to overcome the inertia and incrementalism that normally prevails.

To acknowledge that disappointment with previous efforts at external intervention may have as much to do with inflated expectations as it does with actual performance puts a new label on matters, but it does not solve the dilemma for those considering how to make external interventions work. Hyping expectations in order to get meaningful reforms rolling might make sense *if* such reforms tend to build their own momentum

and cement their own constituencies once underway. But it also risks feeding public cynicism and fatalism, and eroding confidence that social problems can *ever* be successfully addressed through public policy. This latter risk looms larger if the real challenge is not to get reform moving initially, but to keep it moving over the long term. In the next section, I suggest that this *is* the real challenge. Bringing about systemic education reform is like kicking a stone uphill: a swift swing of a strong leg is enough to get it going, but keeping it going may call for something else entirely.

The Problem of Ephemeral Reform: Reflections on the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Study of Eleven Cities

Throughout much of 1993 and 1994, teams of researchers collected a wide array of quantitative and qualitative information about schools and the politics of schools in eleven large central cities, including Washington, D.C. (26). The goal of the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project was to come to some understanding of why some cities undertake and sustain educational reforms that have the prospect of helping low-income and minority children while others do not. Using a common field research guide, teams in each of the eleven cities collected documentary evidence and interviewed about five hundred persons knowledgeable about local events (27). Questions were designed to elicit information about the broad political context, the way that education issues were conceptualized by central actors, lines of conflict and cooperation, and the kinds of program initiatives and reform efforts that were underway.

Preliminary findings from the project have been presented in a number of outlets, and fuller and more complete presentations are in the works (28). Rather than formal analysis and findings, this section of the paper offers some broad reflections about the implications of what we found. These implications challenge conventional wisdom that the necessary and sufficient prerequisite to bringing about systemic reform is to break down, outflank, or structurally replace an educational bureaucracy that has reflexively resisted new ideas. In spite of frequent charges that the educational community is reflexively resistant to innovation and reform, many large-city school districts—and this is true of the District, as well—are virtually overrun with reform initiatives. The problem is less an unwillingness to try something new—in this respect school professionals seem more like gullible consumers than complacent bureaucrats—than the fragmented and episodic nature of the efforts.

Conventional Explanations for Nonreform (29)

Much of the contemporary literature draws on one or both of two conventional explanations for why school reform is difficult: the "information paradigm" and the "bureaucratic resistance paradigm."The information paradigm, often encountered in the literature written by and for education professionals, suggests that the primary obstacle to school reform is either lack of convincing evidence about what works or, where there is such evidence, failure to disseminate adequately that information to practitioners in the field. For some, the focus is on the need for more and better information about the process of learning *at the classroom level*. This

version of the information paradigm focuses on pedagogy, emphasizing the importance of having teachers trained in the latest curricular innovations and pedagogical techniques. For others, the emphasis is on the need for better information about the array of incentives presented to teachers and students by organizational characteristics *at the systemic level*. This version of the information paradigm puts a premium on expertise in organizational innovations, such as career ladders, merit pay, master teachers, site-based decision making, and criterion-based testing, all of which can be seen as tools for redesigning the educational environment in ways that will encourage teachers and students to more actively take responsibility for increasing learning.

A number of policy prescriptions follow logically from a diagnosis of insufficient information. At the state or national level, they can include funding "demonstration programs" and helping to develop networks of information dissemination. At the district level, they include reforming teacher training, setting tough standards for teacher recertification, rewarding and expanding the responsibilities of master teachers who can help to bring others along, encouraging district representatives to visit and "learn from" a few model school administrations around the country, and hiring top administrators who have proven their knowledge of cutting-edge techniques by successfully implementing reform strategies in other jurisdictions.

The bureaucratic resistance paradigm, in contrast, presumes that we already have a good idea of what needs to be done but that self-interested education professionals, wielding disproportionate power, scuttle or emasculate any efforts that interfere with their comfortable routines. According to this perspective, self-interest propels bureaucracies to resist reforms that would increase workloads, make existing skills obsolete, interfere with habits and routines, or impinge upon discretion and control. Moreover, stressful working conditions and conflicting messages about social priorities can induce even well-meaning and unselfish educators to adopt self-protective habits and routines that work against the interests of their students.

In addition to arguing that bureaucracies have an *interest* in deflecting reforms, the bureaucratic resistance paradigm asserts that bureaucracies have the *power* to block reforms, even when those reforms have popular support and the endorsement of elected leaders. That power is presumed to rest partly in the bureaucracy's monopoly over information and its reputation for expertise; these advantages presumably help bureaucracies to define issues in terms favorable to them and are most likely to accrue at the agenda-setting and implementation stages when overall levels of attention are lower than they are at the policy formulation stage (30). But the power also comes from more conventional sources—a large and readily mobilized constituency, the threat of work stoppages, political contributions and campaign support—that make bureaucracies formidable players in the open battles over policy formulation.

The bureaucratic resistance paradigm appeals to the impatient public, at least in part because it dismisses the view that reform is complicated and that it is necessary to defer to experts; it also appeals because it identifies a villain. Asked about a series of possible steps states could take to reduce educational expenditures in tight budget times, a vast majority (73%) favor reductions in the number of administrators (31). Business leaders, an important constituency when education reform is under consideration, are especially likely to subscribe to the view that educators are an obstacle to progress. In one survey, 86% of business executives agreed (49% strongly) with the statement that "usually, educational reforms are resisted by unions and administrators who like to keep things the way they are (32)."

The public's responsiveness to characterizations of the educational bureaucracy as an obstacle to reform likely is rooted in frustrating experiences, as well as vivid and oft-repeated anecdotes. But, as I argue in the next section, the bureaucracy-as-obstacle perspective is overinflated when it is used to imply that schools are uniformly, rigidly, and unselectively opposed to new programs and new ideas. Both the information and bureaucratic resistance perspectives oversimplify the nature of the problem in ways that may ultimately lead to misdirected political and policy responses.

What the Dominant Perspectives Do Not Explain: A Multitude of (Undigested) Initiatives

Rather than blanket resistance to new ideas, our research suggests that urban school districts, at any point in time, are undertaking multiple initiatives. When we set out to do our research, we developed a long checklist of the kinds of reforms that were being discussed in public debates and in the education literature. We expected that some cities would be trying many of these reforms, while others would be trying few or none. Even though most of the cities we were studying did not have reputations as innovators, we found, instead, that almost every city had at least some examples of almost every type of reform.

In each of the eleven districts that we considered, school officials and school district publications highlighted an impressive array of innovative efforts. In Denver, for example, some elementary schools were including Montessori programs, some middle schools were building a core knowledge curriculum, and high schools had adopted numerous curricula, including Baccalaureate High Schools emphasizing a European-style approach and Alternative High Schools for students who had failed to learn in the traditional setting (33). In Detroit, seven African-centered academies were established; the Academy of the Americas offered a curriculum that emphasized the language and culture of the Latino community; and the Tech Prep Partnership 2000 Consortium was attempting to refashion vocational education (34). Most of the eleven districts boasted some special magnet education programs for the gifted, "school-to-work" programs, and special initiatives in using computers and technology. Several instituted, or planned to institute, Comer schools or other efforts to incorporate families into the learning process. St. Louis, in 1994, began an initiative to establish fourteen community education centers that would offer nontraditional programming, invite participation by the adjacent neighborhoods, and emphasize a holistic approach to education (35). Boston, alone, had at least three pilot projects that emphasized parental involvement, although all three relied on external funding and were vulnerable to cutbacks (36). In Detroit, four professional development schools were established, making it possible for teachers to receive technical training and support from Michigan universities.

The District of Columbia offers an interesting case to illustrate how a school system that is widely viewed as a dismal failure and resistant to systemic reform can simultaneously be the setting for numerous, uncoordinated reforms. As early as 1989, the Committee on Public Education (COPE) listed as characteristics of the system: far too many employees, a "confused and unwieldy budget," a nonresponsive central administration, major problems with facilities attributable to deferred maintenance, an obsolete curriculum, a tendency of many teachers to overemphasize rote learning and standardized tests, and evidence that poor principals sometimes were simply transferred to the central office (37). Much later, in November 1996, the control board issued it's analysis, descriptively titled "Children in Crisis: A Report on the Failure of D.C.'s Public Schools." Charging that "too many children have suffered as a result of mismanagement, uninspired leadership, and institutional

disregard," the board used that report as the launching pad for firing Superintendent Smith and hiring General Becton. In February 1997, a series of articles in the *Washington Post* underscored the breadth and depth of the system's failures (38).

Yet the DC public schools are hosts to numerous pedagogical reforms. Table 1 lists just a sampling of some of the curricular, professional development, and organization initiatives found in the DC school system. Many are tied to former Superintendent Smith's broad goal of combining school-based decision making, special school-based programs, and increased parental choice in the public schools. As part of the decentralization effort, every school has been required to establish a Local School Restructuring Team, and over forty "enterprise" and "renaissance" schools have been given special discretion to shape their own policies at the school level. Smith established a Center for Educational Change, which has run summer institutes for parents and teachers, exposing them to the philosophies and techniques of a range of pedagogical reform approaches, such as Comer Schools, Sage Schools, Venture Schools, Outcomes Driven Development Model, and the Effective Schools approach. In addition, an aggressive deputy superintendent has spearheaded the expansion of the District's Early Learning Years program, which involves a more child-friendly curriculum and a heavy emphasis on making certain that teachers and principals receive the training and support they need to put the curriculum into place. The District of Columbia is perhaps the only large urban school district to offer a full day early childhood education program in every elementary school, and the program has been expanding to incorporate many three-year-olds. In addition, a community-based organization that is not formally tied to the schools—the Washington Parents Group Fund—offers small matching grants to PTAs for educational enrichment and runs leadership and training programs for parents.

Table 1. Selected Reform Initiatives in D.C. Public Schools

A dual language immersion program in Oyster Elementary.

An Afrocentric curriculum at Webb Elementary School, and a "Multicultural/African Diaspora School at Spingarn High.

School day extended by half an hour in 1991.

Tougher graduation standards in math and science and foreign languages.

Institution of community service requirement.

Pilot programs focusing on promotion and retention in 33 elementary schools, Pilot Comer School Improvement Programs and SAGE School Development programs in 50 schools.

Special "academies" designed to provide high school students with career-relevant education, including a "Health and Human Services Academy" at Eastern High, a "Public Service Academy" at Anacostia High, and the "Trans Tech Academy" at Cardoza High.

Public/private partnerships providing enriched career-related training, including separate programs in Culinary Arts (M.M. Washington High); Pre-Architecture, Interior Design and Landscape Architecture (Spingarn High); International Studies (McKinley/Penn High); Pre-Engineering (Dunbar High); Business and Finance (Woodson High); Travel and Tourism (Roosevelt High); and COMSAT's computer and science partnership with Jefferson Junior High .

"Turning Points" programs, integrating social service delivery, health care, and recreation, at six junior highs, instituted during Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly's administration.

"School-Within-School Charters," including a Montessori School (Merrit Elementary), a Non-Graded School (Truesdell Elementary), and a Media Technology Social Research School (Kelly Miller Junior High).

Nonetheless, there is little evidence that all this activity is adding up to systemic reform. Many of the initiatives are at the individual school level. It is rare indeed for there to be any formal evaluation of these programs. Not only are central administrators not in a position to offer data about what works and what does not, often the central administration lacks the capacity even to identify all the initiatives that are under way. In some cases, reforms may be superficial or exist in name only. In other cases they may be working and working well. The sad fact is that we simply do not know. DC is not alone in exhibiting a pattern of multiple but undigested reforms. This pattern was fairly typical among the eleven cities in the study, and it has been noted in other places as well. Farkas refers to this as the tendency toward a "reform du jour (39)."

However, to conclude that the problem is not one of blanket resistance to new ideas is not the same as concluding that there is no problem at all. The way we define social problems can influence political dynamics and lead us in policy directions that are not necessarily to our collective good. "As political discourse," two political scientists write, "the function of problem definition is at once to explain, to describe, to recommend, and, above all, to persuade (40)." Politically potent paradigms make explicit or implicit claims about the nature of social problems (their severity, incidence, novelty, proximity, crisis, and likely victims), about the causes of those problems (whether they are self-induced, imposed by others, or the result of broad, immutable societal forces), and about the potential for, and appropriateness of, specific forms of public-sector intervention. The information paradigm and the bureaucratic resistance paradigm characterize the problem as one of resistance to reform, and, as I have already argued, each is associated with a platform of preferred policy options deemed appropriate for response. Reframing the problem may point us in different policy directions, and in the next section I argue that they should.

Recasting the Problem:
From Fragmented and Evanescent to Coherent and Sustained Reform

Neither the information paradigm nor the bureaucratic resistance paradigm can readily account for the emerging picture of school districts as frequent dabblers in reform initiatives. In portraying educational professionals as insufficiently informed about reform ideas or intransigently opposed to change, they encourage overly optimistic visions about what is needed to turn schools around. They imply that there is an identifiable set of pedagogical techniques or organizational adjustments that—once injected into the local arena—will generate a positive and self-sustaining impetus to reform. This, in turn, lends credence to the "big bang" approach, in which an external actor (a state, the courts, Congress, or a control board) employs its preeminent legal authority to give reform a sudden burst of momentum, to dismantle or work around existing bureaucracies and personnel, and to measure success by a standard of "the more innovations the better." It also encourages the belief that such interventions can be temporary intrusions, to be pulled back in favor of traditional institutions of local political control as soon as forward progress is established.

In contrast, I have suggested that the problem is not necessarily a lack of energy, a lack of ideas, or even a lack of willingness to change. Rather, the problem involves an inability to build small school-based efforts into citywide programs and an incapacity to sustain existing initiatives in the face of competing priorities or hot new ideas.

Seen this way, it becomes apparent that some of the conventionally favored policy responses have the potential to actually make things worse. One way they can make things worse is by multiplying small initiatives, each with its own logic and legitimate claim on resources and energies. Bryk et al. have noted this problem in Chicago, where the highly celebrated decentralization policy apparently enticed some schools to become "Christmas tree" schools, bedecked with myriad programs ranging widely in content, purpose, and methods:

> A natural concomitant to the multiplicity of the programs, however, is that they are often uncoordinated and may even be counterproductive in terms of student learning. The addition of new programs on top of old ones may result in a disjointed and fragmented set of experiences for students. . . . Much of school life seems to follow an endless cycle of soliciting funds, implementing new initiatives, and then going out to solicit more funds for even newer initiatives to replace current ones (41).

Lee and Smith also have found evidence that, when it comes to school reform, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. Their analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Study data indicates that students in "restructured" public schools (those that have in place at least three out of twelve practices deemed "significant departures" from convention) do better than children of similar background who attend more traditional public schools. They find evidence, as well, that these restructured public schools manage to close the gap a bit between students from the lowest and highest socioeconomic groups. But they also find some evidence that public schools that try to do too much restructuring showed less of an advantage than those that had implemented just a few of the reform practices.

A second way that the conventional orientation to reform may have unfortunate consequences is by reinforcing the senses of skepticism and powerlessness that make it so difficult to mobilize and sustain a tradition of broad public interest and involvement in the enterprise of educating the community's youth. Farkas, for example, warns that the pressure to measure success by the adoption of innovations can contribute to a "legacy of skepticism" that leads teachers, principals, parents, and the broader community to the cynical conclusion that "nothing works (42)."

Such evidence that there may be such a thing as too much reform suggests that successful school reform requires selectivity, institutional capacity, and sufficient political support to maintain positive momentum in the face of various forces that can block, contain, or gradually erode promising initiatives. Rather than creating a self-sustaining cycle of progressive reform, many highly touted initiatives may themselves require that there already be in place certain political, social, and institutional preconditions that make it possible for a community to collectively define goals, assess needs, mobilize resources, and act purposefully and in a sustained manner. Such preconditions are problematic in large urban areas marked by racial and ethnic divisions, budgetary constraints, and the threat that key interests will choose the exit option over the costly and uncertain option of tackling problems head on. Absent such preconditions, the constant public call for new reforms and innovations may exacerbate problems, further dissipating limited energies and resources in a frenetic search for the combination that will take root and flourish.

A third way that external interventions targeted against local parochialism and bureaucratic intransigence can backfire is by jerry-rigging a temporary central administrative apparatus to work around the existing structure and failing to systematically nurture a strong and capable bureaucratic apparatus to take its place. Even outside managers who are highly aware of the importance of in-house managerial expertise, reliable financial accounting procedures, an ongoing system of data collection, and evaluation research can fall victim to the antibureaucratic rhetoric associated with the dominant paradigms—a rhetoric that tends to juxtapose school-level innovation with central office rigidity and that identifies reductions of central office budgets and personnel as a primary indicator that reform is taking place.

Building Conditions for Sustained Reform: Some Unconventional Conclusions

Rather than simply ignorance about what to do or resistance to doing what is known to be needed, this analysis suggests that central problems facing school districts like that of Washington, DC, include the difficulty of setting stable goals, transplanting and building upon ongoing initiatives, and avoiding the temptation to zig-zag or circle about in response to shifting political pressure or in pursuit of dramatic results. Rather than focusing on the technical specifications of this or that pedagogical reform or organizational design, this raises the possibility that thinking about policy ought to be more sensitive to the political dimension—to questions about building coalitions that are solid and strong enough to make effective claims upon the community's resources and to hold together in the face of countermobilizations and to institutionalize reforms so they continue to be viable when public attention flags.

This leads in four directions that are in some ways at odds with contemporary reform strategies. First, *instead of a "full speed ahead" approach that assumes that the public already knows what is wrong with its schools and knows what it wants from them, efforts to jump-start reform ought to begin with a period of broad public dialogue about what schools can and should be expected to do.* Calls to make the school system more efficient imply that the key unresolved issues have to do with selecting *means* rather than setting *goals*. When that is really the case—when goals are clear and shared, but the best means to maximize those goals is uncertain—it makes sense to grant discretion to those with a claim to technical expertise or proven success in other venues. But when goals are unclear or potentially in conflict, we need alternative mechanisms for making decisions, and one of the most important such mechanisms is public deliberation and voting through democratic channels. While it undoubtedly is true that all (or at least nearly all) Washingtonians share a desire for "better education," it is far from clear (and indeed doubtful) that they share a vision of what that education should entail (where should the balance be set, for example, between college preparation versus entry-level job skills; nurturing curiosity and innovation versus enforcing discipline and authority; building children's self-confidence versus preparing them for a harsh and competitive environment; encouraging critical analysis versus respecting and rewarding faith in a higher order; emphasizing academics versus emphasizing physical and cultural well-roundedness) or where the line should be drawn between making the educational system the best it can possibly be versus balancing the expense for schools against other legitimate demands on the budget or the need for tax relief. There is a deep, and I believe sound, tradition in democratic thought that holds that questions such as these should be subject to public deliberation and collective decision making, *not* because that process is guaranteed to produce the best or even a good solution in each instance, but because the experience of engaging in that process is the best preparation for citizens to learn how to make responsible decisions over the long run (43).

Second, *although the formal authority of Congress and the control board may be sufficient to get reform under way, if initiatives are to be given enough resources to succeed over the long term, if they are to be maintained once the attention of these outside actors gets redirected to other pressing matters even in the face of competing demands and subsequent backlash from dissenting interests, reforms and reformers will need an indigenous political coalition behind them.* Our research in other cities convinces us that the District is not alone in failing to have developed a broad-based and readily mobilized coalition, but its failure may be especially puzzling and troubling in light of some of the advantages it seems to have had. As the nation's first predominantly African American major city, as the school system that most rapidly dismantled its segregated dual system in the wake of the *Brown* decision, as the city with perhaps the largest and best educated black middle-class population in the nation, and as a city with deep traditions of political awareness and many leaders schooled in the civil rights movement and its traditions and tactics of political mobilization, the District of Columbia might have been expected to be a leader in this regard. The possibility is real that the absence of such a coalition in DC is partly due to a history in which key decisions have been made elsewhere, in Congress and in the courts. It is not that parent concern and even parental activism have been nonexistent in the political history of DC schools. Rather, those energies have tended to be directed into three channels that serve as alternatives to broad-based political mobilization: (a) individual school-centered activism in a relatively small proportion of schools disproportionately, but not exclusively, located in wealthier and whiter neighborhoods (although often drawing motivated students and parents from other parts of the city); (b) judicially oriented strategies, such as those pursued by Parents United, that put a premium on finding or creating legal points of leverage and then relying on the courts, rather than popularly elected officials, to exert the authority to bring about change; and (c) household mobility, exercised by white and black parents of school-age children who relocate to the suburbs rather than face frustrating battles in DC (44). Successful strategies to generate a broader reform movement will call for finding some ways to counter these fairly well-established alternative patterns. Of even more immediate concern, however, should be acknowledging and counteracting the fairly significant risk that the control board's intervention might exacerbate these patterns—in spite of its best intentions—by reinforcing a sense that there are no viable local venues for influencing policy through democratic means.

Third, *while much of the contemporary dialogue emphasizes the importance of managerial expertise and echoes the Progressives' complaint about parochial and patronage-hungry politicians, this reframing of the problem reminds us that some of the key skills that may be needed for systemic school reform are the coalition-building and coalition-sustaining skills that can most often be found among politicians schooled in electoral politics (45).* Efforts to buffer educational decision-making from professional politicians and broad political controversy can backfire; by making school issues less prominent, they may make it more difficult for educational needs to compete for priority on a crowded public agenda. Efforts to emphasize technique and expertise over coalition building in the recruitment of superintendents may contribute to the high turnover and instability in leadership that characterizes many large urban school systems; it is true that superintendents brought in from the outside can be a breath of fresh air and a catalyst to progressive change, but it also is the case that they may lack established networks, loyalties, and familiarity with local political dynamics. And efforts to bypass local politics by imposing reform through outside intervention can lead to dramatic but superficial and short-lived reforms; powerful external actors—the courts, the state, federal agencies—have the capacity to propel reforms onto the agenda, the authority to mandate formal policy changes, and the resources to get reform initiatives off the ground, but they typically do not have the capacity to monitor and enforce changes at the classroom level, and they typically do not have the will to maintain intense involvement over the long term.

Finally, *while much of the contemporary dialogue emphasizes the need for decentralization and sharp cutbacks in central administrative oversight, the civic capacity perspective reminds us that the tasks of setting priorities, nurturing promising initiatives, systematically evaluating school-level initiatives to determine what works and what does not, and transplanting successful models may require a stronger (albeit not necessarily larger) central institutional capacity.* The premise of the information and bureaucratic paradigms—that appropriate reform initiatives will readily take root and multiply once information about them is widely disseminated and once practitioners' wariness has been overcome—is made doubtful by the finding that reforms already are highly discussed and frequently initiated. Central leadership—both elected officials and their key administrative appointees—have to bear some responsibility for converting sporadic and decentralized initiatives into comprehensive reform. Such leadership requires building a strong data collection and analysis function to enable officials, educators, and citizens to make informed judgments about what is working and what is not. It requires expanding measures of progress beyond the heavy reliance on standardized test scores which, because of their stubborn resistance to *any* short-term interventions, too often end up discrediting potentially valuable efforts, disillusioning reformers, and contributing to the pattern of stop-and-go, sequential bursts of reform that is characteristic of many large districts. As is the case with all efforts to mobilize collective enterprises, building and sustaining a comprehensive reform initiative requires providing participants with positive feedback, including some evidence that they are making progress; central school bureaucracies need to make it a priority to systematically design, collect, and analyze more proximate and more responsive indicators of student success. Finally, a positive vision for central bureaucracy requires proactive measures to recruit, train, and retain the best possible school-level personnel and to give them the incentives and support that they need to succeed.

The DC Case: Recommendations for the Here and Now

Rather than blanket resistance, I have argued, the problem in DC, as in many other urban school districts, tends to be an inability to "scale up"—to identify, nurture, and enlarge upon the small reforms that may be working well at individual schools or within specific agencies—combined with an inability to "nail down"— to build the institutions and political constituencies that can maintain reform initiatives when short-term enthusiasm dissipates and when the policy leaders who initiated the changes shift focus or leave town. So conceived, the problem calls for a combination of information generation and dissemination about school and program performance complemented by a proactive effort to engage the community in discussions about—and *decisions* about—the goals and form of public education in the District.

Generating and Disseminating Information about School and Program Performance

By establishing a basis for distinguishing successful from unsuccessful schools and programs, performance data can enable researchers within and outside the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) to determine which specific school reforms are having the desired effects. A focus on performance indicators is characteristic of the new wave of thinking among education analysts. While past efforts have tended to focus on issues of governance, process, and inputs, "present efforts to reform elementary and secondary education in the United States are focusing heavily on the outcomes of the educational system" as a way to increase both fiscal efficiency and public accountability (46).

In many places, the movement toward performance measurement is tied to a vision of accountability to higher level authorities, most frequently state boards of education. School performance measures are seen as a way to identify schools that should be subject to rewards or punishments imposed by central bureaucracies. Linking performance measures to some form of bureaucratic oversight and sanctioning makes sense in the District. More sophisticated evaluation of school-level efforts is especially important if the decision is made to continue the move to decentralize authority to principals and Local School Restructuring Teams. As envisioned in the District of Columbia Goals 2000 State Education Plan, school based decision-making can be a valuable tool for stimulating innovation. But experience with school decentralization in New York City and elsewhere has made it clear that decentralization can also promote conditions in which patronage, corruption, waste, and misguided pedagogy hold sway. Only careful monitoring of school efforts and their consequences can ensure that successful programs get support and emulation and unsuccessful efforts are righted before long-term harm is done.

I would argue, however, that the main thrust for performance evaluation in the District should be only one component in the effort to engage and mobilize a broader coalition for educational reform. Clear and readily available performance data can help to create conditions conducive to sustained reform by extending to parents and community groups information they need to identify problems in their neighborhood schools and to respond appropriately (47). Literature in the education field emphasizes parent involvement as an important resource in the battle for school improvement, but studies also show that many parents seem satisfied with the way things are. Proponents of school choice as a vehicle for education reform also stress the need for informed parents, but options for choice frequently are underenrolled, and there is evidence that lower income parents may lack access to the kinds of information they would need in order to exercise choice effectively (48).

Low levels of parent participation may reflect insufficient or inaccurate information about school performance. It also may reflect a fatalistic conclusion that schools cannot make much of a difference in their children's lives. Parents who see that their children are earning decent grades and are being promoted on schedule may be too quick to assume that things are fine. An independent source of information about school performance might challenge complacency, where it is unwarranted. By the same token, in some cases solid performance data may reveal that some schools *are* doing better than realized and may build community confidence that its institutions are capable of succeeding in spite of substantial obstacles.

Standardized test scores from individual schools, an important piece of the puzzle, are not in themselves sufficient to accurately gauge performance. Because differences in family background play such a big role in setting the stage for differences in educational achievement, it is important to adjust school performance measures to take into account differences in the characteristics of the children they are serving. Among the school-level indicators of student background that may be important to take into account are eligibility for free or subsidized school lunch,percentage who are non-native English-speakers, student mobility rates, racial and ethnic composition of the student body, and median income and education level in the attendance zone. By systematically maintaining data on individual students, moreover, it would be possible to chart actual progress child by child, and to distinguish, when evaluating schools, the performance of students who have been in the schools for at least a year or two from those who may have arrived only very recently. Standardized exams can be one

dimensional and, if teachers and schools "teach to the test," can be too constraining of innovation and breadth. Therefore, test scores should be supplemented by additional measures of performance, including surveys of student and parental satisfaction.

Because test scores can be too narrow an indicator, because we know that different schools face radically different challenges but we do not know how to statistically control for that fact with precision or reliability, and because the goal ought to be to stimulate involvement and engagement in debate about what schools should emphasize rather than to impose an automatic trigger linked to a particular test, I would argue against linking performance directly to sanctions and rewards.

Thinking about the collection and dissemination of performance data as a tool for stimulating citizen involvement has the additional advantage of narrowing the scope of the authority vested in a central bureaucracy. School reform requires a central bureaucracy with the skills necessary to carry out this ongoing process, and the DCPS does not appear to have the capacity at this point. In the near term, getting a performance assessment initiative under way may require contracting with outside groups that have such skills, but because the requisite information-gathering and analysis program needs to be ongoing, should be linked to program evaluation, and ultimately involves student-level data that must be treated with great discretion for reasons of privacy, there are strong arguments in favor of building that capacity in-house. Blunt and undifferentiated bureaucracy bashing is counterproductive if it sidetracks the effort to build that capacity. But in a vital democratic environment it need not require delegating new powers to central bureaucrats who are not readily held accountable.

Engaging the Community

That successful schools require engaged parents has become an accepted part of the conventional wisdom. For the most part, however, that is thought of in terms of the engagement of individual parents with their own children, not in terms of their collective mobilization as part of a broader coalition with an agenda for the community. Enticing individual parents to oversee their children responsibly, to work cooperatively with teachers in encouraging discipline and making sure homework is done, to inculcate values that are supportive of the educational mission—all these are clearly important, readily agreed upon qualities that nonetheless have proven difficult to manipulate through public policy. When the basic system is functioning, this engagement at the level of the individual parent may be sufficient to make the educational enterprise succeed. Enticing parents to link with parents from other schools, to form coalitional bonds with other sectors of the community, to think collectively about what the community wants and needs from its schools, and to hold public officials accountable for pursuing that vision may be even more important than individual engagement when the basic system is in disarray. And it is a challenge for which the existing research leaves us even less well prepared.

General Becton and the appointed board of trustees already have demonstrated some sensitivity to the need to reach out to the community by making an effort to speak to various groups around the city. They apparently recognize that this is an important step if they are to earn trust, cooperation, and some sense on the part of a disenfranchised community that their mission is legitimate. But the board of trustees, citing the need for

other," has kept most of its deliberations private. In late February 1997, the majority of the trustees decided to bar from further meetings a DC parent who had been attending as a voluntary aide to one of the trustees and who had then written a letter to the control board raising some concerns about the trustees' actions. In explaining the trustees' decision, chairman Bruce MacLaury said that "if we are going to operate within a system of trust in each other, we cannot go running off to the press, to our bosses or to anyone else to register our personal views (49)." But the need to build trust and cooperation between the trustees and other sectors of the community is at least as important to the long-term success of reform as is the need to establish trust and cooperation within the nine-member board, and the obstacles to doing so are immeasurably more challenging. As is the case for the trustees, other sectors in the community can only learn to work together *by* working together.

Although open meetings and frequent communications are absolutely critical, the argument developed in this paper suggests that something more is called for. Communication with the community as a means of soothing fears is not the same as interaction with the commitment to broad mobilization. In order to engage a community that has become accustomed to finding collective politics disheartening and unproductive, it is important to provide a forum in which a broad range of interest groups feel welcome to participate, in which something real is at stake, and through which achievable goals can be set and met.

Endnotes

[1] The formal title of the control board is the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority.

[2] David A. Vise and Sari Horwitz, "Control Board Blasts System as It Readies Takeover Plan," *Washington Post,* 13 November 1996, p. A01.

[3] David A. Vise, "D.C. Control Board Takes Charge of Public Schools," *Washington Post*, 16 November 1996, p. A01.

[4] Courtland Milloy, "Overruling Civilian Rule," *Washington Post*, 13 November 1996, p. B01.

[5] David A. Vise, "Police Department, UDC Are Next on Control Board's List," *Washington Post,* 17 November 1996, p. A01.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Such resignation might not be unfounded in light of the District's long history of finding its local interests ignored or spurned when members of Congress have considered them contrary to their view of the national interest or their reading of the sentiments of voters in the home districts. Sam Smith, *Captive Capital* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1974); Harry S. Jaffe and Tom Sherwood, *Dream*

City: Race, Power, and the Decline of Washington, D.C. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Howard Gillette Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Charles Wesley Harris, *Congress and the Governance of the Nation's Capital: The Conflict of Federal and Local Interests* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1995).

[8] David A. Vise, "Home-Rule Arguments Cut No Ice With School Reform Advocates," *Washington Post,* 12 November 1996, p. B03.

[9] Paul Duggan, "Applause for Takeover Echoes Across the City," *Washington Post,* 17 November 1996, p. A10.

[10] Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution grants Congress jurisdiction over the District. Although the degree of Congressional attention and intrusiveness has ebbed and flowed, this provision consistently has served as an important backdrop to local politics and policy. See Jaffe and Sherwood, *Dream City*; Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*; Harris, *Congress and the Governance of the Nation's Capital.*

[11] For one of the best and most readable accounts, see Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

[12] See Gary Orfield and Susan E. Eaton, *Dismantling Desegregation* (New York: The New Press, 1996), pp. 9-19.

[13] "In 1959 fewer than 25 blacks per 10,000 had white classmates. Not until 1963 did Southern desegregation reach even one percent." Charles S. Bullock III, "Equal Education Opportunity," in *Implementation of Civil Rights Policy,* edited by Charles S. Bullock III and Charles M. Lamb (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1984), p.66.

[14] Colleen O'Dea, "The Price of Parity: Once More Into the School Aid Breach," *New Jersey Reporter*r, May/June 1996, pp. 25, 7.

[15] The high degree of national attention on the Milwaukee experiment has contributed to a situation in which it is difficult to separate the evidence from the ideologically driven controversy in which it is enmeshed. John Witte, of the University of Wisconsin, has issued yearly reports on a range of outcomes associated with the program. Although he finds many positive signs—for example, high satisfaction among parents of children using the vouchers—Witte's comparison of choice students to similar children in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) indicates that "test scores did not improve and did not differ from MPS scores, and attrition from the program averaged 30% per year (not including three private schools which went bankrupt in the midst of the school year)" (John F. Witte, "Reply to Greene, Peterson and Du," unpublished paper distributed at the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, August 1996). For his full analysis of the data, see John F. Witte, Troy D. Sterr, and Christopher A. Thorn, "Fifth Year Report Milwaukee Parental Choice Program," Department of Political Science and The Robert La Follette Institute of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin, December 1995. Witte's

analysis has been challenged by Jay P. Greene, Paul E. Peterson, and Jiangtao Du, "The Effectiveness of School Choice in Milwaukee: A Secondary Analysis of Data from the Program's Evaluation," paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 30, 1996. By focusing only on children who remained in the voucher program for at least three years, and comparing them to a small sample of students who applied for the program but were randomly rejected, they find evidence that students who remain in the program score 3 to 5 percentage points higher in reading and 5 to 12 points higher in math. But their analysis also has been challenged, and the debate rages on.

[16] For some of the context for this pronouncement, see my *Rethinking School Choice: Limits of the Market Metaphor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[17] "Magnet Schools in Prince George's," 8 January 1990.

[18] Retha Hill, "In Pr. George's, Business vs. Schools: Superintendent Blamed for Chill in Once Warm Relations," *Washington Post*, 31 January 1994; Orfield and Eaton, *Dismantling Desegregation*, ch.10.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "We can just kiss those programs goodbye," concluded one of the board members who opposed weakening the desegregation regulations. Lisa Frazier, "Pr. George's Schools Vote to End Racial Quotas," *Washington Post*, 6 June 1996.

[21] Joseph F. Sullivan, "Improvement Lags After School Takeovers, State Says," *New York Times*, 25 April 1995, p. B6. Also, Neil MacFarquhar, "Better Finances, but Not Better Test Scores," *New York Times,* 9 July 1995. 1996 test scores apparently did show some improvement, although it is not clear whether those improvements could be attributed to the intervention.

[22] Bill Peterson, "Kentucky Public Schools Ruled Unconstitutional," *Washington Post*, 9 June 1989, p. A16.

[23] Chester E. Finn Jr., *We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 63.

[24] Quoted in Richard F. Elmore, Charles H. Abelmann, and Susan H. Fuhrman, "The New Accountability in State Education Reform: From Process to Performance," in *Holding Schools Accountable*, edited by Helen F. Ladd (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1996), p. 75.

[25] Anthony Downs, "Up and Down With Ecology—The `Issue Attention Cycle'," *Public Interest* 32 (1993): 38-50.

[26] Funded by the National Science Foundation. Clarence Stone was the principal investigator; Bryan Jones and Jeffrey Henig were the co-principal investigators. Marion Orr and John Portz were members of a large team of political scientists who carried out the field research in eleven cities: Atlanta,

Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. I was a co-principal director of the broad study and the primary researcher responsible for the case study of Washington, D.C. For a broad overview of the project, see Clarence N. Stone, "Civic Capacity and Urban Education: A Progress Report on the Second Year of Activity." Report to the National Science Foundation, NSF Grant Number Red 9350139, January 24, 1995.

[27] Members of the larger research project interviewed *general political influentials* (e.g., council members, school board members, mayors or their representatives, union leaders), *community advocates* (e.g., leaders of parents' organizations, representatives of organizations for racial or ethnic minorities), and *education specialists* (e.g., administrators, principals, and others selected because of their technical expertise). Interviews used a common open-ended format; formats for the three types of respondents overlapped, but not all questions were identical. Most of the results presented here rely on questions that were common to all three groups, but some draw on questions that were asked only of the general political influentials and community advocates. In addition, interviewers were given a high degree of discretion to follow up on important avenues of discussion, even when this meant altering question ordering and, in some instances, failing to ask certain questions. As a result, the number of responses can vary significantly from question to question.

[28] A partial listing includes: Bari Anhalt, Alan DiGaetano, Luis Fraga, and Jeffrey R. Henig, "Restructuring School Governance: Reform Ideas and Their Implementation," presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, New York City, August 31-September 4, 1994.; John Portz, "Problem Definitions and Policy Agendas: Shaping the Educational Agenda in Boston,"*Policy Studies Journal* 24, 3 (1996): 371-86; Clarence N. Stone, "The Politics of Urban School Reform: Civic Capacity, Social Capital and the Intergroup Context," paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 31-September 3, 1996. Along with Richard Hula, Marion Orr, and Desiree Pedescleaux, I am working on a book, to be published by Princeton University Press, that will focus particularly on the politics of education reform in predominantly black cities, and the way that race can complicate the process of building sustainable coalitions for school reform. See also Clarence N. Stone (ed.), *Changing Urban Education* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, forthcoming).

[29] This section summarizes arguments presented at greater length in my paper on "Civic Capacity and the Problem of Ephemeral Education Reform," presented at the Annual Meetings of the Urban Affairs Association, Portland, Oregon, May 3-6, 1995.

[30] William L. Boyd, "The Public, the Professionals and Educational Policy Making: Who Governs?" *Teachers College Record* 77 (1976): 539-77.

[31] Stanley M. Elam, Lowell C. Rose, and Alec M. Gallup. "The 23rd Annual Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappa.* September 1991: 41-56.

[32] Steve Farkas, *Educational Reform: The Players and the Politics* (New York: The Public Agenda Foundation for the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, 1992).

[33] Rodney Hero, Susan E. Clarke; and Mara Sidney, "Civic Capacity and Urban Education: Denver." Second year report prepared for the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project, 1994.

[34] Richard Hula, Richard Jelier, and Mark Schnauer, "The Politics of School Reform in Detroit." Second year report prepared for the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project, 1994.

[35] Lana Stein, "Education Reform and Civic Capacity: St. Louis, Missouri." Second year report prepared for the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project, 1994.

[36] John Portz, "Boston: Case Study Report." Second year report prepared for the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project, 1994.

[37] D.C. Committee on Public Education, *Our Children, Our Future* (Washington, DC, June 1989).

[38] The series, "DC Schools: A System in Crisis," ran daily from February 16 to 20, 1997.

[39] Farkas, *Educational Reform,* p. 4.

[40] David A. Rochefort and Roger W. Cobb (eds.), *The Politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994), p. 15.

[41] Anthony S. Bryk, John Q. Easton, David Kerbow, Sharon G. Rollow, and Penny A. Sebring, *A View From the Elementary Schools: The State of Reform in Chicago* (Chicago: The Consortium on Chicago School Research, August, 1993), p. 26.

[42] Farkas, *Educational Reform*, p.4.

[43] For discussions, see, for example, Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Amy Guttman, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); David M. Steiner, *Rethinking Democratic Education: The Politics of Reform* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994).

[44] Some of these points are developed more fully in Jeffrey R. Henig and Stephen Kidd, "The Politics of School Reform in Washington, D.C.: All Dressed For the Dance, But Still Sitting at Home." Paper prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the Urban Affairs Association, New Orleans, May 2-5, 1994.

[45] This may not be much of a problem in some homogeneous, affluent, and suburban communities where public support for schools is deep seated and where there are fewer competing demands on local revenues; but demographic trends (the decreasing proportion of households with school-age children), ideological trends (increasing challenges to the legitimacy of government in general, the broad celebration of private, market forces), and fiscal realities (the pressure to reduce expenditures at all levels of government) suggest that the need for education to more aggressively compete for scarce public resources is not likely to be restricted to large central cities in the long term.

[46] Helen F. Ladd (ed.), *Holding Schools Accountable: Performance-Based Reform in Education* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1996).

[47] Joseph Berger, "Ratings Raise Qualms in Suburban Schools," *New York Times*, 23 February 1997, p. 35.

[48] Bruce Fuller and Richard F. Elmore, with Gary Orfield, *Who Chooses? Who Loses?: Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996).

[49] Debbi Wilgoren, "School Board President Considers Resigning from D.C. Trustee Board," *Washington Post*, 28 February 1997, p. B1.