

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

CASE STUDIES OF HOW URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

ABSTRACT

SEPTEMBER 2002

AUTHORS

JASON SNIPES
FRED DOOLITTLE
CORINNE HERLIHY

MDRC

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY

MDRC FOR THE COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS



FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH & IMPROVEMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE FORD FOUNDATION
COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

The findings and conclusions presented in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the Office of Educational Research & Improvement, U.S. Department of Education (grant no. R215U000020) or the Ford Foundation.

PREFACE

This study, *Foundations for Success*, began almost four years ago as the Council of the Great City Schools began thinking about whether all the reforms that urban schools were pursuing actually improved their performance. A great deal of effort, expertise, and resources were being devoted to boosting urban school achievement, but almost no one was asking the question about whether the reforms were working.

The primary question, of course, involved whether or not urban schools were improving. To begin answering the question, the Council commissioned a study of central-city National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data. The bottom line suggested that urban education had improved significantly in math but not in reading. We supplemented this analysis with new state assessment results, which we eventually began publishing as part of our *Beating the Odds* series, and with data from local tests, ACT, Harcourt Educational Measurement, and the College Board. The results indicated that our initial NAEP analysis was correct. Urban schools were seeing gains.

We followed these analyses with a second question: Who was making the most progress? This has been difficult to answer with any certainty because so few cities use the same tests. The Council proposed allowing cities to take the NAEP in order to answer this question with greater confidence in the future. In the meantime, we were forced to rely on an inexact process. We asked some of the nation's leading educational researchers and statisticians to sort through the disparate data and distinguish the faster moving urban school districts from the slower ones. We looked for cities, which had improved in both reading and math in over half of their grades through spring 2001, had done so at rates faster than their respective states, and had simultaneously narrowed their racially-identifiable achievement gaps. From this pool of cities, we picked districts that reflected a range of sizes, demographic characteristics, and geographical locations.

The research team ultimately selected Charlotte-Mecklenberg (CMS), Houston (HISD), and Sacramento (SCUSD). The Chancellor's District in New York City was eventually added for limited study. A number of other cities could have been chosen. They included Norfolk, Fort Worth, Long Beach, and others. Progress in these communities has been impressive.

The third question we asked involved what the faster-moving city school systems were doing that others weren't. The answer is what this study, which we commissioned MDRC to conduct, is all about. Unfortunately, there was not much research to guide us when we started the process. We decided, therefore, on an exploratory study using the case study method described in this report. The reader will find that the results presented here are not definitive, but they are provocative.

There is—to be sure—a great deal of research on what it takes to turn around individual schools. Much of this work is rooted in noted educator Ron Edmonds' pioneering studies many years ago. This work continues to be promising and important. But, it nearly always ends with the conclusion that individual school gains were needed at scale.

This report is different in that it starts “at scale” and then worked backwards. We wanted to look at whole systems—large ones—that improved and ask the question, “How did they do it?” Our analysis of state assessment data told us there were such places.

We were met with a fair amount of skepticism when we started. We were told that there were school “effects” and teacher “effects” and state “effects”—but there were no district effects. We were also mindful of the popular sentiment that districts—particularly urban districts—were the problem, not the solution. Ironically, we came to agree with some of the skepticism about

whether districts had an effect. In too many cases, we probably did not. This study, however, indicates that such an effect is possible and can add significant value to the efforts of others—value that will be critical as we work to implement *No Child Left Behind*.

We also faced skepticism about whether we would find any commonalities across the faster improving cities. Many observers indicated that citywide gains were probably unique to each city and could not be generalized. We also heard that district gains were little more than the sum of individual school improvements. The data in this report, however preliminary, suggest that there are common themes and that the citywide gains are more than could be created by individual schools.

It was important, moreover, for the Council of the Great City Schools to look at districtwide levers for change—not just school levers—because the leadership of these systems are being held accountable for the results in ways that others are not. We needed to identify what districts could do to boost performance citywide rather than waiting for the turn-around of individual schools.

Though exploratory, this study is one of the first to identify and discuss what real systemic reform is. Former Philadelphia Public Schools Superintendent David Hornbeck’s pioneering work in Kentucky and the ten-point platform that emerged from it was an excellent start, but few researchers have attempted to put that platform to an empirical test. This report, which David helped conceive, attempts to fill the void by looking at the commonalities of cities across state lines that are improving, then compares them to other communities that have not improved as rapidly.

Our final question involves one’s ability to translate the results of this exploratory study into new research into why and how systems improve and into technical assistance that will boost student performance in city school systems across

the country. We still need to know, for instance, whether districts can improve scores by using strategies that are different from the ones articulated in these case studies. We also need to know where the research on “system reform” and the research on “school reform” converge. The study implicitly raises important questions about the conditions under which approaches like the “comprehensive school reform demonstration models” work and don’t work. Lastly, the study suggests opening a new line of research on systems in addition to work on schools, states, and programs.

The implications for technical assistance are especially critical. The preliminary results of this study suggest that there may be a path for urban schools to follow that will get results on a citywide level. The data also point to where support and expertise are most needed and on what issues.

Clearly, urban education has a lot of work to do. Our schools are not as good as they need to be. We are trying, however, to create a path—paved with good research, coordinated across our cities—along which we can move. We think this strategy is preferable to waiting passively for the latest fad in reform, which may or may not have anything to do with how city schools work—or could work. The creation of a broad strategy for improving urban education nationally gives our work direction and hope.

This report, of course, could not have been possible without the efforts of a great many people. First, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and the Ford Foundation for their support. Cyrus Driver, our program officer at the foundation, was particularly helpful in taking the first step with us. We hope that the results prove useful to the foundation’s work. We also thank the Board of Directors of the Council of the Great City Schools, which enthusiastically backed this effort. I am very proud to have a board that is so committed to improving our schools.

Second, I thank Cliff Janey and Jesse Martinez for their leadership. Cliff, the outgoing superintendent of the Rochester Public Schools, has served as Chair of the Council and its Task Force on Achievement Gaps for several years and has provided much of the intellectual firepower behind this effort. Jesse, a school board member with the Fort Worth Independent School District, has served as the Co-Chair of the Task Force and has contributed immensely to the project.

Third, I thank Sharon Lewis and Janice Ceperich. Sharon, the Council's Research Director, went on all the site visits and helped coordinate the effort from start to finish. Her contributions, large and small, are everywhere one looks on this project. Janice served as a research specialist on the project and also handled the layout of the final report.

Fourth, I thank the team at MDRC. Jason Snipes, Fred Doolittle, and Corinne Herlihy did a masterful job in conducting the research for the Council and articulating an important set of themes for urban school reform. Their work at MDRC was supported by Joel Gordon and Julianne O'Brien who acquired the achievement data from each district and prepared the data files for analysis. Vivian Mateo-Golden provided indispensable support for the research and the production of this report. Kent McGuire, James Kemple, Robert Ivry, Glee Holton, and Louis Richman reviewed drafts of the report and provided valuable feedback. Thank you.

Fifth, I thank the superintendents, board members, and staff from the case study districts and the comparison districts. Eric Smith, Jim Sweeney, Kaye Stripling, and Sandra Kase opened their doors, their books, their reports, and their files to ensure that we understood what made their districts tick. We hope we have translated your reforms faithfully. We also thank the staff of these

districts for arranging interviews, site visits, and collecting data. Rosalind Young at HISD, Gayle McKnight at SCUSD, Betsy Williamson at CMS, and Marjorie Elliot at the Chancellor's District in New York deserve special recognition. Thank you.

Sixth, I thank our Research Advisory Group, which advised the Council on this effort. They included Ron Ferguson (Harvard University), Sam Stringfield (Johns Hopkins University), Pedro Garcia (University of California at Berkeley), David Grissmer (Rand Corporation), Glee Holton (MDRC), John Simpson (Norfolk Public Schools Superintendent), David Hornbeck (former Philadelphia Public Schools Superintendent), Andrew Porter (University of Wisconsin), Katherine Blasik (Broward County Public Schools Assistant Superintendent), Linda Powell (City University of New York), Vinetta Jones (Howard University), Pedro Noguera (Harvard University), Cliff Janey (Rochester Public Schools Superintendent) and Jesse Martinez (Fort Worth Independent School District Board Member).

Pedro Noguera and Linda Powell warrant additional thanks for accompanying the research team on several site visits and for reviewing and commenting on various drafts of the case studies. I also thank the Education Studies Committee at MDRC for their thoughtful and hard-nosed review and commentary on this project.

Finally, I thank the team at GMMB who worked so hard on the production of the report: cover design, editing, report summaries, and advice. Frank Greer and Chrissy Russillo, thank you.

Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools

This is an abstract of the full report and its case studies. For information about the full report contact:

The Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 702
Washington, D.C. 20004
(202) 393-2427
www.cgcs.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....ix

GOALS OF THE STUDY.....1

THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FACING URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS.....2

KEY FINDINGS.....4

IMPLICATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS.....6

SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY AND COMPARISON DISTRICTS.....9

CASE STUDY: HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT.....13

CASE STUDY: SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.....19

CASE STUDY: CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT.....25

CASE STUDY: NEW YORK CITY CHANCELLOR’S DISTRICT.....31

CASE STUDY: COMPARISON DISTRICTS.....35

APPENDIX: COMMITTEES & ORGANIZATIONS.....37

 TASK FORCE ON ACHIEVEMENT GAPS.....39

 RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP.....40

 ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS.....41

 ABOUT MDRC.....43

 COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.....45

 COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBER DISTRICTS.....46

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Characteristics of Case Study Districts.....	8
Table 2: Percentage of Houston Elementary School Students in the First Quartile on SAT-9 Reading by Year and Ethnicity.....	16
Table 3: Percentage of Houston Elementary School Students in the First Quartile on SAT-9 Math by Year and Ethnicity.....	17
Table 4: Percentage of Sacramento Elementary School Students in the First Quartile on the SAT-9 Reading by Year and Ethnicity.....	22
Table 5: Percentage of Sacramento Elementary School Students in the First Quartile on the SAT-9 Math by Year and Ethnicity.....	23
Table 6: Percentage of Charlotte Elementary School Students at Level 1 or 2 on the EOG Reading Test by Year and Ethnicity.....	28
Table 7: Percentage of Charlotte Elementary School Students at Level 1 or 2 on the EOG Math Test by Year and Ethnicity.....	29

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

CASE STUDIES OF HOW URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

REPORT ABSTRACT

I. GOALS OF THE STUDY

The movement to reform education in the U.S. is fundamentally about improving urban public schools. Every debate about standards, testing, governance, busing, vouchers, charter schools, social promotions, class sizes, and accountability are discussions—at their core—about public education in the cities.

These discussions are worth having, for nowhere does the national resolve to strengthen its educational system face a tougher test than in our inner cities. There, every problem is more pronounced; every solution harder to implement. The burden of not solving these problems or implementing successful improvement strategies has fallen disproportionately on the African American and Latino children, children with disabilities and those learning English who live in the poverty-stricken cores of America's major cities.

The nation cannot afford to ignore these communities, for urban schools enroll a large share of America's children. While there are 16,850 public school districts in the United States, one hundred of those districts serve approximately 23 percent of the nation's students. These districts, many of which are located in urban areas, also serve 40 percent of the country's minority students and 30 percent of the economically disadvantaged students.

This report and the longer-term project of which it is a part focus on the potential role of the school district as an initiator and sustainer of academic improvement. While there has been much research on what makes an effective school, there is relatively little on what makes an effective district. In fact, many see large urban school districts as a source of problems rather than solu-

tions. But for school improvement to be widespread and sustained, and for our nation to reduce racial differences in academic achievement, large urban districts must play a key role.

Over the past several years, the Council of the Great City Schools has embarked on an effort to understand student achievement patterns in large urban school districts and to develop ideas for how more districts can raise achievement. Previous Council research has shown that academic achievement is improving in urban schools and has identified a set of urban school districts that are making the fastest improvements, both overall and in narrowing differences among racial groups.

This report extends the existing research by examining the experiences of three large urban school districts (and a portion of a fourth) that have raised academic performance for their district as a whole, while also reducing racial differences in achievement. It attempts to use the experiences of these school districts to address the following questions:

1. What was the historical, administrative, and programmatic context within which student achievement improved in these districts?
2. How can we characterize the nature of the changes in student achievement, and what were the sources of these changes (specific schools, subgroups of student, etc.)?
3. What district-level strategies were used to improve student achievement and reduce racial disparities?

4. What was the connection between policies, practices, and strategies at the district level and actual changes in teaching and learning in the classroom?

The Council and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) intend to use the answers to these questions to identify hypotheses for further study of promising practices at the district level and to develop recommendations for technical assistance in support of reform efforts in large urban school districts. Further, the Council and MDRC hope to encourage a line of discourse and research regarding the role of large urban districts in school reform.

How Were the Case Study Districts Selected?

The Council’s Achievement Gap Task Force, together with its Research Advisory Group (which is made up of nationally-known researchers and practitioners), identified three case study districts. These districts: Houston Independent School District; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; Sacramento City Unified School District; and a portion of a fourth (the Chancellor’s District in New York City) were selected because they met the following criteria:

- They demonstrated a trend of improved overall student achievement over at least three years.
- They demonstrated a trend of narrowing differences between white and minority students.
- They showed consistent improvement over at least a three-year period and they were improving more rapidly than their respective states.
- They were a set of geographically representative urban school districts.

What was the Methodology for the Study?

This research is based on (1) retrospective case studies of these districts and (2) comparisons of their experiences with other districts that have not yet seen similar improvements. The case study districts are used to develop hypotheses about the reasons for improvements in achievement. The comparison districts provide a partial test of the hypotheses emerging from the analysis of the case study districts. While the comparison districts cannot provide definitive support for the hypotheses developed in the case study districts, they were used to discard possible hypotheses and to better understand what is unusual about the case study districts.

II. THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FACING URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The large urban school districts examined in this report face a common set of challenges that exist above the level of individual schools. The primary challenges include:

Unsatisfactory Academic Achievement

The reform efforts were driven by the concern that schools were failing their students — especially low-income and minority students — and that improving this pattern was the district’s most important priority. In both the case study districts and the comparison districts, achievement for minority and disadvantaged students was noticeably below that for white and more affluent students. And the differences by race and economic status increased as students grew older.

Political Conflict

In each of the three case study districts, there had been a period when the school board was divided into factions, and much of its activity revolved around disputes over resources and influence. The school board's "zero sum" arguments often dealt with salaries, hiring and firing decisions, student assignment procedures, and school construction and closings. Factional disputes between department heads, the board versus the superintendent, superintendents versus principals, or principals versus teachers were common and often became serious and personal. At times, infighting was intense because the district was a major employer (especially for groups that historically faced discrimination in the labor market) and because participation in educational politics was a stepping-stone for higher political office. As a result, the leadership in these districts was often not focused primarily on improving student achievement.

Inexperienced Teaching Staff

Each of the case study districts acknowledged that they needed to deal with the fact that much of their teaching staff was relatively inexperienced and suffered from high teacher turnover, especially once teachers gained some initial experience. In part this was due to the challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers when school districts in the surrounding areas could offer teachers higher salaries, better facilities, a less challenged student body, and were seen as less stressful working environments. These difficulties were compounded by the limited training that the districts offered new teachers before they entered the classroom.

Low Expectations and a Lack of Demanding Curriculum

In each of the districts, staff felt overwhelmed at times by the great challenges that

many of their lower-income and minority students faced. This led some staff to reduce expectations for achievement in the lower grades and justify the students' lack of progress. In the higher grades, where instruction and expectations can differ starkly across groups of students, low-income and minority students were under-represented in college preparatory and advanced placement classes. In some schools that served primarily low-income and minority students, the more demanding classes were offered infrequently or not at all.

Lack of Instructional Coherence

The study found that all districts suffered from having different educational initiatives and curricula in individual schools. Likewise, the districts discovered a lack of alignment between instruction and the state standards. Each of the districts had recently experimented with site-based management, which had produced a variety of different educational strategies within each district. This often proved confusing to school-level staff and difficult for the district to support. Additionally, the professional development strategy was fragmented; professional development was not focused on a consistent educational strategy (either of instruction or curricula) and often consisted of one-shot workshops on a series of topics.

High Student Mobility

Previous research suggests that moves between schools can undermine student learning. This problem may be exacerbated by variations in instructional approach. District leaders believed that the high rate at which students moved from one school to another within the districts disturbed the continuity of instruction students received in subjects such as reading and math. Some staff also noticed higher rates of mobility in the low-income student population and considered that another strike against their ability to achieve.

Unsatisfactory Business Operations

One of the most frustrating aspects of daily life for teachers and principals in ailing urban schools is the difficulty they face in getting the basic necessities to operate a school. All too often, school facilities were poorly maintained or dangerous, students were taught by substitutes for part or even all of the school year, and teachers lacked an adequate supply of books and materials. At times district business operations were managed by staff who had been promoted because of tenure in the district, rather than their particular qualifications. Administrative systems were outdated and cumbersome, and new expertise was needed to bring them up to speed. In some of the districts there was the perception — and too often the reality — that direct political influence by school board members and other elected officials affected decisions such as hiring, promotions and assignments, and contracts for supplies or services. Finally, school level staff viewed the central office as unresponsive, bureaucratic, and micromanaging, rather than working to find real solutions.

Three Key Contextual Factors That Affect Change

1. The Uncertainty of Funding

None of the case study districts were in desperate financial circumstances, but each of the districts faced budget pressures, in some years had to cut back spending, and had lost bond elections to raise funds for capital improvements.

2. State Focus on Accountability

Evolving state accountability systems with strong academic achievement goals helped focus local attention on student achievement. Thus, each of the three case study districts operated within a broader

policy context that emphasized student academic achievement, concrete goals for improvement, and incentives and consequences for performance.

3. Local Politics and Power Relations

The process of decision-making in the case study districts was complex and had to accommodate many different interests. However, there were important differences from older, central city districts where interest group politics are more volatile and where the vast majority of residents and the student body are from a single racial group.

III. KEY FINDINGS

The Need to Establish Preconditions for Reform

The individual histories of these faster-improving urban school districts suggest that political and organizational stability over a prolonged period and consensus on educational reform strategies are necessary prerequisites to meaningful change. Such a foundation includes:

- A new role for the school board whereby a new board majority (or other governing unit) focuses on policy level decisions that support improved student achievement rather than on the day-to-day operations of the district.
- A shared vision between the chief executive of the school district and the school board regarding the goals and strategies for reform.
- A capacity to diagnose instructional problems that the school system could solve.

- An ability to flesh out the leadership’s vision for reform and sell it to city and district stakeholders.
- A focus on revamping district operations to serve and support the schools.
- A matching of new resources to support the vision for reform.
- They drove reforms into the classroom by defining a role for the central office that entailed guiding, supporting, and improving instruction at the building level.
- They committed themselves to data-driven decision-making and instruction. They gave early and ongoing assessment data to teachers and principals as well as trained and supported them as the data were used to diagnose teacher and student weaknesses and make improvements.

What Were the Districts’ Strategies for Success?

The case study districts’ approaches to reform shared the following elements in common:

- They focused on student achievement and specific achievement goals, on a set schedule with defined consequences; aligned curricula with state standards; and helped translate these standards into instructional practice.
- They created concrete accountability systems that went beyond what the states had established in order to hold district leadership and building-level staff personally responsible for producing results.
- They focused on the lowest-performing schools. Some districts provided additional resources and attempted to improve the stock of teachers and administrators at their lowest-performing schools.
- They adopted or developed districtwide curricula and instructional approaches rather than allowing each school to devise their own strategies.
- They supported these districtwide strategies at the central office through professional development and support for consistent implementation throughout the district.
- They started their reforms at the elementary grade levels instead of trying to fix everything at once.
- They provided intensive instruction in reading and math to middle and high school students, even if it came at the expense of other subjects.

How Did the Comparison Districts Fare in Their Efforts?

While the comparison districts claimed to be doing similar things, there were several important differences that prevented them from achieving similar gains:

- They lacked a clear consensus among key stakeholders about district priorities or an overall strategy for reform.
- They lacked specific, clear standards, achievement goals, timelines and consequences.
- The district’s central office took little or no responsibility for improving instruction or creating a cohesive instructional strategy throughout the district.

- The policies and practices of the central office were not strongly connected to intended changes in teaching and learning in the classrooms.
- The districts gave schools multiple and conflicting curricula and instructional expectations, which they were left to decipher on their own.

What Were the Trends in Academic Achievement?

- The academic achievement data collected as part of this study suggest that the districts in this study had indeed made progress in academic achievement and that this progress had begun to reduce racial disparities in student performance on standardized tests. Progress in each of the case study districts, moreover, generally outpaced statewide gains.
- This was particularly the case for the low end of the achievement distribution. The patterns of change and the magnitude of changes do not suggest that they were driven by small numbers of schools or students or were the sole result of state “effects.”
- Progress was greatest at the elementary school level, and there was evidence of some improvement in achievement trends at the middle school level. However, these school districts are not yet generally making progress on overall achievement and racial differences in high schools.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

In many ways, these findings represent good practices for any type of organization: set priorities and specific goals; identify appropriate

roles for parts of the organization; select or develop the techniques needed to move toward the goals given the local context, staff, and student body; collect and use information to track progress, identify needed refinements and areas of special needs; and stay on course long enough for the effort to pay off. There are few surprises here, just hard work.

But taking these commonsensical steps in the complex world of urban school districts with many diverse stakeholders, frequent leadership changes, competing priorities, limited resources, and difficult-to-manage bureaucracies is not a straightforward process. A key contribution of this study, therefore, is to suggest some priorities for urban school districts and to provide concrete examples of how several urban school districts successfully focused on student achievement and what they saw as necessary steps toward improvement.

This study is exploratory in nature and is not designed to yield definitive conclusions regarding the factors that drove achievement in these particular districts. However, the evidence gathered in these districts does support a few tentative conclusions that further technical assistance and research efforts should endeavor to test. These hypotheses are interrelated but can be loosely categorized into several topic areas: the foundations for reform; instructional coherence; and data-driven decision-making. In particular, the evidence in this report suggests the following hypotheses regarding the role of the district in urban school reform.

Building the Foundations for Reform

- The nature of the local political and public discourse about schools is important and can be changed. But first, school board, community leaders, and superintendents must agree that improved student achievement is their top priority.

- A sustained focus on enacting effective reforms is possible when a common vision is developed that is supported by a stable majority of the board, and when the school community and general public are engaged in providing feedback and support.

Developing Instructional Coherence

- The central school district office can play a key role in setting district-wide goals, standards for learning, and instructional objectives; creating a consistency of instruction in every school; and supporting the improvement of instruction and the effective delivery of curricula throughout the district.
- Urban school districts face specific challenges. Providing a systematic, uniform, and clearly defined approach to elementary instruction may improve student learning and have an even larger positive effect on the disadvantaged and minority children served by these districts.
- Giving teachers extensive professional development to ensure the delivery of a specific curriculum may be more effective at improving instruction and raising student achievement than distributing professional development resources widely across schools or educational initiatives.
- Requiring, encouraging, or providing incentives for highly skilled administrators and teachers to transfer to low-performing schools may improve the stock of staff at those schools and help disadvantaged and minority children succeed.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

- Teachers may be able to use achievement data as a tool to help them improve instructional practice, diagnose students' specific instructional needs, and increase student learning/achievement. However, teachers and principals need such data given to them at regular intervals from the start of the academic year, along with training in the use of these data to diagnose areas of weakness.
- Students may be assigned to classroom situations that are more beneficial to them if administrators carefully use assessment data in placement decisions to identify students with the potential to do more demanding work. This practice may also increase the odds that disadvantaged and minority students will be able to qualify for high-level classes.

The experiences of these districts, and the perspectives of the leaders in these districts, suggest one final hypothesis: doing all of these things together can have a much larger impact on the performance of a district than doing any one of them alone. Indeed, unless a district tries to reform their system as a whole, trying any one of these approaches may be a wasted effort.

In the end, the findings in this study underscore the importance of the district as a unit of analysis for research and as a level of intervention for reform. It is important next to refine the hypotheses regarding promising practices at the district level and establish a strong empirical basis for understanding the relationship between these educational improvement strategies and changes in teaching, learning, and student achievement in large urban school systems. The findings also underscore the importance in testing these strategies in diverse settings as possible, so as to establish their applicability to the systems where reform is most needed.

Table 1**Characteristics of Case Study Districts**

	Houston	Charlotte-Mecklenburg	Sacramento
Number of Students	209,716	100,553	51,898
Number of Schools	293	135	77
% of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	65.7	38.1	60
% American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1	0.5	1.3
% Asian/Pacific Islander	2.9	4.4	25.9
% Hispanic	54.1	4.4	25.1
% Black/non-Hispanic	33	42.5	21.6
% White/non-Hispanic	10	48.3	25.3
Expenditures Per Pupil	\$5,340	\$5,657	\$5,465
% of Students served in LEP programs	26.5	4.3	28.8

SOURCE: Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the United States: 1999-2000. National Center for Education Statistics, Statistical Analysis Report, October 2001.

SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY AND COMPARISON DISTRICTS

Key Characteristics	Case Study Districts	Comparison Districts
Preconditions		
1. School Board Role	Major change in school board membership.	Major change in school board membership.
	Board role changes to policy.	Board often focused on “zero-sum” decisions.
	Board sets first priority as raising student achievement.	Board is slower to focus on student achievement or is distracted by other issues.
2. Shared Vision	Board defines initial vision for district.	Board is slower to define vision.
	Board seeks superintendent who matches initial vision.	Board seeks superintendent with own ideas and platform.
	Board seeks superintendent who is willing to be accountable for goals.	Board may not hold superintendent accountable for goals.
	Board and superintendent refine vision and goals jointly.	Board and superintendent may not pursue joint vision and goals.
	Board and superintendent have stable and lengthy relationship.	Board and superintendent experience repeated turnover.
3. Diagnosing Situation	Board and superintendent analyze factors affecting achievement.	Board and superintendent may not diagnose what affects achievement.
	Board and superintendent assess strengths and weaknesses of district.	Board and superintendent may not assess district strengths and weaknesses.
	Board and superintendent consider district options and strategies.	Superintendent may develop solutions without board involvement.
	Board entrusts superintendent to run district.	Board may continue micromanaging administration.
4. Selling Reform	Board and superintendent build concrete and specific goals for district.	Board and superintendent may not build concrete goals for district.
	Board and superintendent listen extensively to community needs.	Board and superintendent may not listen to or involve community.
	Board and superintendent begin selling goals and plans to schools and community.	Administration may not seek extensive buy-in.
	Board and superintendent exclaim urgency, high standards, and no excuses.	Board and superintendent may not develop urgency or new attitude.
5. Improving Operations	Central office revamps business operations to be more effective.	Central office may revamp operations to the exclusion of student achievement.

	Central office develops new sense of customer service with schools.	Central office may not have customer orientation.
	Central office moves to fix immediate problems that annoy all.	Central office may not respond to immediate problems.
6. Finding Funds	District pursues funds to initiate reforms and launch priorities.	District may pursue or accept funds unrelated to reforms & priorities.
	District builds confidence in reforms in order to attract funds.	District may pursue funds to fill shortfalls.
	District shifts funds into instructional priorities.	District may shift funds into other priorities, instruction being one.
Educational Strategies		
1. Setting Goals	District sets specific performance goals and targets for self and schools.	District may set more general goals and lack school targets.
	District uses goals to build consensus and rally support.	District may not move to build consensus or support.
	District spends time considering what works elsewhere (“existence proofs”).	District may not seek “existence proofs.”
	District sets specific timetables for meeting goals and targets.	District lacks specific timelines for meeting goals and targets.
	District focuses relentlessly on goal to improve student achievement.	District sometimes distracted by other priorities.
2. Creating Accountability	District goes beyond state accountability system.	District does not go beyond state accountability system.
	District puts senior staff on performance contracts tied to goals.	District does not put senior staff on performance contracts.
	District puts principals on performance contracts tied to goals.	District probably does not put principals on performance contracts.
	District creates rewards & recognition for progress on goals & targets.	District has no reward & recognition system for progress on goals.
3. Focusing on Lowest Performing Schools	District creates system for focusing on lowest performing schools.	District may lack full system for focusing on lowest performing schools.
	District uses school improvement process to drive schools forward.	Districts may have more generalized school improvement strategy.
	District has detailed bank of interventions for lowest performing schools.	District may lack intervention strategies for lowest performing schools.

	District shifts extra help, funds, and programs into lowest performing schools.	District lacks strategy for handling lowest performing schools.
	District tries to improve quality of teachers in lowest performing schools.	District may lack ways to improve quality of teachers in these schools.
	District closely monitors schools.	District may not closely monitor schools.
4. Unifying Curriculum	District adopts or develops uniform curriculum or framework for instruction.	District has multiple curriculum or no framework for instruction.
	District uses more prescriptive reading and math curriculum or tight framework.	District curriculum may be more vague or lack unifying framework.
	District differentiates instruction and provides extended time.	District may not differentiate instruction nor provide extended time.
	District curriculum explicitly aligned to state standards and assessments.	District may not have tied curriculum to state standards and assessments.
	District has clear grade-to-grade alignment in curriculum.	District does not align curriculum between grades.
	District uses scientifically-based reading curriculum.	District may use older reading curriculum.
	District uses pacing guides for classroom teachers.	District may or may not have pacing guides.
5. Professional Development	District pushes for faithful implementation of curriculum.	District may not monitor implementation closely.
	District has uniform professional development built on curriculum.	District may rely more on school-by-school professional development.
	District focuses professional development on classroom practice.	District may not have such focused professional development.
	District provides teacher supports when needed.	District may not have teacher support mechanism.
6. Pressing Reforms Down	District works to drive reforms all the way into classroom (“reform press”).	District may wait for reforms to trickle down.
	District has system of encouraging or monitoring implementation of reforms.	District has no way to tell if reforms are being implemented.
	Central office takes responsibility for quality of instruction.	Central office leaves instruction up to individual schools.

7. Using Data	District uses data extensively to monitor system and school progress.	District may not use data for monitoring either system or school progress.
	District assesses student progress throughout school year.	District more likely to use previous year's data on performance.
	District disaggregates data in numerous ways.	District may or may not disaggregate data.
	District uses data to decide on where to target interventions.	District does not use data to shape intervention strategy.
	District provides training in interpretation and use of test score results.	District training may be voluntary or lack detail.
	District uses data to target professional development.	District does not use data to target professional development.
8. Starting Early	District starts reform efforts in early elementary grades and works up.	District has not defined where to start reforms.
9. Handling Upper Grades	District had fledgling strategies for teaching older students.	District has no strategies for teaching older students who are behind..
	District has some middle and high school interventions.	District lacks intervention strategies at the middle and high school level.
	District doubles up on teaching basic skills to students who are behind.	District has no strategies for teaching older students.
	District begins expanding AP courses in district high schools.	District lacks AP courses in many high schools.

CASE STUDY



Houston

Independent School District

Houston Independent School District, the largest public school system in Texas, ranks seventh largest in the nation. In 1993, the district faced many challenges — one-fourth of the students did not speak fluent English and fewer than half of students performed at grade level on the reading and/or math sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test (TAAS). The district wrestled with the effects of an inexperienced teaching force and a reputation for district inefficiency.

In a 1990 mission statement titled *Beliefs and Vision*, a coalition of reform-minded trustees of the Houston school board stressed school-based budgeting and decision-making, accountability, standardized curricula, and an improved teacher-student relationship. After not seeing eye-to-eye on reform with two superintendents, the board elected Dr. Rod Paige from its ranks, who led the district for the next seven years before being called to serve as secretary for the U.S. Department of Education. Paige began to implement elements of *Beliefs and Vision*, but he and the board were frustrated with the slow pace of reform. In 1996, a failed bond election and the state comptroller's audit of the district became a catalyst for change. The district needed \$1 billion for repairs and new construction, but a strong anti-tax campaign opposed the bond, and teachers' organizations failed to support the measure as an act of protest over contract changes and other disputes. A series of investigative reports on local television exposing misuse of funds and run-down facilities further deteriorated public percep-

tion of the district. The same year, Texas Comptroller John Sharp performed an audit of the school system, corroborating the public's perception of waste and mismanagement. Paige pointed to these events as mandates for reform and formulated a new plan, hired a communications officer, and organized Peer Examination, Evaluation, and Redesign (PEER) committees that included members from the public to implement each of the 100 recommendations made in the Sharp audit.

A New Beginning

In reaction to the failed bond issue and the injurious audit, Paige unveiled *A New Beginning*, a five-point reform plan that improved on the board's *Beliefs and Vision* to offer a solid core of academic subjects and more effective instruction for all students.

A New Beginning proposed:

- Clear accountability measures.
- Rewards for innovations and progress.
- School choice — making students “academic free agents.”
- Decentralization.
- Expanding parental and community involvement.

Curriculum Reforms

Houston's reforms instituted districtwide curricula dovetailing with state standards and assessments. Standardization was also intended to help the highly mobile student population adjust to changing schools with minimal disruption in learning.

- **Project CLEAR** (Clarifying Learning to Enhance Achievement Results) stemmed from a 1995 study that revealed that students of teachers who covered more textbook content scored better on standardized tests. *Project CLEAR* translates the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) standards in writing, mathematics, science, and social studies into tangible learning objectives and sample lesson plans for teachers. Lead teachers in each school are trained in the program and are responsible for curriculum training and implementation.
- The **Balanced Approach to Reading (BAR) program** unifies the district’s reading curriculum to match state standards. This program originated from a PEER committee study of reading and employs McGraw-Hill’s *Open Court* program in most lower grade levels.
- Most **professional development** at the district level centers around BAR and *Project CLEAR* in five professional development days. Houston also offers study groups, online training, partnerships with local universities, and summer workshops such as a two-week *Project CLEAR* institute for 1,700 teachers. New teachers also take part in a three-year mentor program.
- Paige created 12 **administrative districts** in 1994. District superintendents are responsible for attaining district performance standards and communicating needs back to the central office.
- **Decentralization** delegates more decision-making power to district superintendents and principals. In exchange for higher salaries, these district superintendents and then principals agreed to **performance contracts**, holding them

financially accountable for the results of their decisions.

Data-Driven Instruction and Decision-Making

Houston relies on test scores to guide curriculum initiatives and teacher surveys to direct professional development.

- Houston developed its own **accountability system**, based on state standards established in 1993, measuring success with indicators like student attendance, drop-out rates, and performance on TAAS. The system calls for student achievement gains for all racial subgroups.
- Schools identified as “**low-performing**” are paired with a team of principals, curriculum specialists, and researchers to develop and implement a district-funded improvement plan.
- The **technology department** of the central office invested heavily in a web-based student data system, the “Profiler for Academic Success of Students” (PASS). Results of periodic “snapshot” assessments are available online to teachers to measure progress and identify students who need help meeting objectives. Principals may help design a growth plan for teachers whose students are not improving or prescribe school-wide initiatives to address problems revealed by the data.

Other Reforms

- After the failed bond election in 1996, Paige hired an experienced **communications director** to shape the district’s reform message and secure positive media attention.

- The district **restructured the human resources department** to process applicants quickly and eliminate the teacher shortage. Because no hiring preference is given to low-performing schools, principals must “sell” their schools to candidates at district job fairs. Principals have more power to hire and fire and are encouraged to critically evaluate teachers before continuing contracts.
- **PEER committees** were designed to bring critics and community experts to the table to make recommendations in areas such as developing a reading curriculum and outsourcing business functions. A PEER committee proposed that the district separate its educational and business functions and outsource the business functions that it could not run efficiently.
- The racial gap in elementary school students failing to meet basic criteria for proficiency in reading and math decreased.
- The greatest gains in the racial achievement gap were among the lowest-performing students. Improvement was more modest in overall average achievement.
- Overall elementary student performance improved, and fewer students scored below the 25th percentile on the SAT-9.
- The racial disparities in the proportion of students performing in the bottom 25th percentile on the SAT-9 distribution were cut almost in half. In 1998 there were roughly 27 percentage points separating African American or Hispanic and white students. In 2001, the African American-white and Hispanic-white gaps had been reduced to 22 and 12 percentage points, respectively.

Ongoing Challenges

- Principals worry that additional responsibilities like site-based budgeting take time away from instructional leadership.
- Average achievement improved at the elementary school level among all groups, but achievement gaps narrowed in some grades but not in others.
- Achievement gains were more marked in elementary schools than in middle and high schools.
- Academic gains generally exceeded the pace of statewide improvements in both reading and math.

Achievement Results

- By 2001, only two of Houston’s schools were rated as “low-performing” by the state assessment tests, while the number of “exemplary” schools grew to 35.

Table 2

Percentage of Houston Elementary School Students in the First Quartile on SAT-9 Reading by Year and Ethnicity

	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change
Grade 1					
African American Students	35.3	29.5	23.5	19.8	-15.6
Asian Students	18.8	11.7	9.3	7.1	-11.7
Hispanic Students	36.0	25.5	22.2	19.3	-16.8
White Students	12.6	10.3	7.9	7.0	-5.6
All Students	31.4	24.9	20.5	17.4	-14.0
Black-White Difference	22.8	19.3	15.6	12.8	-10.0
Hispanic-White Difference	23.5	15.2	14.3	12.3	-11.2
Grade 2					
African American Students	40.0	32.9	25.8	26.3	-13.7
Asian Students	23.4	11.1	7.8	11.8	-11.5
Hispanic Students	40.0	29.3	24.1	25.9	-14.1
White Students	15.7	11.3	10.0	8.4	-7.3
All Students	35.4	27.7	22.3	23.2	-12.3
Black-White Difference	24.3	21.6	15.9	17.9	-6.4
Hispanic-White Difference	24.2	17.9	14.1	17.5	-6.8
Grade 3					
African American Students	40.5	33.0	29.6	30.2	-10.3
Asian Students	17.2	18.4	14.6	12.5	-4.7
Hispanic Students	39.6	31.3	25.1	26.7	-13.0
White Students	13.8	10.0	10.6	8.7	-5.0
All Students	35.1	28.6	24.7	25.4	-9.8
Black-White Difference	26.8	23.0	19.1	21.5	-5.3
Hispanic-White Difference	25.9	21.3	14.5	17.9	-7.9
Grade 4					
African American Students	46.2	38.6	33.6	32.3	-13.9
Asian Students	21.7	17.1	18.3	13.9	-7.8
Hispanic Students	48.4	36.1	30.2	28.0	-20.4
White Students	16.7	11.4	10.6	9.2	-7.5
All Students	42.0	33.3	28.4	26.8	-15.2
Black-White Difference	29.5	27.2	23.0	23.0	-6.5
Hispanic-White Difference	31.7	24.8	19.6	18.8	-12.9
Grade 5					
African American Students	48.7	42.1	39.7	32.6	-16.1
Asian Students	25.6	18.6	21.4	17.1	-8.5
Hispanic Students	55.0	45.1	40.9	37.2	-17.8
White Students	15.3	12.2	11.2	9.3	-6.0
All Students	46.7	39.3	36.3	31.7	-15.0
Black-White Difference	33.4	29.9	28.5	23.3	-10.1
Hispanic-White Difference	39.7	32.9	29.8	27.9	-11.8

SOURCES: These analyses were conducted using student level data provided by the Houston Independent School District.

NOTES: National percentile scores were used in this analysis. Students scoring in the first quartile have percentile scores ranging from 1 to 25. The Black-White and Hispanic-White Differences are calculated as the absolute value of the difference between the two subgroups.

Table 3

**Percentage of Houston Elementary School Students in the
First Quartile on SAT-9 Math by Year and Ethnicity**

	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change
Grade 1					
African American Students	42.0	44.6	35.0	31.5	-10.4
Asian Students	17.9	15.6	10.3	9.9	-8.0
Hispanic Students	37.9	37.2	29.2	28.4	-9.6
White Students	13.4	14.7	11.0	11.2	-2.2
All Students	35.3	36.9	28.9	26.8	-8.4
Black-White Difference	28.6	29.9	24.0	20.3	-8.3
Hispanic-White Difference	24.6	22.4	18.2	17.2	-7.4
Grade 2					
African American Students	48.7	42.0	35.6	33.3	-15.4
Asian Students	19.4	9.7	8.4	8.4	-11.0
Hispanic Students	42.1	32.2	26.8	26.1	-16.0
White Students	17.6	12.7	9.9	9.4	-8.2
All Students	40.3	33.2	27.9	26.5	-13.7
Black-White Difference	31.1	29.3	25.7	23.9	-7.2
Hispanic-White Difference	24.5	19.5	16.9	16.6	-7.9
Grade 3					
African American Students	44.5	29.9	25.1	22.1	-22.4
Asian Students	12.3	8.1	6.9	4.7	-7.6
Hispanic Students	38.3	23.6	18.5	17.1	-21.1
White Students	14.3	8.8	7.0	6.5	-7.7
All Students	36.3	23.8	19.4	17.5	-18.8
Black-White Difference	30.3	21.1	18.0	15.6	-14.7
Hispanic-White Difference	24.0	14.8	11.4	10.6	-13.4
Grade 4					
African American Students	37.0	31.1	22.0	21.9	-15.1
Asian Students	10.0	8.2	7.3	5.2	-4.8
Hispanic Students	32.0	22.2	15.7	14.5	-17.5
White Students	12.2	7.8	6.9	6.3	-5.9
All Students	30.3	23.6	16.8	16.1	-14.2
Black-White Difference	24.8	23.4	15.2	15.7	-9.2
Hispanic-White Difference	19.8	14.5	8.9	8.3	-11.6
Grade 5					
African American Students	39.3	32.5	31.0	22.7	-16.6
Asian Students	14.7	9.1	9.0	8.4	-6.3
Hispanic Students	36.0	26.3	21.5	17.7	-18.4
White Students	13.2	10.8	9.1	8.1	-5.1
All Students	33.7	26.2	23.2	18.1	-15.6
Black-White Difference	26.0	21.8	21.8	14.6	-11.5
Hispanic-White Difference	22.8	15.6	12.4	9.5	-13.3

SOURCES: These analyses were conducted using student level data provided by the Houston Independent School District.

NOTES: National percentile scores were used in this analysis. Students scoring in the first quartile have percentile scores ranging from 1 to 25. The Black-White and Hispanic-White Differences are calculated as the absolute value of the difference between the two subgroups.

CASE STUDY



Sacramento City Unified School District is the eighth largest school district in California, educating a diverse population of students. Prior to the current reforms, the district was failing — plagued by low student achievement, poor attendance and high dropout rates, deteriorating facilities, inadequate resources, and a teacher shortage. The district also suffered from high superintendent turnover and school board infighting.

In 1996, a report from the Mayor's Commission on Education and the City's Future, citing "a lack of accountability and deplorable building conditions," sparked a reform movement in Sacramento. The mayor backed a new slate of reform-minded board members. Once elected, this coalition of board members moved quickly to buy out the contract of the superintendent and hire Jim Sweeney. An ardent reformer, Sweeney asked to be held accountable for student achievement.

High Standards, Great Results

Sweeney believed only sweeping systemic change would solve the district's problems. He and the board worked to create consensus around his reform plans by seeking input from thousands of stakeholders, including union leaders, teachers, school administrators, and parent representatives. The action plan, *High Standards, Great Results*, was based on accountability and used student achievement data like SAT-9 scores to measure progress towards goals. Schools were given more control over budgeting and other decisions,

while the district assumed control of decisions about the math and reading curricula, testing, and teacher training.

High Standards, Great Results focused on seven "vital signs":

- All children entering kindergarten demonstrate 85 percent proficiency on readiness criteria.
- Minimum of 95 percent attendance rates in every school.
- 90 percent of students meet math proficiency standards.
- 90 percent of students meet reading proficiency standards.
- Increase English language proficiency of English Language Learners (ELL).
- At least 90 percent graduation rate in every school.
- At least 90 percent of high school graduates choose productive life-choice options within one year of graduation.

Curriculum Reforms

District leadership believed a standardized curriculum would benefit all students, especially minorities.

- The action plan called for **uniform curricula in the early grades**, with the adoption of the *Open Court* program for reading and the *Saxon Math* program. The district leaders hoped that uniformity of instruction would ease the detrimental effects of high student mobility across the schools in the district.

- **Professional development**, based on uniform curricula, included at least 18 hours of in-service training per year, six full days of instructional training for new teachers, and common planning periods to encourage teachers to work together to develop lesson plans and discuss student needs.
- **Sacramento’s accountability system celebrates success** as “exemplary” schools are celebrated at district events and in the media.

Data-Driven Instruction and Decision-Making

Central to Sacramento’s action plan is the use of data to direct future efforts, inform instruction, and track progress. Assistant superintendents, principals, and teachers were all given training on how to use data, monitor discussion, and give feedback.

- **Focus on low-performing schools.** Sacramento rates schools based on SAT-9 scores and other data, identifying “low-achieving” or “crisis” schools. These schools receive special attention in the form of technical assistance, first choice of new staff, and a funding allocation formula that takes into account the characteristics of the student population.
- **Focus on low-performing students.** Six-week reading assessments identify students in need of special assistance. Assessments are analyzed to understand specific areas in need of remediation.
- **Data help teachers refine instruction.** Aggregate data are broken down to the teacher and student levels. Principals and teachers receive reports on each student and class to identify patterns and make

comparisons between similar students and classes. Teachers can also use this information to talk to parents about their child’s development.

Other Reforms

- Nine Sacramento schools, called “**best practice**” schools, participate in *National University Center for Research and Teaching Excellence* programs, which facilitate teacher discussion and provide professional development. Most participating schools are low performing with large minority and ELL populations. Many best practice schools have made great improvements in student achievement.
- The district **increased efficiency in business operations.** The central office and human resources department have focused on improving technology and being more responsive to schools’ and employees’ needs. Applicants can now get information and apply for positions on the web. District office improvements have quadrupled teacher recruitment efforts.
- **Communication has been a cornerstone to successful reform** in Sacramento. Associate superintendents meet regularly with school principals, and Superintendent Sweeney hosts “fireside chats” with teachers. The district sends a monthly newsletter to parents and has hired a public relations firm to communicate directly to teachers and facilitate trust and interaction between the district and union leadership.

Ongoing Challenges

- Despite a five-year home visitation effort, getting parents involved in student achievement is very difficult.
- Teachers are still concerned that teaching only the material covered in the assessment tests leaves little time for subjects like science and history.
- Teachers and students feel the pressure to boost test scores. This push may lead schools to focus on the students who are statistically likely to make the biggest gains.
- Overall academic achievement improvements were weaker at the middle school and high school levels.

Achievement Results

- From 1998 to 2000, the number of elementary school students performing below the 25th percentile on the SAT-9 declined.
- The percentages of students scoring below the 25th percentile fell among every racial group, especially among Hispanic students.
- During the same period, the Hispanic-white disparities in the percentage of students scoring below the 25th percentile dropped.
- Scores improved more consistently in math than in reading.
- Academic gains generally exceeded the pace of statewide improvements in both reading and math.

Table 4

**Percentage of Sacramento Elementary School Students in the First Quartile on the SAT-9
Reading by Year and Ethnicity**

	1998	1999	2000	Change
Grade 1				
African American Students	28.6	22.0	25.0	-3.6
Asian Students	26.3	18.9	16.8	-9.5
Hispanic Students	33.8	23.2	18.7	-15.2
White Students	12.1	10.8	11.2	-0.9
All Students	25.0	18.7	17.9	-7.1
Black-White Difference	16.5	11.3	13.8	-2.7
Hispanic-White Difference	21.7	12.5	7.5	-14.2
Grade 2				
African American Students	47.2	32.9	34.5	-12.7
Asian Students	40.4	26.0	24.2	-16.2
Hispanic Students	54.4	34.7	32.2	-22.2
White Students	27.2	15.2	14.8	-12.5
All Students	41.9	27.0	26.4	-15.5
Black-White Difference	20.0	17.7	19.7	-0.2
Hispanic-White Difference	27.2	19.6	17.5	-9.8
Grade 3				
African American Students	57.8	41.3	39.9	-18.0
Asian Students	54.1	41.7	40.5	-13.6
Hispanic Students	57.8	45.2	41.7	-16.1
White Students	29.2	21.4	18.0	-11.2
All Students	49.3	37.1	35.0	-14.4
Black-White Difference	28.7	20.0	21.9	-6.8
Hispanic-White Difference	28.7	23.8	23.7	-4.9
Grade 4				
African American Students	54.4	46.6	44.4	-10.0
Asian Students	51.5	40.8	37.4	-14.2
Hispanic Students	53.6	45.8	44.6	-9.0
White Students	27.4	21.1	21.7	-5.8
All Students	45.9	38.4	36.7	-9.3
Black-White Difference	27.0	25.5	22.7	-4.3
Hispanic-White Difference	26.2	24.7	22.9	-3.2
Grade 5				
African American Students	56.0	47.3	49.5	-6.5
Asian Students	51.9	43.9	45.5	-6.4
Hispanic Students	55.9	46.4	47.5	-8.4
White Students	26.8	21.5	24.8	-2.0
All Students	46.2	39.2	41.6	-4.7
Black-White Difference	29.2	25.8	24.7	-4.5
Hispanic-White Difference	29.1	24.9	22.7	-6.5

SOURCES: These analyses was conducted using student level data provided by the Sacramento City Unified School District.

NOTES: Students scoring in the first quartile have percentile scores ranging from 1 to 25. The Black-White and Hispanic-White Differences are calculated as the absolute value of the difference between the two subgroups.

Table 5

**Percentage of Sacramento Elementary School Students in the First Quartile on the SAT-9
Math by Year and Ethnicity**

	1998	1999	2000	Change
Grade 1				
African American Students	50.1	40.2	40.9	-9.2
Asian Students	37.3	24.0	23.3	-14.0
Hispanic Students	48.2	31.2	30.2	-18.0
White Students	27.6	18.0	16.5	-11.1
All Students	40.9	28.2	27.7	-13.2
Black-White Difference	22.5	22.2	24.4	1.9
Hispanic-White Difference	20.6	13.3	13.7	-7.0
Grade 2				
African American Students	59.6	45.8	38.1	-21.5
Asian Students	40.7	25.9	17.8	-23.0
Hispanic Students	58.9	38.8	29.2	-29.7
White Students	33.2	20.0	14.7	-18.4
All Students	47.7	32.3	24.9	-22.8
Black-White Difference	26.4	25.8	23.4	-3.0
Hispanic-White Difference	25.8	18.8	14.5	-11.3
Grade 3				
African American Students	64.8	44.5	36.3	-28.6
Asian Students	42.2	24.8	20.3	-21.9
Hispanic Students	59.8	37.3	32.6	-27.2
White Students	32.1	18.6	14.2	-17.8
All Students	49.2	30.9	25.8	-23.4
Black-White Difference	32.8	25.9	22.1	-10.7
Hispanic-White Difference	27.7	18.7	18.4	-9.3
Grade 4				
African American Students	62.2	52.1	46.0	-16.2
Asian Students	38.7	30.6	20.8	-18.0
Hispanic Students	57.8	48.0	39.0	-18.9
White Students	31.4	25.6	20.2	-11.3
All Students	46.5	38.8	31.2	-15.4
Black-White Difference	30.8	26.5	25.8	-5.0
Hispanic-White Difference	26.4	22.4	18.8	-7.6
Grade 5				
African American Students	65.1	51.2	50.5	-14.6
Asian Students	38.1	29.7	25.7	-12.4
Hispanic Students	59.7	45.1	41.9	-17.7
White Students	33.3	23.7	20.5	-12.8
All Students	47.2	36.5	34.3	-12.9
Black-White Difference	31.8	27.6	30.0	-1.8
Hispanic-White Difference	26.4	21.4	21.4	-5.0

SOURCES: These analyses was conducted using student level data provided by the Sacramento City Unified School District.

NOTES: Students scoring in the first quartile have percentile scores ranging from 1 to 25. The Black-White and Hispanic-White Differences are calculated as the absolute value of the difference between the two subgroups.

CASE STUDY


**CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG
SCHOOLS**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) is the largest school system in North Carolina and the 26th largest in the nation. Before reform efforts, the district's African American students lagged far behind white students in educational opportunities and test scores. Inadequate investments in inner-city schools meant that schools with large minority populations lacked experienced teachers and quality school facilities and resources. The district's continuing desegregation struggles and the ill effects of school shootings in the late 1980s led to diminished community support, reflected in a bitter defeat of the school bond issue in 1995.

When Eric Smith took charge in 1996, only 63 percent of third-graders met state proficiency standards in reading, 65 percent in math. While only 5 percent below the state average, these numbers masked a racial achievement gap. Only 40 percent of African American students were performing at grade level in reading and math. African American students were also less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes.

The defeat of the school bond and the resignation of the previous superintendent made the atmosphere ripe for reform at CMS. The school board sensed the need for community involvement and sought input on superintendent selection and setting goals for the district. In partnership, the board and stakeholders focused on improving student achievement, school safety, and community collaboration.

Achieving the CMS Vision: Equity and Student Success

Previous district leadership proposed different academic goals for minority and white students, as well as decentralized, "bottom-up" management by the individual schools. Smith's action plan, *Achieving the CMS Vision: Equity and Student Success*, gave curriculum authority to the district office and set higher, racially-blind standards for all students.

The *CMS Vision* built upon the school board's objectives to create four key goals:

- Attaining high academic achievement for all students.
- Creating safe and orderly environments.
- Ensuring community collaboration.
- Developing efficient and effective support operations.

Curriculum Reform

The district implemented centralized, "top-down" curriculum decision-making, based on ensuring equal resources and equal outcomes for all students.

- **CMS developed a uniform curriculum** aligned to state accountability standards and the *Open Court* reading program. Standardization provides teachers with necessary resources, such as quarterly assessments, daily lesson plans, and pacing guides to guide instruction and ensure improved student performance.
- Curriculum reforms include **professional development** — math and language arts in-service workshops, weeklong seminars for Advanced Placement (AP) teachers,

leadership retreats for principals, and payment of fees and support for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification. CMS is second only to Los Angeles in the number of National Board-certified teachers working in its schools.

- **Required common planning periods** allow teachers time to meet and set procedures for implementing curricula or new initiatives. Lead teachers at each grade level also provide guidance for new hires during these periods.
- **CMS set high educational achievement goals**, such as:
 1. Improve preschool instruction, through programs like *Bright Beginnings*.
 2. Ensure all students perform at grade level by grade three.
 3. Have all CMS graduates take at least one AP or International Baccalaureate (IB) course, and have the student composition of these courses reflect the demographics of the entire student body.

Data-Driven Instruction and Decision-Making

Data inform decision-making by measuring improvements in the racial achievement disparity and allocating resources. The CMS Instructional Accountability department develops tests and provides data analysis by school, teacher, and student.

- **CMS disaggregates data** to target low-performing schools and minority schools. Through intensive programs like *Equity Plus* and *A-Plus*, schools receive funding to reduce class size and provide classroom

training and support, as well as incentives to enhance and stabilize the teaching staff.

- **Quarterly exams**, developed by the district, assess students' progress and inform resource-allocation decisions.
- **Data also assure equal access to AP courses.** PSAT scores identify likely candidates for accelerated classes particularly among low-income and minority groups.
- **Data measure equity in the quality of teachers and resources** across schools in the district. For example, CMS uses the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch to justify lowering the student-teacher ratio in schools with higher poverty levels.

Other Reforms

- CMS has built **community and student feedback** into the accountability system. Family and student surveys focus on the goals of "safe and orderly environment" and "community collaboration."
- **Teachers and principals receive bonuses tied to accountability standards.** Teachers in schools meeting growth and performance criteria receive bonuses of up to \$1,500. Principals' pay is tied to their schools' success in closing the racial achievement gap.
- The CMS program ***Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)*** identifies promising students not currently on a college preparatory track to encourage college aspirations and enhance academic skills.

Ongoing Challenges

- Morale often suffers when significant efforts do not improve test scores.
- The focus on accountability standards in math and reading has often meant less emphasis on science and social studies.
- Frequent testing leaves less instructional time in the classroom and little time to re-teach for mastery of subject matter.
- Class sizes have increased in schools not targeted for extra funding and teacher turnover is high districtwide.
- Achievement growth was more marked in elementary schools than in middle and high schools.

Achievement Results

- Elementary student achievement on the End-of-Grade (EOG) tests improved between 1995 and 2000.
- More students of all races are performing at grade level, and the gap in the performance between African American and white students had decreased by nine percent.
- In 1995, 63 percent of African American third-graders scored below grade level in reading on the EOG test, compared to about 28 percent of white students. By 2000, the percentage of African Americans below grade level was just under 43 percent, and under 18 percent for white students.
- Academic gains generally exceeded the pace of statewide improvements in both reading and math.

Table 6

**Percentage of Charlotte Elementary School Students at Level 1 or 2
on the EOG Reading Test by Year and Ethnicity**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change
Grade 3								
African American Students	63	61	61	48	45	43	40	-23
White Students	24	22	19	15	12	13	10	-14
All Students	40	39	37	30	28	28	25	-15
Black-White Difference	39	39	42	33	33	30	30	-9
Grade 4								
African American Students	68	61	60	54	51	50	46	-22
White Students	27	20	21	15	16	14	12	-15
All Students	43	36	38	32	32	31	28	-15
Black-White Difference	41	41	39	39	35	36	34	-7
Grade 5								
African American Students	62	65	57	48	46	41	30	-32
White Students	20	24	18	15	13	11	6	-14
All Students	37	41	34	29	28	25	18	-19
Black-White Difference	42	41	39	33	33	30	24	-18

SOURCES: These data were provided by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

NOTES: North Carolina End of Grade (EOG) data were analyzed. EOG has four achievement levels. Students scoring at level 3 or level 4 are considered to be at or above grade level. The Black-White Differences are calculated as the absolute value of the difference between the two subgroups.

Table 7

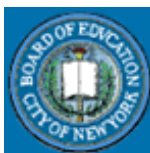
**Percentage of Charlotte Elementary School Students at Level 1 or 2
on the EOG Math Test by Year and Ethnicity**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Change
Grade 3								
African American Students	62	58	59	58	53	51	47	-15
White Students	20	19	16	18	14	14	10	-10
All Students	36	36	35	36	32	31	28	-8
Black-White Difference	42	39	43	40	39	37	37	-5
Grade 4								
African American Students	59	56	53	45	39	35	28	-31
White Students	19	17	15	10	9	7	5	-14
All Students	35	32	31	25	23	20	16	-19
Black-White Difference	40	39	38	35	30	28	23	-17
Grade 5								
African American Students	58	56	54	47	39	35	27	-31
White Students	18	19	17	13	9	9	5	-13
All Students	34	34	32	27	22	21	15	-19
Black-White Difference	40	37	37	34	30	26	22	-18

SOURCES: These data were provided by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

NOTES: North Carolina End of Grade (EOG) data were analyzed. EOG has four achievement levels. Students scoring at level 3 or level 4 are considered to be at or above grade level. The Black-White Differences are calculated as the absolute value of the difference between the two subgroups.

CASE STUDY



NEW YORK CITY'S CHANCELLOR'S DISTRICT

The Chancellor's District in New York City is a "rehabilitation district" that temporarily adopts low-performing schools, or "Schools Under Registration Review" (SURR), to focus special attention and raise student achievement. Schools move out of the district once they meet academic progress criteria and their home district has the capacity to support their continued improvement. Though the district represents a relatively small part of New York City's large school system, the problems plaguing most of these schools are particularly acute. As schools move in and out of the district, the composition of the Chancellor's District changes over time in a way that is not the case in most school systems. These factors may prevent the Chancellor's District from being completely comparable to the other case study or comparison districts in this study. Nevertheless, the Chancellor's District may still provide anecdotal data for exploring reform in large urban districts and may assist in generalizing findings to other environments.

The Chancellor's District serves about 25,000 of the more than one million students in the New York City public school system. A higher percentage of minority students, English Language Learners (ELL) and lower income students attend Chancellor schools than citywide averages. For example, more than 15 percent of New York's public school students are white, compared to only one percent in the Chancellor's District. While the schools are spread across the city, they share common deficiencies like inconsistent curricula,

poor professional development, and inadequate leadership. New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew created the district in 1996 in response to the state's threat of "corrective action" in nine schools on the SURR list. The special district allowed Crew to intervene directly and redesign failing schools. To date, all of the original elementary schools have been removed from the SURR list though some remain in the Chancellor's District because their home district cannot support them. Of the three middle schools, two have been closed and one redesigned. In 1999–2000, the district took on additional schools to reach the current total of 46. Schools move out of the jurisdiction of their community school boards when they are adopted by the Chancellor's District, so the political infighting common in other urban school systems does not overshadow efforts to raise student achievement.

A Model of Excellence

In March 2000, Sandra Kase became superintendent of the district and developed a plan to intensify instructional and professional development efforts. The plan concentrated on grades K–6 but has expanded to include middle and high schools recently joining the district.

Key elements of *A Model of Excellence*:

- Smaller class sizes (20 students in K–3 classes, 25 in grades 4–8).
- Uniform, structured reading and math programs.
- Blocks of time dedicated to literacy and math instruction.
- On-site staff development at all levels.
- Extended time for student learning and teacher training.

- Ongoing student assessment and evaluation.

Curriculum Reforms

The imperative to improve student achievement within a three-year time frame puts an intense focus on accountability and measurable outcomes.

- **Success for All (SFA)** is a structured reading program chosen by the district to guide professional development and provide its approach for student instruction. Although many educators think such a strictly regimented program might stifle classroom creativity, the need to support and guide inexperienced teachers in the lowest performing schools outweighed these concerns. Moreover, the decision to adopt SFA was supported by teacher organizations in the district.
- **Daily 90-minute blocks devoted to literacy** in elementary and middle schools supplement a 90-minute period allotted for SFA. The district developed its own curriculum for this period and provided each classroom with at least 100 books, including texts appropriate for special education and bilingual students.
- The Chancellor’s District uses **Math Trailblazers** and **Mathematics-in-Context** curricula for elementary and middle schools, respectively. Recommended supplementary materials and pacing calendars coordinate with New York State standards.
- Most Chancellor’s District schools are “**extended time**” schools with extra time tacked onto the school day for teachers to work with students in small-group settings on specific reading or literacy strat-

egies. Schools also have after-school programs focusing on literacy and math.

- **Curriculum specialists** at the district, regional, and school levels provide **professional development** in literacy, math, and technology or bilingual education. All new teachers and guidance counselors participate in one week of district orientation and intensive training in SFA, literacy blocks, and math instruction. Monthly principals’ meetings build instructional leadership skills. External time schools also used extra time blocks for professional development. Most professional development is delivered in the teacher’s classroom. It is curricula driven and ongoing.

Data-Driven Instruction and Decision-Making

Data have driven decision-making for some time in the Chancellor’s District, and this has expanded with growing technological sophistication. Under Kase’s leadership, the district has begun disaggregating data by student subgroups.

- **Benchmark assessments** in SFA, mathematics, and other subjects diagnose problems and prepare students for test-taking. Regional superintendents work with principals to develop instructional responses to weaknesses uncovered by the data. In extended time schools, data target subjects for small-group instruction.
- **Data inform professional development.** Each school’s professional development team submits specific training plans every eight weeks based on SFA assessment data.

Other Reforms

- The Chancellor's District **reduced the time school leaders spend on administrative issues**. Operations personnel create reference guides for building staff and assist with resource control and school-based budgeting.
- The district's **personnel department** works to meet the state mandate that all SURR schools be fully staffed by certified teachers by 2003. To date, 94 percent of Chancellor teachers are certified.
- **The Chancellor's District is well funded** and able to offer salary incentives to teachers to increase staff and lower class sizes, fund after-school programs and materials, and provide on-site professional development.

Achievement Results

- Schools move in and out of the Chancellor's District, making it difficult to quantify achievement trends over time, but the number of schools moving off the SURR list and out of the district indicates that the schools are improving. However, this study did not analyze test score data.

CASE STUDY

COMPARISON DISTRICTS

Comparison District 1 is a large urban district with a student body population comparable in size to Houston's, while Comparison District 2 falls between Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Sacramento in size and ethnic makeup. Both districts resembled the case study districts with low student achievement, a shortage of experienced teachers, high teacher and superintendent turnover rates, poor business functions, and insufficient funding. Neither comparison district, however, was as successful as Houston, Sacramento, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg in raising student achievement and closing the racial achievement gap. Recently, the comparison districts embarked on a series of reforms such as creating action plans, hiring superintendents who bought into these reforms, setting measurable goals, and creating accountability systems to ensure high achievement for all students. It is not yet certain whether these efforts will be successful.

In District 1, only a third of its students perform at grade level in national reading, math and science assessments, and fewer than 20 percent of tenth graders read at grade level. Problems of teacher and principal recruitment and retention are due partly to run-down facilities and concerns about school safety and growing class sizes. The current administrative and data systems are inefficient and antiquated, and a survey of teachers leaving the district cited lack of administrative support at the school level as a primary complaint. Severe budget cuts due to a local economic downturn and declining enrollment have curtailed professional development and replaced regional superintendents with executive directors who are stretched very thin.

Frequent superintendent turnover and a strong union presence have produced an uncertain local political environment. Furthermore, the state ousted the politicized and micromanaging school board in a takeover and introduced new appointees from diverse backgrounds. Community members opposed the state takeover, citing the loss of voting rights and possible racial motivation, because the district is predominantly African American. Despite objections, the new board is more effective and operates in a far more professional manner. The superintendent, however, has authority that is often reserved for boards in other districts.

District 2's achievement levels are not as low as in District 1 but have remained stagnant, and state test scores have even declined in some grades. As in District 1, high teacher turnover and poor recruitment practices contributed to the poor conditions in the district. An overstuffed central office and high administrative expenses siphon funds away from the schools that would have been used to purchase books and materials for classrooms, science labs, and libraries. Some schools have been forced to raise money for copiers and to pay phone bills.

Until recently, District 2, like Charlotte-Mecklenburg, wrestled with implementing court-ordered desegregation, taking attention and resources away from efforts to directly improve student achievement. The district does not have the resources or support from the state Department of Education to help teachers be effective in the same way that CMS does. In the past, local leaders perceived the school board as attending to the interests of individual schools rather than the district as a whole. Recently, however, a local business group displeased with the school board backed new candidates, and a local foundation funded a nationwide search for a new superintendent with student achievement as the top priority.

District Action Plans

Both comparison districts have been slower to reach consensus and a shared vision of district priorities among the school boards, superintendents, and other stakeholders. Reform initiatives seem to come from all directions and conflict with comprehensive curriculum plans. While both districts have recently begun to create mission statements and action plans, goals are broad and less clear.

Comparison District 2 implemented a series of programs rather than system-wide reform. One superintendent developed an ambitious strategic program to improve achievement, but the community rejected the high cost of the program. The next superintendent developed an accountability system with measurable student achievement objectives, but did not unify curriculum to reach these goals. Neither strategy brought about improved student achievement. The current superintendent has begun to integrate goals, a strategic plan, and funding, but the plan is in the early stages of implementation.

Curriculum Reforms

Neither school system had implemented uniform curriculum strategies aligned to state accountability standards until recently. Some principals say reforms coming from the central office would compete with the varied curricula and school reform models already in place in individual schools. District superintendents and principals were not held accountable for improving instruction or achievement. At this stage of reform, neither comparison district targets schools or grade levels in the way that the case study districts did. Professional development varies from school to school.

Data-Driven Instruction and Decision-Making

Both districts break down annual test score data to the school, teacher, and student level and have held workshops for principals to help them understand and use the data. However, the data systems are often outdated and antiquated, and training to use these data varies from school to school.

**APPENDIX:
COMMITTEES
&
ORGANIZATIONS**

TASK FORCE ON ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Task Force Chairs

Clifford Janey, Rochester Superintendent
Jesse Martinez, Fort Worth School Board

Members

Marc Abrams, Portland School Board
Katherine Blasik, Broward County Assistant Superintendent
Ronald Blocker, Orlando Superintendent
Marion Bolden, Newark Superintendent
Joel Briscoe, Salt Lake City School Board
Anne Carroll, St. Paul School Board
James Christ, Tucson Governing Board
Carol Comeau, Anchorage Superintendent
June Collins Rimmer, Seattle Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Maryellen Donahue, Boston Director of Research
Vilma Diaz, Broward County Director
Judy Farmer, Minneapolis School Board
Mary Futrell, George Washington University Dean
Alveta Green, Norfolk School Board
Loretta Heard, Columbus School Board
Pamela Hoffler-Riddick, Norfolk Director for Research, Testing and Statistics
Lila Jacobs, California State University-Sacramento Coordinator of Urban Leadership
Carol Johnson, Minneapolis Superintendent
Florence Johnson, Buffalo School Board
Dan Kelly, San Francisco School Board
Karen Knight, Broward County Director of Student Assessment
Thomas Lasley, Dayton University Dean
Vilma Leake, Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board
Juan Lopez, Providence School Board
Clark Lovell, Milwaukee Director of Educational Services
John Mackiel, Omaha Superintendent
Mona McGregor, Omaha School Board
Sandra Miller, Minneapolis School Board
Bernard Minnis, Louisville Assistant Superintendent
Florentino Noriega, Fresno Associate Superintendent for Educational Services
Stan Paz, Tucson Superintendent
Ron Price, Dallas School Board
Jean Quan, Oakland School Board
Darline Robles, Salt Lake City Superintendent
Barbara Shaad-Lampere, Seattle School Board
John Simpson, Norfolk Superintendent
Eric Smith, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Superintendent
Dorothy Sumners-Rush, Philadelphia School Board
Ross Taylor, Minneapolis School Board
Mary Thornton Phillips, St. Paul School Board
David Tokofsky, Los Angeles School Board
Lynn Winters, Long Beach Assistant Superintendent for Research
Linda Blanton, Florida International University Dean
Henry Meares, University of Michigan Assistant Dean
Nicholas Michelli, City University of New York Dean

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP

Pedro Noguera
Harvard University

Sam Stringfield
John Hopkins University

Eugene Garcia
Chair, University of California at Berkeley

Andrew Porter
University of Wisconsin

Vinetta Jones
Howard University

David Grissmer
Rand Corporation

Clifford Janey
Rochester Public Schools

Jesse Martinez
Fort Worth Independent School District

Ronald F. Ferguson
Harvard University

Linda Powell
City University of New York

David Hornbeck
Former Superintendent
Philadelphia Public Schools

John Simpson
Norfolk Public Schools

Katherine Blasik
Broward County Schools

ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS



The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of nearly 60 of the nation's largest urban public school systems.

Founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, the Council is located in Washington D.C., where it works to promote urban education through legislation, research, media relations, instruction, management, technology, and other special projects designed to improve the quality of urban education.

The Council serves as the national voice for urban educators, providing ways to share promising practices and address common concerns.

The organization is served by a staff of about 20 professionals who coordinate the work of the Council, arrange conferences, conduct studies, and collaborate with other national organizations, government agencies, and corporations.

Characteristics of the Great City Schools

- Total student enrollment: 6.8 million
- o African American: 38.9%
- o Hispanic: 31.2%
- o White: 22.8%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 6.4%
- Alaskan/Native American: 0.7%
- Eligible for free/reduced price lunch: 62.4%
- English Language Learners: 18.1%
- Students with Individualized Education Programs: 12.5%
- Number of languages spoken: 120
- Number of Teachers: 408,766
- Total Revenue: \$40 billion
- Local: 43.0%
- State: 47.3%
- Federal: 9.7%
- Number of Schools: 9,446

Eligibility for Membership in the Council of the Great City Schools

School districts are eligible for membership in the Council of the Great City Schools if they are located in cities with populations over 250,000 and student enrollments over 35,000. School districts with general urban characteristics located in the largest city of any state are also eligible for membership regardless of size.

ABOUT MDRC

MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. We are dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through our research and the active communication of our findings, we seek to enhance the effectiveness of social policies and programs. MDRC was founded in 1974 and is located in New York City and Oakland, California.

MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations - field tests of promising program models - and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work - including best practices for program operators - with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.

COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2002-2003

OFFICERS

Chair of the Board:	Clifford Janey, Rochester Superintendent
Chair-Elect:	Anna Dodson, Norfolk School Board
Secretary/Treasurer:	Carlos Garcia, Clark County Superintendent
Immediate Past-Chair:	Manuel Nunez, Fresno School Board

MEMBERS

Arlene Ackerman, San Francisco Superintendent
Marion Bolden, Newark Superintendent
Calvin Boykin, Guilford County School Board
Arne Duncan, Chicago Superintendent
Judy Farmer, Minneapolis School Board
Arthur Griffin, Charlotte School Board
Beverly Hall, Atlanta Superintendent
Cleveland Hammonds, St. Louis Superintendent
Pat Harvey, St. Paul Superintendent
Genethia Hayes, Los Angeles School Board
William Isler, Pittsburgh School Board
Mona McGregor, Omaha School Board
Stan Paz, Tucson Superintendent
Jean Quan, Oakland School Board
Darline Robles, Salt Lake City Superintendent
Dorothy Sumners Rush, Philadelphia School Board
Carmen Russo, Baltimore Superintendent
Linda Sutherland, Orlando School Board
George Thompson, Nashville School Board
Tom Tocco, Fort Worth Superintendent

Donna Evans, Ohio State University Dean
Ex Officio

COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBER DISTRICTS 2002-03

<u>School District</u>	<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>Board Representative</u>
Albuquerque Public Schools	Joseph Vegil	Mary Lee Martin
Anchorage School District	Carol Comeau	Jake Metcalfe
Atlanta Public Schools	Beverly L. Hall	Sadie J. Dennard
Austin Independent School District	Pascal Forgione	Doyle Valdez
Baltimore City Public Schools	Carmen V. Russo	Patricia L. Welch
Birmingham City Schools	Waymon Shiver	Annie Davis
Boston Public Schools	Thomas Payzant	Elizabeth Reilinger
Broward County Public Schools	Franklin Till	Judie S. Budnick
Buffalo City School District	Marion Canedo	Paul Buchanan
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	James Pughsley	Arthur Griffin
Chicago Public Schools	Arne Duncan	Michael Scott
Clark County School District	Carlos Garcia	Mary Beth Scow
Cleveland Municipal School District	Barbara Byrd-Bennett	George Dixon
Columbus Public Schools	Gene Harris	Karen Schwarzwalder
Dallas Independent School District	Mike Moses	Ken Zornes
Dayton Public Schools	Percy Mack	L. Anthony Hill
Denver Public Schools	Jerry Wartgow	Elaine Gantz Berman
Des Moines Independent Community School District	Eric Witherspoon	Margaret Borgen
Detroit Public Schools	Kenneth Burnley	Frank Fountain
District of Columbia Public Schools	Paul Vance	Peggy Cooper-Cafritz
Duval County Public Schools	John C. Fryer	Jimmie Johnson
Fort Worth Independent School District	Thomas Tocco	Jesse Martinez
Fresno Unified School District	Santiago Wood	Manuel Nunez
Guilford County Schools	Terry Grier	Calvin J. Boykin
Hillsborough County School District	Earl Lennard	Candy Olson
Houston Independent School District	Kaye Stripling	Arthur Gaines
Indianapolis Public Schools	Duncan N.P. Pritchett	Marianna R. Zaphiriou
Jefferson County Public Schools	Stephen Daeschner	Ann V. Elmore
Long Beach Unified School District	Christopher Steinhauser	Karin Polacheck
Los Angeles Unified School District	Roy Romer	Genethia Hudley Hayes
Memphis City Public Schools	Johnnie Watson	Michael Hood
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	Merrett M. Stierheim	Robert Ingram
Milwaukee Public Schools	William G. Andrekopoulos	Lawrence J. O'Neil
Minneapolis Public Schools	Carol Johnson	Judith L. Farmer
Nashville-Davidson Metropolitan Public Schools	Pedro Garcia	George H. Thompson III
New Orleans Public Schools	Alphonse G. Davis	Gail Moore Glapion
New York City Board of Education	Joel Klein	Sandra Lerner
Newark Public Schools	Marion A. Bolden	Dana Rone
Norfolk Public Schools	John Simpson	Anna Dodson
Oakland Unified School District	Dennis Chaconas	Jean Quan
Oklahoma City Public Schools	William F. Weitzel	Joseph L. Clytus
Omaha Public Schools	John J. Mackiel	Mona McGregor
Orange County Public Schools	Ronald Blocker	Linda Sutherland
Philadelphia Public Schools	Paul Vallas	Dorothy Sumners-Rush
Pittsburgh Public Schools	John W. Thompson	William Isler
Portland Public Schools	Jim Scherzinger	Marc Abrams
Providence Public Schools	Diana Lam	Gertrude Blakey
Richmond Public Schools	Deborah Jewell-Sherman	Larry Olanrewaju
Rochester City School District	Clifford Janey	Bolgen Vargas
Sacramento City Unified School District	James Sweeney	Richard Jennings
Salt Lake City School District	Darline Robles	Joel K. Briscoe
San Diego Unified School District	Alan Bersin	Sue Braun
San Francisco Unified School District	Arlene Ackerman	Dan Kelly
Seattle Public Schools	Joseph Olchefske	Barbara Schaad-Lamphere
St. Louis Public Schools	Cleveland Hammonds	Paulette McKinney
St. Paul Public Schools	Patricia Harvey	Al Oertwig
Toledo Public Schools	Eugene Sanders	Larry Sykes
Tucson Unified School District	Estanislado "Stan" Paz	Mary Bell McCorkle