

MEMORANDUM

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**FROM: TOM FREEDMAN
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RE: SCHOOL TAKEOVERS

DATE: JUNE 9, 1997

SUMMARY

State takeovers of financially bankrupt schools have occurred for at least 15 years. In the last 8 years, this power has been expanded to include 'academically bankrupt' schools. Currently, 22 states empower state boards to intervene in districts that underperform academically for an extended period of time. Most state interventions occur in several stages, and some form of takeover is usually applicable after approximately two to three years of low performance. Takeover strategies vary but usually include the reconstitution of the school board, administration, school professional staff, or some combination of these bodies.

TAKEOVERS OF 'ACADEMICALLY BANKRUPT' SCHOOLS/ DISTRICTS

Attached is a state-by-state list of the sanctions that states can take against failing schools, and a summary of actions that have been taken across the country. This list was compiled based on a survey of education journals and newspapers.

State/ District	Sanctions outlined for failing schools	Criteria	What they've done/ effectiveness surveys
AL	State takeover of schools or districts possible; parents help develop school improvement plan		State currently runs 2 districts and Birmingham is on probation
AR	School improvement program administered by state education dept; if insufficient progress, could lose accreditation		
Chicago	Schools risk probation; if they fail to measure up after 1 year, district officials have options ranging from firing staff members to shutting down schools Schools on probation receive assistance in monitoring management and instruction	85% of students must score below reading norms on Iowa Tests for school to be put on probation	109 (out of 554) schools on probation in Oct 96 of 71 elem schools on probation, math scores improved in 69; reading scores in 54 37 of 38 high schools improved math scores; 30 improved reading scores
Cleveland	Reconstitution after 3 years of no progress	standardized tests, others unnamed	
Denver		Iowa Tests, other tests, parent involvement, number of suspensions, participation in gifted/talented program, building maintenance, allocation of resources	2/97: School board approved reconstitution of elementary schools based on these criteria

FL	after 3 years of 'school failure', sanctions range from appointment of new principal to state withholding of district funds	7 performance goals, including basic reading and math competencies	1997: Ed Commissioner identified 158 failing schools based on low scores on standardized tests
GA	Increased state aid to schools identified as low performers; reconstitution of school officials possible		
Houston		fewer than 20% of students meet test standards; other unnamed criteria	reconstitution of 2 elementary schools; one has done very well resources available for schools that need to improve
IA	State board removes accreditation; corrective stages implemented; if no progress, board could merge district, appoint interim administrator or place district under receivership		
IL	After four years on watch list; state may reconstitute staff or reassign students		
Indianapolis		staff and student attendance; assessment on tests; graduation and remediation rates; and amount of contact with parents	1996: placed 90% of schools on probation based on these criteria .
KY	Schools that meet own achievement goals in 2 years qualify for bonuses; sanctions include state assistance and firing of staff, superintendent and local school board		
LA	8/96; state panel recommended rewarding high performers and sanctioning low performers after state intervention		

MA	Local boards have authority to take over schools with support and technical assistance from state commissioner; districts may reconstitute school staff; current law gives schools 2 year warning, but likely to be made more severe		State has taken over 1 district
MD	State identifies 'failing schools'; state dept teams audit school; state may order school to be operated by a third party	low and declining test scores	cash rewards to schools that achieve excellence 48 schools reconstituted since 1994 (40 of Baltimore's 80 are eligible; 6 schools in Prince George's county reconstituted)
MI	After 3 years on probation, school may be closed; district must cover incurred expenses	over 80% failure on state proficiency test or if dropout rate exceeds 25%	Debate currently on criteria, not on basic theme
Milwaukee	Reconstitution at discretion of superintendent		
MN	2/94 Proposed legislation to reconstitute schools after 3 years of low performance	performance gap between minority and majority students in these areas: dropout, discipline rates, acad achievement, enrollment in remediation, special ed, and honors classes	
MO	Reconstitution of board members possible; local board shall not issue or renew contracts to either superintendents or principals of academically deficient schools for one year		
MS	State can withdraw accreditation; additional funds may be provided to help restore accreditation; interim administrator may override any local board decisions		

MT	1/27: Gov Racicot advocated adoption of statewide standards for schools and development of sanctions		
NC	Assistance teams identify schools as low-performing; reconstitution of school board, and replacement of superintendent and/or principal possible; local board powers suspended	student performance on writing and math tests, attendance, college preparation and dropout rate	
NJ	1988 law allows for state takeover of schools/district if they fail to meet state certification standards; reconstitution of local board and superintendent; state takes over for a minimum of 5 years		state takeover of schools in Jersey City and Paterson Gov Whitman made 'improving failing schools' central point of social agenda, 1/95
NM	State provides personnel to operate any school or district failing to meet state performance standards; until improvements are seen, powers and duties of local board are suspended		
NY	State identifies low performing schools; requires district to develop corrective-action plan Subject to district takeover; principal may be removed	minimum competency requirements on math, writing and reading tests, dropout and attendance rates 90% of students must pass competency test in 3 years or school is on probation	Schools on list receiving technical assistance and aid Chancellor of NYC schools has taken over 14 schools since 1996
OH	State appoints monitor to oversee educationally deficient districts at district's expense; monitor implements corrective-action plans; no mention of removing board or superintendent		

OK	School identified as 'low performing' after 1-2 years of poor performance; as 'high challenge' after 3 years; state intervention at either level		
Philadelphia	Reconstitution after 3 years of no progress		Teachers union leading the revamping of 6 schools
RI	working on performance standards plans for state takeover of schools		
San Francisco	Reconstitution based on district superintendent decision have had radical closing strategies since 1984	attendance, chronic absenteeism, request for student transfers, test scores	8 schools reconstituted since 1994 flat test scores in reconstituted schools
SC	If minimum standards are not met, districts undergo audit; after 6 months of no improvement, state may recommend to governor that superintendent be removed, escrow funds, or provide technical assistance 4/96: Proposed legislation to fire principals/ superintedents of low performing schools failed		
TN	since 1992, state can takeover schools on probation for two years; audit conducted internally by state department	promotion, dropout and attendance rates; value-added assessment; pass rate on high school exit exam	for each of past 2 years, fewer than 2% schools meet all 5 criteria; no actions taken yet reward high-performers (thousands of dollars each)

TX	State publishes list of low performing schools; grants of \$4-5,000 available to parents to transfer kids out of low performing school; if district doesn't improve after 1 year, state may appoint local residents to exercise powers of board; after two years, district can be annexed to adjoining district	Less than 20% pass rate on standardized tests and dropout rate of 25% or over	gives \$5,000 to principals of schools that exceed standards
VA	Governor's Commission (1996) suggested suspension of school and board leaders of failing schools and barring of students from drivers' ed who don't meet 9th grade standards		
WV	If a school is denied accreditation, its district must develop improvement plan; sanctions increase in severity each year of no progress; final stage is potential removal of superintendent		