

LEVEL 2 - 5 OF 606 STORIES

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The Plain Dealer

June 4, 1997 Wednesday, FINAL / ALL

SECTION: METRO; Pg. 5B

LENGTH: 546 words

HEADLINE: PANEL HEARS SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL-CONTROL BILL

BYLINE: By BENJAMIN MARRISON; PLAIN DEALER BUREAU CHIEF

DATELINE: COLUMBUS

BODY:

State Sen. Robert Cupp was unclear why Cleveland businesses and many city residents were so adamant that the city school district's current governance structure be dismantled so that Mayor Michael R. White could take over.

In heartfelt testimony last night, Sandra Rivera cleared it up for him.

"We want someone to hold accountable," the near West Side Clevelander told the Lima Republican and other members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee. The panel is debating a Ohio House-passed bill that would abolish the current school board and replace it with a nine-member board appointed by White.

Rivera conceded White would not be making the decisions, that a school board would run the 70,000-student district under the direction of a chief executive officer.

"But at the end, it's one person who's accountable. We have not had that," explained Rivera, who has two children enrolled in the district.

Rivera was one of only a handful of people who testified in support of the governance bill at the hearing reserved for proponents of the issue. Others included state schools Superintendent John M. Goff; Superintendent Richard Boyd, who is running the district at the state's request; and David Bergholz, who co-chaired the Advisory Committee on Governance that recommended a mayoral-controlled district as a solution to the district's many problems. The state is running the district under a federal court order.

"It's a crisis," Bergholz told lawmakers.

"I do not believe the state can do this job alone," added Goff.

The best way to continue the improvements being made at the district, Boyd said, was to hand the ball to White and the nine-member board the mayor would appoint. Members would be selected from a pool nominated by a panel.

While the bill is strongly supported by the business community, it has been attacked by the Cleveland Teachers Union, as well as the League of Women Voters



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of Cleveland and other groups. The teachers union questions its constitutionality because voters will not get to vote on the plan until four years after it is implemented.

Proponents of the bill, including its two Republican sponsors, State Reps. Mike Wise of Mayfield and William Batchelder of Medina, point out that voters really have no **control** now over how the district is run because of the federal court order.

Moreover, separate analyses conducted by the Ohio attorney general and the Legislative Service Commission determined the bill is constitutional.

However, state Auditor Jim Petro said he believed the Ohio Constitution requires a prior vote before changing school governance structures.

Both sides agree the issue will be settled in court - unless the federal judge overseeing the case decides to adopt it as his order.

A Senate vote on the proposal may happen by the end of June. State Sen. Merle Grace Kearns, chairwoman of the committee, said she planned on voting the proposal out of committee June 24, setting the stage for a floor vote later that week. She is a Springfield Republican.

If changes are made, the House would need to concur before it could be signed into law by Gov. George V. Voinovich, the former Cleveland mayor who is a staunch supporter of the bill.

There will be a hearing for opponents of the bill next week.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 5, 1997



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Copyright 1997 The New York Times Company
The New York Times

June 1, 1997, Sunday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section 13CN; Page 1; Column 5; Connecticut Weekly Desk

LENGTH: 1572 words

HEADLINE: Hartford **Schools**: A New Beginning

BYLINE: By RICHARD WEIZEL

BODY:

THE **state takeover** today of Hartford's public **schools**, which dissolved the city's elected Board of Education and replaces it with a seven-member **state-appointed** Board of Trustees, is a first for Connecticut -- the first time that a public **school** system is not under local **control**.

Control was taken away by the General Assembly because of a litany of problems in the Hartford system, including poor management, crumbling buildings and dismal test scores. The low point may have been in April when a committee recommended taking away Hartford High School's accreditation, which would make it only the second unaccredited high **school** in New England.

The **takeover**, which was overwhelmingly approved in April, dissolved the Hartford school board, and created a new board appointed by Gov. John G. Rowland and legislative leaders.

The seven new trustees face the task of turning around a \$240 million school system, with nearly 25,000 students in 38 schools. The system has a drop-out rate of 43 percent and for years has had the lowest test scores in the state.

"We're not going to look back to focus on how things got this way -- we're going to look ahead to focus on how we can make the system better . . . much better," said the new board chairman, Robert M. Furek, 54, of West Hartford, a retired chief executive of Heublein Inc., a Hartford-based spirits company.

"Clearly the system is broken and we've got to fix it, there just isn't room any longer for failure," Mr. Furek said. "This is a group of people who have all been in leadership roles in their respective fields of endeavor and who all have a strong sense of what it takes to get the job done," he said of the new trustees. "But they are also people who understand how to work together, and who recognize the need for compromise."

Compromise is something that previous Hartford school boards did not always do. Partisan political battles, and at times even among members of the same parties, often overshadowed education issues.

Some people in the education community said that the local board's last major decision -- particularly the way the decision was made -- characterized the panel's tenure.



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The New York Times, June 1, 1997

That decision involved the 11th-hour hiring in February of Patricia A. Daniel, the East Providence, R.I., School Superintendent, as the new Hartford school chief during an unruly public meeting just hours after the board announced the hiring of Edwin Duroy, the Hoboken School Superintendent. At the meeting there were outbursts from city residents angered by the apparent selection of Mr. Duroy, with one person even pouring a pitcher of water over a board member's head.

The new trustees say they are intent on establishing a sense of order and control. The trustees say that without political motivation, they will be able to focus entirely on education.

"For too long now the adults have been playing politics while the children have been losing valuable time in a system that has been failing them," said Diane Alverio of New Britain, a trustee as well as vice president and general manager of WLAT-AM in Hartford and a former television reporter.

"We weren't elected, so we don't owe anybody anything," Ms. Alverio said, "other than the children of Hartford, who we are obligated to provide the best possible education. Every special interest group has a political mandate, and I have already been approached by those who think the old political rules still apply."

But some parents and teachers say they have heard it all before, and wonder if a board so heavily weighted with members of the business community and without much experience in public education will be up to the task.

"No, I don't believe anything is really going to change, I don't see this board as having the skills or sensitivity needed to truly understand the problems these urban children are facing," said the Rev. Michael C. Williams, a parent who says he is planning to take his three children out of the Hartford school system in September.

"We're either moving out of the city or putting them in private school, I don't want them subjected to any more educational experiments," Mr. Williams. He was alluding to the failed privatization effort undertaken by the board several years ago when it hired Educational Alternatives Inc. to run the system. Mr. Williams added that he has watched the system rapidly decline over the past decade as politics, patronage and incompetence have overshadowed education. "We've suffered enough in this school system, it's time to get out," he said.

Even so, some Hartford residents said they were encouraged by the new board's stated determination to make drastic changes to improve the quality of education for the city's students, 95 percent of whom are black and Hispanic.

"They are a good group of people, and they certainly don't seem to carry with them the kind of political baggage as the previous board, so that makes us very hopeful," said David MacDonald, president of the Hartford Parents Network, a citywide organization of parents' groups. "But if they don't act boldly and quickly, they're going to lose some of the positive feeling the community now feels towards them."

Shirley West, president of another citywide parents' group, Educate Our

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The New York Times, June 1, 1997

Children Now, said, "I've been fighting for a long time and every time someone new comes in they say they're motivated only by what is best for the children. We just want to see results, we want to see real action, real reform that will mean quality education for our children. We don't need any more studies, focus groups or talking about what needs to be done."

Cheryl Daniels, president of the Hartford teachers' union, said that after meeting and talking with the new trustees she was "cautiously optimistic" that the new panel will find a way to succeed.

"These are all quality people who seem to have their hearts in the right place," Ms. Daniels said. "But they have to understand that what we need in Hartford is real educational reform, not just cosmetic changes to make things look like they're better."

Mr. Furek says he understands why some people are skeptical. But he said that the new panel is "tough and savvy enough to get the job done," despite all the failures. He noted that the trustees include a priest who has spent his life working in education, a former State Education Department employee now working in higher education, and members of the business, real estate, health care, community relations and social-services fields.

Mr. Furek says his panel will meet this week to begin to decide which problems to tackle first although planning a new budget, addressing the issues of Hartford High School's accreditation and Bulkeley High School's pending probation are likely to be of immediate concern.

"The only goal we have is to make the Hartford schools better for the children of the city, that's it, that's why we're here," said Mr. Furek. "I know it's one of the biggest challenges I've ever faced."

Another trustee, Lorraine M. Aronson of Manchester, assistant to the chancellor at the University of Connecticut at Storrs and a former State Deputy Education Commissioner, said, "Sure it's a big challenge, maybe the biggest any of us have ever faced, but if we don't believe we can do this . . . we might as well all go home right now."

Those sentiments were also echoed by another trustee, Ana-Maria Garcia of Hartford, chief executive officer of the Greater Hartford Y.W.C.A., who perhaps has even more at stake than other board members because she is the only one with a child in the Hartford school system. Her daughter is a sophomore honor student at Hartford High School.

Ms. Garcia, who formerly held various city posts, including assistant to the City Manager and director of Hartford's Social Services Department, views work as affecting not only Hartford but also other urban areas.

"While our focus is, of course, going to be on the education of the system in Hartford," Ms. Garcia said, if we come up with something that is successful . . . it might be an approach that can be replicated in other cities."

Another trustee, Marie Spivey, vice president of community relations at Hartford Hospital, says a key to transforming the failing system is to focus on "the richness of Hartford's diversity."

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The New York Times, June 1, 1997

The new board, Ms. Spivey said, is made up of people with diverse backgrounds and different areas of expertise. "I think when you put all of our collective experience together," she said, "it's going to lead to real change, to an improved school system and real change."

The new trustees also said that real educational reform in Hartford is going to take time because much of the problem is rooted in poverty, for which there are no easy solutions.

"It's a tangled web and it has to be undone very carefully," said the Rev. Henry C. Frascadore, another trustee. Father Frascadore, a former principal of South Catholic School in Hartford, was assistant superintendent of schools for the Hartford Archdiocese from 1974 through 1985 and was president of Northwest Catholic School in Hartford until last year. "Sometimes quick decisions without proper thought and planning only make things worse," he said. "I think that's how Hartford's schools deteriorated in the first place."

The seventh trustee is Richard Weaver-Bey, a Hartford real estate investor, apartment manager and radio station owner.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 1, 1997

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LEVEL 2 - 8 OF 606 STORIES

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THE HARTFORD COURANT

June 1, 1997 Sunday, STATEWIDE

SECTION: MAIN; Pg. A1

LENGTH: 2052 words

HEADLINE: JERSEY CITY **TAKEOVER**: REFORMS SLOW TO REACH CLASSROOMS

BYLINE: ROBERT A. FRAHM; Courant Staff Writer

DATELINE: JERSEY CITY, N.J. --

BODY:

When the **state** seized **control** of public **schools** here, it promised to clean up a system riddled by local politics -- a district where jobs often hinged on local elections.

"I was one of the big supporters of **state takeover**," says Thomas DeGise, a history teacher who once nearly lost his own job in a political flap.

DeGise won a court case to save his job after the system had demoted him, transferred him and tried to fire him, all within months of the election of a new mayor. DeGise had worked for the mayor's opponent.

Nearly everyone agrees the state **takeover** eight years ago has ended that kind of rough-and-tumble politics, but progress in other areas -- especially the classroom -- has been slow. Even supporters like DeGise, now president of the city council, question the state's continuing role in a tough, urban system.

"I think it's time for them to leave," he said.

What happened in Jersey City holds sobering lessons for Connecticut, which officially takes **control** today of public schools in Hartford, hoping to correct chronic management problems, dismal test scores and alarming dropout rates.

The results are mixed in Jersey City, the first city in the nation to turn its schools over to state **control**.

* The system, aided by court-ordered increases in spending, added dozens of new programs, including new preschool classes, but test scores have risen more slowly than everyone had hoped.

* Despite pouring millions of dollars more into the system, the state has been unable to correct problems such as a severe shortage of classrooms. * Some of the deepest problems of the schools -- poverty, dropout rates, truancy, lack of discipline -- have remained stubbornly difficult to correct.

* The **takeover** has generated lawsuits, grievances and considerable animosity. And it has lasted longer than expected, with officials still uncertain how to



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relinquish state **control** without reversing the reforms.

Twenty-two states have laws permitting **takeovers**, but only a handful have taken the step. New Jersey took **control** of schools in Jersey City in 1989 and later in Paterson and Newark.

Jersey City, a gritty, working-class town with one of the region's highest unemployment rates, stands alongside New York Harbor, in view of the Statue of Liberty. Once the first home for a flood of European immigrants, it now takes in many from Asia, Central America and South America. Nearly three of four schoolchildren live in poverty. Their families are more transient than those in New Jersey's other major cities.

Jersey City's school system of nearly 32,000 students, the state's second largest, had been under state review for five years leading up to the **takeover**. State officials found it deficient in nearly every area, from curriculum to buildings.

Under a tough **takeover** law, the state disbanded the city's board of education and replaced the superintendent and other top school officials with state appointees.

It has been a bumpy ride, and local resentment simmers. The first state-appointed superintendent resigned after her top deputies were accused of fiscal irregularities. The most recent appointee, a veteran state bureaucrat, is the fourth superintendent since the **takeover** began.

Meanwhile, one big question lingers: Was the **takeover** worth it?

"We expected miracles. We didn't really appreciate what a tough job it was going to be," said Raymond O'Brien, one of the original members of a state-appointed board that replaced the former school board. The state board is strictly advisory.

"If I had to give [the state] a report card," said O'Brien, a certified public accountant and chairman of the advisory board, "it would be a C- plus or B-minus at this point."

More autonomy

If Jersey City is to turn its schools around, its best hope can be found in classrooms like Room 410 at P.S. 37, where teacher Dawn O'Flaherty stirred up a lively discussion recently, quizzing eighth-graders about prominent figures in the news.

"Amy, this one is for you -- Jackie Robinson," said O'Flaherty, a slender, dark-haired woman just five years out of Jersey City State College.

"He was the first black baseball player," Amy said.

"What about this guy Newt Gingrich?" O'Flaherty asks, pointing to a news magazine.

"That's the bad Congress dude," a boy answered.



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Principal Marvin A. Strynar calls O'Flaherty "one of our strongest teachers," but she might never have worked at Strynar's school had it not been for the **takeover**. One of the first things done by the state was to give principals more autonomy -- including the authority to hire new teachers and other workers and to make decisions about day-to-day school operations.

Strynar hired O'Flaherty after sending her through an interview with teachers, parents, custodians, secretaries and students.

Experts believe the shift of power to principals could be one of the most significant changes under the **takeover**, but the state also took other steps, such as cleaning up buildings, putting new management practices in place, rewriting curriculums, buying new textbooks and expanding all-day kindergarten programs and preschool programs.

The preschool programs, including some located in housing projects, have been cited as a national model by the U.S. Department of Education and by researchers at Harvard University.

Officials also cite an increase in high school advanced placement classes, an expansion of music and art classes and more time for teacher training.

Has all of this made a difference? It is difficult to tell. Officials concede that Jersey City has no good way of knowing how today's students compare with those in 1989 because it no longer uses the same tests. The district's own progress reports include test results going back only three years.

In those three years, scores at elementary schools have begun to rise, but progress among older students has been disappointing. One of three high school students fails proficiency tests in reading. One-fourth to one-third routinely fail mathematics classes at some high schools. Nearly six of 10 ninth-graders leave school before graduating.

The only change in scores "is like blips here and there," said Jack Silvestri, who monitors testing for the system.

"That's the one thing [the state] can't get a handle on," he said. "I think that's going to elude them forever."

"To rectify 20 years of neglect," said Francis X. Dooley Jr., a former math teacher and principal and now an associate superintendent, "it takes a while to show improvement."

No studies

Nationwide, there is little research on the effectiveness of state **takeovers**, and Jersey City is no exception. There are no recent studies of the **takeover**, other than the school system's own progress reports.

Meanwhile, analysts say that New Jersey, like other states that have taken over local school systems, has put most of its focus on shaping up the central office.

"They were able to clean up the system, end some mismanagement, get a



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curriculum in place, but [the improvement] didn't really trickle down to the classroom," said Susan H. Fuhrman, a researcher who compiled a 1992 report on the Jersey City takeover.

The takeover got satisfactory marks in several areas, including financial management, in an independent study done for the New Jersey legislature in 1994 by Arthur Andersen & Co. However, even that study concluded the state had given "inadequate attention . . . to innovation and the identification of better ways and methods for educating New Jersey's children."

Peter B. Contini, an assistant commissioner in the New Jersey Department of Education, agrees the slow pace of academic reform has been frustrating. "Systemic change -- classroom by classroom reform -- is the most difficult," he said.

'Quick to blame'

The state intervention has been met with suspicion and, in some cases, outright resistance.

"Many administrators and teachers were quick to blame the state team for all manner of problems in the district," Fuhrman wrote in her study. They saw state officials as outsiders, and some scoffed that the officials from Trenton would need maps to find local schools.

The lawsuits and grievances started soon after Elena Scambio, the first state-appointed superintendent, took an aggressive approach to change. Scambio not only arrived with a campaign of "Kids First" bumper stickers and billboards, she announced a massive reorganization, eliminating more than one in four central office jobs.

However, hardly any of the administrators actually were put out of work. Because of seniority rights, many were reassigned to teaching positions or lower-level supervisory jobs. The former superintendent, for example, eventually became a vice principal. Connecticut is likely to face similar issues in Hartford.

In order to make basic changes, such as the length of the school day or the amount of training time for teachers, New Jersey also had to renegotiate union contracts -- a slow and sometimes difficult process, state officials said.

However, Thomas J. Favia, head of the teachers' union in Jersey City, said the relationship between the state and his union has been generally good. "We said from day one, we are not obstructionists," he said.

Still, the resentment lingers.

"I just shake my head about this. It's been a nightmare," said Joseph Masters, a veteran English teacher at Snyder High School.

"We've had five principals at this school, each with their own agenda. This would never have happened with local control," he said. "You try to solve a problem, and there is no one here to solve it, so you've got to call Trenton."

Meanwhile, there has been mixed reaction among parents.



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Maribel Steuth, head of a parent group at Dickinson High School, said the state has been slow to build new schools or to make improvements in programs such as bilingual education.

Still, she said, parents have become more active since the **takeover** and are regularly included with teachers and principals on committees to make decisions at individual schools.

"I can't tell you how many committees I am on now," she said. "Parents are much more involved. That wasn't happening before."

Much more money

While the **takeover** shook things up, Jersey City schools also felt the impact of another state decision.

In 1990, the state changed its school funding system to comply with a New Jersey Supreme Court ruling that found the old system unconstitutional. The result was immediate and dramatic.

Jersey City's school budget, just over \$200 million when the **takeover** began, has risen to nearly \$325 million this year.

Three weeks ago, the court concluded that the state had not gone far enough and ordered more money by September for New Jersey's 28 poorest districts, including Jersey City.

The increase in state money has helped pay for the expansion of preschool programs, textbooks, supplies and high school computer labs.

"When people say money doesn't make a difference, tell me, how can you do those things without money?" said Favia, the teachers' union president.

Back to local **control**?

In each of the last three years, New Jersey has agreed to continue state **control** in Jersey City, saying not enough progress has been made.

One of the most vexing issues is how to turn the district back to local **control** and how to preserve what gains have been made.

"The state has yet to come up with an exit plan," said O'Brien, the chairman of the state-appointed board. "I really think the state wants a way out. I don't think they're having fun."

As part of a gradual shift to local **control**, the law now permits city voters to elect some members of the advisory board. Among those elected is the former superintendent who was ousted when the state took over.

The biggest lesson of Jersey City may be that schools, regardless of how well they are run, are up against a daunting task in the nation's cities.

Barbara Petrick, a U.S. history teacher at Dickinson High School, the city's



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largest, said:

"There is no graffiti outside. The grounds are better kept. The school is in better condition. . . . But I don't see a dramatic change in some of our most intractable problems -- test scores, truancy, breakdown of authority. These are things that are part of urban America."

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: (b&w), Stan Honda / Special to The Courant; * Tisha Townsend works on a puzzle in the Montgomery Gardens Early Childhood Center last week. The center is one of the new programs started since the state of New Jersey took over Jersey City's school system.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 2, 1997



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LEVEL 2 - 18 OF 606 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Detroit News, Inc.
The Detroit News

May 22, 1997, Thursday

SECTION: Front; Pg. Pg. A12

LENGTH: 1151 words

HEADLINE: When **Schools** Fail: Taking over ailing districts can solve some problems -- and create others

BYLINE: By Carol Stevens / Detroit News Washington Bureau

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- When New Jersey **school** activists hear that Michigan Gov. John Engler is considering **takeovers** of failing **schools**, they point to their own cautionary example of what can happen when a **state** wrests **control** from local **school** districts.

"Any **state** that goes down the **takeover** road without looking closely at New Jersey is just going for a politically sexy quick-fix," said Steve Block, special projects director for the Education Law Center, a New Jersey group that has fought the **state's takeovers**.

Twenty-two **states** have laws that allow them to take **control** of local **school** districts because of low test scores, fiscal mismanagement or rampant truancy. But New Jersey has been the most aggressive when it comes to **school** district **takeovers**.

Since October 1989, New Jersey has assumed **control** of its three largest school districts -- Jersey City, Paterson and Newark -- through a series of controversial moves that have placed 10 percent of the state's 1.2 million public school students under its direct **control**.

More than seven years after it began down the school **takeover** road, even New Jersey state officials admit their results have been mixed, at best.

"We believe (the state) was extremely successful in dealing with fiscal mismanagement," said Peter Contini, New Jersey's assistant commissioner of education. "But we certainly have not been totally pleased with all of the changes in student performance."

New Jersey's **takeovers** occurred after enactment of a strict new system for school district monitoring in 1984 that allowed the state to red-flag deficiencies in test scores, building maintenance, attendance rates and finances.

"When a school district is failing, there is no choice. We have to intervene," Contini said. "It is a legal decision made after a series of interventions."



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The Detroit News, May 22, 1997

Once New Jersey determined its three largest districts were unable or unwilling to make improvements on their own, the state moved in. Local school boards were disbanded and replaced with appointed advisory groups. The superintendents and central office staffs were removed or reassigned. And the state appointed a superintendent to run each of the school systems.

All sides credit the state with sprucing up dilapidated schools and dealing head-on with political patronage, corruption and financial mismanagement in the troubled districts.

"We can be assured now that the money is not being siphoned off," said Judith Cambria, education director for the League of Women Voters.

There are signs of academic progress, too, although state **control** has not brought about the impressive educational improvements that some had hoped.

State officials boast that students in Jersey City have made "impressive gains" on state-required tests. But they concede that almost six years after the Paterson **takeover**, student test scores are disappointing except among fourth-graders. (Less than two years into Newark's 1995 state **takeover**, officials said it is too early to expect changes from the state's largest school system.)

Meanwhile, critics contend the state **takeovers** have caused at least as many problems as they have solved, by alienating parents, politicians, unions and community groups.

"It sets whites against blacks and minorities. It sets rich against poor. It sets urban districts against suburban and rural," Cambria said. "It is just a tremendously divisive thing."

Many parents and community groups say they resent the state for replacing local educators with state appointees who are not always sensitive to community needs.

"What New Jersey has done is, in effect, conduct a head transplant and then try to graft on an alien leadership," Block said. "It leads to a level of alienation that makes it very, very hard for fundamental reform to occur."

"Unfortunately, it gives the state all of the power," said Martha Falcon, a Jersey City parent. "The state comes up with a plan and you have to fit their mold one way or another."

Critics concede that some of the alienation was caused by state implementation of needed changes. For example, Beverly Hall, the state-appointed superintendent of the Newark public schools, is given high marks for her education reforms, but she caused a political firestorm last summer when she abolished 630 school system jobs.

"The Newark school system had become the employer of last resort in a desperately poor city," Block said.

And because each of the three **takeover** districts is in a poor, urban area with a high minority enrollment, critics say the state has left itself open to



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charges it is racist and elitist.

"There were parents who welcomed the **takeovers**. They saw their children were not getting the education they needed," said Diana Autin, executive director of the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network. "But there were also parents who felt it was racist."

"The racial elements can't be discounted," said Dan Cassidy, education policy coordinator for Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler. "There definitely is a feeling that elitist whites were coming in and telling blacks what to do."

Critics also contend that once local school districts were taken over by the state, New Jersey didn't have a comprehensive plan for improving education in the districts.

"Did the school need to be taken over? Yes, absolutely," Cambria said. "But when you think about what it is going to take to bring about needed changes, the state has not provided adequate assistance."

As a result, the state's five-year timetable for school district **takeovers** has stretched into an eighth year in Jersey City and a seventh year in Paterson. Chagrined state education officials say they have addressed the problem by developing benchmarks for step-by-step improvement, with a more focused eye on returning schools to local **control**.

"We've learned a great deal," said Contini, adding that the state commissioner of education now views **takeovers** as "a last resort."

New Jersey's experience also has national experts re-evaluating the value of state **takeovers** as an instrument for education reform.

"Sometimes political frustration will propel a state to act, even if a **takeover** isn't in anyone's best interest," said Mike Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents urban school districts. "If states know something we don't know, they should just tell us and work with us."

Sound off

What is the most pressing need that the Detroit public school system should address, and what single change would you most like to see? Tell what you think and why. Please include your name, town and daytime phone number. You can:

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LEVEL 2 - 37 OF 606 STORIES

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May 9, 1997 Friday, FINAL / ALL

SECTION: NATIONAL; Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 641 words

HEADLINE: HOUSE OKS WHITE'S **TAKEOVER OF SCHOOLS**;
LEGISLATION PASSES BY WIDE MARGIN, GOES TO THE SENATE NEXT

BYLINE: By THOMAS SUDDER; PLAIN DEALER BUREAU

DATELINE: COLUMBUS

BODY:

The Ohio House yesterday approved, 56-37, a bill giving **Mayor Michael R. White control** of Cleveland public **schools**.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Mike Wise, a Mayfield Republican, now moves to the Senate, which, a key backer of the measure said, is also likely to pass it.

"I think [chances of Senate passage] are very good," said Sen. Jeffrey D. Johnson, a Cleveland Democrat. "I always believed the major obstacle was the House."

Senate passage would send the Wise bill to Gov. George V. Voinovich, who has promised to sign it and who, on Wednesday, made the second strong lobbying push in a week to win House approval.

White, through spokeswoman Nancy Lesic, cautioned that much remains to be done before the measure can become law.

"The process has not been completed, and we will continue to watch with great interest what happens in the Senate," said Lesic.

Richard A. DeColibus, president of the Cleveland Teachers Union, said the union would continue to fight the mayoral **takeover** legislation in the Senate.

"If the mayor ends up running the school district, our first priority will be getting a new mayor," DeColibus said.

The measure would turn Cleveland schools over to a nine-member board and chief executive officer appointed by White.

The bill provides that four years after a White board took **control** of the schools, voters in the Cleveland school district, which includes Bratenahl, Linndale, Newburgh Heights and parts of Garfield Heights, would decide whether to keep the schools under mayoral **control**.

Because such an election must be held both in an even-numbered year and at



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The Plain Dealer, May 9, 1997

least four years after a mayoral board **takes over** the schools, nonpartisan legislative analysts said such an Cleveland school district election would be held in November 2002.

The GOP-ruled House passed the Wise bill, co-sponsored by Rep. William G. Batchelder, a Medina Republican, after a three-hour debate.

Democrats repeatedly claimed the bill would deprive residents of the Cleveland school district of their right to elect a board of education. Republicans countered that the incumbent board is legally powerless because the schools are now under court-ordered state **control**.

And Republicans fended off two Democratic proposals, one offered by Reps. Peter Lawson Jones of Shaker Heights and Vermel M. Whalen of Cleveland, the other by Rep. Dale Miller of Cleveland, to call earlier districtwide votes on the **takeover**.

The Jones-Whalen proposal, to put the question in this September's Cleveland primary ballot, was rejected 34-59. The Miller plan, to stage a referendum at the May 1998 primary, was rejected 31-54.

Of the 13 Ohio House members with districts entirely or partly in Cuyahoga County, three voted yes on the overall bill, nine voted no, and one was absent.

Casting yes votes were Reps. Edward Jerse, a Euclid Democrat; Edward Kasputis a Olmsted Township Republican; and Wise.

All the county's delegation's no votes were cast by Democrats - Reps. Dan Brady of Cleveland; Rocco Colonna of Brook Park; Troy Lee James of Cleveland; Jones; Miller; Ronald M. Mottl of North Royalton; C.J. Prentiss of Cleveland; Barbara C. Pringle of Cleveland; and Whalen.

The delegation's 13th House member, Rep. Barbara Boyd, a Cleveland Heights Democrat, was absent.

Overall, with six of the House's 99 members absent, the bill drew yes votes from 56 members (55 Republicans, plus Democrat Jerse) and no votes from 37 members (33 Democrats, plus four Republicans - Reps. Michael Fox of Hamilton; Gene Krebs of western Ohio; J. Donald Mottley of the Dayton area; and William Schuck of suburban Columbus).

It was unclear yesterday when the Senate would take up the bill. Teri Geiger, chief aide to Senate Republicans, said: "My guess is we'll send it to the Senate Education Committee and start hearings pretty quickly."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: May 10, 1997



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THE HARTFORD COURANTMay 7, 1997 Wednesday, 7 HARTFORD NORTH FINAL
Correction Appended

SECTION: METRO HARTFORD; Pg. B1

LENGTH: 563 words

HEADLINE: HARTFORD SCHOOL BOARD BOWS OUT FOR TAKEOVER

BYLINE: LIZABETH HALL; Courant Correspondent

BODY:

Ending the bumpiest of flights, Hartford school board members formally handed over the controls of a system in turbulence to a state board of trustees.

In its final act Tuesday, the school board appealed a recommendation that Hartford Public High School lose its accreditation -- the very recommendation that led the state to step in and take over the school system.

From parents in the audience, there were few thank-yous or regretful goodbyes to board members. At the meeting's adjournment, some joined in with Hartford Public history teacher Edwin Vargas Jr., a vice president of the Hartford Federation of Teachers, when he started singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."

The board members, who made state history as the first elected education officials to be ejected wholesale, did speak with sadness at leaving, and some bitterness at the acrimony directed their way in recent months.

Delivering his farewell speech, board of education President Donald Romanik slipped in a reference to then-Vice President Richard Nixon's infamous Checkers speech.

"I could say you won't have the board of education system to kick around anymore, but I won't," Romanik said.

Romanik, who admittedly backed the dissolution of his own board, urged all to cooperate with the state takeover. He said the board, whatever its composition, could not succeed in the caldron of bureaucracy, special interests and political posturing that exists today.

"Whatever your position is, Hartford will never be the same," he said. "The entire state government is now totally responsible, now totally accountable, for the success of public education in Hartford."

Not only is Hartford Public High School in trouble, but also Bulkeley High School, where Tuesday's meeting took place. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Public Secondary Schools has recommended that Bulkeley be placed on probation. The same body will soon visit and review Weaver High School.

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The state board, expected to be appointed this week, will formally **take over** June 1; its task is not only to return Hartford's high schools to good academic standing, but also to deal with a school system perceived as the worst in the state.

With the imminent **takeover**, the meeting had a lame-duck air. The board refused to ratify two union agreements, leaving them for the state-appointed board to contend with.

Also, parents from Naylor School in the South End who are concerned about possible redistricting walked out angrily when school board members said the decision was not theirs, but that of new Superintendent of Schools Patricia Daniel.

Daniel declined to enlighten parents on where the issue of redistricting stands, as some of the departing board members had asked. She said after the meeting she needs time to review the redistricting issue.

Before and during the meeting, members of the Greater Hartford African-American Alliance expressed support for Vicky Forbes, a former nurse's aide who filed a sexual harassment lawsuit in civil court against Maria C. Sanchez School Principal Sara Oyola Bowman. Forbes had been fired from the school.

The city recently failed in an attempt to have the lawsuit dismissed; the case is pending.

The Rev. Henry Price lambasted the school board for failing to investigate the allegations. He demanded that Forbes be rehired with back pay.

CORRECTION:

Correction was published May 8, 1997 on Page B3.

Outgoing Hartford school board President Donald Romanik, at a meeting Tuesday night, paraphrased a speech that Richard Nixon made after his gubernatorial defeat in 1962. The speech was incorrectly identified in a story on Page B1 Wednesday.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: May 8, 1997



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for the report since an early version surfaced on March 15, but Superintendent Carolyn Gettridge refused them in violation of California public records law, which says such documents must be made available. She said the report would not be made public until it went to the school board. It was finally made public late Friday as part of the board's meeting packet.

"The reality is our children are not learning and we want to refocus the community's attention on that (rather than on the ebonics fight)," said Sylvester Hodges, chairman of the Task Force on the Education of African American Students, who oversaw the latest report and supports its wording.

Hodges, who left the school board at the end of last year, was among the board members who on December 18 unanimously approved an ebonics

resolution that spurred a national debate because it called ebonics the primary language of Oakland's African American students. The resolution's wording was amended in January to reflect what the school board said it meant all along — to help students learn to speak standard English while recognizing the speech patterns many students bring to school.

"Ebonics has always been just one phase of our strategy. We also want to recruit more African American teachers, operate more homework centers and train parents," Hodges said.

One aspect of the latest plan that has already raised questions from some is a proposal to hire a \$65,000-a-year "community coordinator" and a \$35,000-a-year secretary. The school district has been criticized for putting too much money in administrative or clerical positions that do not involve direct

teaching of students.

The proposal also calls for \$100,000 a year to train teachers in standard English strategies and other ways to reach its African American students, \$100,000 in materials for students and \$80,000 a year for mentors to students.

"Those salaries and benefits, \$65,000 and \$35,000, seem a bit high to me," said School Board Member Jason Hodge. But Hodge said he believes board members will have adequate time to comment before the plan is adopted, since it will not be voting on the proposals tomorrow.

Instead, the plan will be sent to various school board committees before it returns to the board for a vote, to avoid the brouhaha of last December when the board rushed to pass the proposal that included sloppy language.

Prev Next ■

45. San Francisco Chronicle

May 6, 1997

Pact May Halt School Overhauls Tentative deal could end S.F. staff 'reconstitution' program

Nanette Asimov, Chronicle Staff Writer

San Francisco's 15-year-old system of "school reconstitution" could come to an abrupt and surprising end next week because of a last-minute agreement signed by the city schools chief and the president of the teachers union.

The tentative agreement comes just days before Superintendent Bill Rojas is scheduled to announce which of this year's low-performing schools will be "reconstituted" — all employees farmed out to other schools and replaced by people who would presumably be more effective at helping students. Rojas has overhauled eight schools this way since 1994, and previous superintendents reconstituted schools sporadically before that.

Teachers despise the system as needlessly cruel to good instructors and students whose favorite teachers may be sent away. But Rojas regards reconstitution as a useful tool for tackling schools with the worst records, and recently completed a doctoral thesis on its benefits. Reconstitution is part of the district's 1982 federal desegregation plan.

Under the new proposal — which still requires a judge's approval — the

fix for schools would focus on replacing individual employees rather than the entire staff.

For the first time, the teachers union has agreed to support the involuntary transfer of individual teachers.

"This is revolutionary," said Joan-Marie Shelley, president of the union, United Educators of San Francisco. "I have finally become convinced that yes, teachers have rights to a job in the district, but they have no right to keep change from happening at a school where a plan for change has been developed and approved by the vast majority at the school."

"If it's clear that there are those who have signed on to an improvement plan but are dragging their feet or sabotaging it, then they will be involuntarily transferred."

Rojas, in Memphis, Tenn., for a conference on urban education, said the agreement "sets the stage for ways to improve schools significantly. This is a new partnership with the teachers union."

He and Shelley signed the one-page agreement Thursday. Shelley said the new, gentler alternative was like using a

"scalpel instead of a meat-ax" to improve schools.

Although the proposal could wind up derailing reconstitution, several steps would have to take place first.

First, the NAACP would have to approve of it. The NAACP brought the original lawsuit against the district that in 1982 created the desegregation plan and reconstitution. If the NAACP does not like the new proposal, then Judge William Orrick is unlikely to approve it. Orrick is the federal judge who monitors the desegregation plan.

Under the new agreement, a meeting will be held no later than Saturday so that officials from the district, the union and the NAACP can create a time line for the plan and flesh it out.

As of yesterday, however, key members of the San Francisco NAACP had not been informed of the plan.

"We'd be willing to take a look at anything the superintendent is proposing," said Lulann McGriff, head of the education committee of the local NAACP and its former president. "But I haven't heard about this and can't comment."

LEVEL 2 - 64 OF 606 STORIES

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THE HARTFORD COURANT

April 19, 1997 Saturday, 7 HARTFORD NORTH FINAL

SECTION: METRO HARTFORD; Pg. B1

LENGTH: 703 words

HEADLINE: GOVERNOR MAKES **STATE'S TAKEOVER** OF HARTFORD **SCHOOLS** OFFICIAL

BYLINE: ANNE M. HAMILTON and ROBERT A. FRAHM; Courant Staff Writers

BODY:

Gov. John G. Rowland signed a bill Friday turning over **control** of the Hartford **school** system to an appointed board of trustees, an unprecedented measure prompted by frustration that past boards of education have failed the **state's** largest **school** system.

Rowland hinted at his own reluctance to replace the elected leaders with a board of trustees. They will be chosen jointly by Rowland and senior legislative leaders and take office June 1.

Current board members will remain in office until then.

"We're here with some mixed emotions," Rowland said. "I feel confident that we can select seven individuals who will make changes. Some people will complain, and some will place blame. This is a fresh, new start for the children of Hartford."

Rowland said he is committed to choosing board members whose business and education backgrounds will represent "balance," but would not say whether, or how many, Hartford residents or members of minority groups will be selected.

"Our expectations are high that what we have done will help the schoolchildren of Hartford," said state Sen. Thomas D. Gaffey, D-Meriden, co-chairman of the legislature's education committee.

"The bill specifically requires that their interests come first."

Gaffey, who attended the bill signing along with city and state legislators, state Education Commissioner Theodore Sergi and Hartford School Superintendent Patricia Daniel, said he has been pressing for the law since January, when he visited Hartford schools and talked with parents and school officials about Hartford's situation.

"It's a historic moment for Connecticut and the city, but not a happy moment," said Senate President Pro Tem Kevin Sullivan. "I have every confidence that Patricia Daniel as the executive of the board will bring the necessary leadership."

Daniel said she will present the new board with her ideas for change as soon



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as it meets, but declined to comment on any personnel changes, including whether she plans to follow Rowland's off-the-cuff advice to transfer Hartford Public High School Principal Amado Cruz.

"I am looking very critically at all my staff," she said.

The new law gives the trustees additional power in dealing with union contracts, including the ability to present revisions directly to members. It also eliminates any presumption in new contracts that past employment practices must be followed. An advisory board of parents and teachers will be chosen. The trustees are required to implement a 48-point school improvement plan developed by Sergi, and local control will return to Hartford voters no later than 2002.

By signing the bill, the governor gave the state immediate responsibility for ending racial segregation in Hartford's schools, says a lawyer who won a court order to desegregate the school system.

"The state itself must directly end the unconstitutional segregation in Hartford, because it operates the most segregated school district in the state," John C. Brittain said Friday. "The **takeover** of the Hartford public schools alone will not reduce the racial and ethnic isolation of Hartford's 96 percent African American, Puerto Rican and other Latino minority schoolchildren."

Brittain, a lawyer in the Sheff vs. O'Neill case, called on state officials to alter the boundary lines surrounding Hartford to break up a system where 95 percent of the students are black or Hispanic.

Last July, the state Supreme Court ruled that Hartford's school district boundaries contributed to segregation and that the segregation violated the state constitution's guarantees of equality in education.

The court ordered the legislature to fix the problem, and the issue is now being debated at the Capitol.

Lawmakers have been opposed to altering boundaries but have proposed various plans to assist urban schools, including one that would allow students to attend schools outside their hometowns.

The most dramatic action so far, however, was this week's vote to disband the Hartford Board of Education and take **control** of the failing system. The system suffers from a variety of ills, including high dropout rates, chronic shortages of supplies, crumbling buildings and the worst test scores in the state.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 23, 1997



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Associated Press

04-18 1:30a

Hartford High students confused about how state takeover affects them

By NICOLE SCHIAVI
Associated Press Writer

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) - The newest course offering at embattled Hartford High School is State Takeover 101, and students had plenty of questions.

The Connecticut General Assembly approved the takeover of Hartford schools Wednesday, dissolving Hartford's school board June 1, and giving a panel of state-appointed trustees control over the district's finances.

On Thursday, House Speaker Tom Ritter held an assembly with the 1,670 students to explain what they can expect.

"We're not going to let adults mess up your life," said Ritter, D-Hartford. "The adults that let you down were politicians. The adults that stood up for you were your teachers."

Hartford is the first Connecticut community forced to give up full control of its 23 schools and 24,000 students to the state for the next three years.

Poor academics, high dropout rates and the state's worst test scores were compounded by an accreditation board's recent vote to revoke the Hartford High School's accreditation, and fueled support for the takeover.

Ritter was bombarded with questions

and opinions from his young audience. Student views ranged from outright indignation to an attitude of good riddance to the Hartford Board of Education.

He defended the state's decision, telling the students that the takeover is in their best interest and that the local school board's performance was a sham that needed to be stopped.

He told students that the purpose of the state takeover is to save the schools from losing accreditation, but he warned they should expect bad news before things start to improve.

The students seemed to have a hard time digesting and separating the two main issues at hand: the state takeover and the impending loss of accreditation.

Students also asked Ritter why the state offered money to keep the Hartford Whalers hockey team in town before giving money to the schools.

The takeover bill makes Hartford Public High School eligible for \$20.5 million in state money for construction.

"The governor really doesn't care about our education," freshman Dwyane Pitts said. "(The takeover) made a lot of us happy, but I'm upset because the government felt it could give \$20 million

to (the Whalers) first."

Freshman Wilfredo Ruiz supported the state takeover.

"I think it's good because the (Hartford) Board of Education wasn't doing nothing," said Wilfredo Ruiz, a freshman.

Senior Chris Wyatt partly agreed, faulting the school board for not getting enough money to fix the problems at the school, which is losing its accreditation. But Wyatt is strongly opposed to the state takeover, and he defended the teachers and staff.

"We don't need the state to come in and take over the school," Wyatt said. "We work just as hard as any other students."

Students also rallied behind Principal Amado Cruz, voicing strong opposition to the governor's call for his transfer. One student drew wild applause when he yelled out, "If Mr. Cruz go, we all go."

Ritter did not say whether he supported the governor's statement, which was made Wednesday. The students were told that sometimes situations need to be defused and such episodes put behind.

Cruz said after the assembly he is confident he has Ritter's support. ■

USA Today

April 18, 1997

Texas city ahead of the class in school standards

By John Ritter
USA TODAY

Wynn Seale's kids come from the city's most gang-infested neighborhoods, so poor that 95% of the kids qualify for free or subsidized school lunches.

Stern discipline helped turn around this knot of low expectations. But the real key to better performance was a single-minded focus on establishing tough academic standards, a focus that has made this south Texas port city virtually without equal nationwide.

"Standards took the mystery out of

learning," says Wynn Seale principal Richard Peltz. "Our kids know exactly what's expected of them. And they know we expect a lot. There aren't any more excuses."

The hue and cry for higher standards has gained momentum in the last decade behind corporate leaders, education reformers and politicians, including President Clinton. But the pace of school reform and the move to curriculums based on standards have been slow.

Supporters say tough standards are a way to inject consistency and

competitiveness into American schools at a time when students change schools often, when the nation's employers knock schools for turning out unemployable graduates and when U.S. students' test scores trail those of Asian and European students.

Yet, not many schools have tough standards, and even fewer enforce them. Standards are a highly charged issue for school boards and state legislatures. Conservatives often object that the government is trying to dictate what should be taught. Liberals worry about

LEVEL 2 - 111 OF 606 STORIES

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March 30, 1997, Sunday

SECTION: EDITORIAL & COMMENT, Pg. 2B

LENGTH: 1664 words

HEADLINE: HIGH COURT SHIFTS CONTROL OF SCHOOLS;
ACCOUNTABILITY TO PEOPLE AT RISK

BODY:

There are a lot of reasons your normal Joe will say no to more property taxes. As a result of this (ruling), now we take it out of their hands. - George Caras, principal of Ruskin Elementary School in Dayton

That's a sentiment many education officials have held for a long time but rarely have expressed so honestly.

Caras' statement, carried in an Associated Press story last week, clearly proclaims the goal the education lobby has worked toward for decades and hopes it achieved with last week's Ohio Supreme Court ruling on school funding.

If allowed to stand, the 4-3 decision would give one Common Pleas judge, Linton D. Lewis Jr. of Perry County, more say-so over Ohio's school tax and spending levels than the governor, 132 state lawmakers and 6 million voters.

You don't have to think that property taxes are the best way to fund schools to recognize that the court's action represents the height of arrogance.

You can believe strongly that Ohio needs to do more for its poorest school districts and still regard this ruling as an abuse of power.

The case, filed in 1991, was advanced by a coalition of about 550 school districts that share the opinion that the General Assembly and local taxpayers have been too cheap in providing money for primary and secondary education.

That's nothing new. School leaders have thought that since Ohio achieved statehood in 1803. William L. Phillis, executive director of the coalition, has characterized Ohio's record on education as "'194 years of neglect.'"

Although the statement is foolish, it represents the type of exaggerated rhetoric some education officials have adopted while attempting to put the financial pipeline for schools beyond the reach of the voters.

Plaintiffs' real goal: tax increase

The case, DeRolph vs. Ohio, was nominally about poor school districts not being able to provide adequate opportunities for their pupils. There's actually little argument that the state needs to do more for those children.



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The Columbus Dispatch, March 30, 1997

In reality, this case was about forcing Ohioans to pay much more for primary and secondary education across the state. If that weren't the goal, the coalition would not have been able to sign up nearly 90 percent of Ohio's school districts as parties to the suit.

The case, then, was not merely about equalizing educational opportunities; it was about getting a multibillion-dollar cash infusion for schools, with voters and state lawmakers having little say in the matter.

Such attempts have been made before. Until now, they largely have been unsuccessful.

The truth is that the vast majority of Ohio's 1.8 million public-school pupils enjoy much better educational opportunities than their parents and grandparents did. Americans are more educated than ever.

Until the late 1800s, high school was beyond the grasp of most Ohioans.

A modern system of public schools was not in place until the World War I era. Until World War II, the average American was not a high-school graduate.

And it wasn't until the 1960s that the nation truly embraced the goal of extending equal educational opportunities to all. Since then, steady progress has been made; per-pupil expenditures in real terms (adjusted for inflation) have more than doubled.

Nationally and in Ohio, state and local support for education has never been higher. In this state, in the last decade, taxpayers have provided increases in state and local funding at nearly twice the inflation rate.

In the 1994-95 school year, state and local support for Ohio's public schools averaged \$ 5,365 per pupil. By no rational or historic standard can anyone honestly call that cheap.

Ohioans' investment in education is sizable.

It also is true, however, that increasing pressure has been placed on primary and secondary schools. As society becomes more technological and sophisticated, threatening more than ever to separate the haves from the have-nots, the public's expectations of the schools have grown enormously.

Schools increasingly have been asked to fulfill roles in which parents and families have failed. Education leaders may hold an understandable conviction that investments have not kept pace with expectations.

But to advocate the overthrow of Ohio's entire system of education funding on the argument that it has failed to meet the "thorough and efficient" standard set by the framers of the Ohio Constitution is a perverse reading of history.

It is simply false to assert the claim, as the coalition did and a trigger-happy majority of the Supreme Court bought, that Ohio's school system violates the intent of the constitution's framers.

There is no doubt that Ohio's founders placed tremendous significance on the



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development of a thorough and efficient system of public education. The debates of the 1850-51 constitutional convention clearly show that delegates knew their descendants' expectations of public education constantly would increase.

Court distorts Constitution

The court majority characterized the framers' intent as a system "that is full, absolute, complete and nearly perfect." This reading is incorrect. It is wholly out of context.

The entire debate over the constitution's education clause was suffused with delegates' expressions of understanding that the amount of money needed to provide adequate schools for all would be always a subject of intense debate and compromise.

Over and over and over, the convention majority voted - expressly - to ensure that the General Assembly, representatives of the people, would have broad discretion in balancing the need for thorough and efficient schools with the need for an appropriate level of taxation.

The majority clearly envisioned a state-local partnership in the operation of the public schools. The majority expressly rejected a proposal to "equalize by consolidation the local funds of the state."

D.P. Leadbetter, a Holmes County farmer and convention delegate, was among the majority of delegates to approve of the education clause and to express its intent.

At the time, each township had its own school system.

"And they vote just as much money as they see fit for carrying on their schools," Leadbetter said. "In every district in my county, where it is practicable for them to do so, the people maintain a school for six months in the year, and upwards; others for four months; others for three months.

"The people are extending their operations in this matter as far and as fast as they are capable of doing. . . . If you attempt to drive it faster than the progress of public sentiment by means of constitutional or legislative enactment, you will only create dissatisfaction and bring down votes against the adoption of the constitution, more than you are aware of."

This is not to say that those delegates envisioned a school system that would stay fixed in time, forever township-run. The delegates clearly knew and expressed that the demands of education would evolve continuously.

But no one who reads those debates and gives an honest accounting of them can arrive at any other conclusion than that the framers intended the General Assembly to have broad powers for deciding how to provide for the organization, administration, **control** and funding of a thorough and efficient system of common schools.

People have taxing authority

As dedicated as those framers were to securing public education for all, they were equally dedicated to ensuring that the people - either directly or through



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their state legislators - would hold the purse strings.

Before 1851, the taxing power of the General Assembly was virtually unrestricted except for the prohibition against poll taxes. In response to past abuses, the 1851 constitution embraced restrictions on the state's authority to borrow and required adherence to a "uniform rule" in taxing all forms of property.

In following years, the history of the property-tax provisions of the Ohio Constitution has been of strict limits on property taxation, which can be exceeded only by a vote of the people.

Of course, in 1851, sales and income taxes were not foreseen. But whatever form of taxation is most suitable for funding schools in the 21st century, the principle of the people deciding how much to tax themselves for schools should be beyond debate.

That fundamental policy question cannot be the decision of one judge in Perry County, handpicked by the plaintiffs and to whom the Supreme Court inexplicably has delegated the power to veto whatever remedy is fashioned by the General Assembly.

If Ohio's school-funding system must "undergo a complete systematic overhaul," as the Supreme Court ordered, the people have the constitutional right to be in charge of the overhaul.

Schools must be held accountable

If the overhaul is to be as complete as the Supreme Court has demanded, the legislature should include a thorough examination of the many statutory provisions that insulate school systems from accountability to the public.

In crafting a remedy, the General Assembly must ensure that the public has the means to hold school districts strictly accountable for "thorough and efficient" operations and expenditure of funds.

For far too long, the discussion over educational improvement has been almost exclusively focused on money. While adequate facilities should be provided to all, much credible research shows money is not the most important factor in a pupil's performance.

Other factors - such as high expectations, parental involvement and dedicated teachers - are far more critical.

Ohio voters should have the opportunity to pass judgment on a constitutional amendment that is a reasonable, responsible and balanced effort at addressing the inequities that exist.

The Ohio Constitution, in Article I, guarantees that "all political power is inherent in the people." Ultimately, they must vote on any new school-funding system to ensure the equity of the remedy.

LOAD-DATE: March 31, 1997



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LEVEL 2 - 114 OF 606 STORIES

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The Plain Dealer

March 28, 1997 Friday, FINAL / GEAUGA-PORTAGE

SECTION: NATIONAL; Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 618 words

HEADLINE: LEDGEMONT SCHOOLS PUT UNDER STATE'S FISCAL CONTROL

BYLINE: By BARRY KAWA; PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

DATELINE: THOMPSON TOWNSHIP

BODY:

State Auditor Jim Petro yesterday handed control of Ledgesmont schools to the state, leaving it up to a seven-member commission to develop a new financial recovery plan for the district.

Petro placed the schools under fiscal emergency, which means the commission will be appointed within 15 days to run the cash-strapped district.

Though the state takeover was no surprise, the gloomy news was not welcomed.

"You just have to go on," said Ann Wickert, a middle school science teacher. "It would be a shame for this community to lose its schools by being forced to close. It looks like it's headed in that direction."

The emergency comes with the state's rejection of Ledgesmont's financial recovery plan, which attempted to address a more than \$500,000 deficit.

Ledgesmont school officials say they may challenge the takeover in court to allow them to maintain control until a May 6 levy vote.

The state-appointed commission will include Ledgesmont Superintendent Robert Fenn and three district residents, along with state school and financial representatives.

"This oversight will help resolve the financial burden for Ledgesmont local schools so the district can turn its full attention to the long-term educational needs of students," Petro said in a prepared statement.

Fenn said the announcement didn't surprise him, although school officials had hoped for a different reaction to their plan. He said a 9.85-mill school levy will still be on the May 6 ballot. Voters in the district have rejected the last seven levies.

If the May levy fails, Geauga County schools Superintendent Matthew Galemme plans to start consolidation talks with the Chardon and Cardinal school districts.



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The Plain Dealer, March 28, 1997

"It lets voters know we're one step away from losing our district," Fenn said. "So, it now should be abundantly clear if we're going to save the district, the levy needs to pass."

Don Bagley, assistant Geauga County prosecutor, said he would examine legal avenues to fight the **takeover**.

"We'd like the state to give us the opportunity to pass the levy before they take this kind of action," Bagley said. "The school needs to be able to focus on the levy, and this clearly hinders the process."

Yesterday's sunny, warm weather could not lift the somber mood in the district, which includes Thompson and Montville townships.

"It's just really discouraging," said Roberta Moss, a second-grade teacher. "They've [school officials] tried everything they were supposed to do, and they are not trying to cut it to the bare bones where these kids lose out on all their educational opportunities because we're having a financial problem."

Also yesterday, Petro placed Osnaburg Local schools in Stark County in a fiscal emergency status. Last year, Cleveland and Youngstown schools were placed under a fiscal emergency.

The state oversight commission will be disbanded if financial stability is restored and the district can offer a five-year plan for remaining financially stable.

But yesterday, that day looked far away, although Ledgemont officials said school would continue as usual.

Joey Neal, a first-grader, stopped by Moss' classroom yesterday to give her a cupcake in celebration of his seventh birthday.

Moss paused in her serious talk about the school and thanked Joey, but then returned to the critical issue.

Moss said the public's most recent defeat of a school levy in February demoralized her, and she wondered whether residents realized the severity of the financial struggle.

"I found that we're really in some serious trouble and some people didn't realize it," she said, excusing herself to get ready for her next class. "Well, no one has let it affect what's going on in the classroom."

GRAPHIC: BOX: MONEY TROUBLES; A chronology of Ledgemont School District's financial struggle:; Nov. 15, 1996: State places district under fiscal watch, meaning that unless school officials come up with an acceptable financial plan, the state will **take over** the district.; Feb. 4, 1997: District sees seventh defeat of a school levy.; Late February: State rejects district's financial recovery plan.; March 27, 1997: State Auditor Jim Petro places Ledgemont schools under fiscal emergency, meaning state will appoint a commission within 15 days to run the district.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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The Baltimore Sun

March 26, 1997, Wednesday, FINAL EDITION

SECTION: LOCAL (NEWS), Pg. 2C, The Education Beat

LENGTH: 917 words

HEADLINE: If no **takeover**, back to courts; **Schools**: If the state-city "partnership" legislation fails in the General Assembly, precedents in other cities suggest that Baltimore could lose even more **control** over its public **schools**.

BYLINE: Mike Bowler, SUN STAFF

BODY:

AS **STATE** lawmakers struggle with the Baltimore City **school** problem, they ought to ask themselves this question: If the **state-city** "partnership" legislation is rejected, what's next?

The city might be able to stand the "loss" of \$ 254 million during the next five years.

That's the amount the **state** would add to the city education budget in return for management reform that gives some -- but by no means all -- power over city **schools** to the governor and the **state** superintendent of **schools**.

But the money has to be found before it can be lost. Anyway, it's a drop in the bucket if you consider the real need of Baltimore **schools**. Spread over five years, the \$ 254 million is even more diluted. Call it the pittance that a politically weakened city could wrest from a reluctant **state**.

Baltimore is already educationally bankrupt. City and state officials conceded as much in remarkably candid remarks at a national conference sponsored in Baltimore last month by the Education Commission of the States, an education clearinghouse based in Denver. They recited the familiar statistics: 50 of the city's 180 schools are eligible for state **takeover**, and more are on the way. Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke testified he had come to endorse the partnership because he realized that the system was "unresponsive" and he "could not get at" aspects of management.

The long struggle in state and federal courts over financing and managing Baltimore schools "has been the equivalent of trench warfare," the mayor said.

If the legislation fails, it's back to the courts in May -- back to trench warfare, in other words.

In what mood will we find state Judge Joseph H. H. Kaplan and federal Judge Marvin J. Garbis, who had offered to wipe the litigation slate clean in return for the reform package being kicked around this week in Annapolis?



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The Baltimore Sun, March 26, 1997

Everyone close to the situation knows that Garbis had been particularly annoyed at Superintendent Walter G. Amprey's failure to carry out his orders in the 13-year-old special education case and that the judge came within an eyelash of placing the whole caboodle in receivership.

It's instructive to look at other cities where schools are in similar bankruptcy. In Cleveland, state Superintendent John Goff took over the city schools in 1995 with all powers except to levy taxes and close buildings.

Goff told the Baltimore hearing that he found a system with "horrible facilities," heavy debt and a graduation rate of 33 percent. He also had to deal with the third federal judge to rule on Cleveland's desegregation plan, roughly equivalent to Baltimore's long-running special education case. Goff said he was "very cynical" about the intent of interest groups, who make it almost impossible to get agreement on actions. "Urban districts are all about money and power," he declared.

The Ohio Supreme Court ruled Monday that the state's funding formula is unconstitutional, that the quality of a child's education is "dependent on the vicissitudes of geography -- that is, the place of the child's birth or residence." That observation applies to Baltimore as well, but if the Maryland case returns to state Circuit Court in May, it will take years (and millions of dollars in lawyers' fees) for appeals to be exhausted.

Two other bankruptcy "models" are in New Jersey, where Paterson, Newark and Jersey City schools are operated outright by the state, and in Chicago, where Mayor Richard M. Daley got sweeping managerial control over schools from the Illinois legislature two years ago.

Daley appointed a chief operating officer and a superboard to replace the existing board of education. Former City Hall staff members dominate the top levels of the new school bureaucracy. The Chicago experiment has had good reviews so far, but would it work in Baltimore? Would the General Assembly cede such authority to the city's mayor? Not likely.

The point is, of the responses to educational bankruptcy -- 22 states allow intervention, according to the education commission -- the one proposed for Baltimore is mild by comparison.

It's one of the few that would grant some local control and require state-city cooperation.

My colleague Gregory Kane, City Council President Lawrence A. Bell III and the local PTA are among many who complain of the city's giving up autonomy for a "measly" -- Kane's word -- \$ 254 million. He's got the measly part right. But the situation is such that Baltimoreans are likely to give up all authority over their schools if House Bill 312 fails.

Hopkins students use funds for intriguing projects

The Johns Hopkins University each year awards 50 undergraduates up to \$ 2,500 to propose and carry out research projects. This week's issue of the university's Gazette lists some of the more intriguing undertakings.

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The Baltimore Sun, March 26, 1997

Education Beat's favorite is that of senior Arthur Tsai of Woodside, N.Y., who is studying the embryos of grasshoppers. The outcome of Tsai's work might be a greater understanding of human spinal cord injuries. Juniors Matthew Scherneck of Philadelphia and Jonathan Weinberger of Scranton, Pa., are among a handful of people granted interviews with the eccentric Arizona architect Paolo Soleri, while senior Juliette Wells of Springfield, Va., traveled to Cambridge, England, to study original archives of mid-20th-century novelist Barbara Pym.

Elsewhere in the Gazette is news that Supreme Court wannabe Robert H. Bork will address the Pre-Law Society on Tuesday.

Pub Date: 3/26/97

TYPE: COLUMN

LOAD-DATE: March 27, 1997

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LEVEL 2 - 141 OF 606 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Detroit News, Inc.
The Detroit News

March 14, 1997, Friday

SECTION: Metro; Pg. Pg. D1

LENGTH: 690 words

HEADLINE: Engler outlines his plans for **takeover of schools**

BYLINE: By Mark Hornbeck / News Lansing Bureau

BODY:

LANSING -- Ecorse, Highland Park and Benton Harbor **schools** are the worst in Michigan, and they're targets of Gov. John Engler's proposal to have the **state** seize **control** of failing districts, the governor said Thursday.

Other districts, including Detroit, could be on the **takeover** list in future years as districts are judged by their students' performance on new **state** tests.

Engler, who initially proposed the so-called "School District Educational Accountability Act" in January, provided new details Thursday when Sen. Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron, introduced a five-bill package to implement the controversial plan.

"We believe firm, bold action in **school** districts where they're not getting the job done is necessary," said Engler. "These bills identify districts where we have massive problems and kids are being left behind."

Democrats said the package isn't likely to pass the House in its current form.

"I have serious questions about the state coming in and taking over districts that are floundering and have had serious problems for years," said House Education Committee Chair Sharon Gire, D-Clinton Township. "The problems are so complex, to send in one trustee and expect that individual to solve them is too simplistic."

Gire said she would rather have a team sent in to diagnose a district's problems and propose solutions.

Under the legislation, schools may be declared educationally bankrupt by the governor if one or more of these conditions apply:

* More than 50 percent of students score in the lowest category on fourth- or seventh-grade Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) math and reading tests for five consecutive years. Scores on the tests are rated "satisfactory," "moderate" and "low."

Ecorse, Highland Park and Benton Harbor are the only school districts in the state where more than half the students scored "low."



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* More than 50 percent of pupils score in the low ranking on fifth- or eighth-grade MEAP science or writing exams for five straight years. The tests were new this spring.

* More than 80 percent of students who are graduating fail to pass any portion -- math, science, reading or writing -- of the High School Proficiency Test for two years. The tests were given recently for the second time and results will not be available until May, state school officials said.

Many districts, including Detroit, had more than 80 percent of their students flunk at least one part of the first battery of proficiency tests.

The governor would review the list of failing districts and decide which ones needed state intervention. The state superintendent recommends three potential receivers and the governor chooses one.

The receiver signs a one-year, renewable contract and has the power to fire the local superintendent and other administrators, juggle finances, transfer teachers and rework curriculum. The receiver would not have the authority to cancel contracts or fire teachers. The local school board becomes an advisory body.

"If the administrator does not perform in one year, he or she will be gone, too," said state schools chief Arthur Ellis.

The criteria for **takeover** are markedly different from those identified by Engler when he laid out the plan in his State of the State message. Under the governor's original proposal, more than 100 districts would have been eligible for state intervention.

"They (the initial criteria) were too broad and were open to attack," said DeGrow. "These standards are sufficiently low that nobody can make a legitimate defense that districts failing to meet them are doing a quality job."

Local school officials said they were not notified about the legislation's impact on their districts.

"I haven't got a real keen feeling about Engler," said Benjamin Dobbs, vice president of the school board in Ecorse, where voters last November approved a \$45-million bond to build a new high school. "I don't like what he's trying to do with schools."

"We're trying to bring back the district, increase academics, make these schools better."

Detroit News Staff Writer Craig Garrett contributed to this report.

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THE HARTFORD COURANT

March 11, 1997 Tuesday, STATEWIDE

SECTION: MAIN; Pg. A9

LENGTH: 402 words

HEADLINE: SCHOOL TAKEOVERS

BYLINE: Compiled by Courant Staff Writer Robert A. Frahm

BODY:

Although many would view a **state takeover** of Hartford's public **schools** as a drastic step, Connecticut would not be the first **state** to seize **control** of a struggling **school** system. Twenty-two **states** have laws permitting such **takeovers**, but actual intervention is still relatively rare. Here are some notable examples:

NEW JERSEY -- In the best-known example of state **takeovers**, New Jersey seized **control** of its three largest public school districts -- Jersey City, Paterson and Newark -- removing school boards and replacing top administrators with state-appointed educators.

Susan Fuhrman, a researcher who studied the Jersey City experiment, said such **takeovers** often fail to address underlying economic issues that cause urban districts to engage in "all kinds of patronage and nepotism." In addition, Fuhrman, dean of the graduate school of education at the University of Pennsylvania, said state **takeovers** often focus on management issues, such as fixing buildings, but place less emphasis on actual classroom instruction.

Still, New Jersey officials say the **takeovers** in Jersey City in 1989 and Paterson in 1991 have begun to produce improvements in student achievement. Newark's **takeover** in 1995 is too recent to measure, officials said.

OHIO -- A federal judge in a desegregation case ordered the state to **take over** Cleveland's crumbling public schools in 1995.

Ohio officials are streamlining

the management of Cleveland's schools and rewriting the curriculum. Voters approved a tax increase, but the district still is operating about \$140 million in the red this year -- a figure equal to about one-fourth of the school budget.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A financial **control** board created by Congress threw out the top officials in the D.C. public schools last year and put a retired Army general in charge of the system.

ILLINOIS -- The state legislature in 1995 gave Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley



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broad powers to run the city's schools, including replacing the board of education and appointing the head of the school system and other top administrators.

MARYLAND -- A bill before the state legislature would give the governor and state board of education a role in replacing Baltimore's school board and naming a new city school chief. Baltimore's mayor would lose his near-exclusive power in running schools in exchange for more state money to help reform the system.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: March 11, 1997



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Copyright 1997 Times Mirror Company
Los Angeles Times

March 1, 1997, Saturday, Home Edition

SECTION: Metro; Part B; Page 3; Metro Desk

LENGTH: 463 words

HEADLINE: JUDGE REJECTS COMPTON BOARD'S BID TO REGAIN **CONTROL OF SCHOOLS**;
EDUCATION: DELAYS IN TURNING AROUND DISTRICT ARE A CONCERN BUT **STATE** HAS NOT
ABUSED ITS POWER, JURIST RULES.

BYLINE: MATEA GOLD, SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

BODY:

A Los Angeles Superior Court judge ruled Friday that the **state** should keep the reins of the beleaguered Compton Unified **School** District after **school** board trustees sued to wrest back local **control**.

The **state** bailed out the financially strapped **school** district in 1993, and since then a Department of Education appointee has run the day-to-day operations while the seven-member **school** board has functioned as an advisory panel.

After a four-day hearing, Superior Court Judge David Workman said it is "a matter of concern" that the **state** has not made more progress in improving the **schools**, but that **state** Supt. Delaine Eastin did not abuse her discretion in retaining **control** of the district.

"We're obviously very happy that the judge recognized the hard work involved in turning the district around," said Richard Whitmore, the state's chief deputy superintendent, in an interview Friday.

L'Tanya Butler, attorney for the school board, said late Friday that she was disappointed with the ruling and that she will talk to her clients about whether they plan to appeal.

"I know that if the situation in the district does not improve, there will be another lawsuit, and hopefully a more successful one," Butler said.

State officials said improving the debt-ridden district has taken time because of difficulty in building consensus with the local school board.

"Our basic argument was always that there's been improvements, but there haven't been enough," Whitmore said. "Because the Legislature mandated we improve student achievement in that district, until we see significant improvement, we don't think it's fair to the kids to turn the district back. Until we see a school board that's ready to collaborate, we don't believe it's ready to turn back to local governance."



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Los Angeles Times, March 1, 1997

School trustees say the district was unconstitutionally seized and that the state did not develop reasonable guidelines for the 28,000-student school system to be returned to local **control**. The state has also come under fire for the district's deteriorating school facilities and low student test scores.

"It is everyone's hope that the state will show the commitment that everyone is doubting the board has, because it is just utterly unbelievable that they could have run this school system for 3 1/2 years and these conditions that are a threat to the health and safety of the children still exist," Butler said.

Butler said the district was not able to make its case because state employees who testified were afraid to strongly criticize the department.

"If they had stated plainly and succinctly that the state had been totally disregarding the needs of the district . . . then they probably would not have been employable in the state of California," Butler said.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: March 1, 1997



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Copyright 1997 The Columbus Dispatch
The Columbus Dispatch

February 26, 1997, Wednesday

SECTION: EDITORIAL & COMMENT, Pg. 10A

LENGTH: 582 words

HEADLINE: MAYORAL RULE;
CLEVELAND SCHOOLS NEED TOUGH DECISION-MAKER

BODY:

Cleveland Mayor Michael R. White wants to take **control** of that city's troubled public-school system because he believes he can make tough decisions on spending and accountability. He thinks returning authority to the elected school board would be a mistake.

A school governance committee agrees and so does The Dispatch. The ailing system hardly can do worse than under the fractious elected board, which left the Cleveland district \$ 150 million in debt.

Its mismanagement and fiscal irresponsibility were so great that a federal judge presiding over school desegregation gave **control** of it 22 months ago to the Ohio Department of Education.

Now, it's time to make a gradual return to local **control**. The governance committee believes the best way to do that is to give White the power to choose board members and hire a chief executive officer to run the district's day-to-day operations. The city would try an appointed board for four years and vote in 2001 whether to return to an elected board.

There are precedents for such mayoral **takeovers** in Boston, Baltimore and Chicago. And the Chicago experiment, in particular, receives mostly high marks. Mayor Richard M. Daley named a budget expert - not an educator - as chief executive officer. The CEO put together a financing plan for construction, balanced the budget, cut the central bureaucracy by nearly 30 percent and removed 14 principals and almost 200 teachers and others for malfeasance.

That's the kind of tough decision-making that most urban districts desperately need. Still, a one-size-fits-all solution is not the answer. Cincinnati schools have made major advances in pupil performance in the past five years without mayoral intervention. In Baltimore, the mayor is abdicating **control** after seven years of mixed results.

Clearly, turning **control** of the schools over to the Cleveland mayor is an act of desperation that might not be needed if the board's performance had not been so dismal.

Still, consensus won't be easy to come by in the General Assembly. There are factions of lawmakers who believe:



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White should not be granted **control** without a prior vote of the people.

Mayoral **control** is a superficial solution, lacking added opportunities for charter schools and vouchers that transfer power to parents.

That a better answer is decentralization of large, urban districts, such as Cleveland.

House Speaker Jo Ann Davidson, R-Reynoldsburg, prudently suggests that as the legislature debates these thorny issues, it consider alternatives to school governance, especially in urban areas.

This might include options for big, unmanageable districts to decentralize or for boards to include a mixture of appointed and elected members.

Just as Ohio cities have options on what form of governance to choose, school systems should have some alternative types of organization. This makes sense, given how poorly traditional elected boards have performed, especially in some urban schools.

Ultimately, the debate over the Cleveland district's governance may be just the first step of a long journey to re-evaluate the structure of urban schools. The Cleveland system has some unique problems that seem to require a mayoral fix, provided the state retains some fiscal oversight. But long term, many urban schools may find that less drastic measures, such as reorganizing into smaller districts or reconfiguring the board, will reach the same goal of increased accountability and cost **control**.

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Copyright 1997 The Detroit News, Inc.
The Detroit News

February 26, 1997, Wednesday

SECTION: Metro; Pg. Pg. C3

LENGTH: 370 words

HEADLINE: In Lansing: Engler takes education reins

BYLINE: By Kenneth Cole and Mark Hornbeck / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

BODY:

LANSING -- Maneuvering by Republican **state** senators cleared the way Tuesday for Gov. John Engler to take additional **control** of public education.

In a rare procedural move, GOP leaders abruptly adjourned the Senate session -- avoiding a vote to challenge Engler's move. Without a vote, the governor's plan takes effect automatically. It shifts power from the **state** Board of Education, now under the leadership of Democrats, to the **state** superintendent of **schools** -- Art Ellis, a longtime friend of Engler's.

Tuesday was the last day lawmakers could have voted to reject the power shift.

"Republicans, by not allowing a vote on the governor's orders, are saying politics comes before taking care of the people's business," said Sen. Virgil Smith, D-Detroit, noting that the adjournment kept the Senate from other work.

Said Detroit Democrat Kathleen Straus, who just became president of the state board: "It's too bad they (GOP senators) wouldn't even allow a vote. There were so many Republicans in the House who rejected the executive orders that we were hopeful Republicans in the Senate would reject it, too."

Straus said she and other Democrats may sue to block Engler's two executive orders.

Speaking for the governor, press secretary John Truscott said: "The criticism smacks of politics. If you're going to criticize something, fine. But come with solutions."

Smith called the two orders "bad policy" and noted that the State Board is the top educational authority, according to the Michigan Constitution.

"The governor, by his executive order, has given that authority to the state superintendent of schools, who's not even an elected official," added the Detroit senator.

Engler unveiled his plan in December, saying the school board spent too much time on administrative chores and not enough on sweeping education policy.



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The Detroit News, February 26, 1997

Democrats called it a power grab in wake of November elections, when Republicans lost **control** of the eight-seat education board -- now split equally among the two parties.

Democrats contend Engler wants to give more power to his ally -- Ellis -- so he can advance his education agenda, including charter schools and state **takeovers** of failing districts.

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

February 16, 1997, Sunday, FIVE STAR EDITION

SECTION: NATIONAL, Pg. A-24

LENGTH: 1186 words

HEADLINE: DALEY RESCUES CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS;
RADICAL TAKEOVER BY MAYOR PULLS NATION'S THIRD-LARGEST SYSTEM FROM FINANCIAL;
MORASS

BYLINE: DANIEL LEDUC, THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

DATELINE: CHICAGO

BODY:

Built in 1914, the Helen C. Peirce Elementary **School** is a three-story, blond-brick building with space for 750 students. On a recent morning, 1,029 students were crammed into the **school's** classrooms, adjacent storefront space, and four trailers on a slushy playground.

Soon, there will be more space for young voices singing "The Sound of Music," a cafeteria to replace hallway serving tables, more elbow room for fourth graders writing their fledgling novels.

A 23-classroom addition is planned for next year at this **school** on the city's poor, multiethnic north side. It will be the most visible sign of the changes since **Mayor** Richard M. Daley, with the blessing of the **state** legislature, took complete **control** of the nation's third-largest public **school** system.

It was the most radical transfer of school authority to a big-city mayor in the nation.

In little more than 18 months, Daley has restored financial order to the once perpetually deficit-ridden system, which former Education Secretary William Bennett once called the "worst in America." And at Peirce Elementary and elsewhere - in bricks and mortar, new roofs and new windows - dramatic improvements are changing the face of the system.

But what is happening inside those buildings is harder to change.

Nearly one-fifth of the city's 557 schools are on academic probation for low test scores; truancy and dropout rates remain high; middle-class residents continue to desert the system.

And with the schools' success now tied to the mayor's political fortunes, some educators worry that real reforms may be sacrificed for quick fixes before the next election.

Still, amid the accolades and the brickbats there is something new in many



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Chicago classrooms. Hope.

"There's a lot of pressure on pupils and teachers to keep a quiet, academic environment," said Janice M. Rosales, the principal at Peirce Elementary. "But there's also the pressure of accountability, to raise test scores. We're not on probation, but we see the schools that are and that's motivation."

From Mayor Ed Rendell's declaration of a renewed commitment to Philadelphia's schools, to efforts from Sacramento, Calif., to Boston, big-city mayors are taking on education reform with renewed vigor.

Nowhere has the shift of **control** from educators and school boards to politicians at City Hall been more pronounced than in Chicago.

The State of Illinois has given the mayor authority to appoint the superintendent - now called the chief executive officer - and a five-member board and to assume broad authority over the use of state school funds.

To underline his commitment to education, Daley named his own budget chief as the schools' chief executive officer and his former chief of staff as board president. He promised a businesslike approach to running the 420,000-student system and said executives from local companies would be recruited to manage local schools to free up principals to concentrate on academics.

"There is no other model in the country like Chicago's," said Michael Bakalis, a former Illinois state school superintendent who now teaches at Northwestern University. "The Chicago schools are not being run democratically. They're being run by two or three people. I'm not saying that negatively. It's a crisis situation."

The previous school board president went to prison for income tax evasion, and the political intrigue at the board's offices, Daley complained, "made the Kremlin look progressive."

Within a month after assuming the new powers, Daley's administration had signed a four-year contract with the teachers' union, allowing modest raises and turning the once-skeptical union into an ally.

School chief executive officer Paul Vallas, a schoolteacher before he entered government, next drove out other unions representing maintenance employees and other nonprofessional employees and replaced them with private services, saving \$ 170 million. He exposed warehouses of food and furniture that gathered dust under the old administration. He changed procedures to order such supplies delivered directly to schools for immediate use - and scored a public relations coup.

More important, Wall Street took notice of the new fiscal practices. For the first time since the late 1970s, bond houses rated the system with investment-quality grades, allowing the new board to borrow \$ 806 million for school construction and renovation.

At schools like Peirce, the annual maintenance budget increased from \$ 10,000 to \$ 100,000. The storefront spaces and trailers will soon be gone. A new roof, new stairs and new windows "which we've been begging for for the past 12



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years," says Rosales, will soon be realities.

Nan Sullivan, whose two children attend Peirce and who sits on the school's parent-teacher council, has nothing but praise for the changes.

"Nothing else was working," she said. "Now, there's a lot of hope."

Not everyone is happy. The centralization of power has prompted complaints that the schools are being run by a political machine in which whom you know counts more than what you need.

"I would not call this a corporate model at all. It's city hall style," said Julie Woestehof, executive director of Parents United for Responsible Education. "I've begun calling Vallas the super-committeeman. Everything goes through him. If you want an addition for your school, go to him. If you want something done in your neighborhood, go to your alderman. That's the way it works in Chicago, that's the level they're on."

Vallas dismisses such attitudes: "Our success has almost disappointed some people. My job is to ensure that the educators have the time to focus on their jobs."

Many reform groups here, including Parents United, grew out of education legislation passed in 1988 that created local school councils with the intent of giving more autonomy to schools and parents. Some of those councils now feel their authority is threatened.

Even so, most have acknowledged that Vallas' first year was successful in bringing finances under **control**. This year, the focus is on classroom performance, and such improvements take time.

Vallas, who has sought out advice from leaders of Chicago's giant Catholic school system, plans to institute a new values-oriented philosophy in the classrooms. He also intends to impose a core curriculum in high schools to emphasize basic math, science and reading skills.

The new board has begun mandating homework, and administrators have expelled more problem students than in the recent past.

Vallas has promised to raise standardized test scores - his main benchmark of academic progress - through mandating summer school for elementary students who don't keep up, banning promotions based only on social reasons, and increasing efforts to root out truancy and boost attendance.

Most elementary school students showed progress in the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills released last summer, following the first year of the mayoral **takeover**.

Vallas used those test scores to place 109 schools on probation last October.

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LEVEL 2 - 202 OF 606 STORIES

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The Boston Globe

February 10, 1997, Monday, City Edition

SECTION: METRO/REGION; Pg. B3

LENGTH: 483 words

HEADLINE: **State** education chief seeks **takeover** of Lawrence **schools**

BYLINE: By Kate Zernike, Globe Staff

BODY:

State Education Commissioner Robert V. Antonucci today will begin the formal steps toward making the troubled Lawrence **school** system the first to come under **state control**.

The commissioner said yesterday that he will ask the **state** Board of Education at its meeting today to give him power to look at several options that would allow a **state takeover** in Lawrence and the ousting of administrators who have neglected the district's problems.

Some see Lawrence as a demonstration of the perils of education reform. Its high **school** became the second **school** in **state** history to lose accreditation despite an infusion of \$ 200 million from the **state** since the Education Reform Act of 1993.

A state audit is investigating charges that school administrators misspent the money on frills like bagpiping lessons and laptop computers for school committee members while ignoring a list of 50 problems - including lack of books and adequate light, oxygen and space - that put the high school on probation 10 years ago.

Two weeks ago, Governor William F. Weld urged the board to look at a **takeover** and the removal of Superintendent James F. Scully, who has lifetime tenure.

Antonucci said he wants to be able to consider four proposals and return to the board with a recommendation in March, when the audit is expected to be complete.

He wants the board to take a formal vote to authorize him to take those steps so it will be clear that the state is continuing the pressure on Lawrence.

"I want to be out there," Antonucci said.

Board members have said they will back the commissioner, and other state leaders have said they want to see swift action on Lawrence so its problems won't derail or discredit the seven-year reform effort begun in 1993.

The commissioner will look at several options.



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One would put the 11,000-student district into receivership by declaring it "underperforming."

According the reform act, the state would then send in a team to help the school come up with a reform plan. Then if the system did not improve after two years, the state would **take over**.

Antonucci will also consider filing legislation to allow the state to go in immediately.

He and other state officials have said that they fear Lawrence would dawdle on improving the system the same way it stalled on fixing problems at the high school.

Two other proposals are aimed at Scully, who has aggressively fought charges of mispending and insisted that the accreditation team was biased against him.

One would establish a regulation under which the commissioner could strip the credentials of any administrator in a system where a school lost accreditation. Now, certification can only be stripped for "crimes of moral turpitude."

The commissioner will also look at legislation allowing the state to oust administrators found, after hearings, to have neglected their duties under state law.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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LEVEL 2 - 208 OF 606 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Detroit News, Inc.
The Detroit News

February 09, 1997, Sunday

SECTION: Outlook; Pg. Pg. B5

LENGTH: 1049 words

HEADLINE: **State takeovers** display mixed education results

BYLINE: By Richard Burr / The Detroit News

BODY:

Gov. John Engler joined a growing national trend, when he recently proposed allowing the **state to take over school** districts with low test scores or high dropout rates. Although results elsewhere are mixed, **states** are giving their education departments the power to seize low-achieving **school** districts from locally elected **school** officials.

The **state** "cannot sit by and ignore the problems in the name of local **control**," Engler declared in his **State of the State** address two weeks ago. Why would the **state** do better than local districts? "So many of these systems have made it impossible to do worse," he told The Detroit News editorial board a week ago.

This message echoes the rationale of New Jersey, which passed the first "academic **takeover**" law in the nation. Said then-Commissioner of Education Saul Cooperman: "If not us, whom; if not now, when? ... Enough is enough."

Twenty-one other states, including Michigan, have followed suit with various academic bankruptcy laws. The longest-running experiment has been in Jersey City, New Jersey's second largest district.

The state took **control** in October 1989 after a report found rampant "cronyism" and low student passing rates on a state proficiency exam. The superintendent was demoted and the school board was abolished, while the state appointed its own superintendent. School facilities were immediately improved, says Richard Vespucci, a spokesman for the New Jersey Department of Education.

But the original state-appointed superintendent resigned in 1994 when an audit discovered improper spending and weak administrative **controls**. The state considers the incident an aberration. New Jersey has had no such problems in Paterson or Newark, the only other districts out of 596 that the state has seized, Vespucci says.

The most difficult challenge has been to raise test scores. Results on state tests have not reached the minimum level required before the state can free Jersey City schools. During the past year, the increase of eighth- and 11th-grade students who achieved passing scores on the reading and mathematics state exams ranged from 2 percent to 10 percent.



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"The results seem to indicate that the more time Jersey City has had to work with its younger students, the better the results," said New Jersey Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz.

"It hasn't helped at all," said Daniel Cassidy, the educational policy aide for Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler. He considers the test score improvements marginal.

The problem is that a growing local school bureaucracy is reporting to a larger bureaucracy in the state capital, Cassidy says. What would work better is creating more charter schools and giving parents vouchers to let them choose between private and public schools, he says.

"If the state knows better than the city, why don't they just tell us?" asked Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools. "... I think the state could do worse."

Other states have approved academic **takeover** or "bankruptcy" laws, but have not been as active as New Jersey. Schools or districts that don't meet certain state academic criteria are given several warnings, according to the Education Commission of the States. Sometimes the state provides professional or financial support.

In Michigan, the state sets academic competence standards that schools, not districts, must meet to win accreditation. They include minimum passing rates on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests.

If schools fall short of meeting accreditation standards for three consecutive years, the state can withhold up to 5 percent of their state funding until an acceptable improvement plan is filed. Other state sanctions for unaccredited schools include allowing students to transfer to another school in the same district; state appointment of an interim principal or even closing the school.

No school has suffered such sanctions. The earliest any penalties could go into effect in Michigan is the 1998-99 school year, says Bob Harris, the communications director for the state Department of Education.

A twist in the state **takeover** trend is state legislatures handing over **control** of local school districts to their mayors. In 1995, the Illinois General Assembly gave responsibility for Chicago school governance to Mayor Richard Daley. He appointed his budget director, Paul Vallas, as the district's "chief executive officer."

Vallas acted swiftly. He eliminated a projected four-year deficit of more than \$ 1 billion. Vallas contracted out central office functions such as janitorial and carpentry services. And he and his five-member school board abolished a district policy allowing automatic promotion from grade to grade. State and college entrance exam scores in Chicago have improved during the past year.

Other mayors nationwide have sought more say in their school district's decisions. New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani wants greater authority over school finances. Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry has won line-item veto power over the school budget. And Boston's mayor has regained the authority to appoint the

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school board.

In contrast, Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer reportedly rebuffed an offer from Gov. John Engler to run the Detroit Public Schools.

Having the mayor **take over** would be a better answer in Jersey City, says Jersey City mayoral aide Cassidy, who adds that the mayor is not campaigning for that authority. At the least, he says, the mayor would be politically accountable to the grass roots, unlike the state.

The irony is that giving mayors **control** of their city school systems is motivated by financial as well as academic mismanagement -- the kind of "corruption" that led political reformers at the beginning of this century to seize the schools from mayors, notes Governing magazine.

But the costs of an ailing school system are too great for a mayor to ignore, Cassidy argues. The city has an interest in assuring that the public schools provide a good education, he says, so middle-class professional families will stay.

Cassidy points to the experience of Detroit. When the Archdiocese of Detroit was forced to close many parochial schools almost a decade ago, he says, the middle-class tax base fled the city.

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Bossing City Schools

Big-city mayors are seeking more power over their local school boards now that education has become a top public concern and urban education has plummeted to the bottom of the success charts.

BY ROCHELLE L. STANFIELD

Thomas M. Menino couldn't have picked a better time to stick his neck out. Boston's popular mayor has never had it so good. His hometown New England Patriots football team went to the Super Bowl. (So what if, once again, they didn't win.) Menino is enjoying an approval rating of about 80 per cent. And with a well-stocked campaign war chest, he's considered a shoo-in for reelection in September.

So, assuming full responsibility for the fate of Boston's troubled public school system—a move ratified by 70 per cent of the city's voters—may not appear to be a great risk for Menino.

But that doesn't explain why other big-city mayors are grabbing hold of the live hand grenade called urban education.

Public education is one headache that most U.S. mayors can avoid. And for most of this century, they have done just that. Nearly every school system in this country—98 per cent, according to the National School Boards Association—is controlled by an independently elected board that appoints the superintendent and is officially responsible for what goes on in the classroom.

Now education has catapulted to the top of the public's worry list and urban education has plummeted to the bottom of the success charts. All sorts of reforms have been tried for more than a decade; none of them seems to work. So why invite inevitable failure?

"As mayors, we take the blame for everything, no matter what happens," Menino responds.

Mayors can't afford not to get involved in school reform, Chicago's Richard M. Daley insists. Schools are "critical to the economic development of our cities," he told the U.S. Conference of Mayors at its Jan. 18 meeting in Washington. It's the mayor's duty to improve urban education as a way to attract business and retain middle-class residents. Otherwise, he warned, "to be frank, people will leave your city."

Like Menino, Daley now runs his city's school system. Unlike Menino, he didn't volunteer for the task. A Republican-

dominated Illinois legislature dumped control in his lap in July 1995.

But Daley has become a zealous convert. He not only made education the centerpiece of his city administration, but his top priority this year as president of the mayors' conference. That's a major switch for an organization that has never before even had a committee dealing with education.

Austin (Tex.) Mayor Bruce Todd notes that during his half-dozen years in the organization, the topic of public schools never came up. But he said the subjects that were discussed, "crime, gangs, unemployment, declining tax base due to flight from the cities . . . come back to one simple thing: the success or failure we have experienced in the cities in raising our children."

Now mayors across the country are getting Daley's religion, if their enthusiastic comments—indeed, just their attendance—at an 8 A.M. meeting on a recent Saturday in Washington is any indication.

Daley, Menino and other mayors are focusing on management fixes for entire school systems. Thus, they are taking an approach that is the opposite of the currently popular charter school and voucher plans that rely on market forces to improve individual schools. In so doing, the mayors may not be addressing the whole picture.

"You know you have to fix schools one school at a time," said Ted Sanders, now president of Southern Illinois University, who, as Ohio's state superintendent of schools in the early 1990s, took over the Cleveland school system. "Yet, you'll never get it done if you try to fix one school at a time."

What Sanders did in Cleveland is a more common approach to dealing with public school crises around the nation. Because state governments are ultimately responsible for public education, they sometimes end up taking over failing school systems as a last resort. A variation on this occurred in Washington, D.C., where a congressionally created financial control board—acting in the manner of a state—took over the school system, pre-

More...

empting the elected school board and replacing the superintendent.

Many education experts warn that the mayors' do-it-yourself efforts are likely to backfire. "I'm really quite pessimistic that the mayor will be able to address the underlying fundamental problem, which is how to improve the test scores and the educational capacities of low-income minority children," said Paul E. Peterson, a Harvard University professor currently studying school voucher experiments in Cleveland and Milwaukee.

"I think the question is not whether you should have centralization or decentralization, but whatever is appropriate" for a particular city, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said. What is essential, he went on, are high academic standards and a reliable assessment system that shows whether students are meeting them. "Then you can look at what sort of organization at the local level delivers."

What the voters want is better student test scores. In the past, that's been the hardest promise for mayors to deliver.

In the 1970s, the mayors of Detroit and New York tried to rescue their schools and failed, said Michael W. Kirst, a Stanford University professor who studies the politics of education. "It didn't last, because they began to be accused of not being able to raise achievement scores and improve the schools, so the mayors backed out on the basis that this was a no-win ball game." Kirst foresees history repeating itself now.

Menino dismisses such negativism. "The scores *will* increase," he insisted. "You can't have a defeatist attitude. You *have* to have a focus, a plan. That's *what we* have in Boston for the first time in many years.

"And I'll tell you one thing: Kids in the Boston public schools today are getting a better education than they did two years ago or even one year ago."

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Today's mayors are wading into the swamp of urban education, for the most part, to deal with fiscal or managerial messes in their local school systems. So far, their administrative changes seem to be working.

Chronic deficits triggered the moves in Boston and Chicago. A more complex accountability problem stimulated change—although not the remedy sought by the mayor—in New York City. "In all of these cases, money was never far below

the surface," explained John F. Jennings, director of the Center for National Education Policy, a small education think tank in Washington.

Since 1969, control over New York City's elementary, middle and junior high schools had been lodged in 32 elected community boards, many of them rife with scandal. The schools' chancellor administered the high schools, but nobody ran the system as a whole. When Republican Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani tried to take over, a politically divided state Legislature refused to give him the power. In a compromise late last year, the Legislature gave consolidated authority to schools chancellor Rudy F. Crew, with whom Giuliani appears willing to work amicably.

Boston's management quagmire resulted from a different kind of split control. The school committee (the city's name for its school board) was independently elected, but the mayor and city council set its budget. "Every year, the committee went and spent whatever it darned well felt like spending," Howard Leibowitz, Menino's director of intergovernmental relations, said. "It chronically ran deficits, but the kids weren't getting an education [equal to] the money being spent."

So Menino's predecessor, Mayor Raymond Flynn, pressed for a referendum to switch from a 13-member elected committee to a seven-member body appoint-

ed by the mayor. It squeaked through in 1989, but the changeover, which wasn't fully implemented until after Menino took over in 1993, was subjected to another referendum last November. To the surprise of many observers, the appointed board, backed by Menino, was retained by a sweeping margin of 70-30 per cent.

"The big thing is [that] somebody is now accountable for the system," Menino said. "In the past, we had chaos. Now we're working together, solving the problems, not blaming each other."

Menino has eliminated the school system's deficit, invested heavily in technology and poured millions of dollars into capital improvements. Before he became

mayor, Menino visited a school on the first day of classes. "Graffiti was all over the building. Tables were turned over, and it was dirty," he said. "I made a commitment to myself right then that school would never again open in Boston with those conditions. And we've done that."

A 1988 reform initiative made Chicago's public school system the most decentralized in the nation. Community groups—through a complex procedure—nominated a candidate slate from which the mayor appointed the board of education. But neighborhood councils for each of the city's 557 public schools hired principals and dictated the spending of a healthy chunk of the school budget. By spring 1995, the system was running a huge deficit and applied to the state legislature for a bailout.

Instead, the Republican-dominated legislature turned the problem over to Democrat Daley, authorizing him to directly appoint a five-member corporate-style board with a chief executive officer rather than a school superintendent.

"That's an awesome responsibility for one person: Daley," said Arthur L. Berman, the ranking Democrat on the Illinois Senate's Education Committee. "The Republicans wanted to drown him in this. It's [up to him] to float or drown, and so far, he's been [swimming] beautifully."

Daley appointed his chief of staff as president of the board and his budget director, Paul G. Vallas, as the effective superintendent of the school system. They have wiped out the deficit, negotiated a four-year contract with the teachers' union, constrained the discretion of the local school councils and imposed a comprehensive education plan on the schools.

"Education is now a citywide priority,

More...

BOSSING CITY SCHOOLS, continued... (3)

the priority of the most powerful governmental figure in the city," Vallas said in an interview. "The mayor now has the authority and the political obligation to make the system work, to mobilize the resources of the city in support of the system."

Such political clout can cut two ways, as Baltimore Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke has learned. Shortly before he took office, parents sued the state alleging inadequate financing of the city's schools. The state countersued, charging that the school board appointed by the mayor spent its money inefficiently. The result was a consent decree under which the mayor and the governor share power to appoint the board.

The decree "requires that four of the nine members of the new board be people with experience running a large institution," Christopher T. Cross, president of the Maryland State Board of Education, said. "But it's not just about having better managers of the money. It's also having a sense about how to create a strategic direction and plan for the district."

National School Boards Association executive director Anne L. Bryant argues that reforming the way school boards are selected doesn't necessarily guarantee improved results. "Lots of school boards behave just fine, and they are elected the same way as the boards who misbehave. I'm not sure it's a structural issue as much as it is the need for a change in the culture around how we run schools," she said.

THE HARD PART

Former Ohio schools chief Sanders warns that "you can deal with the man-

agement problems, but you can't turn around the situation surrounding some of the other problems you're going to face in trying to actually improve learning. Even if you wanted to, you couldn't replace every teacher and every administrator. You can't get the curriculum changed overnight, and you certainly can't change some of the conditions in which children are living and coming to school."

Mayors Menino and Daley are trying to address student achievement with very different approaches.

Menino hired a renowned school superintendent, Thomas W. Payzant, at the time the assistant U.S. secretary of Education for elementary and secondary education. He came to Boston in 1995 with a national reputation for turning around schools—in a Philadelphia suburb, Eugene (Ore.), Oklahoma City and, most recently, San Diego.

"Boston did not have clear expectations about what students should know in various subjects at various grade levels," Payzant said in a recent interview. "So the first thing we did was establish city-wide learning standards in math, science, English language arts and social studies." Even with the mayor's choices on the school committee, it took eight months to reach agreement on those standards.

Next came assessment—a test to determine just how much the students were learning. "Boston had used the same old metropolitan achievement test for 10 years, and the results overstated what really was the achievement of the students," Payzant said. So he gave a harder test, the so-called Stanford 9. "Predictably, the results were not good," he said. "But we've got a baseline."

Now he's working on putting in place a

tough new curriculum and training teachers in how to get students to learn it.

"People have to be realistic about what it's going to take to turn this system around," he said. "There has to be a way to begin showing some progress and have it be continuous each year over the next four or five years."

He recognizes that won't be easy. "This is the toughest assignment I've had in my career," he said.

In Chicago, Daley told his budget director, Vallas, to run the schools. "He didn't just go find a superintendent somewhere," Vallas said. "He didn't recycle one of these superintendents that seem to bounce from system to system."

Daley and Vallas have expanded preschool and extended the school day for elementary and high school students, imposed a core curriculum, ended the practice of promoting students to keep them with their age group and required summer school for students who don't perform adequately. They are also experimenting with school uniforms.

"All I'm doing here is what any reasonably intelligent person with a little experience in government would do if they were put in the same position," Vallas said.

"He's not a curricular expert, and they're trying some fairly crude stuff—back to basics and phonics and gimmicks," said Stanford's Kirst. "The key is: Can they improve the capacity of the teachers to teach kids better? That is something that typically these mayors and outsiders have not had a good strategy for doing."

Vallas responds that scores on "national standardized tests [given in Chicago] elementary schools are at their highest level in a decade. [And] a clear majority of high school children showed improvement this year as opposed to past years."

Critics say the improvements result from the 1988 reforms, not from what Vallas has done. "Instead of acknowledging the progress that had occurred and saying that they were going to build on it, they have attempted to present as bleak a picture as possible about what happened before they came on the scene," said Donald R. Moore of Designs for Change, a Chicago group that helped fashion the earlier reforms.

Vallas acknowledges that he is controversial and that his boss's neck is on the line. "If the job doesn't get done, you'll know who to blame," he said.

Does that mean the mayor's job really is on the line? Will the voters really hold the mayor responsible for the success or failure of the schools? "Those are good hypothetical questions," state legislator Berman said. "But they're not as important as another question: What happens to the kids?" ■

LEVEL 2 - 216 OF 606 STORIES

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The Plain Dealer

February 5, 1997 Wednesday, FINAL / ALL

SECTION: METRO; Pg. 1B

LENGTH: 363 words

HEADLINE: CLEVELAND NAACP INTENDS TO FIGHT SCHOOLS TAKEOVER

BYLINE: By MARIO G. ORTIZ; PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

BODY:

The local branch of the NAACP last night voted to oppose efforts to give **control** of the Cleveland **schools to the mayor** without a public referendum.

Their thumbs down was the black civil rights organization's first public comment on the governance issue that has captured the attention of education advocates, city officials and **state** legislators for months.

NAACP President George Forbes said the plan to give Mayor Michael R. White **control** of the district lacked one essential input: "It should be voted upon by the city of Cleveland. We trust them. They distinguished themselves in the last vote," he said referring to the successful school tax levy last fall.

Forbes, who closed the meeting to the media, said after the vote that the NAACP would challenge the constitutionality of any attempt to alter school governance without a referendum.

He said he and the NAACP deliberately kept a low profile during the public discussions of the governance plans to avoid accusations of playing politics. Forbes lost a mayoral bid to White in 1989.

The plan offered by the Advisory Committee on Governance, a group created by White and Superintendent Richard A. Boyd, would allow a referendum on mayoral **control** after four years.

Under the plan, the school board would be disbanded and the mayor would hire all top school administrators.

The NAACP Executive Committee made its vote after listening to Steven Minter and David Bergholz, co-chairs of the advisory committee.

Stanley Miller, an NAACP Executive Committee member who also served on the advisory committee, said only drastic change could improve the district's future. Miller cast the sole vote in favor of mayoral **control**.

He said the NAACP would influence public perception of the proposal, but he said much more debate remains before a final plan is considered by the legislature.



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The Plain Dealer, February 5, 1997

Meryl Johnson, a teacher and Cleveland Teachers Union official, said the union welcomed the NAACP as a partner in its fight against mayoral governance.

"It's going to be a major step in the defeat of the proposal," she said. Johnson was also invited to speak to the Executive Committee. The vote was taken before she spoke.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO BY: CHUCK CROW/PLAIN DEALER PHOTOGRAPHER; NAACP President George Forbes argues against a plan to give the mayor **control** of Cleveland schools at an NAACP executive committee meeting. The committee voted last night to oppose the plan.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: February 6, 1997

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LEVEL 2 - 234 OF 606 STORIES

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Los Angeles Times

January 26, 1997, Sunday, Southland Edition

SECTION: Part A; Page 1; Metro Desk

LENGTH: 2192 words

HEADLINE: **STATE FAILS TO STOP COMPTON SCHOOLS' SLIDE INTO DECAY;**
EDUCATION: DILAPIDATED AND FILTHY FACILITIES ILLUSTRATE DIFFICULTY OF GETTING
THE DISTRICT BACK ON TRACK. TOP OFFICIAL SAYS RAISING TEST SCORES, FIXING
ACCOUNTING PRACTICES WERE PRIORITY.

BYLINE: JEFF LEEDS, TIMES STAFF WRITER

BODY:

In the 3 1/2 years since the **state** Department of Education took **control** of the debt-saddled Compton **school** district, many buildings have fallen deeper into decay and disrepair:

Leaky roofs sometimes drive students and teachers out of their classrooms.

Broken windows are left unrepaired for months, leaving textbooks and **school** materials exposed to the elements and vandals.

Most classrooms have no heating or air conditioning, forcing students to endure cold or sweltering temperatures.

And some restrooms are so filthy and dilapidated that students refuse to use them.

"If these **schools** were prisons, they would be shut down," said Maureen DiMarco, Gov. Pete Wilson's former chief education advisor.

Department of Education officials who **control** the district's operations concede that conditions at Compton Unified School District rank at the very bottom of the state's public school system.

Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin said more emphasis should have been placed on maintenance and renovation during the state's proprietorship. But she described efforts as "a triage situation," saying officials first wanted to fix Compton's accounting practices and raise test scores.

Now, she said, they are beginning to assess the condition of the 38 schools and siphon more money into repairs. Advisors have urged her to dissolve the district and place its 28,000 students in neighboring schools, but Eastin said she is not yet ready to take that step.

Compton Unified School District holds a special position in California



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Los Angeles Times, January 26, 1997

education. It is the only district taken over because of both financial bankruptcy and academic deficiencies, meaning the state holds sway over the purse strings and the curriculum.

When Compton Unified was taken over in mid-1993 as a condition of receiving \$ 20 million in emergency state loans, the district was viewed as something of an experiment. It offered a chance for the state, with its vast resources and teams of experts, to show exactly how an inner-city school district should be run.

But the state's stewardship instead has demonstrated how difficult it can be to fix an educational institution after decades of neglect.

Under state management, test scores have risen slightly and the district has begun to repay the state loans. State officials have also tried to correct accounting practices that failed to warn the district that it had slipped into debt. But the state's efforts have been hampered by political infighting, an exodus of hundreds of teachers and rapid turnover of the state appointees who oversee the district's central office. In the last 12 months, four men have taken turns running Compton schools for the state.

Nothing illustrates the state's inability to get the district back on track as graphically as the floors, walls, ceilings and grounds of the campuses, some of which were constructed in the 1920s and '30s.

Records show that there is a backlog of 2,400 work orders to fix everything from broken water pipes to exposed electrical wires. While schools have accumulated close to \$ 50 million worth of deferred maintenance work, the district has been slashing its maintenance budget, with only \$ 429,000 put toward repairs last school year.

Applications for state funding to renovate 16 of the neediest schools are frozen in the district bureaucracy, and school officials say they have been forced to scale back plans to renovate 10 other schools.

School board members have sued the state, seeking to regain control of the district, and the trial is scheduled for next month.

Parents, teachers and the local teachers union say their repeated pleas to the state have failed to result in improved school conditions.

"If I had somewhere else for my son to go, I would take him out of there," said Karen Mackey, who has two children in the district. "It's really not fair. The majority of them want to be something in life. The kids are feeling cheated."

J. Richard Whitmore, an Eastin deputy who served as state administrator from July to November, said, "It's very easy to be critical of where we are today." He acknowledged that the district has been "slow to respond" to requests for basic maintenance and that inadequate supervision has resulted in poor quality repairs.

Michael P. Bishop, the associate superintendent for business and administrative services, said, "Conditions today are probably the same or a little worse than they were before the state takeover. It probably got worse immediately after and is only now beginning to be addressed."

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Public schools are falling apart all over America. In New Orleans, one elementary school reported that termites had chewed up walls, library shelves and the books on them. In Washington, D.C., poor physical conditions delayed the opening of several schools last fall.

In California, 43% of schools have at least one inadequate building, and 71% of the schools need roof repairs, plumbing, electrical or other work, according to a federal study last year.

Compton Unified's attempts to renovate most of its schools have been thwarted. Only three elementary schools have been overhauled with paint, new carpets and glass blocks to replace broken windows.

Compton had filed applications for state money to modernize 26 of its most decayed schools but, just after the state took over in mid-1993, decided to rescind 16 of the requests. District officials say the plans drawn for the projects were over budget and poorly conceived by the architect, who was later fired. Plans for the other 10 remodeling jobs were redrawn, leaving the district with less money for construction.

In addition, the architect sued the district for breach of contract and won \$ 400,000, a judgment on appeal.

Even basic maintenance has been left undone at Compton schools.

The district--with annual spending of about \$ 129 million--set aside \$ 1 million for repairs in 1994 but spent only \$ 740,000, records show. In 1995, it cut the budget to \$ 750,000 and then spent only \$ 429,644. Officials said the unspent funds were rolled over into the next year's budget.

Last spring, district officials touted plans for a \$ 14-million repair blitz. But the administrator who made that pledge resigned a few weeks later, and the promised repairs did not occur.

This year, officials dedicated \$ 8.5 million for repairs. About half of the money is earmarked for re-roofing most of the schools this spring, when Compton's high schools face a review by the state's accreditation panel.

"The district has not considered this repairs a priority," said Joyce Brooks, executive director of the teachers union, the Compton Education Assn. "The track record speaks for itself."

The problems in this relatively small school district have put Eastin, elected in 1994, under political heat. A number of state lawmakers have expressed willingness to repeal the legislation placing Compton under state authority, and the extent of the district's decay has become a concern in the governor's office.

One critic is Maureen DiMarco, who ran against Eastin and served as Wilson's secretary of child development and education until she resigned in November.

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Los Angeles Times, January 26, 1997

"The fact that this has continued under 3 1/2 years of receivership is particularly disturbing," said DiMarco, who toured the district last spring. "There's something very seriously wrong here."

*

Compton's schools have been in decay since before many of its teachers, let alone its students, were born.

"During the past 15 years, physical maintenance has consisted primarily of stopgap measures to repair damage rather than capital outlays to restore the buildings and sustain their useful lives," said one study by a Los Angeles County Grand Jury.

That report accurately describes conditions today. But it was written in 1985.

Compton Unified is still a bleak landscape of boarded-up windows, blistered paint, sagging roofs and fetid restrooms. The walls and floors of many portable classrooms are rotted and cracked. Ceiling tiles have fallen in many buildings.

When it rains at McNair Elementary School, it rains in McNair Elementary School.

In classroom after classroom, water seepage has caused portions of the ceilings to fall. Desks and chairs are dripping wet. Puddles form on the floor.

District repair workers have come by countless times to survey what needs to be fixed, but even 5-year-old kindergartner Eduardo Santos can size it up: "There's a hole in our school."

The rain forces Eduardo's class to haul its books to the cafeteria, the library or elsewhere.

One recent morning, 12 of the 30 students had been carted home by parents, who pull them out of school on rainy days for fear they will be hit by ceiling tiles or shocked by exposed wiring. Conditions have been this way, teacher Betty Wilson said, for nine years.

Five hours after a reporter visited the classroom, a work crew patched holes in the roof. District officials said the work was done in response to parent complaints.

After a recent night of storms, Principal Carrie Allen arrived at Centennial High School to survey the damage. In the guidance counselor's office, water had dripped from light fixtures and ceiling vents, soaking forms and reference manuals. Everything in a supply room was sopping wet too.

In a student lunch area outside the cafeteria building, graffiti-stained tables and warped metal benches are clustered under a rusting roof. Nearby, students parade on the blacktop that is supposed to offer 11 full basketball courts. All but one have broken hoops and backboards.



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Inadequate security has exacerbated the maintenance problem, officials say. The district now spends more annually to repair vandalism and arson damage--\$ 1.06 million in 1995-96, up from \$ 474,982 in 1992-93--than it does to fix aging facilities.

Thieves and vandals plague the campuses, spray-painting windows and walls, breaking windows, stealing lighting and plumbing fixtures, and stripping wire from heating and air-conditioning units to sell for scrap. In October, arsonists torched Emerson Elementary School while it was undergoing renovations, causing \$ 300,000 in damage.

In November, the state brought aboard its latest appointed administrator: Randolph E. Ward, a former assistant superintendent from the Long Beach school district, where he had helped implement a school uniform policy.

Ward has toured several schools to assess the scope of their deterioration. "I had a hard time understanding how, over the years, schools could be allowed to get this way if you care about kids," he said.

District administrators are looking into proposing a bond measure to pay for improvements, although they question whether it makes sense to raise taxes in a city where more than 39% of the residents are reported to be on welfare.

Some experts have advised Eastin to dissolve the district altogether.

"There should be an ultimatum at this point that you've got 'x' number of years to fix the district, or it will be dissolved, and let that happen," said Edward Zemla, a former district consultant who now works for the Chino school system.

Eastin said she wants to allow Ward time to demonstrate improvement before she tries to address questions surrounding dissolution, such as who would assume the remaining debt and how the district's assets could be divided.

Meanwhile, Eastin is exploring ways to raise additional money for maintenance and construction, including the sale of vacant land and at least one school.

The state superintendent also said she would meet with lawmakers from the Compton area to seek additional repair funds. "The district's central problem," she said, "is getting all its ducks in a row. For Compton, where one day they said they were in the black and the next they were \$ 23 million in the red, it is true that a lot of things get put on hold."

(BEGIN TEXT OF INFOBOX / INFOGRAPHIC)

A High Turnover

The Compton Unified School District was placed under the state Education Department in July 1993, and the state installed its own administrator. But frequent turnover, particularly last year, has contributed to instability.

March 1996: J. Jerome Harris, who raised test scores in Atlanta and New York schools, left Compton after a two-year stint. He slashed the district's maintenance budget, but students posted some improvement on reading and math tests.



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Los Angeles Times, January 26, 1997

March to July 1996: Dhyun Lal, a deputy superintendent with the state Education Department and a former Carson principal, was the first state administrator chosen by Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin after her election in 1994. After a brief teachers strike, Lal abruptly resigned.

July to November 1996: J. Richard Whitmore, an Eastin deputy, was to run operations on an interim basis while a national search was conducted for a full-time replacement. Amid the turmoil, the district virtually halted maintenance work.

November 1996 to present: Randolph E. Ward, a former Long Beach Unified School District assistant superintendent, has pledged to push through a series of renovation projects at 10 schools.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: From above left, a broken window at Roosevelt Middle School, a mangled table at McNair Elementary and a damaged ceiling and locker room at Willowbrook Middle School illustrate conditions in Compton district. State officials said they wanted to fix accounting practices and raise test scores before attending to maintenance and repairs. PHOTOGRAPHER: CLARENCE WILLIAMS / Los Angeles Times PHOTO: Principal Carrie Allen surveys damage and disrepair in storeroom at Centennial High School. PH FRANCINE ORR / For The Times

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: January 26, 1997

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S.F. Reforms Put on the Line In Legal Battle

By Caroline Hendrie
San Francisco

In 1994, officials at Potrero Hill Middle School here were given an ultimatum: Whip your school into shape—fast—or everyone on staff should start looking for a new job.

Ronald Cabral, the principal, remembers the shock of learning from Superintendent Waldemar Rojas that Potrero Hill was among nine San Francisco schools chosen for possible "reconstitution," a process that involves removing the whole staff and starting over from scratch.

"It was devastating in the initial couple of months," he recalled. "It was like restructuring with a gun to your head."

Since then, such experiences have become increasingly common as the city's school leaders forge ahead with what is arguably the nation's most aggressive plan for intervening in struggling schools.

Hailed by supporters as a ray of hope for urban education reform, the reconstitution program has nevertheless become anathema to a growing number of teachers and principals in the district.

"What sense does it make to punish the good, the bad, and the mediocre by saying, 'Everybody out?'" asked Joan-Marie Shelley, the president of the United Educators of San Francisco, the local teachers' union. "There's probably 90 percent agreement that reconstitution is a horror."

But beyond its controversial nature, what makes this ambitious program noteworthy is that it is being carried out under an unusual banner: a court-sanctioned desegregation agreement.

Known here simply as the consent decree, the 1982 agreement is worth more than \$30 million in extra state aid to the district each year. It also spells out action the district must take to improve student achievement

among African-Americans and Hispanics, including the reconstitution of three schools every year. That mandate has led the district to make far more extensive use of the dramatic reform technique than the few other places, such as Houston, in which it has been tried.

Now, 14 years after the consent decree was signed, it faces a serious challenge in federal court—not over the reconstitution policy, but over the constitutionality of its race-based system of classifying and assigning students.

Since the lawsuit was filed in January 1995, court proceedings and publicity surrounding it have largely focused on the issue of quotas for ethnic enrollment and how they affect the Chinese-American students who are challenging them.

But the case has broader implications for the ethnically eclectic school system and its nearly 64,000 students. If the courts throw out the consent decree, district officials believe their high-stakes intervention efforts would be dealt a potentially lethal blow.

"When you have the federal court reminding people of their moral responsibility, it's a lot easier," Mr. Rojas explained in a recent interview. "You can get more with a kind word and a gun than you can with just a kind word."

Decree's Reach Is Sweeping

In part because of its two-pronged approach of requiring both integration and sweeping school improvement, the consent decree has come to dominate district education policy.

Extending well beyond such traditional desegregation concerns as student and teacher assignment, it governs such issues as how money is divvied up among schools, what thematic and instructional approaches they will emphasize, and what philosophical tenets they will live by.

"The consent decree interlocks the components," observed Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a Washington-based advocacy group that represents 48 of the largest urban school systems. "It also gives them broader authority to do all kinds of things. They can squeeze almost anything into it."

The decree grew out of a 1978 lawsuit filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People that accused the school system of discriminating against blacks.

But district officials have now made allies of their former legal adversaries to tenaciously defend the consent decree, which was extended to include Hispanics in 1992. The state, which was also sued by the NAACP, has also thrown its support behind the district in its efforts to preserve the decree.

Their common opponent is a group of Chinese-American plaintiffs who are pressing U.S. District Judge William H. Orrick Jr. to throw out the decree on grounds that it maintains an unconstitutional "scheme of racial classification."

Elite School Affected

Despite its ramifications for the district's entire desegregation plan, the case has become primarily associated with the issue of entry into the city's prestigious Lowell High School.

Until the district modified the school's admissions policy last winter, students of Chinese descent were required to meet more stringent admissions criteria than other groups in an effort to keep them under the district's enrollment cap.

More...

S.F. Battle Over Desegregation Order

continued...

District officials and the NAACP say the plaintiffs should be satisfied with the new Lowell admissions procedures.

But those supporting the suit say the focus on Lowell High misses the point.

"This case is not about getting Chinese-American students into certain schools," said Amy Chang, a spokeswoman for the Asian-American Legal Foundation, a

local group that supports the suit. "It's about the right to be judged as an individual."

Although the case is approaching its second anniversary, it remains unclear if or when it will go to trial.

Resentments Build

Meanwhile, feelings against the district's reconstitution program are running high among some educators.

Ms. Shelley of the teachers' union traces that sentiment to the policy's dramatic expansion in recent years and the growing ranks of staff members who have been affected by it.

Since 1994, the district has reconstituted eight schools. Eight others emerged intact from the intensive probationary process that can culminate in reconstitution. And another eight remain reconstitution candidates.

"At first teachers didn't really care except in schools being reconstituted," Ms. Shelley said. "But now there are visibly wounded people showing up in schools throughout the district. So there's a critical mass out there absolutely ready to go on the warpath about the whole thing."

Aware of such feelings, Superintendent Rojas emphasizes that reconstitution should not be viewed as an indictment of individual staff members, but rather of a school's culture and organization.

Under San Francisco's version of reconstitution, the first step is to remove a school's entire staff—from the principal on down—and replace it with people who agree to abide by an 11-point educational philosophy spelled out in the consent decree.

Permanent employees can reapply for their old jobs, and if they are not rehired they are guaranteed a position elsewhere in the district. In practice, only a few employees have been rehired at reconstituted schools, and many of the new staff members have come from outside the system.

Other aspects of the overhauls include reducing the student-staff ratio, incorporating technology into the curriculum, and conducting extensive staff development.

"The process of reconstitution is

not for the faint of heart," Mr. Rojas wrote in a statement submitted to Judge Orrick in the consent decree's defense. "It is a dramatic and radical tactic for dysfunctional institutions."

Second Wave Criticized

The tactic was first used here 12 years ago in five of the city's lowest-performing schools. After that initial wave, however, the district turned to less drastic efforts as it tried to improve other campuses targeted by the consent decree for extra money and attention.

In 1992, a committee appointed by Judge Orrick and headed by Harvard University desegregation expert Gary Orfield examined progress made in those targeted schools. It concluded that only those that had been fully reconstituted had succeeded in elevating black and Hispanic achievement.

Criticizing the district for effectively wasting consent decree funds on schools that failed to show such gains, the committee urged the revival of reconstitution.

The consent decree was amended in 1992 to convert the committee's recommendation to a requirement. It called for the district to begin overhauling three schools a year until "the task is completed." The task is not specifically spelled out, but Mr. Rojas has interpreted it to mean substantially eliminating the pattern of underachievement by blacks and Hispanics.

Two years later, at the district's request, the consent decree was amended to expand the pool of schools that could be reconstituted. Instead of just the roughly three dozen schools targeted by the consent decree, any low-performing school in the district became fair game.

To critics such as Ms. Shelley, that move was wholly unwarranted by the evidence.

The apparent success of the schools that were reconstituted in the 1980s, she believes, was due to factors other than the wholesale turnover of staff. For one thing, she says, the mix of students in the schools was dramatically changed, and their parents had to pledge to support them.

Ms. Shelley also points to the lack of improvement in standard-

ized-test scores among the more recently reconstituted schools as further proof that the tactic is grossly overrated.

But to supporters of reconstitution the benefits of the technique have been proven even though they may not become evident for several years.

More...

Desegregation Order

continued...

"It's like open-heart surgery," Mr. Orfield said. "It's a very, very dramatic kind of intervention, the most radical form of urban education reform there is."

Back From the Brink

As it turned out, Potrero Hill proved to be a survivor.

After a two-year struggle, school leaders managed to make enough improvements so that district officials backed off their threat to reconstitute the 500-student school.

"We survived the process, mainly because we took it seriously," Mr. Cabral said. "There were some schools that rebelled or never took it seriously, and they're the ones that ended up getting the chop."

Still, Potrero's brush with oblivion hasn't turned Mr. Cabral against the consent decree, illustrating a central irony of the policy: Although it was the decree that got Potrero Hill into its predicament, it was the consent decree that provided the resources to get out.

"About half our budget comes from the consent decree," Mr. Cabral noted. "We have to support the consent decree, even though we were under the ax because of it."

Mr. Cabral is not the only one aware of the double-edged nature of the decree—and of the varying interests at stake in the case now before the court.

"Without the consent decree money, a lot of our teachers and paraprofessionals would lose their jobs," Ms. Shelley pointed out. "So we all have conflicting interests in the whole thing."

On the Web



For background, past stories, and Web links on the changing policies of school desegregation, click on **This Week's Links** at <http://www.edweek.org>.

Plan Gives Mayor Control Over Cleveland Schools

By Caroline Hendrie

Eighteen months after Ohio took control of the beleaguered Cleveland public schools, a move is afoot to hand them over to Mayor Michael R. White.

A pair of Republican lawmakers from the Cleveland suburbs proposed legislation early last month to make the change. Since then, both Gov. George V. Voinovich, a Republican, and Mayor White, a Democrat, have tentatively endorsed the idea.

"In the best of all worlds, the community would elect a board of citizens to supervise the schools," Rep. William Batchelder said in introducing the measure. "Cleveland is so far from the best of all worlds that we cannot see the best of all worlds from where Cleveland is."

The proposal was modeled on legislation approved in Illinois last year that gave Mayor Richard M. Daley broad control over Chicago's schools.

The Ohio bill is not expected to become law in the current legislative session. It was introduced during heated contract talks that barely averted a teachers' strike in Cleveland last month, and the sense of urgency that attended it has since abated.

'Broken System'

But with Mayor White saying he would consider taking over the schools if a community consensus

develops that he should, the proposal is far from dead.

"We have a broken system," the mayor told *The Plain Dealer* newspaper. "And we have to have enough guts, I think, to try some new strategies even though we may not know whether or not they'll completely work."

State education officials have been in control of the 70,000-student district since March 1995, when a federal judge ordered the takeover.

The district is facing severe fiscal problems, and has staked much of its hope for financial stability on a proposed tax increase being put before city voters on the Nov. 5 ballot.

Mr. Batchelder and Rep. Michael Wise, the bill's other sponsor, said the measure should not be construed as a knock against the state-appointed superintendent, Richard Boyd, who they said has made "heroic efforts."

But they said Mayor White was in a better position to command community support.