Creating a 21st Century Education System

Reinventing America's Schools:

An Abridged Version

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Introduction

For a century, our public education system was the backbone of our success as a nation. By creating one of the world's first mass education systems, free to all children, we forged the most educated workforce in the world. The creation of standardized, unified school systems with monopolies on free schooling had a dramatic impact on this country, helping us build the most powerful, innovative economy on Earth.

But all institutions must change with their times, and since the 1960s, the times have changed. First television emerged to dominate the lives of young people, undermining their desire and ability to read. Then the cultural rebellion of the 1960s and '70s brought new problems, including widespread drug use and the decline of the two-parent family. Teen pregnancy soared, the percentage of children raised by single mothers tripled, arrest rates for those under 18 shot up, and gang activity exploded. Meanwhile immigration picked up, doubling the percentage of public school children from households that didn't speak English, from 10 to 20 percent. At the same time, our Information-Age economy radically raised the bar students needed to meet to secure jobs that would support middle class lifestyles.

Today our traditional public schools "work" for less than half of our students. More than one in five families chooses something other than a traditional public school—a private school, a public charter school, or home schooling. Among those who do attend public schools, 16 percent fail to graduate on time. Even more graduate but lack the skills necessary to succeed in today's job market. Almost a quarter of those who apply to the U.S. Army fail its admission tests, more than a third of those who go on to college are not prepared for first-year college courses, and almost half of them never graduate. Among industrialized nations, the U.S. ranks 22nd in high school graduation rates and in the bottom half in math, science, and reading proficiency.

Since 1983, we have seen wave after wave of school reforms. Unfortunately, most have been of the "more-longer-harder" variety: more required courses and tests, longer school days and hours, higher standards and harder exams. Few have reimagined how schools might function, given our new technologies.

To Save Public Education We Must Reinvent It

If we were creating a public education system from scratch, would we organize it as most of our public systems are now organized? Would our classrooms look just as they did before the advent of personal computers and the Internet? Would we give teachers lifetime jobs after their second or third years? Would we let schools survive if, year after year, half their students dropped out? Would we send children to school for only 8.5 months a year and six hours a day? Would we assign them to schools by neighborhood, reinforcing racial and economic segregation?

Few people would answer yes to such questions. But in real life we don't usually get to start over; instead, we have to change existing systems.

One city did get a chance to start over, however. In 2005, after the third deadliest hurricane in U.S. history, state leaders wiped the slate clean in New Orleans. After Katrina, Louisiana handed all but 17 of the city's public schools to the state's Recovery School District (RSD), created two years earlier to turn around failing schools. Over the next nine years, the RSD gradually turned them all into charter schools—a new form of public school that has emerged over the last quarter century. Charters are public schools operated by independent, mostly nonprofit organizations, free of most state and district rules but held accountable for performance by written charters, which function like performance contracts. Most, but not all, are schools of choice. New Orleans's last traditional school will soon convert to charter status, and 100 percent of its public school students will attend charters.

The results should shake the very foundations of American education. Test scores, school performance scores, graduation and dropout rates, college-going rates, and independent studies all tell the

same story: the district has improved faster than any other in the state—and no doubt the nation as well.

Washington D.C. also enjoyed a clean slate, in a very different way. In 1996, Congress created the D.C. Public Charter School Board, which grants charters to nonprofit organizations to start schools. After 20 years of chartering, 47 percent of the city's public school students attend charter schools. The board closes or replaces those where kids aren't learning enough and encourages the best to replicate. D.C.'s charter sector has higher test scores, higher attendance, higher graduation and college enrollment rates, and more demand than the city's traditional public schools, and it is improving faster. The difference is particularly dramatic with African-American and low-income students.

A decade ago the elected school board in Denver, frustrated by the failure of the traditional bureaucracy, decided to embrace charter schools. They gave most charters space in district buildings and encouraged the successful ones to replicate as fast as possible. Then they began turning district schools into "innovation schools," with many of the autonomies that help charters succeed. When these efforts began, Denver had the lowest academic growth of any of Colorado's 20 largest cities. By 2012 it had the highest.

Leaders in other struggling urban districts have paid close attention to such reforms, and they are spreading.

Most of the debate in this field is stuck on the tired issue of whether charter schools perform any better than traditional public schools. The evidence on that question, from dozens of careful studies, is clear: on average, charters outperform traditional public schools. The studies favored by charter critics come from Stanford University's Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO). But even they show that, on average, students who spend four or more years in charter schools gain an additional two months of learning in reading and more than two months in math every year, compared to similar students in traditional public schools. Urban students gain five months in math and three and a half in reading. And charter parents are happier with their schools. On five key characteristics—teacher quality, school discipline, expectations

for student achievement, safety, and development of character—13 percentage points more charter-school parents were "very satisfied" with their schools than traditional school parents in 2016.

But when it comes to charter schools, "average" means nothing, because the 43 states (and the District of Columbia) with charters all have different laws and practices. Any good idea can be done poorly, and some states have proven it with their charters. One has to look beyond the averages to see the truth: In states where charter authorizers close or replace failing schools—a central feature of the charter model—charters vastly outperform traditional public schools. But in states where failing charters are allowed to remain open, they are, on average, no better than other public schools.

What matters is not whether we call them charter schools or district schools or "innovation schools" or "pilot schools," but by what rules they are governed. Do they have the autonomy they need to design a school model that works for their kids? Are they free to hire the best teachers and fire the worst? Do they experience competition that drives them to continuously improve? Does the district give families a choice of different kinds of schools, designed to educate different kinds of learners? Do schools experience enough accountability—including the threat of closure if they fail—to create a sense of urgency among their employees? And when they close, are they replaced by better schools? If the answer to these questions is yes, the system will be self-renewing: its schools will constantly improve and evolve – as we will see in New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and Denver.

When Economies and Societies Evolve, Institutions Must Change

As late as 1890, 71 percent of Americans lived in rural areas, where one-room schools predominated. But over the next decade many cities tripled in size, as manufacturing boomed and immigrant labor poured in. A 19th century education system could not cope with the cities' new needs, so reformers gradually developed a new model: large districts

with one-size-fits-all schools.

At the time, political machines controlled many urban school boards. To stop the machines from firing teachers of the opposite party and hiring their own party members, reformers invented teacher tenure, strict pay scales determined by longevity, and protections for seniority.

All the while, schools grew in size and the entire system grew increasingly bureaucratic. "In the 1890s there was, on average, one staff member in state departments of education for every 100,000 pupils; in 1974 there was one for about every 2,000," David Tyack and Larry Cuban wrote. By the 1960s, New York City schools employed more administrators than the entire French education system. Then many public systems unionized, and the detailed labor contracts unions negotiated intensified the rigidity.

By this time, however, the schools' customers were changing in important ways. African Americans had begun leaving the south for northern cities during World War II, and in the 1950s whites began moving to the suburbs. In 1950, Tyack tells us, roughly 90 percent of public school students in our 14 largest cities were white. By the 1970s, only half were.

By 2014, a majority of public school students *in the country* were minorities. And the shift from an industrial economy to the Information Age and a global marketplace had created a growing gulf between those with skills and those without, driving incomes down for many. In 1989, a third of public school students were low-income (qualifying for subsidized meals). By 2013, a majority were.

Gradually, leaders in places like New Orleans, Washington D.C., Denver, and Indianapolis concluded that if they wanted more than incremental improvement, they had to change their operating systems. Slowly they began creating 21st century systems, in which the central administration steers the system but contracts with others to operate schools. The steering body, usually an elected school board and appointed superintendent but sometimes a mayor or appointed board, charters schools that meet emerging student needs. If they work, it expands them and replicates them. If they fail, it replaces them with

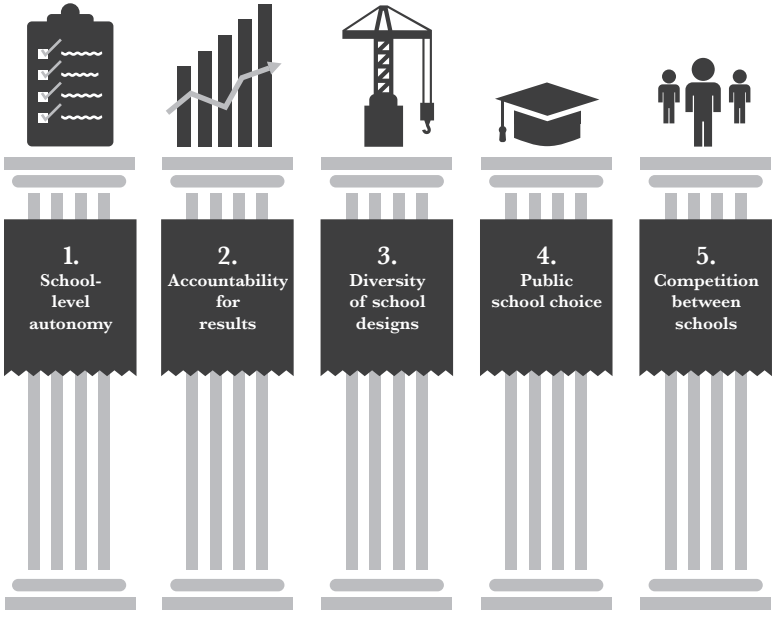
better schools. Every year, it replaces the worst performers, replicates the best, and develops new models to meet new needs, creating an ever-evolving network of schools, with many providers, many different teaching methods, and many choices for parents and their children. Since both parents and teachers can choose among many different kinds of schools, elected boards are free to create a more diverse set of schools, to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse body of students.

More than any other single reform, this model breaks the political stranglehold interest groups have over elected school boards. Most school board members want to do what's best for the children, but too often that creates problems for the adults in the system, most of whom vote. And when the children's interests collide with the adults', the children usually lose. Closing schools is political suicide, for instance, because employees, parents, and community members all vote. Turnout in school board elections is often under 10 percent, so their votes usually carry the day. Hence board members who anger too many people know they are risking defeat.

In 21st century systems like New Orleans Public Schools, where school boards contract with independent organizations to operate schools, the battle of self-interest is quite different. School operators still push for their own interests, but they no longer act as a unified block. Every time a school is closed for poor performance, other operators line up to take its place. Hence elected leaders have more freedom to do what is best for the children.

The new formula—autonomy, accountability, diversity of school designs, parental choice, and competition between schools—is simply more effective than the centralized, bureaucratic approach we inherited from the 20th century.

The Five Pillars of a 21st Century School System

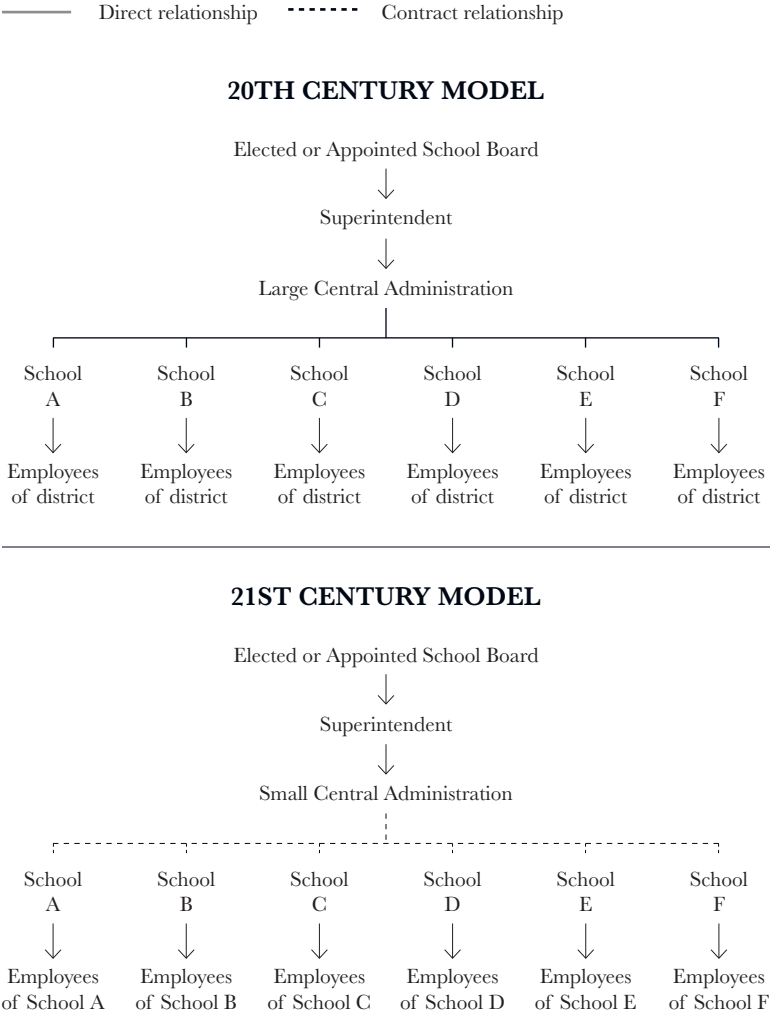


The charts on the following pages show some of the basic differences between 20th and 21st century systems. (Both are simplified, but the graphics capture the essence of the two approaches.)

20th Century School Systems v. 21st Century School Systems

20TH CENTURY SCHOOL SYSTEMS ✗	*21ST CENTURY SCHOOL SYSTEMS* ✓
District is one organized unit; all school employees are district employees.	District has a small central staff but contracts with separate organizations to operate schools.
District steers the system and operates the schools.	District steers the system, but independent organizations operate the schools.
District controls schools through centralized rules and budgets.	District controls schools through accountability for results.
Most decisions about who to hire, how to spend money, and how to design schools are made at district headquarters.	Hiring, budget, pay, and design decisions are made at schools.
Schools live on regardless of results; there are no consequences for student achievement levels (except for consequences in students' lives).	Schools in which students are falling behind are replaced; those in which students excel are expanded or replicated.
Most students are assigned to schools closest to their homes.	Most families choose their public schools.
Schools educate all students who are assigned to them.	Schools compete for students and funding follows student choices.

Organizational Model of 20th Century School System v. 21st Century School System



Misconceptions Regarding Charter Schools

Nationally, more than 70 percent of K–12 teachers in traditional public schools belong to unions or associations similar to unions, but only about 10 percent of those in charter schools do. Most charter school leaders believe that industrial unionism, with its labor vs. management paradigm, is a poor fit for education, because teachers should be treated as professionals.

The more teachers there are in charter schools, the fewer there will be in unions, and union leaders understand this. They have fought charter expansion in every state where they are active.

Surveys show that roughly half of Americans don't know what charter schools are, so union-promulgated falsehoods have fallen on fertile ground. Very briefly, let me address some of the most common misconceptions.

Charter Schools Are Public *Schools*

Critics often speak as though charter schools are not public schools. This is nonsense. In reality, charters are a new form of public school, which now educate more than three million students. They are organized differently from 20th century systems, but they are accountable to public bodies; they are publicly funded; and they are free and equally accessible to all students.

Chartering Is Not "Corporate Reform"

Critics love to call charter leaders and funders "corporate reformers." But in the course of my research, I've met hundreds of charter school leaders, and I have yet to meet one who could be described as "corporate." Most of them are passionate do-gooders trying to change the world. Their schools do receive some funding from foundations created by corporate leaders such as Bill Gates and Sam Walton, but so do traditional districts and teachers unions.

Most Charter Schools Are Not-For-Profit Organizations

Critics like to charge that charters are out to make profits at the expense of children, but less than 15 percent of charters are operated by for-profit organizations. Where authorizers do their jobs well, as in New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and Denver, most for-profit operators have closed. We have long used the nonprofit sector to address public needs: Many of our hospitals, universities, human service providers, low-income housing organizations, and early-childhood education providers are non-profits. In the 21st century, K–12 education is migrating to this "third sector" as well.

Our Public Education Systems Fund Students, Not Schools

Critics constantly accuse charters of draining money from public schools. Since charters are public schools, that is impossible. When a school no longer educates a child—because the child has left for a charter school, or moved away, or chosen to attend a school in another district— most of the money leaves as well. Many district and union leaders talk as if the money belonged to them, but it is taxpayers' money, which we spend to provide a quality education for every child.

Unlike Traditional Public Schools, Charters Are Legally Prohibited from "Cherry-Picking" the Students They Want

Critics argue that charters cherry-pick their students, then dump those they don't want on traditional schools. In truth, charters serve higher percentages of poor and minority students than district schools. And cherry-picking goes on far more frequently in traditional district schools—particularly selective magnet schools—than in charters. By law, if a charter school cannot take all who apply, it must hold a lottery; it cannot choose its students.

Chapter 1

New Orleans: Katrina Wipes The Slate Clean

In 2005, the third-deadliest storm in U.S. history hit Louisiana. In its wake, the most important experiment in U.S. public education began in New Orleans.

Two years before, the governor and state legislature had created a Recovery School District (RSD) to take over the worst public schools in the state. After the storm, they handed it all but 17 of New Orleans's schools. Gradually, over the next nine years, the RSD turned them all into charters. Soon, every public school student in the city will attend a charter school.

New Orleans has improved its schools faster than any other city in the United States. This improvement would be impressive enough on its own, but it is occurring in a district in which 82 percent of the students are African American and 85 percent are poor.

This revolution occurred in large part thanks to the efforts of one unlikely heroine. Leslie Jacobs was born into New Orleans's small Jewish community in 1959. In 1992, seized with "passion and naïveté"—her words—she ran for a seat on the Orleans Parish School Board. In a district with a majority of African Americans, she went door to door, often in public housing projects. And she won.

It is hard to describe how bad the New Orleans schools were at the time. In crumbling buildings, teachers napped during class, students roamed the halls at will, and fights were common. Some principals' jobs went to the mistresses of top district officials or to those who bribed the right administrator. If someone failed as a principal, they were kicked upstairs, into the central office. A 2004 study showed that one in four adults in the city had not completed high school and four in ten were unable to read beyond an elementary school level.

Jacobs pushed her colleagues on the board to "reconstitute" failing schools—replace their principals and teachers and start over. But they stonewalled her. After four years of frustration, Governor Mike Foster appointed her to the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE, like the cow). There she pushed through an accountability system: statewide standardized tests; school performance scores, based on test scores, attendance rates, and graduation rates; help for schools with low scores, in the form of money and consultants; and forced reconstitution of schools rated failing for four years in a row.

The new tests were given every year from third through eighth grades, and high school students took Graduate Exit Exams (GEE). Students had to achieve at least a "basic" (grade-level) score in English language arts or math and an "approaching basic" score in the other subject to move from fourth to fifth grade and eighth to ninth. To graduate, high school students had to pass the GEE. In 2000, only one in four public school students in New Orleans scored basic or above on the new tests.

Jacobs's epiphany came in 2003, when the valedictorian at New Orleans's Fortier High failed the GEE, despite making five attempts. "When she failed and couldn't walk across that stage and get her diploma, there was no civil rights protest, there was no religious protest, business protest, civic leadership protest—there was a deafening silence," Jacobs remembers. She decided it was time for something radical: a special school district to take over failed schools, a new idea in education reform circles.

Unfortunately, her brainchild required a constitutional amendment, which necessitated a two-thirds vote in the legislature, then a simple majority on a statewide ballot. The governor and his staff convinced the legislature, and Jacobs led the statewide campaign. The Orleans Parish School Board, City council, and teachers union all came out against the amendment. "But I had served an African American district," Jacobs says. "I had walked the district; I answered my phone. I knew parents wanted good schools for their kids; I had no doubt about it." The amendment passed by close to 60 percent—both statewide and in the city.

The new district had a lot of New Orleans schools to choose from: 54 of the state's 73 failing schools were in the city. In its first two years, the Recovery School District (RSD) took control of five schools, turning them over to charter operators.

On August 29, 2005, Katrina roared in and the levees gave way. New Orleans Public Schools was already broke when Katrina hit; the board was searching for a $50 million line of credit so it could meet payroll. On September 15 it put all employees on unpaid disaster leave. Soon afterward it announced it was not reopening any schools that academic year. Jacobs met with State Superintendent Cecil Picard and insisted that they do something. Her solution: a bill to require that the new Recovery School District take over all New Orleans schools that had performance scores below the statewide average. The RSD would reopen them all as charter schools, she said.

State legislators from both parties were fed up with the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), so they passed the bill. In November, with one stroke of her pen, Democratic Governor Kathleen Blanco swept more than 100 empty schools into the RSD. With no plans to reopen schools and no money to rehire anyone, the OPSB voted in December to permanently lay off its 7,500 employees.

Louisiana's senior senator, Democrat Mary Landrieu, learned that the U.S. Department of Education had almost $30 million of unspent charter startup money, and she convinced Secretary Margaret Spellings to make most of it available for new charters in New Orleans.

When charter applications began to roll into the RSD, its temporary leader, Deputy State Superintendent Robin Jarvis, asked the National Association of Charter School Authorizers to vet them, to make sure those approved had a good chance of producing high-performing schools. To her and Jacobs's chagrin, the association recommended only six of 44 applicants in the first round. So Jarvis swallowed hard and only chartered six schools. That meant the RSD somehow had to open its own schools—three of them that spring of 2006, more in the fall—with no fund balance to draw on, no principals lined up, and no teachers.

To top it off, State Superintendent Cecil Picard passed away in February 2007. The state board appointed Paul Pastorek, a New Orleans attorney who had served with Jacobs on BESE, to replace him. He immediately hired Paul Vallas to run the RSD. Vallas had run school districts in Chicago and Philadelphia, where he managed a portfolio of some 40 contracted schools, 56 charter schools, and more than 200 district-run schools. He had learned the value of handing authority over budget and personnel to the schools but holding them accountable for results.

"My game plan was to create a system of either charter or charter-like schools—traditional schools with charter-like autonomy," Vallas told me.

"Rather than try to restore what was there, we would select school providers— and they didn't have to be charters, they could be old schools—based on the quality of their application. And then give all the schools the independence and autonomy they would need so that the structure of the schools—how they hired, the length of the school day, length of year, the operational plans— would really be designed to benefit kids." The central office would play a support role, providing the buildings, the materials, and the accountability.

"All the schools would be up for renewal every five years, including traditional schools"—and if they were not performing, they would be closed down. "You would be prequalifying or incubating new school providers, or identifying top performing schools that were ready to take on other schools or expand their clusters, so you would turn the weak performing schools over to the strong performing schools."

While BESE accepted every charter application its screeners approved, Vallas and his staff also worked hard to make the schools the RSD operated succeed. They treated them as much like charters as possible, though teachers who survived three years automatically got tenure, under state law.

It was an uphill battle. When Vallas first arrived, in the spring of 2007, less than half the kids were showing up for school. More than 90 percent of the RSD's students lived in poverty, the vast

majority being raised by single parents or grandparents. "So you take deep poverty and then you compound that by … the physical, psychological, emotional damage inflicted by the hurricane," he told the *New York Times*. "It's like the straw that breaks the camel's back."

After a couple of years, it became obvious that charters were outperforming RSD-run schools, especially at the high school level. Motivated parents were flocking to the charters; the RSD-operated high schools became dumping grounds for those paying less attention and for students dropping in and out of school. Their average entrant was four years below grade level, and every year almost half their students were new. So Vallas and Pastorek embraced the obvious solution: turn all RSD schools in the city into charters.

Partnering with New Schools for New Orleans– a nonprofit that helped charters get started—the RSD landed a federal Investing in Innovation grant for $28 million, to replace failing schools with high-performing charters. As the city's strongest charters took over failing RSD-run schools, a transition began from mostly single charters to charter management organizations, each with a handful of schools.

"Paul Vallas was our Gorbachev," Jacobs says. "He came in and was willing to give up his power and control. He could have created a mini school district; instead, he wound down the RSD-run schools, which was very hard to do. Every year he had to lay off people, downsize his budget, because he ran fewer schools. He deserves phenomenal credit for that."

The Results

Before Katrina, 60 percent of New Orleans students attended a school with a performance score in the bottom 10 percent of the state. A decade later, only 13 percent did.

Before Katrina, roughly half of public school students in New Orleans dropped out, and fewer than one in five went on to college. In

2015, 76 percent graduated from high school within five years, a point above the state average. In 2016, 64 percent of graduates entered college, six points higher than the state average.

The fastest progress took place in the RSD schools. Because the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) was only allowed to keep schools that scored above the state average, the failing schools were all in the RSD. In the spring of 2007, only 23 percent of students in those schools tested at or above grade level. Seven years later, *57 percent did*. RSD students in New Orleans improved *almost four times faster than the state average*. (The state adopted a new standardized test in 2015, so scores are no longer comparable to those of the previous decade.)

Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) studied charter school results between 2005–6 and 2011–12. Charter students in New Orleans gained nearly half a year of additional learning in math and a third of a year in reading, every year, compared to demographically similar students, with similar past test scores, in the city's non-chartered public schools.

Douglas Harris, an economist at Tulane University, created a research center to investigate education reform in New Orleans. He and his team have looked into every possible explanation for the improvements, and in the process have proven that they are just what they appear: the result of profound reforms. They examined whether demographic changes in the city could have contributed to the improved test scores and concluded that, at most, demographics accounted for only 10 percent of the difference between progress in New Orleans and in other districts hit by the storm. But because New Orleans students experienced more trauma and disruption than those in the other districts, they added, "The factors pushing student outcomes down were at least as large as the population changes pushing them up."

Did the reforms come at the expense of any group of students? No: "All major subgroups of students—African American, low-income, special education, and English Language Learners (ELL)—were at least as well-off after the reforms, in terms of achievement." Nor did reforms increase the segregation of African American students.

If one counts only African Americans, New Orleans had the lowest test scores in the state before Katrina, eight percentage points below the state average for black students. By 2014 its scores exceeded that average by five points. On the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests in 2015, which covered third through eighth grade, black students in New Orleans again outperformed their counterparts across the state. ACT scores of the city's black students, which averaged 17.8 in 2015, were about a point higher than the national average for black students, 16.9. Black males in New Orleans graduated from high school at higher rates than their counterparts in both the state and nation.

"We are not aware of any other districts that have made such large improvements in such a short time," Harris concluded.

There are many kinds of schools in New Orleans. There are "no excuses" schools, with a laser-like focus on getting poor, minority children into college. There are schools with a special focus on science and mathematics, technology, creative arts, and language immersion. There is a Montessori school. There are many schools that use blended learning and some that embrace project-based learning. There are two high schools that offer the demanding International Baccalaureate program, one military and maritime high school, and three alternative high schools for kids who are far behind, over age, or have dropped out or been expelled. Several diverse-by-design schools have opened, with deliberately integrated student bodies. And a new career-tech high school opened in 2017, followed by a career-tech center available to students from any public high school.

In a system that provides different kinds of schools for different children, it makes no sense to force a student to attend any particular school. Hence no one in New Orleans is assigned; every family chooses. All RSD and OPSB schools are required to provide transportation for their students.

To make the choice process easier, the RSD in 2012 launched a computerized enrollment system, "OneApp," and the OPSB joined a year later. Families list up to eight choices, in order, and a computer

program matches students with available seats. Siblings get preference, and in K–8 schools half the seats are reserved for kids from fairly wide zones around the schools. The RSD set up four centers around the city to help parents decide which schools to list.

For the 2014-15 school year, 71 percent of students got their first choice and 80 percent got one of their top three choices. The following year 75 percent got one of their top three choices.

Winning Political Battles

It is one thing to deliver results. It is quite another to win the hearts and minds of a majority of voters. Race is a wound that festers beneath the surface of virtually every issue in New Orleans.

By the time Katrina hit, the black community still harbored deep distrust of the white power structure. When the school district laid off its 7,500 employees—three quarters of them black—it triggered enormous anger. The available data suggest that less than half of the former OPSB employees landed jobs with the OPSB, RSD, or charters. The public school population had fallen dramatically, after all, and 30 percent of OPSB teachers who applied to the RSD failed its basic skills test. To make matters worse, blacks had to watch white reformers at the state board and the RSD take over the schools and white charter operators and teachers flood the city. By 2015 African Americans still made up only 51 percent of school leaders and roughly half the teaching force, down from 71 percent of teachers before the storm. In 2007 whites won a majority on the city council, and in 2008 they did the same on the Orleans Parish School Board. Some black activists suspected a white conspiracy to keep blacks from returning to the city, so whites could take over.

Today, however, a solid majority of New Orleanians supports the reforms. The Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives does a poll every year. In 2009, only 31 percent of public school parents said the schools had improved since Katrina. Two years later 66 percent believed the schools had improved. In April 2016, 63 percent of voters surveyed in New Orleans agreed with the statement: "Public charter

schools have improved public education in New Orleans." Among African Americans, 57 percent agreed. Three quarters of those surveyed supported public school choice (72 percent of African Americans), and 62 percent thought it had had a positive impact on the quality of education (52 percent of African Americans).

In 2016, after a Democrat hostile to charters won the governorship, Jacobs and her allies decided it was time to move control over New Orleans's charters back to the OPSB. They drafted a set of principles that most local leaders signed onto, then a bill that easily passed the state legislature. All RSD schools in the city returned to the locally elected school board on July 1, 2018.

Chapter 2

A Tale Of Two Systems: Education Reform In Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., offers a rare real-world laboratory: two public school systems of roughly equal size, occupying the same geography, with different governance models. The older of the two, D.C. Public Schools (DCPS), uses the traditional unified governance model, in which the district operates all but two of its more than 110 schools and employs their staff, with central control and most policies applied equally to most schools.

Competing with DCPS is a model designed and built largely in this century. In 1996, Congress passed a bill creating the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) to authorize charters. The PCSB owns or operates none of its schools; instead, it contracts with more than 60 independent organizations—all of them non-profits—to operate 123 schools (as of 2018–19). It is a leader in its field, considered by experts one of the best charter authorizers in the nation.

Before 1996, half of all DCPS students dropped out, only 9 percent of ninth-graders in public high schools went on to graduate from college within five years, and almost two thirds of teachers reported that violent student behavior interfered with their teaching.

In 1995, House Speaker Newt Gingrich asked moderate Republican Steve Gunderson to come up with an education reform bill for D.C. Gunderson's young staff person, Ted Rebarber, concluded that all public schools should be charter schools, or something like them. The congressman was skeptical. Then the two met with Al Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers. Gunderson asked Shanker what he thought of charter schools, unaware that he was a key originator of the idea. "Shanker said, 'Every school should be a charter

school,'" Rebarber recalls. "Gunderson almost fell out of his chair, and he talked about it for days."

The School Reform Act created two charter authorizers, the D.C. Board of Education and a new Public Charter School Board. It passed with bipartisan support. In 1997 and '98 the city's Board of Education (BOE) rushed its first charters into place—with predictable consequences. Then, in 2006, the BOE discovered that the director of its charter oversight office was stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The board fired her, and she was sent to prison. Embarrassed, board members voted to stop authorizing charters. When Adrian Fenty became mayor two months later, he convinced the city council to give him control over the district-run schools and to transfer all surviving BOE charters to the PCSB.

The Charter Board Gets Serious About Quality

After they inherited the BOE charters, members of the Charter Board began to feel the need for more rigor in holding schools accountable for student learning.

"When I came on the Board, we were only closing schools for financial reasons," says Skip McKoy, who joined in 2008. "That's one of the two criteria in the reform act. The other is not meeting goals" set out in schools' charters. "But so many of the goals were apple pie and fluff. So it was hard to close a school for academic reasons."

In late 2010, the Board unveiled a Performance Management Framework (PMF) designed to compare most charters' performance, using test scores, graduation rates, and the like. Over time, it developed separate frameworks for preschool charters, elementary and middle schools, high schools, adult education charters, and alternative schools.

In December of 2011, the Board hired a new CEO, Scott Pearson. Using the PMF, Pearson divided schools into three performance tiers, based largely on their scores. By law, the Charter Board can close a school for poor performance only if it is failing to meet the goals laid out in its charter—not for being in tier 3 for several years. To resolve

that problem, Pearson pushed charters to include a score on the PMF as one of their goals.

Every five years the Charter Board staff puts schools through a serious review. They look at schools' academic performance, financial performance, and compliance with legal requirements. In addition to the PMF, they rate schools on a 100-point financial and audit review framework. If a school is performing well, staff encourage it to expand or open another school, so it can serve more students. If a school is performing well in some areas but not in another, they put it on notice and monitor it until the problem is resolved. Those succeeding with some grade levels but not others may find their charter partially revoked: say, for middle school but not for elementary. Overall, about a third of all charter schools opened in D.C. were closed over the first 20 years—a total of 46 through 2016.

Pearson and his staff have also recruited strong charter networks from elsewhere, and they have continued to be quite careful about who gets a charter in the first place. All this effort appears to be paying off, as the percentage of charter students enrolled in tier 1 schools continues to rise.

Critics charge that charters drive out troublesome students, who then land at DCPS schools. To expose such tactics, Pearson and his staff came up with the idea of annual "equity reports" for each school. The reports show midyear entries and withdrawals. For special education students, low-income students, and each of six racial or ethnic groups, they also show enrollment, attendance rates, disciplinary actions such as suspensions, and academic proficiency. Between 2013, when this data was first published, and 2016, midyear withdrawals fell from 5.5 to 4.9 percent. Suspension rates declined each year, to just above DCPS rates, and expulsions declined from 186 in 2012–13 to 81 in 2015–16. The Board and district also launched a computerized universal enrollment system like OneApp in New Orleans, called "My School D.C."

As in New Orleans, D.C. has an extraordinary level of innovation in school models, which continues to grow. The Charter Board has authorized four Montessori schools, eight bilingual immersion

campuses, schools for over-age students, a school specializing in children with disabilities, schools for adults, and its second weekday boarding school, which begins in fifth grade—this one for children in foster care or at risk of placement.

Twice in recent years the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools has published reports on the health of the charter school movement. In both 2014 and 2016, it rated D.C.'s charter sector the nation's healthiest.

Comparing the Traditional and Charter Sectors

In the late 1960s, D.C. Public Schools had 150,000 students. By 2007, it had less than 53,000. That year, DCPS tied for the worst reading scores among the 11 big districts then tested under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Yet it spent more per child than almost every other big city. At the time, charters educated almost 20,000 children—27 percent of all public school students in D.C.—and they were outperforming DCPS. By creating successful schools in the poorest neighborhoods, charters removed the excuse DCPS had relied on for years—that kids from poor, dysfunctional families were just too difficult to educate.

After Mayor Fenty convinced the city council to give him control over DCPS schools, he hired Michelle Rhee as the district's chancellor. Rhee launched some of the most dramatic reforms in the country, and since 2007, DCPS has improved faster than any of the other large districts that take the NAEP tests. (New Orleans does not participate in NAEP.) DCPS leaders deserve enormous credit for this. But charter schools in D.C. still perform better, and in the city's low-income wards, charters far outdistance district schools.

In making comparisons, we have to be careful to understand the context. The two sectors have slightly different demographics. In 2015–16, DCPS had more white students (13 versus 5 percent), who were mostly middle-class or above in income, and fewer black students (64 versus 76 percent). The racial balances matter because there is a huge

gap between the academic performance of white students and others in D.C.

Another difference is financial: Charters get significantly less money per student than DCPS schools. Although various experts come up with different figures, the total difference in operating plus facilities funding has probably been between $6,000 to 7,000 per student in recent years.

The financial and racial differences suggest that DCPS schools should easily outperform charters, but other factors work in the opposite direction. Charter students' families actively choose their schools, whereas only half of DCPS families do. Many believe this gives charters an advantage. Most experts agree that while overall poverty levels are similar, DCPS schools in the poorest wards have more students who are "in crisis" than charters, because those families are unlikely to apply for charters.

D.C.'s Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) designates students as "at risk of academic failure" if their families are on welfare (TANF) or food stamps (SNAP) or homeless. Students in foster care and high school students who are at least a year over age for their grade are also included.

In 2015–16, 47.6 percent of DCPS students were "at risk," while 43.8 percent of charter students were. But, unlike charters, DCPS's distribution is bimodal: some DCPS schools have mostly middle-class students or above, while others have mostly at-risk students. In 2014–15—not counting alternative schools—some two dozen DCPS schools had more than 75 percent "at risk" students, while only one charter did.

It is difficult to say how all these realities balance out. Fortunately, two studies from Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) try to compensate for student demographics (but not for the other factors).

From 2007–8 through 2010–11, CREDO found, charter students gained an average of 72 more days of learning per year in reading than demographically similar DCPS students who had similar past test scores. In math, the difference was 101 days. A more recent CREDO study, published in 2015, found the same trends, while also showing that

by a student's fourth year in a charter, the impact was more than double this amount.

When this was written, DCPS had no data available on college acceptance rates. Phone calls to each DCPS high school in the spring of 2015 revealed why: With two exceptions, the schools either had no idea how many of their students had been accepted to college or simply ignored repeated messages. In contrast, every charter high school had an answer, because the Charter Board requires that they report the number and back it up with the actual college acceptance letters. In 2016, 97.2 percent of charter graduates were accepted to college.

On the D.C. Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS), the city's standardized tests from 2006 to 2014, charter students consistently performed better and improved faster. DCPS schools moved from composite (math and reading) scores of 31 percent proficient or advanced in 2006 to 49 percent in 2014, an increase of 18 points. Charters moved from 36 to 57 percent, an advance of 21 points. In Wards 5, 7, and 8, which are D.C.'s poorest, with the highest concentrations of African Americans, charters performed dramatically better than DCPS.

The same trends continued on the PARCC exams, which replaced the DC CAS. In 2016, charters outperformed DCPS in nearly every grade level and subject. In the two poorest wards, charters had nearly three times the percentage of students "meeting" or "exceeding" expectations as DCPS schools. Among African Americans and at-risk students, the ratio was almost two to one.

After years of abysmally low scores, D.C. has shown significant improvement on NAEP, considered by many the most reliable testing gauge because there are no stakes attached, hence no pressure to cheat. In 2013 and 2015, the two sectors combined improved faster than any state, though two analyses published in 2015 and 2016 found that a quarter to a third of the previous decade's increase could be attributed to changing demographics. DCPS has also made great progress on its own, moving from a tie for last among 11 urban districts tested in 2007 to tenth and 11th in fourth grade reading and math out of 21 urban districts tested in 2015. Eighth-graders ranked 14th in reading and 15th

in math in 2015. But DCPS's greatest progress has come among middle- and upper-income students and in elementary schools. Low-income eighth-graders still ranked 21st out of 21 districts in reading in 2015 and 20th in math. Low-income fourth-graders tied for 15th and 14th, respectively.

Two underlying realities explain these results. First is the huge gap between white and other students. White students in DCPS score higher than whites in any of the 20 other urban districts that have taken the NAEP for several cycles. But they also score 55 to 65 points higher than black students in DCPS. Given that ten points is considered about a year's worth of learning, that is a huge gap. To put it differently, 75 percent or more of whites in DCPS score "proficient" or above on NAEP, while only 8 to 18 percent of blacks do. The gaps have not narrowed over the past decade.

Charters have performed far better among African American and low-income students, where they are concentrated. On the 2015 NAEP exam, 4th grade black students at public charter schools outscored black students in DCPS by seven points in math and four points in reading. For eighth grade, the difference was 18 points in math and 12 points in reading.

Which brings us to the second underlying reality: DCPS has done well with elementary students, but with adolescents, charters produce much better results. When students hit middle school, DCPS's performance plummets, in part because so many white students peel off to private schools. Indeed, a 2014 *Washington Post* poll found that only 24 percent of D.C. residents would choose to send their children to a DCPS middle school.

In other words, DCPS has done a good job with those who are easiest to educate: white, middle-class, and elementary school students. When all is said and done—when all test scores have been compared, along with attendance, graduation rates, college enrollment, parental demand for each type of school, and independent studies—the charter model is clearly superior.

Chapter 3

Denver: An Elected School Board Adopts A 21st Century Strategy

Many wonder whether a 21st century strategy is possible with an elected school board, because closing schools and laying off teachers triggers such fierce resistance. With an elected board, Denver Public Schools (DPS) has embraced charter schools and created "innovation schools"—district schools with some of the autonomy charters enjoy. Between 2005 and 2015 it closed or replaced 48 schools and opened more than 70, the majority of them charters. Of DPS's 204 schools in 2016–17, 56 were charters, which educated 21 percent of its students, and 47 were innovation schools, which educated 20.5 percent.

Like New Orleans and D.C., DPS was floundering in 2005. Of 98,000 seats, 31,000 were empty, and many school buildings were half full. The four-year graduation rate was only 39 percent. And a financial crisis loomed, in the form of pension contributions the district could not afford. When the superintendent retired in 2005, Mayor John Hickenlooper urged his chief of staff, Michael Bennet, to pursue the job, and the board chose Bennet over two more traditional candidates.

Abandoning Centralization

Bennet recruited Brad Jupp, a union official, to be his senior policy advisor. Jupp was convinced that DPS principals needed more autonomy to improve their schools. In the fall of 2006, he convinced Bennet to create "beacon schools," which came with "greater resources, the opportunity to have a new school design, and a bit of autonomy," Jupp says. They negotiated a memo of understanding with the teachers union, then asked teachers and principals to make proposals. Their offer generated 24 proposals.

In April of 2007, the *Rocky Mountain News* revealed that almost a quarter of Denver students had left DPS for private schools, surrounding districts, and charter schools in those districts, costing DPS $125 million a year. A disproportionate percentage of those left behind were poor and nonwhite.

That summer, Denver's standardized test scores remained flat or dipped. But two charters were hitting the ball out of the park: West Denver Prep, a middle school full of low-income Latino kids, and Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST), a high school that combined low-income and middle- class students. So Bennet urged West Denver Prep and DSST to expand and offered them empty buildings.

In October 2007, Bennet announced that DPS would be closing eight underperforming schools and would develop "innovative and high-performing schools, especially secondary schools, by conducting a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to solicit new schools for the 2009 school year and beyond." That evolved into an annual "Call for New Quality Schools," which indicates where the district needs what level of schools and invites high-performing institutions to apply to open them.

Meanwhile, the beacon schools were bumping up against the limits imposed by district rules and the teachers' contract. Frustrated beacon school leaders proposed a novel use of a waiver clause in the 120-page contract: to waive everything but the provisions that permitted union membership and representation. The union objected, but leaders at two schools went ahead anyway. In early 2008, the board approved the waivers.

Both schools were in the district of State Senate President Peter Groff. With help from Bennet's staff and others, he drafted an Innovation Schools Act and pushed it through the legislature. It allowed waivers to district policies and state statutes governing budgets, hiring, scheduling, school calendars, and tenure for new teachers, if a majority of teachers voted for the innovation plan. If 60 percent voted for it, schools could waive all or part of the union contract.

The Turning Point on Charters

In the spring of 2008, the first class of seniors graduated from the Denver School of Science and Technology. Every one of its graduates had gained admission to college—the first time that had happened in a school with many low-income students. The charter's success had a big impact on Bennet and the school board.

That same year, Bennet and the board unveiled a School Performance Framework (SPF) that measured test scores, academic growth, student engagement, enrollment rates, and parental satisfaction. Every school wound up with a score that summarized its performance, and charter schools quickly dominated the top ten lists.

With the SPF in place, the district's charter office closing low performers, and other charters proving that autonomy worked, the board formally switched its theory of action to "performance empowerment." This meant DPS would move more and more decision-making to the school level, as principals proved their schools could perform. And DPS would replace failing schools with better schools, whether charter- or district-operated.

In January 2009, Colorado's governor appointed Michael Bennet to fill the U.S. Senate seat of Ken Salazar, who had been appointed secretary of the interior by President-elect Obama. Bennet urged board members to appoint his deputy, Tom Boasberg, to ensure continuity, and they quickly agreed.

In Boasberg's first year as superintendent, the district created an Office of School Reform and Innovation to oversee its portfolio of charters and innovation schools, recommend which new schools should be approved, and recommend which failing schools should be closed or replaced.

Cooperation Between DPS and Charter Schools

In December 2010, DPS and charter leaders signed a District-Charter Collaboration Compact. The compact committed DPS to develop a

citywide enrollment system that included all public schools, to share buildings equitably, to provide equitable funding for charters and DPS schools, and to grow successful schools and close or restructure failing schools of both types. Charters committed to share the responsibility for special education, including for severely disabled students, and to admit students who arrived in the middle of school years. The compact attempted to create *one system* out of the two sectors.

Meanwhile Boasberg and the school board continued to approve replications of successful charter schools, while closing low performers. In 2010–11 they closed 25 percent of charters up for renewal; over the next three years, they closed almost 10 percent. Over the next six years they opened five to six new charters per year.

In 2011 DPS rolled out the new enrollment system, called SchoolChoice, which includes both charter and DPS-operated schools. Before then, parents who wanted their children to attend a public school other than their neighborhood school had to research and apply to multiple schools. Parents who knew how to navigate the system fared better than those who didn't.

The SchoolChoice system has clearly increased equity, leading to a jump in the percentage of low-income students and English-language learners attending charter schools. During the system's first three years, 95 percent of those participating were placed at one of their five preferred schools, and roughly three quarters received their top choice.

Delivering Results

In 2005–6, 11.1 percent of DPS students dropped out each year, and in 2006–7 less than 39 percent graduated in four years. By 2015–16, only 4 percent dropped out each year and 67 percent graduated on time. The four-year graduation rate for Latinos, the district's largest group, has more than doubled since 2007. In addition:

- Through 2014, the percentage of students scoring at or above grade level in reading, writing, and math increased 15 percentage points (from 33 to 48 percent) over ten years, far faster than the state average.

- Since 2014, Denver schools have adjusted far better to the more demanding, Common Core–aligned PARCC tests than schools in the rest of the state. Ranked by the percentage of students at proficiency or above, Denver schools in 2014 outperformed only 16.7 percent of Colorado schools on the elementary English language arts test, but in 2016, they outperformed 43 percent. In elementary math, Denver jumped from the 19th percentile to the 41st in 2016. Middle schools were even stronger: In English they jumped from outperforming 17.5 percent to 56 percent, above the state median. (Middle-school math comparisons are not reliable, because students can take so many different versions of math.)
- In 2005, DPS trailed statewide averages by about 25 percentage points in both English and math. By 2016, that gap was only four percentage points in both areas.
- DPS has tripled the number of students passing Advanced Placement exams.
- Average ACT scores rose from 16 to 18.6 in 2016, twice as fast as statewide scores.

Despite this progress, however, Denver has not been able to narrow the achievement gap between races and income groups. The gaps have actually widened, because white and middle-class students have raised their scores faster than minority and low-income students. This is similar to the trend in Washington, D.C., suggesting that as reforms spur schools to improve, white, middle-class students are better prepared to take advantage of the opportunity.

Charter Schools Lead the Way

Unlike most cities, Denver's charter schools are concentrated at the middle and high school levels. At those levels, they produced most of the district's academic growth and three quarters of its enrollment growth between 2010 and 2016. A study of test scores from 2010 through 2014, by economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and

Duke University, found that Denver's charters produced "remarkably large gains in math," large gains in writing, and smaller but statistically significant gains in reading, compared to DPS-operated schools.

By 2014–15, charters served three percentage points more low-income students than district-run schools, ten percentage points more English-language learners, and almost as high a percentage of special education students—10 versus 11 percent. Both sectors used the same expulsion guidelines, yet charters expelled students at a lower rate and retained students at twice the rate of district-run schools.

A 2015 CREDO study of urban areas compared charter students to demographically similar students with the same past test scores in traditional public schools. It found that Denver's charter students had gained almost three months more learning in math and one month more in reading, each year. The impact was particularly large in middle schools, roughly triple this amount. By a student's fourth year, charter gains across all school levels were huge: five times as great in reading and more than three times as great in math.

Can "Charter-Lite" Schools Compete?

Despite the success of individual innovation schools, as a group they did not perform nearly as well as charter schools on standardized tests, according to three studies published in 2013, 2015, and 2016.

Four important differences between innovation schools and charters probably contributed to the gap in performance—differences that also explain why charters outperform DPS-operated schools in general.

First, charters have faced more consequences for poor performance. The district often filled innovation schools that didn't meet their enrollment targets, whereas if a charter's enrollment lagged, it might have to lay people off. Charters also have explicit performance contracts and are usually closed if they fail to meet their targets. By 2017, DPS had still not closed an innovation school. Politically, it is harder for a board to close a school full of DPS employees.

Second, charters are often run by entrepreneurial leaders. Most

innovation schools have been run by principals from within DPS, who may have less inclination to think outside the box.

Third, successful charter schools often replicate, spreading their success and improving the charter sector. To its credit, DPS has begun to do the same with innovation schools, but only since 2016.

Fourth, innovation schools have more autonomy from district mandates than traditional DPS schools but far less than charters. Boasberg and the board believe in autonomy, but DPS mid-level staff people don't always get it. The issue is not so much outright restrictions as constant battles with the DPS central office that innovation school principals have endured.

Innovation Zones to the Rescue?

By 2016, four innovation school leaders were frustrated enough with district micromanagement that they decided to propose an "innovation zone"—a group of schools with an independent, nonprofit board, which would negotiate flexibilities and a performance agreement with the district.

In December 2015 the board endorsed the idea. Months of negotiations followed, finally resulting in a three-year memorandum of understanding between DPS and the board of the newly named Luminary Learning Network (LLN). The four schools won the right to opt out of some district mandates and services, receiving the funds instead. Each school got about $425 per student more than they otherwise would have. In return, the schools pledged to improve their performance. If they fail to improve, the Luminary Learning Network board can recommend actions to DPS, such as replacing a school leader or even replacing a school. DPS remains the authorizer; the LLN board is a kind of intermediary, to oversee, support, and protect the schools.

By 2019, the DPS board had approved three innovation zones, a big step forward. But many of those who pushed for them wanted "independent governance," meaning that the zone boards would actually be the schools' authorizers. This is because authorizers that don't also operate schools and employ their staffs are freer to hold them

accountable, without conflicts of interest.

The Secrets of Denver's Political Success

How has Denver managed to pursue a 21st century strategy for a decade, with an elected school board? What could other elected school boards learn from its experience? Here are ten principal lessons. Denver has not done every piece well; for instance, it has often been perceived as moving ahead without genuine community input. But the backlash after such failures has only illustrated the importance of that lesson.

Create a respected catalyst for reform. In 2006, Superintendent Bennet asked several foundation executives to create an organization of civic leaders to push for change and support the board when it promoted reform. A+ Denver, now called A+ Colorado, included some 100 movers and shakers among its membership. Its mission was "to harness the power of Denver's civic leadership to build public will and advocate for the changes necessary to dramatically increase student achievement in public education in Denver."

Build a broad coalition for reform, including organizations that represent minorities and low-income people. Michael Bennet was wise enough to ally with organizations such as Padres Unidos and Metro Organizations for People, both of which supported key aspects of reform. Their support helped neutralize opposition to school replacements, expansion of charter schools, weighted student budgeting, and expanded choice of public schools.

Create positive examples of success. The success of Strive Prep, DSST, and KIPP charter schools convinced Michael Bennet and board members to embrace and expand charter schools. "If you were a critic," said then-State Senator Michael Johnston, "we could take you to 20 different charters that would show dramatic results."

Use data to communicate the need for change. The School Performance Framework was indispensable, producing data that

justified closing, replacing, and replicating schools. Once ratings became available, parent and community groups began to use them to demand improvements in their schools.

Seek community input before making changes. It is almost impossible to consult too much with the community. At the same time, leaders must be willing to proceed even when significant minorities in the community oppose action. Consultation does not mean capitulation to the loudest voices.

Treat all school types—charter, traditional, and others—with an even hand. Being agnostic about school type played a big role in Denver's success. By signing a compact with the charters but refusing to indicate any preference for them, Tom Boasberg avoided giving the opposition something to rally around.

Get serious about winning school board elections. In 2009, reformers took the elections for granted, but the opponents of reform, led by the teachers union, organized and won three open seats. Reformers never made that mistake again. Beginning in 2013, they raised significant money and recruited candidates with enormous credibility. The result was a 7–0 reform majority elected in 2015.

Be strategic about the pace of reform. Superintendents who moved too fast, like David Hornbeck in Philadelphia, Alan Bersin in San Diego, and Michelle Rhee in Washington, D.C., sparked a backlash that undermined reform in the first two cities and would have done the same in D.C. if Mayor Vince Gray, who defeated Mayor Fenty in 2011, hadn't kept Rhee's deputy on as chancellor and supported continued reform.

Don't back down because you have only a 4–3 majority on the board. Often appointed superintendents, city managers, and county executives are extremely cautious when they have only a one-vote majority on the body that hires and fires them. Had Boasberg been that cautious, there would have been no opportunity to demonstrate that expanding the charter sector produced results.

Ensure consistent leadership over time. More than a decade of consistent leadership at the superintendent level cannot

be underestimated. Profound change is almost impossible without continuity of leadership.

How Sustainable Are Denver's Reforms?

Only time will tell. Unlike charters, innovation schools and zones could be easily neutered if the district's leadership changes. But if the innovation zones work and DPS continues to expand its charter sector, Denver could soon reach a tipping point where a majority of public school families benefit from 21st century governance. If that happens, the reforms will be difficult to undo.

Chapter 4

Indianapolis Blazes Two New Trails

Indianapolis is the only American city where the mayor authorizes charter schools, and Indiana's charter law has been ranked number one in the country by both the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

The roots of all this go back to 1999, when Bart Peterson ran for mayor as a Democrat. Indianapolis was struggling to keep its middle class, and Peterson, who wanted much stronger public schools, campaigned for a charter school law. Teresa Lubbers, a Republican state senator, had introduced six previous charter bills, all of which had failed. She came up with the idea of giving the mayor authorizing authority, and Peterson agreed. Their bipartisan support broke the political logjam.

Peterson put a young staffer, David Harris, in charge of his new charter office, and Harris put in place a rigorous process to approve charters. Mayoral authorizing has turned out to be a surprisingly stable and effective strategy, enduring through three mayors from both parties. The mayor's office is highly regarded as a charter authorizer. It tracks 27 different performance measures on its schools, does qualitative evaluations, and has closed at least ten schools, often replacing them with a new school run by a stronger operator. Over the years, it has rejected many more applications than it has accepted. By 2016 the mayor authorized 35 schools on 40 campuses, which served about 13,600 students.

By any measure, mayoral charters have outperformed schools in the city's central district, Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). Demographically, they serve a poorer population, but one with slightly fewer English-language learners and students with special needs. Indiana debuted a new, more demanding test in 2015, and the state then changed testing

companies in 2016, so there is no valid way to compare test scores before and after 2014. On the 2014 tests, 71 percent of students at the mayoral charters were proficient in English language arts, compared to 60 percent of IPS students. In math, the difference was 75 to 65 percent. (The same trends continued on the new tests but at lower levels of proficiency.)

According to the mayor's office, the charters outperformed neighborhood schools that students would have otherwise been assigned to by 17 percentage points in English and 16 in math. Their median growth percentile, which measures students' rates of progress, was about five percentage points higher in both subjects, and their four-year graduation rate in 2016 was 89 percent— the state average—compared to 77 percent at IPS schools.

Stanford University's CREDO released a study on charter performance in Indiana in 2012. Compared to their counterparts in traditional public schools, it concluded, every year "charter students in Indianapolis gain an additional two months in reading and nearly three months in math." Those in mayoral charters did even better, gaining two months in reading and 3.6 months in math. In 2015 CREDO published a report on 41 urban regions, including Indianapolis, which also revealed that by students' fourth year in Indianapolis charters, their annual gains were roughly double this amount.

Perhaps because the mayor's office closes failing schools, its charters have also shown more rapid improvement. In 2013, only 35 percent of them received an A or B rating from the state; by 2016, 50 percent did—compared to 18 percent at IPS.

Innovation Network Schools

The rise of charters put enormous competitive pressure on Indianapolis Public Schools, where 44 percent of schools were rated D or F by the state in 2016–17. In the 1960s IPS had more than 100,000 students; by 2016, it was down to about 29,000. The city's charters educated about 14,000 students, nearly a third of all public school students in the district in 2016–17.

In 2006, Mayor Peterson and David Harris founded an organization called The Mind Trust, a kind of venture capital outfit for the charter sector, to raise money and recruit talent. In December 2011 it released a report, *Creating Opportunity Schools: A Bold Plan to Transform Indianapolis Public Schools*. It advocated that the mayor and city council appoint the superintendent and urged that over time all Indianapolis public schools be converted to "opportunity schools," which would receive autonomy in exchange for accountability and operate on a performance contract with the district.

The report generated an enormous amount of attention and controversy. The superintendent rejected it, and Peterson's successor chose not to pursue it. So an informal group of elected officials, businesspeople, and community activists turned their attention to electing reformers to the school board. The reformers won all four seats that were up in 2012, creating a majority on the seven-member board. They bought out the superintendent's contract and hired Dr. Lewis Ferebee, a young, African-American deputy superintendent from North Carolina, whose first-hand experiences led him to believe in school-level autonomy.

At 25, Ferebee had been a middle school assistant principal in Creedmoor, North Carolina, when the superintendent asked him to become principal of the worst elementary school. "He gave me the keys and said, 'Lewis, you have carte blanche authority—if anybody comes to you about a decision you made, have them come to me,'" Ferebee recalls. "And I believe that was why I was successful. At the end of the day, if principals feel handcuffed, if teachers feel handcuffed, you're stifling their creativity…. You're limiting the opportunity for them to be successful."

As an elementary school principal, Ferebee saw a lot of his graduates fall back academically in middle school, so he asked the superintendent if he could run the middle school. When he turned it around, the superintendent asked him to supervise all the middle schools in the district. Then he became regional superintendent of a feeder pattern of elementary, middle, and high schools that were all struggling. "We outperformed the district in terms of growth," he says.

When Durham, North Carolina, hired the district's chief of staff to be its superintendent, he brought Ferebee along as his chief of staff and asked him to turn around all the district's low-performing schools. Again, Ferebee empowered his principals and teachers. He was telling his story at a National Association of School Boards meeting when some school board members from Indianapolis heard him. The next thing he knew they were inviting him to Indianapolis for an interview.

"I didn't realize until I got here the real thick dividing line between traditional public schools and charters," he says. There was "a lot of finger pointing" between IPS and the mayor's office. IPS was "struggling with underutilized facilities, and charter schools were being incubated in old grocery stores. The whole financial model of that division didn't make sense to me. We're still talking about public schools."

Ferebee also found an unusual degree of centralization at IPS: principals didn't even select their assistant principals and teachers. Principals told him their schools weren't as strong as they could be because they didn't have enough autonomy. So he began to empower them.

He quickly forged a relationship with the mayor's charter office. The deputy mayor for education drafted a bill to create incentives for IPS and charters to work together, by allowing the district to bring outside operators in to run "innovation network schools" in district buildings. The Mind Trust's vision informed the draft, and the fact that the state was taking over failing IPS schools created urgency. Ferebee signed on and publicly supported the bill. It passed in 2014, and in 2015 the legislature added new features and extended the same authority to the state's other districts.

Innovation network schools are exempt from the same laws and regulations charters are exempt from, and they operate outside IPS's union contracts. Most have five-year performance contracts with the district. If a school fails to fulfill the terms of its contract, the district can terminate it or refuse to renew it, but otherwise it cannot interfere with the school's autonomy.

The principal and teachers are employed by a not-for-profit school, not IPS. The nonprofit's board hires and fires the principal, sets the budget and pay scale, and chooses the school design. Almost all the schools operate in IPS buildings.

There are four types of innovation network schools:

1. New start-ups, some of which are also charter schools.
2. Existing charter schools that choose to become innovation schools and are housed in district school buildings.
3. Failing district schools restarted as innovation schools, often in partnership with an outside operator.
4. Existing IPS schools that choose to convert to innovation status.

Some serve as neighborhood schools, others as schools of choice. Ferebee believes in public school choice, but he also wanted to give quality schools to those whose parents didn't choose. He was trying to create a system that would provide both. In addition, he believed that when a school was abandoned, the neighborhood tended to go downhill. He wanted innovation schools to have the opposite effect, to revive neighborhoods.

When charter schools become innovation schools, they pay rent to IPS, but at very low rates. Different innovation schools have negotiated different agreements with IPS, but most get free or reduced-price bus transportation, free utilities, free student meals, free custodial, maintenance, special education, and information technology services, and a nurse and social worker. These advantages add up to an average of about $2,000 per student per year —enough to make becoming an innovation school more attractive than just opening a new charter school.

The Mind Trust proposed that it "incubate" innovation schools, by providing coaching and grants to leaders to support them through one or two years of planning, and Ferebee agreed.

As of 2018–19, nearly 28 percent of IPS students attended 20 innovation network schools. That percentage will increase as the

schools build out their grade levels and more innovation schools launch in August 2019.

Meanwhile, Superintendent Ferebee closed several existing IPS high schools. In his first three years, he estimated, IPS weeded out 56 percent of its failing schools. "My philosophy is this," he said: "You can have a bad year, but we know those schools, and they exist all across the nation, where every year is a bad year. It's typically the neighborhood schools, where students are required to attend. That's a social justice issue, an equity issue. I am of the belief that we get students out of those situations by any means necessary."

IPS, the mayor's office, and The Mind Trust also created a unified enrollment system for all types of public schools within district boundaries. And in 2017–18 the district shifted to weighted student budgeting, in which most of the money allocated for children follows them to the school and the principal and staff decide how to use it.

In their first three years, the innovation network schools improved their test scores faster than any other types of public schools within IPS boundaries. They are the most promising of the in-district autonomous schools around the country, in my opinion, because they start with true charter-like autonomy. If they prove to be a viable alternative to independent charters, they might have enormous impact nationwide. In most places, it is far easier, politically, to create in-district innovation schools than independent charter schools.

The only downside is that the expansion of the independent charter sector in Indianapolis has slowed, because charter operators can get a better financial deal as IPS innovation schools. It would take a change in state law to undermine independent charters, but to undermine innovation schools, all it would take is a reversal of the school board majority, which makes their autonomy subject to shifting political winds.

Chapter 5

The Keys To Success: The DNA Of 21St Century Systems

Over the past three decades, I have researched and written about the most dramatic examples of transformation in post-bureaucratic public organizations and systems I could find, in multiple countries and at every level of the public sector. I have constantly asked: What strategies made the most difference? What pieces of organizational DNA had to be changed to get fundamentally different behavior? The patterns have been striking. Whether in public education, the Department of Defense, city government, or state government, the fundamental DNA of public bureaucracies is similar—which means the strategies required to transform it are similar.

Traditional public bureaucracies centralize authority, organize in hierarchies, use rules to control behavior, avoid competition, treat those they serve as dependents, not customers, and produce standardized services for mass markets. In the Information Age, these bureaucracies are dinosaurs. They are too slow, too rigid, too inward-looking, and too indifferent to the quality of their performance.

I believe there are seven strategies that hold the key to transforming performance in urban school systems. Think of them as the seven C's of 21st century education systems:

1. Creating *clarity* of purpose and role by defining missions and outcome goals and separating steering from rowing, so those doing each can concentrate on their core purposes.
2. Creating *contestability*, so no public school has a right to continue if it consistently fails its students.
3. Creating *consequences* for performance, through competition, rewards, and penalties.

4. Empowering *customers* by giving them choices of different kinds of schools, with public dollars following their choices.
5. Decentralizing *control* over operations (but not steering), to give those running schools the authority they need to succeed.
6. Using this freedom to transform the *culture* of public schools.
7. Boosting the *capacity* of school leaders, teachers, and other staff.

Creating Clarity of Purpose and Role

In a traditional system, which operates schools directly, the board and administration spend their time and energy *rowing:* hiring teachers, assigning them to schools, negotiating union contracts, making sure the buses run on time, dealing with broken water mains or vacation schedules or even scandals in the schools. They often run from crisis to crisis, losing sight of their core purpose. Success is rare when a large school district tries to steer and row at the same time.

In New Orleans and Washington, D.C.'s charter sector, boards and superintendents no longer have to operate schools and employ thousands of staff. Their role is clear: to focus on their core purpose, improving student outcomes. They have time to address the system-wide challenges that get in the way of progress: how to create enrollment systems that prevent "creaming" of the best students and give poor families an equal shot at quality schools; how to ensure that students with disabilities find programs that fit their needs; how to offer educational programs that engage all students, whether they are college bound or not. They can even figure out how to use enrollment systems to boost racial and economic integration, or how to fund new birth-to-five initiatives to help poor families better prepare their children for school. Free of rowing obligations, they can devote their full attention to *steering*.

And they can do so with far fewer employees than traditional districts. The charter board in D.C. has done an outstanding job with 38 employees (as of 2017), while the central administration in DCPS had 902.

"You can't wear both hats well," said Patrick Dobard, who became the Louisiana Recovery School District's superintendent in 2012. "I'm often asked, 'What's the key to your success?' My answer is the nimbleness of our policy making. Traditional districts are like luxury cruise ships: If they want to change direction, it's going to take a long time. New Orleans is like a bunch of swift boats: When we need to change directions, we're able to change nimbly, and quickly."

In an effective 21st century system, those doing the steering play four key roles: authorizing, regulating, managing resources, and speaking up for the needs of families and children.

Authorizing functions include:

- Negotiating, approving, and renewing charters
- Holding school operators accountable by measuring and reviewing their performance
- Revoking charters and replacing failing schools
- Making sure that children get access to better schools when theirs are closed
- Making sure there is capacity to handle students when a school suddenly closes during the school year
- Expanding and replicating successful schools
- Adjusting supply to demand—for example, by filling niches in the market with new schools

Regulating ensures equity of access to schools, resources, and opportunities by:

- Establishing the rules of the game regarding choice, neighborhood schools, the admissions process, student transfers, transportation, discipline, accounting, purchasing, measurement of performance, provision of information to parents and others, adjudication of disputes, and meeting the needs of special populations such as students with disabilities, English-language learners, gifted and talented students, and former dropouts

- Enforcing compliance with these policies and rules—for instance, to prevent schools from discouraging or pushing out students they don't want

Managing resources means making sure schools have what they need to succeed:

- Creating a funding formula that provides adequate resources to educate each kind of student (including those with severe disabilities) at each level of schools
- Ensuring that adequate facilities are available to all schools
- Ensuring that support services schools need are available to them
- Ensuring that schools have an adequate supply of effective personnel available to them
- Ensuring that systemwide resources needed are available, such as health insurance and pensions or 401(K) accounts for school staff
- Securing any new revenues needed to make these things happen or to provide new services or schools, such as preschools or adult schools

Speaking up for the needs of families and children involves:

- Lobbying the state legislature to change laws when necessary—to equalize funding between charters and traditional schools, for instance, or to give charters access to existing public school buildings and/or public funding for facilities
- Lobbying for more resources for schools or for steering, when necessary
- Bringing leaders and institutions in the community together to address problems and opportunities that the schools cannot address on their own, such as providing mental health services
- Lobbying public and private sector leaders to create new supports for children and families, such as support for poor families beginning at the birth of their children, free tuition for low-income high school graduates at public institutions of higher education, or apprenticeships for those who want to learn a trade

Creating Contestability, So Failing Schools Are Replaced

Those doing the steering in traditional districts are often politically captive of their employees in the schools. If reformers on a board get enough employees riled up by replacing schools, they risk defeat. This is not the case in 21st century systems. When those steering do not employ those rowing, they have the political freedom to do what is best for children, including replacing failed schools. Those running public schools no longer have that right regardless of their performance; their right to operate a school is contestable.

Creating Consequences for Performance

In a typical public school, everyone knows there are a few problems. There might be a fourth-grade teacher with tenure who shouldn't be teaching because he doesn't like kids, or a chemistry teacher who is senile. But no one does anything to solve these problems. Removing a tenured teacher for performance is impossible in some states; in others, it takes hundreds of hours of work over several years. So the adults in the building know there will be no negative consequences for them if they simply ignore the problem. The dynamics are entirely different when all the adults know the school could be replaced and everyone could lose their jobs. Most of the time, they find a way to come together and solve problems.

It's not just the threat of negative consequences that improves schools; it's also the possibility of positive consequences. In New Orleans, D.C., Denver, and Indianapolis, people running schools know that if they succeed, they may be able to expand and/or replicate their school. For those who care about educating children, this is a handsome reward.

Many believe that failing schools can be turned around if we just give them enough money and support, but, as study after study shows, most such efforts fail. It has been far more effective to replace a failing school with a better one.

Many also assume that we should hold individual teachers accountable for student learning, but data, logic, and experience all suggest that states and districts should hold schools accountable for performance and let them figure out how to hold their teachers accountable.

Giving "Customers" a Choice of Different Schools

All parents should have the freedom to get their children out of bad situations. Most parents who can afford it choose, by moving into a neighborhood with good schools or sending their children to private schools. Low-income parents deserve the right to choose as well.

Different children flourish in different environments. Students arrive at school with different backgrounds, different interests, different forms of intelligence, and different learning styles, but traditional schools treat most of them the same. When children land in the right school, they can blossom in surprising ways. And when communities can help choose which model they would prefer to replace a failing school, as in New Orleans and Denver, parents and students are more likely to feel committed.

Of course, for many families the best choice is a neighborhood school to which their children can walk, particularly in elementary school. Most 21st century districts have either reserved half their seats in K–8 schools for those who live nearby or have designated some of their charter schools as neighborhood schools with attendance zones.

There are dozens of different kinds of schools already in existence.

Different Types of School Models

By Pedagogical Approach:

- Project-based education encourages active learning through projects, at times in the community outside school
- Community schools include "wrap-around" social services for students and families, such as health care, psychological counseling, and parent education
- "No-excuses" schools usually have longer school days and years, high expectations, an incentive structure with clear rewards and punishments, and an unrelenting focus on college
- Competency-based learning allows children to move on not when the teacher does or the calendar flips over but when they prove they have mastered particular content
- Personalized learning usually involves educational software to help students learn content at their own pace
- International Baccalaureate schools offer rigorous, exam-based curricula that help develop language abilities, international understanding, and critical thinking
- Montessori schools group three grades together in each classroom and engage students in self-directed learning, at their own pace, for much of the day
- "Early-college" high schools engage motivated students in college-level work and allow them to earn as much as two years' worth of college credits, through Advanced Placement courses and dual-enrollment programs with colleges
- Internship-heavy high schools, such as the Big Picture Learning schools, have all their students spend some time every week in internships at businesses, nonprofits, or public agencies

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By the Type of Students They Target:

- Schools for gifted students
- Single-sex schools
- Schools that offer increased support for English-language learners
- Schools for adults
- Preschools
- Schools with intense therapeutic help for children (and families) who need it
- Schools for students with particular disabilities
- Schools that seek to preserve a cultural heritage, such as Afrocentric schools and Native American schools
- Schools for "at-risk" children: those who are chronically truant, coming back from the criminal justice system, or otherwise struggling

By Particular Content Areas:

- Bilingual immersion schools
- Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) schools, and STEAM schools, which add arts
- Career and technical high schools, which prepare students for technical careers right out of high school
- Arts-intensive schools
- Drama-intensive schools
- Military and maritime academies
- Athletics-intensive schools, such as Denver's Girls Athletic Leadership School

Once choices are available, families need enrollment systems that help them find the right match. Computer algorithms can create effective systems, but some families need hands-on help. Districts and authorizers should create places where parents can sit down with counselors to sort through their options, as the RSD did in New Orleans, or make sure one or more organizations in the city are playing that role, as in D.C. Authorizers must also ensure that transportation is equally available to all students.

Giving families a choice of different kinds of schools has several other advantages over assigning all students by geography. First, schools have to compete for their students and money, so parents have much more leverage in demanding what their children need, because they can leave, and the money follows them. Second, information about the demand for schools can help authorizers make decisions about renewing charters and replacing or replicating schools. Third, choice can help keep middle-class families in cities. Fourth, choice can help stabilize school populations. Low-income urban families tend to move often, but if families can choose their schools and transportation is provided, their children don't have to switch schools every time they move. Finally, choice makes integrating schools by income easier.

Empowering School Operators by Decentralizing Control

To create different school models, it helps to give those running schools the authority to control their operations. It's silly to expect unique and innovative models to appear when schools have to use the same staffing patterns, pay scales, hiring methods, school calendar, and curriculum.

Successful schools also require real commitment from their leaders and staff, and that is much more likely if they make most of their own decisions. Someone taking orders from central headquarters is seldom going to give 100 percent, particularly when they question some of those orders.

It is shocking how little control traditional districts give their principals and teachers. "Forced placement" of teachers by central

headquarters is common, often required by union contracts that honor seniority. In addition, lockstep pay systems give great teachers an incentive to leave for better pay in another industry and poor teachers an incentive to stay. Tenure policies, union contracts, and appeals processes also make it difficult to fire ineffective teachers.

Because centralized control through rules doesn't work well in today's world, 21st century systems shift the primary mechanism of control from rules to accountability for results. Some advocates for children worry that without all the rules, schools will not treat poor children and minorities equitably. What they don't understand is that our centralized districts systematically treat poor and minority children like second-class citizens. Those children get the most inexperienced and lowest-quality teachers, because stronger teachers and those with seniority can use the centralized rules to migrate to middle-class schools. But as 21st century systems have shown, it is entirely possible to create decentralized systems of choice that are far more equitable than traditional districts.

If we want to hold principals accountable for student learning in their schools, we have to let them control what goes on there. Otherwise, they have a ready excuse for failure: They can blame central headquarters with its silly rules.

But we shouldn't stop at empowering principals. Running a school is too big a job to leave all the decisions in the hands of one person. Many charter schools have an instructional leader, an operational leader, and sometimes a third leader who focuses on school culture. More and more also use distributed leadership, with "teacher leaders" for each subject and grade level or levels. Typically, teacher leaders teach part-time and coach, instruct, and/or evaluate their team the rest of the time.

Transforming School Cultures

The five strategies just discussed will change school cultures, but experience teaches that these changes never come fast enough or go far enough without a deliberate push. In public bureaucracies, cultures become deeply engrained. Being relatively powerless, people become

invested in being victims. To avoid any sense that they are responsible, they blame others for all problems—district headquarters, the principal, parents, even the union. Those bent on reinventing public schools have learned that they need to deliberately create cultures that embrace innovation, responsibility for meeting students where they are, and accountability for results.

They also have to reshape students' habits, attitudes, and expectations. Creating motivated learners is a big part of it. Traditional schools barely recognize this challenge, doing nothing—other than the efforts of individual teachers—to create motivation. But many charters make building motivation job one. They spend the first week of school setting the culture, the expectations. They create systems of rewards and penalties to heighten motivation. They take students to visit university campuses, to bring the possibility of attending college alive.

Building the Capacity of School Leaders and Teachers

A century ago, when most students went on to menial work or childrearing, teachers didn't have to excel. Principals weren't expected to be instructional leaders; even in recent decades, their days were given over to facilities management, discipline, parent and community interaction, and gathering evidence of compliance with federal, state and district requirements. But in the 21st century, the majority of jobs will require some technical skill and the ability to analyze and solve problems. Today we do need excellent leaders and teachers, particularly in urban schools.

Hence those creating 21st century systems realized early on that they needed deliberate strategies to build new talent pipelines. They brought in Teach For America, The New Teacher Project, and New Leaders. The Mind Trust in Indianapolis and New Schools for New Orleans created fellowships to develop aspiring school leaders. KIPP and E.L. Haynes Public Charter School in D.C. developed the Capitol Teaching Residency, which DCPS then adapted for its own use. Denver Public Schools set up a Denver Teacher Residency.

Multiplication, Not Addition

Seven strategies, then, hold the key to reinventing our schools. Are all seven necessary? Yes, if we want dramatic improvement. The formula for success is more like multiplication than addition: if too many are zeroes, the outcome is going to be zero. Changing half the DNA of a bureaucratic system is a recipe for internal conflict, not transformation. When system DNA is coded for bureaucracy, innovators swim constantly against the current. Most of them either wear out or give up. But when the key pieces of DNA are recoded, innovators get to swim with the current. The entire system supports them.

What about suburban and rural communities? Are bureaucratic systems adequate there? Well, ask yourself: Do we want most suburban and rural schools to be cookie-cutter models? Should we allow them to survive year after year if their students are falling behind? Should their principals have little power to select their teachers, fire the few incompetents, or control their own budgets?

I would answer "no." The new model is emerging first in urban districts, because they are desperate. But it will work in suburban districts as well. Small, rural bureaucracies tend to be far less constraining than large ones, and there are geographic limits on how many choices students can have in rural areas. But rural districts and authorizers can use most of the seven C's. They can develop a shared sense of purpose and separate steering and rowing. They can empower their principals and teachers. They can build talent pipelines and change school cultures. They can use online resources to give their students more choices.

By 2050, I believe the 21st century model will be the norm in urban and suburban districts, just as the bureaucratic model became the norm between 1900 and 1950. There is simply too much at stake to maintain systems that don't prepare students to thrive in today's world.

Chapter 6

Strategy: Getting From Here To There

Potential 21st Century Strategies

For State Leaders

- Create a turnaround school district to hand failing schools to charter operators
- Take over a failing district and turn over failing schools to charter operators
- Create an independent state-local board to authorize certain failing schools, as Springfield and Massachusetts have
- Create a dedicated charter board to authorize charters in a city or region, as Congress did in D.C.
- Create a citywide education commission with power to open, close, replace, expand, or replicate district and charter schools, with power to override authorizers
- Remove barriers to 21st century models in state law and regulations
- Create financial incentives to support 21st century models, such as funding pools
- Allow districts greater flexibility by converting to "charter district" status
- Strengthen state charter laws and practices

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- Make charter authorizers accountable for the performance of their schools
- Create politically independent, single-purpose charter authorizers
- Extend teachers' pensions, insurance, and other benefits to charter teachers
- Adopt 21st century measurement and accountability systems
- Require districts to distribute 80 to 85 percent of their funds to schools to control
- Reform or eliminate teacher tenure laws

For Mayors and City Councils

- Ask the state legislature to allow mayors to authorize charters
- Create new public authorities—real estate trusts—to handle school facilities in a politically neutral fashion
- Finance a pool to pay teachers whose schools are closed or replaced for a year, while they look for another teaching position
- Catalyze the formation of advocacy and support organizations like The Mind Trust and New Schools for New Orleans

For School Boards and Districts

- Pursue any of the four initiatives listed above for mayors and city councils
- Set up a separate, independent charter board, with no operating responsibilities, to authorize charters and/or innovation or pilot schools
- Shift to weighted student budgeting
- Create universal enrollment systems covering all traditional and charter schools
- Require a minimum percentage of low-income students in some or

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all schools, to integrate schools by income level (and often by race)
- Increase funding for schools with a healthy percentage of low-income children, to promote integration by income level
- Remove the monopoly from most internal services by allowing schools to purchase them elsewhere if they prefer

For Federal Leaders

- Meld categorical grant funds into broader grants
- Allow districts to combine certain categorical funding, below a set amount
- Reward states that strengthen their charter laws and practices
- Reward districts that create separate authorizing boards, use performance agreements to hold their schools accountable, replace failing schools, and give school leaders the power to control their budgets and hire, fire, and reward employees

Endnotes

All quotations without endnotes are from interviews with the author.

Introduction

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Second, D.C. launched a major capital investment drive to rebuild and renovate DCPS schools in 2008. Since then, it has spent an average of about $7,400 per student each year on DCPS schools, while charters have received about $3,000 per student annually in facilities funding.

Third, other DC agencies have spent money on DCPS schools—for maintenance, security, health services, and other services—that did not always go to charter schools.

Fourth, DCPS schools have been funded based on projected enrollments, while charters have been funded based on current-year enrollment audits in October.

(According to former Deputy Mayor for Education Niles, the city is transitioning to a system that will fund both sectors on the same basis.)

Fifth, the city council has occasionally made supplemental appropriations to DCPS but not to charters.

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Chapter Five

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