

A Legacy of Education Reform in Detroit:

An Archival and Field-based Case Study of the Current State of
the School District and Reforms in Detroit, Michigan

Maple Kirby

Advised by

Edward St. John, Ed.D.

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Introduction

Even after years of policy and reform attempting to decrease debt and increase achievement, Detroit Public Schools are still considered to be in a state of near crisis. In 2010, Detroit students scored the lowest out of every U.S. urban school district on U.S. Department of Education achievement exams (Foley, 2010). Detroit has one of the lowest graduation rates in the country, if not the lowest (at 25%) (Headlee, 2007). In the beginning of 2011, the district reported a legacy deficit of \$363 million (Detroit Public Schools, 2011b). In 2010, Arne Duncan, United States Secretary of Education, called Detroit Public Schools “arguably the worst urban school district in the country” (Oosting, 2010). A year later, he said that he “couldn't be more hopeful, more optimistic about where Detroit can go” (Oosting, 2011).

This thesis is a case study of the Detroit education system focusing on two current reform initiatives, the role of Emergency Financial Manager and the push to bring charter schools into the district. These two initiatives are rooted in an evolution of education reform in Detroit and across the nation. Thus, a large part of this thesis is an historical case study of the national context of education reform today and a presentation of the history of education in Detroit starting in 1919. This thesis reveals how the national educational movements have affected the history of and current identity of reform initiatives in Detroit's schools. This national and historical context also teaches us about what makes a reform successful or not. Through this thesis, takeaways—best practices and cautions—are summarized in bold¹. These conclusions are relevant to school districts across the nation.

The research for this thesis also included field study interviews. Presented in this paper is a process of reform—based on categories of interviewees' stances on education reform—that

¹ These takeaways can be found together in Appendix A

serves as a guide to thinking about the most effective ways to implement reform. This thesis concludes with evaluations, takeaways, and improvements tailored to the Detroit school district based on the analysis of the interview data. These conclusions specifically address the Emergency Financial Manager position and the increased presences of charters schools in Detroit as well as larger challenges that cannot be addressed only by the two initiatives focused on in this paper.

The identity of powerful education reform in America has changed from one of coalitions to one of increased communication and collaboration today. To enact the solutions and face the challenges presented in the following pages, every actor in our education system, from community members to national leaders, needs to begin working together to improve the schools of Detroit and our country.

Background: Two Current Detroit Education Reforms

To focus my interviews and subsequent analysis of Detroit's schools, I chose to concentrate on two different reform efforts going on in the Detroit school district: the Emergency Financial Manager position and the increase in charter schools in the district. These were the two reforms that characterized the current educational reform in Detroit. The Emergency Financial Manager (EFM) of the Detroit Public Schools is a leadership position created in 2009 for the purpose of improving the financial situation of the school district. Today in 2012, the schools still have an elected school board as well as a superintendent of schools, but the EFM has the power to overrule them not only in fiscal matters but matters directly concerning academics as well. The position is controversial in Detroit partially because it was created by the state, not the city, brings in someone with expertise in business instead of education, and gives them

autocratic power over the Detroit schools. The current EFM Roy Roberts was appointed in May of 2011.

The push to turn a large amount of public schools into charter schools (about 40 schools or 30% of the existing publics in the year 2012) was a heavily discussed issue during my initial research (Wasko). The EFM before Roberts, Robert Bobb, created a plan to bring in new operators to charter these new schools. Roberts scaled down this proposal and chartered only five schools in the 2011-2012 school year (Roberts). Although the current reform effort involving new charters may look differently than expected, 54,000 students in Detroit currently attend charter schools (Hing, 2010) compared to 66,000 attending public schools (Detroit Public Schools, 2011a). Charter schools, as Walter McLean, a retired Detroit teacher, principal, and assistance superintendent, admitted to me: are not going away.

These initiatives are so contemporary that there is a risk that some of the suggestions in this study may be irrelevant by 2013. However, by being the first to evaluate these initiatives I believe that I have brought new material into the discussion of education reform and drawn conclusions that are currently relevant for actors in Detroit.

Methodology: Case Study

Robert Yin, a prominent author on case methods, says that an appropriately integrated study collects “data at every level of [a] complex organization, using a variety of... methods” (2006, p. 43). Mixed methods, according to Yin, “embrace much more than the traditional dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research” (Yin, 2006, p. 41). This thesis’ study is built from a combination of field study, done through ten interviews, and archival study (Yin, 2006). Both methods will be described in following sections.

Yin stressed collecting and analyzing “data at every level of [a] complex organization.” Studying the education system in Detroit involved looking first at the national level of reform movements. From there, the next level closer involved looking at the history of education reform in Detroit. The next step was taking an intimate look at the system by speaking with people involved at every level of education reform. The interviewees for this thesis were chosen based on their proximity to the issue to encompass every level of reform in Detroit.

I made sure to “maintain the same point of reference” or “unit of analysis” in order to integrate my study (Yin, 2006, p. 43). All levels of my analysis are focused on the role of Emergency Financial Manager, the introduction of charter schools, and the larger contextual problems in Detroit.

Historical Perspective on Detroit Education Reform

Methodology: Archival Analysis

The archival analysis has two parts: the first is the national context of the current reforms in Detroit and the second is the history of them. The national context has been crafted largely out of two important works that received large national acclaim due to their complete look at historical national movements.

Diane Ravitch’s piece *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* (2010), was based on her 40 years of experience in education reforms. She reflects on *A Nation At Risk* (U. S. Department of Education, 1983) and other reports that frame the national context for contemporary reform. Ravitch was once a strong supporter of the same issues she now criticizes.

Second, in *As Good as it Gets* (2010), Larry Cuban, another noted historian of education, focuses his critique on national educational movements by examining education reform in Austin, Texas. While Ravitch addresses the topics of accountability and choice, the large-spanning movements of today, Cuban considers more a larger range of the pieces of education reform. He offers important cautions and suggestions for reformers that will help lead them to the best outcomes. His advice, and Ravitch's, shows up throughout this thesis.

These books form a context for the history of Detroit schools from 1919 to 2002, summarized from the historical analysis of Jeffrey Mirel. Mirel is a professor at the University of Michigan in the School of Education and an authority on the history of Detroit education reform. His book *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, will serve as the backbone for the history that I present. Using many sources, he compiles his own multi-dimensional story of the past in a complete, detailed way. While his book covers the time between 1907 and 1999, a second piece of his titled *Detroit: There Is Still a Long Road to Travel, and Success Is Far from Assured* (2004), covers 1999 through approximately 2002. This article is found in a compilation called *Mayors in the Middle* about mayoral takeovers of struggling school districts around the country.

My summative history is largely a condensed version of Mirel's history. When choosing what to keep in the story and the large amount to remove, I wanted the summary to convey the most important facts from the past that affect the current situation today. To extract the takeaways from the history, I considered first and foremost the changes that were attempted and whether they were successful or not, and why. These mini arcs within the large timeline are the pieces that teach us what has worked or not in making positive educational change.

I put together the last piece of Detroit's history, from 2002 through February 2012, from newspaper articles from that period. Using archived articles from databases, I scanned through every piece mentioning "Detroit Public Schools." After constructing a history using every-side on the issues that I could find, I then whittled it down the way I had with Mirel's book, looking for the important details and the stories from which we can draw important takeaways.

This history section is not entirely objective. Although Mirel's narrative is fairly fact-oriented, as is mine, I have created a story that is not complete. I have focused on the tales that teach us something I deemed as most important and informative. The entire narrative also has a focus on the present initiatives of charter school choice and the business-oriented EFM role.

National Context

When the state of Michigan created the autocratic Emergency Financial Manager (EFM) position to run Detroit's schools and filled the position, later, with a businessman, this was not unprecedented. Detroit's actions sit within a context of education reform that shapes what changes local districts around the country make. The educational movements that have swept across the United States have influenced both the current role of EFM as well as the charter school push in Detroit.

In her book, Diane Ravitch (2010) reflects upon the beginning of two national movements: accountability and market-based choice. The first began as a quest to create common national standards to make sure that students across the board were learning the same things (Ravitch, 2010). It has now turned into the "accountability movement" to measure student learning on standardized tests and then to use those results to punish or reward teachers and schools (Ravitch, 2010).

The underlying foundation of the school choice movement was a desire to introduce new ideas into the school system. John Chubb and Terry Moe began discussing school choice in 1990 (Ravitch, 2010). They argued that public education was “owned” by “teachers’ unions and myriad associations of principals, school boards, education schools, book publishers, testing services, and many other[s]” all of whom benefited from keeping the schools the same (Ravitch, 2010, p. 118). Because of these many different stakeholders, fundamental school reform was impossible (Ravitch, 2010). School choice, then, was the solution for making change. The key to Chubb and Moe’s plan was to allow parents and students to choose which schools they wanted to attend thus creating an incentive for schools to please students (Ravitch, 2010). This process allows students and families to hold schools accountable, hopefully leading to improved schools, instead of letting the school system be controlled by the interests that Chubb and Moe identified (Ravitch, 2010).

Albert Shanker, frequently named the founding father of the charter school movement, suggested that groups of teachers should be able to form their own schools and try new innovative pedagogy that would work for students who struggled in the traditional system (Ravitch, 2010). He called these “charter schools” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 123). But in 1993, he saw the “charter school” turn into something else (Ravitch, 2010). Instead of being run by teachers, many new charters were operated by corporations who began to fight teachers’ unions (Ravitch, 2010). Shanker criticized the new charters’ lack of national standards and curriculum (Ravitch, 2010). Around the nation, these charter schools were most heavily populating in urban districts like Detroit because of the poor existing local academic options (Ravitch, 2010).

Ravitch moved her focus from the national level to a local one, from which perspective we are privy to the nuances of these large reform movements. She wrote about the hiring of a

non-educator superintendent to reform a district as he see fit, without rules, that *was* unprecedented. San Diego's school board elected this superintendent Alan Bersin in 1998 (Ravitch, 2010). Ravitch (2010) concluded that Bersin personified the accountability movement: demanding higher test scores, fighting the teachers' unions, and believing that schools were wasteful and inefficient.

Bersin had immediately made it clear that his reforms would be top-down, announcing, "you've got to jolt a system" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 53). He explained that reform would not happen if you wait for consensus (Ravitch, 2010). The teachers' unions objected from the beginning, but Bersin pushed on without their buy-in, without coalition support, and school faculty morale fell to abysmal levels quickly (Ravitch, 2010).

Bersin's term ended in 2002 and he left San Diego with mixed results (Ravitch, 2010). Ravitch continues her tale by recounting the rein of a mayoral-appointed leader of schools in New York City, Joel Klein. Klein also had little experience in education and took a top-down business approach, eliminating checks and balances to improve speed (Ravitch, 2010). He stressed testing and accountability making it the end-all through his district; schools and teachers were rated on their students' test scores and how they changed (Ravitch, 2010). 80 percent of the teachers' union members strongly disapproved of Klein (Ravitch, 2010).

In 2009, Klein started putting more energy into charter schools, planning to open 100 more than he already had and giving public school buildings to charter operators to help ignite that growth (Ravitch, 2010). The concept of neighborhood schools eroded and the public schools grew bitter (Ravitch, 2010). As neighborhood public schools were shut down, largely due to low test scores, their attendees scattered to surrounding schools, many over forty-five minutes away (Ravitch, 2010). The least motivated students were lost in the shuffle as public

schools were closed and smaller charters were opened (Ravitch, 2010). Unfortunately, the new schools were so focused on high test scores that they were not motivated to look for the lost students (Ravitch, 2010). The students who were not lost but still not capable enough to get into a charter were forced into other larger public high schools, starting the process anew of depressing test scores and getting the school shut down (Ravitch, 2010). Ravitch worries that the charter school movement will continue to harm America's public schools in this downward spiraling way as the neediest students with the less motivated parents are the only ones left in the public system (Ravitch, 2010).

Both Bersin and Klein were superintendents with a "get-tough," top-down leadership style, focusing their energy on the new conservative choice and accountability (Ravitch, 2010, p. 47). These growing trends all have the same underlying idea: business principles – accountability, competition, standards, quantifiable measures, efficiency, and large-scale reform—are the new best rules for running our school system. The concept of school choice is a reflection of competition in business sectors that leads to better products and systems of production (Ravitch, 2010). Standardized testing grew from the desire to hold educators accountable, measuring and standardizing their jobs and paying them based on how efficient they seem to be (Ravitch, 2010).

Local reforms, including the EFM position and charters in Detroit, reflect this business approach to education. The role is modeled off of the CEO position in companies in which the leader is given almost absolute autonomy and power. Furthermore, the position is based on the premise that autocratic leadership is more efficient at making change and that financial solutions through business practices will improve the schools. A common effort in Detroit to improve the district is to become more fiscally lean by cutting costs and consolidating the number of schools.

Ravitch (2010) writes that these business ideals grew from conservative factions of reformers with right-leaning ideologies but that now the movement is embraced by the nation as mainstream. These movements are so powerful because, as both Larry Cuban and Ravitch agree, both the left and right have bought into them. As Ravitch and Cuban also discuss, it is typical of a movement to be “infused with hype” and blindly supported, despite a lack of evidence showing that it will result in positive change. I conclude that **national movements are powerful because they are what is “in,” not necessarily because they are what is best for the students of America.** We need to realize that new autocratic, top-down, business oriented positions of control, and increased competition will not *guarantee* improvements.

After examining these national movements, Ravitch and Cuban offer takeaways to protect future reformers for falling into the holes that past educators have. Using the examples of San Diego and New York City, Ravitch (2010) cautions her readers about the negatives of top-down control. One of the institutes commissioned to do research during Bersin’s reign in San Diego, found that teachers “who perceived decision making as being top-down tended to resist school-wide reform efforts” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 57). In New York City, because mayoral control took power away from local and central school boards, parents found it difficult to communicate with school authorities (Ravitch, 2010). Ravitch (2010) argues that speedy top-down reform makes it hard to gain **credibility, support, and objective review: three necessary pieces to creating support for reforms.**

Klein’s strategy in New York City of warning schools of their low performance and then closing them if their scores did not improve did not result in “school-change” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 87). Cuban addresses the need to have a “school-change” strategy that changes classroom practices. He knows that **for a solution to work, it must improve what happens between**

students and teachers (2010). He offers a four-question method of assessing enacted reforms, which doubles as a guide to implementing reform (2010). One of these questions is whether or not the reform has changed the content and practice of teaching (Cuban, 2010). The current movements of increasing accountability and choice may change high school structures but do not automatically change what is done in the classroom and thus may not improve students' academic performance (Cuban, 2010).

Ravitch's last important point, one that she brings up throughout her book, is that using more standardized testing and therefore creating more accountability, does not automatically translate to improved pedagogy (2010). **There are many pieces of a great education that are extremely important that cannot be measured by numbers**, things like clean and safe environments for learning and committed, quality teachers and staff (Ravitch, 2010). She makes it clear that using test scores to measure success is not complete.

With these national movements and the resulting cautionary recommendations in mind, we will step forward to look at how these specific movements have played out in Detroit. Conversely, looking at the case study of Detroit in its past and present will teach us some nuances about these national movements.

Detroit's History

Larry Cuban, in *As Good As It Gets* (2010), reflects upon consistent errors of urban educational leaders across the nation and places the blame for these common errors on reformers' lack of historical knowledge. Most policy leaders fail to recognize that the current state of our American education system and its individual struggling urban districts depends on the past (Cuban, 2010). Historical trends and past patterns of behavior in educational organizations may be instrumental to reform (Cuban, 2010). In this way, when we look at the

current situation in Detroit and think about possible solutions for the schools there, we should not overlook the history that lies beneath the surface.

In this history section, I aim to take the history that Mirel has shared and weave it into an abridged version intended for both the reader who wishes to learn about the interesting and potent past of Detroit's public schools, and for the reformist who wants to learn from the successes and failures of past reforms. Detroit's history is filled with cautions and best practices that I will draw out and highlight in bold.

All points from Mirel's book *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System* will have a page number following. Other sources will be cited properly. Uncited points are my own.

1919-1929

Throughout the 1920s, Detroit's education system was "one of the finest in the world" (43). The largest cause of this excellence was the consensus regarding the need for and the direction of the city's education system (44). Business leaders and organized laborers alike agreed on educational issues largely because both sides saw the schools as working in their favor (48). For the laborers in Detroit, they saw the public schooling system as their own creation and protecting it as a part of their ideology (49). The laborer's constant vigilance was the only thing that would keep their school system out of the hands of the capitalists (52, 50). While the labor factions saw education as an ideological means to change the existing structure of the economy, in the eyes of the conservative business leaders, the school system was a means to continue strengthening the established order (52). Ideologically, these business leaders considered the roles of schools to be geared towards teaching patriotism and the virtues of capitalism (52). As economically beneficial systems, "good" schools were those that best prepared children for the labor force (52).

Even though socialists, union members, business leaders, and school officials all had different, contradictory reasons for their support, they nonetheless agreed on the need to expand their high-quality public school system (54). The size and growth of the city's school funding are evidence of this multi-dimensional support. In addition to school enrollment growing from 95,023 to 254, 645 students between 1918 and 1932, the city of Detroit also spent an additional \$41.20 more per pupil in the 1931-1932 school year than in 1918-1919 (54). This expansion was also noticeable in terms of the percentage of city revenue spent on schools, which changed from 18% in 1914-1915 to 34% in the 1920-1921 school year (54). These increased expenditures were supported through allocations made by the city council (54). This implies that the political leaders of Detroit also supported public education in a major way, and that if they did not, they faced a hard wall of opposition (54).

Ample funding, although one way to measure support, does not always signify consensus, however. Across the country, controversies regarding *how* money should be spent on schools were common (55). In Detroit however, three key major money-spending measures went over smoothly. Firstly, as the nation experienced declines in the number of new and old teachers alike and as Detroit teachers' salaries fell in comparison to other professions', Detroit experienced a teacher shortage (56). Aforementioned support for the Detroit school system immediately led to substantial increases in teacher salaries and a new acceptance towards allowing married women to teach (58-59).

Secondly, even though the monetary cost of doing so was staggering, Detroit labor and business factions united in their demand that more schools be built to accommodate the increasing enrollment numbers (59-61). From the 1917-18 school year to that from 1934-35, the number of students needing an education in Detroit almost tripled (60). Overall in 1920-1921—

the peak year of teacher salary increases and the middle of the demand for more schools— the mayor and council *doubled* their allocation for Detroit schools, an increase of \$5.8 million (58). While the public school system in 1917 consisted of 126 schools with eight under construction, the system was 222 schools strong by the year 1930 (65).

Thirdly, broad consensus led to the continuation, rationalization, and bureaucratization of the progressive reform efforts set in motion by the school board from the previous decade (66). Although it was his predecessors who introduced IQ testing and tracking, the superintendent, Frank Cody, smoothly expanded these practices (68). He introduced commercial, technical, and general learning tracks as a way to allow students to achieve the education best suited for their intellectual level (70). The unanimity underlying the creation of these progressive policies— both parties generally agreed with the national progressive movement headed by educational theorist, John Dewey—upheld the consensus between business leaders and organized laborers (67).

In its Golden Age, the Detroit school system experienced the power of broadly based consensus in creating positive change. This theme of broad support will come up again and again as one of the biggest and best practices in Detroit’s history. **Having support and consensus from many constituents is vital for implementing reform.**

Cody and his board also implemented the Gary Plan initiative. Under the Gary Plan, schools operated on a rotating schedule, which meant sending two platoons of students to either the traditional half of the school or the half designated for an enriched program (72). This allowed for the most efficient use of school space, time, and staff (72). While this plan had the most current curriculum and was cost efficient, it was one of the most controversial programs of the time period (72).

A preliminary cause of the school board's success with the Gary Plan was how slowly the board implemented it. After evaluating the backlashes incurred by other cities who implemented the plan, they decided to only convert two schools into platoon schools the first year, two the second, and nine the next (73). This board was wise to be attentive to the successes and failures of similar education reform across the nation in order to avoid common mistakes. **Not only can school districts learn from their own past, but from the experiences of other similar school districts.**

Before making any changes, the board allowed educators within these schools to choose whether or not to be involved with the initiative (73). This ensured that involved educators bought into the program—buy-in being an important component of any comprehensive school reform. These Detroit leaders also informed the public regarding their plans (73). The superintendent, Frank Cody, spent much of his time on community relations and his efforts went a long way to ensure that the reforms were successful (68).

Much of the communication with the community and educators was laced with research language. Cody and his board framed the reforms as being heavily researched-based (68). They assured the principals and teachers that no policy decisions would be made before researching and studying the schools' results (73). Using scientific knowledge to endorse educational reform is not only helpful for gaining support, but is necessary for ensuring quality reforms. In Detroit's case, when the district started spending large amounts of money on construction projects, criticisms arose regarding exactly how money was being spent and where (61). The board responded quickly to these outcries by implementing research initiatives, which eventually discredited the criticisms (61-63). Not only was this an efficient way to resolve immediate concerns, but the board acknowledged the concerns and used a research-based approach to look

into the matter. The board showed accountability for its program and the program's success, which should always be emulated by any education system.

This example of success in new school reforms exemplifies and adds nuance to Ravitch's best practices: **move slowly with new reforms and research them. Conducting and reporting objective research is an important tool for acquiring the credibility and legitimacy by which efforts gain support and buy-in.**

This was an important period in the history of Detroit. It is considered the Golden Age for Detroit schools because every city faction agreed when it came to the education system. Importantly, each faction saw the schools as *theirs*—the system for which they were responsible and felt obliged to constantly monitor and protect.

1929-1940

In my interview with Jeffrey Mirel, he told me that after he wrote *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, he realized that he had written a tragedy. This may not have been the case if the Detroit school system had never reached the level of success that it did in the 1920s and if the following fall was not so dramatic. Some argue that the Great Depression hit Detroit harder than any other city in the nation (89). The effects included not only devastating unemployment but also the destruction of the previous decade's consensus. The Great Depression forced actors to come face-to-face with three large educational issues: reducing the education budget, adjusting to new enrollees, and organizing a teachers' union. By the end of the 30s, the different factions (laborers versus business owners) began disagreeing over education along the same lines that they previously divided down on political and economic issues (90).

In the end, it came down to money. As the Great Depression hit Detroit, the largest portion of the municipal budget was being spent on the school system (91). As city debts

increased, the government turned to educational retrenchment as a partial solution. On the side of the city government sprouted what was called the Stone Committee (91). The Stone Committee was led by a banker named Ralph Stone and consisted of representatives from large business groups (91). These businessmen advised the city on retrenchment issues, approving the city for bank loans *if* the budget was balanced (91). Their demanding of a balanced municipal budget led these business leaders to pull back their almost unconditional support for the schools and instead demand huge spending cuts (91).

Organized labor, liberals, and left-wing organizations standing by the board of education had been the allies of the Stone Committee but were now their fierce adversaries (93). Divisions were largely along class lines: the business and right-wing factions wanted low taxes and low spending on education, while organized labor and left-wing groups fought for the opposite (93). What began in this Great Depression period as positions for or against retrenchment, a balanced budget, or social services began to turn into hardened political philosophies that would continue to split the different actors in Detroit (95).

One of the biggest battles over the education budget was fought over teachers' salaries (93). The board's decision to cut construction costs was one of the few retrenchment decisions that faced little opposition but these costs were only about 20% of the educational budget (93). Teachers' salaries accounted for 75% of the 1929-1930 school budget and were accosted quickly (93). The issue of cutting salaries was extremely controversial and salient (96). The Stone Committee demanded reductions in the allocation for teachers' salaries and after the school board voted against these reductions, threatened to take away the board's control (94). While the board of education began to grudgingly make cuts elsewhere in 1931 as it reeled under the

demands for less spending, these cuts did not yet breach teachers' salaries until a year and a half after the Stone Committee's threats (97).

In 1931, board president A. D. Jamieson made a speech suggesting cuts in teachers' benefits and the board approved the proposals unanimously (98). Jamieson's recommendations would save the district an approximate \$800,000 (98). Although none of the recommendations were a direct cut to wages, his proposal set the tone for prioritizing programs over salaries (99). In the next year, the school board tied its salary reductions to parallel those throughout Detroit (102).

In the winter of 1933, things got even worse in Detroit. Two of the city's largest banks went under, further helping to cripple the city's economy (102). Unemployment may have exceeded 350,000 people (103). Teachers and city workers received no salaries for two months, were paid in scrip following that, and then joined the relief lines (103). An amendment limiting property taxes signified the likely loss of an annual \$2 million to the Detroit's public school system (103).

However, the 1933-1934 year turned out to be the worst of the depression (110). By 1934, a large collection of interest groups and organizations had rallied behind the school board (109). These socialist, left-leaning, working-class supporters fought strongly for the children of workers (109). Their power and the declining prestige of businessmen throughout the city of Detroit after the bank collapses helped put an end to these attacks on the education system and largely halt budget cuts (109-110). The successful refinancing of the city's debt also helped (110).

Through this time of lingering high unemployment, a new demographic of students enrolled in Detroit high schools (132). These students, largely from poor or working-class

families, were seen in this time period as less academically and vocationally able (132-133). School authorities, in response, began offering some less rigorous high school classes for these students; by the 1940s, Detroit high schools were giving many of their enrollees a second-rate, general track education (134).

Detroit's schools' new curriculum to keep these less academically talented students in school was another issue that split labor and business factions apart. Labor unions, fighting to keep even their adult workers in jobs, were incentivized to fund the schools and their new general track, while business leaders already had a surplus of skilled labor and had little need to fund the public schools (134). However, in less than a decade, business leaders began to feel the results of the lowered standards in Detroit high schools, and began complaining of the inadequate skills of their employment pools (135). This was the beginning of concerns about the lower quality of public education in Detroit.

Here we see, for the first time, the success or failure of Detroit being explicitly defined by the achievement of students. Detroit, in the 20s was seen as one of the best in the country because of its successful implementation of national reforms. During the Depression, the Stone Committee and other business and conservative leaders called the system unsuccessful because of its 'non-efficient' spending. Later, the system and its reforms will be judged based on factors that have nothing to do with student learning. The creation of the general track and lower standards is one of the most important changes from this time period. The resulting negative and long-lasting effects, as we will see, remind us of the importance of teaching and learning, an obvious point but one that does get lost in the shuffle. Just as Cuban reminded us before: **we must measure reform in how it improves teaching and learning.**

The reason that school systems as organizations frequently measure their success on factors besides students' achievement is, as Chubb and Moe wrote, because they are controlled by a mass of actors that support the schools based on what the schools can do for them. School board members as well as city officials that determine part of the funding for schools are voted into office and cater to these voters to retain their jobs. The different groups of actors support the education system based on whether it keeps students out of the labor force longer, or reduces the budget deficit, or increases teachers' salary. As a result of this structure of power, decisions made under these pressures may lead to negative consequences for students' learning.

For example, when the school board considered cutting teachers' salaries, it faced strong opposition from non-student constituents who had their own agendas and goals. Thus, the board decided to cut spending on maintenance and construction, which happened quietly because no one was there to oppose the measures. These cuts, though, were the first in a 15-year period of decisions that entirely curtailed the physical expansion and improvement of the school system (99). The severe consequences of the school board's uncontested decisions would begin to show beginning in the late 1940s and would continue after that when students learned in poorly maintained, unsafe buildings, in classes of 40 children because there were not enough schools (99). Even now, the poor quality of school buildings is considered one of the major challenges in Detroit schools (Moje). This hindsight knowledge shows the importance of considering policy decisions based on more than who has a strong voice, arguing for or against them.

This is just a part of the difficulty of schools systems as organizations. Their board members and stakeholders are not the direct recipients mandated in the organizations' mission policies. Reformers cannot forget the nuances that result from the nature and identity of the organization itself. Amongst all this, **it cannot be forgotten that schools are created to serve**

the student, not the voters. So although reforms are not supported or voted down by students, their effects must reach students by changing what happens in the classroom.

This Great Depression time period was also an era of more freedom for teachers. In 1934, the newly created Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) announced itself as an active union (117). By 1936, they had proved their ability to successfully strike for what they wanted (119). They became openly allied with organized labor, liberals, and school administration as they grew (120, 122) but were not as radical as many of their original critics accused (118). By the early 1940s, the DFT established itself as anti-communist, a politically smart move (173). Although the union may have had liberally extremist views in earlier years, they worked diligently to eliminate this as a part of their identity. The practice of **removing the extremities in their organization's identity, allowed them to gain legitimacy.**

A caution for current and future reform leaders is **do not forget the foundation and history of the teachers' unions.** The DFT is a powerful player in the current public school system and they draw this power, their goals, and their methods from their past. Notice that the DFT was born in the wake of the Great Depression, a time of despair for teachers in which their strong voice and hand became necessary for solving some of their most pressing problems. These unions still play an active role in Detroit in the 21st century.

1940-1949

After the economic slump of the Great Depression came a World War II boom for Detroit (152). By 1939, the schools' operating budget was almost as high as it was pre-depression (129) but this post-depression recovery brought new dilemmas.

As military equipment for the war effort rolled off assembly lines, African Americans moved into Detroit in great numbers, doubling the populations of black communities which were

soon segregated from white neighborhoods (153). The middle and upper class white families that made up the business groups in Detroit began relocating to the suburbs (154). This only further reduced this socio-economic group's desire to financially support the inner-city Detroit public schools (154).

Within the school system itself, the school district was transforming their curriculum "in favor of vocational education" (157). During the war, high school courses needed to pertain to employment in the military, employment in war industries, or serving the war as a civilian in order to be 'practical' (157). The board still faced the financial demands of constructing buildings, hiring new teachers, and raising teachers' salaries (158-159). While the school system had not cut any programs, nor fired any teachers through the Great Depression, a positive, salaries had been cut and were now extremely weak in the face of new inflation (130). Also, because of the hiring freeze and low salaries for teachers in Detroit, the city was facing a teacher shortage, one that left elementary and junior high classes with a median of 41 students (159). The decreased spending (by over 80%) for the past 15 years left existing buildings in need of repair (158). On top of that, the migration of Detroit inhabitants to outlying sections of the city created a demand for brand new schools (158).

After WWII ended in 1945, the school board found itself facing business leaders who opposed high taxes and a municipal government with little money to spare (161). Business organizations began criticizing the school system for wasting money and lowering educational standards (163). They thought that the schools were a poor investment because public school graduates in Detroit were not being adequately trained for even basic work (178). The teachers' unions agreed with many of those criticisms and denounced the platoon system and the general tracks in the high schools as the cause (178). The conservative superintendent, Arthur

Dondineau responded that this lower quality was due to the ‘less quality students’ that were now enrolled in the system (179). At this point in 1945, the DFT had maintained little respect and cooperation with their school board, which did not increase wages or hire teachers (175). A piece of their ill relations stemmed from the presence of Dondineau and his strong ties to the business community (175).

In 1946, after the city provided the schools with considerably less money than they requested for another consecutive year, the board of education and its supporters backed a proposed constitutional amendment that designated one third of all state sales tax revenues for schools and local governments (164). This amendment became known as the “sales tax split” and, when it was passed that year increased state sales tax revenue for public education (168-169). It effectively reduced the existing current inequalities in state aid, which was given proportionally more to rural districts (166). This proposal and two other passed amendments were huge steps toward ending the lack of funds for statewide public education (170).

The many groups that backed the board and fought to increase the school budget now pushed and pulled the board in opposite ways when it came to spending priorities now that there were available funds (162). Parents demanded new schools while teachers cried for increased salaries and the board struggled to satisfy both needs (176). In reaction to these growing tensions, A. D. Jamieson made a speech in 1947 very similar to his previous one in 1931 about the necessities of making cuts and the board’s plan to do so (180). Even while the speeches looked similar, the situation was entirely different (180). During the Great Depression, the board faced the Stone Committee while its supporters understood that cuts had to be made. Now it was the liberal and labor organizations giving the board trouble (181). This time these organizations were looking to get as much money as possible instead of lose as little as possible (181).

And now, for the first time in the history of Detroit, the teachers' union announced a strike to get the spending that they wanted (162). They militantly refused to accept lower salaries despite the fact that doing so would hurt others (181). The DFT was not considering hiring more teachers and reduce class size and they were not considering students missing days of schools, since they eventually went on strike. Here again we see a situation in Detroit's history in which the loudest actors are those who are fighting for their own gains.

By this point in 1947, the board had realized, because of parent involvement as well as a consciousness of the current needs of the system, that maintenance and construction cannot be forgotten (185). However, it was faced with a dilemma: not completely fixing schools buildings, or not completely giving educators what they want. Their response, to compromise, only backfired (183) because they did not realize the full extent of the DFT's resolve. Here may be the time to remind reformers: **do not underestimate the determination and the goals of each player. To do this requires policy-makers to understand that different stakeholders may be looking out for themselves and not the students.** Reformers cannot simply assume that other actors only have students' best interests in mind.

Let this situation also be a reminder that **a lack of money is not the sole cause of dissent and disagreement within a system.** The school system had more funds overall at this point than during the Great Depression but this did not lessen the city's division. The political fighting that began during the depression persisted and grew in the present day. Money can help heal problems, as will be shown shortly, but points in history like the one above should remind us that money is not the only factor to blame when things turn sour.

The teachers would have gone through with their threat to strike if not for an additional \$2.5 million offered to the schools from the city the day before the proposed strike (183). This

allowed the school board to pay teachers what they demanded, while still having money to begin rebuilding the rest of the system (183). By 1948 however, the main concern was again the acute need for funds to construct new buildings and maintain the old ones (185). This need was apparent and most parties understood that the school board needed the freedom to issue bonds and propose millage (property tax) increases (186). Legislation to give the board those powers was passed in 1949, partially because the city realized that it would be better for them and their budget if the school board was accountable for the finance and results of the schools instead (186). Financial control was given from the mayor, council, and interest groups to the voters (186). This was extremely important for the board of education and the whole school system: now they depended even more directly on the desires of the people.

The first campaign the school board put in front of voters was a tax increase of 2.5 mills. On the same ballot, three school board members were up for reelection (and their opponents looking to take their spots) (199). This vote was especially exciting and groundbreaking because a new constituency played a part: the black community (196).

By 1944, the NAACP in Detroit was the largest chapter in the nation (186). Even before this time, there was growing evidence that the schools in Detroit were becoming increasingly black and increasingly segregated as black families were restricted to certain areas and school board policies sorted black students into certain schools (188). These policies included unequal resources and facilities given to certain schools with large numbers of minority students (188), employing black faculty at numbers much lower than the percentage of black enrollment (less than 4% compared to 17%) (190), white staff putting a larger percentage of black students in special education and general track classes (191), moving populations of racially alike students to certain schools when there was overcrowding (193), and allowing students to move out of

schools with large numbers of minorities (188). The black community began to get involved in the school system in the 40s, hoping that the schools would play a major role in decreasing segregation and racism (190). Their priorities lay in improving buildings (over increasing teacher salaries) because the schools serving the largest black populations were the oldest and needed the most renovations and because board policies in response to overcrowding led to increased segregation (192-193).

Unfortunately, again, the school system and suggested reforms were not being framed by how they help students achieve. Just as the teachers' goals were their low salaries, now black parents' were poor buildings and large class sizes. These factors clearly do affect learning, as Kozol² would show you in detail or any teacher would likely argue, but it is never mentioned in parents' arguments how they affect learning. Instead the building and class conditions were measures of inequality, not learning. This hurts the system; not only reformers but activists and voters should also realize the distinction.

The black activists joined the white liberals and labor leaders to create what Mirel called the "liberal-labor-black coalition," jointly seeking more liberal policies and programs for the schools (195). This coalition is the one that plays a huge role in educational reform for the next few decades in Detroit. Just like the coalition of business and labor factions during the 20s in Detroit, the liberal-labor-black coalition is another example that **coalitions of voters are powerful in creating education change in Detroit.**

² Jonathan Kozol wrote *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* in 1991. The book presented the shocking educational inequalities based on race and class that are present around the country. He profiles the schools and communities in six different locations explicitly showing his readers the horrible learning conditions that these children have to deal with and which no outsider seems keen on improving.

As the decade came to a close there was a feeling of possibility and unity that resulted from this new coalition (200). But the era as a whole constituted a decline in the quality of Detroit's schools. This decline came not from the obvious issues of buildings or salaries, but from the watered-down curriculum that aimed to teach all students, especially minorities and working class students, practical courses that were assumed to be best suited for those students and the war (202).

Again, the school system had survived the past decade by eventually giving the loudest parties what they needed while ignoring the pieces of the problem for which no one was fighting. During the Great Depression, the board flirted with the Stone Committee and the teachers, while cutting funding for building maintenance. In the 1940s, it dealt first with the state and its lack of monetary aid, then the stubborn teachers' unions, then the liberal-labor-black coalition while ignoring the poor curriculum that spread through the schools. These choices were not only the effect of loud players who had the ability to push and pull the school board (with control, money, threats, or votes) but a national movement that belittled the abilities of poor and minority students while stressing the importance of the war. As we leave the 1940s behind, let us reflect again on the fact that **national movements are not necessarily what is best for our children.**

1949-1964

1949 through 1964 was a period marked by the emigration of young, white, middle-class families from Detroit to the suburbs outside of the city (220). With them, went the city's manufacturing jobs, local property tax base, and public education's political backbone (219-220). They left behind a segregated city and a larger percentage of younger African-Americans (29%) who were generally poorer but had more children (56% of the students attending city public schools) (219-220). The majority of Detroit's population now clustered around being either

under twenty or over fifty years old; elderly voters began to have more of a say in school millage and bond issues while school enrollments increased (219-220).

The era was also characterized by a change in power alignments as the liberal-labor-black coalition worked to gain control of the schools (217-218). In 1955, the first black candidate was elected for the school board and five of the seven board members were backed by the labor coalition (226). This board's only hiccup came when the members started having meetings involving multiple school administrators, teachers, and university professors, while not informing superintendent Arthur Dondineau (226). When their existence was leaked, the "secret board sessions" were called a 'plot' of and against certain factions and became front-page news for almost six weeks (226). While the actual effect on the board and their proceedings was weak (228), the quick and dramatic reaction to the "secret meetings" reminds us that **transparency between board members and the board (as well as other governing and decision making bodies) and the community is extremely important.**

As the liberal-labor-black coalition strengthened its hold on the school board, it also focused its efforts on expanding, improving, and funding the public school system (229). After a millage increase in 1949, the system began hiring teachers and started a construction project (229). Two years later, it was clear that the new money and efforts were not enough to address the deteriorated existing school buildings as well as the need for new buildings and teachers in growing districts (229). The system needed more money to solve problems that had been plaguing the system for decades (229). This could have been a pivotal moment for Detroit's education system: the newspapers along with the major civic and labor organizations supported a millage increase. Disappointingly, the board succumbed to pressure from the Board of

Commerce, the only prominent critic of another tax increase (and all tax increases at that), and only put a millage increase of two mills (instead of the wanted 2.5-6 mills) to voters (230).

By the time the board got around to proposing a 3 mill increase in early 1957, there was no longer a consensus of support and almost 60 percent of voters turned down the appeal (234). Of course it is difficult to berate an organization for not pushing for more when the time is right, since we do not know if the consensus would have held just as well for a larger original mill increase, etc. But accepting an increase that would not cover its needs, even in a time of positive public opinion, hurt the board's overall effectiveness at raising funds. The Board of Commerce's role in the situation is also very upsetting in their situation-blind criticism of tax raises and in how the board's quickly yielded to it. Mirel, in this chapter is pessimistic, writing that "even the strongest political movement could not arrest the deterioration" of Detroit (218).

Without the second funding increase, the school system fell into a state of crisis (234). The board failed to get any emergency funds and as a result had to cut spending on construction almost in half (234- 235). The teachers' union demanded that any remaining funds should be put toward salary increases as inflation increased (235). They urged the school board to put all first graders on half-day sessions to free up money to give teachers' a raise (235). When they did not get these salary increases, hundreds of teachers left for the suburbs and the teacher shortage in the city grew severe (235). Again, this was an instance of the teachers' union putting teachers' needs first, but it is hard to tell which decision by the board—refusing or allowing a salary increase—would have helped students more.

Amidst these crises, the system was beginning to realize that even if the education system had enough safe buildings and enough teachers to put students in small classes, a large percentage of these students would still be receiving a second-rate education (239). The

commercial, vocational, and general tracks had been supported up until now, even while they continued to lower the systems standards (237). Previously, school leaders had thought less academic classes were necessary to keep all students in school, but even while these tracks had a strong presence in the school system, only about 60% of students were graduating from high school (235). Along political lines, liberals argued that the school system needed more funds to diversify curriculum and create more social welfare programs (236). Conservatives fought against new taxes and wanted the system to return again to teaching the traditional basics (236).

Hearing these loud concerns from the community, when the school board looked for a new superintendent to replace Dondineau that year (1958), it chose someone willing to accept input from community groups (239). The new superintendent Samuel Brownell created the Citizens Advisory Committee on School Needs (CAC) to survey all aspects of the school system and recommend changes (239). The CAC investigated the curriculum, personnel, buildings, school-community relations, and finances of the system and concluded by calling for an overhaul of the curriculum (240). This change, just like solving the building and teacher shortages, required a huge increase in funds for the schools (241). Unfortunately, a large piece of the advice the CAC offered on how to improve the curriculum was in favor of vocational and general courses in order to keep all students in school (242). The CAC did recommend that the school system strengthen the highest-level tracks simultaneously, but their report ignored the poor education a third of Detroit students were receiving (242).

As a result of the CAC's suggestions and warnings, even the business community got behind the committee's recommendations including their need for more funds (242). There was little opposition and the board quickly passed a 4.5 mill renewal, a 3 millage increase, and a \$60 million bond approval by large margins (244). The school district, even while the revenue from

the millage increases would continue to decline as property assessments declined, was in the best financial shape since the 1920s (244).

There is much to learn from this period of distress and calls for change. The problems and proposals through which the school system cycled are very similar to those of the 21st century: funding is lacking, buildings are eroding, teachers are upset, and students are receiving a poor education or none at all. From here on out, Mirel's history sounds very much like a book on current reforms and we should keep our eyes open to see what our predecessors have tried and which of their efforts failed or succeeded.

One thing to understand from this is how deeply rooted Detroit's current problems are. They have been building through the 1990s. Thusly, **we cannot forget and assume that our solutions can only be skin deep.** Next, I think that creating an advisory committee to survey the largest aspects of the school system is a best practice. **Opening the issue up to research and input from community members introduces new non-partisan, student-minded options and gains the support of the community.** The CAC's recommendations and the following inflow of support and money through the system were large factors in the success of racial changes in Detroit.

One of the CAC's strong suggestions was that the school board and other leaders should improve relations between the Detroit school system and the black community (254). At the time of the CAC's recommendations, more focus had been turned toward racial issues in Detroit schools (251). As more blacks moved into Detroit, aligned their missions with the spreading civil rights movement, and allied themselves with the labor-liberal factions, the existing racial inequalities in Detroit began to be addressed. Black Detroiters were successful in improving existing schools and building new ones in black neighborhoods, increasing the number of black

faculty in Detroit schools, ending the policy that segregated black faculty in black schools, and improving the quality of instruction and curriculum in black schools (251). With steady pressure from the black leaders (and their liberal allies), and promises from the schools board, the board spent 75% of its total construction costs from 1959 to 1962 in areas with the largest proportions of black students (254). By 1961, the percent of black teachers had increased from 5% in 1949 to 22% of the total teaching force in Detroit, one of the highest rates in the United States (254, 255).

In terms of improving the teaching of black students in the city, the black community was conscious that black students were not taught the same curriculum, partially because schools were persuading black students to aim for vocational goals instead of going to college and were putting black students in lower tracks more frequently than white children (255). The black community also contended that Detroit educators needed to understand that educating poor, black students required different teaching strategies than they typically used to teach their other students (256). An important factor in making these pedagogical changes was an extremely successful project called “Great Cities School Improvement” which worked with teachers and parents to standardize methods of teaching based upon children’s previous life experiences (257). The program began in Detroit and spread around the country (257). Detroit had become a leader in race relations (258).

The only aim of black groups that was not realized was stopping the administrative from manipulating attendance boundaries in order to further segregate schools (262). The CAC report found that racial segregation of schools existed and was harming black students (263). As certain black factions became passionate and militant about the need for desegregation, working class white families were voting against it (265). The labor-liberal-black coalition did not agree

on this issue and factions of both white voters and black voters began to withdraw their support from the school system for opposite reason: some blacks wanted more change, while some whites wanted less (265). This was a huge problem for the school board, which had collected a \$6 million deficit by 1963 and needed to go to voters to get more funds (266). White voters increasingly refused to increase their taxes for a school system that was largely improving majority black schools (267); black voters did not want new funds to go toward increasing segregation (268). For the first time, the majority of Detroit students were black, while the majority of voters were white and large numbers of working-class whites were abandoning the liberal-labor-black coalition (270). The only strong support for an important millage increase in 1964 came from the Board of Commerce who now realized that the collapse of the school system would harm the Detroit's economic viability (268).

The school board, here, needed to chose its goals then be absolutely transparent about where funds would be used. Not picking a side, not saying anything meant that it got little support from either faction. What happened to the charismatic leaders, the published research and reports, learning from others?

1964-1981

Through this time period, Detroit was in an accelerated tailspin into economic and social devastation. Unemployment, crime rates, segregation, and the number of black and poor residents increased dramatically (295). As residents grew poorer and property value fell drastically, keeping the school district afloat required higher and higher rates of taxation, rates that were hard to get voters to support (297). By 1980, 86% of students were black (297), estimates of black unemployment were up to 40 percent (296), and black residents were growing

angry and frustrated with the too slow change in the school system. There seemed no end in sight to the educational and societal inequalities that they were facing (299).

In 1966, a Detroit school became the site of walkouts, rallies, and demands, not from teachers or administrators but from students (301). They demanded improving the school in part by removing principals, and they stayed out of school long enough for the school board to get involved (302). The board ended up recognizing the concerns of the community and met the students' demands (304). Unfortunately this legitimized the students' actions and set a precedent which polarized the community: white voters now thought the board was too weak to stand up to black students, while more black families and students began to boycott their own schools (304-305). A part of the black community continued to get more militant, wanting "black power" instead of integration (309). In the wake of the Detroit Riot on July 23, 1967, black nationalists argued that the only solution would come when the "black community controlled its own schools" (312).

A research committee, created by the school board after the first high school student boycott, studied the condition in every Detroit high school (304). It offered up two major changes: the decentralization of administration authority in the system and increased accountability for teachers (328). A key to both was increased parental and community involvement in their schools (328). Decentralization became an increasingly supported reform not only because it would decrease the anger of the community as well as the anarchy of the students, but it was also a reform that did not cost money (330). The change would hopefully restore authority in the schools, the lack of which was due to conflicts over personnel, symbols of black nationalism, and verbal and physical violence within the schools that had grown out of control (331). Another factor that led to a successful campaign for decentralization was the

publication of Detroit test scores: 80% of students scored below national norms and every school with majority minority students scored below grade level (335).

By July of 1969, both houses of the Michigan legislature passed a bill created by Coleman Young, a Lansing Democrat, dividing Detroit into seven to eleven regions with their own nine-member board (337). A central board elected from the city at-large could overrule, modify, or affirm the decisions that each regional board made (336). The first debate after passing the bill, was over how regions should be split, who would control them, and what agenda these new regional boards would take (338). The entire debate had its foundations in the debate over segregation versus desegregation (338).

While the existing liberal board members still had its say, they wanted to continue their goal of integration and they drew boundaries that created integrated regions and mandated high school desegregation (339). This was an extreme proposal that exceeded the requirements of the current decentralization law (339). This board, passionate about its goals, ignored the lesson that has developed across this history so far: **maintain your most mainstream identity in order to gather the largest support**. In this case, its extremist position pushed all white voters and some black voters as well against it (341). Coleman Young denounced the board for turning public opinion against his decentralization bill, which the Michigan legislature quickly repealed (342). Young created a new bill, this time ending the school board's plans for desegregation (342-343). The governor split the eight new school districts along racial lines; giving four regions to the black community even while black students were the majority in *every* region (343). In the end, white candidates won most of the seats across the boards (346).

The radical black backlash to this new more modest desegregation plan turned to the courts (344). The U.S. Supreme Court decided that desegregation could take place only within

the city limits of Detroit (346). Unfortunately for this initiative, only radicals supported it and for political reasons (344). William Grant in 1971 said, “at no point during the debate on decentralization was education the prime consideration” (344). Most black families at this point just wanted the best education for their children and believed that that could be achieved by getting more teachers into well-funded and orderly schools (345). The issue of desegregation took attention away from other educational issues (346).

Busing in the city also intensified both white and black Detroiters’ opposition to most liberal reforms and any tax increases (356). Facing a lack of support for any increase in funds, the school system’s deficit exploded from \$3.5 million to \$20.3 million from 1969-1971 (347) and in 1972, Detroit school leaders prepared to shut down the entire school district (351). The only reason that this did not come to fruition was because of state funding requirement changes that forced city residents to increase millages to support the schools (352- 354).

The city began the costly busing desegregation initiative in 1976 and by 1989, busing ended quietly (413). From its conception throughout its lifespan, it was a cause of white flight and general opposition to supporting the schools (358). In review, we can list the factors that contributed to the horror that was busing. It was an initiative only supported by the extremities of constituents, the radicals. These supporters did not stop in the face of a general lack of support, even while their efforts were financially costly. Their motivations were political instead of student-centered. They pushed many black and white residents, the center of the voter pool, away, further breaking up liberal-labor-black coalition, which meant that future collective efforts lacked collaborative support.

As the smoke of busing cleared, the discord of decentralization was obvious. Competing interest groups only agreed on the importance of accountability which pitted them all against a

teachers' union that did not want the boards to be able to remove "poor" teachers and principals (360). The public wanted to remove some of the power held by the DFT while increasing the power of the community even more yet (360). Teachers worried that accountability would be based not on whether a teacher could teach but on whether the teacher had certain political or racial ideologies (361). In 1973, the DFT asked for a pay increase equal to the increase in cost of living (362). The board agreed to the pay raises if the DFT agreed to an accountability plan: the two parties had finally come head to head (362). After neither side budged, the DFT began the longest strike the Detroit school system had ever seen (363).

By this point the school system seemed to be broken into two factions, there were no alliances, no collaborations, no middle grounders. It is important to understand that this divisiveness made it extremely difficult for cooperation and positive change to be made. We have discovered from this historical tale how important it is to **focus on the middle grounds, to get different groups to support your position, while removing extremely radical identities.** We have seen examples of successes, and failures to do this, and the positive and negative results. But now we have two different factions at the extremities that are locked in conflict. At this point in conflicts, the two **factions need to realize the most important goal—improving the education of students in the classroom—and understand the differences in where the others are coming from in order to come together to reach that goal.** The teachers needed to see that the decentralized boards stood the best chance of truly making change for the good of students, but the board needed to realize the fear and sacrifices that the teachers had made in the past, and the reasons for their near obsession with protecting their jobs. The boards, if they *were* advocating for the students and the community, should have made it clear to the teachers that their accountability plan would only terminate teachers based on their teaching practices, not

teachers' beliefs. These considerations should have been clearly defined in the new plan, if both separate factions had a hope of closing the gap between them.

The stalemate between the union and the boards only ended when the governor set up a statewide panel to study accountability and report back with guidelines on how to evaluate teachers (364). Finally, the governor had reached a middle ground through, as we have seen as a best practice, his move to **get an objective examination and solution that multiple parties can trust.**

Decentralization had broken whatever relationships had existed before, and motivations were more about politics, pride, and race than teaching students (368). Through the mid-1970s, there had been “near anarchy” throughout Detroit schools (366). Student violence, vandalism, as well as teacher absenteeism were raging (366). Student test scores, already below the 45th percentiles, dropped into the twenties (366). By 1981, there was little interest in the decentralized system anymore and Detroiters voted to recentralize the system (368).

Here we not only see the importance of the many best practices that we have already identified (and the devastation that comes when we ignore them), but we see the beginning stages of the national movements discussed by Ravitch and Cuban entering the scene in Detroit. We see, although not exclusively, two initiatives through the 60s, 70s, and 80s: one for decentralization and one for teacher accountability. Both the failure of decentralization and the increased support for accountability are factors that spurred on the transition to centralized top-down control, lack of union power, and dependence on standardized testing. The initial initiatives, lets not forget, were for community power: for the community to control the schools and hold teachers accountable, while the environment in 2012 has no focus on community input. Something went wrong in this transition to community control: something on which we should

attribute part of the current situation. As Walter McLean would ask: what went wrong in our past that lead us to need what we now have?

The way I see it, the desire for community control sprouted from a public feeling that the majorities' desires were not being considered: in this period, most students in Detroit were black, as were their families, but the paths of communication favored white residents: most voters were white and most district administrators were white. In response, the community did what they could to get their voices heard: they rallied in the schools. They thought that they should be controlling their schools.

Unfortunately, the reform did not aim to comply with these specific needs. Instead the board and certain radical black factions used it as a move toward desegregation, while the state split the decentralized boards in such a way as to still give whites disproportionately more leadership positions. By this point, consensus and coalition were gone and the only initiative left was the hope to keep teachers accountable to the needs and desires of the community. We will see how community control over teachers, turns into the present day top-down control of the teachers' unions. As historians, let us keep our eyes open as we progress in history. As reformers, lets **make sure that the outcomes of our initiatives match up directly with the original goals of that change.**

1981-1999

Through this period, graduation rates remained around 50% and those students who graduated did so with few basic skills and an average ACT score of 14 (413). Issues with discipline were still a daily part of the everyday school experience (414). The financial strife that characterized much of the schools system's history was deepened by the recession during the 1980s (416); even while black Detroiters supported millage increases all through the 80s, this

was not enough to keep the school system from running annual budget deficits (417). White voters, despite being in the minority, still played a dominant role in state government and city media (417).

Neither the state nor the DFT helped the schools reduce the deficit and the media blamed the school board entirely for financial troubles, which Mirel says is “neither entirely fair nor accurate” (420). This may be a good time to remind readers not to forget that **the media has immense power over public opinion and can cause huge success or damage for education reformers**. Throughout his history, Mirel comments on the opinions propagated by various media sources and the ways in which they strongly affected public opinion.

The largest initiative of this period began in 1988 when the school board was swept with the candidates representing a new reform called the HOPE campaign (621). The HOPE members advertised an “education revolution” and financial stability (421). Specifically they wanted to empower schools and create schools of choice (422). Their plan for raising money was very similar to the previous board’s plan, but the HOPE leaders had the confidence of the public (423). This confidence grew out of the alliance that the HOPE campaign represented, a type of alliance not only between the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) and many civic and grassroots organizations, but the DFT, the Chamber of Commerce, and the media as well (420).

The alliance between and public support for these diverse organizations led to a passing vote on a millage increase that brought fiscal stability to Detroit schools and with it an opportunity for new change (423). In 1991, they boldly moved forward with their plans to empower schools and create choice (423). If large percentages of a school’s faculty, students, and parents voted in favor, their school was “empowered” which, defined by HOPE, meant that

faculty and parents controlled basically every aspect of how their school ran, including 92 percent of their budget (424). The system's central administration would then only monitor whether the school balanced their budget and met academic standards (424). The hope was that the schools system bureaucracy would become more efficient and individualized (425).

The new changes did not come without opposition, however. The strongest resistance came from the powerful DFT who refused to let any of their members vote to empower their school (426). The DFT thought that the practices of schools picking their own teachers and selectively raising teachers' salaries, eliminated fairness and teachers' job protection (425). After a strike, the DFT triumphed with a resulting contract that reduced the power of empowered schools, took teacher matters out of contest entirely, and gave them new salary increases that sucked up the previous feeling of financial security (427). Even after a four-year term of a balanced budget and improved test scores and graduation rate, the HOPE board members were criticized heavily by the DFT and had lost their confidence (428).

Here is another a reform that stressed community control and accountability, but was also a shift toward choice and competition. These were business approaches to accountability that are closer to our present day initiatives in Detroit. And in the end, it was the community control aspect of the HOPE reforms that failed, mostly due to its conflict with the teachers' unions. Mirel argues that the DFT, at this point, was "not interested in following the lead of... its fellow locals, or its original commitments," a harsh but realistic assessment (430). The union's obsession with defensively facing each and every opponent head-to-head instead of trying to work with them made new proposals difficult to discuss, try, and make successful (431).

The board leaders were at fault because they should have understood the struggles with the unions in the schools' past, foreseen this stubbornness, and recognized their legitimate

concerns for retaining jobs and security (432). The HOPE team should not have assumed that the DFT would cooperate to create change. The DFT's power should not have been underestimated and the board should have known that without the DFT's partial cooperation, its task was nearly impossible (430). To get the support of the teachers, the board should have pushed its pedagogical concerns instead of its political ones (432). Moving forward, **leaders of education reform, especially in Detroit, cannot ignore the power of the teachers' unions or expect cooperation.** On the other hand, **the unions need to be willing to be more flexible and open minded** in order for the cooperation necessary for the betterment of the school system (433). More communication, understanding, and cooperation from both sides could have made this hopeful reform reach its full potential.

1999-2002

In 2004, Mirel wrote a piece called *Detroit: There Is Still a Long Road to Travel, and Success Is Far from Assured* about the events in Detroit's school district after the HOPE reforms. Mirel's piece focused on, as the title suggests, a new school government system of mayoral control. From here, it will be easy to see how Detroit is building up to EFM control.

As the 1990s were ending, approximately 80 percent of the Detroit school district's funding came from the state (Mirel, 2004). With this, the state gained more control on the state's school districts (Mirel, 2004). As individual districts had less and less power, they could no longer ask voters for millage increases in response to teachers' unions' demands (Mirel, Detroit). The Republican-controlled state legislature further diminished unions' power when they passed a new law in 1994 that fined unions and individual teachers for every day that they strike (Mirel, 2004).

This is a crucial shift in Detroit, partially as a backlash to the failed initiatives to give Detroiters more community control over their city's schools. Not only was it the failed attempts at decentralization and empowerment that led these changes, but a deep financial problem that the school system struggled to deal with on its own. School finances have played a large role in Detroit up to this point, but they will only become even more influential in changing specifically who is making reform and how. These struggles and failures help us understand the reasons behind the increase in state control and decrease in union control, which are large aspects of education reform in Detroit today.

This increase in state control and a decrease in the power of the previously strong DFT grew out of a stalemate situation in which factions could not unite and create change. After the HOPE campaign attempts, it seemed that there would never be enough cooperation and collaboration to help solve the schools' problems. As a result of these weak coalitions, it was easy for the state to gain more control. This shift in control has changed the essence and power of the previous "coalition." In this resulting situation, which only becomes more top-down as we progress toward present day, cooperation and widespread community support is no longer needed to make change.

The leadership structure of Detroit's public schools began to explicitly change in 1999, when the state of Michigan, targeting Detroit schools, passed a bill that gave mayors the power to appoint new school board members and the school superintendent (now to be called school 'CEO') (Mirel, 2004). Through the 1990s other state governments had begun directly getting involved in restructuring failing schools, or giving that power to centralized figures (Franklin, 2003). These state "takeovers" were justified in four ways: one, widespread opinion thought that local school boards were inefficient bureaucracies, two, there were growing demands for

structural reforms of public schools, three, a growing belief was that certain mayors would have the will and skills to fix urban schools, and four, as a way to improve financial and academic accountability (Franklin, 2003). The bill in Detroit, Michigan Public Act 10, received general support from Detroiters because the widespread sentiment was that the current administration and schools were not teaching their children and improving the system (Mirel, 2004).

The bill was inspired by and modeled after the similar Chicago school reform bill that was passed in 1995 (Mirel, 2004). The Chicago mayor appointed Paul Vallas who had a background in finance but was new to education, to the new position of CEO (Mirel, 2004). The following five years brought financial stability and higher student achievement, news of which clearly made its way to Detroit (Mirel, 2004). In Detroit, the new board was seven members, six appointed by the mayor and one by the governor (Mirel, 2004). This board then chose who should fill the role of CEO although the mayor could fire this CEO without cause (Mirel, 2004).

The change was the result and solidification of an alliance between a black Democrat mayor, Dennis Archer, and a white Republican Governor, John Engler (Franklin, 2003). Both Democrats and Republican House and Senate members voted for the bill (Mirel, 2004). Even though top-down control diminished the need for widespread support, **collaboration at the state and administrative level is still needed.**

It was uncertain if Republican Engler and Democrat Archer agreed on educational ideologies of the mayoral takeover (Franklin, 2003). Instead their collaboration likely reflected the public discontent with the local school board and its lack of action and results (Franklin, 2003). The Detroit newspapers, which supported the mayoral takeover, also were concerned with the effectiveness of school governance (Franklin, 2003). It seems that this decision was made with little consideration of the educational decentralization and centralization movements

and the pros and cons that came along with them (Franklin, 2003). These pros and cons concerned checks and balances of the system (Franklin, 2003). Centralized, state control could more efficiently introduce higher standards through the system but could limit local community efforts to improve the schools (Franklin, 2003).

At this point in time, Michigan and Detroit have been influenced by national movements for standards and efficient business control, but they have not truly identified and agreed upon the underlying ideologies. The pros and cons of state centralization will become more explicit as history progresses, as will those of reformers' buy-in to the national education movements. No matter what the underlying causes were, these changes were extremely powerful for Detroit at that time and still are in how they shaped the leadership structure of Detroit today. The role of Emergency Financial Manager has aspects of this CEO position within it. The fact that the position was created to spark top-down change and action, that it was created as a business position, and that Chicago's model succeeded with a CEO who had no background in education but improved the district's financial system, have all shaped the position of Emergency Financial Manager today.

In 1999, the reform board offered David Adamany a one-year interim CEO position (Mirel, 2004). Adamany had a strong and long background in education although he was white, worked in academia, and had never worked in public schools specifically (Mirel, 2004). He immediately began setting an agenda to addressing the schools' problems with truancy, large class sizes (of 35-40 students), and promoting students through the grades even when they were not performing at grade-level (Mirel, 2004). These issues were clearly ones that effected student learning, always an important goal. Some of Adamany's efforts to help students, including a merit pay system for the highest performing schools, and removing teachers and administrators

from failing schools, ran counter to what the teachers' unions wanted (Mirel, 2004). Union members decided to strike and although Adamany could have used the new bill from 1994 to penalize teachers, he did not (Mirel, 2004). He refused to set the board against the teachers, compromising with them even though he could have forced them to accept his reforms, and in the end both groups got what they wanted and the schools opened again (Mirel, 2004). Even though the system no longer needed strong cooperation to change (Adamany could have followed through with his initiatives and ignored the unions), it is clear that **cooperation balances the system, making reforms pass more agreeably.**

In the end, Adamany's willingness to work with the unions was not enough for him to still want a system in which they had full power. Before his year was over, Adamany got a bill passed through the Republican-weighted state legislature that abolished unions for school principals and administrators (Mirel, 2004). He wanted to be able to weed through poor administrators in order to let the quality principals have more control in their schools (Mirel, 2004). In 2000, after this bill was passed, the school board chose a new replacement CEO, Kenneth Burnley who had experience both in Detroit and education (Mirel, 2004). As Mirel concluded his piece on mayoral control of Detroit schools in 2004, Burnley was settling into his role as CEO of the schools.

2002-2012

In our interview, Mirel indicated that he did not know of a single major work on Detroit education after this point. And thus, although I did research that pales in comparison to his holistic study, the facts and data following are of my own finding. The following narrative will present the major historical events up until February 2012. Along with best practices, it contains an increased focus on the business approach consuming the district. The issues of the

Emergency Financial Manager position and charter schools will be extremely salient. From the shift to state takeover and mayoral-control, to the resulting position of EFM, the importance of accountability, standards, and efficiency are constant. Charters are typically connected with privatization, outside contracts, and the CEO/business control of the schools in the following history. As the charter movement grows, sentiments about them will change even as they remain consistently tied to the new leadership of the schools.

In the beginning of the last decade, Detroiters' feelings toward charters were icy. In December of 2002, a philanthropist named Robert Thompson announced that he would give \$200 million to build 15 charter high schools in Detroit.¹ Thompson had given millions of dollars to the city and people of Detroit in the past, and was clearly passionate about improving schools.² He spent nine months crafting a state bill that would lift the charter school cap.³ Lawmakers passed the bill in August of 2003.⁴ Before Thompson could put his money into effect, however, his gesture became involved in a huge political debate with Detroit Public Schools and the community.⁵ Part of the problem came from the public opposition to charters at the time.⁶ The problem was more acute because Thompson wanted to charter his schools and not let Detroit Public Schools do so.⁷ At that time, Kenneth Burnley responded that only schools chartered by DPS were doing as well as the public schools according to performance scores.⁸ Even though Burnley held the business CEO position, he was not entirely open to letting new charters in at this point in time.⁹

By the end of 2004, approximately 42 charter schools were operating in the city of Detroit, some of them for-profit.¹⁰ DPS union representatives cried that every child who left Detroit Public Schools for charters took their state enrollment money with them out of the school system.¹¹ This is a paradox with charters that remains prominent in Detroit: even as business

leaders, as we will see, use charters as a way of reducing their budget costs (such as maintenance and operation costs of buildings, and salaries for teachers), charters at the same time take more students from the public system, thereby reducing the budget income.

For example, in an effort to retain students, the Detroit school system decided in February of 2005 to no longer issue waivers to allow students living in Detroit to attend other districts.¹² Meanwhile, a bill in the state legislature authorized the creation of 15 new charter schools in Detroit in 2003 and by 2005, another bill to lift the cap was before the House education committee.¹³ This increase in charters was, according to the liberal *Michigan Quarterly Review*, “the worst that could happen to the crisis in the Detroit Public Schools.”¹⁴ In their minds, the option of having choice should be cared about only after the public schools were helped.¹⁵ The public school system lay in direct opposition to charter schools.

The tale of charter schools will continue in parallel to that of the EFM, which begins where Mirel left off. Kenneth Burnley was still CEO of the mayor-controlled schools. During his time as CEO, Burnley made it a priority to get parents involved. He created an Office of Parent Community Liaisons to bridge the gaps between the schools and parents.¹⁶ This office took an active role in helping to keep their enrollment numbers from falling.¹⁷ New programs through DPS taught parents how to prepare their children for school.¹⁸ By 2004, every Detroit school had a parent group.¹⁹ Burnley urged parents to “wrap their arms around the children” and help prepare their students for learning by doing things like attending parent-teacher conferences, feeding children well, and getting children involved in after school activities.²⁰

The projected shortfall of Detroit Public Schools the 2003-2004 school year and the next, \$78 million and \$91 million respectively, caused Burnley to start laying off 900 of the existing 9,000 teachers and scaling back on other expenses.²¹ The fiscal deficits grew mostly out of the

enrollment decline in Detroit schools, almost 17% in the past eight years amounting to losing \$211.8 million in revenue.²²

In this time of cut back, the lines were again drawn along labor and business. Some news articles commented that Burnley was “doing a good job in the business community but not in the neighborhood.”²³ The Michigan Chronicle, a business journal, made its support for Burnley clear.²⁴ On the other hand, Labor factions from Detroit pointed fingers at contractors who were not city residents, arguing that privatization took money from the schools and jobs from Detroit laborers.²⁵

Some parents and publications blamed the debt on the “school takeover,” mayoral control in other words, and the fact that parents did not have a voice through the ability to elect a school board.²⁶ Community members blamed Burnley for the deficit, especially since the school system had a surplus of \$83 million in 1999.²⁷ A new liberal coalition, Keep the Vote No Takeover (KTVNT), demanded the removal of Burnley and the appointed school board.²⁸ In their recommendations to reducing the Detroit schools’ deficit, they wanted to sever ties with outside consultants and corporations who were using the system for their own financial benefit.²⁹ They also demanded that money given to charter schools, \$12 million that year, should be given rightfully to the public schools.³⁰ The DFT sided with these protesters.³¹ These school activists, backed by strong support from the Michigan Quarterly Review, a publication of liberal articles, demanded new checks and balances and more scrutiny and community control of Burnley who, the Michigan Quarterly wrote, “has operated in a totalitarian manner since the Republican operatives... seized control of the schools and hand picked him.”³²

Over the summer of 2004, the mayor, Governor Jennifer Granholm (D), and the Michigan legislature created a new board election plan to be voted upon by Detroit citizens in

November: If this Proposal E was passed the school would remain under the control of a mayoral-appointed CEO to be approved by the board.³³ Detroit's mayor at the time, Kwame Kilpatrick, supported the proposal and said that he would keep Burnley in his current CEO position if it were passed.³⁴

The lines over who supported Proposal E and who fought it tooth and nail were drawn again down their previous lines. The mayor and the Detroit Chamber of Commerce supported Proposal E, among others.³⁵ The Michigan Chronicle "unequivocally support[ed] the measure" writing that Burnley deserved more time than just four years to continue his plans for Detroit.³⁶

In opposition, KTVNT and other community and citizen groups, Detroit pastors, and the Detroit National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) created a coalition "Just Say No to Proposal E," demanding that the system revert back to the voter-elected school board.³⁷ Under the stress of this relatively new state and business pushed top-down CEO governing Detroit's schools, the liberal-labor-black coalition was again uniting. Their power may have been limited by the system, but in the face of a city vote the strength of coalitions was again prevalent. This group helped defeat Proposition E by a margin of 65-35 in November of 2004.³⁸ The system would revert back to the eleven-member board in November 2005.³⁹

As the issue on the November 2004 ballot subsided, worries about the district's deficit grew. The deficit was high not just because of declining enrollments, but because spending trends did not decrease in parallel.⁴⁰ Governor Granholm approved a loan for \$210 million for Detroit to cover the \$198 educational deficit that school year.⁴¹ This measure was only a temporary loan and would little help the future financial situation in Detroit. To plan for the future, Granholm created a transition team to work through the schools' finances.⁴² The team, chosen in January consisted of between 120 and 160 community, union, and religious leaders,

educators, Detroit's NAACP branch members, representatives from the mayor's office, and representatives of Detroit's legislature.⁴³ The new transition team decided not to renew Burnley's contract, ending his employment in June 2005.⁴⁴ They also left the budget crises to be left with Burnley and his replacement, instead splitting into eight different committees that focused on other aspects of improving the system and helping the students.⁴⁵ In the beginning of Burnley's last year, he announced a five-year plan to close 110 schools, almost half of the district's 252 buildings, cutting 5,400 employees, but saving \$380 million.⁴⁶ It was approved by the state in March.⁴⁷

DFT, union, and community protesters resisted closing schools and cutting jobs, but most vehemently protested privatization, money toward charter schools, and outsourcing.⁴⁸ In response to the Deficit Elimination Plan, almost all of the district's unions and the schools' administrators accepted some wage and benefit cuts, but the DFT, by late August, still had not accepted the cuts, threatening to delay the start of school.⁴⁹ The 11.4 percent wage cuts would set Detroit teachers back to 1999 wages.⁵⁰ Narrowly avoiding a strike, the DFT and the school board, with the help of the transition team, settled on a contract that did not cut teachers' pay but required teachers to loan five days' pay to the district during the 2005-2006 year.⁵¹ The settlement came from a clear commitment from all sides to avoid a strike.⁵²

On July 1, 2005, William Coleman III became the CEO of Detroit schools.⁵³ He had a 30-year history working in public education, holding lofty financial and operating positions in New York, San Francisco, and Dallas schools.⁵⁴ He clearly had experience with school finances, the first time these skills had been stressed in a leader of Detroit's schools. After he was in office for less than a year he had both liberals and conservatives standing behind him.⁵⁵ The *Chronicle*, the business oriented newspaper that urged the board to keep Burnley, wrote a piece

on how Coleman should be given the permanent CEO job.⁵⁶ He was liked for his aggressive marketing plan to retain Detroit students, his new plans to fight the still raging violence in Detroit's schools, and his communication with parents, students, and faith-based groups.⁵⁷

In late 2005, the community banded together, Detroit's business leaders, the Detroit NAACP, the newspapers, even the liberal KTVNT, to vote yes by more than a two-to-one margin for a millage increase that brought a yearly \$95 million into the schools.⁵⁸ The collaboration was proof that, in the words of CEO Coleman in his thanks to the community, "most people in this city care about the education of children."⁵⁹ In November, for the first time since 1999, Detroiters voted for which school board members they wanted. In March 2006, the elected board offered Coleman the "superintendent" position for another year.⁶⁰

The cycle of closing schools and cutting jobs continued into 2007. Fifty-two schools were slotted for closure in 2007 due to 60,000 empty seats.⁶¹ The DFT went on strike at the beginning of the school year for 16 days, causing even more students to flee the schools and the cycle to continue.⁶² The teachers returned after collaboration with the school board, both factions sacrificing for the financial sustainability of the system.⁶³ The school board closed buildings depending on housing patterns and the conditions of the buildings, while some community members wondered whether which schools were closed could and should be decided upon based on their academic achievement.⁶⁴

In March of 2007, the school board fired Coleman after he lied about his familiarity with a technology vendor and gave that company part of a \$58 million deal, even though they were not the best suited for the job.⁶⁵ He received the rest of his \$225,000 salary for that year due to his contract.⁶⁶ Connie Calloway was appointed as the new superintendent in March of 2007.⁶⁷ Calloway left her position as a superintendent of a small district in Missouri to take the position

in Detroit.⁶⁸ In September 2008, Kilpatrick, Detroit's mayor, resigned, plead guilty to two counts of obstruction of justice, and spent 99 days in prison.⁶⁹ By December 2008, the school board fired Calloway.⁷⁰ The district had to pay the rest of her contract as well.⁷¹

The board cited that Calloway was “insubordinate” and “uncooperative”⁷² with the board and “exercised poor judgment and unprofessional behavior.”⁷³ The board and Calloway blamed the other for the state decision made in late 2008 that Detroit was in a financial emergency.⁷⁴ Mike Flanagan, superintendent of public instruction, head of the state board and department of education, determined that there was a financial problem in the school district big enough to warrant help from the state government.⁷⁵ Detroit Public Schools had a \$130 million deficit and no plan to overcome the shortfall.⁷⁶ The school board blamed Calloway's lack of leadership since she did not develop school improvement plans.⁷⁷ Calloway in turn argued that the board was simply using her as a scapegoat for the district's already existing problems.⁷⁸ She pointed fingers at its own lack of transparency and honest financial dealings.⁷⁹

According to a state public act called the “Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act” that was passed in 1990, if the superintendent determines a serious financial problem, the Governor of Michigan is required to appoint a team to review the financial condition of that district, which Flanagan did.⁸⁰ The outside review team spent thirty days deciding whether a financial emergency existed and thus whether an Emergency Financial Manager needed to be established.⁸¹ The Detroit school board could agree on a deficit elimination plan agreement with this review team in order to establish that the district was not in a state of financial emergency.⁸² An EFM was a last resort, Flanagan said.⁸³

That December of 2008, Flanagan announced that the deficit plan and some other documents that the Detroit board submitted were unsatisfactory.⁸⁴ By January, Flanagan was

recommending Emergency Financial Managers for Detroit schools.⁸⁵ By the end of the month, Granholm appointed Robert Bobb, the CEO of a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm, the former city administrator and deputy mayor of D.C., and former president of the board of education there.⁸⁶ The state senate consented to the appointment.⁸⁷ Granholm commented that “Robert has the ability to get the Detroit Public Schools’ fiscal house in order so the district can devote its attention to ensuring that every students receives a quality education.”⁸⁸ He was given a salary of \$260,000 to get the job done.⁸⁹

One Detroit newspaper, *Crain’s Detroit Business*, sang Bobb’s praises: they commented on his realism that “the house [was] on fire and he [had] to be starting with a bucket of water on the front door,” his dedication to Detroit Public School’s mission for the children of Detroit, and his confidence.⁹⁰ He was clearly already getting the media on board and he began urging “business, big and small” to get involved.⁹¹ Although Bobb was new to Detroit, he learned a lot quickly.⁹²

Immediately, Bobb established a core team dedicated to the finances of the schools, including a chief financial officer, a chief of staff to handle grants, and an entire office to handle the district’s internal audits.⁹³ Within a month, his team found financial irregularities in the budget, causing them to have to increase the budget deficit estimate by over \$100 million.⁹⁴

A few months later, Bobb announced that he would be revitalizing and revamping the Detroit Public Schools Foundation, a nonprofit created in 2003.⁹⁵ He received some initial grants from individuals and corporations and planned to use the money as seed money for this new endowment and development office.⁹⁶ Bobb’s goal with the foundation was “to assist the Detroit Public Schools by providing a secure source of private funds necessary to ensure that the

Detroit Public Schools may achieve its educational objectives for the benefit of its students, their parents, its employees, and the community at large.”⁹⁷

Even with these efforts on Bobb’s part, a bond request on the ballot for November 2009 was Detroit’s last effort to save its school district from filing for bankruptcy.⁹⁸ Detroit Public Schools had an accumulated deficit of \$276 million and an expected debt of over expected \$130 million in the 2009-2010 school year.⁹⁹ For some, bankruptcy seemed like the best option: it would allow for Detroit Public Schools to entirely rebuild, lowering its debt and reworking contracts and collective bargaining agreements with the DFT.¹⁰⁰ The district did not accept bankruptcy though, requesting a \$500.5 million bond to renovate almost all of its schools, schools that were on average over 50 years old.¹⁰¹ The bonds were no-interest and low-interest stimulus money that President Barack Obama made available to modernize existing schools.¹⁰² Voters passed the \$500.5 million bond.¹⁰³

These funds were a part of the 2010 budget developed by the finance team to eliminate the current-year debt and reduce the standing one.¹⁰⁴ The plan also designated closing 29 schools and laying off almost 18% of the currently employed work force, about 2,451 employees.¹⁰⁵ As the beginning of the school year neared, 33 principals had already been let go, 72 administrative positions were cut, and 2,500 teachers, aides, and counselors had to reapply for their jobs.¹⁰⁶

Bobb reported that with the plan “at least our facilities would be available for 21st century teaching and learning.”¹⁰⁷ Although there seems to be no change in pedagogy that comes along with this plan, and supposedly about the same ratio of students per teacher, Bobb may be referring to the fact that this plan would attempt to keep Detroit Public Schools running. The

plan seemed like a moment-before-death necessity to create some type of future for Detroit schools at all.

The biggest focus through this period—starting long before this bond proposal, but growing even more obvious after it—was on the financial aspects of Detroit schools. This reflected the fact that finances *were* pivotal to the *existence* of Detroit Public Schools, but it may have also been a reflection of the national trends in favor of bringing business practices into educational organizations.

Not only had the largest newspapers reporting on school issues become very business oriented but the topics even they discussed had turned, by the end of 2009, largely to the financial goings-on of the school district. Discussions of financial fraud, of new bonds through private companies and ones backed by the state, real estate deals, advantages and disadvantages of bankruptcy... The developments focused public attention of the finances of the schools, while more and more ignoring the pedagogy and the results in student learning.

The trend was also one of favoring Bobb and his business expertise. *Crain's Detroit Business* praised Bobb as they reflected upon the year 2009.¹⁰⁸ It applauded how he and his assembled team shrunk the physical and financial size of the district, cutting schools and jobs.¹⁰⁹ The newspaper praised how he investigated fraud and ran financial audits, “finding millions that had been misappropriated or embezzled by employees... and millions in savings.”¹¹⁰ Alongside many of these praises for Robert Bobb was acclaim for Mayor Dave Bing as well. The duo seemed like business partners fighting to fix the schools’ finances and turn the schools around. It seemed conducive to reform that the two believed in the same things and supported each other to make those changes. Bobb reported that he “considers himself a part of Bing’s Cabinet.”¹¹¹

This confidence in Bobb and his financial doings even began to spread as some saw the opportunity for Bobb to increase his power over academics as well.¹¹² For these business papers, Bobb's success with finances led them to conclude that "Bobb and his team have earned the right to roll out their academic plan."¹¹³ This, in the wake of student test scores that were Detroit Public Schools' worst in their history (less than 15 percent of public school students were passing the math or reading portions of the Michigan Merit Exam),¹¹⁴ almost parallels the argument from 1999 for mayoral control of the schools: what we have is not working. In this case, though, mayoral control and an EFM had already been in place since 1999.

Detroit stakeholders, including the president of the DFT, also supported Bobb's continued leadership in the wake of these academic failures because they blamed the consistent leadership turnover and the effect: no traction, sustainability, or progress.¹¹⁵ As Bobb's contract came closer to expiration, Detroit again considered mayoral control as an option, this time to create stability of leadership.¹¹⁶ Mayor Bing supported mayoral control along with many of the newspapers, Governor Granholm, and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan himself who also saw it as a solution to almost constant administrator turnover.¹¹⁷

In Cuban's book (2010), he lays out some 'common errors' in urban school reform and offers his advice. One of the topics he addresses is successions of reforms and reformists (2010). He argues that the cycle and recycling of urban educational leaders leaves school systems weak and ineffective (2010). While frequent new superintendents may seem progressive, most new ones wipe out the little gains or foundations for gains left by their predecessor (Cuban, 2010). Even when individuals try and make transitions smoother, the sustainability of existing reforms usually still suffers (Cuban, 2010).

When addressing this issue of instability, Cuban (2010) brings up another trend that began in the 1990s to lay weak, uneven layers after layers of reform. He commented that since the 90s, as leaders agreed that standards-based curriculum, testing, and accountability led to success, they begin implementing these reforms at a pace that was impossible to maintain (2010). Therefore, most efforts are not sustained and educational personnel get burnt-out as a result of the quickly moving cycle of new efforts (Cuban, 2010).

One of the reasons this cycle of reforms happens is because money for these fad policies is plentiful (at least this is what Cuban argues) because of the loud national rhetoric and acclaim (2010). Thus creating these reforms is easy even while the continuation is difficult (Cuban, 2010). Playing out in Detroit, educational foundations from Michigan and around the U.S. began to give more money to Detroit's schools and Bobb's business ideas.¹¹⁸ One of the national foundations, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, paid \$84,000 toward Bobb's salary over two years and over \$183,000 to DPS to fund financial audits.¹¹⁹ Many different foundations also began donating money toward the startup and continuation of Detroit charter schools.¹²⁰ This contrasts the fight against Bob Thompson's attempt at spending millions to improve the charter network in 2002. A major factor in this difference is the presence of Bobb and Bing and their acceptance of the national charter school trend. As the relationship between Bobb and Bing grew, as discussed previously, the pair began to include all types of schools, including charters, in their discussion of the school system, making the idea of charters more mainstream and acceptable.¹²¹ In this case, as Bobb and Bing embraced the business style of addressing education, funders embraced them.

By this point in late 2009, there were about 60 charter schools in Detroit, and the number was growing.¹²² Since Detroit Public Schools' enrollment fell below 100,000 students in the

2008-2009 school year, Flanagan said that it cannot be considered a First Class School district anymore and he removed the cap on charter schools in Detroit.¹²³ Through this time, Bobb continued his trend of privatizing services to outside contractors, actions that evoked anger and frustration from the city unions.¹²⁴

In this same time period, a new coalition based around national business standards was forming. Local foundations and other educators, parents, and community organizations joined together to create Excellent Schools Detroit.¹²⁵ Excellent Schools Detroit wanted to build 70 new high schools by 2020 and to help get 90% of Detroit students graduating from high school and then enroll in postsecondary education or training.¹²⁶

Excellent Schools Detroit agreed that business leaders were the best for the job of replacing the schools.¹²⁷ They suggested mayoral-control and called for high citywide educational standards in Detroit.¹²⁸ Annual report cards would assess school performance and failing schools would be closed and replaced.¹²⁹ They supported new state legislation that asked the lowest-performing schools to create a turnaround plan as well as the one that opened the state cap on charter schools.¹³⁰

School competition because of charters brought transformation, they said, but they did recognize that the current charters in Detroit were not doing much better than the public schools.¹³¹ For seemingly the first time, the community addressed all types of schools in Detroit. This holistic look at education reform added to the sense of cooperation and collaboration in Excellent Schools Detroit, as well as symbolized a shift in accepting of charter schools as a piece of education with which to work instead of stand against.

Soon enough, in mid-2010, an outgrowth of Excellent Schools Detroit began a petition to get mayoral control on the ballot.¹³² Although the preferences of the business and foundation

communities were clear, and those of Governor Granholm were the same, the state legislature said that it did not have the power to change the governance model of Detroit's schools.¹³³ Instead, they announced that voters should be the ones to make the decision to switch to mayoral control.¹³⁴ People who signed the local petition were generally fed up with the school board's lack of success in improving Detroit's schools as well as the constant instability of superintendents (there had been four since 2006).¹³⁵ These problems were blamed on the board.¹³⁶ Signers also argued that the board was "faceless" and hard to keep accountable.¹³⁷ They wanted an "elected official they [could] hold responsible" and planned to do just that by replacing the current system with one in which the mayor would be help accountable for the appointment of a superintendent of schools and an advisory board of community-level members.¹³⁸ They based their hopes for mayoral-control off the success stories from Boston and New York that had public schools systems led by the mayor since 1991 and 2002 respectively.¹³⁹ The issue never reached the November ballot box because the group did not bring the petition to the city council by the deadline.¹⁴⁰

Excellent Schools Detroit seemed to be the first collaboration, mention even, of teachers and community members alongside of the business community and foundations.¹⁴¹ Instead of uniting around a common goal while having different stances on education, as happened many times before the 21st century, this was a coalition united on identical educational values. Excellent Schools Detroit collected around national business ideals: accountability, standards and measurable goals, and transparent performance information, all to help parents "shop" for a good education for their children.¹⁴² This illustrates what Ravitch wrote, that what had been considered conservative, became a nationally agreed upon position.

We have moved from a system of state-imposed leadership in order to control the Detroit schools, their finances, and their unions, to a system of business-oriented leadership that feels less overbearing. Both systems of control are equally state run without paths of input from the community, but the difference is in the stance of those voters. The community now supports the values and theories behind the national choice and standards movements.

Within this environment in the beginning of 2011, the state approved Bobb's new deficit plan called the Renaissance Plan.¹⁴³ To save \$75-\$99 million on maintenance, capital, and salary expenses, the plan detailed turning some of the 142 public schools into charters.¹⁴⁴ Bobb created a list of 45 Detroit Public Schools that would either be closed or changed into charters.¹⁴⁵ He said that this would improve his original idea of simply closing all those schools, which would have been a continuation of the closures of 60 schools in the past two years and likely resulted in some class sizes skyrocketing to 60 students.¹⁴⁶ In accordance with the plan, Bobb's office began accepting bids from charter school operators from around the country, hoping to find the "best, proven school operators" to run these "Renaissance" schools.¹⁴⁷

In May of 2011, newly elected Governor Rick Snyder (R) appointed Roy S. Roberts to follow in Bobb's steps, whose contract was to expire in June.¹⁴⁸ Roberts' background is entirely business. He told me, in our interview together, that he had "been in corporate America for 45 years, with Leer Seigler, General Motors, to the top of organizations." He worked up the ranks at General Motors to become the Group Vice President for North American Vehicle Sales, Service and Marketing.¹⁴⁹ At this time, Rick Snyder passed the Emergency Manager law legislation that allows emergency managers to sell public assets, make appointments, make and break contracts, and dissolve collective bargaining agreements.¹⁵⁰ Due to this law, *Roberts has full control over not only finances but academics as well* (including the school board).¹⁵¹

When Roberts was appointed, he was in charge of a district with over \$327 million in debt.¹⁵² Immediately, he began closing \$200 million of the deficit by turning short-term bonds into long-term notes.¹⁵³ His financial plan also included reducing that much in spending by reducing salaries by a uniform 10% and laying off teachers to parallel the continuous drops in student enrollment.¹⁵⁴

Roberts' biggest new initiative so far, just being defined and developed, is called the Education Achievement System, or EAS. I spoke to Roberts on this topic in the end of February 2012. The EAS is a going to be a statewide program that operates the lowest performing 5% of schools in Michigan: "schools that have failed for a minimum of three years in a row by our standards" (Roberts). Beginning in the next school year (2012-2013), its goals are to make those 5% of schools into financially and academically stable schools that prepare students to "compete in a global workforce."¹⁵⁵

Roberts is the chairperson of the Education Achievement Authority (EAA), or the group of people in charge of the EAS (Roberts). He works with Rick Snyder in the EAA and the hired chancellor, John Covington from Kansas City. In describing the EAA, he told me, "there's a committee I work with of eleven people, an executive committee of five, and I have to make sure I manage that whole process." According to Roberts, the EAA is going to "put more money, more effort, more energy behind these schools. [We'll] probably be able to select some of [the] teachers." The EAS wants to make its schools look different from traditional public schools.¹⁵⁶ When Roberts and Snyder selected Covington they said, "We want you to think innovatively, creatively. And over all [Covington's] talking about meeting a child where the child is, and moving that child one year in one year's time. Maybe no grades. When a kid can master what they're supposed to know in that grade, they move on to the next segment. You have to use a lot

of technology in doing this. So any teacher that would be teaching kids in this kind of environment, they'd have to be able to use technology" (Roberts).

This final initiative, built on the ideals of top-down leadership, working around teachers unions, and thinking outside of traditional schools, shows that the district and its leadership are still enveloped within the business movement of education.

Conclusion of Detroit's History

In almost a century, Detroit's schools have changed drastically. The district has seen extreme times of financial bounty and starvation, populations come and go, coalitions unite and break, unions rise to power then fall, innovation and true devastation. These ups and down, successes and failures, have taught us invaluable lessons with which we can build future reform to restore the education system of Detroit. The history has shown us how reforms must be based on student-oriented goals. To gain support for these initiatives actors need to transparently research them and make sure that they appeal to large groups of constituents in order to gain legitimacy and support. Even with collaboration, there are some problems in Detroit that have been growing for the decades that skin-deep solutions will not fully address.

The next sections will continue this history, examining how Roy Roberts dealt with Robert Bobb's plan to create more charter schools, as well as how Roberts has acted differently than Robert Bobb as the new EFM. The following sections are based on the interviews of people working within the present education system instead of solely based on archival sources. As such we will gain deeper insight on and understanding of Detroit's schools' current state. We will see how the takeaways from the past play out in Detroit's current reform initiatives and these current initiatives will also show us how the national business movements have flourished in Detroit.

Interviews on Current Detroit Education Reforms

Methodology: Field Study

Based on consultation, I identified people with expertise and experience with Detroit Public Schools to interview. This search began by speaking with my adviser and emailing people he knew through his connections at the School of Education at the University of Michigan and through the Higher Education- DPS Consortium. The Consortium is a collaboration between seven universities from Southeast Michigan, including the University of Michigan, that works to improve education and reduce inequalities in Detroit Public Schools. After reaching out to this initial group of people for interviews, I reached out to a second group that the former had suggested to me.

From November 2011 through January 2012, I interviewed ten different adults who were or are involved in education reform in Michigan. They represent various positions within the system of education reform, some working directly with Detroit Public Schools, some working at the University of Michigan, and some in other capacities.

Every interview was conducted and the audio of every interview was recorded with IRB consent. Two out of the ten interviewees requested to remain anonymous: both ‘Rebecca Platte’ and ‘Vienna Williams’ are pseudonyms. Every interview started with a brief description of my thesis and an inquiry of how the interviewee was involved in Detroit or education reform. Each was then asked about what they believed to be the biggest challenges in Detroit education today. I asked about the charter school push and the role of EFM as plainly as I could to avoid any of my own biases in the questions. They were usually phrased as such: “For my thesis, I also am looking at the current role of Emergency Financial Manager in Detroit. What are your thoughts on that position?” I never had to elaborate on what either the EFM or charter schools were; however, in some interviews I mentioned Roy Roberts’ and/or Robert Bobb’s name.

Additionally, I asked each interviewee what solutions they would suggest for the education system in Detroit. In every interview, I followed up on many of the aforementioned framework questions. I concluded the interviews by asking for further contacts or supplemental material to read.

Interviewees' Basic Information

Table 1: Interviewees

	Time of Interview	Current occupation	Relevant past experiences	Current affiliations
	Location of Interview			
	Length of Interview			
Nkem Khumbah	January 24, 2012	•Faculty in the Comprehensive Studies Program at the University of Michigan	•Was a part of the discussions that eventually became the Consortium	
	Math Lab, University of Michigan			
	1 hour, 13 minutes			
Walter McLean	January 14, 2012		•Was a teacher and principal for K-12 in Detroit •Worked in the Central Office as one of twelve Executive Directors (assistant superintendents) over Detroit schools from 2000-2001	
	Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, Detroit			
	40 minutes			
Jeffrey Mirel	November 21, 2011	•Professor at the University of Michigan School of Education •Historian	•Wrote <i>The Rise and Fall of an Urban School District</i> and <i>Mayors in the middle: politics,</i>	
	School of Education Building, University of Michigan			

	34 minutes		<i>race, and mayoral control of urban schools</i>	
Elizabeth Moje	December 7, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Associate Dean of the University of Michigan School of Education •Studies adolescent literacy •Creates teacher professional development programs at the University of Michigan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Worked in Detroit for 25 years, specifically on professional development 	
	School of Education Building, University of Michigan			
	46 minutes			
Irene Nordé	December 19, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Head of the Detroit Public Schools' Math department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Worked in Math education for 30 years inside and outside of the Detroit district (including in charter schools) •Past teacher, administrator, and university instructor 	
	Albert Kahn Building, Detroit			
	54 Minutes			
Rebecca Platte	December 12, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Works for a nonprofit focused on reform evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Past teacher •Experienced with reform throughout Michigan 	
	Ann Arbor Public Library			
	32 minutes			
Jerry Rankin	December 2, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reverend at Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit •Works with students in math using programs he has created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Grew up in Detroit •Follows a religious mission to help students succeed in math •Has been working with students in Detroit for 26 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Member of the Consortium
	Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, Detroit			
	1 hour, 46 minutes			

Roy Roberts	January 31, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Emergency Financial Manager •Chairperson of Education Achievement Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Business background 	
	Fisher Building, Detroit			
	23 minutes			
Laura Roop	November 30, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Outreach Director at the University of Michigan for past 11 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Former Communications Director at the University of Michigan •Present for the creation of the Consortium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Member of the Consortium
	School of Education Building, University of Michigan			
	41 minutes			
Vienna Williams	January 27, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher in a public Detroit elementary school •Has been a teacher for 15 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Grew up in Detroit •After getting her teaching degree, decided to return to Detroit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Member of a teachers' union in Detroit
	An elementary school in Detroit			
	1 hour, 2 minutes			

Interviewee Analysis

The people I interviewed provided me with insight on the current situation in Detroit, on-the-ground opinions about the current reforms, and suggestions from people actively involved in either Detroit or education. To further delve into this insight from my interviewees, I categorized each person and analyzed their responses. Below, I have categorized them in two ways: the first based on their vantage point, the second on their educational stances. The first category depends on what role they have (or may have had) in education. Each role has a varying degree of distance from Detroit Public Schools. The second category is concerned with how each person thinks reform should generally happen based on which actor(s), tool(s), and place(s) of implementation—three subcategories—each interviewee considers the most effective or important in educational reform.

The categories emerged after analyzing every interview with a clean slate. With little prior background in education, I was not aware of people's ideologies, factions, parties or other affiliations. In order to create my categories, I listened to the audio of each interview again marking down every comment about the topics of this thesis according to whether the interviewee said it negatively, positively, or neutrally.³ I attempted to be as objective as possible, responding to the interviewee's tone and evaluations rather than if I thought the comment was about a negative or positive aspect of a topic. I created a chart on which every interviewee's name was listed in a column down the left and every topic was listed across the top: Detroit schools, EFM, charter schools, suggestions, and "ideologies." In the ideologies column I included extra comments that had to do with education or reform overall and helped me see the foundation beneath what each person was saying. However, as seen in the following section, I will split interviewees into 'stances' instead of "ideologies."

If someone made the same point more than once, each recurrence would add an additional positive or negative sign next to the original comment to include the emphasis of repetition. After everything was written out, I compared across each row to create a stance for each person. Looking down a column presented the relevant and comparable data about each specific topic.

I think that there is much to learn from categorizing the comments and grouping interviewees. Splitting interviewees into different groups teaches us about each of them. We can also see the similarities and differences they have with people in different groups as well as to people in their same categories. We can also see how each interviewee's vantage point and stances affect how he or she evaluates Detroit's challenges and suggest improvements. Lastly,

³ For the relevant pieces of these notes, transferred into a electronic table, see Appendix B

there are things to be learned about how reformers in general think about reform. Using the categories of my interviewee’s stances (actors, tools, and places), I created a process of reform that will help guide our evaluation of reform and our development of future reform.

Interviewees’ Vantages on Detroit

Table 2 presents my analysis of interviewees’ vantage points on education reform in Detroit schools. I split the categories by how close the interviewees are to reform in Detroit. The closest to the action are the people who are positioned within Detroit schools. I further split that category into administrators and teachers. Next are those who are specifically involved in Detroit reform from the community level or from a university level. Both are actively involved in Detroit but not working through the district school system. I signify which interviewees are from the University of Michigan and although these people are knowledgeable about Detroit and reform, they are not currently or directly engaged in it, unless otherwise noted. The farthest removed category, although not to be discounted, is that of an outside activist, neither involved directly in Detroit nor the university.

Table 2: Interviewee’s positions in relation to Detroit school reform

	Detroit Public Schools (Administrator)	Detroit Public Schools (Teacher)	Detroit Community	Consortium	University of Michigan	Outside community
Roy Roberts	√					
Irene Nordé	√					
Walter McLean	√ (Past)	√ (Past)				

Vienna Williams		√				
Jerry Rankin			√	√		
Laura Roop				√	√	
Nkem Khumbah				√ (Past)	√	
Elizabeth Moje					√ (Past: involved in reform with DPS)	
Jeffrey Mirel					√	
Rebecca Platte						√

Interviewees' Implicit Stances on Reform

Along with their position within the system of education reform in Detroit, I wanted to categorize my interviewees into ‘ideologies:’ generalizations about people’s beliefs about reform. Many published educational works include generalizations like this. For example, Larry Cuban, in *As Good As It Gets* (2010), describes two national parties of school reformers. They lay at two ends of a continuum, he says, that do not align with the typical divisions of political liberalism or conservatism (Cuban, 2010). First is the ‘Effective Schools and Districts’ crowd that has argued “for decades” that schools run by strong leaders and teachers who value efficiency, high standards, and accountability can achieve excellence and equity for all students, no matter what students’ family background (Cuban, 2010, p. 7-8). Positive changes, for this faction, are those that put accountability for student success on teachers and administrators (Cuban, 2010).

On the other end of the teeter-totter is the ‘Improved Schools and Community’ party (Cuban, 2010, p. 9). These reformists do not believe that school improvement alone can

substantially close achievement gaps in the long-term (Cuban, 2010). Instead, reform must include both in-school and out-of-school efforts to weaken the strong link between a student's socioeconomic background and his/her academic achievement (Cuban, 2010). Improvement, for this crowd, involves connecting families and communities with early education programs, health services, parent education, and programs for students after school and during the summer (9).

This way of sorting people was helpful for me in interpreting a few of the people I interviewed. For example, Jerry Rankin fit neatly into Cuban's Effective Schools and Districts faction. Rankin believes that students have "all kinda social issues that's plaguing their consciousness" but that they are just "a challenge in being able to keep them intrigued." He tells his students that their "brain works just as well [as every other student's]" and his goal through his teachings are to empower them with learning. He knows that they can learn, no matter what outside problems they must overcome.

Unfortunately, not all of my interviewees split into Cuban's factions and even for those that did, I still felt that his teeter-totter with the two parties on opposite ends was not a complete picture of reform. Cuban's two groups only consider where reform should happen: one would say the schools and districts while the other would include schools but also communities and families, however, they do not address much more than that. This does not tell us *who* reformers think should be deciding upon and implementing reform or what the tools to implementing that reform are.

Cuban's teeter-totter is a neat way of looking at educational ideologies that span more than just liberal or conservative, but the process or reform is not two-dimensional and neither are people's stances. Thus, I created the categories that I saw shaping up across my interviews. They cannot be called ideologies because they are not as general and universal as Cuban's may

be. Instead, I will call them stances: people's underlying positions on educational reform. Table 3, below, is made up of three categories. First is "actors:" who should be creating and implementing reforms. This includes all of the stakeholders that we heard about repeatedly in Detroit's history: The community (including families), teachers and other school faculty (including their unions), the local school system and the leaders at this level (in this case Detroit), and the state (recently becoming more and more involved). Ravitch reminds us to include federal actors, and I expanded this to "all" to encompass the stance that reform is most effective when every actor at every level is involved.

The second category encompasses what tools people consider necessary in order to make change. These tools are critical to navigating the naturally slow, difficult, and hazardous reform process. My interviewees had different stances on what the most important tool when making reform is. There are three types that emerged: data, collaboration, and context. The first, data, refers to the best practice from Detroit's history as well from both Ravitch and Cuban's books: reform can only (and should only) be enacted if we research it, evaluate it, and gain data about it. The people who stress the importance of this tool want to constantly assess past and current efforts and use that data to improve education. This tool will help make sure that our reforms are levelheaded and effective. Rebecca Platte, for example, saw research and evaluation as an "issue core to [her] work and [her] interests." When I asked her for possible solutions for Detroit schools she said that one is "making sure that when we recommend options for failing schools that we actually know that they're better than the alternative or better than the status quo."

The second tool, collaboration, also contains a best practice from Mirel's history as well as his in-person interview. In his words, "My book was a lot about the formation and collapse of the political coalitions in the Detroit schools... If you could get [the labor union, the board of

commerce, and the Michigan Manufacturers Association] to agree then the money would continue to flow.” Along with collaboration comes communication, a necessity for working together. The most important piece of this is the need for and power of working together to make change. As Nkem Khumbah puts concisely, “the best way of solving problems is to form alliances and synergy and communication, genuine communication.”

Third, “Context” refers to the consideration of the complex background surrounding every reform and policy. Some reformers believe that it is a necessity to examine the context of reform when making or evaluating change. For example, I included the history of Detroit schools in this thesis because I believe that it greatly affects the current situation in Detroit and that we can learn from it. These historical and national contexts are tools we can use to better evaluate and improve current educational initiatives. Elizabeth Moje believes that considering context helps us better judge each actor or organization involved with reform because it helps us understand them and refrain from making generalizations about them.

As an example of this, the current and past teachers I interviewed—especially Moje, Rankin, and Vienna Williams—always consider the contexts in which their students live and how they affect their students. Williams spoke about a push, some time ago, for “whole language” learning which meant that “kids will learn to read because they just read books” and how that was unrealistic for many urban students: “there's so many people in their houses and so much noise goin' on and cursin' and drinkin' and smokin' and this and that... how do I expect them to sit there and concentrate on reading a book?” And when it comes down to it, she said, “they don't have any books.” Those who believe in the power of context know that every person, every reform, and every district cannot be examined alone: you need to understand the environment surrounding them.

The third category in Table 3 is what Cuban tackles with his factions: the site of implementation. Once we have our reformers and they are using tools to effectively create change, where are they focusing their efforts? This is not a literal location but general categories of recipients of reform. Cuban gives us the options of making schools and districts more effective and/or improving communities and families. I used these categories but split up schools and districts as well as added one more.

This additional place of implementation encompasses all of the above, adding in change at the state and national levels. Roop named it a “systems approach:” the category for those people who believe that reform must change the entire system in order to substantially solve problems. For instance, Laura Roop repeatedly said that if reform efforts were not “scalable,” they were “superficial.” Her most memorable phrase was that of a reform (for example, bringing in an EFM) only being “a band-aid at the place of the greatest hemorrhage.” In regards to the charter school push, “it’s never gonna be able to serve enough kids to make a big enough difference.” Her stance was one of the most pessimistic I encountered and at first, such a systems approach seems impossible, but her stance, like every one present here, has something to teach us if we consider it. For example, what makes charters a “partial strategy” and the EFM a band-aid? What bigger issues need to be solved here and how can we begin to tackle them?

Every reformer can have a different combination of these pieces that constitutes their stance on reform, as seen with the ten people I interviewed. Even with similar categories between “actors” versus “places,” one person can be placed in different categories across them. For example, Walter McLean thinks that every actor needs to be involved in creating change at a community level, while Nkem Khumbah thinks the opposite—that community members should create change to affect the whole education system. For McLean, one of the most important

solutions for Detroit is to improve the “family community” where “adults [help] parents keep children in check.” To help us get back to a time where there are expectations that every community member needs to help kids succeed in school, McLean thinks that our country on a grand scheme needs to prioritize education.

Khumbah, on the other hand, says that the people should be the ones to take charge of educational change: “the schools board, the city council, the church community.” He opposes any other non-community actors of reform who act as “hammers.” He argues, that no one can “come and actually tell [Detroiters] that your solution is better for their children and their grandchildren” than their solutions are. These democratic, grass-roots reforms should aim, Khumbah says, to change the “systemic problem.” Like Roop, he thinks that change needs to be implemented across every level of education.

Using the three separate category groupings can be tricky, especially since it is rare that any reformer fits neatly into categories without some overlap. Not everyone in the same category is homogeneous either. But from these categories, I built my theory of how reformation should work. I believe that reform is a process of change built upon certain actors using certain tools in order to ensure the success of their reforms in a specific place of implementation. There is not necessarily a ‘most effective’ combination of pieces, but each actor, tool, and place has its own strengths and we should consider each of them. If we want to effectively create positive change in Detroit and around the country, we cannot forget any piece of this process. **As you create, implement, or evaluate any education reform, ask yourself what pieces of the process (actors, tools, places) you (and/or the creator of the reform) currently are deeming as most important. Then look again, consider every piece in the process, and evaluate which ones you *should* be deeming as most important.**

The last, but not least, piece in the process is considering what the specific reform to be implemented is. For example, Williams’ discussed the specific initiative of ‘whole language learning.’ Creating the EFM position or a new charter school is an example of an implemented solution. Cuban writes that those in his Effective Schools and Districts faction typically implement business reforms. Even though people’s stances affect the reforms they are most likely to suggest, I will not be putting any of these specific reforms in Table 3. I do not think they could even be succinctly categorized. However, I do hope that by analyzing the reforms that my interviewees suggest and by comparing the stances as well as positions of the people that made them, we can learn more about the suggestions/solutions themselves. This final piece will be found in the following conclusion sections.

Table 3: Reform actors, tools, and places (3.a. below)

	Most influential reform <u>actors</u>					Most important <u>tools</u> for creating change		
	Communi- nity/ Families	Teachers	Local School System	State	All	Data/ Evaluation / Research	Communication / Collaboration	Context
Roy Roberts			√			√	√	√
Irene Nordé			√			√	√	√
Walter McLean					√	√	√	
Vienna Williams		√				√		√
Jerry Rankin		√						√
Laura Roop				√	√		√	
Nkem Khumbah	√						√	√
Elizabeth Moje		√				√		√

Jeffrey Mirel					√		√	√
Rebecca Platte		√		√		√		

Table 3.a. Reform places

	Most important <u>place</u> of implementation			
	Communities/ families	Schools	Local school system	Entire system
Roy Roberts			√	
Irene Nordé		√	√	
Walter McLean	√		√	
Vienna Williams	√	√		
Jerry Rankin		√		
Laura Roop				√
Nkem Khumbah				√
Elizabeth Moje	√	√		
Jeffrey Mirel			√	
Rebecca Platte				√

Analysis of Current Detroit Education Reforms

Emergency Financial Manager

Walter McLean noted that it was important to ask about why it was “necessary” to bring in an EFM: “What was it [in Detroit] that brought it to that point? What was going awry? What systems were broken within the system? ...What things... should have been sustained that were not, that were best practices?”

The purpose of the EFM, Nkem Khumbah would answer, “is to improve the financial situation in the system.” Almost every interviewee also defined the situation that necessitated an EFM, as a state of financial failure. This point should not surprise us. We already saw that this was the case, that the position was created after superintendent of public instruction Mike Flanagan found Detroit to be in a “state of financial emergency.” But when we think back to those financial problems, they were largely caused by a much wider context (in time and place)

than bringing in one man could fix. The following responses thus show us the pieces of the financial problem that *can* be fixed by changing the leadership structure of the schools.

Irene Nordé said that the financial problems arose because “for too long, too many people were writing checks and not enough people [were] balancing the budget.” The school district did not realize that as “the city size starts declining” the budget was going to be declining as well because “it's built on the student population that was declining” (Nordé). Now, she said, the district needs to own up to that and let the EFM create an “appropriate budget” for the schools. “As a business we needed to forecast or see down our future that we were gonna have to start getting smaller and we have started closing schools, but we haven't done it to the extent that we needed to do it” (Nordé). In Roop’s words: “you actually have to right-size the district, you can't have like a million buildings open and no funding for any of them.” Rebecca Platte stated that “if you believe that there should be a Detroit Public Schools to begin with then you need to be thinking about long-term viability” and that is the goal of consolidating finances. These comments legitimize the actions of past and future leaders who closed schools in Detroit.

Jerry Rankin defined the state of financial failure as one caused by “the lack of responsibility and the lack of proper business procedures and accounting procedures [that] did not clearly identify the sources who were helping themselves”: a financial exploitation of the system. Platte also mentioned the financial corruption, whether illegal or unethical, as one of the biggest challenges for Detroit. The goal of having an EFM, Rankin said, was “to stop the flagrant waste and poor financial management of the resources.” As Nordé put it, the EFM is suppose to create financial “checks and balance:” verifying and validating every expenditure. “You need someone who's balancing the check book!” (Nordé). These conditions were the reasons behind the new EFM role, and **whoever acts as EFM should understand that the**

EFM needs to maintain an appropriately sized budget to allow the schools to stay afloat, as well as reduce the financial corruption within the school district.

The next piece of McLean's earlier questioning is asking, "why couldn't just we find a great superintendent... who could come in with appropriate staff... and reframe this?" Rankin's answer is that an EFM brings a "business mind... to the situation." They will know how to identify and stop people who are financially abusing the system and will be able to shrink the district to ensure its financial stability. Vienna Williams agreed that one good thing about the EFM was their "common sense" about financial things compared to superintendents who made the "dumbest decisions." **This business and finance experience and perspective is necessary for the jobs that the EFM is required to do.**

The EFM position is also different from that of superintendent because the voters or the school board cannot remove whomever the state appoints. This autocracy of the role has the potential to reduce the high level of superintendent turnover that plagues Detroit (and the nation). Roy Roberts presented the fact that "the average life of superintendent of schools is 3.5 years." With each turnover, McLean said, you lose the "sense of positive continuity" and must redo the culture. Williams pointed out the waste of having to pay the fired superintendent as well as the new one that is hired. She categorized this as part of the financial waste before Detroit had an EFM. In contrast to this constant turnover, McLean considers the 1970s in Detroit to be a period of success because there was "continuity of thought and practice and vision and purpose" because the superintendent at the time was in charge for over 13 years.

The reason for the turnover around the nation, argued Roberts, is because of the structure of leadership. "In this nation," he said, "every reformer that got fired, none was fired for education, they were fired for political reasons... you were on the board and you hired me, cause

you liked me, all of a sudden you're off the board and you got new members on that you don't like and he's out of there." Williams continues, "it seems like every time [Detroit] got somebody who was trying to really do something, they got rid of him." Some people argue that ex-superintendent Connie Calloway is an example of this; that the school board fired her because it did not like that she wanted to make drastic change (Lessenberry, 2009). Mirel believes the autocracy of the role is good because it allows the EFM to make quick and decisive change. An EMF is better for "catching of the people who were misusing funds," agreed Williams. **The autocratic nature of the EMF position could protect the district from constant turnover and allow change to be made more efficiently.**

Herein lies the paradox of the position of EFM. As referenced above, one of the reasons the system wants an EFM is to create a system of "checks and balances" for the financial goings-on, many times unethically, in the city. What makes an EFM the best person for this duty, besides his or her assumed business acumen, is that the EFM role is autocratic and thus *removed* from the typical system of check and balances. On the other hand, one of the biggest problems that some people have with the EFM is that "there is no checks and balances for [him or her]... they get to do whatever they wanna do" (Williams).

We should examine some of these theoretical negatives that possibly come along with this EFM role. After we consider these negatives we can conclude more accurately about whether the paradox of the EFM acting as a check but not being checked is more of a pro or a con of the position.

At a systemic level, Khumbah saw bringing in an EFM without checks and balances as undermining democracy and thus very "dangerous." He gave the example, "It's like going to DC someday and saying that we'll stop the Presidency, we will stop Congress, and we will get a

corporate guy to come around and turn this country around because we're in a deep budget [crisis]...” Even though he understands how much of a “crisis” Detroit is in, and knows that the “democratic system... has its flaws of efficiency,” in his eyes, bringing in an EFM is inherently worse. “It doesn’t work that way,” he said, “because the bottom of society it's a democratic system.”

One of the takeaways drawn from Diane Ravitch’s book (2010) was that changes from the bottom up make it easier to gain credibility, support, and objective review, all of which are necessary pieces to creating support for reforms. Bringing in top-down control with an EFM, on the other hand, is like a hammer on the system and reduces buy-in from the community and educators, Khumbah said. “Change from within, people are part of it, its part of their lives, they accept it, they buy-in, they own it. And when it doesn't go right they blame themselves for it. When it comes from outside, they leave it up to you... But their lives are the ones involved.”

Buy-in can be lost at all levels—individual community members and families, teachers, and administrators—and when it is, serious harm has been done.

When the EFM, his team, and those who appoint him are outsiders, the take over seems even more unwelcome and further reduces buy-in. Khumbah said that in Detroit “the proposals for solutions are not coming from the people themselves who are involved. They come from outside agents.” These outsiders “have no clue what the problem [is],” at least not more than on a theoretical level. Khumbah knows that these people from outside Detroit “cannot be knowing better [the people of Detroit’s] future than they do. You cannot come and actually tell them that your solution is better for their children and their grandchildren than they do.” Nordé commented on her own experiences working in Detroit and concludes that because she knows about “the climate... the culture... [and] the problems” she can “get started with the work at a

much faster rate” and “start targeting what [she] need[s] to do.” **The more an EFM truly knows about Detroit before coming in, the faster and more effective they are at their work and representing the Detroit community and gaining their support.**

Khumbah also argued that an EFM “ends up leaving the school district worse than they came in because all decision are not based... on education philosophy or theory or organizational management on how to bring out the best education, it’s based on friendship and cutting costs.” Elizabeth Moje warned us that “if it’s all about a bottom line without taking into account pedagogical principles or... what’s best for kids basically, then it’s a recipe for disaster.” Here we can remember what we have seen as a best practice through the nation and Detroit’s history: that positive and effective reforms are those that focus on students and what goes on in the classroom. Platte restated this when she said she does not think that improving the financial system is “the issue that’s gonna make a difference for kids and their outcomes.”

Williams agrees that “making cuts in a business is different from making cuts in a school.” She knows that “you can’t make a good decision about something unless you’ve been there.” Moje thinks that “in an ideal situation, a financial manager who is surrounded by people with expertise in education, who is attuned to the needs of teachers and students and their parents... can work very very well.” The person needs to “recognize the needs and fit the needs of an education system” (Moje).

At this point, we need to acknowledge how the EFM role changed when Rick Snyder became governor and that now Roberts has control over the finances *and* academics of Detroit schools. This is a move that gives Roberts’ even more single-manned control, but Moje might see this as an improvement. She said that, “at the University of Michigan, the budget model works so that the Provost is both the academic-chief academic officer and chief budget officer,

it's not a separate position. And that was very intentional because it meant that the chief budget officer would always have an academic mission at her or his core.” After this new change, it is even more important that **the EFM (or leader of the system) needs to have experience in the classroom and with education or at least refer heavily to those on the academic side of things.** Even if an EFM succeeds with the district’s finances this does not mean that they should get to try their hand at the academic part of things too (as was suggested near the end of Robert Bobb’s time as EMF).

Although there are takeaways from discussing the EFM position theoretically, an analysis of the role will only be complete after specifically examining whoever holds the position. Whether the paradox above in which the EFM acts as a check on the system but has no checks upon him or herself turns out for the better or worse, depends largely on the person. The importance of individual actors cannot be undermined here. Cuban wrote that many times success is the result of “Superman” or “Wonder Women” leaders: extraordinary individuals who revive districts with their remarkable political smarts, force of will, energy, and time (2010, p. 142). Mirel, in his interview and in his piece published in 2004, stated the caveat that the possibility of change, which is potent in such an autocratic position, depends on the strong “do good” vision of whoever fills the position. Reading the history and seeing the national examples of different leaders gives us a sense of this, but the following first-hand interviews show the deep importance of personal characteristics.

When addressing the issue of EMF, four interviewees spoke generally about the role alone, while six interviewees spoke specifically about the person filling the role, Roy Roberts. The six that referred to Roberts directly were the six that work in Detroit (and thus are the six farthest to the left on Table 1): Roberts himself, Nordé, McLean, Williams, Rankin, and Roop.

The fact that the people within the system commented specifically on the person holding the EFM role, both Robert Bobb and Roy Roberts, shows how much the individual leader and their characteristics matter. When outsiders look in at a system, they sometimes downplay the man or woman within the role, when they should not. **Do not forget that changing the person holding the same exact role can vastly change the reality of that position.**

Analyzing these specific comments about Roberts, the following section will examine how the current EFM, Roy Roberts, is fulfilling the expectations set for him as well as avoiding the negatives that could come along with his position. I was also privileged enough to get to speak to Roberts himself about the role he has occupied for almost a year now. His own responses will supplement others' comments.

To begin, Roberts understands the financial reasons he is needed in Detroit. He mentioned that he was brought in because “people will steal from the district because they don’t care about the kids” and that he has “had to stop all that.” He recognized the district deficit that he reduced from \$347M when he was appointed “to \$89 million in 6 months.” Williams has more trust in Roberts’ ability to do this as compared to “the one we had before” who “made a bigger deficit.”

Roberts also recognizes the importance of his “business acumen” in securing the necessary finances. Roop, even with a more negative outlook on the situation that most, praised that Roberts is “from the corporate world, comes into it with the ability to analyze that kind of data..., [and] assessed the financial thing and cut the deals he needed to do to get some of the debt off the front of the table and that kind of thing.” Roberts aptly concluded, “So the financial piece: major major issue.” He seems to understand why he is there; the problems that

necessitated his job and the goals that people through the system see as belonging to the EFM. He seems to be reaching the goals set for him.

Above, I concluded that the EFM himself should understand Detroit in order to more efficiently do his job as well as make it clear that he is doing it in the best interest of the people of Detroit. Nordé and Roop commented on Robert's appropriate background for the job. Roop reflected positively on Roberts' knowledge of education in the state of Michigan as well as in Detroit. "He knows Detroit," she said, "knows Detroit people and politics and can walk in that very complex space" as compared to Past EMF Bobb who "didn't know how to work in this context... the combination of Detroit and Michigan."

In terms of Roberts being an educator: he is not. However, he does grasp the importance of academics. Although he says that the finances of the district are a major issue, he told me that it is "getting the academics in place that will move the young people forward." When I met him it was clear that he truly cares about the students. He told me, "I've been clear with all audiences, if it's not about kids, don't waste my time." He also knows that he cannot make decisions, financially or academically, by himself. In our interview, he said, "I have to use my business acumen, coupled with the acumen of all the academic people around me to put a team together, to impact the lives of these young people."

The last step of evaluation is to examine how Roberts is doing within such an autocratic role: Is he fulfilling the positive aspects and avoiding the negative possibilities? First off, Roberts recognizes that "we need some stability in this school district." He understands that the goal is for him to remain in the position because "every time you bring in a new superintendent, they have to demonstrate their worth: they change the system. And when you do that, principals can't adjust, teachers can't adjust, and kids get hurt." His being in office was a big thing, he told

me, because it allowed his job to be about the kids while in most cities “the system doesn’t work” because it does not allow leaders to focus on children. Robert saw his position of EFM as a solution to that problem. “They can’t fire me,” he said. “I was selected, not elected. I report to the governor and the governor only.”

This does beg the question of whether he will abuse the autocracy of the position, but Roberts seems to be doing a good job of avoiding presenting himself as a dictator. The most important key to this has been gaining buy-in from all levels of the system that pre-existed him. Roberts’ success at cultivating buy-in needs to be paralleled by the failure of his predecessor. Khumbah told me, without using names, that when Bobb came in there was no buy-in so he “had to fire almost everybody in there.” Khumbah explained that “when you come in and there's not buy-in you cannot work in that context. Then you get rid of them... or you yourself are out. And since you have the power, you get rid of them and bring your own folks” which is exactly what Bobb did.

Getting rid of all the dissidents may allow a leader to do what he or she wants but it weakens the buy-in of the community. Bobb’s major mistake that lost him Detroit’s trust was bringing outside people in to fix Detroit, outside people who “have no clue how Detroit looks like” (Khumbah). Nordé herself worked under Bobb and experienced the cuts that Khumbah referenced. At the administrative level he took over everything, bringing in his own friends... even going so far as to cut the math department (Nordé). She was removed even though she had more experience in Detroit than Bobb’s friends did.

When Roberts came in, restored the “best candidates” for jobs, and knew how to support employees without micromanaging, Nordé was thrilled. From the remarks made specifically about Roberts, the importance of his business experience in working with the employees of the

district and creating buy-in amongst them is clear. Nordé shared how Roberts' CEO experience means that he knows "the added value of his employees within the company" and how to "support and even move out the way so that others can do their part." Roberts spoke about the difficulty of the job and that things got "a bit more comfortable" once he "started to learn the talent of the people and knew who I could call on to get something done." "Very few people are from the outside," Roberts reported, "All they wanted was a chance." This just shows that he knows the importance of the people already around him and the skills they have. **Having the skills to effectively work with existing local employees is a key factor in creating successful buy-in.**

Reducing the buy-in of the school faculty, Bobb "brought in so many people that he knew. He... awarded contracts to his relatives' people... his friends' son..." reported Williams. She saw the affects of these biased decisions and clearly disliked Bobb for them. This dislike of outside contractors has existed at least since 2003, during Kenneth Burnley's time as CEO of the schools. She said that she does not "really see that or hear things going on like that with this current emergency manager... he seems like he's making sound decisions." It seems clear after looking at the contrast between how Bobb and Roberts handled outside consultants that **a part of being welcomed in as a leader, is not bringing in outsiders to do the inside jobs.**

Williams was not the only one who said something along the lines of "I don't have too big of a gripe with... the Emergency Financial Manager we have now" (especially in comparison to Bobb). General community members, represented by both Rankin and McLean, "believe in what [Roberts] believes in and the approach [Roberts] wants to take" (McLean) as well as his sincerity and integrity (Rankin). Roberts himself knows the importance of this positive relationship with the community. When I asked about changes he is enacting that are going to

help the system, he spoke about his ties with the community, saying, “this community respects me. This community knows I will not steal, I will not cheat, and I care about kids.”

Roberts calmed my mind most when we he then said, “I have the authority not to deal with the union or not to deal with the school board... I have all that authority under Public Act 4, [but] I don’t have to utilize it. Because if you use that power indiscriminately, you’ll never be respected. You’ve got to function in a way that you can be respected for what you do, and do classier work... I can cancel any contract, but I won’t do that!” When he came onto the job, Roberts knew, “if they have a voice and wanna talk, I want to hear it. Because I’m gonna do what I have to do to educate kids.”

It seems that in terms of filling a role that could become negatively dictator-like or positively effective and efficient to varying degrees, Roberts has been doing a good job. The EFM has a lot of power, and how he or she uses it is critical. As Williams said in reflection of such a position: “you appoint someone to oversee our district, they make a dumb decision, and then you tell us we have to pay for it,” so those decisions need to be quality as well as involve the community. Roberts has managed to not push the community or the current Detroit educational leaders away. Let us just hope that he can continue these positive efforts and remain a long-term efficient but democratic leader (as much as he can be), reducing the turnover that disrupts the system.

I hope that the takeaways discussed above will always help define what things all EFMs should do. State governors can use them to help guide their appointments and EFMs can use them as a way to check their own actions. However, even though people within the system should use those same takeaways to measure how each specific EFM is doing, because the EFM

role is so autocratic it is harder to remove someone from that spot if he or she is *not* doing a good job.

Overall, I endorse both the role of Emergency Financial Manager and Roy Roberts. I believe what McLean does: that a quality EFM with “appropriate human resources. Of people who know this work” can “reshape and put the systems back in place for an effective district.” But I want to go through the process of reform laid out in the previous interview section based on the categories of actors, tools, and implementation to explain the few ways in which I think the position can be improved.

Considering those categories, the reform of bringing an EFM into Detroit is a change of *who* is enacting reform. The EFM position gives power largely to a combination of “local school system” and “state” actors. Some interviewees believe that different actors would be more efficient. Khumbah, for example, thinks very poorly of bringing in an EFM because he sees “community/families” as the most important actors of reform. The EFM gives the state more control instead of letting the community democratically be the actors of change. Khumbah’s concerns of protecting democracy are persuasive but I do not think that just renewing the board of education in Detroit and giving it the power over a superintendent is the best way to currently use a democratic process to help the schools. I do not endorse removing Roberts and giving the power back to voters because I think that Roberts has the qualities, as discussed above, to work through financial problems in a way that board members do not. I also think that an EFM can offer more stability than a board. The creation of the EFM position is also partially due to the failure of decentralization in Detroit’s past, resulting not because of the state’s involvement but because of some of the community’s own failures.

I also want to argue that the type of cooperation that Khumbah wants, that is found throughout Detroit's history, is no longer a likely occurrence at all. This cooperation was a coming together of different interest groups to form coalitions, strong in numbers, that make change through the polls. These groups may have different ideologies or see the education system in a different light but they all have the same goal at that time. The EFM position curbs any possibility of future coalitions growing and making change because they no longer have defined paths of power. However, the EFM is not the only inhibitor. Mirel, in his interview, stressed that when "the coalition [of labor and business] fell apart [it] could not be reformed." He did not think "you could right now put together a working coalition of interest groups."

I think that there is a *new* type of cooperation that is possible and more powerful growing in Detroit. It is a cooperation of not just community level actors, but all levels of actors. I think that now, in this time in which the state is paying attention to Detroit's schools, it would be beneficial to strengthen lines of communication from the community up to the EFM in order to create this new kind of communication, cooperation, and sense of ownership of the changes being made. Back in 1999, when Mayor Dennis Archer and Governor John Engler created mayoral control, there was one columnist in Detroit who seemed to be paying attention to the pros and cons of centralization (Stroud 1999, Franklin 2003). He argued that reformers had to find a balance between centralization and decentralization that would create change through "accountability imposed from above as well as from the empowerment of parents and students at the most intimate level" (Stroud 1999, Franklin 2003).

To build this, we must begin with one of Khumbah's suggestions regarding democratic control that I think *can* improve the system. First of all, he reminded me that outside actors cannot forget that the people in Detroit "are very heavily invested in their welfare... They feel

the pinch of things going wrong more than anybody else.” Thus, when any level of actors comes in to help fix problems in Detroit they must acknowledge the important Detroit actors: “their mayor, their school board president, the church community...” (Khumbah). To acknowledge these people is to tackle the problem “humanly” and Khumbah thinks this is the only way we should be going about reform.

I think that increased transparency would make sure that *all* levels of actors are acknowledged and feel involved and responsible to the changes their EFM is making. Williams suggested this, hoping to have a “candid way of seeing what's spent on what... see[ing] the decisions that are being made in *my* district [emphasis added].” Whether people have a way to make suggestions or not, transparency is the first concern: letting the people who live and work in their school district see what things the administration is doing. From this they can make their judgments.

The next necessary piece in Detroit is the communication. One of Khumbah’s resonating points is that “in a democracy, what makes it strong, and the best way of solving problems is to form alliances and synergy and communication, genuine communication.” This communication needs to be both ways; sharing knowledge up and down the channels; vertically and horizontally. In this way, William Coleman was praised for his communication with parents, students, and faith-based groups during his time as CEO. Robert Bobb also smoothed out the process of change and was further interconnected with the city as he developed his collaboration with Mayor Dave Bing. Nordé knows that “the number one issue in any large district is communication.”

The next step, is gathering the input from the important community, school, and district level actors. Teachers are especially important and powerful educational actors and the EFM

should consider their input. Williams said that she would “like to see... a willingness to get feedback from people who are... in the trenches, before decisions are made. So before you decide 'ok we're going to come out with this other test', then could you pilot it a few places? Could you just... do a survey and see what the teachers are thinkin' about it?” This practice not only helps ensure that the reforms work in the classroom but that teachers buy into them. She said that if teachers did get the chance to offer input, “once we actually put the program throughout the district, we probably wouldn't have so many teachers saying 'you know what, I'm not using that.’”

These paths of communication and input, in a system with top-down leadership, will need to be further explored and defined. What will these lines of communication look like? Nordé went through the process of establishing this communication when her math department was restored. She set up a monthly meeting for one main representative from every building so she “can give them some direction and information about what's changing in mathematics education.” She also created a newsletter than she sends to every math teacher in the district. The final piece was creating an online facebook-like professional community. There are things like this that I think could be developed to show teachers and community members what is going on in the district as well as give them an opportunity to offer input.

After transparency and communication, the third piece of this is an actual semblance of a checks and balances system around the EFM that protects Detroit from a dictator but does not threaten the positive stability of the EFM position. In terms of what this will look like, I imagine a system that grows out of the cooperation of everyone within Detroit schools: teachers, principals, administrators... These stakeholders offer their feedback of the EFM, which is then given to the EFM as well as the governor who has the power to remove that person. If the EFM

is removed at any point, the superintendent under them should be protected by contract and allowed to work with the new EFM for at least a year. This would help ensure that nothing is forgotten or changed too abruptly, attempting to offer some sense of the stability that is needed in Detroit.

This new kind of cooperation that I think is more possible as well as more powerful in present times requires a balance of centralization and decentralization to work. “Accountability imposed from above as well as from the empowerment of parents and students at the most intimate level,” as was quoted before. This requires an EFM who fills the role in accordance to the best practices here, as well as community-wide support of the EFM. It also requires the empowerment of every other level of actors and communication between these levels, including a system of feedback on the EFM.

Charter Schools

There are many common themes across the discussion of charter schools that span all vantages and stances of my interviewees. That largest common concern about charter schools is that of “quality control.” In their own words, *every single* interviewee mentioned as a negative of charter schools, that there is no quality control among them. Even for the people who are not categorized as having a stance of seeing research as an extremely important tool in reform, they still realized that the lack of data on charter schools is a negative. This further shows the level of worry about the lack of quality control of charters. This negative response mirrors the same conclusions that established reformers like Ravitch are reaching.

It seems that many of my interviewees are responding to the hype across the nation that enveloped Detroit near the end of Bobb’s time as EFM that choice is better and therefore *all charters are better*. Because the public was failing, Bobb announced that he would replace them with charters, which seems like his endorsement of the higher quality of charter schools

across the board. Moje, McLean, and Williams all commented that charters were not all better. Williams explicitly said, “The downside of the charter school is [that it is] being pushed as if it is a better option, when all the research supports that charter schools do not outperform public schools.” Moje, wanting to avoid generalizations, said, “I’m disturbed by the implications that somehow they’re better...what bothers me is when people say ‘we need more charters.’” There is not something inherently better about the fact that a school is a charter. The governance of the school does not equal its success, which Platte also mentioned.

Rankin and Nordé believe that overall, charters actually do “not deliver as well as the public school system in Detroit” (Rankin). McLean also weighed in that “there’s not sufficient enough data so say that the work of the charter school concept is better than the public school concept.” Platte, Nordé, and Roop all commented that charters “vary hugely in terms of quality” (Roop). The main conclusion, after all this, is three-fold: **charter schools on average are not better than publics, the governance of charter schools does not inherently make them better schools, and there is no quality control among charters and there needs to be.**

Luckily, it is clear that with the new change in leadership, Roberts has not bought into the generalization that charters are overall better than publics. He said, “the jury’s still out on if [charters are] better than public education or anything else. Some are better and some are worse.” He knows that this lack of research and standards on charters schools could harm kids, kids for whom he is responsible. He told me that he is “going to be responsible for every young person in the city of Detroit getting a quality education,” both public and charter. To ensure this he knows that “there’s some things that we have to agree on. What are the standards we’d like to have for someone coming in to be a charter? And under what condition do we take them out?”

He knows that **research, data, and standards are necessary when it comes to charter schools**, even if the country has already endorsed them.

In order to make sure there is more quality control of the charters in Detroit, Roberts also wants to move slowly. He shares the opinions of Platte, Roop, and Khumbah when he said, “when state legislatures... are taking the cap off the charters, that’s like the wild, wild west!” Roop, Platte, and Khumbah described this “wild wild west” as a state of fluctuation in which kids get lost; a place in which profits are made. Platte argued that by opening the charter school cap in Detroit with “no kind of quality control... charter operators that do this work on the cheap, and that are maybe just as, if not more interested in making money than student achievement will grow and thrive and reproduce, and those charter operators that require that kind of infrastructure thing and that time and planning and those years to build their school won’t... come to Michigan and even if they do, they’re not gonna populate as much as these kind of poor performing charters.” Roop thought that the fact that different people were extracting capital from Detroit schools in the “flux” of the situation was one of the biggest challenges in Detroit. The for-profit aspect of many of the new charter schools was extremely worrisome not only to Platte and Roop but to Williams, Khumbah, and Rankin as well.

Bobb’s plan was an invitation for these charters to come in. Luckily when Roberts took office, he decided to scale down Bobb’s existing push for charters. Although the press and Bobb’s Renaissance plan reported that Bobb was to create up to 45 charters, Roberts said that the plan was more like 15 when he entered the scene. When I asked Roberts about this in our interview together, he said that he decided to slow things down “because I’m not convinced that we have good charter operators. I’m not convinced that we know what is good. So, I said let’s do 5. We did 5. We think they’re pretty good schools.” **Hopefully, slowing the process of**

charter growth will allow high quality charters to take root in Detroit. Ravitch (2010) wrote that getting an effective charter school running may take up to five years. Some of them need a year to plan and the time to build up their grade-levels year after year in order to create the culture they want (Platte).

The current administration under Roberts does seem to be doing a good job of attempting systemic quality control: knowing not to generalize charters or publics, slowing down the growth of charters, and setting standards of quality. But there are other smaller pieces across the board that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of many of the charters in Detroit. Nordé, Williams, and Rankin said that the quality is suffering because the charter schools do not have enough supports. Nordé mentioned the charters' outdated material; Rankin worried about their lack of emphasis on the quality of teachers, especially new ones. Williams said that because the charter schools pay teachers what the charters want, which is too little in her eyes, they get only new teachers. These new teachers have neither veteran teachers to learn from nor professional development opportunities (Williams). Charters have high turnover rates (Rankin). They have no union, structured support system, or curriculum (Williams). Both Nordé and Mirel counted the charters' lack of a common core as a huge lack of support as well. Mirel elaborated to say that in Detroit, like in other urban districts, "children from impoverished families tend to move a lot" and if there is no common core, moving affects them even more negatively. Williams' commented that under all of these conditions student success can only be low: "you get what you pay for."

In the end, although most of my interviewees reacted negatively to the fact that there was no quality control for charters, whether at the level of curriculum, teachers, funding, or overall success, every interviewee but one had some positives to say as well. These positives can be

split into two categories: in-practice and theoretical. Many of the individuals I interviewed acknowledged that, in practice, there are some good charters. Roop, who criticized many pieces of the general charter school push, approves of nonprofit charters that can offer up proof of their quality. Doug Ross's University Prep charter schools, for example, are her example of being "quality and nonprofit." Nordé commented that some charters are good places with "honorable" people and "they can offer a smaller, more intimate setting." Williams acquiesced that charters get better parent participation. But these details, we will realize, have to do with a larger theoretical discussion of charters that addresses the larger movement itself and its values: choice, business, and new modes of education.

The consensus is that change and choice are not inherently bad. Khumbah, bringing an objective view to the table, said that charters are just "different from what we know," not bad, just different. He said that although the charter movement "comes at an intersection of profit and public good," charters can offer a public good. Moje thinks that a positive of the charter movement is the "stimulus that charters have given all of us to change the way we think and do business." Nordé and Williams also agree that choice and alternatives, in theory, are desired. Roberts has made it clear that "the war is over" between publics and charters. He wants to "work collaboratively with other people who will charter, and make sure we educate kids in the city of Detroit."

However, some key players in Detroit and education reform are still nervous about accepting charters into their public school system. To them, the charter movement threatens public schooling. McLean's opinion reflects the opinion that the Detroit community held when charters were first entering the city: that the charters "pull away from the... population base of public schools" which forces the publics to recruit to "maintain some of the services that they

need to have.” The charter schools mean that the public district has to work harder to recruit and retain students so that they can remain open. Charters, in this view, exacerbate the financial troubles of the district.

Moje’s worry was that charters “take away from the mission of public education.” She, Roop, Rankin, and Khumbah argued that there is a selection bias in who gets into charters. Families that have more interest in their child’s education, know how to find an alternative, and have the transportation to do so, get their kids into charters. Moje said that in this way charter schools “manage to be quite selective in who and how people are admitted and who stays.” This means that the students who are most in need are the ones left behind in the public schools. “You start to see these differences in the populations of the two groups, and that might explain differences in outcomes” (Moje). Khumbah argued that if charters ever score better than publics it’s because they “cream up” the best students from the general population.

So when Williams reflected that a positive aspect of charters is that they have better parent participation, this could also be seen as a negative for public schools. The publics, as opposed to the charters, cannot be selective. They have a mandate to “take an average Joe on the street and make the best of them... Whether [their] parent is a church minister, a drug addict, a janitor, whatever they are” (Khumbah). Nordé is proud of what the publics offer students: special education, options for deaf students, vocational programs, magnet schools, that the charter network does not. Khumbah knows the difficulty of this and this makes him proud. He thinks that considering “how much they do, in that context, they need to be acknowledged and valued and encouraged as opposed to bashed at after not doing anything good.”

The picture painted of charter schools, from my interviews with knowledgeable figures throughout education reform in Detroit, is a negative one. There is a lack of standards and a lack

of evidence in Detroit and across the nation that says charters schools are on a whole better. But I believe in the possibilities that can come with some charter schools: whether that is the simple ideal of diversity, or the sometimes necessary financial relief for the district, or the possibility of new ideas or vigor. Done in the right way, following the tools for successful reform, I think the consequences can be minimized and the gains maximized.

First, as highlighted above, we cannot generalize charters as successful or not: as Roberts understands we need to be constantly evaluating what is working or not working at the site level of every school. It is not the type of operator running a school, it is what they are doing that is working that matters. As Moje said, “It’s really not about needing more charters, it’s about needing more schools that do the things that leading charter schools are doing! And public schools could do those things.” Bringing in fresh ideas may teach even the old dogs some new tricks.

There needs to be agreed upon and transparent standards for charters, new and old, just as Roberts promised he was creating. When we spoke, Roberts did not explicitly share what his standards will be as the district slowly lets in new charters and possibly removes some. After hearing the worries about for-profit charter schools, I think that it is Robert’s job, as protector of Detroit’s students and a symbol of honest finances, to make it the standard that charters must be non-profit. The schools should also share a common core with the Detroit public schools in order to offer increased stability. Offering quality professional development for their teachers should also be a necessity in every charter (and public). Giving these supports to new teachers, who may truly be vigorous and passionate teachers, will further help them succeed even if there are not enough veteran teachers to emulate.

The process of inviting in new charters should remain as slow as Roberts has initiated. There should also be the option of new charters building up their grades slowly, inviting in a new grade of students each year in order to create the culture they may deem beneficial. As Roberts is beginning to do as well, lines of communication should always remain open between charters and publics. I think these could also be opened further to include the Higher Education- DPS Consortium. When it comes to new ideas for teaching students, these universities have plenty of passion, expertise, ideas, and even time and money to spend improving the schools in Detroit. The call for communication and activism from these universities needs to be raised loud and clear. As Khumbah said on the issue of demanding university involvement, “if you hoist a small flag, it’s a small flag. If you hoist a strong flag and try to sink it deep, it makes a bigger difference.”

Lastly, with new ideas coming in to Detroit, the existing public schools need to be supported and recognized. There are publics in Detroit that are currently doing new and successful things. The existing public schools can be a part of the innovation and choice in Detroit: offering the things that they have that are unique. Their mandate to teach all students has required the public system to create diverse options that are important to offer all students of Detroit. The district should also work to make these diverse schooling options transparent and available to all families in Detroit. One of the largest concerns with charters was that they only benefitted the families that were knowledgeable enough to choose them even though the underlying theory behind choice is that all students should get it, especially students struggling in the traditional education system. Showing the differences and strengths of each school transparently and clearly to every family, and giving them the power to choose, may increase their interest and pride in the district and their school. Hopefully these families, the district, and

all other actors can embrace what the schools in Detroit are doing well, new and old, charter and public, even if they have not yet reached the overall success demanded of them.

Detroit Context

This thesis has examined both the theoretical side as well as the case by case, in-practice side of the EFM position and charter schools, considering the positives and negatives. What we have not considered however, are the systemic challenges that are not addressed by bringing in an EFM or different types of schools. The school district sits within a context of these widespread, and deeply rooted problems. In Khumbah's words, in the scope of these societal problems plaguing the schools, a "charter school or Emergency Manager [won't] change anything" (Khumbah). Analyzing the systemic problems that surround the educational reform initiatives in Detroit, there emerged three categories of crises. Detroit is in an economic crisis, in a social crisis, and thirdly, in a "fluctuation" crisis.

It is important to understand systemic problems, how current reforms can or cannot address them, and then what possible reforms could improve them. I hope that through the following brief exploration of the three types of crises that I see in Detroit and some quick suggestions for improvement, it is clear that the tool of considering context is important. Although using this tool involves looking at larger blanket problems and reform, we need to remember not to generalize. As a part of this, **do not put blanket blame on Detroiters for the problems in the city and schools, but at the same time, do not lower expectations of actors in Detroit, because this in itself will only harm them further.**

Looking at the first of the three types of crises that affect Detroit's schools, McLean saw the poor "economic status of not only the district, but the state of Michigan" as a major challenge for the schools. This economic crisis in Detroit and its causes are deep and system-wide. In

Detroit itself, there is a lack of a tax base because people are leaving Detroit as a “gush out in every direction” (Roop). This outflow leaves only the poorest within a city with an extremely high unemployment rate and low property values, which makes it almost impossible for the schools to raise funds. At a state level, as Roop said, “the system of funding education in Michigan is broken.” Because of the disparity in per pupil investment across the state, Khumbah argued, “you can only get [a] disparity in outcomes.” Because the “financial support systems” are not equitable, McLean said, Detroit struggles “to support the teaching and learning process.”

The Detroit EFM has to work within the context of this chronic and systemic poor economic situation. In Laura Roop’s eyes, Roberts’ role is only a “band-aid at the place of the greatest hemorrhage,” no matter how effective he is at his job. Cuban suggests that the successes of all long-term superintendents are dependent on the time and location in which they are placed (2010). The power and passion of each individual matter, but the context is a large factor of whether an individual is labeled a hero or a failure (Cuban, 2010). All-star leaders in all urban districts, Cuban argued, face an environment that limits change and creates conflicts (Cuban, 2010).

Cuban argues that a leader can be successful only when he or she understands that “they cannot *permanently*... solve *all* problems with the resources they have, particularly when the goal is to turn around chronically low-performing, high-poverty schools and keep them turned around” (emphasis added) (2010, p. 144-145). Successful leaders know that their reform will be limited and know how to cope with the dilemmas that will arise (Cuban, 2010). In Detroit’s case, the EFM has to accept that he can only bandage certain financial problems. We cannot expect perfection, but overall, Roberts seems to be effectively doing the jobs that the limited role of EFM was intended to address.

It will take a systemic effort to change the underlying economic environment in which Detroit sits. In order to increase living standards and lift the Detroit community up from a “poor community to maybe a middle class [one]” (Khumbah), our state and our country must make it a priority. So far, the state has implemented a district level solution, the EFM, but this does not fix the underlying economic struggle in Detroit. Khumbah spoke about how Wall Street hurt the whole country, but the government bailed them out and let them keep working, while in Detroit they just appointed an EFM. This is a national system that chose its priorities, he said, and they are clearly backward.

Changing the system of funding across our country would be another systemic solution. The state of Michigan is just a “perverse version” of this national problem of inequitable funding, Roop argued. McLean thinks that all schools should have equitable funding “be it federal, be it state, be it local.” He further suggested that “once funding is given with equity... at least 80% should go directly where children are.”

The second type of crisis in Detroit is a social one. Seven of the ten interviewees mentioned social problems as one of the “major challenges” facing Detroit schools today. The factors contributing to the overall social crisis include poverty, lack of healthcare, divorce and difficult family arrangements, emotional and physical abuse, and lack of role models. Although these challenges plague most urban districts and “apply to the state and really the country,” they “play out in the most devastating ways in areas like Detroit” (Platte). Specifically though, these factors of social crisis affect families and thus students and their ability to come to school and be engaged. In McLean’s words, these factors decrease students’ “school readiness.”

Roberts understands that “when a kid in our system is worried about if they can have breakfast... if their clothes aren’t clean... It really takes a unique person to be able to connect

with that young person and move them to the next level.” The three interviewees that are or have been closest with the students of Detroit—Williams, McLean, and Rankin—all mentioned the difficulty of teaching students in this environment and that “parenting” (Williams), “student readiness” (McLean), and “social issues” (Rankin) were major challenges in Detroit.

All three teachers gave examples of how these things made it difficult for students to learn. Rankin explained that the social issues kids are faced with lead to student “frustration” with school, hostility in order to protect oneself, poor attendance, and dropping out of school. “When kids are dealin’ with that kind of drama,” and “there’s so many people in their houses and so much noise goin’ on and cursin’ and drinkin’ and smokin’ and this and that...how do I expect them to sit there and concentrate on reading a book?” wonders Williams. Another setback teachers have to work around is a lack of parent involvement because “many times parents in the urban setting... didn’t have a good experience with education so they stay away from the school. They don’t really want anything to do with the teachers sometimes” (Williams).

McLean says that today, there is “a lack of children being ready to learn. Before they even enter school.” This is not just the fault of the child’s mom and dad but the fault of the whole community of adults is not “helping parents keep children in check.” As a result, children do not know how to “live sociably with other people in a civil manner,” which is disruptive in school.

In a struggling urban city like Detroit, Khumbah says students already “start with a step behind.” This step behind is a result of the poor social and economic environment the kids are in. Because of this environment, whether an urban school is chartered or public does not matter: students will still fail. Platte says that around the nation, poor students are failing in publics and charters alike. In her words, “what we see in the national data is mirrored in Michigan as a

whole and in DPS in particular... Do a scatter plot laying out student achievement in all these schools, and you'll see there's some doing really well and some doing poorly and that generally the line follows the percentage of kids who are poor.”

Even in the face of these social problems, Rankin believes that effective teachers can work around the students’ social problems and reach extremely high academic outcomes. And I want to emphasize the fact that Rankin has seen huge success. Rankin has helped his students reach high levels of achievement through his deep understanding of students’ experiences, his passion, and his determination to prove to them that “God has made everyone with a capacity for understanding.” He aims to surprise them with their own talents and success in the classroom. I believe that understanding the social problems each student faces, staring those in the face, and then being determined to teach through that, is a powerful and doable thing. His success with math workshops convinces me that reforming how teachers work with students is a viable and effective place to implement reform.

On the other end, both Williams and McLean want parents to make some changes as well. Both interviewees seemed like extremely high quality teachers, but they still thought that for them to help their students be more successful in school, some things have to change at the community level. Their suggestions represent the point of view that Cuban (2010) labeled as “Improved Schools and Community.” When I asked Williams what her solution would be, she said that she “would like to see more parent accountability in some way... in our district, doing something to parents who don't send their kids to school... Even if you're not gonna do anything else, at least get them here.” She also suggested more support for parents because “every parent loves their child and wants the best for their child. But, unfortunately, sometimes they don't know what's best for their child.”

McLean believes that there need to “be expectations for parents to ensure that their child or children are school ready.” He specifically offered suggestions on how the “family community” needs to come together to help the children. McLean said that a child’s family should be “follow[ing]-up at home” with that student. Then, at school, the teacher...and the administration and the counselors... all the support people” have that same “expectation and that enthusiasm and that passion” that the community and family have. The result is “community based supports: you get the community people talking more positively, they're volunteering to support the schools.” In this environment, “a child can't lose because even when he wants to go left or right... he can't get off the track.”

Creating parent groups, like past Detroit Public Schools CEO Kenneth Burnley did in 2004, could be a good first step to making the improvements that Williams and McLean identified. An “Office of Parent Community Liaisons” like Burnley created could help get parents involved with their students and schools.

Detroit’s third type of crisis is what I am calling a fluctuation crisis: a state of instability and movement, including constant reforms, in which kids get lost and adults find personal gain. Sometimes adults *are* working diligently to create solutions, but other times, they may try “to do something that might be of value personally” (Khumbah). Roop worried about contractors “swarming like vultures around the schools” trying to make money. The district is in a place of fluctuation that harms its students in many ways.

Roop, again, considered charter schools a band-aid, a limited tool to reducing some of the bleeding, because they will not offer stable change in Detroit. Roop said that charter schools are neither sustainable nor scalable as the effort grows in Detroit. Ravitch clarified this point in her book, writing “what is stunningly successful in a small setting, nurtured by its founders and

brought to life by a cadre of passionate teachers, seldom survives the transition when it is turned into a large-scale reform” (2010, p. 146). Roop considers charters a “partial strategy” because moving too quickly, as has been happening across the nation, will cause the quality to suffer.

Charters in Detroit are also further splitting the school district up into pieces. Roop talked about what she called an attempt to break the district into a ‘portfolio district,’ a piece of which would be the charter school network. Creating a portfolio district requires “chopp[ing] it up,” in this case into three different districts with a different person running each chunk (Roop). The other two pieces besides the charter schools would be the public schools and then the poorest performing schools that are being set aside for the EAS. In Detroit, Roop speculated that Doug Ross, who currently runs a successful network of charter schools called University Prep, would be responsible for the charters. Karen Ridgeway, the current superintendent, would be in charge of the public schools, and John Covington would remain the leader of the EAA and the worst schools in Detroit (Roop). Roop said that there is no evidence that portfolio districts work (Saltman, 2010). In her mind, they just add to the state of fluctuation.

Roberts is currently in the middle of these three pieces. He hired Ridgeway, but is also on the EAA working closely with Covington, is filling the EFM position, and is communicating between the public schools and charter schools. When I asked about the biggest solutions he was working on or wanted to work on in the future, he brought up his responsibilities to the EAA. When Roberts talked about his responsibilities to the school district, he summarized three pieces in this quote: “I have to run this system to make sure we manage the budget, make sure we do everything we said we were gonna do at the academic side, with challenging course work for the students, and I have to make sure that we continue to engineer and put EAA in place.”

Overall, having passionate and intelligent people focusing on each piece, all united underneath someone who has all three in mind is a good thing. All of the pieces can be examined and communicated back and forth. This is just another instance in which the EFM position is a key way to offer the necessary stability in leadership as well as open up lines of communication and collaboration. The EMF and his team just need to remember Cuban's advice, and my own takeaway from the beginning of this section on context, that leaders should not forget how deeply rooted the challenges in Detroit are and, as a result, should not underestimate how difficult it will be to make drastic change. I worry that, because Roberts' job is self-described as "juggling a lot of balls while you drive down the road," he will have insufficient time and energy to focus on every issue as well as the financial pieces that he is in charge of.

Charter school openings coupled with public school closures are also a source of constant change for students who are moved from school to school. When Ravitch (2010) wrote about the charter school push in NYC, she noted how some of the neediest students were lost in the shuffle as student populations were moved from school to school. This possibility needs to be addressed in Detroit and monitored very closely. Moving slowly and making transitions between closing schools and opening schools transparent and easy for families is a positive first step toward creating stability. Having someone or a team of people to watch out specifically for these kids is also a necessity. Conveniently, Detroit Public Schools are already beginning to do this, partially in response to the overall poor attendance levels. In the 2010-2011 school year, the average Detroit high school student missed over 28 days of school (Abramson, 2012). The school district has begun offering parent workshops and sending attendance agents to homes to strongly remind parents to send their children to school (Abramson, 2012). This is exactly what

Williams suggested as a way to get parents to be more helpful, and it will help make sure students do not get lost in the flux of moving schools.

Another factor that could be improved to help students more easily get to their new schools and attend school every day is the busing and public transportation system in Detroit. Moje said that transportation is one of the biggest challenges in Detroit because “there's no busing available, so [students] have to take public transportation. Public transportation is completely unreliable. So the kids are late!” When the students are late, they miss valuable teaching time and disrupt the classroom when they come in. This is an instability within the system that a reliable educational transportation system could improve.

Another thing that could create stability in the classroom, as offered as a suggestion in the charter school section, is offering a common core curriculum in *every* school in Detroit. Nordé and Mirel see the lack of a common core as a huge weakness among charters. As Roberts is making a concerted effort to create a united, communicating district of public schools and charter schools together, he needs to create curriculum standards across the district. Teachers like Williams know exactly what is working and why and that advice can be put into action to help offer stability for students who are moved around within the district.

Constant teacher turnover is another instability. This came up in the discussion of charter schools but is a concern in all types of Detroit schools. Moje brought up that one of the major challenges in Detroit is the “routine practice of pink-slipping all teachers and... that's just not great for stability, for building a sense of faith and trust in your employer... compromises the possibility that the teaching will be at the highest levels.” Fortunately, Moje reported, “the current administration is really trying to change that. They wanna have teachers in place ...[and]

engaged in professional development well before school starts.” Hopefully this vision becomes a stable reality.

Many interviewees suggested professional development and training to further help teachers teach at consistently high levels and stay in the classroom, both of which would help students find stability. Platte, whose focus is completely on research and evaluation, reminded me that “just evaluating teachers doesn't make them better.” What is really going to help teachers in this struggling system, she said, are “systematic ways to get at teacher learning and development. So that could be professional development, that could be partnering with school reform agencies... like Success for All.” Roop brought up a current professional development program called Reading Apprenticeship for which Michigan is currently a scale-up state. If high school teams from Detroit participated, they would get free professional development and use it “as an opening for getting—improving teaching and learning” (Roop).

Roop also brought up the possibility of Michigan colleges and universities working directly with their own “little cluster systems... elementary, middle school, high school.” The partnering universities would share their projects and results with their fellow universities (Roop). This reminds me of the original concept of charter schools: having the place and freedom for teachers to test out new ideas for improving education. Partnering in this way also involves the key tool of cooperation and communication and would get universities involved.

Through my interviews with other actors in Detroit and at the University of Michigan, I heard other ideas about cooperation between local universities and the Detroit schools. To create the professional development that Mirel believes is a critical part to the common core curriculum, he thinks that Detroit “would have to work very closely with educators at Wayne State and U of M and MSU, to get teachers up to the point where they can actually teach a

rigorous, content-rich discipline-based content-rich curriculum.” Moje and Nordé had suggestions: almost identical ideas about cooperation between universities and Detroit schools to get college students and younger students together.

Moje brought up the fact that lower income students do not have the same opportunities as other children over the breaks from school: winter break and especially over the summer. It is during these times when they fall farther behind their less disadvantaged peers. Moje cited the growing push toward extended day and extended year models that aim to remedy this. These models maintain “regular holidays to which so many people are committed” but also offer what Moje and colleagues at the University of Michigan are calling “intercessions.” “The kids are on break, but we offer instruction. Maybe it's enrichment, maybe it's regular instruction, maybe it's making up something that they missed, but that's an opportunity for teachers to continue teaching—they don't have to take the break if they don't want to, but they can also have the break.”

Moje specifically sees the possibility of getting undergraduate students involved with these intercessions throughout the year. For example, “we could bring undergraduate students who are dance majors... to run a dance camp with kids at a middle school” (Moje). These college students can offer the opportunities that not every family can afford. It would be good for university students because they “give a community a service [and] they could get service learning credits for it... there are all sorts of ways that they can get compensated without it having to cost money” (Moje). These intercessions would also be another way to educate the students in the School of Education at Michigan, says Moje: “it's a little lower stakes activity, but it's still rewarding and enriching for the [education students].” She says that the intercessions are “another resource for staffing... the certified teacher can be off having a vacation and our in-service or pre-service teachers are learning how to be teachers in this intercession.”

The Detroit students are not only getting these new opportunities but they are also building what Moje calls “pipeline mediators.” For many of the Detroit kids, they may be the first in their family to go to college and these intercessions at the University of Michigan would allow them to see “people they wouldn't normally get to see. They're seeing people who go to college” who are “young and hip and fun” (Moje). Moje said that this would be even more effective if the intercessions happened consistently. The current system of visiting the campus once a year starting in middle school “does not help a person go to college.”

Nordé already had a similar idea in mind and is putting it into action this summer. She is getting a program from Texas to come run a three-week engineering summer camp to get elementary students excited about classroom math. The mentors will be college students from that program (Nordé). Both Moje and Nordé know that programs need to get at younger students and get them involved consistently each year. Nordé’s concern is the fact that her district starts losing students in grade three. She hopes that real-life experiences will be something for students to get passionate about, something to get them to stay focused in school.

In the future, I hope that it is not Texas coming in at the request from a school leader in Detroit: I hope it is a college in Michigan partnering with Detroit schools to mutually help them both. These are places where the DPS Consortium can be a key player and I urge the Consortium to consider these, pull out the biggest flag they have, and get started.

I see these solutions –intercessions and professional development and innovation all in partnership with Detroit and universities like the University of Michigan—as the epitome of collaboration for the better. This is the communication that is necessary today.

A new type of communication is emerging, different than the old, but possibly bigger and better. As discussed, the coalitions of Detroit’s past are broken and increasingly autocratic

positions of leadership in the district have made it harder for community members to form coalitions and create change. The new way of creating change involves cooperation in different places: unifying all the levels of actors, vertically and horizontally, instead of unifying the masses.

The foundation for this new type of cooperation is the growing involvement of the Federal Government, which began in the late 1900s (Mirón & St. John, 2003). From 1964 through 1981, the government got involved with Title I and afterwards they began setting standards for our national education system (Mirón & St. John, 2003). This thesis has reflected upon how the resulting national movements have shaped education reform across the United States as well as the role of EFM and the charter schools push in Detroit. McLean believes that this attention on education will continue and grow, that there has been a “refocus on education being a priority in America” even more recently with our current President Barack Obama and his Department of Education.

This growing federal involvement brings with it a reimagining of education itself (Roop). “Until a country makes education of its people the priority, it will never be in good competition with the world” (McLean). We need to make sure that all people understand that education is increasingly becoming a priority in this country and should be (McLean). McLean argued that the many of us who are “locked into yesteryear,” need to “recognize that things change [and] we have to rethink how we're gonna do things, especially around education.” This national involvement and rethinking and getting everyone committed together will be the new way of education reform.

Looking at the categories of “most influential reform actors,” this new cooperation sits in the “All” column. This category means that no one is wrong in whom they think the best actors

for making reform are. Instead, every single column is pivotal and must get involved to create long-term systemic change. What we need, said McLean, are “expectations and accountability for all stakeholders.... We're talking about not only teachers on the personal level, we're talking about administrators at all level of administration, we're talking about parents, we're talking about community-based school systems, the community at large in support of the education to make it a priority, we're talking about the state of Michigan as a stakeholder, making sure that this district is operating. And we're talking about even the federal government making education a priority.”

We can see the playing out of this new powerful cooperation in this thesis' case study of Detroit. As the federal government got involved in educational initiatives, national movements grew and slowly affected the Detroit's schools. Charter schools entered the scene, the state got more involved, and the centralized EFM position was created. For years, Detroit has been grappling with the reality that the charter schools endorsed by the nation are not inherently better quality than public schools. The community of Detroit struggled against an outside force that put them under the control of a businessman. The best practice of the past—getting coalitions together to change the direction of the schools—was diminished. But Detroit has begun to realize how to work with these new reforms; integrating their charters while working to ensure quality, cooperation, and innovation; gaining stability from an EFM while still staying involved in the reform process. Detroit is ready to continue getting every passionate actor involved in reimagining the education in their school district.

Conclusions on Detroit Education Reform

There are many lessons to learn from the successes and failures of Detroit schools' past and present reforms. Through the timeline of this thesis—from the long-ago past up through a

consideration of how things may be changing in the future—the focus has been on the role of EFM and the charter school push in order to unify our analysis. Examining the strengths, weaknesses, and possible improvements of the EFM position, has revealed the importance of collaboration with actors at every level in the system in creating buy-in while still efficiently enacting reform. This cooperation together must strike a balance between centralized and decentralized control. Transparent input and feedback needs to travel from the community, teachers, and educational administrators to the EFM and back. The EFM needs to work laterally with charter school leaders, the EAA, the superintendent, and even city officials. The charter school movement must be based on the cooperation between charters and publics to support the existing strengths of every school and bring new ideas to every school. Together, the schools of Detroit, possibly along with the universities in Michigan, can begin creating standards and high quality through the district.

These current initiatives reflect how important the tools of reform presented throughout this thesis are. First, as Detroit moves forward, its reformists cannot forget to look at the complex and deep context around their education system. There are deep systemic crises that must be addressed by every related actor and with every tool. As a part of examining the context of Detroit schools, the lessons from the district's past cannot be ignored, even as Detroit, its schools, and the nature of education reform change.

From this history, the successes and failures of Detroit's past actors have left us a legacy of warnings and advice: The goal of reform must be to help *students* learn, even though adults are the ones with the power. Upholding a well-supported identity as well as using nonpartisan research help actors gain legitimacy. The tool of evaluation and research has only become more important as national movements and hype grow and spread in America. Evaluating old and new

reforms will ensure that Detroit implements only the most effective ones. This research and the transparent sharing of data will, in turn, increase support and cooperation in our education system.

Through time, the theme of cooperation has been a constant in Detroit, even if it has changed slightly along the way. This cooperation requires transparency, communication, and input from every actor in order to create and implement reform in any location within the education system. The Detroit schools are in a systemic crisis that runs deeper than one reform or one group of actors can fix. In this context, considering every tool, actor, and place of implementation is critical. By getting every actor in Detroit and in the United States to make improving education a priority, deep positive and stable reform will be made.

There has been a legacy of reform in Detroit, and now, as our education system is changing, that legacy will come to fruition. Detroit schools must join hands with actors in their city, their schools, their state, and their nation to improve and expand the focus of existing reforms. Their resulting systemic solutions will begin to help students and improve their educational outcomes, the goal all along.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Takeaways

National Context

- National movements are powerful because they are what is “in,” not necessarily because they are what is best for the students of America
- Credibility, support, and objective review: three necessary pieces to creating support for reforms
- For a solution to work, it must improve what happens between students and teachers
- There are many pieces of a great education that are extremely important that cannot be measured by numbers

Detroit’s History

1919-1929

- Having support and consensus from many constituents is vital for implementing reform
- Not only can school districts learn from their own past, but from the experiences of other similar school districts
- Move slowly with new reforms and research them. Conducting and reporting objective research is an important tool for acquiring the credibility and legitimacy by which efforts gain support and buy-in

1929-1940

- We must measure reform in how it improves teaching and learning
- It cannot be forgotten that schools are created to serve the student, not the voters
- Removing the extremities in their organization’s identity, allowed them to gain legitimacy
- Do not forget the foundation and history of the teachers’ unions

1940-1949

- Do not underestimate the determination and the goals of each player. To do this requires policy-makers to understand that different stakeholders may be looking out for themselves and not the students
- A lack of money is not the sole cause of dissent and disagreement within a system
- Coalitions of voters are powerful in creating education change in Detroit
- National movements are not necessarily what is best for our children

1949-1964

- Transparency between board members and the board (as well as other governing and decision making bodies) and the community is extremely important
- We cannot forget and assume that our solutions can only be skin deep
- Opening the issue up to research and input from community members introduces new non-partisan, student-minded options and gains the support of the community

1964-1981

- Maintain your most mainstream identity in order to gather the largest support
- Focus on the middle grounds, to get different groups to support your position, while removing extremely radical identities

- Factions need to realize the most important goal—improving the education of students in the classroom—and understand the differences in where the others are coming from in order to come together to reach that goal
- Get an objective examination and solution that multiple parties can trust
- Make sure that the outcomes of our initiatives match up directly with the original goals of that change

1981-1999

- The media has immense power over public opinion and can cause huge success or damage for education reformers
- Leaders of education reform, especially in Detroit, cannot ignore the power of the teachers' unions or expect cooperation
- The unions need to be willing to be more flexible and open minded

1999-2002

- Collaboration at the state and administrative level is still needed
- Cooperation balances the system, making reforms pass more agreeably

Process of Reform

- As you create, implement, or evaluate any education reform, ask yourself what pieces of the process (actors, tools, places) you (and/or the creator of the reform) currently are deeming as most important. Then look again, consider every piece in the process, and evaluate which ones you *should* be deeming as most important.

Emergency Financial Manager

- Whoever acts as EFM should understand that the EFM needs to maintain an appropriately sized budget to allow the schools to stay afloat, as well as reduce the financial corruption within the school district
- This business and finance experience and perspective is necessary for the jobs that the EFM is required to do
- The autocratic nature of the EMF position could protect the district from constant turnover and allow change to be made more efficiently
- Buy-in can be lost at all levels—individual community members and families, teachers, and administrators—and when it is, serious harm has been done
- The more an EFM truly knows about Detroit before coming in, the faster and more effective they are at their work and representing the Detroit community and gaining their support
- The EFM (or leader of the system) needs to have experience in the classroom and with education or at least refer heavily to those on the academic side of things
- Do not forget that changing the person holding the same exact role can vastly change the reality of that position.
- Having the skills to effectively work with existing local employees is a key factor in creating successful buy-in.
- A part of being welcomed in as a leader, is not bringing in outsiders to do the inside jobs

Charter Schools

- Charter schools on average are not better than publics, the governance of charter schools does not inherently make them better schools, and there is no quality control among charters and there needs to be
- Research, data, and standards are necessary when it comes to charter schools

- Hopefully, slowing the process of charter growth will allow high quality charters to take root in Detroit

Context

- It is important to understand systemic problems, how current reforms can or cannot address them, then what possible reforms could improve them
- Do not put blanket blame on Detroiters for the problems in the city and schools, but at the same time, do not lower expectations of actors in Detroit, because this in itself will only harm them further

Appendix B: Partial Chart of Interviewee’s Responses

	Charter Schools			Emergency Financial Manager		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Roy Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •+No longer a fight between Detroit publics and charters •++Agreement on standards from charters and when they are failing •+Getting cooperation about standards •Slowing down to insure quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Some charters are better, some worse •Need to identify how large the market is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No conclusive findings whether charters are better than publics. •Taking the cap off charters= wild wild west 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •I stopped people stealing money •+My role offers stability (as compared to in the past) •+I’ve done what no one else did: reduce the deficit to \$89M in 6 months •+Business acumen •Power over all schools (public and charter) •+I personally care about kids •I have authority but won’t necessarily use it (I still want to 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elected officials get fired (often) for political reasons (because they are elected and fired by changing political constituents)
Roy Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •+No longer a fight between 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Some charters are better some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No conclusive findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •I stopped people stealing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elected officials get fired (often)

Irene Nordé	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Good places with passionate people •Offer something different from publics •+Smaller, more personal •Less cost because no union (staffing costs=biggest part of budgets) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Public schools have some services that charters don't have (special ed, vocational, magnet schools) •-No quality control •No curriculum •- Outdated materials •-Lack of support (all vs publics) •Some new professional development they didn't have before 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Roberts knows Detroit •Proven CEO of company •+Knows how to work with and support employees •Doesn't micromanage •++Checking and watching finances 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •We need EFM to create appropriate budget because past school district did not •Old EMF took over everything •Cut math department •Brought his own close circle in for jobs
Walter McLean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Wherever students can learn should be accepted •Schools that use data on student performance (not just from tests) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Both charters and publics are at fault for students not learning •Some doing well, some not •State initiatives= more charters (they're not going away) •Public schools will never be gone •Same students, same curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Takes students from public district→ district has to recruit and retain to offer services •If students aren't learning •No data says charters are better than publics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Roberts' beliefs and approach •Put systems of effective district back •People who know this work (know culture, goals of learning, how to conduct reviews, can do something about it) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Why was EFM necessary? (What systems broken, what wasn't systematic? What best practices weren't being sustained?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -Short-term leaders lack positive continuity: must redo culture with each leadership
Vienna Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Charters get better parent participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Publics have common open core 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •-Charters being pushed as <i>bettdW</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •+Catching financial misuse 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Business cuts are different from

Jerry Rankin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There are some good charters 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Parents don't know difference •Charters know how to make money (exploit head count) •Not delivering as well as DPS •No emphasis on quality of teachers •High teacher turnover rate •Exploitation of kids with greatest need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •EFM helps solve previous problem: no accountability; much financial fraud; exploitation of kids •Roberts is sincere, has integrity •Roberts and Bobb have a business mind to stop financial waste 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Challenge: business culture vs. culture of educators
Laura Roop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •+High quality, non-profit charters •++Doug Ross/University Prep: Policy background, business offer, proof of quality 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •--Not a scalable strategy (doesn't reach all kids, scale up too fast and quality suffers) •Free for all → huge variance in quality •No system analysis •Portfolio district: no evidence this works, harder politically •-Extracting capital (contractors) in flux •Students lost in flux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •+Ability to analyze data and cut debt •Roberts knows Detroit and MI •Closing schools had to be done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •We need fresh ideas outside of MI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Doesn't acknowledge how broken MI ed system is •band-aid at place of greatest hemorrhage •EAS, Covington
Nkem Khumba h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Charters are trying to do a public good, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ••Detroit in crisis → opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •-Profit component (few V 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •EFM is not an educator •Creating a

Elizabeth Moje	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Democratic nation: we have a right to open schools •Stimulators: change the way we think and do business 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •--Detract from mission of public ed •-Selective about student population •-generalizing across the board (“charters are better”) •Chartering doesn’t=success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Be attuned to people involved with ed and parents Combine academics with finances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Difference in ideas verses how they live out in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If EFM only sees costs and ignores pedagogy •Risky if final say is money
Jeffrey Mirel		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Government liberalizing charters •Eliminates collective bargaining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •---Privatization •No common core (no stability) •No way to know how they’re doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Autocratic •A leader with strong vision to do good can make change •Signs of possibility depending on leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Government forcing mayoral control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mayoral control bound up in other issues (racial)
Rebecca Platte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Policy could incentivize good charters in low income areas •Startup money and year to plan, new school to build up→ create culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Charter school operators want cap lifted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •EAA will make worse schools/charters: •-No quality control •-School governance doesn’t matter: poor students still fail (mirrored in nation) •Opening cap: only money-efficient, for-profit charters thrive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meant state paying attention→ •Increased accountability (audience) •Consolidated sources, closing public schools→ •Long-term structural viability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Finances and personnel management doesn’t =making different for kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Student achievement hasn’t improved

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