

**Transforming Urban School Systems:
Integrated Governance in Chicago and Birmingham (UK)**

by

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1998

Publication Series No. 20

The research reported herein was supported in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education through a contract to the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) established at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE), and in part by CRHDE. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Birmingham, England, Local Education Authority (LEA) lead their respective nations with their school reform strategies. Since Mayor Richard Daley took over the school system in July 1995, the CPS have made significant improvements in their financial management, administrative functions, and educational performance. Major initiatives that initially posed political risks, such as an end to social promotion and the creation of summer bridge programs, are now endorsed by national, state, and local leaders from the two major political parties, including President Bill Clinton, Texas Governor George Bush, and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. In large part because of the CPS accomplishments in the absence of additional state funds, the mayor was selected as 1 of the 10 “public officials of the year” (Ehrenhalt, 1997, p. 22). The system is managed by a politically skillful school board president, a dynamic chief executive officer (CEO), Paul Vallas, and a competent administrative team, including the chief education officer.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, the Birmingham LEA has undergone a transformation. In September 1993, the Birmingham City Council reversed a decade of neglect in education with its appointment of a nationally known reformer, Professor Tim Brighouse, as the chief education officer. Brighouse’s charismatic leadership has energized and inspired the rank-and-file in the teaching force. Since 1994, the city’s budget for education has consistently exceeded the national spending standard. These investments have produced significant gains in student performance. As David Blunkett (1998), England’s Secretary of State for Education and Employment, commented on the findings from a major external evaluation of the LEA, “This report describes a success story for Birmingham City Council.... The report describes a very well run LEA, with a sense of purpose and a carefully articulated rationale for the deployment of its resources” (pp. 1–2).

Both school systems are moving toward better student performance that coincides with new leadership at the district level. Although test scores are seen as an incomplete measure of student learning, student outcome

indicators remain a widely accepted barometer of how well school systems perform. In this regard, student performance suggests that the sister systems are closing the gap with their national averages. In Birmingham, there have been significant gains in student test scores in the past 3 years. In 7 out of 10 national tests in key subject areas across four different grade levels, Birmingham students made gains at a much faster rate than the national average. In Chicago, elementary reading and math test scores have shown consistent gains over the past several years. Truancy rates have declined steadily in the last 3 years and graduation rates for high school seniors have improved to 65%.

Clearly, Chicago and Birmingham are in the midst of an unprecedented drive toward educational improvement. Current reforms in the sister cities will provide valuable lessons in urban educational transformation for other urban school systems. Recent accomplishments of the two systems must be considered significant as their schools were once publicized as the “worst” in their respective nations. The two systems also confront numerous structural constraints associated with urban society. The Birmingham LEA is the fifth most socioeconomically deprived district out of 366 in England. Twenty-five of its 39 wards are ranked in the most disadvantaged 10% in the country. Similarly, 83% of Chicago’s students qualify for free and reduced-price school lunch. Most middle-class families who live in the city send their children to parochial and private schools.

INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE AS A SCHOOL REFORM MODEL

The successes of the two systems closely relate to the recent redesign of district-level governance and management. The sister systems share several institutional characteristics that can be broadly described as *integrated governance*, a framework that the author first identified in a 1997 report on Chicago school reform entitled, *Integrated Governance as a School Reform Strategy in the Chicago Public Schools* (Wong, Dreeben, Lynn, & Sunderman, 1997). The major institutional features include:

- Strong political will to improve the operation of the school system.
- A clear vision of educational accountability, focused on academic standards and performance outcomes.

- High-quality leadership at the central office committed to using a mix of intervention and support strategies to meet the challenges faced by urban schools.

More specifically, in Chicago, the Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act, which took effect in July 1995, reverses the trend toward decentralization of authority over school operations and redesigns the governance arrangement so that power and authority are now integrated. Integrated governance in Chicago is characterized by:

- A reduction of competing authorities (such as the School Board Nominating Commission) and a coordination of activities in support of systemwide goals and standards.
- Mayoral appointment of school board members and selection of top administrators.
- The creation of the position of CEO to oversee the top administrative team, including the chief education officer.
- Powers granted to the school board to hold local school councils (LSCs) accountable to systemwide standards.

With integrated governance in place, CPS has improved the conditions for teaching and learning in several ways:

- It has improved the financial and management functions of the entire system.
- It has allowed for a sharper focus on schools and students with the greatest academic needs.
- It has raised the standards in professional recruitment, academic performance, and school management throughout the system.
- It has enhanced public confidence in the city's educational system.

In Birmingham, integrated governance offers a useful framework for understanding educational management. As in Chicago, educational accountability in Birmingham is closely connected to the city's electoral institutions. The following institutional features characterize the LEA governance:

- The education committee of the city council (currently under the control of the Labour Party) functions as the school board, which oversees the entire operation of the district-level administration.
- The chief education officer is accountable to the city council, which is structured in terms of a ward-based electoral system.
- The education budget is an integral part of the city's total allocation.
- The chief education officer and his top staff in the education department regularly coordinate their activities with those of the other city departments.

Since the appointment of Tim Brighouse as the chief education officer, the Birmingham LEA has transformed the educational system in several ways:

- It counters the national tide of de-legitimizing the role of LEAs during the era of conservative party dominance in Westminster.
- It redesigns the central office as a critical friend to assist schools and teachers to improve on previous best practices, particularly through the Birmingham Advisory and Support Service (BASS).
- It offers schools a wide range of high-quality, affordable, technical services in both statutory and nonstatutory domains.
- It leads the nation in setting performance targets and in innovative initiatives, such as secondary school restructuring, early years education, and the University of the First Age (UFA).
- It provides the critical support to schools within a national educational system that otherwise lacks sufficient checks and balances.

Clearly, the sister systems have much to celebrate and to learn from each other. Both systems can be characterized as integrated governance in that educational governance is closely connected to the electorally accountable political leadership in the city. There is a strong tendency to improve policy coherence and organizational coordination.

Variation in Pressure and Support

Though organized under an integrated governance model, Chicago and Birmingham have adopted a different mix of intervention strategies to reach the goal of improved student performance. Table 1 depicts the key components of the accountability framework used in the sister systems. The four major accountability mechanisms include setting standards, establishing formal sanctions, providing support to build up the capacity of schools and students, and pressure from “marketlike” competition. The two systems employ these strategies to varying degrees.

In Chicago, systemwide standards, formal sanctions, and support are used simultaneously to improve the performance of failing schools and students, although sanction-oriented policies have received the most attention. Chicago has developed systemwide standards for principals and teachers and has begun to implement curricular standards for students. The latter will serve as a basis for assessing both student achievement and teacher and school performance. They provide both curricular support to schools and a tool that the district can use to develop further sanctions.

This combination of support and pressure is also reflected in the summer bridge programs, which are a key element in the district’s academic promotion policy. The summer bridge programs, as described later, offer remediation for poorly performing students while also serving as sanctions for low performance. Along with a focus on academics, the district is attempting to address the nutritional and personal needs of its most disadvantaged students. The Lighthouse Program is an after-school program that provides students who would

otherwise be left alone with dinner and activities within the safe confines of the school.

Finally, unlike the Birmingham LEA, which faces market competition, particularly in terms of high school enrollment, Chicago schools face limited competition. Within the system, newly formed charter schools and the expansion of magnet schools and the International Baccalaureate program create competition among schools. Unlike in Birmingham, where the national government initiates competition between schools through its parental choice program, in Chicago the district directs school competition.

In contrast to Chicago's pressure-and-support approach, the Birmingham LEA has developed a coherent set of strategies that is primarily supportive of teachers and head teachers at the school level. In part, the LEA can adopt this approach because of the nature of the English educational system. In England, the national level sets curricular standards and has established a national assessment. In addition, the national government conducts inspections of both the LEAs and individual schools. Sanctions are based largely on school rankings that are determined by the students' performance on national exams. The national government, therefore, applies much of the pressure on schools. Birmingham has used this situation to align itself with the schools and to counterbalance national-level sanctions. The LEA has created a number of support programs to help schools set performance targets and to prepare for evaluations by the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (OFSTED).

In addition, the LEA has undertaken several programmatic initiatives in partnership with other city agencies to provide schools with further support. A primary example is the UFA which provides early adolescents with unique learning experiences during school breaks and the summer.

Finally, the Birmingham LEA must contend with competition from private and grant-maintained schools. This is particularly relevant in the area of secondary schooling. The LEA controls only 7,381 of the 10,600 places available for secondary school admissions. The remaining one third of the places are controlled by selective single-sex and voluntary-aided schools. Grant-maintained schools, which are outside of the LEA control, have captured an additional 3,000 places. The LEA schools thus face the effects of creaming, which diminishes the number of high-performing students within the schools.

In summary, although the two sister systems operate within an integrated governance framework, they have developed significantly different approaches to improving school and student performance. In terms of a policy continuum between a pressure-oriented approach and a school professional-oriented approach, Chicago maintains a hybrid approach that uses both pressure and support whereas Birmingham directs more of its efforts and resources toward supporting teacher improvement at the school level.

These cross-Atlantic variations in systemwide improvements are embedded in the governance structure of the public educational systems in the two countries. The author feels that Chicago's district-level administration has few options to reduce its pressure on failing schools because it constitutes the only legitimate source of meaningful sanctions within the American governmental framework of local (i.e., district) control. In the absence of a national examination, a national curriculum, and a meaningful state monitoring system, Chicago has to assume the responsibility of ensuring systemwide performance in order to meet its vision of educational accountability. In contrast, the LEA in Birmingham can focus its attention on teacher and school support because pressure on failing schools comes from various external sources with different policy mechanisms, as Table 1 suggests. These include OFSTED, which applies national testing and curricular standards to monitor school performance on a regular basis, and a choice scheme that enables parents to register their schooling preferences for their children. The national government recently issued a new educational policy that is likely to give the LEAs a new role in pressuring failing schools. Both systems, therefore, face a crucial challenge of finding the proper balance between pressure and support.

Policy Challenges Defined

Despite variation in school improvement strategies, Chicago and Birmingham face several common challenges as the sister systems enter the millennium. These policy challenges can be identified as:

- The need to institutionalize key leadership qualities that would sustain administrative success for the system in the long run. The two systems currently operate under dynamic leaders. This raises the question of how Chicago will make the transition when Vallas leaves. Likewise, what kind of leadership is Birmingham going to cultivate in the post-Brighthouse era?
- The challenge of broadening the academic gains in underperforming schools.
- The challenge of identifying the proper balance between pressure and support in raising performance in failing schools.
- The need to ensure equal access to quality schooling for the city's diverse student populations.
- The need to improve the quality of the teaching force and the school principals systemwide.

In the following analysis, the author specifies how school governance has been redesigned, how the change facilitates particular kinds of management and educational initiatives, and the consequences of these actions. The next section outlines the distinctive features of Chicago's integrated governance, its accomplishments, and its major intervention strategies to improve student performance. In the third section, the major reform initiatives under Brighthouse's leadership in Birmingham are discussed, specifically the central administration's supportive role in promoting better teaching and learning. Then, the author briefly examines several factors in Birmingham and in the UK that have contributed to the unique LEA role. This chapter concludes with policy implications for lessons learned from a comparative study of the sister systems. Given the national prominence of the two systems, these lessons can have international significance for the redesign and improvement of urban school systems.

How the Research Was Conducted

To examine how governance redesign facilitates school management and improves educational performance, this study adopts a comprehensive institutional perspective (Wong, Dreeben, Lynn, Meyer, & Sunderman, 1996). This perspective considers how broader institutional arrangements (top-level political, policy, and administrative institutions) influence resource allocation, supportive services of the central office, intervention in failing schools, and professional development. Particular attention is focused on how systemwide institutions create the conditions that affect teaching and learning in schools and classrooms.

Several research strategies were used to collect information for this report. To gather data from the Birmingham LEA and schools, the author spent several weeks in England during the fall of 1997 and winter of 1998. The author “shadowed” Professor Tim Brighouse, Birmingham’s CEO, for about 1 week, attending virtually all of his meetings at the school sites, district-level offices, and in the department of education and employment in Westminster. He also interviewed (sometimes more than once) district-level administrators and members of the education committee in the city council (an equivalent to the school board in CPS). He attended various meetings and forums, including hearings conducted by the Secondary Education Commission, consultative meetings between the unions and the education committee, and the city council’s chief administrative officers’ meeting. During his visits to several primary, secondary, and special schools, he observed classroom instruction and interviewed teachers and head teachers. The author collected numerous documents, including policy reports, budgets, internal memos, minutes of city council meetings, OFSTED inspection reports on the LEA and selected schools, news reports, and proposals on school reform from interest groups.

In Chicago, using semistructured questionnaires, a cross-disciplinary research team under the author’s direction interviewed board members, the CEO, the chief education officer, the head of the accountability office, and others who are responsible for developing and implementing programs in professional development, curricular standards, and school improvement. Documentary materials were also collected from the board. These

included board policies, budget information, and minutes of the Chicago School Reform board of trustees meetings. At the school level, the researchers selected several schools that were under probation and reconstitution for more focused data collection. In these selected schools, they interviewed the principals and teachers, conducted classroom observations, and collected school documents such as curriculum guidelines, budgets, school improvement plans, and staff development materials. To develop an understanding of the broader policy climate, the researchers developed a database of articles and editorials related to education that appeared in two major Chicago newspapers, the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, since August 1, 1995 (1 month after the mayor took over the school system).

Considering the Cross-National Context

The two sister systems operate in very different policy and political contexts. The UK has instituted a national examination, a national curriculum, and a national inspectorate on schooling standards. Under the Local Management of School (LMS) scheme in the last 8 years, schools in the UK have enjoyed substantial control over financial and human resources. Parents in England can select from a broader pool of schools, which include state (government), religious (Catholic, Muslim, and Church of England), and grant maintained (those that opt out of direct LEA control but continue to receive government funding). In contrast, the United States does not maintain a national educational system. Instead, it has a strong tradition of district-level governance that is defined by the constitutional framework of individual states. Autonomy at the school level and parental choice remain largely limited in America.

At the same time, there are similarities between the two sister systems. Both Chicago and Birmingham are large, urban systems, each with several hundred schools. As Table 2 shows, Birmingham, the largest district in England, has 164,000 students. The LEA maintains 444 schools, including 25 nursery, 327 primary, 61 secondary, 29 special, and 2 hospital schools. Like Chicago, Birmingham has a highly diverse student population. Whereas 59% of Birmingham students are White, 41% of the students are Black and ethnic minorities. Pakistanis

(17%), African/Caribbeans (7%), and Indians (7%) comprise the largest minority communities. In all, 32% of the students speak English as a second language. One of three (31%) students in Birmingham is classified as low income, compared to the national average of 19%. The mobility rate is 18% (Birmingham Local Education Authority, 1997b).

Chicago's student population has similar characteristics though the system is much larger. Chicago enrolls more than 420,000 students in 567 schools. These schools include 489 elementary schools and 78 high schools. Unlike Birmingham, the majority of Chicago's students are from minority communities. More than half, 54.5%, of the students in the CPS are African American, 31.3% are Latino, 10.8% are White, and 3.4% are Asian American and Native American. In all, 15.4% of students are classified as limited English proficient. This compares to just 5.9% of students in the state when Chicago is excluded. Approximately 83% of students in Chicago are classified as low income compared with only 17% in Illinois when Chicago is excluded. Finally, the mobility rate in Chicago is 29% (Chicago Public Schools, 1997).

In short, both systems face similar challenges that arise from the socioeconomic conditions their students confront. In several ways, Chicago's challenge is more difficult given the size of the system and the higher percentage of disadvantaged students.

SYSTEMWIDE REFORM IN CHICAGO

Integrated Governance in Chicago

Decentralization is no longer the dominant reform strategy in the CPS. The Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act, which took effect in July 1995, reverses a 7-year trend toward decentralization of authority over school operations and redesigns the governance arrangement to integrate power and authority. Integrated governance reduces competing authorities and coordinates activities in support of systemwide policy goals. The 1995 law suspended the power of the School Finance Authority (SFA), eliminated the School Board Nominating Commission, and diminished the ability of the LCSs to operate independently of board policy. Further, integrated

governance is designed to facilitate policy coherence and improve organizational collaboration among major actors. As a result of the 1995 reform, appointment decisions emanating from the mayor's office closely link the board, top administration, and the mayor's office. Finally, integrated governance relies on an administration that enjoys strong managerial authority. The 1995 law expanded the financial powers of the board and enhanced the powers of the CEO to manage the system.

Several questions arise concerning this redesigned system of governance. Can integrated governance effectively address the complex challenges facing the CPS? Specifically, how does the redesigned system of governance address issues of teaching and learning, failing schools, and finance and management? The author's study of the integrated system in the CPS found that the new governance system has improved the conditions for teaching and learning since July 1995 in many ways:

- Mayoral control facilitates policy coordination and reduces institutional fragmentation.
- Integrated governance improves the financial and management functions of the entire system.
- Integrated governance allows for a sharper focus on schools with the greatest academic needs.
- The public school system is able to broaden its political base of support.
- There are systemwide efforts to improve the quality of principals and teachers.

Reducing Institutional and Policy Fragmentation

Although the 1995 legislation left intact some features of the previous arrangements, it reduced competing institutional authority and recentralized administrative authority. The law decreased the size of the 15-member board to 5 and put the mayor in charge of appointing board members, the board president, and the CEO in charge of the schools. Because the board appoints the top administrative officers, these changes facilitate an effective link between the mayor's office and the central office. Under this arrangement, education becomes a part of the mayor's policy agenda and gives the mayor the option to decide the amount of political capital he is willing

to invest in improving the schools.

The new administration acted swiftly to demonstrate a commitment to efficient management by adopting a business management model. The management and maintenance of school buildings, for example, was reorganized to stress customer service and contracting out. The board eliminated the Bureau of Facilities Planning in the central office (resulting in the elimination of 10 jobs), reduced the number of positions in the Department of Facilities Central Service Center by half (26 out of 50 positions were eliminated), and reduced the citywide administration of facilities from 441 positions to 34. Contracts for these services are now with private firms. To oversee the management and maintenance of school property, the board negotiated contracts with five firms to provide property advisory services for each region. Under this arrangement, the firms advise principals and the department of operations on property management and provide custodial, engineering, and construction-related services to the schools. In addition, the board prequalified a number of general construction contractors for schools to select from.

By strengthening the centralized authority of the school system, the 1995 legislation shifted the balance of power between the central office and the LSCs. Prior to 1995, the central office competed with the LSCs for authority over the educational agenda. The LSCs had broad authority, but there was little direct accountability or oversight. For example, state Chapter I funds went directly to the schools, but the board remained accountable if the money was misused. Selection of principals by the LSC was often influenced by the constituencies of the particular neighborhood.

The new administration has signaled that LSCs can no longer operate with complete independence and have incorporated the LSCs into the overall system by defining standards and responsibilities they must adhere to. This policy establishes 15 criteria covering the actions of the principal, staff, LSC, and LSC members. Under the new board policy, the board declared that an educational crisis existed at Prosser Preparatory Center and Nathan Hale School. At each school, the board disbanded the LSC. The LSC at Prosser was declared nonfunctional in part because of its failure to approve the school improvement plan or evaluate the principal. At Hale, the LSC was

suspended after LSC members were found to have intruded in the day-to-day operations of the school, entered classrooms unannounced and uninvited, and failed to follow the law regarding their powers and responsibilities, among other violations. The board also requested that the state legislature tighten guidelines on the use of Chapter I funds currently controlled by LSCs. This request stems from a controversy in which LSC members at Roberto Clemente High School allegedly used Chapter I funds to send parents to Puerto Rico and to support the Puerto Rican independence movement. After a preliminary investigation, the board found the politicized climate at Clemente to be counterproductive to student learning and appointed a new principal without the LSC's consent. A special legislative committee and the Cook County state's attorney are currently investigating the use of Chapter I funds by Clemente's LSC.

Improving Financial Management and Upgrading the Physical Infrastructure

The 1995 governance redesign enhanced the ability of the central administration to perform financial and management functions efficiently. The 1995 law suspended the budget oversight authority of the SFA, removed the balanced budget requirement, and placed the inspector general under the authority of the board. In addition, the board was granted new authorities that expanded its financial powers. A number of funded programs (e.g., K-6 reading improvement, substance abuse prevention, Hispanic programs, and gifted education) and categorical funds were collapsed into a general education block grant and an educational services block grant, respectively. Although total revenues available to the board declined by 8% in fiscal year 1996 from the previous year, revenues going into the General Funds increased by about 2% (or \$28.5 million). Additionally, the board acquired greater flexibility over the use of pension funds and Chapter I funds not allocated to the schools. Finally, there were no longer separate tax levies earmarked for specific purposes.

These changes increased board discretion over school revenues, allowing the board to prepare a 4-year balanced budget and negotiate a 4-year contract, including a raise, with the Chicago Teachers Union. The 4-year teachers' contract brought both financial and labor stability to the system. Indeed, by March 1996, Standard and

Poor's raised the CPS bond rating from a BBB- to BBB, and Moody's from a Ba to Baa, allowing the board to issue bonds for the construction of new buildings under lower interest rates than before. By the summer of 1997, the CPS bond ratings were A- from Standard and Poor's and Baa1 from Moody's.

Enjoying its much improved standing in the bond market, the CPS launched a major capital improvement campaign for the first time in decades. The need to upgrade the schools' physical infrastructure is long overdue. Whereas 36% of the school buildings were built more than 75 years ago, only 11% are less than 25 years old. The school where Mayor Daley announced Phase II of the improvement plan offers an example of the need. According to one report, the school's "roof leaked so badly that five third-floor classrooms had been rendered soggyly unusable, thus creating overcrowding in other classrooms. Windows were broken and missing . . . Hallways were scarred by peeling paint and crumbling plaster" (Kogan, 1998, p. 10). After the \$2.3-million renovation, the school principal summed up the impact of the capital project as causing "a transformation in learning" (Kogan, 1998, p. 10). Systemwide, without board-directed capital improvement, most facilities will continue to lack the capability to make the transition to the information highway. The first two phases of the capital improvement plan are financed by \$1.65-billion bond funds, with an additional \$800 million in the third phase. Through the year 2003, these funds are allocated in four areas: renovation of school buildings, improvement in existing operating systems (e.g., heating), new construction, and educational enhancement projects (e.g., science laboratories and playgrounds). In response to public concerns about accountability in implementing such an ambitious plan, the school board released school-by-school information on physical conditions and a detailed timeline for repair and renovation, and organized public hearings citywide beginning in the spring of 1998.

Pressuring and Supporting Low-Performing Schools

The 1995 law incorporated a focus on accountability and academic achievement that compelled the administration to target the lowest performing schools within the system for intervention. Declaring that an educational crisis existed in Chicago, the 1995 legislation directed the board of trustees and the CEO to increase

the quality of educational services within the system. It enhanced the powers of the CEO to identify poorly performing schools and place these schools on remediation, probation, intervention, or reconstitution. Prior to 1995, the subdistrict superintendent, not the school board, had the primary responsibility of monitoring the performance of the schools and identifying nonperforming schools. In the past, to place a school on remediation or probation required the approval of the subdistrict council, which was made up of parents or community members from each LSC within the subdistrict.

With the new legislation, the board and central office focused on the lowest performing schools within the system. In January 1996, the CEO placed 21 schools on remediation for failing to meet state standards on the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP) for 3 consecutive years. Only six schools were placed on remediation by the previous administration. At the same time, the board removed two elementary school principals because the schools failed to improve after a year on remediation. In September 1996, the CEO placed 20% of the district's schools on probation.

Probation. In 1996, the district placed 109 of the 550 CPS on academic probation because 15% or less of their students scored at grade level on nationally normed tests. These schools are being held accountable to their school improvement plans as well as to improvements in test scores. By the fall of 1997, 9 schools have been removed from the list, 15 have been added, and 7 have been reconstituted. In addition, 36 principals have been removed. Since spring 1998, probation schools are required to have at least 20% of their students scored at grade level on nationally normed tests. As of summer 1998, 108 schools were on probation and another 7 high schools were on reconstitution.

Table 3 shows the percentage of students in high schools on probation (including reconstitution) and in the district as a whole who score at the national norms on the Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP), the standardized test that the district uses to place schools on probation. The researchers focused on the high schools because, on the whole, high schools have not made the gains in test scores achieved by elementary schools. Students scoring at national norms in reading in probation schools range from 7.6% to 12.62% over an 8-year

period. The average across the district's high schools ranges only from 17% to 23.35%. At the highest point, less than 30% of the students in the districts' high schools score at the national norm in reading. The same holds true for math (Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998). Clearly, the district faces severe challenges in improving probation high schools and high schools systemwide.

Whereas the district holds the probation schools accountable for improving student performance on standardized tests, it also provides several types of support. Each school must select from a list of board-approved external partners. The external partners are teams of support personnel from local universities and national reform groups who are charged with improving instruction in probation schools. The district paid for the external partners in full the first year of probation. Schools are expected to pick up one fourth of the cost each year of probation. The district also provides schools with probation managers who oversee the school improvement plan and assist the principal in all areas of school operations. Finally, the district provides the schools with business managers to oversee the school budget and financial operations. All of these supports are intended to enable the principal to become an effective instructional leader.

The researchers' preliminary analysis of the probation policy in their case study of high schools suggests that the policy has created new incentives for schools to examine how they allocate resources, in particular, time, teachers, and students. Schools have responded to probation by devoting more class time to test practice. In addition, schools have altered the ways in which they assign teachers to classrooms. The researchers detailed comparative case studies of four high schools indicates that the schools under probation tend to assign the most experienced teachers with the best reputations to students who are testing close to the national norms. As part of promotion policy, some schools have developed new basic math and reading skills sessions to assist low-performing students. According to our survey of high school principals in the spring of 1998, 34% of the principals reported hiring reading specialists but only one principal reported hiring a math specialist.

Reconstitution. Seven schools have been reconstituted based on continual low performance of students' test scores (none of the reconstituted schools had more than 7% of their students reading at or above grade level

according to test scores). Five of the seven schools had their principals replaced, and 188 of 675 teachers, or 29%, were not rehired. These schools will have to improve their test scores or risk being shut down.

Table 4 shows various characteristics of reconstituted schools. The table indicates the difficult socioeconomic conditions with which the schools and students must contend. The seven reconstituted schools are located in the most racially and economically isolated wards of the city. The mobility rates reflect conditions of extreme poverty. Table 4 suggests that support and pressure are needed to assist both the schools that operate in these conditions and the young people they serve. Pressure alone will not be sufficient given the severe challenges both face.

The researchers' case studies suggest that principals and teachers in reconstituted schools feel enormous amounts of pressure to increase test scores. This has led to an increasing standardization of instruction and even more attention being focused on test-taking practice and drill than in probation schools. A reconstituted school in this study has informally tracked students in order to provide those students near the national average access to a more effective learning environment. The school has also been affected by the district's academic promotion policy. Because of the failure of eighth-graders from the feeder schools to score at the district benchmark on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), ninth-grade enrollment dropped significantly. Because of this drop, the percentage of special education students in ninth-grade classrooms has increased. To date, teachers feel that they have been provided with inadequate support to deal with this situation. This suggests the need to examine how student promotion policies interact with school accountability policies, and to consider ways to link elementary and secondary schools together more effectively.

Reorganizing the Office of Accountability to Support Schools. The board and top administration reorganized the central office to reflect the focus on accountability and established the improvement of standardized test scores as the primary objective of the system. Though other departments within the central office were eliminated or significantly downsized, the administration created the Office of Accountability, which has grown from a staff of 50 in September 1995 to almost 80 in 1998. This office monitors the performance of

the schools and identifies and intervenes in low-performing schools. One administrator said that the mission of the department is “to fix schools...so they won’t fall below a safety net.”

The Office of Accountability not only pressures schools to improve but also provides professional support. It is in the process of implementing various programs to level up schools where test scores are low. Currently, the Department of School Quality Review works with the Illinois State Board of Education to develop a review process to evaluate all schools once every 4 years. The Department of School Intervention works with schools on the state’s Academic Watch List or on probation. These schools receive a 1-day visit from the staff in School Intervention, which recommends corrective actions and pairs them with consultants to provide technical support. The Office of Accountability provides a list of 21 external partners that the schools can choose from. According to the Guidelines for External Partners, each external partner is expected to have the “ability to raise student performance and...to customize the assistance to meet the individual needs of each school.” In December 1995, the board approved \$1.3 million in contracts for universities and colleges to work with 30 schools on the watch list. During 1996–1997, the first year of probation, the school board allocated more than \$11 million to these schools in terms of support personnel and staff positions devoted to implementing and overseeing probation. In 1997–1998, the central budget for probation and reconstitution associated personnel was close to \$8 million. During 1998–1999, the central budget for this purpose was about \$10 million.

Few principals and teachers in our case study of schools on probation and reconstitution report satisfaction with the contracted external partners the board financed. Teachers feel that the external partners, which the district requires schools on probation to hire, offer little meaningful assistance. Teachers resent planning time being controlled by the external partners and resist attempts by the external partners to evaluate instruction. Teachers in one school actually locked their doors to prevent the external partners from entering. Similarly, principals feel that the external partners lack a focused plan for school improvement, particularly in the area of instruction. Though many principals report satisfaction with the probation managers, they feel that the external partners have not been cost-effective. Overall, the variation in terms of support provided to schools by

external partners poses a serious challenge to the district. The district has delegated responsibility for improving teaching and learning in low-performing schools to external partners. The author's case studies suggest that the district needs to monitor the quality of the services provided by the external partners more closely and to consider whether or not these contracted services could be provided by district personnel like Birmingham's BASS model, thereby building the district's instructional support capacity for long-term improvement.

Pressuring and Supporting Low-Performing Students

The End of Social Promotion. In an expanded program from the summer of 1996, third-, sixth-, eighth-, and ninth-grade students who did not meet set levels on one of two nationally normed tests (the ITBS or the TAP) were required to participate in a system-sponsored summer school called the Summer Bridge Program during 1997. The pressure is particularly high for the eighth-graders, because those who fail the spring tests cannot attend graduation ceremonies. In 1997, 21% of the eighth-graders failed to meet the cutoff point in the spring and were placed in the Summer Bridge program. Sixty-two percent of eighth-graders who participated in the program met the promotion requirements after 7 weeks. In other words, by the end of the summer in 1997, 92% of the 27,800 eighth-graders had met the school system's new promotion standards. In the summer of 1998, 54% of the 7,558 eighth-graders who were required to attend the Summer Bridge program passed the tests and were promoted to high school. The district provided teachers in the program with day-by-day lesson plans. Students were promoted to the next grade if they brought their scores to the established cutoff point. If they did not, they were required to repeat the grade. Repeating students returned to their original schools, unless they were older eighth-graders. Approximately one half of the repeating eighth-graders (in 1997 that constituted about 4%), who were 15 years old by December 1, were attending 1 of 13 transition centers that feature a basic skills curriculum.

Seeing the Summer Bridge program as providing an opportunity for social and academic development for many inner-city children, the school board decided to expand the program to the first and second grades beginning

in the summer of 1998. From a broader institutional perspective, the expanded Summer Bridge program for students across six different grade levels constituted only a part of the district's overall summer initiatives that involve the Chicago Public Library, the Chicago Park District, and the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training. The system was expected to spend a total of \$65 million to provide a variety of learning, social, and job skills to 175,000 children or about 40% of the CPS enrollment. As Mayor Daley envisioned the long-term impacts of these collaborative programs, "By providing safe and productive ways for our young people to spend their summer vacation, we help keep them away from the dangerous influences of gangs, guns and drugs" (Washburn, 1998, p. 3).

Political Will and a Broadened Base of Political Support

The link between the mayor's office and the board can facilitate political support for the school system. With the redesign of the governance system, Mayor Richard Daley has been more willing to invest his political capital in the Chicago schools. To restore public confidence, the new administration has projected an image of efficient, responsive, and "clean" government. The administration has also taken a number of steps to strengthen the support of the business community for the public schools. This support becomes crucial when appealing to the Illinois legislature because the business community can lobby in favor of the board's legislative agenda, thereby lending the board credibility.

In 1995 and 1996, the author and his colleagues issued two surveys to 100 members of the policy community from Chicago and Illinois and asked them to rate the performance of seven governance actors, the governor, the mayor, Democratic and Republican legislators, the Chicago Teachers' Union, the central office, and the school board. Their analysis of the 1995–1996 performance ratings for these seven governance actors shows that the board, the central office, and the mayor made significant gains over their 1993–1995 performance ratings. Only the performance of these three actors edged into the "satisfactory" category. The performance of the other actors remained in the "poor" category (Wong et al., 1997; see also Wong & Moulton, 1998).

Media support for the board and central administration remains strong. The authors tracked all stories and editorials concerning education that appeared in the two major Chicago newspapers from August 1, 1995 to March 31, 1997. Their analysis indicates that the two newspapers were generally supportive of the central administration. The newspapers opposed only 5% of the proposed administration policies. The most noticeable editorial pattern was a supportive response to central administration policies. Seventy-four percent of the editorials that focused on administration policies were supportive (Wong & Jain, 1999).

The mayor's appointments to the board of trustees reflects a concern with consolidating business supporters of the schools. Most board members have extensive experience in the private sector. The distribution of appointments within the central office reflects the mayor's commitment to improving the fiscal conditions and management of the system. The top appointments in the central office made between July 1995 and February 1998 reflect a diversity of expertise: 27.9% come from city and other public agencies, 8.1% from the private sector, 6.3% from nonprofit organizations, and 57.6% from the ranks within the CPS (see Table 5). In areas that are not directly related to education (e.g., finance and purchasing), 63% of the appointees came from outside the school system.

The new administration reorganized the central office according to business principles that stress downsizing and privatization as a way to further enhance business support for the schools and the perception of efficient management. Within 1 year of implementing the new system, the number of staff positions in the central administration declined almost 21%. The majority of these cuts came from citywide administration and services. The reduction was achieved through awarding contracts to private providers for food services and facilities. Other reductions were obtained by consolidating the 11 district offices into 6 regional offices.

The administration's strategy of focusing on management and budget issues early on can be viewed as a serious effort to establish political credibility. Thus, the administration balanced the budget, developed a 5-year capital development plan, and negotiated a 4-year teacher's contract. In March 1998, the board initiated the negotiation with the Chicago Teachers' Union even though the teachers' contract did not expire until 1999. This

strategy improved public confidence in the ability of the administration to manage the schools and stabilized relations with the union. Believing that raising test scores is the basis for long-term political support, the mayor, board, and CEO have now taken this as their primary strategy. Better test scores, it is hoped, will form the basis for increased state funding and the continuation of the current governance with the mayor in control of the schools. This arrangement is likely to shift additional power back to the central office, including the establishment of qualifications for the appointment of principals by the central office, and to further diminish the LSCs' role. Indeed, in August 1996, the legislature adopted legislation that allows the board of trustees to develop additional standards and requirements to become a principal. Taken together, the district's actions significantly improved public confidence in the ability of the board and the central administration to govern the schools, giving the top administration the legitimacy it needs to carry out its educational initiatives.

Strengthening the Quality of Human Resources

The district administration has taken several steps to improve standards for teachers and principals systemwide. The districts' teachers are predominantly from two local institutions. This administration has expanded the pool of teachers by targeting other teacher education institutions in Chicago through programs such as the Ambassador Corps, which sends teachers and principals to local colleges. The district also recruits candidates nationally through the Recruiting New Teachers Partnership Network. Overall, three fourths of the teachers are from Illinois institutions and one fourth are predominantly from other Midwestern states ("City aims to higher 'best and brightest,'" 1996).

In addition to recruitment efforts, the district has instituted a new teacher induction program that focuses on pairing new teachers with expert mentors. Mentors and new teachers meet monthly for district in-services and collaborative learning. New teachers receive detailed materials from the district that explain policies and procedures and provide overviews of different aspects of classroom management and instruction. The district also offers all teachers professional development opportunities through the Teachers' Academy.

Although the district has focused its efforts on teacher recruitment and professional development, it has developed new, more rigorous standards for principals. The 1988 reform gave LSCs the power to hire and terminate principals. Consequently, principal hiring became political. Although one of the intentions of the 1988 reform was to foster a more rigorous selection process, the vast majority of principals continue to come from the schools where they served as assistant principals. In 1997, the current administration adopted a new set of standards in an attempt to control the quality of principals. These standards require principals to reside in Chicago and to have a master's degree, a minimum of 6 years of classroom and administrative experience, 70 hours of course work in administration, and a 30-day internship. Once in office, principals are required to complete 32 hours of professional development training every 2 years. The board was instrumental in lobbying the state legislature to enact Senate Bill 1019, which codifies these standards.

In order to support new and experienced principals, the district has created the Leadership Academy and Urban Network for Chicago (LAUNCH) and Leadership Initiative for Transformation (LIFT) programs in cooperation with the Chicago Principals and Administrators' Association and local universities. In addition, the district has provided all principals with training on how to use district teacher evaluation forms. These evaluations are checklists the principals can use to assess classroom management, instruction, and the teacher's participation in the school. These evaluations are a way for principals to terminate poorly performing teachers. Although the evaluations provide principals with a tool to do this, they do not rely upon any model of effective instruction and represent a variety of items to look for in a classroom rather than an instrument for actually assessing the quality of a teacher's instruction. Although the district has increased efforts to improve the quality of the teaching pool and current principals, it has yet to develop more comprehensive standards for teachers.

An Ambitious Agenda for Systemwide Restructuring

As integrated governance operates at the end of its third year, the CEO and the school board have broadened the reform agenda. Designed to improve the quality of schools throughout the system, these new initiatives include the following:

- The system has designed and disseminated their own standards (Chicago Academic Standards) in the areas of English language arts, mathematics, biological and physical sciences, and social sciences. Benchmark exams for selected cutoff grades are being developed and piloted in June 1998 and in 1999–2000. These standards and assessments may mark a new phase of outcome-based accountability in the district. The results of the district exams may provide additional information concerning probation and reconstitution. Thus, although these standards and assessments may provide an educational vision to guide teaching and learning districtwide, they may also serve as a tool to develop further sanctions on low-performing students and schools.
- All high schools have established Junior Academies for 9th- and 10th-grade students and are creating Senior Academies for 11th- and 12th-grade students. The academy structure creates teams of teachers who are responsible for a group of students throughout the course of their high school education. Teachers advance through the grades with their students.
- The academy structure is intended to provide students with academic and personal support and provide teacher collaboration. Teachers are expected to participate in a professional development program that is supportive and consistent with their school's action plan.
- LSC elections were held on report card pickup days as a way to improve parental participation. Between 1988 and 1993, voter turnout for these elections decreased by 68%. This is consistent with a sharp decline in the number of people seeking LSC seats. In 1989, more than 17,000 candidates ran for the LSC. In 1991, that number decreased to 8,398, and to only 7,288 in 1996. This year 84

schools, or slightly more than 15% of the system, slated fewer than the six parents needed (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 1998). Clearly, attracting widespread parental support and involvement in the LSCs remains a challenge.

Under integrated governance, the CPS has tried to improve the operations of the system and the performance of its schools and students. The district administration has brought financial stability to the system and, in conjunction with the mayor, has regained public and political confidence in the schools. Whereas the administration has addressed a number of functions, including teacher recruitment, principal standards, and facilities improvement, its most visible efforts have been the policies that place pressure on poorly performing schools and students. Probation and reconstitution have served as wake-up calls for schools, teachers, and students. Yet without adequate technical support, such policies will not ensure improvement. The district has yet to develop an instructional and organizational model that provides schools and teachers with a vision to guide their improvement efforts. The new curricular frameworks and exams the district has begun to implement may provide the base for such a vision. The district has made tremendous strides in several key areas. The challenge of developing an educational vision that provides the support for improved performance lies ahead.

TRANSFORMATION IN BIRMINGHAM LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Integrated Governance in Birmingham

Across the Atlantic, the Birmingham LEA maintains two essential characteristics of integrated governance, namely, a unified political structure that is committed to education, and a vision that aims at better student performance. In terms of governance, Birmingham's arrangements are quite similar to Chicago's post-1995 structure. The LEA is formally the Education Department in the City of Birmingham. In the city's political system, power rests in the city council, and the office of the Lord Mayor performs mainly ceremonial functions. The chief education officer is hired by the city's chief executive and serves the city council's education committee.

Because the Labour Party constitutes the majority in the 117-member city council, its caucus in the education committee controls the policy agenda. At the same time, the Labour group in the committee is responsible for the fiscal management and school performance of the educational system. The council's education committee regularly consults with organized interests (e.g., the teachers' and head teachers' unions). In other words, the council's education committee "integrates" both political and policy functions.

The direct involvement of the Labour Party caucus in allocating the educational budget is indicative of how "integrated governance" operates. Education is the largest item on the city budget. In 1997–1998 it accounted for 48% of the city's total expenditure, as suggested in Table 6. As a result of the 1988 national LMS reform, 75% of the resources are allocated to the schools, 16.5% is retained at the central administration, and the remaining 8% is for capital improvement projects (see Table 7). Not surprisingly, budgetary allocation involves political leadership, upper-level administrative staff in the city, and the LEA's leadership. During the process, political concerns and policy needs are properly balanced. For the fiscal year 1998 budget, planning began in the spring of 1997 when the baseline for both statutory and nonstatutory services was established by the LEA's director of finance. A series of strategic planning sessions then followed where the CEO, the director of finance, and other upper-level managers presented their proposed budgets before the leadership of the Labour Party and the upper-level administrative team of the city. Additional closed-door sessions were scheduled during the fall that allowed the Labour group to question the budget justifications and to pressure the CEO and his upper-level managers on savings. In late 1997, for example, the Labour group decided on a 5% reduction of the central administration's budget but preserved the portion of the delegated school budget in 1998. By December 1997, the final budget for the next fiscal year was established.

Political Commitment

Like its counterpart in Chicago, the political leadership in Birmingham has made a strong commitment to education in recent years. The strongest indication of the city's political will toward educational improvement was

its significant shift in educational funding that coincided with the appointment of Tim Brighouse, a nationally known school reformer, as the CEO in September 1993. Prior to Brighouse's appointment, economic development dominated the city's agenda. During the 1980s and the early 1990s, local and national revenues were shifted away from education and allocated to an ambitious renewal program in the central business district, including the construction of the international trade center, orchestra hall, and the infrastructure to expand tourism. Public works and construction programs appealed to the traditional constituency of the Labour Party, which captured the majority of city council in 1984. As shown in Fig. 5.1, during the 1980s and the early 1990s, the city did not spend up to the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) level as recommended by the national government. The SSA is the amount of revenue expenditure that the national government considers appropriate for a local authority to incur to provide a standard level of service consistent with the national government's public expenditure plans. Between 1991–1992 and 1992–1993, the gap between actual spending and the SSA widened to more than £60 million. However, this trend was reversed following an “internal revolt” within the Labour Party in 1992. The new leadership saw the need to maintain a proper balance between public construction and human capital investment. Since 1994 Birmingham's spending on education has exceeded the SSA level. In 1997–1998, the actual education spending was £20 million above the SSA.

The shift in funding priorities represented a politically visible endorsement of the Brighouse administration. Birmingham's decision bore national significance in light of 17 years of policy dominance by the Conservative Party in Westminster. In a series of school reform legislation, the Conservative Party mandated district-level administration to delegate the majority of the funding to schools, enabled schools to opt out of the government-maintained sector, broadened parental preferences in choosing schools, and expanded the role of the OFSTED in monitoring LEA and school performance. Politically, the Conservative Party aimed at weakening the power of the LEAs, a substantial number of which were governed by the Labour Party in the city council. Losing substantial control over both funding and the most competitive schools, LEAs across the nation faced virtual extinction. National policy allocated the majority of the funds directly to schools (LMS) and encouraged schools

to opt out of direct governmental control (grant-maintained option) (Bullock & Thomas, 1997). The role of the LEA was further eroded as the national inspectorate system expanded in 1993. Given this national trend of undermining the LEAs, Birmingham's decision to renew its LEA under new leadership was unique.

As the Conservative agenda aimed at dismantling the organizational functions of the LEAs nationwide, the local scene in Birmingham was far from promising. For years, the office of the chief education officer in the city was dominated by the electoral concerns of politicians and lacked a focus on school improvement. Within the central administration, heads of services operated like warring barons. The LEA suffered from organizational fragmentation and an absence of systemwide concerns over classroom practices. Policymakers in Birmingham, thus, were at a crossroads. Should they dismantle the LEA and its functions or should they redefine the role of the LEA to fill the gap between the national policy initiatives and educational practices at the school and classroom levels?

To develop an informed basis for deciding on the future of the LEA, the city council appointed an independent education commission to review the present and the future needs of education services in Birmingham. The 13-member commission was led by Professor Ted Wragg of Exeter University, and city councilors, parents, head teachers, and teachers were represented. The commission was established in the spring of 1993. It held 34 public hearings and heard from 140 witnesses during the spring and summer of 1993. In addition, the commission received more than 100 written submissions. Its report was published in October 1993, when Brighouse began his tenure as the CEO.

Because the 1993 education commission report coincided with the arrival of the Brighouse administration, it provided useful baseline information on the quality of the educational system under the previous leadership. *Aiming High*, commonly referred to as the Wragg report, documented extensive deficiencies in the existing system. These included:

- Education was not a sufficiently important issue in the city as it integrated with the global economy.
- The LEA had difficulty transitioning to LMS by holding firm to the existing attitude that it owned

schools, thereby providing an incentive for schools to choose for grant-maintained status (exiting from governmental control).

- A climate of political contention and personal favors weakened the support for education.
- It lacked a unified vision of the role of LEA.
- Achievement standards in Birmingham schools were too low.

In light of these concerns, the Wragg report concluded, “We see no point in a city with Birmingham’s aspirations in aiming low. It would be a disappointment to those whose children are already in or about to enter school, as well as to those who work in the education service.” The commission made 25 recommendations that covered major components of the educational institution, including educational governance, resource allocation, and standards and achievements. Many of the recommendations reflected Brighouse’s vision. The major recommendations included:

- Establish a clear district organization, while allowing for local flexibility and creativity.
- Establish a process of school self-review that does not overburden schools and recognizes the work done by OFSTED.
- Place education at the top of the city’s spending priorities.
- Develop individual school and citywide targets in literacy, numeracy, and staying-on rates.
- Improve the political climate for education.

In a follow-up review 2 years after its publication of the report, the education commission found that the educational system was moving in a positive direction and meeting several important targets. *Hitting the Target?*, the second Wragg report, found that education had become the city’s top priority beginning in 1994–1995. Brighouse was praised for his efforts to share his vision with the broad business community, including the

Technology and Education Consortium, the Chamber of Commerce, City Pride, and the Birmingham Education Business Partnership. The second report also observed an improved relationship between the LEA and the schools. Whereas 13 schools left the LEA in 1993, only 1 had opted out during 1994 and 1995. The LEA also began to establish more rigorous targets and to institute means of consultations with schools. Overall, out of the 25 original recommendations in the 1993 report, 13 showed progress made, 6 remained stable but satisfactory, and 6 remained unsatisfactory in the 2-year period. Initial accomplishments in the period between the first and the second Wragg report have turned into systemic restructuring and higher performance in subsequent years. As Table 8 shows, the achievement gap between Birmingham and the nation narrowed substantially in reading, writing, and math at Key Stage 1, in English at Key Stage 2, and in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. Key Stage 3 is the only level where both the national average and Birmingham declined in performance. Whereas the LEA and the national average fell at more or less the same pace in math, the LEA experienced a greater decrease in English performance. The overall picture, thus, suggests that Birmingham has made significant progress in “improving the previous best” (Birmingham City Council Education Department, 1996). By January 1998, the OFSTED (1998) report concluded that “the LEA has defined a clear aspiration to raise standards and has convinced schools and others of its determination to do so, and of the feasibility of that undertaking” (p. 1).

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES IN BIRMINGHAM

In the following sections, the author identifies strategies that the LEA has used to improve teaching and learning in Birmingham schools within a fairly short period of time. As a whole, these strategies offer a promising reform model for other LEAs to consider in their efforts to raise standards and student performance. Instead of relying on a “silver bullet,” the LEA adopts a mix of informal pressure and persistent support as intervention strategies. Overall, a vision of the LEA as a critical friend to teachers and head teachers lies at the core of the Birmingham model. This vision, in turn, relies on a well-designed infrastructure at the central office focused on

bringing about school improvement and academic gains.

The Local Education Authority Leadership Matters

Just as Vallas is so closely associated with progress made in Chicago, it is virtually impossible to separate Brighthouse from school improvement in Birmingham. Under the leadership of Brighthouse, Birmingham went against the national tide of de-legitimizing district-level administration. Clearly, Brighthouse not only resurrected but also redesigned the LEA to the effect that, to use the words of the OFSTED (1998) report, it “has helped to revive the morale of its teachers and to engender an enhanced professional commitment that has resulted in a worthwhile rise in standards” (p. 1). Teachers and head teachers have clearly regained their high level of professional respect since the first Wragg report. The district-level administration, from Brighthouse’s perspective, plays a unique and indispensable role that bridges the gap between national standards and school needs. In essence, the LEA needs to provide the necessary support to enhance the quality and the performance of the schools. Without the LEA’s supportive functions, schools are on their own in coping with a national system of educational accountability that is primarily designed to exert top-down pressure and sanctions. Brighthouse’s vision of the LEA revolves around the notion of “celebrating [the] success of urban teachers and head teachers.” Seeing the many challenges that teachers face on a daily basis in an urban setting, Brighthouse redesigned the LEA as a critical friend to teachers. The supportive role involves several major LEA functions.

The Chief Executive Officer as Pedagogical Mobilizer

First, the CEO personifies the teacher-oriented culture of the LEA. Unlike his predecessors who were office bound, top-down managers, Brighthouse decided to spend most of his time visiting schools, talking to teachers in the staff room, and observing classroom instruction. Within the first 6 months of his appointment, he established the new governing style by visiting about 200 schools. In the next 3 years, he visited all the remaining schools, developed a close working relationship with head teachers, and engaged in discussion with numerous

teachers on a wide range of curricular and instructional issues. Even with his busy schedule, he regularly writes personal messages of praise to teachers identified as making important contributions in their classrooms.

Over time, the CEO has made every effort to diffuse good practices. He takes advantage of all opportunities to motivate teachers to take that extra step toward higher standards. In his writings and his lectures, Brighthouse constantly reminds teachers of several broader principles that guide good practices. These include “inclusive practices,” intelligence as “multi-faceted” and not inherited, education as a “life-long” activity, competition as “ipsative” and not “normative,” and “celebrating success” rather than focusing on failure (Birmingham City Council, 1997c, pp. 8–9). To connect these broad principles to the school and classroom setting, Brighthouse writes a regular column in the LEA bulletins that are distributed regularly to all teachers. Through both informal conversations and direct contacts with the teachers, Brighthouse serves as a pedagogical mobilizer to create new energy points throughout the system. As the OFSTED (1998) inspections concluded, the CEO “has had an enormous personal impact. He has the ability to...inspire teachers to new levels of commitment...” (p. 4). Brighthouse’s vision is ably supported by a first-rate administrative team at the central office, including the deputy chief of education.

The Local Education Authority Offers Competitive Services

Second, the educational needs of the schools drive central office organization rather than the reverse. Because of LMS budgeting, the city delegates 75% of the operating budget to schools in Birmingham. Schools can purchase services from nongovernmental vendors or buy back services from the central administration (Table 9). Indicative of the LEA’s success in gaining the confidence of the schools, virtually all the schools purchase from the central administration the personnel/payroll services, the general financial services, special education (statutory) services, statistical support, the advisory and support services, and information technology. According to the annual city council survey, customer (i.e., school) satisfaction with the quality of the LEA services increased from 84% in 1995 to 91% in 1997. Education was rated as the best among all municipal service areas.

A survey conducted by the Audit Commission indicates that head teachers in Birmingham were much more positive about their LEA services than their peers in 10 other LEAs with similar socioeconomic characteristics (OFSTED, 1998). Of the 52 total categories of LEA activities and services, Birmingham LEA was rated first in 20, including the quality of LEA actions to achieve its priorities, openness of the LEA about the budget-making process, and help in using comparative data for target setting. The LEA was rated second in another 12 sets of activities, including its willingness to listen to schools' views, support for school self-evaluation, and curriculum support. Only four items were ranked at or below 10th place.

An Infrastructure of Support

Third, the LEA has developed a full-scale infrastructure that provides ongoing professional and technical support to the schools, a key function of the advisory and support services. The BASS is efficiently staffed with 30 teacher advisors who provide teachers with training in classroom practices and with another 35 link advisors who assist schools in dealing with issues that affect the entire school organization. Advisors are accredited inspectors, who receive formal training and conduct school inspections in other LEAs. The basic advisory entitlement allotted to each school is two half-day training sessions each term, with additional time allocated to support new head teachers and teachers, members of the school governing body, and schools that are scheduled for the 4-year national inspection cycle. Twice a year advisors report on the organizational health of the schools and once a year they rate the schools' effectiveness in meeting the national standards. Schools that show serious weaknesses in attendance, achievements, and curricular delivery can then purchase additional, sustained intervention strategies from the advisory and support services. A key function for the advisors, then, is to prepare schools to pass the rigorous test of national inspection. Each advisor serves as a "critical friend" to an assigned cluster of schools, challenging schools to improve on their delivery standards and student performance. About 4 to 6 months prior to the scheduled visit of the national inspection team to the schools, the advisors identify and coach those teachers who are not meeting the national standards. The key challenge for the schools and their

advisers is to pass the inspection by making sure that at least 80% of their performance indicators meet the satisfactory level in the national framework.

Establishing Performance Targets

The Birmingham LEA was touted as a national model when it first introduced the process of target setting at the school level. Its vision was to “improve on the previous best” (Birmingham City Council Education Department, 1996). Using their 1996 performance level as the baseline, all secondary schools have set millennium targets in terms of raising achievement at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. More than 70% of primary schools have set targets for literacy and numeracy. This process of target setting has been reinforced by the LEA’s year-long focus on a particular subject matter. For example, the LEA launched the “Year of Numeracy” and the “Year of Reading” and planned to implement the “Year of the Arts” in the next academic year. Target setting is also aided by new assessment initiatives, for example, creating families of schools that share similar socioeconomic characteristics.

The OFSTED evaluation of the LEA suggests that the targeting process, though seen as beneficial by the schools involved, needs to be elaborated more clearly. Some schools report feeling that they did not know the specific components of the process, although the LEA’s support was helpful. In addition, declaring a different focus for each year may distract teachers from improving their core practices as much as it provides a goal to mobilize their support. Schools that have adopted the targeting approach have seen improvements in student achievement. The challenge for the LEA is to expand this support to more schools. As we see in Chicago, this requires enormous resources. As the LEA expands its support and advisory model to more schools, this challenge will become more significant.

To summarize, Birmingham’s LEA approaches the challenge of improving school and student performance by creating a professionally oriented culture and providing schools with expertise in the areas of school management and instructional improvement. Brighthouse emphasizes the key role teachers play in improving

school and student performance. His charismatic leadership has mobilized teachers' support for systemwide improvement and innovation. In conjunction with this cultural shift, the central administration has developed its capacity to provide schools with technical support. Through the BASS and its advisors, the central administration assists schools in setting and attaining improvement targets. This twofold approach has enabled Birmingham to make significant gains in student performance. The LEA is helping to narrow the gap that has long existed between the nation and the city.

VARIATION IN PRESSURING AND SUPPORTING FAILING SCHOOLS

Whereas the Chicago administration is pressing low-performing schools and low-performing students with sanctions and support, the Birmingham LEA restrains from applying formal pressure on their schools. For Brighthouse, publicly labeling schools as failures would distract from serious efforts at school improvement. Instead, the LEA prefers to rely on a combination of constructive persuasion and technical support. Why do Birmingham and Chicago adopt such different approaches toward systemwide educational improvement? Here are some of the institutional factors that may explain these policy differences.

Major Versus Small Crisis

First, the educational challenge differs in terms of its magnitude and urgency between the two districts. Chicago is confronted with a wide scale of failing schools. The key challenge is to bring up the enormous number of students who are performing very poorly at all elementary and secondary grade levels. For example, only 12 of the district's 80 high schools have at least 30% of their students performing at the national average on the standardized TAP tests. In the seven reconstituted high schools, only about 7% of their students have met the national norm for several years. At the end of their eighth grade, 22% of the 27,800 students failed to read and calculate at the seventh-grade level and were required to attend summer school in 1997. For the 33,300 third-grade students, more than one third of them fell significantly behind in their basic academic skills. The magnitude

of these challenges required the school board to take immediate and broad-scale action. If the school board had been indecisive, more than 6,000 eighth-graders would have been promoted into high schools even though they were 2 years behind in their academic performance. Districtwide sanctions visibly create new and higher expectations for many schools and students in terms of academic outcomes.

Compared to Chicago, Birmingham faces the challenge of “improving their previous best” (Birmingham City Council Education Department, 1996). Though Birmingham has schools that are performing poorly, most of the schools are getting close to the national averages in meeting academic outcome standards. In the author’s analysis of the 61 LEA-maintained secondary schools, only 16 (or 26%) fell below the district’s average in both the 1996 General Certificate of Secondary Education point score and a 5-year percentage change (see Table 10). The magnitude of failing schools and low-performing students in Birmingham is clearly nowhere near that of its sister district. It should be noted that within its own national context, Birmingham does have some room for improvement. The gap between the LEA and the national average remains considerable in several areas of assessments. For example, 48% of the LEA’s pupils achieved at a satisfactory level in Key Stage 3 math assessment as compared to 61% at the national level. In Year 11, GCSE results for 1997, 36% of students in the LEA earned five or more top grades (A to C) as compared to 43% of the national population.

Local Control Versus National Standards and Local Competition

The United States has a strong tradition of local control. Schools are not required to meet national standards in the absence of a national examination and national curriculum. Outcome-based pressure, if any, would have to come from the school board and its administration. There is no appropriate governmental agency other than the Chicago district administration to enforce systemwide standards.

The Birmingham LEA is positioned in a national system of checks and balances. Pressure on schools comes from the national inspectorate that evaluates both the schools and the LEAs. The Birmingham LEA responded to this systemic pressure by aligning itself with the schools. To assist schools in coping with this

external threat, the LEA becomes a “critical friend” of the schools. Between October 1997 and January 1998, a team of national inspectors conducted an extensive review of the LEA and its schools. In preparing for the inspection, the LEA had to organize an enormous number of documents. As shown in Table 11, there were 572 pieces of documents in 20 major areas submitted by the LEA to the inspection team. These included 209 policy documents on curriculum and assessment, and another 40 reports and records on admissions and student placement. Further, OFSTED inspectors conducted extensive interviews and classroom observations in 20 primary, 14 secondary, and 3 special schools. Data collection at the site level focused on the effectiveness of the LEA strategy in school improvement. According to the LEA’s own estimate, the entire OFSTED inspection costs £180,000.

The 1998 White Paper published by the Blair government alters the LEA’s role. The White Paper restores the LEA’s evaluative function and requires LEAs to intervene more directly into low-performing schools. The White Paper provides a significant challenge for the LEA. It will have to renegotiate its relationship with schools and determine how much pressure it can and should place upon poorly performing schools within the framework of its supportive approach.

Limited Institutional Competition Versus the Market for Schooling

In Birmingham, schools have to compete with non-LEA schools in order to keep their student enrollment, and thus their budget, at their usual levels. Competition has had the most effect on the LEA at the secondary level. As noted earlier, the LEA-maintained schools enroll approximately 54% of the possible secondary students in the district whereas 46% of students attend grant-maintained, selective single-sex, and voluntary-aided schools. This has resulted in a large number of undersubscribed secondary schools. Twenty-two of the LEA-maintained secondary schools are undersubscribed. Nine of these schools have more than 40% of their classrooms vacant. Two schools are scheduled to be closed because of low enrollment. Because funds follow the pupils, schools need ongoing support from the LEA advisors to avoid any negative findings from the OFSTED inspection. In contrast,

student enrollment in the Chicago public schools is not significantly threatened by a competitive sector. Exiting demands to the suburbs and nonpublic schools affect both districts.

In short, given the American tradition of local control, Chicago's district administration has to perform multiple functions, namely both pressuring and supporting schools. In Birmingham, given the checks and balances within a national system, the LEA joins the schools as a "critical friend." A proper balance between pressure and support is a challenge for the leadership in both districts.

DEFINING THE POLICY CHALLENGES

Having outlined the institutional changes in the two sister systems, in this section the author identifies several policy challenges and their implications for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. For policymakers, the key is to develop strategies that will sustain and broaden the accomplishments of the last 3 years. For practitioners, there is a need to improve organizational coherence and programmatic alignment between the central administration and the site level to meet the challenge of educational accountability. For researchers, the challenge is to raise analytical standards in conducting research that is less grounded in advocating a particular ideological or partisan point of view. The challenges the author has defined may provide a preliminary basis for a policy and research agenda in the next several years.

The Challenge of Leadership Succession

The two sister systems are currently under exceptionally capable leadership. As we look to the future, a critical issue is whether those qualities that help the transformational process can be institutionalized beyond the Vallas and the Brighthouse era.

In Birmingham, the OFSTED (1998) report recognized the immeasurable contribution of the chief education officer. It concluded, "[The chief education officer] has the ability to articulate a very particular educational vision.... His accessibility to schools is much appreciated. The LEA would not have made anywhere

near as much progress without his leadership” (p. 4). Restructuring of the LEA leadership already began with the departure of the deputy chief education officer and the head of BASS in 1998. Together with the CEO, these top-level administrators played a crucial role in school improvement in the LEA. The key question is what kind of leadership culture will occur once Brighthouse leaves office. This is particularly critical as several units within the LEA central administration have slowly adapted to the Brighthouse vision.

Similarly, in Chicago, the successful operation of the system currently depends on the managerial and leadership qualities and skills of Paul Vallas. Vallas’ strong management expertise and leadership skills complement the educational expertise of the chief education officer, Cozette Buckney. However, the risk of putting power at the top of the system is that the system is dependent on the capabilities of the leadership. The question arises: How can the system maintain effective leadership beyond a few years? Currently, leadership relies on the mayor’s ability to appoint competent managers. If the mayor appoints a strong leader, good things will happen. If not, the whole system could flounder. The city needs to develop a more systematic means of leadership succession. Toward this end, the author has identified several qualifications that contribute to the effective leadership of the current administration that may serve as a starting point. They include (Wong et al., 1997):

- Ability to articulate a clear mission and realistic policy goals.
- Knowledge of the local political scene and understanding of the connections between the schools, city hall, the state legislature, the business community, LSCs, and local reform groups.
- Political skills to manage the conflicting interests of these various groups.
- Ability to manage competing demands without arousing the animosity of particular groups.
- Ability to focus on the collective enterprise rather than disaggregate school management in terms of racial and ethnic considerations.
- Administrative, managerial, and negotiation skills.

The Challenge of Broadening Academic Gains: Implications for Pressure and Support Policies

Redesigning Secondary Education. For the sister systems, a major challenge is to broaden the academic gains from the primary to the secondary level, in poorly performing schools, and systemwide. In this regard, secondary education is a central challenge for both systems. In Birmingham, according to OFSTED, the percentage of city primary schools in the special measures/failing category is lower than the national average, whereas the comparable figure for secondary schools is higher. In Chicago, standardized test scores at the elementary level for both math and reading have been improving in recent years. At the high school level, however, though math scores have improved, reading scores remain low.

Both Birmingham and Chicago are currently in the process of redesigning secondary schooling. In Birmingham, the city council's Secondary Education Commission has begun to rethink secondary admissions arrangements. An LEA position paper that led to the creation of the commission focuses on the effects of market competition and LMS on the distribution of students (Birmingham Local Education Authority, 1997a). The paper argues that the creaming of the highest performing students by selective schools has resulted in an increasing number of both underperforming schools and school closures. Furthermore, different admissions and exclusion policies and varying rates of subscription have led to a chaotic transfer of students, both from primary to secondary schools and across secondary schools. The paper suggests that admission policies be centralized to reduce this confusion and ensure a more equitable distribution of students. In addition, the LEA administration is attempting to build its capacity for supporting secondary schools. Currently, most of the LEA school support personnel associated with the BASS have primary school expertise. The Brighthouse administration needs to focus on bringing more secondary education expertise to the LEA.

Chicago has initiated several organizational changes at the secondary level. In order to personalize relations between students and teachers, the district has implemented Junior and Senior Academies. The central focus of the academies is to have teachers stay with one group of students through 2 or 4 years of high school.

Similarly, the district has begun to implement advisory periods intended to create supportive relations between teachers and students. The district recently published a curriculum guide for this program. Teachers have disagreed with the advisory periods. It will be vital to have teacher support for this initiative.

In an effort to improve student performance, the district has increased math and science graduation requirements and developed standards and assessments for core subject areas. The district has also expanded specialized programs, including magnet schools, the International Baccalaureate program, scholars honors programs, and career training. Several new schools are slated to open over the next 2 years, including 11 high schools redesigned as Career Academies, several charter schools for high school students, and 7 “small school” high schools. The district’s reform plan, Design for High Schools, is an ambitious effort to ensure that all high school students receive a strong core academic curriculum and to offer several different avenues for achievement.

Improving Teaching and Learning in Poorly Performing Schools. Along with efforts to improve secondary education, both districts face crucial challenges in improving teaching and learning in poorly performing schools. Birmingham’s “critical friend” approach to school improvement is facing many alternative strategies that are under consideration by the national government.

One option is closing failing schools. Stephen Byers, the schools standards minister until recently, considered the option of closure if a school fails the OFSTED inspections and has at least 25% of their places vacant (Carvel, 1998). In the last 4 years, the Birmingham LEA has closed five schools because of poor performance and undersubscription by parents. The second option being considered is contracting private service providers. Michael Barber, a key education adviser to the Blair administration, introduced the option of contracting failing school management to private vendors in a speech in January 1998 (“Schools. Labour’s learning,” 1998). As part of the proposed “Education Action Zones,” private firms can take over some or all of the 20 low-performing schools within each zone. To create a flexible climate for whole-school improvement, the education action zones are likely to relax national curricular standards and national union provisions.

The third option is the pressuring strategy (without proper support) that OFSTED inspections are

associated with. The head of OFSTED, Chris Woodhead, insists that failing schools ought to be publicly labeled and that poor teaching should be sanctioned. The league tables report school rankings on the national assessments and further stigmatize schools that serve disadvantaged students. The tables do not take into account either this disadvantage or the gains made by these schools and their students. In contrast, Brighthouse sees that public blaming is counterproductive and that failing schools need proper support and encouragement. In recognition of these two opposing strategies—pressuring and support—Brighthouse and Woodhead have been appointed by the government to serve as vice-chairmen of a national commission on school standards.

The Birmingham model has to contend with several competing approaches. Yet, precisely because of these contending models, Brighthouse's approach to school improvement constitutes a necessary counterbalance to the other strands of governmental intervention, thereby providing the proper checks and balances within a national educational system.

In Chicago, whereas the media and the public have focused on probation, reconstitution, and academic promotion, the CPS have expanded their policy options in addressing educational failure. With the CPS board's approval, seven charter schools started fall of 1997 and six new charter schools were in operation during 1998–1999. These schools are selected based on state and district provisions, including services targeted to at-risk student populations. Although receiving public funds, these schools enjoy substantial autonomy from both CPS central direction and union work rules. In return for programmatic flexibility, charter schools are held accountable for student performance through a 4-year contract agreement. Because of political opposition from the teachers' union, existing failing schools are not likely to become charter schools. Further, many schools in CPS are adopting the small-school strategy, broadening their school-to-work programs, and bringing in external expert partners to address their own needs. Although there is no lack of innovative strategies, CPS is somewhat behind in assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving student achievement. Clearly, the district needs to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation functions as it proliferates innovative practices systemwide.

Providing Ongoing Support to Schools

Another major challenge in the area of broadening academic gains is the need to develop the systems' capacity to provide ongoing support to schools. The sister systems differ in the capacity of their central administrations to assist schools and teachers in their efforts to improve student performance. Whereas Birmingham has developed a strong advisory and support system that provides schools with expertise in these areas, Chicago relies heavily on consultants. Table 12 shows the decline in the number of central office staff in Chicago involved in curriculum, instruction, and professional development that has occurred over the past decade. Almost one half of these positions have been eliminated. Currently, the central administration does not have the technical capacity to assist schools in their improvement efforts.

This downsizing has resulted in the district relying on external consultants to assist schools in efforts to improve core instructional activities. This policy is problematic in terms of the support the district offers poorly performing schools. As previously mentioned, the quality of the external consultants provided to schools on probation is highly variable. Although these consultants have the best intentions, helping schools improve their performance and that of their students requires intensive, long-term efforts. Many of the external partners do not have the staff to provide such support. The reliance on external consultants also results in the lack of a unified educational vision at the district level. Whereas Brighthouse and the central administration in Birmingham offer a coherent vision of school improvement, Chicago's approach offers a variety of models. This policy should be reconsidered, particularly in light of the district's drive to raise standards systemwide. Providing support to schools requires a long-term institutional commitment that may be undermined by the overreliance on competing consultants.

The Challenge of Diversity

The districts are facing two kinds of diversity challenges. First, the school systems have to ensure equal access for their disadvantaged populations. Second, the districts need to maintain a middle-class presence by allowing for institutional diversity.

For Birmingham, a longer term challenge is to improve performance among its immigrant student populations. Whereas 14% of the White boys failed in all subjects in the GCSE examinations in 1996, these numbers are higher for the Bangladeshi boys (24%) and the Pakistani boys (17%). There are significant gender differences. Whereas 37% of the girls achieved 5 or more A–C grades in the GCSE in 1996, only 28% of the boys did. Although African/Caribbean children performed well in the primary level, African/Caribbean boys as a group underperformed at the secondary level. Birmingham's recruitment of teachers and head teachers also showed a significant underrepresentation of ethnic minorities. In light of these concerns, Birmingham has initiated several strategies. Particularly innovative is the UFA, which is a cross-agency initiative designed to complement and enrich school learning for early adolescents. The UFA offers interest-led, intensive, and accelerated learning opportunities during holiday breaks and also provides distance learning and debating opportunities through the Young People's Parliament. In its first year, the UFA was piloted in Aston, a City Challenge area.

With its diverse student body, the Chicago school board is weighing the proper balance between second language instruction for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and the need for mainstream English-based instruction. In February 1998, the board approved a 3-year limit to instructional programs for most of the district's LEP students. The limit is coupled with additional support for professional development and multicultural programs. The challenge is for the CPS to create the necessary conditions for LEP students to make a meaningful transition to the mainstream classroom.

The other dimension of the diversity issue is how to retain the middle class. Central-city educational systems have to cope with the exiting of the middle class to both suburban and nongovernmental schools. As public institutions, urban school systems need to maintain a healthy mix of students with different socioeconomic

backgrounds. Thus, the sister systems, though focusing on raising the lower-performing schools, cannot afford to neglect the needs of the middle class. Innovative programs that emphasize high-quality curriculum and outcome performance are designed to address these structural challenges. In Chicago, magnet schools with distinct curricular programs have been a successful tool for maintaining a more heterogeneous student population. In spring 1998, the board revised the magnet school admission policy in part to accommodate the schooling demand of middle-class parents in regentrified neighborhoods. In March 1998, the school board approved an expansion of the International Baccalaureate program from 1 school to as many as 13 in the next few years. These programs are intended to become regional centers of academic excellence as students would be drawn from those who score above the 60th percentile within a specific regional boundary. If successful, these initiatives may bring about more integrated schools in terms of income, ethnicity, and race.

CONCLUSION

Integrated governance has accomplished much in a relatively short period of time in both systems. This reform model fosters educational improvement through the coordination of activities in support of systemwide goals and standards. Integrated governance enables central administrators to develop a strong political base on which to improve system operations.

In Chicago, the central administration under integrated governance has successfully addressed fiscal and managerial problems. It has raised performance standards for the whole system and instituted an ambitious accountability agenda that provides both pressure and support for school improvement. Several urban school districts in the United States, including Cleveland, are following Chicago's lead.

The Birmingham LEA has had similar success under integrated governance. The LEA has significantly improved its fiscal operations and has mobilized teachers and head teachers around its innovative educational agenda. Its professionally oriented support model has led to significant school improvement and improved student achievement. As the national government in the UK reinforces the LEA's monitoring function, Birmingham offers

a promising model for balancing pressure and support.

Integrated governance appears to be a promising strategy for the improvement of urban school systems. Although the sister systems have made significant gains, their approaches to school improvement reflect both differences in the educational visions that guide the leadership of each system and the organizational and political realities in which both systems are located. As the educational visions of both administrations continue to evolve and as the political and organizational realities change, continued study of how integrated governance operates within each system may provide further insights into successful strategies for improving urban schools.

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TABLE 1
Key Components in Systemwide Accountability

Policy mechanisms	Chicago	Birmingham, UK
Setting standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide standards in curriculum, assessment, and professional recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National curriculum and examination
Formal sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven schools reconstituted • 109 schools placed on probation • Social promotion terminated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OFSTED inspection of LEA • OFSTED inspection of schools • School rankings by test performance in newspapers
Support to build up school capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External partners for reconstituted and probation schools • Professional development for principals and teachers (e.g., Projects LIFT & LAUNCH) • Expanded teacher recruitment efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham Advisory Support Services • LMS enables school autonomy • Chief Education Officer leadership in ensuring teacher support
Support to build up student capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer Bridge programs • Lighthouse program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early years provision • Cross-agency collaboration (e.g., University of the First Age)
Pressure from market-like competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited: 15 charter schools approved; IB and magnet programs expanded • Families exit to private and suburban schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant-maintained schools opt out of LEA control • School closure • Parental preference and LMS budgeting

TABLE 2
Birmingham and Chicago School Characteristics, 1997–1998

Characteristic	Birmingham	Chicago Public Schools
Number of schools	444	567
Minority students	41%	*89%
Low-income students	31%	83%
Mobility rate	18%	29%

Note: From Birmingham City Council (1997a), and from Chicago Public Schools (1998).

TABLE 3
Average High School Percentage of Students
at National Norms on Test of Achievement and Proficiency

	Subject	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
District High School Average	Reading	23.35%	20.24%	21%	17.65%	19.49%	16.92%	20.92%	23.1%
	Math	17.43%	18%	20.84%	16.5%	21%	17.97%	25.83%	25.84%
Probation High School Average	Reading	12.6%	10.2%	10.2%	7.6%	9.6%	7.5%	10.5%	12.62%
	Math	8%	8.4%	10.2%	6.6%	10.8%	8.4%	14.3%	15.82%

Note: From Chicago Public Schools (1998).

TABLE 4
Characteristics of Reconstituted High Schools, 1997–1998

School	Low-income	Mobility	Dropout	Chronic truancy	Black	Hispanic
DuSable	90.2%	70.7%	21.8%	12.6%	100.0%	0.0%
Englewood	67.5%	50.3%	23.3%	5.1%	100.0%	0.0%
Harper	83.5%	52.4%	34.5%	12.0%	99.4%	0.5%
King	91.9%	55.6%	18.6%	30.5%	100.0%	0.0%
Orr	79.5%	49.8%	29.1%	1.9%	96.3%	3.6%
Phillips	86.8%	57.0%	45.7%	9.7%	100.0%	0.0%
Robeson	87.7%	53.7%	27.5%	21.6%	100.0%	0.0%
Mean	83.9%	55.6%	28.6%	13.3%	99.4%	0.6%
All High Schools	76.0%	32.0%	17.0%	12.0%	63.0%	24.0%

Note: Based on information provided by the Chicago Public Schools, Office of Accountability (1998).

TABLE 5
New Appointments at Chicago Public Schools' Central Office
(July 1995–February 1998)

Intermediate past employers												
Area	City of Chicago		Public agencies		Non-profit		Private sector		CPS		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Education	1	2.2	1	2.2	3	6.8	—	—	39	88.6	44	39.6
Non-Education	25	37.3	4	5.9	4	5.9	9	13.4	25	37.3	67	60.3
% of total	23.4%		4.5%		6.3%		8.1%		57.6%		100.0%	

Note: From *Catalyst*, section on “Comings and goings,” September 1995 through February 1998.

TABLE 6
1997–1998 Birmingham City Budget

Function	Budget (£ millions)	Percent of total
Education total	493	47.7%
<i>Delegated to schools</i>	372	36.0%
<i>Non-delegated to schools</i>	121	11.7%
Other function total	541	52.3%
Total	1,034	100.0%

Note: From Birmingham City Council (1998).

TABLE 7		
1997–1998 Birmingham Education Budget		
Allocative level	Budget (£)	Percent of total
<i>Non-delegated</i>		
Central administration	81,482,290	16.5%
Capital asset charges	39,755,650	8.1%
Subtotal	121,237,940	24.6%
<i>Delegated to</i>		
Local Education Authority schools	327,087,720	66.3%
Grant-maintained schools	44,831,340	9.1%
Subtotal	371,919,060	75.4%
Total	493,157,000	100.0%

Note: From Birmingham City Council (1998).

Table 8
Birmingham Local Education Authority Performance
Compared to National Average

Key Stage 1				
Subject	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Reading	1995	72.3	78.5	-6.3
	1997	77.3	80.1	-2.8
Writing	1995	75.2	80.4	-5.2
	1997	79.0	80.4	-1.4
Math	1995	74.2	79.2	-5.0
	1997	81.4	84.1	-2.7
Key Stage 2				
Subject	Year	LEA	National	Difference
English	1995	37.4	48.3	-10.9
	1997	56.7	62.9	-6.3
Math	1995	37.9	44.7	-6.9
	1997	53.2	61.0	-7.8
Key Stage 3				
Subject	Year	LEA	National	Difference
English	1995	59.8	61.9	-2.1
	1997	46.4	56.6	-10.2
Math	1995	50.2	63.0	-12.8
	1997	48.3	61.0	-12.8
General Certificate of Secondary Education				
% pupils 5+ A*-C	1994	31.0	40.7	-9.6
	1997	36.0	43.1	-7.0
% pupils 5+ A*-G	1994	78.1	87.0	-8.8
	1997	83.8	88.4	-4.6
Average points	1994	28.0	33.5	-5.5
Score per pupil	1997	33.4	36.7	-3.4

Note: From Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (1998).

TABLE 9
1997–1998 Birmingham Central Service Budget

Central administration department	Staff (number of Full-Time Equivalent)	Percent of total	Budget amount (£)	Percent of total
Special education	1,231	46.7%	31,577,880	38.8%
School services and support	303	11.5%	18,609,310	22.8%
Financial controller	150	5.7%	3,816,060	4.7%
Personnel and equalities	609	23.1%	14,368,140	17.6%
Management and coordination	125	4.7%	6,008,690	7.4%
Advisory and support service	220	8.3%	5,827,860	7.2%
Total	2,638	100.0%	81,482,290	100.0%

Note: From Birmingham City Council (1998).

TABLE 10
General Certificate of Secondary Education
Points Score for Birmingham Schools

1996 Performance	1991–1996 Change in Performance		
	Above LEA Average	Below LEA Average	Total (Number of Schools)
Above LEA average ^a	8	23	31
Below LEA average	14	16	30
Total (number of schools)	22	39	61

Note: LEA = Local Education Authority. From Birmingham City Council (1998).

^aIn 1996, the average GCSE points score was 26.9.

TABLE 11
Documents Prepared for 1997 Office of
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

Section	<i>Number of Documents</i>
Strategic planning within the Local Education Authority	19
Organization of decision making and the council	5
Local Education Authority provisions supporting schools	34
School places, admissions, and appeal procedures	40
Behavior plan and supporting provisions	20
Pupils educated outside of school	18
Supporting school attendance	11
Maintenance and repair of schools	15
Financial regulation	37
School governance	35
Employment of staff	29
Special education needs	17
Health, safety, and welfare	9
Curriculum and assessment	209
School transport	1
Discretionary and mandatory awards	1
Youth service	5
Adult education	11
Performance data on pupil attainment	39
School improvement	17
Total	572

Note: From Birmingham City Council (1997b).

TABLE 12
Central Office Staff in Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

Number of Staff			
<i>School Year</i>	<i>Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development</i>	<i>Total Central Office</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
1988–1989	404	4,881	8.3%
1989–1990	471	4,328	10.9%
1990–1991	371	3,632	10.2%
1991–1992	237	3,404	7.0%
1992–1993	201	3,126	6.4%
1993–1994	166	3,266	5.1%
1994–1995	221	3,456	5.7%
1995–1996	197	2,739	8.1%
1996–1997	143.2	2,712	5.3%
1997–1998	138	2,505	5.5%

Note: Data taken from Chicago Public Schools annual budgets 1988–1989 through 1997–1998. Calculations are author’s own.