

WHO SHOULD RUN PHILADELPHIA'S SCHOOLS?

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2016
Behrakis Grand Hall
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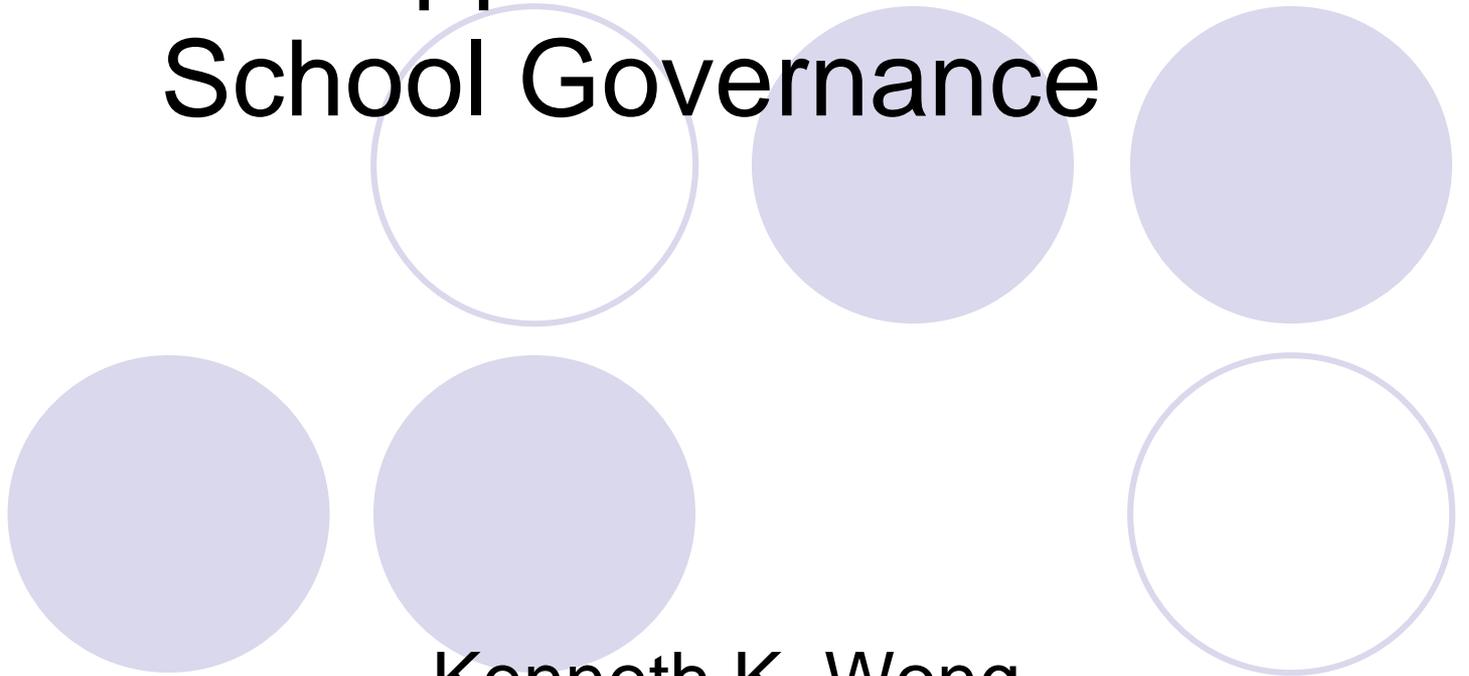
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Who is in charge? Considering Different Approaches to Urban School Governance



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Why Focus on School Governance?

School governance serves several aims:

- *Representation* of school board members: Does the district embody a collective vision? Do board members reflect the changing populations in the city?
- *Accountability* of the policy making process: Can local voters' hold the district leadership accountable for their decisions? Is there policy and data transparency for parental and public engagement?
- *Capacity to act*: Does the governance system enable schools and teachers to take actions to improve teaching and learning?
- *Leverage partnership*: Is there collaboration between the school district and other sectors?
- *Incentives to innovate*: Does governance facilitate innovative practices at all levels?

Local Governance: 3 Approaches

- An elected school board that is independent from other state and city governing bodies
- A system of strong school-level authority with relatively weak district authority
- Mayoral appointed school board that integrates mayoral election and school accountability

(1) School Board Elected By Local Voters in Elections Held Separately from General Elections

- Nonpartisan electoral cycle drives governance accountability: A dominant approach
- An elected school board in a nonpartisan election that is held “off year” from the local general election.
- Board members can be elected from sub-districts or district-wide (or at-large).
- There is usually no term limit: incumbency dominates
- Challenges may include:
 - Board elections are rarely contested and have low voters’ turnout.
 - Board members often involve in micromanagement
 - Fragmented representation may not reflect diverse populations
 - Organized interest groups exercise strong electoral influence with campaign contributions and organized voting blocs
 - School District insulates from other policymaking institutions

(2) Decentralized governance or site-based empowerment

- Decentralized reforms are directed at reallocating power between the central authority and the schools within the public school system.
- Not surprisingly, the specific arrangements that enable schools to make decisions to address their particular needs vary widely across districts as well as among schools within a district.
- By the 1990s, virtually all urban districts had some form of “site-based governance,” with parents and community representatives serving in an advisory role at the school sites.

(2) Decentralized governance: Parental empowerment in Chicago

- The most extensive effort to ensure that parents are indeed the key decision makers was the Local School Council (LSC) reform in Chicago during 1988 through 1995. Each school had an elected LSC.
- Each 11-member council consisted of 6 elected parents (i.e. the majority), 2 community representatives, 2 teachers, and the principal. There was also one student member at the high school level. *Only parents were allowed to vote for parental representatives.*
- Each LSC was given substantial authority: *they hired and fired the principal*, allocated lump sums that came from a state compensatory education program fund, and developed school improvement plans.

(2) Decentralized governance: Parental empowerment in Chicago

- Chicago's LSC reform produced mixed results.
- After the first LSC election in 1989, voters turnout for LSC elections declined significantly.
- Many LSCs did not have enough parent candidates to fill the 6 seats.
- Achievement gains were modest and uneven in subject areas and grade levels.
- The reform did not improve the academic performance at the high school level.

(3) Mayoral Governance: Different Designs



- Mayoral appointed school boards govern several urban districts: Chicago, New York, Boston, Cleveland, New Haven, Hartford, and Providence, among others.
- The mayor in Washington DC is also in charge of the school system, while the DC city council maintains strong budgetary checks.
- Boston and Providence have nominating committees that submit a list of qualified school board candidates to the mayor.
- The appointed boards in New Haven and Hartford have expanded to include elected parental representatives.

(3) Mayoral Accountability - Design Rationale

- **Integrated Governance: A single office (Office of the Mayor) is ultimately accountable.** Integrate electoral accountability and public education performance at the citywide level.
- Enables the mayor to rely on system-wide standards to hold schools and students accountable for their performance.
- Supports schools that are persistently underperforming, such as leveraging resources in the larger community.
- Reduces institutional fragmentation that often impedes strategic actions

Does Mayoral Governance Work?

Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA-NAEP)

- Mayoral governance has continued to improve student performance in urban districts.
- In 2015, New York, Boston, Chicago, and the District of Columbia have shown that they were able to outperform their urban district peers across multiple academic measures in both the fourth and the eighth grades.
- DC outperformed its urban district peers in 8 of the 12 measures in the fourth grade and in 3 of the 10 measures in the eighth grade in 2015.

Does Mayoral Governance Work?

State Assessment Shows Promising Results

- Mayoral governance tends to narrow the achievement gap in New York; New Haven, and Chicago. Further, Hartford, Boston, and Providence shows progress on some academic measures in different subjects.
- Mayoral governance in New York City shows significant, positive effects on both fourth- and eighth-grade student achievement, especially for African American and Latino students.

Does Mayoral Governance Work?

Strategic Allocation of Resources

- Mayoral governance engages in strategic allocation of resources to support learning:
 - positively associated with an investment in the teaching staff, more spending on instruction, smaller student-teacher ratios, a greater percentage of resources allocated for K-12 student support, and a larger percentage of revenue coming from state sources.
 - Appointed school board members have complementary, specialized skills and experience

Lessons on Mayoral Governance

- Granting a mayor the opportunity to be in charge of the district is only the beginning. The mayor has to be an active “education mayor.”
- Cities should adapt mayoral control to their unique local context.
- Even if mayoral control is initially successful, reinventing mayoral governance is needed to sustain gains.

School Governance Change?

- Is Philadelphia ready for school governance change?
- What design features work for Philadelphia?
Elected board? Decentralized control? Mayoral Governance?
 - Representation
 - Accountability
 - Capacity
 - Partnership
 - Innovation
- Is there a collective will (and public support) to enact and implement governance change?

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