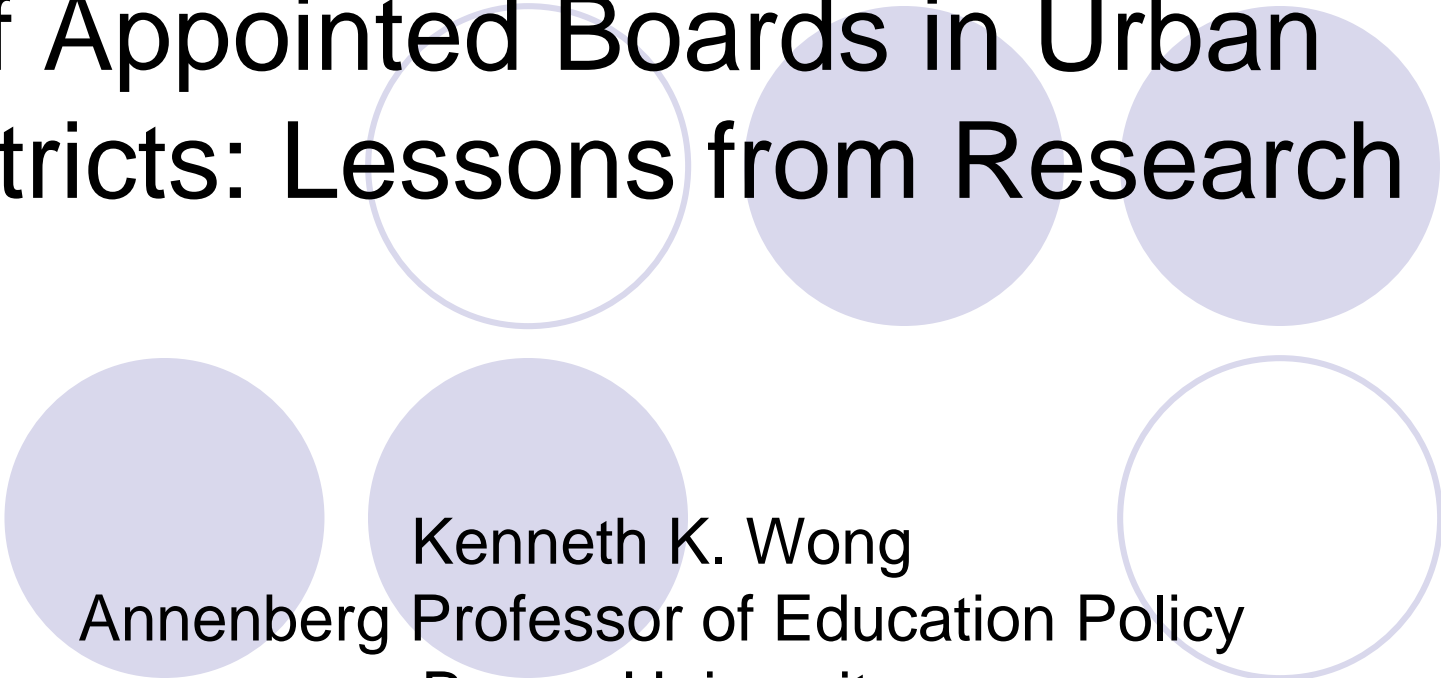


# Considering the Design and Effects of Appointed Boards in Urban Districts: Lessons from Research



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# UNIQUE CHALLENGES FOR URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN THE U.S.

**SCALE:** 26.6% of the nation's K-12 students are served by the largest 129 districts, and about 45% are taught in the 400 largest districts; high concentration of high needs students in these districts

**FRAGMENTATION:** An elected school board constitutes multiple centers of power and lack of a single entity that is ultimately in charge to improve school performance; low turnout for school board elections

**DECLINE IN PUBLIC CONFIDENCE:** Growing parental demand on school improvement, out-migration of middle-class families, limited parental engagement from diverse communities, and taxpayers' concerns

# 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?

# Governance by Appointed Board: Different Designs



- Governor and Mayor jointly appoint the school board in Philadelphia and, until 2016, Baltimore
- 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.

# Appointed Board - Design Rationale

- **Integrated Governance: A system-wide elected office (e.g. governor or mayor or both) is ultimately accountable.** Integrate electoral accountability and public education performance at the citywide level.
- Enables the appointed board 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

# Enabling Processes



- State **legislation** that authorizes the governor/mayor to appoint the board (such as Philadelphia, Chicago and New York)
- State legislation that calls for a **citywide referendum** on whether to grant the mayor the authority to appoint the school board (such as Boston and Cleveland).
- Voter approval of **changes in the city charter** that allow the mayor to appoint school board members (such as Oakland in 2000).

# VARIATIONS OF APPOINTIVE POWER

District	Mayor/Gov appoints <u>majority</u> of board?	Mayor/Gov appoints <u>all</u> of board?	Mayor/Gov has <u>full appt. power</u> ?
Boston	Yes	Yes	No ^
Chicago	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Haven	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baltimore	Joint appt. with governor until 2016; Mayoral appointment since 2017		
Providence	Yes	Yes	No ^
Detroit <sup>a</sup>	Yes	No *	Yes
Cleveland	Yes	Yes	No ^
Wash. DC	Full Governance Authority		
Oakland	No	No	Yes
Philadelphia	No: Joint appt. with governor		
New York	Yes	No	Yes
Hartford	Yes	Yes	Yes

NOTES: a) In 2004, Detroit reverted to an elected school board. ^ Nominating committee pre-screens candidates and then gives a slate to the mayor. \* State places 1 of 7 on board for first five years.

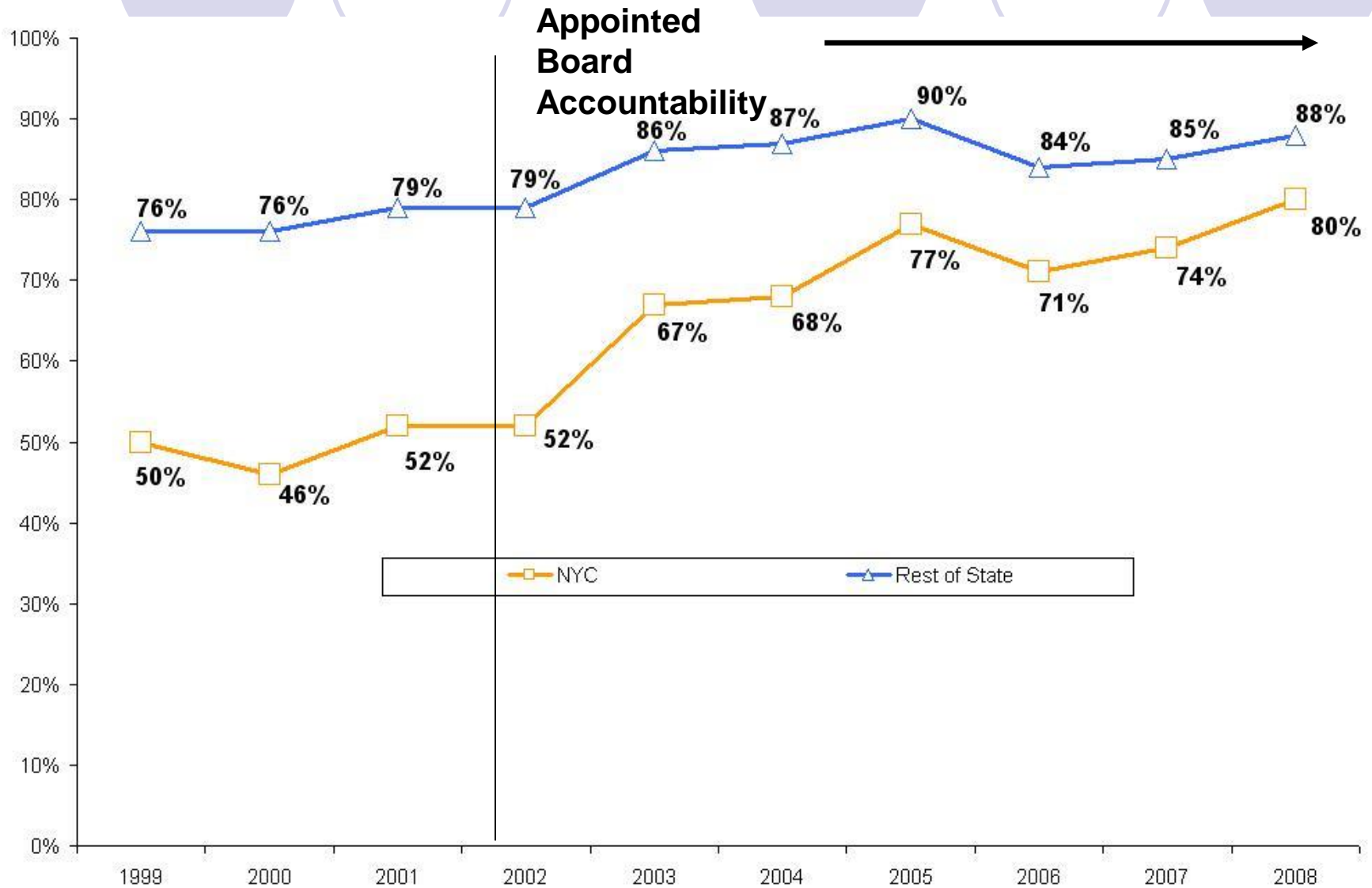
## **Does Appointed Board Raise Student Performance?**

Consider Findings based on analyses of 100 urban districts (comparing appointed with elected boards)

- Appointed boards show a statistically significant, positive effect on student achievement in reading and math at both elementary and high school grades.
- The lowest performing schools show persistent improvement in student achievement in districts with appointed boards.
- Academic progress is also correlated to institutional checks and balances (such as school board nominating committee). There is an ongoing need for transparency and community engagement.



# New York City: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Achievement, 1999-2008



# Does Appointed Board Work?

## Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA-NAEP)

- Appointed boards have 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 Appointed Board Work?

## State Assessment Shows Promising Results

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

# Does Appointed Board Work?

## Strategic Allocation of Resources

- Appointed board 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
  - larger percentage of revenue coming from state sources.
  - Appointed school board members have complementary, specialized skills and experience

# Does Appointed Board Improve Management?



- Appointed board is strategic in prioritizing resource allocation and management. Appointed board lowers spending on general administration, while targeting resources on instructional purposes.
- Union-management collaboration is strengthened: Unions signed off on Race to the Top application and AFT President endorsed NYC appointed board.
- Appointed board governance improves data analytic functions and fiscal discipline.

# The Public Matters – Electoral Democracy Holds Appointed Board Accountable

- In 2004, Detroit voters chose to end the appointed school board after poor district performance
- In 2002, Cleveland voters chose to continue the appointed board governance after strong performance
- D.C. Mayor Fenty was voted out of office for not sufficiently engaging the public on reform
- Lesson: voters can discern school performance, and will hold board governance accountable

# Factors for Success in Appointed Board Governance

- Internal accountability:
  - Clear standards of accountability at different levels of the policy system
  - Strategic deployment of resources
  - Focus on capacity building and data use
  - Portfolio approach to school improvement
- External accountability:
  - A system-wide office ultimately accountable, with proper checks and balances
  - A nominating process for school board appointment
  - Budgetary approval by the City Council
  - External and independent evaluation

# Lessons on Appointed Board Governance



- Granting an appointed board the opportunity to be in charge of the district is only the beginning. The board has to be an active board.
- Cities should adapt appointed board governance to their unique local context.
- Even if the appointed board is initially successful, an ongoing process of evaluation and improvement is needed to sustain gains.



# Appointed Board Governance for Saint Louis?

What design features in appointed board governance work for Saint Louis?

- Consideration for governance design:
  - Representation
  - Accountability
  - Capacity
  - Partnership
  - Innovation
- Is there a collective will (and public support) to enact and implement meaningful governance change?