



Can States Take Over and Turn Around Low-Performing School Districts? Evidence on Policy Effects and Political Dynamics From Lawrence, Massachusetts

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Can States Take Over and Turn Around Low-Performing School Districts?
Evidence on Policy Effects and Political Dynamics from Lawrence, Massachusetts

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A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Education of Harvard
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Education

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Dedication

To my dad, Milton, for the visits to his classrooms that made me interested in schools and addressing inequality, and for the summers and after-school hours we spent together that inspired my love of learning. To my mom, Kathy, for insisting with such certainty that there were no limits to what I could accomplish that her encouraging voice still sings in my head daily. To my little brother, Jacob, for always reminding me to balance work with play. To Linda and Tom, for showing me that family is not limited to the one you're born into. To Miriam, for sacrifices large and small and for being my very favorite thought partner and my love.

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Abstract

Turning around persistently low-performing K-12 schools and districts has been an elusive goal despite prioritization at the highest levels of government. In recent years, the U.S. Department of Education encouraged states to adopt tiered accountability systems, like the Massachusetts model, which allows state takeover of districts in cases of extreme underperformance. Massachusetts' Lawrence Public Schools provide a unique opportunity to examine a post-No Child Left Behind state takeover and turnaround of a chronically low-performing, majority low-income, district stemming directly from state accountability policy. I use mixed-methods to examine both policy effects and political dynamics of the Lawrence turnaround. In Part I, I use student-level administrative data to compare Lawrence students' academic achievement gains before and after the turnaround to similar students in other majority low-income Massachusetts districts. I find that the turnaround had large positive effects on math achievement and modest positive effects on reading achievement. The turnaround also increased grade progression among high school students. I find no effects on any other non-test academic outcomes. The reforms were particularly effective for the district's large population of students learning English as a second language. I also find that intensive small-group instruction by select teachers over vacation breaks explains roughly half of the effect in math and all of the effect in reading. In Part II, I examine the political dynamics of the Lawrence turnaround drawing on interviews, press coverage, public documents, and secondary sources of survey data. I find that, although it was certainly not without controversy, the Lawrence reforms were less contentious than many other recent cases of takeover and turnaround. Explanatory

factors relate to the (1) Lawrence context, (2) new authorities granted to the state under its accountability law, and (3) features of turnaround leaders' approach to reform. Specifically, leaders focused on relationship building and stakeholder empowerment, differentiated district-school relations, a "third way" framing and policy approach to transcending polarizing politics, strategic staffing decisions, and generating early results while minimizing disruption. The study provides a rare and encouraging proof point illustrating that accountability-driven improvement of low-performing districts is indeed possible, as well as lessons for other states, districts, and schools seeking improvement.

Introduction

Americans tend to view the public school system as the government's primary program for combating social inequality (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2004). However, both the income gap between wealthy and poor families and academic achievement gaps between high- and low-income children have grown over the past three decades (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Reardon, 2011). For schools to play a greater role in narrowing these gaps without lowering the bar for high-income students, they must more effectively serve low-income learners. One strategy for narrowing these gaps is to try to dramatically improve, or "turnaround," the country's lowest performing schools which tend to serve high concentrations of low-income students. Turnaround of these persistently underperforming schools could make a system-wide dent given that low-performance tends to concentrate within a subset of schools. For instance, more than half of all dropouts occur at just 12 percent of high schools (Balfanz & Legters, 2004).

The Federal government has spent billions of dollars to support the turnaround of these schools. However, some observers have theorized that district-level reform is better suited to supporting long-term success for low-performing schools (Johnson, Marieta, Higgins, Mapp & Grossman, 2015; Zavadsky, 2013). Indeed, only approximately 15 percent of the nation's districts had one or more schools eligible for the Federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program aimed at turning around the lowest-performing five percent of public K-12 schools (Center on Education Policy, 2011). Recent work by Chingos, Whitehurst, Gallaher (2015) suggests that there are indeed notable differences in student achievement between lower and higher performing districts.

Unfortunately, district improvement is rare (Chingos, Whitehurst, Gallaher, 2015) and studies of successful district-wide turnaround efforts are few and far between. This is especially true when it comes to district turnarounds that stem directly from accountability policy and that could therefore be replicated and brought to scale. However, the single and cross-case studies of districts with records of improvement that do exist tend to emphasize that effective navigation of both internal and external politics appears to be a critical ingredient of success (Honig & Coburn, 2008; Johnson et al., 2015) and long-term sustainability (Jochim, 2013; Stone, Henig, Jones & Pierannunzi, 2001; Patashnik, 2003).

Lawrence, Massachusetts provides a useful case because it is a rare example of a district turnaround effort driven by a state's accountability policy that has resulted in early successes for students and that has generated minimal political controversy relative to other examples of state intervention and district turnaround (Buras, 2015; Jabar, 2015; Russakoff, 2015; Williams, 2015). My dissertation examines both the policy effects and political dynamics of Massachusetts' takeover and turnaround of the Lawrence Public Schools, a persistently low-performing district serving a student population that is almost entirely low-income. Lawrence was the first district to be taken over by the state since the passage of a 2010 law providing the state with increased authority to intervene in cases of extreme underperformance.

The findings have implications for the State of Massachusetts which has now taken over a second low-performing district and has recommended takeover of a third. The results could also be useful for other states that are designing or modifying their own accountability systems, particularly in the post-Every Student Succeeds Act era in which

states will play a greater role in addressing underperformance. Specifically, the findings suggest that state-level accountability can drive improvement of the lowest-performing districts. The study also provides some lessons about the particular policy mechanisms that can drive success, such as intensive small group instruction by select teachers over vacation breaks. These programs have the potential for scalability regardless of whether a district is undergoing turnaround.

The second paper helps to put the first in context, providing lessons about the generalizability of the findings on the turnaround policy's effects. Specifically, in paper two, I examine how stakeholders have responded to the Lawrence takeover and turnaround and why the Lawrence turnaround has not been more politically contentious. The results provide direction for states on the types of contexts that might be most ripe for this kind of intervention. They also have implications for district leaders looking for guidance on navigating the politics of district-wide improvement. Overall, the study provides an encouraging illustration of how policy and politics can drive the improvement of low-performing, majority low-income school districts.

**Part I: Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts? Evidence from
Lawrence, Massachusetts**

Abstract

The U.S. Department of Education has spent billions of dollars to support turnarounds of low-achieving schools, yet most evidence on the impact of district-wide turnarounds comes from high-profile, exceptional settings and not from examples driven by state accountability policy. In this paper, we study the impact of state takeover and district-level turnaround in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Takeover of the Lawrence Public School (LPS) district was driven by the state's accountability system, which increases state control in response to chronic underperformance. We find that the first two years of the LPS turnaround produced sizeable achievement gains in math and modest gains in reading. Our preferred estimates compare LPS to other low income school districts in a differences-in-differences framework, although the results are robust to a wide variety of specifications, including student fixed effects. While the LPS turnaround was a package of interventions that cannot be fully separated, we find evidence that intensive small-group instruction over vacation breaks led to particularly large achievement gains for participating students.

School and District Turnaround

Turning around chronically under-performing schools and districts has been an elusive goal, despite prioritization at the highest levels of government (Gewertz, 2009). In recent years, considerable federal resources have been devoted toward this end. The Obama administration's signature education initiative, Race to the Top, awarded \$4.35 billion to states in competitive grant funding, based on six criteria, one of which was the state's plans for turning around their lowest achieving schools (Smarick, 2010). This was on top of \$3 billion in new funding for School Improvement Grants (SIG), aimed at improving the lowest-performing five percent of public K-12 schools, which was also funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Dee, 2012).¹

At the state level, there is considerable variation across accountability models in the policy response to chronic underperformance. Most recently, the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) through its Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Program has encouraged states to adopt tiered accountability systems targeting the lowest performers for intensive interventions. The U.S. DOE has held up the Massachusetts system as an exemplar (U.S. DOE, 2012). This system has three distinct features. First, it classifies schools and districts into five levels based on performance. Second, it requires low-performing schools and districts to implement rapid improvement plans. Third, it allows the State to takeover schools and districts at the very lowest levels of achievement (U.S. DOE, 2012).

Massachusetts is not alone in using or considering state intervention into underperforming districts. The Education Commission of the States (2016) estimates that eleven states passed or debated legislation to create state-run districts within the past year

¹ This was beyond the \$546 million that had previously been appropriated for this purpose.

alone. Examining state turnarounds of districts from 1992 to 2000, Wong and Shen (2002, 2003) found that states have successfully improved district financial management but have had less success with improving student academic outcomes. These turnarounds predate, however, No Child Left Behind and thus did not all occur in a policy context with standardized performance information and high-stakes testing. As a result, there is a need to examine state takeovers in a more contemporary accountability climate.

In the post-No Child Left Behind era, a handful of papers have examined the impact of a variety of efforts to turn around individual schools. Dee (2012) uses a regression discontinuity approach to show that Federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) improved achievement among schools adopting the federal turnaround model. Strunk et al. (forthcoming) find that the cohort of Los Angeles turnaround schools with the most dramatic staff turnover experienced gains in ELA while those schools that implemented more moderate forms of turnaround experienced less improvement or even declines. Papay (2015) sees substantial achievement gains in Massachusetts schools eligible for SIG funding and required to choose from among a variety of school improvement models. The charter sector also provides models for turnaround. Abdulkadiroglu et al. (2014) find large impacts in both math and reading from converting underperforming traditional public schools into charter schools in Boston and New Orleans. Fryer (2014) shows that injecting best practices from charter schools into traditional public schools boosts math, though not reading, achievement. These studies build on a series of earlier findings suggesting that approaches to school turnaround involving high levels of staff replacement can, in some cases, undercut the capacity of schools to effectively improve

(Malen, Croninger, Muncey, and Redmond-Jones, 2002; Hess, 2003; Rice and Malen, 2003; Rice, and Croninger. 2005; Rice and Malen, 2010).

While the research on school-level turnaround has grown in recent years, much less is known about the effects of district-level reforms, which may be better suited than individual school reform to create the conditions for the lowest-performing schools to have long-run success (Supovitz, 2006; Zavadsky, 2013; Johnson et al., 2015). Indeed, recent evidence is consistent with the idea that districts play an important role in student achievement, beyond what school-level factors explain alone (Chingos et al., 2015).

A few recent papers have examined entire districts undergoing turnaround efforts. Harris and Larsen (2016), for example, document substantial achievement gains across the New Orleans school district following wide-ranging reforms. Zimmer et al. (2015) find mixed results for turnaround schools in Tennessee's unusual state-managed Achievement School District model under which district governance is divorced from geography through the placement of low-performing schools from across the state into a single district. Gill et al. (2007) show that the state's takeover of Philadelphia's school district in 2002, which turned over control of many schools to private operators, had little impact on student achievement. Importantly, most of the existing evidence on the impact of district-level turnaround comes from exceptional cases stemming from unusual circumstances, such as the Hurricane Katrina disaster, rather than directly from accountability policy. Additionally, these cases typically involve outside operators taking over large numbers of schools.

In contrast, the Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) provide a valuable case of accountability-driven state takeover and district-wide turnaround of a chronically low-

performing school system that was not solely driven by a large shift to outside school operators. The Achievement Gap Act (AGA) – signed into Massachusetts state law in 2010 – granted the State Board and Commissioner of Education the authority to intervene and take control of Level 5 school districts. Beginning in Fall 2012, LPS was taken over by the Massachusetts state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The takeover was specified as the final step in a policy process that began with chronic underperformance and ended with the classification of LPS as a Level 5 district, the lowest rating in the state’s accountability system. The turnaround reforms involved efforts designed to increase expectations, increase school-level autonomy and accountability, extend learning time, improve human capital, and improve data use. The majority of LPS students attended grade levels in schools that were not taken over by outside operators (more than 95 percent in year one and more than 80 percent in year two).

We find that LPS students exposed to the first two years of the state’s takeover score 0.17 standard deviations higher on math exams and 0.03 standard deviations higher on ELA exams compared to demographically similar students in other Massachusetts districts. Our results are robust to controlling for student fixed effects, which suggests that compositional changes in the LPS student body cannot explain our findings. We find suggestive evidence that participation in “Acceleration Academies” - an intensive, targeted instructional program that was administered to some students over vacation breaks – can explain a large share, but not the entirety, of the math impact and all of the ELA impact of the LPS turnaround.

Importantly, the Lawrence turnaround effort was a policy response stemming directly from state law and likely to be repeated in other contexts. While LPS was the first Massachusetts school district to be taken over by the state under the Achievement Gap Act, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has since voted to take over two additional districts—Holyoke and Southbridge. Furthermore, with the recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states will play an even greater role in shaping accountability systems in the coming years. Therefore, states have more of a need than ever for research on the merits of state-level accountability policy design choices. Our paper begins to address this need by providing rare evidence of the impact of state accountability policy and state-led district-wide turnaround.

The Context: Lawrence, Massachusetts

Lawrence is a mid-sized industrial city about 30 miles north of Boston that is considered, based on several measures, to be one of the most economically disadvantaged cities in the State of Massachusetts. From 2009 to 2013, median household income was \$32,851 and the poverty rate was 29.2 percent. Roughly 11 percent of residents over the age of 25 held at least a Bachelor's degree. Nearly 40 percent of Lawrence's population was foreign born (U.S. Census, 2015). The city is home to a large population of Latino residents, including many who came to Massachusetts the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico. LPS enrolled approximately 13,000 students in 28 schools as of 2011.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the Lawrence student population. Relative to the rest of Massachusetts, Lawrence students are far more likely to be low-income and classified as Hispanic. Leading up to the turnaround, roughly 80 percent of LPS students were learning English as a second language, making Lawrence a

particularly relevant case given our nation's growing population of ESL students. Prior to the takeover, LPS students scored about 0.75 standard deviations below the state average on ELA and Math exams. LPS students also score somewhat lower than students in other districts with a predominately low-income population.

The district has a long history of chronic underperformance, but the State took particular notice after reviewing results for the 2010-11 school year. Lawrence was in the bottom five districts in the State based on the percentage of students considered proficient on the ELA and math Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams. Three quarters of the schools in the districts experienced declines in achievement between 2009-10 and 2010-11 and only about half of all students were graduating within four years.

In the fall of 2011, based on these performance measures, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education classified LPS as a Level 5 district, the lowest rating in its one through five tiered accountability system, and placed the District into receivership. In January of 2012, the State appointed a Receiver: Jeffrey Riley, a former Boston Public Schools teacher, principal and deputy superintendent. Riley was given all the authority of the previous Superintendent and School Committee. The Achievement Gap Act also gave the Receiver broad discretion to alter district-wide policies including the collective bargaining agreement, to require staff to reapply for their positions, and to unilaterally extend the school day or year district-wide. The Receiver spent the Spring of 2012 gathering information, recruiting and hiring a central office team, visiting schools, interviewing principals, and planning for the 2013 academic year.

Receivership did not automatically come with large amounts of additional funding. According to estimates from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE), per pupil spending increased only slightly in the first year of the turnaround from \$13,272 in 2012 to \$13,852 in 2013. This was relatively similar to the state average for 2013 of \$14,021 (MA DESE, 2015). However, in the second year of the turnaround, LPS did receive more than \$2 million in Race to the Top funding and more than \$3 million in School Redesign Grants through the federal School Improvement Grant program (Education Research Services, 2015). In addition, LPS has received some private funding, from individual donors and foundations, to support special programs such as the Acceleration Academies.

The Lawrence Public Schools Turnaround

The Receiver began implementing turnaround efforts in the 2012-13 school year and the turnaround intensified over time. In this paper, we present results from the first two years of the turnaround implementation: 2013 (year one) and 2014 (year two). In the follow section, we outline the five primary components of the turnaround strategy, specifying the changes that occurred over time. This description is also summarized in Figure 1.

Expectations. First, the District attempted to raise expectations for students and staff. In Spring 2012, the Receiver released a turnaround plan that laid out ambitious performance targets, including 1) doubling the number of schools with Student Growth Percentiles² greater than 50 in year one, 2) moving from 22nd to one of the top five

² Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's growth model. More information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/>

ranked Massachusetts Gateway districts³ in ELA and math proficiency and graduation by year three, and 3) closing the gap with the rest of the state in ELA and math proficiency and graduation in five to seven years (MA DESE, 2012).

Autonomy and Accountability. Second, the District attempted to reduce spending on the central office and increase school-level autonomy. The Receiver cut the central office budget by \$1.6 million in year one and by an additional \$5 million in year two (Education Research Services, 2015) in an effort to push funds to the school level and shift to a more service-oriented approach to district-school relations. This is consistent with other improved districts that have moved from a compliance to a school-support focus (Supovitz, 2006) and provide a differentiated menu of services based on individual schools' needs (Honig, 2013).

While the overall goal was increased autonomy, the District provided differentiated levels of autonomy and supports to schools based on each school's prior performance and perceived capacity. The District gave schools that were highest performing prior to the turnaround, such as the Level 1 South Lawrence East Elementary and Frost Middle School, the highest levels of autonomy to continue operating as they saw fit. For the lowest performing schools, the District began handing over management to independent operators. These organizations were then given substantial operational autonomy. Schools in the middle, based on prior performance, were provided with the least autonomy and the most intensive central office supports.

The ultimate result could be thought of as a portfolio management model of district organization in that the central office oversees a diverse set of school operators

³ Massachusetts Gateway districts are located in 26 Gateway Cities that are characterized as midsized urban centers with historical economic success, but persistent contemporary social and economic challenges.

that range, in this case, from charter management organizations to local non-profits to the Lawrence Teachers Union. However, the Lawrence model is different from many portfolio management districts in that it does not manage schools of choice. Even the Lawrence schools that are now operated by organizations that have historically run charter schools are non-charter public schools with open enrollment policies and unionized teachers.

For example, the Community Group, a Lawrence-based early childhood education and charter school operator, began managing the Kindergarten and 1st grade at Arlington Elementary (now Community Day Arlington) in year one. In year two, the Community Group assumed responsibility for grades K-4. A new organization led by a duo of educators, took over the 5th grade at South Lawrence East Middle (now Spark Academy) in year one to run a fitness-themed program that integrates physical activity throughout an extended school day (Education Research Services, 2015). In year two, they expanded to manage grades 5-6 at Spark Academy. Unlocking Potential (UP), a Boston-based, non-profit middle school turnaround organization, was handed management of the 6th grade at Leonard Middle School in year one (now called UP Leonard). In year two, UP expanded to manage grades 6-8 at UP Leonard and the 6th grade of the Oliver School (now UP Oliver). The Lawrence Teachers Union operated grades 1-5 of the Oliver School (now Oliver Partnership) as of year two. Additionally, the Phoenix Foundation, a high school charter school provider based in Chelsea, Massachusetts, opened Phoenix Academy--a new alternative high school that targets recent dropouts and students at risk of dropout, including pregnant, parenting, and chronically truant teens. The school aims to provide tailored socio-emotional supports alongside quality academic offerings.

Human Capital. Third was an effort to improve the quality of the District’s administrators and teachers. The Receiver took a particularly aggressive approach to improving the quality of school principals and decided that several schools could benefit from new leadership. The District estimates that 36 percent of the principals were replaced in year one and another 20 percent were replaced in year two (Education Research Services, 2015). The national organization Building Excellent Schools offered a year-long training program for school administrators and those staff members determined to have potential to serve as school leaders down the road (Empower Schools, 2014). The District raised base salaries for both new and experienced principals in year one (Education Research Services, 2015).

The District also attempted to improve the quality of the teaching force. Although the Receiver had the authority to require all staff members to reapply for their positions, he did not require them to do so. The District began by identifying a group of about ten percent of all teachers it considered low-performing based on student data, attendance records, and principal reports. Riley then conducted a “Receiver’s Review,” observing these teachers in the classroom and gathering additional information during the summer of 2012 (Empower Schools, 2014). Ultimately, LPS estimates that about eight percent of teachers were removed prior to year one of the turnaround. Between the District’s dismissals, resignations and retirements, roughly one-third of teachers in 2013 were new to LPS. The District partnered with Teach for America to assist with recruitment as well as training for current and new teachers (Empower Schools, 2014).

In year two, the District made significant changes to its teacher compensation system. The traditional “steps and lanes” system in which salary was determined based

on teacher experience and educational attainment was replaced by a performance-based career ladder with five major levels: novice, developing, career, advanced and master. Teachers' advancement up the first three rungs of the ladder is based on a teacher's annual end of year evaluation. Advancement to advanced or master status is determined based on the submission of an application that includes evidence of effective teaching such as recommendations from peers and principals, and student growth data for those teaching in tested grades and subjects. The District also instituted a stipend system to support its extending learning time efforts (LPS, 2013).

The District also created new leadership opportunities for teachers. In year one, LPS established its Teacher Leader Cabinet, providing 100 teachers with a stipend of \$5,000 to provide the Receiver with guidance on district-wide policy. Additionally, the Sontag Prize was awarded to 168 educators from within and beyond the District. These teachers participated in a professional development weekend at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and received a \$3,000 stipend to teach at a one-week Acceleration Academy programs (described below).

LPS estimates that as a result of changes to the teacher compensation system, in year one of the turnaround, 100 percent of teachers saw a pay increase and 92 percent saw a bump in pay beyond the increase they would have received under the old system (LPS, 2013). The average LPS teacher received a \$3,000 raise for the 2014 school year (ERS, 2015).

Learning Time. The fourth major turnaround component was increased learning time, including expanded school day, enrichment activities, tutoring, and special programs. A non-profit organization, the National Center on Time and Learning, worked

with several schools to craft school-level implementation plans for adding hours to the school day. In year one, schools led by outside operators added about 90 minutes to the school day. By year two, the school year was expanded by at least 200 hours for all first through eighth grade students (Empower Schools, 2013). The District also worked to build out after-school enrichment offerings such as theater, dance, arts, music and sports. At the high school level, LPS partnered with Match Education, a non-profit charter school operator and educational program provider, to offer intensive mathematics tutoring to a subset of the 9th and 10th grade students attending two of the District's lowest performing high schools (ERS, 2015).

Acceleration Academies. One particularly notable component of the Receiver's expanded learning time efforts were the "Acceleration Academies." These programs provide struggling students with targeted instruction in either ELA or math, delivered in small groups of ten, by select teachers over week-long vacation breaks.⁴ The District's goal is to provide the students who need it most with additional time in front of a talented teacher.

These teachers apply through a competitive process for the Sontag Prize in Urban Education. Selection for the Sontag Prize is based on evaluation ratings and principal recommendations. Teachers were recruited from both within and outside of Lawrence, but the majority of the Academy teachers were Lawrence employees. Participating teachers attend a weekend event at Harvard University which includes an awards dinner, networking opportunities, planning time, team building activities, and professional development delivered by experienced educators, Harvard Graduate School of Education

⁴ In recent years, the District also ran a small handful of classes for higher performing students to provide more advanced targeted instruction than they would get in a typical school day, as well as sections in science.

professors, and leaders such as Doug Lemov who discusses techniques from his book *Teach Like a Champion*. Teachers receive a \$3,000 honorarium for the week and other giveaways such as branded jackets and iPads.

Principals nominate students from their individual schools to participate in the program. The Central Office makes recommendations about factors principals might consider when selecting students but does not mandate they use any particular criteria. Specifically, the District recommends that principals focus on students in the lowest two categories of proficiency ratings on the previous year's MCAS exams (either the "warning" or "needs improvement" categories). The District also recommends that principals use interim assessment data to identify and nominate students who are not making progress in a particular subject area. The District recommends omitting students with chronic absenteeism (who may be unlikely to attend the Academy) and students with behavioral problems so severe that they would substantially disrupt the learning of others. When pitching the program to parents and students, educators emphasize that the Superintendent has selected them for a special opportunity to get extra academic help. The program is not described as punishment or remediation.

Principals typically use homogenous ability groupings to create classes of ten to twelve students, and teachers are assigned to a single group for the week. Teachers are given substantial flexibility to run classes as they see fit and to create their own lesson plans. Academies held over the February vacation focus on ELA. The April Academies focus primarily on math, but also include some classes dedicated to science. The District asks Academy teachers to focus on frequently assessed MCAS standards and provides a list of these standards, sample objectives, as well as interim assessment data for all of the

students in the teacher's class to identify the standards their students have and have not yet mastered.

The daily schedule varies by school, but all students participate from 8am to 3pm. Administrators are told to aim for a total of 25 hours of instruction over the week. Instructional time in the core subject is typically broken up by two "specials" per day, which include subjects such as theater, visual art, music, sports, technology and cooking. Students receive incentives for perfect attendance including \$40 gift cards and raffle tickets for larger gifts.

Data Use. The fifth and final priority for the turnaround effort was a greater emphasis on the effective use of data. In the first year, The Achievement Network (ANet), a national partner organization, began working with nine LPS schools to provide training on how to use of data to drive instructional improvement. ANet helped administer formative assessments and supported schools in using data to target specialized programming for struggling students. In 2014, ANet expanded to work with a majority of Lawrence schools (Empower Schools, 2014).

Methods

Data. We make use of student-level administrative data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE). The data include students in the state from the 2008 to the 2015 school year, recording information on each student's grade, school, district, demographic characteristics, standardized test scores, attendance and high school graduation status. We supplement the state data with records from LPS on participation in the Acceleration Academies in 2013 and 2014.

Full Sample. Our full sample includes over 500,000 unique students in each year. Our preferred analytic sample includes the roughly one-fourth of students attending the 50 or so school districts in the state in which at least half of the students qualified for free or reduced price lunch as of 2008. Such low-income districts provide a more relevant comparison to LPS, though we show that our findings are generally robust to a number of different sample restrictions that we discuss below.

Outcome Measures. Our primary measures of academic achievement are students' scores on the statewide mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS exams, given in 3rd-8th and 10th grades. We standardize these scores within year, subject and grade using the full sample of Massachusetts students. We also examine additional outcomes including students' school attendance, grade progression, probability of remaining in the same district, probability of remaining enrolled in school, and probability of taking the MCAS in any given year.

Acceleration Academy Participants. LPS' data allows us to identify the students who participated in Acceleration Academies in 2013 and 2014. In 2013, 505 LPS students participated only in a math Acceleration Academy, 570 participated only in an ELA Acceleration Academy, and 495 participated in both types. In total, 1,570 students, or 21 percent of LPS students in tested grades, participated in at least one Acceleration Academy. In 2014, these numbers roughly doubled in each category, so that 42 percent of LPS students participated in at least one Acceleration Academy.

Data-Analytic Plan.

Modeling Overall Turnaround Effects. To study the overall effect of the turnaround, we conduct difference-in-differences analyses that compare achievement

trends of Lawrence students to achievement trends of students in comparable districts that did not experience the turnaround. In all models, we treat the school years 2008-12 as the pre-turnaround control period. We then use two different regression specifications. Model 1, a school-by-grade fixed effects model, is:

$$Y_{isgy} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y + \beta_2 LPS_{isgy} + \delta_{sg} + \gamma_{gy} + \beta_3 X_{isgy} + \varepsilon_{isgy} \quad (1)$$

Here, Y is an outcome for student i in school s and grade g in year y . LPS is a binary indicator for being enrolled in the Lawrence Public Schools and 2013 indicates the first post-turnaround year. The interaction of these two variables provides an estimate of the extent to which changes in LPS' outcomes in the first year of the turnaround relative to prior years differ from such changes in other comparison districts. We exclude 2014 data in order to focus on first year impacts.

Inclusion of school-by-grade fixed effects δ implies that estimates are generated by comparing the same school-grade combination to itself over time. Grade-by-year fixed effects control for any statewide shocks common to a given grade in a given year, such as changes in exam difficulty. Student-level demographic controls X account for any compositional changes within LPS or other districts over time. These controls include measures of gender, race, free or reduced price lunch status, first language not English (FLNE) status, Limited English Proficiency status and special education status. Standard errors are clustered at the school-by-grade level to account for serial correlation in unobserved components of the error term at that level.

We modify this school-by-grade fixed effects model in two important ways. First, in order to account for potential pre-existing differences across schools and districts in student characteristics, we run versions of the model in which we add controls for lagged test score and attendance measures. Specifically, we include math and ELA MCAS

scores, as well as the number of days attended as measured one year prior to the outcome being measured. When one-year lagged scores are missing, we replace them with two-year lags. We refer to this as Model 2, which takes the form:

$$Y_{isgy} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y + \beta_2 LPS_{isgy} + \delta_{sg} + \gamma_{gy} + \beta_3 X_{isgy} + ELA_{isg,y-1} + MATH_{isg,y-1} + Attendance_{isg,y-1} + \varepsilon_{isgy} \quad (2)$$

Second, in order to estimate the cumulative effects of the turnaround in 2014, its second year, we run versions of Models 1 and 2 in which we include 2014 data but omit 2013 data and replace *2013* with a *2014* indicator. This allows us to compare the second year of the turnaround to the pre-turnaround period. Including both periods simultaneously would result in estimates of the impact of one year's turnaround conditional on the other year's, causal interpretation of which would be unclear.

Even controlling for school-by-grade fixed effects and lags in student achievement and attendance may not sufficiently account for differential changes over time in the composition of the LPS student population relative to the population in other districts, particularly if such changes occur along unobservable dimensions. To account for this, we run Model 3, a student fixed effects model, of the form:

$$Y_{isgy} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y + \beta_2 LPS_{isgy} + \delta_i + \gamma_{gy} + \varepsilon_{isgy} \quad (3)$$

There are only two differences between this model and Models 1 and 2. The main difference is that school-by-grade fixed effects have been replaced by student fixed effects, ensuring that identification of turnaround impacts comes from within-student changes over time. This eliminates compositional changes as a potential source of omitted variable bias. The second and smaller difference is that student fixed effects obviate the need for demographic controls, which are constant over time, and lagged

measures of achievement, which the model implicitly employs for identification. Here, we cluster standard errors at the student level.

Findings

Turnaround Impacts on Math and ELA Achievement.

We begin by using the raw data to explore achievement trends in Lawrence and other districts. Figure 2 illustrates Lawrence's chronic underperformance prior to the receivership. Panel A presents math MCAS scores for all tested Lawrence students and students in other majority low-income districts in Massachusetts. For the five years leading up to the turnaround, Lawrence students underperformed Massachusetts as a whole by roughly 0.7 standard deviations and underperformed other majority low-income districts by about 0.3 standard deviations. In 2013, the first full year of the turnaround, math scores in Lawrence rose by roughly 0.2 standard deviations relative to the rest of the state, and then rose again by about 0.1 standard deviations in 2014. Math scores in other low-income districts remained relatively flat during this time. This clear break from trend already suggests that the turnaround may have had large impacts on math achievement in Lawrence.

Panel B suggests that in ELA, prior to the turnaround, Lawrence substantially underperformed the rest of the state, by 0.7 standard deviations, and other low-income districts, by 0.2 standard deviations. ELA scores do rise slightly in 2013 and again in 2014 but noisiness of those scores in Lawrence's pre-turnaround period and post-turnaround trends in low-income districts make it less clear whether such increases are due to the turnaround itself.

Table 2 contains estimates generated by our three regression models corresponding to Figure 2. We focus first on comparisons of LPS to students across the entire state. Estimates from the school-grade fixed effects model suggest that math scores rose by 0.20 standard deviations in year one of the turnaround and by 0.31 standard deviations by its second year. Inclusion of lagged achievement and attendance measures leaves the first-year estimate nearly unchanged but does decrease the estimate of the second year impact to a similar 0.19 standard deviations. The student fixed effects model implies the turnaround improved test scores by 0.12 standard deviations in year one and by 0.19 standard deviations by year two.

We confirm that differences in these estimates are driven by the different specifications and not the changing samples across the models. The last three columns of the table show that limiting the sample to other low-income districts has little effect on any of these estimates. We also confirm that these results are not driven by changes in the proportion of students taking these exams. In order to further rule out differential migration as a source of omitted variable bias, we run versions of all of these models in which we fix students' districts as of 2012, regardless of where they subsequently moved. This has no impact on the estimates presented here. Regardless of the model and sample used, all of these estimates suggest that the turnaround had large positive impacts on math achievement. Though Models 2 and 3 differ slightly in their estimates of the first-year impact of the turnaround, both suggest that, by its second year, the turnaround had improved LPS students' math scores by a large and statistically significant 0.17-0.19 standard deviations.

In ELA, all three models suggest small first-year impacts, on the order of 0.01-0.02 standard deviations, only one of which is statistically significant. By the second year, the three models suggest slightly larger gains of 0.04-0.09 standard deviations, though only the student fixed effects model suggests a statistically significant impact. Limiting the sample to low-income districts makes the estimates more consistent across specifications. The main takeaway is that the turnaround had no apparent impact on ELA scores in its first year and at best small positive impacts in its second year, on the order of 0.02-0.03 standard deviations.

Turnaround Impacts by Subgroup.

Because Lawrence has a high proportion of students learning English as a second language and because such students traditionally underperform their peers who learned English as a first language, we explore differences in the effect of the turnaround by first language status. Figure 3 graphs math test scores over time by language status. Specifically, we follow the Massachusetts DESE convention and identify students whose first language was anything but English as “First Language Not English” (FLNE) regardless of the ESL services students received. Panel A shows a massive rise in the math scores of Lawrence’s FLNE students, so much so that they appear to have closed the gap with FLNE students in other low-income districts. Panel B shows large math gains for non-FLNE students as well, although breaks from prior trends are somewhat less clear. We formalize these estimates in Table 3 by interacting the difference-in-difference specifications in models 2 and 3 with indicators for whether a student’s first language was English. Though the subgroup estimates here differ somewhat by the model used, both models confirm that FLNE students saw large gains in math in both years of

the turnaround. The estimates, as well as panel A of Appendix Figure A, also suggest that FLNE students made moderate gains as a result of the turnaround. As panel B of Appendix Figure A shows, non-FLNE students appear to have made little progress in ELA. The turnaround is clearly benefitting Lawrence’s FLNE students, a population of particular concern to the district and to the wider education policy community.

We also explore heterogeneity in turnaround impacts by grade level. Figure 4 graphs math test scores over time by grade level. Panels A and B show large, sharp rises in math scores for Lawrence elementary school and middle school students, so much so that the district has closed the achievement gap with other low-income districts. Panel C shows some evidence of gains in high school, though not nearly enough to close massive achievement gaps relative to other low-income districts. Table 4 shows estimates of these impacts using school-by-grade fixed effects Models 1 and 2.⁵ Model 1’s results in the first column match the figures closely, showing gains across all grade levels but particularly large gains in middle school. Controlling for lagged achievement and attendance measures makes the gains appear more evenly distributed across grade levels. Estimated impacts on ELA by grade level, as seen in Appendix Figure B and the last two columns of Table 4, show little clear and consistent heterogeneity.

Acceleration Academies.

Acceleration Academies Modeling. To examine possible differences in achievement gains depending on whether Lawrence students participated in an Acceleration Academy, we rely on a modified version of Model 3. The resulting Model 4, a student fixed effects model, is:

⁵ Student fixed effects models do not allow us to explore heterogeneity by a fixed grade level, which changes each year for most students.

$$\begin{aligned}
y_{isgy} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y \times AAMATH_{isgy} \\
& + \beta_2 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y \times AAELA_{isgy} \quad (4) + \beta_3 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y + \delta_i \\
& + \gamma_{gy} + ELA_{isg,y-1} + MATH_{isg,y-1} + Attendance_{isg,y-1} + \varepsilon_{igt}
\end{aligned}$$

This model includes two three-way interaction terms to indicate whether student i participated in an Acceleration Academy in a particular subject and year. Therefore, β_1 is an estimate of the difference in academic achievement between Lawrence students who were and were not chosen to participate in a math Acceleration Academy in 2013. Here, the interaction between the LPS and 2013 indicators allows us to isolate the effect of the rest of the turnaround bundle in year one. We control for lagged math and ELA test scores as well as lagged attendance given that students were likely selected for Acceleration Academy participation based on their prior academic achievement and attendance record. Again, we exclude 2014 data when estimating the first year effects. We run a separate version of Model 4 in which we include 2014 data but omit 2013 data to compare the second year of Acceleration Academies to the pre-turnaround period. For these 2014 estimates, we replace students' lagged test scores and attendance with their 2012 data to avoid conflating the effects of 2013 and 2014 Academy participation.

Finally, we modify Model 4 to explore the extent to which the achievement differences between Acceleration Academy participants and non-participants persisted beyond the year of the intervention. We refer to this model as Model 5, which takes the following form:

$$\begin{aligned}
y_{isgy} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y \times AAMATH_{isgy} \\
& + \beta_2 LPS_{isgy} \times 2013_y \times AAELA_{isgy} \quad (5) + \beta_3 LPS_{isgy} \times 2014_y + \delta_i \\
& + \gamma_{gy} + ELA_{isg,y-1} + MATH_{isg,y-1} + Attendance_{isg,y-1} + \varepsilon_{igt}
\end{aligned}$$

There are two differences between Model 4 and 5. First, we run Model 5 excluding 2013 data in order to estimate the relationship between 2013 Acceleration Academy participation and 2014 achievement. Second, we replace the interaction between the *LPS* and *2013* indicators with an interaction between an *LPS* and *2014* indicator to isolate the 2013 Acceleration Academy effects from the effects of the non-Acceleration Academy components of the turnaround in year two.

Acceleration Academy Findings. We first explore the unadjusted achievement trends for Lawrence Acceleration Academy participants compared to non-participants within and outside of Lawrence. Figure 5 displays MCAS scores for 2013 Academy participants and non-participants, with the LPS sample limited to those in LPS at some point in the post-turnaround period. Panel A illustrates that prior to the Acceleration Academies, participants outperformed non-participants in Lawrence by roughly 0.1 standard deviations. However, participants were still behind other Massachusetts students by about 0.2 standard deviations and their achievement trend leading up to the Academy seems to roughly track that of Lawrence non-participants.⁶ In 2013, the first year of the Acceleration Academies, participants appear to have caught up to, if not surpassed, students in other majority low-income districts in Massachusetts. Specifically, their math scores rose by about 0.3 standard deviations relative to the rest of the state while non-participants' math scores rose by a smaller, but still substantial 0.2 standard deviations. In 2014, gains appear to continue for both groups, with gains for participants somewhat larger than for non-participants.

⁶ Although participants appear to underperform non-participants in 2008, this is due partly to the fact that relatively few students observed in post-turnaround Acceleration Academies were present in LPS that far back in time.

Table 5 displays estimates generated by our student fixed effects models.

Estimates in the first column suggest that non-participants' 2013 math scores rose by 0.11 standard deviations, whereas Acceleration Academy participants' scores rose by an additional 0.12 standard deviations, for a total first-year improvement of 0.23 standard deviations. The second column suggests that roughly half of the 2013 Acceleration Academy effect faded out by 2014, although overall turnaround effects continued to increase. LPS students who did not participate in the 2013 math Acceleration Academy thus showed substantial gains over the first two years of the turnaround but those who did participate showed even larger gains.

The story is somewhat different for reading achievement. As panel B shows, participants in 2013 ELA Acceleration Academies look generally similar in achievement to non-participants prior to the turnaround. In the first two years of the turnaround, non-participants show little or no gains in ELA achievement, where participants show clear gains that are even larger in 2014. Regression estimates in the third column of Table 5 suggest that non-participants slightly lost ground but this effect is small and somewhat sensitive to the choice of pre-period.⁷ Academy participants gained about 0.09 standard deviations relative to those non-participants, for an overall first-year gain of 0.06 standard deviations. The fourth column suggests these gains for participants largely persisted into 2014.

We note here that our estimates of the effects of the 2013 Acceleration Academies could in theory be biased by differential selection into participation, hence our inclusion of the lagged achievement and attendance variables that LPS administrators described as

⁷ When we restrict the pre-period to two years, the 2014 estimate for non-participants becomes marginally significant ($p = .02$) and when we restrict the pre-period to a single year, the estimate for non-participants is marginally significant in 2013 ($p = .02$) and not significant in 2014 ($p > .05$).

part of that selection process. One indication that such controls are sufficient to largely eliminate bias in our estimates is the fact that we observe clear positive impacts of each Acceleration Academy on its own subject but no effects of each Academy on the other subject. If differential selection were an issue here, we would expect to see similar impacts of a given Academy across both subjects.

There are two central takeaways from these figures and tables. First, Acceleration Academies appear to have had large positive impacts on achievement in the subjects they focused on. Second, the other components of the LPS turnaround had large positive impacts in math but no impact in ELA. As a result, any positive impacts in ELA appear to be driven largely by Acceleration Academies, whereas improvements in math are generated both by the Academies and by other district initiatives.

We repeat this analysis for the 2014 Acceleration Academies in the bottom panel of Table 5, with corresponding figures in Appendix Figure A. Estimating these impacts is complicated by the fact that 2014 participation status may be correlated with 2013 participation status and other unobservable shocks to students in 2013. We therefore present these estimates but are somewhat less confident in their causal interpretation. We present them in part because LPS doubled the number of students participating, so that these estimates provide suggestive evidence about the potential scalability of this intervention.

Participation in the 2014 math Acceleration Academy appears to boost 2014 math scores by 0.18 standard deviations relative to the 0.13 standard deviation gain of non-participants, for an overall gain of 0.32 standard deviations. Participation in the 2014 ELA Acceleration Academy also appears to boost math achievement by an additional

0.06 standard deviations, a small effect that could be spuriously driven by selection bias or could represent true spillovers from the ELA preparation that precedes the math test in time. As such, we find the estimated impacts of the 2014 math Acceleration Academy on math scores to be plausible. Oddly, both math and ELA Acceleration academies appear to boost ELA scores in 2014 by 0.11 standard deviations. Given that ELA testing preceded math Acceleration Academies in time, this suggests that at least some fraction of these estimated effects is driven by selection bias. As such, we put somewhat less stock in these ELA achievement gain estimates.

The bulk of the evidence thus suggests that Acceleration Academies were an important component of LPS' turnaround success. Though selection issues may create some bias in our estimates, results from 2014 are suggestive that the positive Acceleration Academy impacts may be scalable to a wider range of students than LPS selected in its first year of the turnaround.

Turnaround Impacts on Other Academic Outcomes.

We also look for possible turnaround effects on additional outcomes of interest, but find little evidence of impact. Figure 6 shows the unadjusted days of school attendance by year for Lawrence students compared to students in other majority low-income districts. Interestingly, student attendance shows a large jump in the year prior to the turnaround. However, there is no visual evidence of major differences between Lawrence and comparison districts in the post-turnaround period. Nevertheless, we utilize Model 2, our school-by-grade fixed effects model with demographic controls as well as lagged test scores and attendance to estimate the turnaround effect on attendance. In Table 6 we report that Lawrence students under the turnaround appeared to gain between

two and three days in school compared to comparison students. However, the Lawrence break from trend in 2012, prior to the turnaround, complicates our ability to interpret this coefficient.

Similarly, in Panel A of Figure 7, we show that overall grade progression in Lawrence does not appear to break from the upward trend in other low-income districts after turnaround implementation. We also examine student mobility. Figure 8 shows that the probability of remaining in the same district was already growing in Lawrence relative to other districts prior to the turnaround, and the magnitude of change in any given year was relatively small (never larger than 0.02 percentage points). We also test for whether the turnaround had an effect on whether a student enrolled in school would remain in school. Figure 9 shows that the probability of remaining enrolled seemed to have increased slightly in the year leading up to the turnaround, both overall and for the high school subsample shown in panel B. In Figure 10 we display the percent of 12th grade students who graduate, conditional on having progressed to 12th grade. There does not appear to be visual evidence of a shift in 12th grade graduation in Lawrence over the first two years of the turnaround relative to comparison districts. In sum, we do not find convincing evidence that the turnaround appeared to have a positive or negative effect on any of the alternative academic outcomes we explored.

The one possible exception is grade progression among high school students. Panel B of Figure 8 shows that prior to the turnaround, Lawrence high school students were less likely to progress to the next grade than students in comparison districts, by a magnitude of between ten to 20 percentage points depending on the time point. In the four years leading up to the turnaround, the trend for Lawrence students appears to track

the trend for non-Lawrence students. In 2013, the probability that Lawrence high school students progressed to the next grade increased by about eight percentage points while the same figure increased by about two percentage points for comparison students. This probability dipped by about two percentage points for Lawrence students in year two of the turnaround, but they remained about five percentage points more likely to progress than they did in 2012. We report our estimate of the turnaround effect on grade progression with the high school sample in Table 6. The first year of the turnaround appears to have made Lawrence students about ten percentage points more likely to progress to the next grade. By year two, this effect was reduced slightly to nine percentage points. Therefore, we find suggestive evidence that the turnaround had a statistically significant positive effect on Lawrence high school students' grade progression.

Discussion

Our findings illustrate that the Lawrence Public Schools receivership has demonstrated promising early results, particularly in terms of students' mathematics achievement and among the district's large population of students learning English as a second language. Students exposed to the first two years of the turnaround appear to have made substantially larger mathematics achievement gains than demographically similar students in other majority low-income school districts across Massachusetts. In ELA, we find some evidence of small positive effects by year two. We find suggestive evidence that the turnaround may have increased the probability that Lawrence high school students progress from one grade to the next and no evidence of slippage on any of the other outcomes we explored.

In both the first and second year of the turnaround, students who participated in Acceleration Academy programs over week-long vacation breaks made larger gains in both ELA and math than did non-participants within and outside of Lawrence. Our estimates of 2013 Academy participation more closely approximate the effect of Academy participation than our 2014 estimates given we find evidence of possible selection effects in year two, particularly for the ELA Academies. In both years, math gains are larger among Academy participants, but the overall math effects cannot be fully explained by Academy participation. Gains in ELA are more fully concentrated among ELA Academy participants.

The magnitude of these effects is notable. In year one, the combined average effect of Acceleration Academy participation, plus the remaining bundle of turnaround reforms was 0.23 standard deviations in math and 0.05 standard deviations in reading. In Table 7, we put these effects into context by comparing them to the size of the effects found in two other studies of related interventions. Here we prefer to rely on the 2013 results given we are less concerned about selection effects biasing our Acceleration Academy estimates. If positive selection into the Academies did occur, our estimates of the rest of the turnaround bundle represent a lower bound for the true effect. The combined effects of Acceleration Academy participation plus the rest of the Lawrence turnaround are slightly larger than the effects of injecting high-performing charter school practices into low-performing, traditional public schools in Houston, Texas (Fryer, 2014). Lawrence effects are somewhat smaller than, but still comparable to the effects of grandfathering traditional public school students into charter schools in New Orleans and Boston (Abdulkadiroglu et al., 2014). It is also worth noting that, in contrast to New

Orleans, only three percent of Lawrence's 2013 test-takers were in schools and grades taken over by outside operators. Therefore, only a small fraction of the widespread achievement gains we observe in year one are attributable to such outside operators.

Based on our year one results alone, the Acceleration Academies seem especially effective, particularly given that they involve only one week of intensive instruction. Although at first glance this may seem like a low-intensity intervention, it is important to keep in mind that participating students receive at least 25 hours of additional instruction in a given subject over a week. The District argues that this adds up to more hours of instruction in a core subject than a student gets in a typical month of school. LPS estimates that this program costs approximately \$800 per student per week. The bulk of these funds go to teacher stipends, and the remainder pays for teacher professional development, student incentives, and student transportation. These Acceleration Academy programs might be a useful and scalable strategy for schools looking to improve the performance of struggling students in core content areas, regardless of whether or not their districts are pursuing an aggressive district-wide turnaround effort.

Given the large body of research showing that teacher quality accounts for a larger portion of the variation in student achievement than any other school-based factor, and Dee's (2012) and Strunk et al.'s (forthcoming) findings that turnaround schools that adopted reform models compelling the most dramatic staff turnover produced the largest gains, it may be initially surprising that Lawrence achieved sizeable gains while actively replacing no more than ten percent of teachers in year one. However, Acceleration Academies could be thought of, in part, as a human capital intervention since teachers were selected based on merit.

It is important to keep in mind that our results focus solely on the first two years of the turnaround. The Receiver made additional changes in the 2015 school year including piloting full-day Kindergarten for four-year-olds, implementing a new teacher contract that mandates school-based teacher leadership teams (ERS, 2015), attempting to equalize funding between schools (ERS, 2015), and creating a district-wide family engagement office (LPS, 2013).

Not only is it unclear how these additional changes will impact student achievement in the short run, it is uncertain whether the short-term gains we observe will be sustained over time and translate to longer-term outcomes of interest such as college enrollment and persistence, particularly as the Receivership is phased out and local control of the District is reinstated. Lawrence has made impressive gains, but there is still work to be done to realize the goal of eliminating the gap between Lawrence and Statewide averages. Despite these open questions, our study undoubtedly provides an encouraging proof point that the improvement of chronically underperforming districts serving primarily low-income and ESL students is indeed possible.

Part II: A Third Way? The Politics of School District Takeover and Turnaround in Lawrence, Massachusetts

Abstract

Superintendents place politics at the top of the list of factors that inhibit their job performance, yet research provides educational leaders with limited guidance in this area. State takeovers and district-wide turnaround efforts tend to be particularly politically heated. The Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) provides a valuable case study as a rare example of a state takeover and district-wide turnaround effort resulting in substantial academic improvements for students. I examine how stakeholders in Lawrence—the general public, parents, educators, union leaders, and district partners—perceived the turnaround reforms and the factors that contributed to the stakeholder response. I rely on interviews with leaders of turnaround and stakeholder groups, popular press coverage, publically available documents, and two secondary sources of survey data assessing parent and educator perceptions. I find that, although it was certainly not without controversy, the Lawrence reforms were less contentious than expected based on other recent cases of takeover and turnaround. Explanatory factors relate to the (1) Lawrence context, (2) new authorities granted to the state under its accountability law, and (3) turnaround leaders’ approach to implementation. More specifically, within a context that was ripe for change and armed with significant authorities, turnaround leaders focused on relationship building and stakeholder empowerment, differentiated rather than uniform district-school relations, a “third way” approach to transcending polarizing politics, strategic staffing decisions, and generating early results while minimizing disruption. The

findings have implications for states considering takeovers of low-performing school systems and for district leaders seeking improvement.

The Politics of School District Takeover and Turnaround

So often in education, we're pitted against each other. It's arts or academics. It's more time at school, or with families. It's empowering teachers, or it's teaching to the test. All these things are false choices. We just need to figure out how we empower more people to be successful. And the courage I saw... yesterday in Lawrence is absolutely inspiring. It makes you so hopeful about where we're going as a nation.

Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, September 2014

Politics is the number one factor that superintendents say inhibits their job performance, according to a 2015 American Association of School Administrators survey (Education Week, 2015). State interventions in low-performing schools and district-wide turnaround efforts tend to be particularly politically contentious. State takeover of school districts runs counter to our nation's deeply embedded tradition of local control over K-12 schools and the resources devoted to running educational systems. District turnaround efforts can also be controversial, especially when they involve high levels of staff turnover or closures of schools that are tightly linked to community identity. Recent large urban district turnaround efforts have resulted in considerable public resistance in places like New Orleans, Louisiana (Buras, 2015; Jabar, 2015), Memphis, Tennessee (Glazer & Egan, 2016), and Newark, New Jersey (Russakoff, 2015), and even in smaller Massachusetts cities such as Holyoke (Williams, 2015).

Several turnaround districts that are under state control or simply seeking dramatic improvement have implemented a "portfolio management model" (PMM) approach to district organization and improvement. With PMM, the central office oversees and holds accountable a supply of schools that are managed by a diverse set of operators such as charter management organizations, nonprofit groups, and the district itself (Hill, Campbell & Gross, 2012). Market-based approaches to educational

improvement rely on the theory that families will drive positive change by expressing their priorities through choice and dissatisfaction through exit (Hirschman, 1970). Henig (2010) describes PMM as a quasi market-based “contracting regime” that assigns a public entity—the central office—as the primary consumer and overseer of school management organizations and service providers which compete for contracts with the district or state.

As a result of the primacy of public management within PMM systems, pluralistic politics likely play a significant role, on top of families’ expressed school preferences, in determining which organizations receive and retain contracts. The effectiveness of PMM systems will therefore rely on governmental capacity and could make “civic capacity”—the ability of a community to collectively set and pursue goals—imperative (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999; Stone, Henig, Jones & Pierannunzi, 2001). PMM implementation may introduce or empower new political actors, at the expense of others, as districts contract with outside organizations (Henig, 2010; Mehta & Teles, 2011). Interest groups, such as employee unions, likely influence policy and partnership choices (Moe, 2011). At the same time, portfolio management models may avoid sharply ideological debates if they are viewed as a pragmatic blending of market-based approaches to education reform with centralized public regulation (Henig and Bulkley, 2010). PMM may also help district leaders gain favor with school-based staff by providing them with greater autonomy and flexibility. This potential political benefit may have previously been underestimated given that factors such as antagonistic racial politics appear to have outweighed the advantages of PMM in some of the most prominent portfolio districts (e.g., Buras, 2015).

Understanding the political dynamics of district turnaround could provide crucial lessons for the implementation of future efforts and for promoting the long-term sustainability of effective district reforms. Single and cross-case studies of districts with records of improvement emphasize that effective navigation of internal and external politics—within both the central office and the larger community—appears to be a critical ingredient of success (Honig & Coburn, 2008; Johnson et al., 2015). Furthermore, any policy requires political support to sustain itself and therefore to fulfill its long-term objectives (Jochim, 2013; Stone, Henig, Jones & Pierannunzi, 2001). More specifically, a policy's durability depends on the mobilization of groups with an interest in the reform's preservation (Patashnik, 2003). Unfortunately, the academic literature is short on both examples of successful district-wide turnaround and guidance for educational leaders on navigating the politics of state takeover and district turnaround.

This paper begins to fill that hole by examining the political dynamics of the Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) takeover—a rare example of state takeover and district-wide turnaround effort resulting in substantial academic improvements in its first two years of implementation. The Lawrence turnaround occurred in a particularly policy relevant context given that the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) has held up Massachusetts' accountability system as an exemplar (U.S. DOE, 2012). This system has three distinct features. First, it classifies schools and districts into five levels based on performance. Second, it requires low-performing schools and districts to implement rapid improvement plans. Third, it allows the state to take over schools and districts at the very lowest levels of achievement (U.S. DOE, 2012). Lawrence was the first district to be taken over since the state was given the authority to do so. The State Commissioner of

Education has since taken over two additional districts—Holyoke and Southbridge. Nationwide, the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) carves out a greater role for states in addressing school and district underperformance. As a result, the need to examine state accountability systems has never been greater.

This paper provides lessons for the field about the political viability of accountability-driven state takeover and about the effective navigation of politics in the context of district-wide reform. Specifically, I address two research questions: *(1) How did key stakeholders within Lawrence—the general public, parents, educators, union leaders, and district partners—perceive the state takeover and turnaround reforms? (2) What factors contributed to that stakeholder response?*

I find that, although it was certainly not without controversy, the Lawrence reforms appeared to be less politically contentious than many other well-known recent cases of district takeover and turnaround. Three primary factors played a role: (1) the local political environment, (2) the statewide accountability law providing the state with significant authorities in low-performing districts, and (3) turnaround leaders' approach to implementation. More specifically, within a local context that was ripe for change and armed with broad new authorities, turnaround leaders' minimized opposition and increased support for their reforms through a focus on relationship building and stakeholder empowerment, differentiated rather than uniform district-school relations, a “third way” approach to transcending polarizing politics, strategic staffing decisions, and generating early results while minimizing disruption.

Context

Lawrence, Massachusetts

Lawrence is a mid-sized industrial city about 30 miles north of Boston that is considered, based on several measures, to be one of the most economically disadvantaged cities in the State of Massachusetts. From 2009 to 2013, median household income was \$32,851 and the poverty rate was 29.2 percent. Roughly 11 percent of residents over the age of 25 held at least a Bachelor's degree. Nearly 40 percent of Lawrence's population was foreign born (U.S. Census, 2015). The city is home to a large population of Latino residents, including many who came to Massachusetts the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico.

LPS enrolled approximately 13,000 students in 28 schools as of 2011. There are also a small number of charter school options in Lawrence that are not managed by the Lawrence Public Schools. LPS is among the top ten districts in Massachusetts in terms of student enrollment, but its student population is still roughly a quarter the size of the state's largest district, the Boston Public Schools. Relative to the rest of Massachusetts, Lawrence students are far more likely to be low-income and classified as Hispanic. About 90 percent of Lawrence students qualify for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch. Leading up to the turnaround, roughly 80 percent of LPS students were learning English as a second language. Prior to the takeover, LPS students scored about 0.70 standard deviations lower than the state average on both math and ELA standardized exams, and also below the average predominately low-income district in Massachusetts by 0.3 standard deviations in math and 0.2 standard deviations in ELA (Schueler, Goodman, Deming, 2016).

School Accountability in Massachusetts

Although Massachusetts' students lead the nation in their average performance on standardized exams, considerable achievement gaps based on race and social class

remain. In an effort to address these issues in the midst of the competition for federal Race to the Top funding, the Massachusetts State Legislature passed the Achievement Gap Act (AGA) in 2010. This reform created a tiered system of accountability targeting the lowest performing schools and districts for intensive interventions, including state takeover at the very lowest levels of achievement. The AGA also provided the state with increased authorities in takeover districts.

Lawrence had a long history of low-performance, but the state considered the 2010-11 results to be especially grim. Lawrence was in the bottom five districts in the state based on the percentage of students considered proficient on the state's ELA and math exams. Three quarters of the schools in the districts experienced declines in achievement between 2009-10 and 2010-11 and only about half of all students were graduating within four years. Furthermore, the state now had new policy mechanisms at its disposal for attempting to address underperformance.

In the fall of 2011, the state deployed the takeover authority provided by the 2010 AGA. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education classified LPS as a Level 5 district, the lowest of the five possible ratings in its accountability system, and placed the district into state "receivership." In January of 2012, the state appointed a Receiver who was a former Boston Public Schools teacher, principal and deputy superintendent. The Receiver was given all the authority of the previous Superintendent and School Committee. The AGA also gave the Receiver broad discretion to alter district policies such as the collective bargaining agreement, to require staff to reapply for their positions, and to unilaterally extend the school day and year.

Receivership itself was not accompanied by large amounts of additional funding from the state. Figure 1 illustrates that while per pupil spending in LPS did increase post-turnaround, these increases were not large, and spending was also increasing at a similar rate statewide. According to Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) estimates, per pupil spending increased from \$13,272 in 2012 to \$13,852 in 2013. This was not far from the state average for 2013 of \$14,021 (MA DESE, 2015). In the second year of the turnaround, LPS received more than \$2 million in Race to the Top funding and more than \$3 million in School Redesign Grants through the federal School Improvement Grant program (Education Research Services, 2015). In addition, LPS has received some private funding, from individual donors and foundations, to support special initiatives such as the Acceleration Academy extended learning time programs described below.

Lawrence Public Schools Turnaround

The turnaround strategy had five major components as described in the Turnaround Plan released by the Receiver and State Commissioner of Education in spring of 2012. The first was an effort to raise expectations for students and staff. The turnaround plan laid out ambitious performance targets such as closing the gap with the rest of the state in ELA and math proficiency and graduation within five to seven years (MA DESE, 2012). The district also began a dropout recovery effort. The second component was increased school-level autonomy and accountability. The district handed over management of a small number of schools to outside operators, resulting in a version of the portfolio management model of district governance without the typical choice-based school assignment element. Third was an effort to improve the quality of

administrators and teachers, through staff replacement, staff development, and a new performance-based career ladder compensation system for teachers. The fourth turnaround plan feature was increased learning time, expanded school day, enrichment activities, tutoring, and special programs. One particularly notable program was “Acceleration Academies” which provided struggling students with targeted instruction in a single subject, delivered in small groups of roughly ten, over weeklong vacation breaks. Acceleration Academy teachers were recruited from both within and outside of Lawrence and applied to participate through a competitive process. The fifth and final major turnaround component was a greater emphasis on the effective use of data to drive instructional improvement.

The first two full years of Lawrence turnaround implementation led to substantial positive gains in math and modest improvements in ELA. There is no evidence of slippage on other non-test outcomes such as attendance, grade progression, district transfer, enrollment in school, and graduation among 12th graders, and improvement on grade progression among high school students (Schueler, Goodman & Deming, 2016). Furthermore, the Acceleration Academy programs appear to explain roughly half, but not all of the gains in math and all of the gains in ELA. The size of the effects is slightly larger than the effects of injecting the practices of high-performing charter schools into low-performing traditional public schools (Fryer, 2014).

Methods

Data

To examine the political dynamics of the Lawrence turnaround, I relied primarily on one-on-one interviews with leaders of the turnaround and stakeholder groups,

supplementing these interviews with a review of publically available documents⁸ (Merriam, 1998), news articles and survey data. The incorporation of multiple types of data from a variety of sources helped me triangulate results to reduce systematic biases that could come from one particular mode of data or type of informant (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). For instance, interviews with leaders regarding their communication strategy might suffer from self-report bias while speeches given by district leaders allowed me to observe their behavior. Similarly, representatives of stakeholder groups sometimes had different perceptions about how leaders attempted to gain their support than leaders themselves.

To review popular press coverage, I identified news articles discussing the Lawrence Public Schools from fall 2007 to fall 2015 using LexisNexis, Google News Advanced Search, and by searching directly in the archives of publications such as *Commonwealth Magazine*, *Boston Magazine*, WGBH (Boston-based member station of National Public Radio), *Boston Globe*, *Eagle-Tribune* (covering the Merrimack Valley), and two regional publications geared toward a bilingual and Spanish-speaking readership, *Rumbo News* and *El Mundo Boston*. This resulted in a sample of 259 articles. I coded these articles for major content-based themes, as well as whether the publication was national in distribution, in a bilingual publication, distributed via radio, or an op-ed. In Figure 2, I illustrate the count of articles by year of publication.

I also reviewed two secondary sources of survey data. The first was a survey of Lawrence parents conducted June 4th - 10th of 2012 by the MassINC Polling Group on

⁸ Examples of public documents for review include the LPS turnaround plan, case studies crafted by Education Research Services (ERS) and Empower Schools in collaboration with LPS, LPS and Lawrence Teachers Union website content, publicly available speeches such as a November 2013 address the LPS Receiver gave at the Boston Foundation and MA Business Organizations Forum, and minutes from Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meetings.

behalf of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association. The sample includes 404 adults living with children who were attending non-charter and charter schools in Lawrence. The poll was conducted via telephone by bilingual interviewers from Braun Research, Inc. The results were weighted to reflect the broader population of Lawrence parents based on census figures. In Table 1, I present the descriptive statistics provided by the MassINC Polling Group's report and compare these to figures from the 2010 census on the overall adult population in Lawrence. Respondents were somewhat more likely to identify as Hispanic or Latino (80 percent vs. 74 percent), slightly less likely to have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher (10 percent vs. 12 percent) and much more likely to be female (75 vs. 52 percent). The latter could be due to the survey's focus on adults living with school-aged children. Although the census numbers are not directly comparable to the population of parents in Lawrence, the comparison helps provide confidence that major demographic groups were not underrepresented by the survey. These data, while far from definitive, help shed light on parent perceptions of the early stages of the turnaround.

The second source of survey data came from the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Massachusetts (TELL MASS) survey.⁹ This is a statewide survey of school-based educators conducted every other year. The TELL MASS survey asks educators about their perceptions of their working environments in areas such as time use, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, management of student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support. Educators are given a four-week window to complete the survey at their convenience using an anonymous password. I provide the text of all

⁹ These data are publically available at <http://www.tellmass.org>.

items in Table 2. Johnson, Papay and Kraft (2012) found that teachers' perceptions of their working environments based on the 2008 TELL MASS survey were positively correlated with their professional satisfaction and their schools' academic growth, controlling for school-level demographic characteristics.

I examine secondary TELL MASS results from before (March 2012) and after (January 2014) the first full year of turnaround implementation. Because these data are cross sectional, I am not able to determine whether differences in educators' perceptions were the result of turnaround policy changes, as opposed to changes to the composition of Lawrence's labor force. Regardless, these data provide an estimate of perceptions among Lawrence educators pre- and post-receivership. As I report in Table 2, the response rate was slightly higher in 2012 than 2014 in both Lawrence (78 vs. 72 percent) and the state of Massachusetts as a whole (52 vs. 48 percent).

Interview Participants

I relied on purposeful sampling (Seidman, 2006) to gather a pool of participants representing turnaround leadership at the district and state levels, and who could speak to major stakeholder groups' perceptions of the receivership. I describe the list of interviewees in Appendix A. I identified the people on this list based on interactions with the district during the data acquisition process for an earlier study through which I learned about who played key roles and had pre-turnaround institutional knowledge. I identified state level participants through my data access contacts at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. I also used publically available documents and news articles to identify an initial list of interviewees, and then added to this list using snowball sampling. An informal conversation with a parent connected to a

group of Lawrence-based educators helped me recruit interviewees who had expressed skepticism about the turnaround. Once my analysis of the press coverage and survey data began to suggest that there had been minimal resistance to the turnaround, I asked my interviewees to suggest participants who had expressed viewpoints that were critical of the turnaround.

The resulting sample included a total of twenty interviewees. Central office leaders included the Receiver and four other high-ranking district officials, including one who had worked in Lawrence for many years prior to receivership. At the state level, I interviewed the former Massachusetts Secretary of Education who was in office during the transition to receivership, a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education official who had been involved with the new labor contract conversations¹⁰ post-receivership, and a former State Senator who represented Lawrence at the time of the transition to receivership. I interviewed three representatives of organized labor including a high-ranking leader of the Lawrence Teachers Union and two officials from the Massachusetts American Federation of Teachers who had been involved with Lawrence in recent years. I interviewed two principals, identified by the district, who had been principals both before and after receivership. I also spoke with three teachers who were either non-renewed or otherwise left the district during the post-receivership period. Finally, I spoke with the leaders of three non-profit partner organizations including enrichment providers and a local community group.

Interview Procedures

¹⁰ Department of Elementary and Secondary Education officials argue that these conversations should not technically be referred to as “negotiations” under the AGA.

Interviews with turnaround and stakeholder group leaders focused on public perceptions of reforms, the factors explaining public response, and turnaround leaders efforts to gain stakeholder support. I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Merriam, 1998), beginning with open-ended questions to avoid steering the interview based on my hypotheses (Seidman, 2006). For turnaround leaders, I began by asking about broad changes in mood, among educators and members of the general public, over the course of the turnaround. Later in the protocol, I included more specific probes (Merriam, 1998) to get at the reactions of particular groups and district leaders' thought process about garnering support. My approach to interviewing stakeholders was similar. I began by asking them to tell me the story of the takeover and attempted turnaround from their perspective, and then probed on specifics throughout the conversation. I told subjects that I could not guarantee anonymity because the context is unique and relatively small, and because some of my respondents were identifiable public figures. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were audio recorded for transcription.

Data Analysis

I relied on content analysis to identify major themes emerging from my data (Merriam, 1998). I coded transcripts of interviews and public speeches using a list of codes, provided in Appendix B, that included examples of Maxwell's (2005) three broad types: (1) "organizational" codes which are general topics that could be anticipated prior to interviews, such as the list of stakeholder groups or turnaround components, (2) "substantive" codes that primarily describe subjects' perceptions without implying a more abstract theory, such as adjectives describing communication characteristics between the district and stakeholders, and (3) "theoretical" codes that place the data into

a more abstract framework, such as codes related to ideology and pragmatism. Codes were primarily based on my review of relevant literature and publically available documents, but some emerged directly from interview data.

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998). This was an iterative process in which I conducted and coded an interview, identified new codes and refined my protocol based on emergent themes. Coding throughout data collection offered two advantages. First, it helped me address threats to validity by developing tentative hypotheses and adapting my protocol to proactively seek out evidence that might run counter to my emerging theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In other words, I specifically asked later respondents to react to my hypotheses. Second, it helped alert me to an appropriate stopping point for recruitment once subjects no longer seemed to be identifying novel themes (Maxwell, 2005). At that point, I re-analyzed the interview data with my full set of codes, re-reading transcripts in search of discrepant data that could not be explained by my developing hypotheses or that might support plausible alternative hypotheses (Maxwell, 2005).

Findings

Research Question 1: Stakeholder Perceptions of Reforms

In the following section I evaluate press-, survey- and interview-based data to unpack how key stakeholder groups in Lawrence perceived the receivership and turnaround reforms. I find several signs that, although the Lawrence experience has not been uncontroversial, the controversy has been minimal when compared to reforms in places like New Orleans, Louisiana (Buras, 2015; Jabar, 2015), Memphis, Tennessee (Glazer & Egan, 2016), Newark, New Jersey (Russakoff, 2015), and even in smaller

Massachusetts cities such as Holyoke (Williams, 2015). In these and other takeovers and turnaround efforts, stakeholders have expressed considerable dissatisfaction in the form of public protests, school walkouts, and critical commentary in the press and other public venues. These types of reactions were relatively limited in post-receivership Lawrence. In the following section, I discuss the reactions by key stakeholder groups including the general public, parents, students, educators, the teachers union, and partner organizations.

General Public. Popular press coverage of LPS is a useful source for uncovering the overarching public narrative surrounding the receivership and turnaround. To the extent that there were major sources of resistance to the Lawrence turnaround, I would expect them to appear in press coverage of the schools over this period. Figure 3 tracks the dominant themes found in news articles from fall of 2007 to fall of 2015. The primary content of the coverage shifts from a negative tone pre-receivership to a more positive tone post-receivership. For the first four years of coverage in the pre-receivership era, there was a single dominant theme related to allegations of wrongdoing against public officials. The specifics included campaign finance-related investigations of the city's Mayor, fraud and embezzlement indictments against an LPS Superintendent, and the firing of three consecutive pre-receivership Superintendents.¹¹ In 2011, the coverage of such allegations continued, but new themes also began to emerge. There was an increased focus on the district's record of low academic achievement, the announcement of the state's takeover and the Mayor's support for state intervention.

In 2012, the scandal and low-achievement themes persisted, culminating in a *Boston Magazine* article titled, "Lawrence, MA: City of the Damned" which catalogued

¹¹ There were no allegations against the Interim Superintendent who served immediately prior to receivership.

social and economic woes plaguing the city from budget cuts to crime to unemployment to low student performance. Many Lawrence residents resented the article for its deficit perspective and responded with a “We Are Lawrence” campaign focused on the community’s strengths. Around this time, the press also focused on the selection of the Receiver, the release of the turnaround strategic plan, and partnerships the district was forging with charter school operators.

In 2013, the coverage shifted to a narrative of academic improvement. Journalists also tried to unpack the steps leaders took to achieve results. In the most recent years, Lawrence was often described as a model for district turnaround. Overall, there were minimal mentions of community-based resistance to receivership or the turnaround. The criticism that did appear came from the teachers union and related to concerns over threats to collective bargaining rights, teacher dismissals, performance pay proposals, and compensation for extended learning time. Additionally, individual teachers expressed due process complaints regarding their evaluations. Finally, some regional and national education reform leaders argued that the turnaround reforms did not go far enough in utilizing market-based approaches to educational improvement.

Interviewees echoed the press-based finding regarding minimal public resistance to the turnaround. When describing the process of coming to a decision to place Lawrence in receivership, one high-ranking state official said, “It would have been a different decision if the entire community was lining up at the Board meeting and said, ‘we don’t want you people coming here. We can do this ourselves.’” One state-level union leader compared the response in Lawrence and Holyoke, the second district taken over by the state under the AGA, “There was certainly much more [resistance] in Holyoke... they

had a community hearing where they had like a thousand people come out. And all 98 percent said, ‘We don't want receivership. It's punishment. It's not support and we'd rather do this ourselves.’” The leader of one Lawrence-based non-profit, that had been conducting focus group-like gatherings with community members leading up to and through the receivership, described her organization’s expectation for the local response and the reality of that response this way:

We felt that...there was not going to be a public outcry...the majority of community members are going to be fine with it... they don't think things could get any worse and everyone was willing to try something different. And I think in fact that that is what happened... parents did have a lot of questions and they voiced concerns but it was not protested or resisted in a big way. We held some forums early on that I remember [the Receiver] nervously agreed to participate in. And he's like “Am I going to get eaten alive here?” [and I said,] “I don't think so.” ...and he didn't.

Parents. Overall, I find limited evidence of parent resistance and some evidence of support for the changes. The available parent survey data is consistent with the idea that Lawrence parents had a positive initial response. The MassINC poll was conducted just after the release of the turnaround plan, but prior to implementation of most of the reforms. I report the results and the full item texts in Table 1. The majority of parents surveyed (68 percent) had heard about and approved of the turnaround plan while only five percent disapproved. Seventeen percent had not yet heard about the plan. When pollsters provided parents with a brief description of the turnaround,¹² support increased to 83 percent and disapproval also increased, but still only to 12 percent. Available information regarding sampling techniques is limited, although a brief census comparison shown in Table 1 suggests major demographic groups are not underrepresented. It is

¹² The text of the description was, “The state receiver’s plan calls for extending the school day, providing targeted support for English Language Learners and special education students, making it easier to dismiss ineffective principals and teachers, and working with charter school operators to improve school performance in the city’s worst schools.”

possible that, because the Massachusetts Charter Association sponsored the poll, the sample could have over-represented parents sending their children to charter schools not managed by the district or subject to the turnaround. Despite limitations, the poll is consistent with other data suggesting parental support for and limited resistance to the turnaround.

For example, interviewees told a similar story. A former state-level elected official who represented Lawrence during the transition to receivership indicated that parents who were fed up with the state of affairs in their schools were helpful in convincing the state to move forward with receivership. He also said that once the receivership took effect, “I didn’t really get any complaints from parents... I definitely heard positive.” One school principal said, “I do sense [parents] think our school is good and it’s probably better than it was... there was never a big reaction... I know if they were unhappy we’d probably hear about it. So I’d say they’re more happy than unhappy.”

Students. There are no major signs that the takeover or turnaround has been particularly controversial with the Lawrence student population although relevant sources are limited. I was not able to find data providing a pre- and post-receivership comparison of student perceptions of the Lawrence public school system. The press coverage did not highlight any major student resistance to the turnaround, in contrast to coverage of the more recent Holyoke takeover that has generated student protest (Williams, 2015). The turnaround had no apparent effects either positive or negative on student attendance or the probability of remaining enrolled in the district (Schueler, Goodman, and Deming, 2016).

Educators. All signs suggest that many Lawrence educators, including central office employees and school-based staff, initially had significant anxiety after the state announced it was placing the district in receivership and during the turnaround planning phase. Interviewees said there was a lot of “fear,” “nervousness” and even “hysteria” among educators worried primarily about the possibility of job loss or school transfer. Some feared that the district would become an exclusively charter school system. The fear was especially acute before the State Commissioner announced the selection of a Receiver since this created uncertainty about who would lead and what turnaround would look like in practice, particularly since Lawrence was the first takeover district under the AGA. One interviewee said some educators espoused a skeptical attitude, “what does someone think they can come in and teach us that we haven’t tried already?” However, fears decreased once the Receiver arrived in the district in early 2012. One now former principal said, “once the decision was made and the Receiver was announced and he came up [to Lawrence] and started to in his way meet people, reassure people... almost immediately I think people started to relax.”

However, once educators learned more about the turnaround plan that spring, new fears developed regarding job security and staff turnover. The initial review of the district’s existing human capital quality was likely the most stressful aspect of the early phase of the turnaround for educators, as the Receiver and his team decided which principals, teachers, and central office staff members to retain. It is hard to overstate how distressing this process must have been for the educators who did end up losing their jobs as a result of this process in particular. Turnaround leaders began by identifying a group of about ten percent of all teachers they considered low-performing based on student

data, attendance records, and principal reports. They then conducted a “Receiver’s Review” in the spring of 2012, observing these teachers in classrooms and gathering information (Empower Schools, 2014). Ultimately, LPS estimates that between eight to ten percent of teachers were removed prior to year one of the turnaround. Between dismissals, resignations and retirements, MA DESE estimates that LPS had a teacher retention rate of about 82 percent in 2012-13 and 74 percent in 2013-14, as displayed in the top half of Figure 4.¹³ The Receiver took a more aggressive approach to replacing school principals. The district estimates that it actively replaced roughly half of all principals in the first two years of the turnaround (ERS, 2015). As I show in Panel B of Figure 4, MA DESE estimates that LPS had a principal retention rate of about 82 percent in 2012-13 and 72 percent in 2013-14.

Not surprisingly, the educators I spoke with who were non-renewed or who left the district in the post-receivership period were dissatisfied with aspects of the turnaround. These interviewees expressed concerns about due process in the evaluation system, as well as an excessive focus on test prep, Teach Like a Champion-inspired rigid instructional practices, the recruitment of educators with minimal classroom experience, the district’s partnership with Teach for America, and disciplinary intensity, particularly at some of the district’s schools managed by outside operators. One educator who was hired and non-renewed in the post-receivership period said it was a challenge to be a new hire in a school environment where several staff members had recently been let go. However, it is difficult to know the degree to which these concerns were shared beyond my sample of interviewees.

¹³ For the purpose of this figure, MA DESE defines retention as remaining in the same position within the district. A staff member is still considered retained if he or she transferred schools within the district.

Educators who were retained had concerns about how extended learning time would affect work schedules and the ability to retain teachers. One principal remembered a teacher with a newborn at home who decided to leave the district due to the extra hours. Principals were also concerned about increased accountability landing on their shoulders in a system with greater school-level autonomy. However, these interviewees tended to describe a gradual decrease in the anxiety level as the turnaround effort moved forward. One principal explained the evolution in mood this way:

It was really, really scary. That year leading up to [2012-13 turnaround implementation] was awful. Awful. And even when [the Receiver] came we didn't know. We all hear, oh, everyone's going to be fired...we weren't sure what the plan was... And then slowly we started to realize, you know what, this is probably going to be a really good thing. In retrospect it's the best thing that's ever happened like ever. And I feel so fortunate that I'm a principal in it and I got to be part of it because just the professional growth for me has been amazing and just seeing what's happening with our kids.

Not all educators gave quite as glowing a review of the current state of affairs in Lawrence, but the TELL MASS survey data suggest that educators who remained in the district had greater satisfaction with their work environments, on average, than educators had leading up to receivership implementation. Importantly, the survey data on teacher perceptions are cross-sectional. As a result, I am unable to determine whether the differences in teachers' perceptions about their working conditions are due to policy changes or due to changes to the teacher population over this period. Additionally, since I do not have access to individual-level data, I am not able to formally test which of these changes are statistically significant. Furthermore, it is possible that teachers had particularly poor perceptions of the school system in the spring of 2012 because they feared upcoming turnaround policy changes, and that these low perceptions are driving some of the improvement in perceptions between 2012 and 2014.

Despite these limitations, at a minimum, the aggregate data do not suggest that the group of teachers working in Lawrence in 2014 were any less satisfied with their working environments than the teachers working there in 2012. I report the aggregate survey results for 2012 and 2014 in Table 2. Overall, there were improvements on 94 percent of the questions, including those on time available for meeting student needs and collaborating with colleagues, communication with parents, community support, teacher leadership, school leader support, the alignment of professional development with improvement plans and differentiation of professional development. The survey-based reports are consistent with MA DESE indicators of working conditions such as class size. Figure 5 provides shows that from 2011 to 2014, average student-to-teacher ratios went down from roughly 14:1 to 12.75:1 in Lawrence compared to a change from 14:1 to 13.5:1 in the state as a whole.

Teachers Union. Throughout this period, the Lawrence Teachers Union (LTU), a local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), represented Lawrence teachers. While it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about individual teachers' reactions to the turnaround given my limited sample, it is easier to identify the issues raised by their union. The union was opposed to the concept of receivership and had serious concerns about the preservation of collective bargaining rights and local democratic decision-making. National AFT leaders echoed these concerns in the press. Despite these concerns, union leaders described making an early conscious decision to collaborate with state and district leaders on turnaround efforts. There was significant union-district tension during the early phase of turnaround implementation in spite of ongoing cooperation on specific initiatives. After the new teacher contract was in place,

relations seemed to improve. Overall, union leaders describe improved personal relations with district leaders relative to the pre-receivership period, in the face of policy-based disagreements. I trace the union's response in more detail below.

As the state came to the decision to place the district in receivership in 2011, the union expressed full agreement that students in Lawrence were not being adequately served and that change was needed. However, union leaders viewed the AGA as a blunt instrument that misdiagnosed the cause of the district's problems, placing blame on, "bad teachers, collective bargaining agreements, and obstructive unions" rather than, "poor district leadership, the school committee, et cetera." As a result, the union had significant fears about the threat receivership posed to collective bargaining rights. The union also criticized the concentration of power over an entire district with a single official, in this case, the State Commissioner of Education. At the same time, the union also saw that receivership could come with a silver lining by improving some conditions in LPS. A state-level union official described the union's ambivalence this way:

It's a tough call for us. Because I think a lot of educators desperately want to see improvements. But they don't want to see improvements if it means that they're going to be the scapegoat... for that dysfunction that they have no control over. The [LTU], they're very committed to the kids and they totally knew that the kids have been getting shortchanged and receivership was an opportunity to make things better and bring in more resources and kids getting more attention, better focused leadership... [they were] weighing that against the threats to democracy.

Ultimately, leading up to the state's decision, the union began to view receivership as inevitable, believing that the Board of Education had the votes to take over the district. In this context of perceived inevitability, the LTU President told the Commissioner he was committed to working in partnership and told the press his goal was to "make lemonade out of a lemon." Union leaders say they made a deliberate

decision to be at the table with district leaders rather than fighting an inevitable change.

Local leaders cited Saul Rubenstein's research showing a positive correlation between union-district collaboration and student achievement. One state-level leader explains:

We knew [receivership] was inevitable and it wasn't going to do either the school system or the union any good to be out there fighting it, because it was going to happen and we didn't want to be put in a position where we were going to be contrary or obstructionist as to making the receivership work as well as it could work. We never supported receivership and we still don't support receivership, but knowing that it was going to happen, [the LTU President] was right to say the union wants to be in the game, wants to have a voice in the game and the only way we're really going to have a voice with [the Receiver] is if we collaborate with him and we cooperate with him.

Despite this commitment to collaboration, the early phase of turnaround implementation was marked by significant union-district tension. Union criticism of the turnaround was one of the dominant themes found in the popular press coverage of Lawrence over the course of 2013. One state-level union leader recounted:

The first year and a half was really difficult, from the appointment of the Receiver, the Receiver's Review, the early changes that were made, the bargaining. Just a lot of fear and anxiety... a lot of our worst fears realized about how the AGA would be used as a hammer and as punishment instead of as support... And if you just get rid of the union and you have total management authority, that's going to turn around a district.

In addition to the Receiver's power to override collective bargaining, the union viewed the Receiver's Review as particularly problematic. Union leaders acknowledged, "there was a sense that, yes, there were some people in Lawrence teaching kids that had no business there and to fire them was the right thing to do," however, there was also a sense that the district went too far by firing teachers who could have improved with support. The union also criticized the Review for lacking due process and negatively affecting school culture. Another state-level leader described the union reaction this way:

Maybe these were teachers that maybe some... shouldn't be in the profession. But it was the way it was done that was so jolting... It wasn't... "here are what we are identifying as your deficiencies in teaching and here's a support plan and here are the resources you're gonna have." There was none of that... and they brought in like hitmen and women to basically do these evaluations, like special consultants... you want to destroy the culture of a school, you bring in outsiders that have no connection to the school or the community.

Beyond the Receiver's Review, the process of coming to an agreement on a new contract was tumultuous from the union's perspective. The then State Secretary of Education commented, "there was a tremendous amount of anxiety around the original negotiation of the contract and the state and national AFT got involved... because they were concerned about where things were going and the precedent that might be set." The union filed two complaints against the district with the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations for the district's failure to bargain and creation of a Teacher Leader Cabinet to advise on district policy paid for via stipends rather than a union-negotiated rate. One state-level union leader described the union-district disagreement over interpretation of the AGA this way:

What the law says is that if the Receiver or the Commissioner believes that one or more provisions of the collective bargaining agreements is an impediment to student learning, they can set that provision of the contract aside... where the law says, 'if one or more provisions,' they said every provision of the contract... there is no contract.

Eventually, the union and the district entered into conversations formally mediated by the Department of Labor Relations. The major points of disagreement centered around the district's new performance-based compensation system and what union leaders viewed as "unfairly low compensation" for extended learning time. In the face of these concerns, the district moved forward with implementing its new compensation system even before the contract was ratified by the union membership. Union leaders did say that they were

able to successfully move the district toward outlining procedures for grievance and arbitration and toward implementing teacher leadership teams at the school level to ensure greater teacher voice in the new system of school-level autonomy and accountability.

One state AFT leader said that the resulting contract was, “tilted more towards what I would call the policy objectives of State management.” Another leader said the union sentiment “was not a ra ra, let's ratify this contract. It was, basically, this is better than having nothing, not a hell of a lot better than having nothing, but it's better than having nothing.” In the spring of 2014, Lawrence teachers voted to ratify the contract by 57 to 43 percent (WBUR, 2014). The new contract replaced the traditional “steps and lanes” system in which salary was determined based on teacher experience and educational attainment with a performance-based career ladder composed of five major levels: novice, developing, career, advanced and master. Teachers’ advancement up the first three rungs of the ladder is based on a teacher’s annual end of year evaluation. Advancement to advanced or master status is determined based on the submission of evidence of effective teaching such as recommendations from peers and principals, and student growth data for those teaching tested grades and subjects. The District also instituted a stipend system to support its extending learning time efforts, its Teacher Leader Cabinet, and the Sontag Prize for Acceleration Academy instructors (LPS, 2013).

In the midst of the tumult, one relative bright spot in union-district relations during the first year of turnaround implementation were ongoing conversations surrounding planning for the Oliver Partnership School. In short, the district and the union came to an agreement that they would begin co-managing grades 1-5 at the old

Oliver School starting in 2013-14. Planning began in early 2013. In the spring, the Receiver and his team joined union leaders for a retreat and AFT conference where, “a lot of the model for the Oliver partnership was hashed out,” according to one state-level union leader. He went on to explain:

[The Oliver Partnership School] has evolved into genuine collaboration... everyone's committed to having that school work. So I guess I would set aside my cynicism for that. I think we've done a good job also keeping that school kind of protected in a bubble so we could be like duking it out, but it's not going to bleed into that school.

Other union leaders described more ups and downs with regards to their collaboration with the district around the Oliver Partnership School, but the overarching sentiment was that the communication and cooperation had been positive and ongoing.

Overall union-district relations seemed to improve in the years after the contract agreement was in place. Press coverage over this period suggested both ups and downs in the union-district relationship. Dominant press-based themes over 2014 and 2015 included union-district cooperation, expressions of union support for the turnaround, and continued union criticism of the turnaround. From the union's perspective, communication and interpersonal relations have improved since prior to the receivership. One state-level union leader described, “communication is better... [the LTU President] has much better access to [the Receiver] than he did to [the previous Superintendent] and that [the Receiver] will get back to him and there's a better personal relationship. That's something that's hard to build.” The LTU President echoed the idea that “the Receiver and I have a good personal relationship,” but added, “professionally we disagree on some things.” Ongoing disagreements relate to union concerns about compensation for extended learning time duties, mid-career teacher salaries, teacher retention among new hires (particularly young, Ivy League educated teachers from outside of Lawrence), due

process for teachers who are non-renewed prior to attaining professional status, and compensation for paraprofessionals.

In a 2014 commentary piece, AFT President Randi Weingarten highlighted Lawrence, alongside Finland, as an example of success driven by union-district collaboration (Education Week, 2014). However, my interviews made it clear that despite improved relations, local and state union leaders would not hold Lawrence up as a model of union-district collaboration because it is occurring within a system of state receivership. One state AFT leader explained that collaboration has mostly occurred with the Receiver and his staff members rather than the State Commissioner who the union views as “driving the train.” This arrangement makes it impossible for Lawrence to serve as a model of collaboration from this union leaders’ perspective:

You need to have people in the room who... can make the decisions right there and then... There has to be complete transparency about what each side is thinking and what information they have to have genuine collaboration...there's genuine commitment and good faith among the people who are doing it, but the key people who should be doing it are not in the room.

Despite their view that Lawrence should not serve as a model of collaboration, union leaders did not hesitate to acknowledge the successes that have come with the turnaround. As one state-level leader expressed:

I don't want to discount the fact that there has been legitimate progress, right?...I don't want to discount the gains, whether it's MCAS scores or other [measures]. I think parents have more confidence in the school system. Enrollment is up. I think there's generally more confidence. I think there have been pockets of certain schools where teachers are thrilled to be there. So there's a lot of good stuff.

However, union leaders still do not attribute these improvements to the state receivership system. Instead, they point to policy changes, such as extended learning time, that they

believe could have been implemented without receivership, in a locally controlled district with more traditional collective bargaining rights.

In sum, despite the union's objection to the receivership model and ongoing policy disagreements, both union and district leaders describe the union's overall response as fundamentally collaborative rather than oppositional. Union leaders argue they have taken this approach in the face of some pressure from their members to do otherwise. One local union leader said that some members, "want me to be the enemy sometimes, but you have to be a diplomat... as you get a little bit older you kind of think like a grandfather instead of an angry neighbor." One district official said that the contract agreement helped to create a partnership in which the union often functions as an "ombudsman" helping to raise issues that percolate from schools with district leaders. Ultimately, he argues that the union has been, "extraordinarily helpful when it could've been extraordinarily toxic... if it had gone toxic...there could be a lot of effort that would not benefit at all school leaders and teachers... a phenomenal distraction. We didn't go down that way."

Partner Organizations. Partner organizations such as academic enrichment program providers and non-profit organizations that provided the district with consultation services tended to offer an extraordinarily positive assessment of the turnaround effort in both press coverage and interviews. One leader of a community-based partner organization explained:

A lot of us saw a lot of opportunity in having receivership... But I also don't think that it was inevitable that it's played out as well as it has 'cause we could have gotten in as a Receiver someone who was like a "my-way-or-the-highway" kind of person or who didn't believe in the community at all or who thought parents were the problem, etcetera. And instead we got someone who believes very strongly in parents and families and who was incredibly not just open to but proactive about reaching out to

and developing community partnerships and giving schools a lot of autonomy to do that as well.”

Although representatives of these groups still had ideas about how to improve the overall approach, the dominant theme was that the district was in a much better condition than it had been in the pre-turnaround period. This is perhaps not surprising given that, as partner organizations, these groups may feel a certain degree of accountability for the results of the turnaround effort.

Conclusion. In sum, the early phase of receivership created substantial anxiety for Lawrence educators and the LTU. As turnaround implementation progressed, press coverage, parent and educator survey data, as well as interviews with representatives of key stakeholder groups support the idea that the turnaround was relatively well-received by Lawrence community members, parents, retained educators, and partner organizations. At the very least, there are no signs that any of these groups have generated significant resistance to the turnaround. The union, on the other hand, has expressed significant criticism and district-union relations have had ups and downs. However, there are signs of improvements in union-district relations in recent years and of ongoing collaboration despite policy-based disagreements.

Research Question 2: Factors Contributing to Stakeholder Response

Overall, the public response to the Lawrence turnaround has been positive and the opposition has been mild when compared to other cases of district takeover and turnaround. In the following section, I address my second research question: what factors contributed to Lawrence stakeholders’ response to the turnaround? Put another way, I seek to understand why the Lawrence turnaround was not more controversial. Although I am not able to draw definitive causal conclusions that explain the public response, several

distinct themes emerged from my analysis providing plausible explanatory factors. I find that three primary factors limited negative response to the turnaround, including features of: (1) the local Lawrence context, (2) the broader state accountability context in which the state had been granted new authorities through the AGA, and (3) turnaround leaders' approach to implementing reforms.

Lawrence Context. Several characteristics of the Lawrence context likely helped limit the negative reaction to the turnaround. First, the school district is medium-sized and had a growing enrollment post-receivership. Some describe it as, “big enough to matter, but small enough to make a difference.” Managing a set of roughly 30 schools provided the Receiver and his deputies the opportunity to set foot in all of the schools. One central office leader explained:

To do the school-by-school [reform] ...you need to have a small number of schools to be able to focus on... any intervention short of just hitting complete restart on a school, you need to... see the whole school kind of arrayed before you... to advise schools or strategically replace people, you have to know that school, pretty much like the back of your hand to be able to do it well. You have to build the relationships.

In addition to the district's manageable starting size, throughout the post-receivership period, student enrollment was increasing. This prevented the central office from having to make unpopular budget cuts or close a large number of schools based on declining enrollments.

Lawrence's political context also helps explain the turnaround response. Prior to receivership, there was a widespread perception of dysfunction, instability, and even corruption among high-level public officials at the city and school district levels. One leader of a partner organization argued that this created more receptivity to takeover than would have existed had the district simply had poor performance:

Corruption makes me feel much more comfortable with the state taking over... there's a big difference when you say, "I'm only doing this because we're going to do better with your schools than you were doing," versus "because people are stealing stuff"... that condition really did change the rhetoric... there was a moral underpinning.

For many Lawrence community members, these perceptions contributed to a sense that there was a lack of local capacity to address student performance and a hope that state-level resources could help, as one now former high-ranking state education official argued:

There was a sense of urgency in this place because things had gone from bad to worse... this Mayor, himself, was tarnished with various accusations... they'd hit bottom. I think when they arrested the superintendent and the chaos that was prevailing in terms of the school system and the lengthy track record of failure there and the number of students who were being harmed in the face of that, there was a growing recommendation that... they needed help.

Typically, state takeovers are met with the concern that they compromise local, transparent, democratic decision-making. These concerns were present in Lawrence, but there was also limited confidence in local policymakers. At a Boston Foundation event, the Receiver remembered that when he first arrived in Lawrence, people told him, “you’ve got to watch the school committee tapes from the past, it’s like Jerry Springer!” The leader of a one community-based group argued that negative public perceptions of the pre-receivership School Committee dampened concerns about usurping local power:

The one thing that there was a little bit more outcry or resistance about was the fact that the School Committee was not going to have a role anymore... I'm not sure that that was echoed by a lot of popular support... I don't think there were any parents on the School Committee... there were some people who genuinely cared... and then probably others who were like I'll run for School Committee and then I'll run for City Council and then something else. And so I don't know that the School Committee was before an incredibly effective vehicle for public oversight of the education system.

Therefore, although the community was not happy about receivership, many seemed to view state intervention as the lesser of two evils.

According to interviewees, these dynamics and an overall sense of urgency contributed to unique situation in which the Lawrence Mayor, legislative delegation, and Governor all expressed public support for receivership. This was important as the leader of one partner organization explained:

They were invited in. This was not actually a hostile takeover... a lot of these places, the biggest problem you have is if you have a local player who's opposed to you and fighting it. In fact, the Mayor invited it and then didn't dabble really... The delegation was very supportive... to have an opposition, to have a problem, you have to have an opponent.

One member of the legislative delegation who was supportive of receivership talked about the intentionality with which he and others worked to gather local support that was demographically representative of the community:

[The Mayor] was a very controversial figure, but to his credit, he said to the state, "Hey, look, help me." ... he was from the north side of the city and that was where the vast majority of people that were sending their kids to the public schools [were] ... to have Latinos on our side, that was huge... A white guy [referring to himself] couldn't have done this without having a team from Lawrence... we built an internal group. We had reps, we had parents, young moms, the Mayor, we had a lot of people in turn say, "We want this."

It is hard to overstate the degree to which interviewees believed that local elected officials' early support for state involvement played a role in the community's response to the reforms.

Beyond local elected officials, employee unions tend to play a large role in educational politics (Moe, 2011) and indeed several characteristics of the organized labor landscape in Lawrence contributed to the turnaround response. First, Massachusetts principals are not unionized, which made it easier than it otherwise would have been for the Receiver to replace roughly half of all principals in the first two years of receivership. One high-level district official argued that because a key part of the turnaround strategy

was to “elevate” the principal’s role, “in other states that have unionized principal associations, you can’t do any of this.”

Relations between the teachers union and the district had been poor for a long time prior to receivership. One high-level LTU leader recounted the start of his relationship with the previous Superintendent. After making a critical comment to the press, the union leader recounted being summoned to the central office:

[The Superintendent] just started yelling at me and basically saying that he produced a memo that said all communication had to go through the Superintendent and he put the memo in my face and said "Have you read this memo? Do you want me to get the old union president to read it to you?"... He ended up being jailed for embezzlement and he has to live with his issues. So for a long time the LTU, we were aware of the improprieties... by the Superintendent... some of the School Committee members, City Council members... [the Superintendent] ended up – they had his office raided... he was removed... And in the middle of all of that the city of Lawrence was put into receivership... at a real low point.

From the district’s perspective, the Receiver’s administration viewed the union as having been, in some ways, a force for good in a dysfunctional pre-receivership system. One district administrator explained:

For the last 20 years... the union was an incredibly positive force here in the midst of a lot of chaos, a lot of turmoil, a lot of people that were treated incredibly unfairly at the teacher level and at the student level. Politics ran rampant... The union was actually protecting people from corruption... reformers never think this is a real thing but it literally was the union protecting people from cronyism, like “I want to fire you because you had a fight with my sister.”

The new team’s perception that the union had served to protect educators from corruption likely contributed to the district’s post-receivership willingness to collaborate with the union.

Finally, the lack of a strong union-parent alliance likely played a role in minimizing turnaround resistance. In many large urban districts, school systems have historically served as a major employer and often an important venue for the social

mobility of people of color. This dynamic can reinforce alliances between educator unions and parents, particularly in places where the teaching force is racially or ethnically similar to the families it serves (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999). In contrast, the 80 percent white LPS staff is not representative of the roughly 90 percent Hispanic Lawrence student population. I describe the racial and ethnic makeup of LPS staff over time in Figure 7.

One leader of a partner organization argued that these dynamics have created a disconnect between the union and the broader community explaining, “it's not Latino teachers losing their jobs in Lawrence... there's not a 30, 40, 50-year history of [the teaching profession] being a stepping stone to the middle class. And [the LTU President] is a White Irish guy.” Furthermore, educators were not socioeconomically representative of the roughly 90 percent low-income student population, and there was a sense that many of the teachers lived in neighboring communities rather than within the district itself. As a result, one district official speculated that one reason the community outcry over job losses was relatively muted was because many of the teachers who were dismissed resided outside the district. One leader of a community-based organization recounted the early days leading up to receivership:

We also got calls from some folks pretty high in the union nationally sort of asking us if we would organize against receivership... the challenge with some unions today is that they have become disconnected from the communities they are embedded in and serve – especially in the face of immigration and demographic changes - and that was largely true with the teachers' union here... we felt organizing to save the union was not something that was going to have resonance with parents and students here.

In sum, several characteristics of the local Lawrence context, such as the school district's size and growing enrollment, the receptivity of local elected officials to state intervention, the union politics, and the racial/ethnic disconnect between the teaching

force and student population, contributed to creating a context in which it was possible to implement receivership and turnaround without a dramatic backlash.

Expanded State Authorities. The accountability context in Massachusetts also contributed to the turnaround response within Lawrence. The AGA state law gave the state the authority to take over districts in the most extreme cases of underperformance. The state is then able to select and appoint a Receiver who has all the authority of the Superintendent and School Committee, as well as new authorities to change district-wide policy, such as suspending portions of the collective bargaining agreement and unilaterally extending the school day and year. These AGA-provided authorities were, at least in the short run, politically useful in shielding turnaround leaders from local politics to certain extent.

First, the new authorities seemed useful in allowing the state and district to recruit turnaround leaders with political capacity. Interviewees argued that it would have been difficult to recruit an effective receiver without offering authorities that he or she would perceive as necessary for making major improvements. One state-level elected official explained that he advocated for state takeover, in part because, “to get the caliber of [the eventual Receiver], I knew that’s what we had to do.” Several interviewees characterized the eventual Lawrence Receiver as politically adept. One leader of a partner organization described his reaction to hearing the Commissioner was considering the eventual Receiver for the role:

That would be brilliant because not only is he a great guy, he's politically extremely savvy... he [was principal of]... one of the fastest growing schools, where the teachers were among the most pleased with it and the union was quite supportive... even though [the future Receiver] was skirting some rules, [his Superintendent] loved him... He had a personal set of skills to be... driving change at a high level, and at

getting by, almost against what you'd expect in a way that people liked him for it, not disliked him for it.

Turnaround leaders at the district level echoed this sentiment. One district administrator who had worked primarily in consulting prior to receivership argued that the Receiver, “having lived in this world and really understanding the political nuances in a much deeper way helped us to avoid a lot of the pitfalls that I think even incredibly well-intentioned thoughtful people would fall into.”

The authorities also seemed to play a role in the recruitment of other key staff members who were aligned with the Commissioner and Receiver’s approach to reform. At a November 2013 gathering of greater Boston area business leaders, the Receiver explained:

Receivership... put a spotlight on the Lawrence Public Schools. There’s a lot of interest in the reforms that are taking place there, so we are getting hundreds more applicants in for teachers... a lot of people want to come work... in this unique set of circumstances. Self-motivated, self-starting people who are interested in being more than a principal, but really a CEO... and not being bound by... central office bureaucracy... people are interested in this idea that they can really put their own stamp on their building. (Riley, 2013)

The turnaround team believed that the new authorities provided by the AGA allowed them to recruit people to work in the district who helped improve the response to the turnaround because they were aligned with the new approach.

In addition, the new authorities provided crucial leverage for state and district leaders. Most obviously, they allowed the district to bypass likely political battles over their preferred policy changes such as district-wide extended learning time. More specifically, during union-district conversations over the teacher contract, the new authority that allowed the Receiver to ignore portions of the collective bargaining

agreement helped the district get union support for a contract the union would not have otherwise accepted. One state-level union leader explained:

We spent a lot of time on [the new contract discussions]... at one point, the Receiver set a deadline... saying if we don't have a contract settled by this date, I'm imposing... we were powerless. So we pushed as hard as we could to get the best deal we could get and when the clock struck midnight we said okay, we'll sign the deal, also stating that we didn't like it and we didn't like the receivership, but we had to move forward... there was some lobbying done with the membership to tell them... if we didn't get this, we had... nothing in writing, no grievance procedure... Better to have this than nothing.

Furthermore, these new powers allowed turnaround leaders at both the district and state level to frame themselves as taking a measured approach by emphasizing that they did not use the full extent of their powers. The Receiver, Commissioner, and other advocates of the turnaround effort often publically argued that they exercised the authorities in a restrained and responsible way. In particular, these leaders often point to the decisions not to ask all staff to reapply for their jobs and not to convert LPS schools into charters. At the Boston Foundation event, the Receiver said:

The reality is, I could make every teacher in Lawrence, if I so chose, reapply for their job... before I got there, there were calls to destroy the LPS system. People said "turn it all into charter schools," someone said, "this is their Katrina moment" which I thought was slightly disrespectful, but I got the point. But I wanted to take a more measured approach.

Although this rhetoric may have helped improve the general public's response to the turnaround effort, union leaders had a different interpretation, arguing that the state did not show restraint but rather, "overreached what the intent of the [AGA] law was." When asked about the district's framing around restraint, one union leader responded, "If I hear that one more time, I'm gonna blow my brains out... why would they come in and just fire everyone? That's absurd. I mean, mass firings don't work." The new authorities may

have allowed turnaround leaders to appear measured to a general audience, but union leaders did not accept this framing.

In addition to helping turnaround leaders describe their approach as measured, the AGA-based authorities also created a “good cop, bad cop” dynamic between district and state leaders, helping district officials avoid some blame for unpopular decisions. One leader of a partner organization argued that the Receiver’s team has been able to respond to stakeholder requests by saying, “I’d love to help you out with that, but [the State] won’t let me do that.” Similarly, one union leader argued, “Most people in the district that know [the Receiver] on a personal level like the guy. They might very much dislike some of the policies, but they also know that [the Receiver] can’t do anything in Lawrence without the approval of the Commissioner.” In some cases, union leaders perceived that district leaders framed themselves as more moderate than state leaders in order to encourage union cooperation. One union leader said that district leaders used the subtle threat of charter school expansion to encourage union cooperation, suggesting, “those people out there want to do nothing but charter schools and I’m sort of holding back the floodgates, so work with me and we’ll make the system work and we won’t have to kill you with charter schools.” This is one example of how the state’s primacy provided a degree of political cover for local leaders.

In sum, the new authorities provided by Massachusetts’ accountability system contributed to minimizing resistance to the Lawrence turnaround. The autonomies helped the state recruit politically adept district leaders. The presence of talented leaders was not simply a lucky accident, but the result of state law, at least in part. Furthermore, although state takeover itself was hardly popular, the authorities it provided helped to shield

turnaround leaders from some potential local political conflicts in the short term.

However, it is yet to be determined how the political dynamics will evolve if and when the state eventually returns local control of the district.

Turnaround Leaders' Approach. Within the local and statewide context described above, I find five features of the turnaround leaders' approach to implementation that seemed to limit resistance to their reforms. This approach included an emphasis on relationship building and stakeholder empowerment, differentiated district-school relations, a "third way" framing and policy approach that attempted to reconcile seemingly dichotomous political perspectives, strategic staffing decisions, and producing early results while minimizing disruption.

Relationship Building and Stakeholder Empowerment. The first feature of turnaround leaders' approach was their emphasis on building relationships and empowering key players within the district to feel a sense of ownership over the reforms. Stone et al. (2001) argue that when a policy subsystem, such as a school district, is ineffective or corrupt, it is not enough to simply disrupt that system. Sustained reform requires altering relationships between various actors with a stake in that system in order to build civic capacity. Stone et al. (2001) characterize civic capacity as, "various sectors of the community coming together in an effort to solve a major problem" (p. 4). Consistent with this concept, Lawrence district leaders sought to convene key stakeholders in the district, build relationships with them, and empower them to be a part of the reform effort. This was politically advantageous because, as one state level leader explained, "people support what they help create."

In the earliest phase of the turnaround implementation this approach was best illustrated by the Receiver's decision to begin with information gathering and needs assessment. The Receiver was appointed in January of 2012 and spent a good part of the first five months visiting schools, and meeting and surveying parents, teachers, administrators, potential partner organizations, elected officials and union leaders. Leaders said this information would inform the creation of a turnaround plan that was released in June of 2012. This effort seemed to go beyond a symbolic listening tour in part because turnaround leaders made community members feel heard by implementing early changes that were responsive to community feedback. One leader said the central office team, "deliberately tried to weave in really tangible changes that would resonate with people on the ground early on. " The Receiver provided some examples:

We had [a positive] vibe from the parents initially when they saw we were fixing the buildings... There are going to be bathroom doors on the stalls... toilet paper in the boys and girls room. Parents then began to see that we're also opening up all these opportunities for their kids... theatre performances and sports. The kids were probably happy... Parents saw that those kinds of things also helped with kids being bonded to their school... those were areas where we felt like we had a lot of support from parents and heard a lot from them.

Other district officials and community members argued that this initial responsiveness helped to build confidence in the new leadership.

School-level administrators also argued that this initial period of information gathering, coupled with tangible changes that were responsive to feedback, was important for securing principals buy-in. One administrator explained:

[The Receiver] didn't make a whole bunch of changes that first half year... he was assessing on the ground, meeting with every single principal individually. He'd come right to the school..."Tell me what you think about this. Show me some classrooms... What do you need?"...the idea of someone asking..."What is going to help you to succeed?" that was a new idea I think for folks... That was very impressive... everybody just started to relax.

Another principal explained that these school visits immediately demonstrated to educators that the Receiver was different from previous leaders, arguing, “when you walk through a school you kind of get a good sense of... what’s going on... the previous Superintendent came maybe once when we opened... [the Receiver] likes to be in the schools. You can tell he likes to talk to the students.” However, the Receiver’s listening and responsiveness did not mean that the district always capitulated to administrator opinion. Principals said that district leaders were willing to push back, “say no” and vet principal ideas, but that they felt district leaders wanted to hear their opinions. One explained, “we don’t have to agree with everything but if you feel like you’ve been heard and respected and then at least you’ve had a voice in the change that’s coming... that’s been the thing that’s been extraordinary.”

Another component of turnaround leaders’ effort to build relationships with and empower school-based staff was his approach to school-central office relations. The Receiver and his team were critical of top-down district authority and called for a more decentralized system that empowered school-level leaders through greater autonomy. His stated goal was to shift the central office from a compliance- to a service-based organization, consistent with the approach of other improved districts (Supovitz, 2006; Honig, 2013; Johnson et al., 2015). This service-based approach appealed to school-based staff. One principal explained, “[the Receiver] said ‘we work for the schools, we serve the schools.’ I’ll never forget that. That was a big change. Before it had been, ‘[schools] report to central office.’” In practice, this meant cutting the central office budget by \$1.6 million in year one and by an additional \$5 million in year two and pushing some funds to the school level (ERS, 2015), a decision that again likely appealed

to school-level staff. In describing his rationale for this approach, the Receiver often related to school principals by recalling his own experience as a principal:

As a principal, I spent a lifetime evading and ignoring the central office... I had to know how to get around some rules to focus on what matters, which was the teaching and learning and classrooms... a lot of central offices... send dictates down to the principals... "this has to be filled in right away"... What we try to do in Lawrence is to change the mindset... make their lives easier... and get the hell out of their way. (Riley, 2013)

This rhetoric seemed to resonate with principals. One administrator said, “the big difference was that here was someone who very recently was in the principal's chair.”

In addition to principals, the Receiver and his team worked to build relationships with and empower teachers. Principals suggested this was a particularly high priority, “when you talk to [the Receiver], it’s not about the principals at all, it’s about... taking care of our teachers... He meets with teachers more than principals which I think is cool.” The Receiver’s himself echoed an appreciation for teachers:

Is there anything more important in a school system than the teachers?... That's where the trench is. That's where the war is. That's where it happens is in the classroom. As a building principal, I spent 90 percent of my day trying to make my teachers' lives easier so they can focus on their craft and do what they need to do... teachers are everything.”

Publicly, the Receiver often credited the hard work of classroom teachers for the early results of the turnaround arguing, “we were able to put some conditions in to make that happen but the teachers did this.” The local union leadership suggested that this rhetoric does indeed resonate with many teachers themselves, “[the Receiver] has made several statements, very strong statements about the faculty, stuff they like to hear.”

In addition to the rhetoric, the district created new programs designed to provide excellent teachers with recognition, increased voice, and in some cases an opportunity to earn stipends on top of their regular salaries. For example, the district established a

Teacher Leader Cabinet to advise high-level central office staff, Advanced and Master teacher roles as part of the new career ladder system, school-level Teacher Leadership Teams as part of the new teacher contract, and opportunities to be selected to work in extended learning time programs such as the Acceleration Academies where they are acknowledged as outstanding teachers. This positive orientation toward educators was likely critical in sustaining their energy to implement improvement efforts.

Furthermore, district leaders said their efforts to build relationships extended to leaders of organized labor. One high-level central office leader described, “The amount of personal time that I’ve spent with [the LTU President] is quite significant... it’s been some of the most important hours that I’ve spent” because this investment helped her understand the President’s perspective and to think creatively about coming up with “mutual solutions.” A state-level elected official explained the importance of this effort:

Lawrence is a big labor community... there’s always the Annual Labor Day Breakfast. And the [former] Superintendent never showed up. [The Receiver] showed up... people were blown away... [the LTU President] was tough, he’s an old-school union guy. And [the Receiver] really went out of his way to work with him and make him feel a part of it. Chris Christie has a line... “It’s hard to really hate someone who’s looking you in the eye.” [The Receiver] made it really hard for people to dislike him.

Again, leaders of the local teachers union have been critical of many of the Receiver’s policy decisions and do not believe that the post-receivership communication with the central office has always been perfect. One local union leader remarked, “I get a little frustrated with him because sometimes I find out things afterwards when maybe we had a better answer.” However, this same leader was clear that communication with the district has improved in recent years, “we’re having a lot of trouble over [at one particular school]

right now. But I mean the one thing I like about [the Receiver] is we get on the phone. We're talking to each other."

One particularly notable example of the district's effort to engage with the union was its decision to enter into discussions with union leaders regarding the new teacher contract. From the district's perspective, they were not required to do so, given the authorities provided by the AGA, and this process could potentially limit their flexibility. One central office leader explained the district's reasons for negotiating this way:

Number 1 there was this sense this was honestly just the right thing to do... [the Receiver] believes in a unionized district and, at the heart of it, it's because unions help teachers access protections for their jobs in cases where things haven't been good... Number 2, the teachers here had enlisted this group to be their voice... to just say we're not going to engage in that, I think would've really undermined the morale of the district in a needless way... Now we weren't willing to compromise on the things we really needed... but we really wanted to reach an agreement... thank goodness we actually had a really willing union president, and local and national AFT who saw that this could be a potential success story for everyone.

In the end, district leaders argued that the process of getting a new contract passed with union members helped solidify the district's view of the union as a partner and promoted longer-term collaboration.

One specific way in which these negotiations promoted increased partnership was that they resulted in the establishment of teacher leader teams that contribute to decision-making at every school. The incorporation of these teams into the district's model was a win for the union, making increased school-level autonomy more palatable. Additionally, to union leaders, the creation of teacher leader teams was emblematic of their broader influence on the turnaround. One state level union leader explained:

The big thrust [of the turnaround plan] is school-based decision making... if it's just window dressing for... vesting all power in a school principal who is accountable to a single individual, the Receiver, Commissioner, whatever, that's a very top-down model... what we've tried to do is to take their framing of school autonomy, and

reframe it from a top-down to more of a bottom-up perspective... School autonomy is teachers having real voice and power at the school level around decisions that affect kids... that's actually how you get sustainable, long-lasting reform that works, when you have the buy in from the people who are doing the job... A lot of these ideas we introduced to resistance have become part of the district's vocabulary now... teacher voice, teacher leadership teams, teacher decision making... it's definitely part of the fabric of the district now.

The final example of turnaround leaders' emphasis on relationship building was their effort to convene and empower community members from outside of the school system. In their study of the politics of school reform in five big-city portfolio management districts, Hill and Jochim (2015) apply Schattschneider's (1960) framework to argue that leaders will have a political advantage when they attract bystanders into the political arena and convert them into active allies. Lawrence turnaround leaders did this by convening and enlisting community-based organizations such as local community development organizations, Lawrence-based early childhood center and charter school operators, and enrichment providers, who had before had only a limited role in the schools. For instance, to expand learning time, the district relied in large part on existing non-profit organizations to provide enrichment activities for students. In many cases, these arrangements greatly expanded enrichment providers' operations. An October 2015 *CommonWealth Magazine* article described:

The Boys and Girls Club's shiny state-of-the-art facility in Lawrence used to sit empty during the day until school got out. Now, six schools bus students to the club during school hours for the kids to enjoy swimming, karate, drumming, cooking, basketball, dance, computers, creative writing, and art. Kids from another set of schools go to the Lawrence YMCA, which also sends its instructors into the schools to provide enrichment on site. The Y used to serve only 140 Lawrence kids after school; now it works with thousands.

Leaders of non-profit partner organizations described this as a major departure from the pre-receivership culture. One argued, "the schools had been a very impenetrable place for

a long time. We had tried to work with them particularly through our youth programming... without a whole lot of success.” Now these organizations had an opportunity, “to serve kids whose parents might not get it together to bring them to you.” This arrangement went beyond simply providing an opportunity to serve more children. As one leader of an enrichment provider explained, “the fact that [the Receiver] came in and said we want to extend the day, we want to bring in partners to do it and we know we have to pay for it, that's huge.” This financial commitment further helped these organizations grow their programs and extend their reach.

Early relationship building with these community-based leaders also improved public perceptions of the turnaround. As one of these leaders explained, “this was a two way street, we were asking things from [the Receiver] and he's saying I need your help in selling it.” Early in the turnaround planning phase, this leader presented at a public forum about emerging plans for her organization’s involvement in the extended learning time efforts along with a panel with other leaders of community-based organizations including people who had grown up in Lawrence. She described, “instead of [the Receiver] being the mouthpiece... we were the mouthpiece saying, ‘this is what we're excited about.’... it also put us on the line, too... you're saying you're a part of this. As a result, the early engagement of these community-based groups likely contributed to public perceptions that the turnaround was not simply a top-down effort imposed from the outside, but included insiders in the decision-making process. It also generated a large source of support for the Receiver and his team among organizations that were able to extend their reach through the district’s approach to extended learning time. This is one example of

district leaders' notable ability to identify win-win policy decisions that benefit students, the district, and the broader community.

Differentiated District-School Relations. The second major feature of the turnaround that improved stakeholder response was its emphasis on contingency and differentiation as opposed to uniformity, particularly in terms of school-district relationships. The contingency theory of leadership posits that there is not one best style of management. Instead, a leader's ideal management style varies depending on the environment, including the characteristics of the organization being managed (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Applying this theory to school systems, the degree of autonomy and types of support that a central office should ideally provide to schools is dependent on a number of environmental factors, including characteristics of individual schools. The ideal district-school relationship will likely vary from school to school.

Single and cross-case studies of districts with records of improvement (e.g., Supovitz, 2006) tend to conclude that what matters most is achieving policy coherence—in this case, the “alignment of standards, curricula, assessments, and ... formal policy texts” in schools and their central offices (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 16). This can be achieved in centralized or decentralized districts. Coherence does not require that practices are identical across schools, but rather that schools take actions that are aligned toward achieving coordinated objectives (Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson & Daly, 2008; Childress, Doyle, & Thomas, 2009; Johnson, Marietta, Higgins, Mapp & Grossman, 2015). Others emphasize that achieving coherence is not a static goal, but an ongoing process in which schools and the central office work to craft a fit between individual schools' approaches and external policy demands (Honig & Hatch, 2004). Consistent

with this approach, I find that Lawrence turnaround leaders attempted to allow schools to operate in varied ways and to tailor the district-school relationship to individual school contexts. This approach seemed to improve stakeholder response to the turnaround by providing flexibility and tailoring policies to fit individual schools' preferences.

The first phase in which district leaders differentiated between schools was during the Receiver's initial needs assessment in the spring of 2012. The needs assessment was consistent with an asset-based approach to community development in that it involved an effort to identify community-based strengths that turnaround leaders could mobilize (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Although the district as a whole had been given the State's lowest accountability rating, turnaround leaders determined early on that there was within-district variation in terms of school, administrator, and teacher quality. The Receiver explained at a Boston Foundation-sponsored event, "I took about the first five months to really look into the school system and I saw some good things. There were problems... but I also saw two high-performing schools... others that were about to break and go into high-performing status. I saw a lot of great teachers" (Riley, 2013). Rather than assuming that failure was the rule throughout the district, turnaround leaders identified pockets of pre-existing success to identify, retain and promote talented educators and administrators. This also allowed the Receiver's team to publicly celebrate the teachers and leaders at these high-performing schools, a move that these educators likely appreciated.

In addition to identifying variation, district leaders aimed to increase school-level autonomy, consistent with the idea that there is no one uniform set of solutions for running an effective school. Instead, the philosophy was that the ideal solutions are

contingent on unique school-level contextual factors best understood by school-level staff. School autonomy tended to improve school leaders' perceptions of the turnaround by giving them greater flexibility. However, principals initially also viewed autonomy with trepidation because it came with greater responsibility and accountability. One principal remembered, "we were charged with redesigning our school and I didn't know where to begin and I was incredibly nervous about that." To help smooth this transition, the central office narrowed the focus of principal planning in the first year to one major area: extended learning time. They brought in a partner organization the National Center for Time and Learning (NCTL) to help schools plan their expanded learning time efforts. NCTL's role was to help schools think about all possibilities for time use. The central office did mandate that schools add additional time, but allowed school-level staff to decide when in their schedules to add it and how to use it. Principals suggested that this arrangement helped them think of possibilities outside of what they had done before and guided them through a planning process that made school-level autonomy more fruitful going forward.

Honig (2012) identifies effective central office practices for supporting principal development and finds that these practices are often consistent with theories of teaching and learning typically reserved for classroom teachers, such as differentiation and modeling. She argues for a shift toward conceptualizing central office staff as "teachers of principals' instructional leadership" (p. 735). In their effort to transition Lawrence principals to a new system of greater autonomy, district leaders used several familiar instructional practices. They used what Honig calls "brokering" to connect principals to external sources of support. District leaders used instructional scaffolding by narrowing

the focus of school-level planning to extended learning time in the first year so that principals could adapt to their newfound autonomy. They used “modeling” by exposing principals to a range of extended learning time models, but resisted making decisions for principals about which models to select. Ultimately, district leaders and principals argued that allowing schools to self-select their approach helped to ensure there was a certain degree of school-level buy-in for the extended learning time reforms and partnering with NCTL helped them feel supported in the planning process.

Although the Receiver’s team increased school autonomy, rather than increasing it uniformly across the district, they implemented a system of what I call “differentiated autonomy.” The district provided different schools with different levels of autonomy and a tailored set of central office supports based the district’s assessment of each school’s prior performance and perceived capacity. Schools that were highest performing prior to the turnaround received the highest levels of autonomy to continue operating as they saw fit. Schools in the middle, based on prior performance, were provided with the less autonomy and more intensive central office supports. For the lowest performing schools, the district began handing over management to independent operators that were then given substantial operational autonomy. This is one example of the turnaround leaders’ ability to avoid false dichotomies, such as an unnecessary forced choice between a highly centralized vs. decentralized system. Had the district instead opted for a uniform system of autonomy, some schools might have felt that the default arrangement was poorly matched to their school context.

“Third Way” Framing and Policy Approach. Another notable feature of LPS leaders’ approach that likely improved the turnaround reception was the use of “third

way” framing and corresponding policy decisions. Bobbio (1997) describes the third way as a political position that attempts not only to reconcile right-wing and left-wing political perspectives, but also to “transcend the politics of left and right” (p. 8). In public statements, the Receiver often characterized the broader education community as in the midst of a bipolar ideological battle between proponents of market-based reforms such as charter schools and proponents of more traditional and centralized systems of public schooling, often allied with teachers unions. The Lawrence turnaround, he argued, subscribed to a “third way” or “radical center” approach borrowing the best ideas from both camps and rising above ugly ideological battles:

We've taken shots from both sides of this war... we think there's another way of doing business. There's a space for everyone to play together in the same sandbox... there are good ideas on both sides... This problem is far too big for a civil war. It's silly to watch some of these folks rage on either side... As a group, we've made a decision that we're going to tune out that stuff. So, sometimes I take shots from extremists in the traditional union camp. Sometimes I take shots from the extremists in the “charter schools are the only way” camp. We don't need a camp... this third way is what we're about... I've seen many types of good schools and parents just don't care. They just want a good school for their kid.

This framing likely improved the reception of the Receiver’s approach. It is hard to imagine opposing “good schools” or favoring charged political arguments. Instead, the Receiver’s supporters described the Receiver as a moderate, capable of crossing ideological lines. The former State Secretary of Education argued that the Receiver, “was a boundary crosser... who had good relationships with the charter entrepreneurial innovation community and he had a long proven track record as a district administrator.” The Receiver himself remembered, “I was a principal of... an AFT union school... quietly I was friends with [leaders of charter school networks]. We always had to kind of

talk in secret and have beers because there was such animosity between the worlds” (Riley, 2013).

The third way framing is an example of turnaround leaders’ ability to apply the kind of integrative thinking that Martin (2007) and others argue is an essential attribute of successful leadership. Integrative thinking is characterized by an ability to avoid false dichotomies, resolve tensions and synthesize seemingly contradictory policy choices into a new choice that is preferable to either of the original choices. In the early stages of the turnaround, it appeared that the third way approach could have been a political liability since the Receiver was fielding criticism from both sides of the broader ongoing debates. However, this approach ultimately seemed to allow him to avoid taking a clear side, partner with members of both sides of the polarized debate, and reframe political battles themselves as the enemy.

Beyond rhetorical framing, the third way approach was reflected in several of the turnaround team’s policy choices. First, by bringing in a small set of charter school operators to manage low-performing schools, the Receiver’s team implemented what can be thought of as a portfolio management approach to district governance.¹⁴ PPM itself incorporates both market and public management oriented approaches to educational improvement. In a PMM system, the central office oversees and holds accountable a supply of schools that are managed by a diverse set of operators, typically including charter management organizations (Hill, Campbell & Gross, 2012). Families within a PMM system usually have access to public school choice and their preferences help to inform the district’s decision-making regarding its portfolio of schools. However,

¹⁴ LPS officials do not typically use the phrase “portfolio management” to describe their approach, possibly because the term itself stems from an investment portfolio analogy and therefore connotes a market-based approach to education reform.

portfolio management places the central office—typically a public, democratically governed entity—as the primary arbiter of school quality (Henig and Bulkley, 2010).

The Lawrence system diverged from the typical approach to PMM in that LPS retained a neighborhood- rather than choice-based school assignment policy. Despite this difference, the Lawrence model still incorporates both market and non-market elements. The district contracts with outside organizations which, in theory, compete to run schools. These groups include charter management organizations born out of market-based approaches to educational improvement. The district provides these organizations with autonomies more familiar to charter managers and CEOs than to traditional public school administrators. Central office managers then track these organizations' progress and determine whether or not to renew the contracts based on performance. This system of district governance lends itself to a third way approach by blending market and non-market based reform.

The district's selection of a diverse set of school operators further illustrates its third way approach. Under receivership, a large majority of Lawrence schools were kept under district management; however, the district handed over management of four of the lowest performing schools. As I outline in Figure 6, these partners ranged from a Boston-based charter school operator with a focus on school turnaround, a Lawrence-based early childhood education and charter school operator, a duo of Boston-based educators, and the local Lawrence Teachers Union. The district also partnered with a Chelsea-based charter operator to launch a new high school targeting students at risk of dropout. Partnering with both charter operators and the union reinforced the Receiver's message

that he was agnostic about the type of operator and willing to work with reformers representing both the left and right of educational politics.

The district's partnership with the teachers union to co-manage the Oliver Partnership School seemed particularly valuable in terms of improving overall union-district relations, from the perspective of both union and district leaders. Union leaders argued that, in addition to building trust, this collaboration has increased the union's influence beyond the school itself:

We went to... an AFT conference in New York City and [the Receiver] did go to that, and his team... that's when a lot of the model for the Oliver Partnership was hashed out... that helped build a little bit of trust that we could kind of move forward in other areas. Plus, a lot of the vocabulary of the Oliver Partnership School has seeped into the vocabulary of the district at large. So I think it's been a net plus... we've tried to say this is the way to go if you're trying to move a school forward. It can be bottom-up teacher led.

District leaders echoed this sentiment and further argued that collaboration on the school has given the district some advantages when negotiating with the union over other district policies. For example, one district official said that union leaders were more likely to agree to school-based working conditions over district-wide policies when the district made the argument that district-wide policies would limit the union's flexibility over how to run things at the Oliver Partnership School.

Some observers have gone a step further, arguing that the partnership was a politically advantageous win-win proposition for the district regardless of the outcome, "if the school's good, everybody loves it. If the school's bad, it's 'the union had a chance.'" However, district leaders pushed back against the idea that this was their intention, forcefully asserting, "we want them very much to succeed." Union leaders did express some concern about the risk of being blamed for failure and were careful to

describe the arrangement as a union-district partnership rather than a solely union managed school. Regardless, the local union President describes the school as a high priority and a key part of his legacy:

I always think of the 100th anniversary of the Strike of 1912. I led the parade... we ended in the middle of the Common... and they marched into the wall. But it was like a metaphor for me, where is the union going?... And then it hit me... I looked across the Common and I saw... our partnership school and I go "That's where we're going"... I really have to do all that I can to make that work.

The third way approach was also on display at other schools undergoing turnaround. For example, although the district partnered with charter operators to manage low-performing schools, these did not technically become charter schools. They relied on neighborhood- rather than choice-based student assignment policies and all had a unionized teaching force. The Receiver described this approach as stemming, not from an effort to compromise, but from his own deeply held beliefs. At the Boston Foundation event, he explained, “We have asked charter operators to come in...but we have asked them... to have their teachers be AFT teachers. I believe in some kind of teacher representation.” In our interview, he further explained, “If I had any concerns about charter schools, frankly, I'm worried that they weren't servicing the same kinds of kids... I always stayed in public schools because I felt it should be one unified system.” One leader of a partner organization argued that this aspect of the Receiver’s orientation toward charter schools was politically useful, “because most of the people who he needed to woo hate the charters. So [the Receiver’s] very smart about kind of presenting this as a lot less bad than it could be in many ways. At least it isn't those charters and stuff, right?”

The Receiver and his team often used the language of a “level playing field” between charter- and district-managed schools to describe the idea that although schools

were given different levels of autonomy, all schools had to play by a certain set of foundational rules. Although this has created new challenges for charter operators that are used to greater flexibility, one district official argued that it has also provided charters with an opportunity:

Charters have gotten unfairly maligned, or in some cases perhaps fairly maligned, because they've been on an unequal playing field in terms of the kids they can accept, how much money they're getting, the facilities... if you had a chance here to level that, wow, wouldn't that change the debate? ... When the charters have to do the real work inside the district, the people from outside can't yell at the charters for not taking the same kids anymore.

Union leaders also suggested that this arrangement was more palatable than it would have been for the Receiver to bring charter schools of choice into the LPS system:

In Lawrence, they're not really charters. They're like EMO-run schools... there's openness for the union to working with organizations like that. They need to be neighborhood schools. They can't use lotteries. The teachers should be unionized... if they're run well in a democratic way... the teachers there feel that they have a voice, and they're honoring the union contract and they're not violating people's rights, I think we could live with those places.... a lot of the union opposition to charter schools is more along the lines of... choice, which means they don't serve English Language Learners, they don't serve Special Ed[ucation] students... they're taking funding but not serving the kids equitably."

The final example of a turnaround policy effort that reflected the third way approach was the dual emphasis on lifting academic expectations and boosting students' social and emotional skills through expanded enrichment offerings. The 2012 turnaround plan raised the bar for the district's performance targets, identifying the following goals:

1) double the number of schools with Student Growth Percentiles¹⁵ greater than 50 in year one, 2) move from 22nd to one of the top five ranked Massachusetts Gateway

¹⁵ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's growth model. More information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/>

districts¹⁶ in ELA and math proficiency and graduation by year three, and 3) close the gap with the rest of the state in ELA and math proficiency and graduation in five to seven years (MA DESE, 2012). However, the Receiver and his team sent clear early signals that they were not focused on boosting academics alone.

At a public event, the Receiver explained that his emphasis on building out the district's enrichment offerings was part of a broader strategy to close an "opportunity gap" between urban and suburban districts. He described this goal in both moral terms and pragmatic ones, arguing that all kids deserve these opportunities and that they help build the non-tested skills necessary for success in college and beyond. At one public event, the Receiver told the following anecdote about one of his middle school students back in Boston:

Michael was profoundly dyslexic. Michael is very unlikely to pass the English portion of the MCAS test... But Michael was cast as Jesus in our production of Godspell ... and Michael carried that play... not only was his performance exquisite and stunning, his voice unmatched, but when his friends, his co-actors messed up a line, he covered for them... we had a critic from New York who said to me... if that kid keeps this up... he's gonna be on Broadway. So Michael may not do advanced on the MCAS, but Michael has a rare talent... Don't tell me this kid is not going to do well in life."

The Receiver's team began implementing this vision early on in a way that improved the public's reception of the turnaround. As one leader of a partner organization explained that the Receiver, "got that [intramural sports] league going... That was one of the first things that happened... It is just a totally different message... than an academic-only, "I'm here to browbeat you people. Look at these terrible test scores." District and school leaders argued that expanded school-based enrichment resonated with educators, parents, and students. One principal explained:

¹⁶ Massachusetts Gateway districts are located in 26 Gateway Cities that are characterized as midsized urban centers with historical economic success, but persistent contemporary social and economic challenges.

Parents are supportive because we never had enrichment [before receivership]. We [now] have intramurals, our students go to the Y, they learn how to swim, we have karate, a dance teacher, a soccer person... the kind of opportunities that students in the suburbs... we put on [a musical] this year... it was like phenomenal, something that we as a school had always dreamed about... I was just blown away. Parents were just like, "This was great."

The turnaround leaders' dual emphasis on academics and enrichment offerings was another example of their integrative thinking about how to approach district improvement.

In sum, turnaround leaders' third way framing and policy efforts, such as keeping most schools under district management, partnering with diverse operators, inviting the union to co-manage a school, asking charter operators to run unionized schools with neighborhood assignment, and promoting a balance of academics and enrichment, increased stakeholder receptivity to the reforms.

Strategic Staffing Decisions. One of the primary reasons education policy can be highly politicized is because public school systems tend to serve as major employers in urban areas (Henig, 1999) and because the unions that represent employees in the education sector tend to be well organized (Moe, 2011). Education spending makes up nearly half of local budgets (US Government Accountability Office, 2014) and staff salaries and benefits make up a large share of educational expenditures. Therefore, educational reform often comes with major, sometimes painful, implications for people's livelihoods. Indeed, the most contentious Lawrence reforms related to job security, salaries, and working conditions. Examples include the Receiver's Review of low-performing teachers, the performance-based compensation system, and extended learning time. However, turnaround leaders also made several staffing decisions that seemed to help reduce controversy.

First, the Receiver's team retained, enlisted and promoted staff members whose own attitudes and beliefs were aligned with turnaround leaders' approach to reform. District leaders report cutting roughly one-third of the central office staff. One leader who had been working in the district for many years prior to receivership remarked that the Receiver, "has a team that is all working aligned in the same direction. He was very quick to get people off the team who weren't aligned in that direction. The central office doesn't look anything like it looked three years ago." As a result, those staff members who remained were less likely to oppose the coming changes. Additionally, one district leader suggested that fallback rights allowed some staff members who lost their positions at the central office to retain employment in new roles within the district.

The Receiver took a particularly aggressive approach to improving the quality of school principals, deciding that several schools could benefit from new leadership. The district estimates that 36 percent of the principals were replaced in year one and another 20 percent were replaced in year two (ERS, 2015). In selecting new principals and identifying those to retain, the district sought leaders whose skills and beliefs were aligned with the new emphasis on school-level autonomy and accountability. As one district-level official argued:

We've also changed the role of the principal... it's not even to say that principals in the past were a problem but the model...was top-down... the principal was there to follow orders... And now, we're not giving you orders. We can give you recommendations or suggestions. But... it is now on you to develop that plan... people who may have been successful in the past may not be successful in this new model."

As another central office leader explained, the principals who were retained tended to be those, "few rogue agents who had managed to get everything done well" in the midst of the pre-receivership chaos, "by basically not following top-down orders." One example

was a former principal, herself a Lawrence native and first-generation college graduate, who remembered prior to receivership, “there was a three-year period where I lived through eight superintendents as a principal. So when one... adopted the Success for All program, an opposite philosophy from anything that I align myself with... through all of that we stayed with the work that we were doing. Specifically, pre-receivership, this principal prioritized extended learning time and “idolized... progressive educators.” When the Receiver arrived in Lawrence, this veteran school leader said, “I felt like someone was finally talking my language.”

At the school level, teachers were also retained based on their fit with the district’s new approach. In some cases, teachers decided to leave when the fit was poor. Principals of schools taken over by outside operators had the flexibility to rehire their staff to align with their own philosophy. Many of the existing teachers at these schools were displaced, but some found roles at other LPS schools. Extended learning time also required principals and their teachers to rethink teacher fit with the school and/or district. One principal said that she explained to her teachers, “if this isn’t what you signed up for then I wish you well. You have to go where you believe in the mission and vision, the day and the time and the hours work for you.”

Turnaround leaders also placed an emphasis on hiring a balance of insiders and outsiders. Retaining key staff members who had a history in Lawrence prior to the receivership helped build support for turnaround efforts. One central office leader who was new to the district explained that there were people who had been working in the district pre-receivership who, “embraced what we’re trying to do.” She went on to say, “they’ve been the ambassadors with their own friends, family, and the community and so

this effort is not just about those of us from outside coming in and evangelizing... It was really converting key people in the system to believe.” Furthermore, retaining veteran staff also allowed new leaders to tap into institutional knowledge that helped them avoid potential political missteps. Another district-level leader said:

Other reform models, they said, “Well, what is there must be terrible. So we need to bring all these new people in.” And what can happen is the people there, many of them I’m sure are very good and hardworking and can tell you, “here are the different landmines to avoid.” Like, “Oh yeah, we did that and that didn’t go so well.”... we’ve had some really great, great talent here that has helped.

In addition to retaining key insiders, the Receiver’s decision to retain the majority of Lawrence teachers also helped to improve stakeholder reception to the reforms. Supporters of the turnaround often point out that the AGA gave the Receiver the authority to force all teachers to reapply for their jobs, but that he did not fully utilize this authority. Instead, the district conducted a Receiver’s Review, as described above. Ultimately, LPS estimates that about eight to ten percent of teachers were actively removed prior to year one of the turnaround (Empower Schools, 2014). The Receiver highlighted his decision to dismiss ten percent of the teaching force as an example of his restraint, and framed this decision as part of a broader theory of action that likely resonated with educators. At a July 2012 public event, the Receiver argued, “most people in the teaching profession are trying to do the right thing. I would argue that we need to support them and train them to get them to be better.” At a fall 2013 event, he acknowledged that the Receiver’s Review “was a disruptive event,” but went on to say:

It could have been much worse. We looked at folks who we were concerned weren’t doing right by kids. So we had to make some changes there. But the reality is, we kept 85-90% of the teachers... because I felt like we had some great people, we had some good people, and we had some people that we could develop and get better. I can work with those kind of people... and you can’t blame the teachers for things that sometimes are out of their control.

Another high-level district leader said that the turnaround team placed a great deal of emphasis on teacher retention:

The last thing that we wanted was for mass exodus to happen. And instead, "How do we keep all the good, great, working hard to improve teachers in the district?" And understanding that we care about them... So, we never went for a process where we were asking anyone to apply for their jobs. If we did do a major school intervention... we try to be really thoughtful... "Okay, so if we are displacing these 12 teachers, let's really make sure we find them jobs," and not say, "Well, look, I'm sorry. You are out of luck."

Despite the district's framing, union leaders and likely many of the teachers who were dismissed felt that the team went too far in letting go of some teachers who were effective or had the potential to improve with support, and that the Receiver's Review was implemented without due process. This was undoubtedly a harrowing process for those involved and particularly for those who were dismissed. However, union leaders did seem to agree that had the Receiver replaced a greater fraction of teachers, the negative response would have been more extreme.

Another contentious aspect of the turnaround was the new teacher contract. The union expressed had concerns about features such as the use of stipends, rather than a contractually arranged rate, to compensate teachers for extended learning time hours and the performance-based career ladder system which union leaders worried could lead to unfair differences in pay. One way in which the district improved the palatability of the new compensation system was to emphasize that it increased pay across the board. The Receiver explained:

For me, the most important part of the union contract is just with the compensation piece and trying to pay people like professionals. They had their first raise in a bunch of years and making sure that teachers felt valued and giving them opportunities to move up. That was super important to me.... Giving people a raise for the first time in

many years is certainly a way to help overcome obstacles, having the membership feel respected.

LPS estimates that as a result of changes to the teacher compensation system, 100 percent of teachers saw a pay increase and 92 percent saw a bump in pay beyond the increase they would have received under the old system (LPS, 2013). The average LPS teacher received a \$3,000 raise for the 2014 school year (ERS, 2015). The district raised base salaries for both new and experienced principals (ERS, 2015). Although the contract increased pay across the board, Figure 9 shows that average salaries in Lawrence actually decreased over this period. This is likely because the teaching population becoming younger over this period, as illustrated in Figure 10. Although average salaries declined, the increases for those who remained in the district likely helped to improve educators' response to the compensation reforms.

In addition to employment and salaries for school-based educators, turnaround leaders improved the employment prospects for several community-based partners and enrichment providers. One central office leader describes the mood among these stakeholders in the early phase of turnaround planning:

There were a lot of questions that came up... from an after school provider perspective, "are you taking away my job?" And instead, what happened was... You can still have your after school program... But we also may be actually asking you to come in and provide support and stuff that you usually would be doing after school but during the day. And for them, they are like, "Wait a second. This is a whole new revenue stream and an opportunity for us to get into the schools, get to see the kids."

Enrichment providers echoed the idea that they appreciated the opportunity to play a role in the school system's extended learning time effort. In sum, although staffing-related decisions were some of the most controversial components of the turnaround, several of these choices helped to reduce stakeholder resistance.

Producing Early Results While Minimizing Disruption. The final factor that seemed to improve the turnaround's reception was the leadership's focus on producing early positive results while minimizing disruptions for children and families. Interviewees agreed that reports of academic improvements after the first year of implementation created support for the turnaround among parents who felt their students were benefitting and among retained educators and district partners who felt they were a part of producing those results. As results came in, it became more difficult for critical stakeholder groups to actively oppose the turnaround without being viewed as resistant to positive change.

Turnaround leaders intentionally prioritized producing early results. When identifying their initial policy priorities, district leaders described an emphasis on asking themselves "what is actually going to make a difference for kids now?" In the early phase of turnaround, the district implemented programs such as Acceleration Academies that contributed to producing positive first year results (Schueler, Goodman, Deming, 2016) while continuing to build out reforms that were geared toward longer-term improvement such as increased school autonomy and capacity. One district-level administrator explains the team's rationale this way, "schools need some strategies where they can help the kids in front of them right now before they may have had time to redesign everything." Another district-level administrator explained that the central office intentionally waited to generate publicity on new reforms until positive results were in, arguing that a lot of districts, "love having press conferences over something they're going to do." In contrast, he suggested LPS has been, "careful about going out and trying to be really loud about new initiatives... We would rather talk about the results after they are achieved."

Several interviewees argued that early positive results helped build momentum for further progress by illustrating that improvement was possible. This was particularly true when educators felt like they were part of producing those improvements. One district-level leader described the following example:

Acceleration Academies, in particular, had a really big role in showing people, early on, that you can... work hard to meet the individual needs of students and you will see the dividends... there were teachers who taught at Academies and were looking around at the other teachers and saying, "Wow, he's leading a Socratic seminar in there with my kids. I didn't even think that was possible. I'm going to try that next week." ... Another was ELT... where people received fresh infusions of ideas, of things they could do right away to change their kids' experience. And then they saw that it got results and then thought, "Okay we can do this." That's also been part of why teachers have been accepting of the changes because they actually see that it's working and they're doing it. "

One principal described the excitement of being a part of a reform that some view as a model:

I went to Boston to speak to a panel yesterday... and [participants] said, "Imagine ...people want to know about Lawrence" ... people are coming to us like we're the model for how you can really make change in an urban district and sustain it over time. So it was pretty exciting... It's like, wow. They're not going to [wealthy suburban districts], they're asking Lawrence how did you do what you did... we were kind of beaten up for a while that it's nice to be acknowledged for hard work.

Not only did leaders try to identify programs that would produce early results, but they also focused on avoiding initiatives that would cause major disruptions without contributing much to outcomes. One leader of a partner organization explained, "[the Receiver's] skill was always to do the least amount of change, except for all the really important things, till they get the results. But everything else he looks at as potentially disruptive, potentially distracting." This seemed particularly true with regard to disruptions that would affect families. For example, the Receiver's team decided against implementing a district-wide school choice system, which has been a common

component of several other recent high-profile district turnaround efforts. Leaders argued that avoiding choice and allowing families to keep their children at their neighborhood schools led to a smoother implementation and helped in their effort to win the hearts and minds of educators and parents. One district leader explained:

From a parent perspective, I'm still going to be sending my kid to the same neighborhood school... instead of, "Wait a second. We now have this new assignment form and I have to choose five different schools and then I'm going to get choice four but I really wanted choice one and I didn't maybe have the best information to make the right choice and I have to send my kid halfway across the district."

In addition to avoiding disruptions from the parent perspective, the district also described trying to minimize disruptions for school building leaders. One leader explained, "there are a lot of... 'ed reform' initiatives out there that... ideally, that would be great to have but it may actually literally not help the school in a really dramatic way in the short term." Based on this premise, in the early years, district leaders avoided implementing a new formal school-level accountability system or a new student funding formula. Three years into the turnaround the district is considering a reevaluation of its funding system. However, as schools were adapting in the early phase of the turnaround, district leaders said they tried to provide funding stability to assist principals with their planning and allow them to focus on instructional improvement rather than, "cost accounting and micromanaging over a few thousand dollars."

Another example of turnaround leaders' effort to minimize disruption was their intentional effort to sequence reforms, focusing on the elementary and middle grades, while putting high school reform on the back burner for the first few years post-receivership. One leader of a partner organization argued that this allowed the district to lay the foundation for future high school success and was a politically useful decision,

“[The Receiver] correctly understood... high school reform is much harder... when the eighth graders are much less well prepared... the high schools are the hotbed for the most oppositional union members. It's the last place you want to go early.”

In sum, district leaders focused on producing early successes while minimizing disruptive changes for children and families and sequencing reforms rather than trying to do everything all at once. These early positive results appeared to build support and minimize opposition for the turnaround, and create momentum for further improvements. Positive results alone cannot explain the lack of major resistance to the turnaround given that there are other cases of district improvement that have generated significant opposition despite positive outcomes (Harris, 2015). However, these positive results did seem to help when combined with an effort to minimize disruptive change.

Discussion

The Lawrence Public Schools turnaround has generated considerably less public resistance than more typical cases of state takeover and district turnaround. Contextual factors help explain why the turnaround was not more contentious, including the local political environment and the broader state accountability system which provides turnaround leaders with broad authorities in cases of particularly poor district performance. Within this context, several features of the turnaround leaders' approach also contributed to limiting negative stakeholder response. These include leaders' focus on building relationships and civic capacity within Lawrence, differentiated district-school relations, a third way framing and policy approach, strategic staffing decisions, and producing early results while minimizing disruption. It is difficult to say whether any of the three factors (local context, state authorities, turnaround strategy) would have been

sufficient to produce the observed stakeholder response on their own, but taken together, they help to explain the public reaction. These findings have several implications for states and districts considering turnaround.

First, characteristics of the local Lawrence context played a role in limiting turnaround resistance. This suggests that leaders should not necessarily expect to replicate the public response in districts that are radically different from Lawrence. A school system with declining enrollment, no evidence of misconduct among public officials, a strong school administrators union, and a strong alliance between parents and the teachers union may require different strategies tailored to the context. At the same time, my findings provide guidance for state leaders on selecting districts ripe for this type of intervention. Additionally, I find that Lawrence's size allowed district leaders to spend time in each of the schools as they worked to understand each school's strengths and needs and to build relationships with school-level staff. Large districts may have less success with a similar takeover and turnaround approach or may want to consider implementing turnaround reforms in a more manageable subset of their lowest-performing schools.

Importantly, I find that the new authorities granted to the Receiver as a result of the Achievement Gap Act played a key role in determining the stakeholder response to turnaround reforms. The law appeared to help state and district officials recruit talented local leaders by offering candidates broad authority and autonomy. The turnaround's success was not simply driven by the chance involvement of an exceptional leader—a condition that seems difficult to reproduce. Instead, I find that the presence of skilled leaders was, at least in part, the result of a replicable policy structure. However, effective

recruitment of effective leaders in other settings is also likely dependent on the available supply of talent as well as state capacity.

My finding that the new authorities contributed to the stakeholder response also has implications for the political sustainability of the reforms. Given that state takeovers are typically temporary arrangements, states might also consider alternative approaches to district improvement that change governance structures in ways that are more difficult to undo. Looking forward for Lawrence, the political dynamics will surely shift if and when the state returns local control. A lack of outrage among stakeholders will not necessarily translate to durable support for the policy changes. While I find that most groups believed conditions were better than they had been prior to receivership, stakeholders will not necessarily “settle” if they feel that things could still improve further. It is possible that stakeholder concerns over compensation, extended learning time, non-renewals, teacher retention, disciplinary practices as charter-run schools, and other issues could build and create challenges for turnaround leaders in sustaining support in the future. In preparation for a transition away from receivership, the district and state would be wise to work on solidifying support for their reforms, particularly among those stakeholder groups that will have greater influence in a locally governed system. The mobilization of groups with an interest in the preservation of the policy changes will improve the durability of the reforms.

Finally, within the Lawrence context, the leaders’ turnaround approach helped to improve the public reception of the reforms. These findings provide guidance for other district leaders on possible approaches to implementing politically viable change. In an education policy climate that is often characterized by polarization, Lawrence provides a

rare and exciting case in which turnaround leaders and local stakeholders were able to transcend either/or thinking to promote district collaboration with both union leaders and charter management organizations, decentralize decision-making while increasing accountability, raise academic standards while bolstering extracurricular offerings, and empower local stakeholders to take ownership over reforms even under a system of state control. As a result, Lawrence's third way provides encouraging lessons for school systems seeking improvement.

	Year 1 (2012-13)	Year 2 (2013-14)
Higher Expectations	Announced performance targets: 1) Double the number of schools with Student Growth Percentiles greater than 50 in year 1 2) Move from 22nd to top 5 MA Gateway districts in ELA and math proficiency and graduation by year 3 3) Close gap with the rest of the State in ELA and math proficiency and graduation within 5-7 years	
Autonomy & Accountability	Increased school autonomy, but differentiated levels based on prior performance	
	Gave management of one full grade level at 3 schools to independent operators	Independent operators expanded to serve additional grades and schools
	Independent operator opened new alternative high school focused on dropout recovery and prevention	
		Lawrence Teachers Union took over management of one elementary school
Learning Time		Central office budget reduced by 25%
	At "Acceleration Academies," select teachers provided 1,800 struggling students ELA or math instruction in small groups over week-long vacation breaks	Doubled participation in Acceleration Academies
	Built out extracurricular offerings	Built out extracurricular offerings further
		School year expanded at least 200 hours for grades 1-8
Data Use	MATCH Education provided math tutoring to 550 9th-10th graders at two schools	
	Achievement Network worked with 9 schools to train educators on using data to improve instruction	Achievement Network expanded to work with 85% of K-8 schools
Human Capital	Replaced 36% of principals, 20% of assistant principals and 10% of teachers	Replaced another 20% of principals
		New teacher compensation system with career ladder, performance pay, stipends for ELT and leadership.

Figure 1. Components of the Turnaround Strategy by Year

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	Pre-Receiptership (2008-2012)			Post-Receiptership (2013-2014)		
	Lawrence	Rest of MA	Low-income	Lawrence	Rest of MA	Low-income
Female	.47	.49	.48	.47	.49	.48
FRPL	.90	.33	.75	.92	.37	.78
White	.07	.70	.31	.06	.67	.28
Black	.02	.09	.22	.02	.09	.22
Hispanic	.89	.13	.34	.89	.15	.37
Asian	.02	.05	.07	.02	.06	.07
Other	.01	.03	.05	.02	.04	.06
ESL	.82	.17	.40	.77	.19	.43
LEP	.38	.10	.24	.50	.13	.31
SPED	.26	.24	.26	.24	.24	.25
ELA Score	-.74	.01	-.52	-.72	.01	-.49
Math Score	-.76	.02	-.47	-.51	.01	-.43
N of students	20,777	1,279,546	361,546	14,975	979,091	266,072
N of districts	1	405	59	1	409	56

Note: All cells represent averages over multiple years. Demographic indicators are constant within student over time. The low-income sample includes students in districts outside of Lawrence that were majority low-income in 2008.

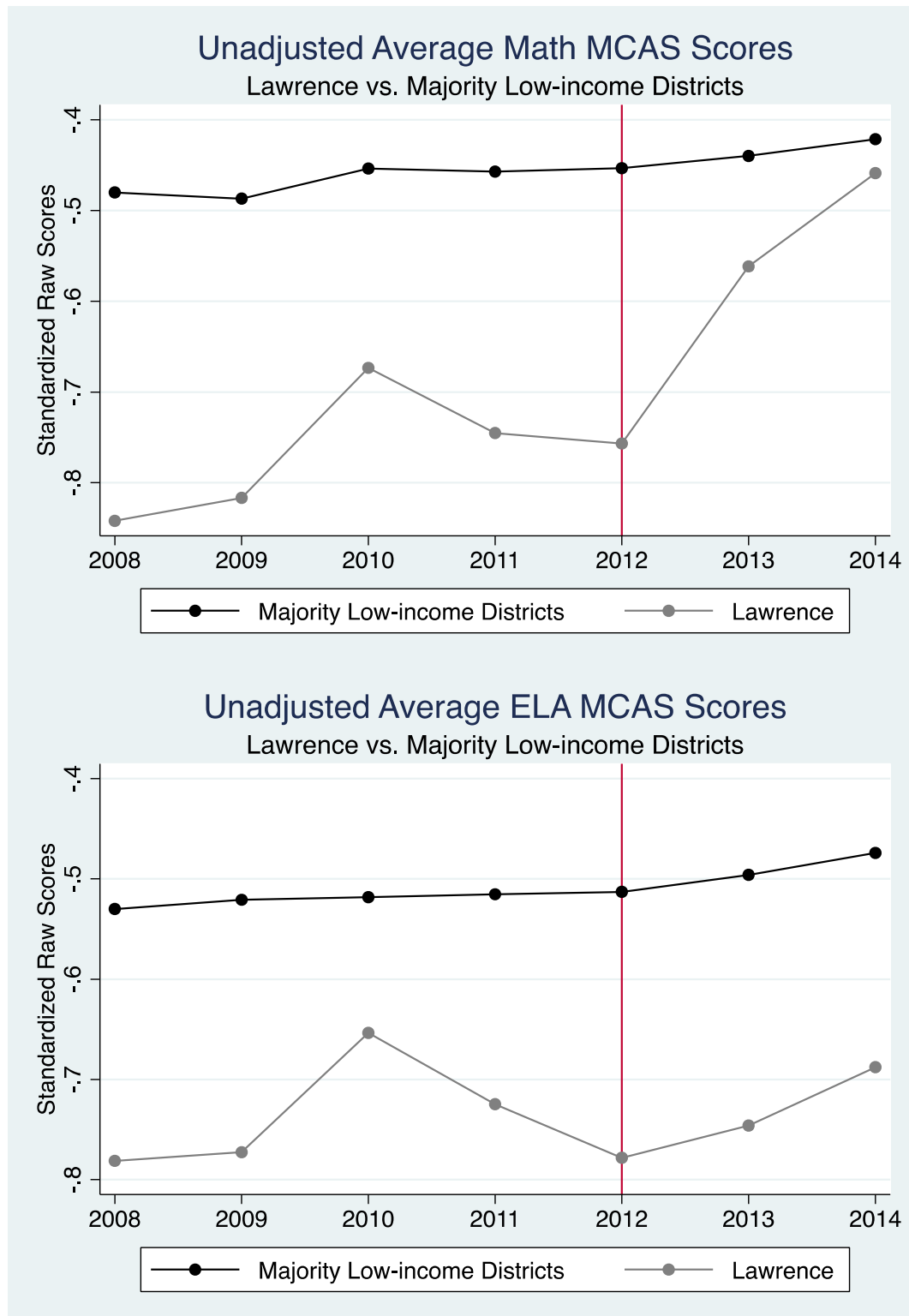


Figure 2. Overall Mean Math and ELA MCAS Scores

Table 2. Turnaround Effect on Test Scores

	Full Sample			Low-income Sample ^a		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
2013 Math	.203** (.029)	.190** (.025)	.118** (.009)	.182** (.029)	.184** (.026)	.108** (.009)
N of students	981,333	840,666	707,527	271,113	219,962	182,540
2014 Math	.305** (.031)	.185** (.028)	.188** (.011)	.268** (.032)	.179** (.029)	.165** (.011)
N of students	1,051,409	908,938	702,527	290,932	238,029	179,506
2013 ELA	.011 (.028)	.014 (.019)	.022* (.009)	-.009 (.028)	.006 (.019)	-.014 (.010)
N of students	982,722	842,130	707,887	271,841	220,589	182,494
2014 ELA	.060^ (.036)	.037 (.023)	.089** (.012)	.022 (.036)	.024 (.023)	.034** (.012)
N of students	1,052,560	910,224	702,964	291,604	238,642	179,501
School-by-grade fixed effects	x	x		x	x	
Student fixed effects			x			x
Demographic controls	x	x		x	x	
Lagged scores and attendance		x			x	

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the school-by-grade level for Models (1) and (2) and at the student level for Model (3) (^p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01). All estimates come from a regression of the listed outcome on an interaction between the year and an indicator for enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools. All models include grade-by-year fixed effects. The sample for the 2013 estimates excludes 2014 observations and 2014 estimates exclude 2013 observations. The low-income sample includes students in districts outside of Lawrence that were majority low-income in 2008.

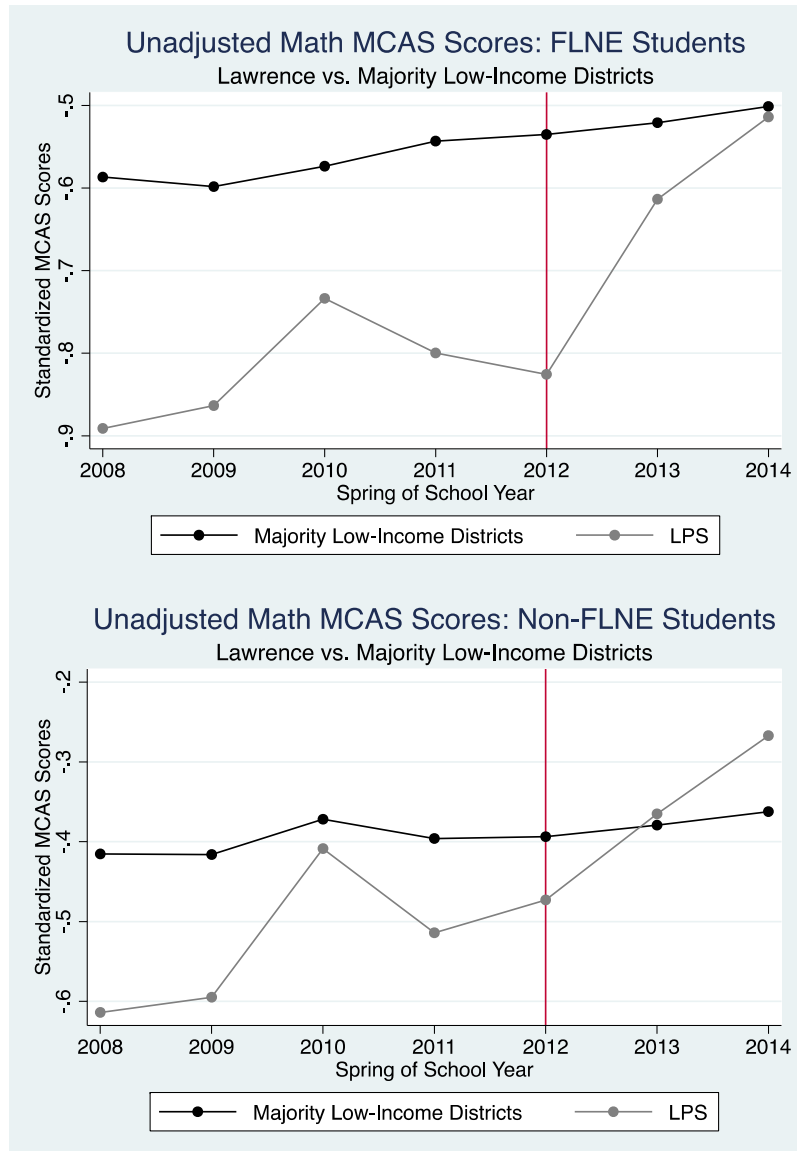


Figure 3. Mean Math MCAS Scores by First Language Status

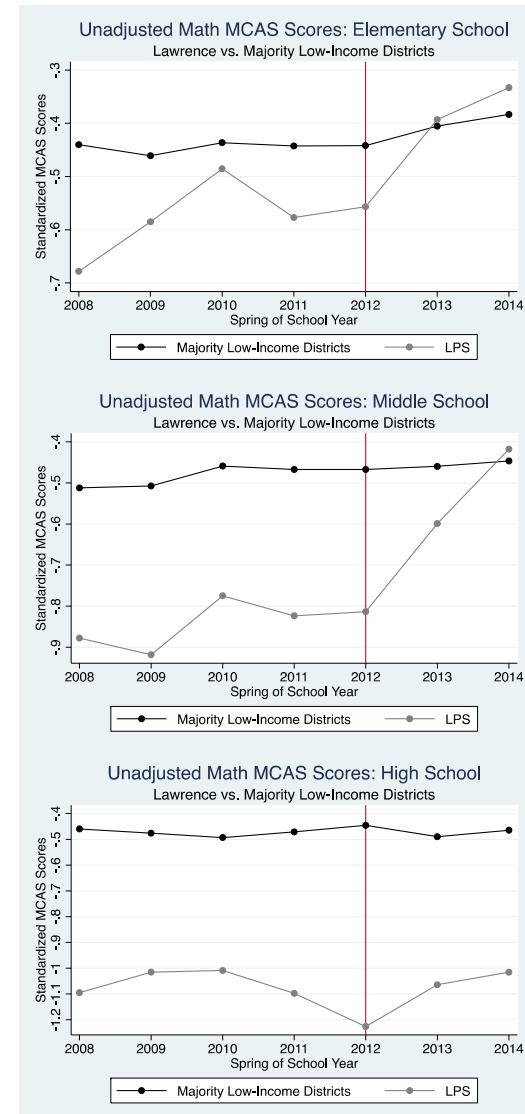


Figure 4. Mean Math MCAS Scores by Grade Level

Table 3. Turnaround Effect on Test Scores, by First Language Status

	Math		ELA	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
2013 Non-FLNE	.154** (.028)	.026 (.019)	-.017 (.027)	-.103** (.019)
2013 FLNE	.191** (.027)	.128** (.010)	.011 (.019)	.007 (.011)
LPS		-.003 (.016)		.024 (.018)
N of students	219,962	182,540	220,589	182,494
2014 Non-FLNE	.153** (.031)	.033 (.022)	-.031 (.031)	-.102** (.025)
2014 FLNE	.187** (.030)	.198** (.012)	.041^ (.023)	.067** (.014)
		-.013 (.016)		.015 (.018)
N of students	238,029	179,506	238,642	179,501
School-by-grade fixed effects	x		x	
Student fixed effects		x		x
Demographic controls	x		x	
Lagged scores and attendance	x		x	

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the school-by-grade level for Model (1) and at the student level for Model (2) (^p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01). All estimates come from a regression of the listed outcome on two three-way interactions between the year, an indicator for enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools, and an indicator for ESL status. All models include grade-by-year fixed effects. The sample for the 2013 estimates excludes 2014 observations and 2014 estimates exclude 2013 observations. All samples include only students in districts outside of Lawrence that were majority low-income in 2008.

Table 4. Turnaround Effect on Test Scores, by Grade Level

	Math		ELA	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
2013 Elementary	.129** (.044)	.163** (.036)	-.055 (.035)	-.024 (.032)
2013 Middle	.251** (.041)	.184** (.038)	.062 (.039)	.008 (.024)
2013 High	.113 (.073)	.247** (.077)	-.110 (.129)	.093* (.045)
N of students	271,113	219,962	271,841	220,589
2014 Elementary	.141** (.041)	.077^ (.044)	-.082^ (.047)	-.002 (.046)
2014 Middle	.421** (.034)	.236** (.034)	.146** (.033)	.037 (.030)
2014 High	.180* (.079)	.198^ (.096)	-.047 (.153)	.039 (.041)
N of students	290,932	238,029	291,604	238,642
Lagged scores and attendance	x		x	

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the school-by-grade level (^p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01). All estimates come from a regression of the listed outcome on three three-way interactions between the year, an indicator for enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools, and an indicator for grade level (Elementary = grade<6; Middle = grades 6-8; High = grade 10). All models include demographic controls, school-by-grade fixed effects, and grade-by-year fixed effects. The sample for the 2013 estimates excludes 2014 observations and 2014 estimates exclude 2013 observations. All samples include only students in districts outside of Lawrence that were majority low-income in 2008.

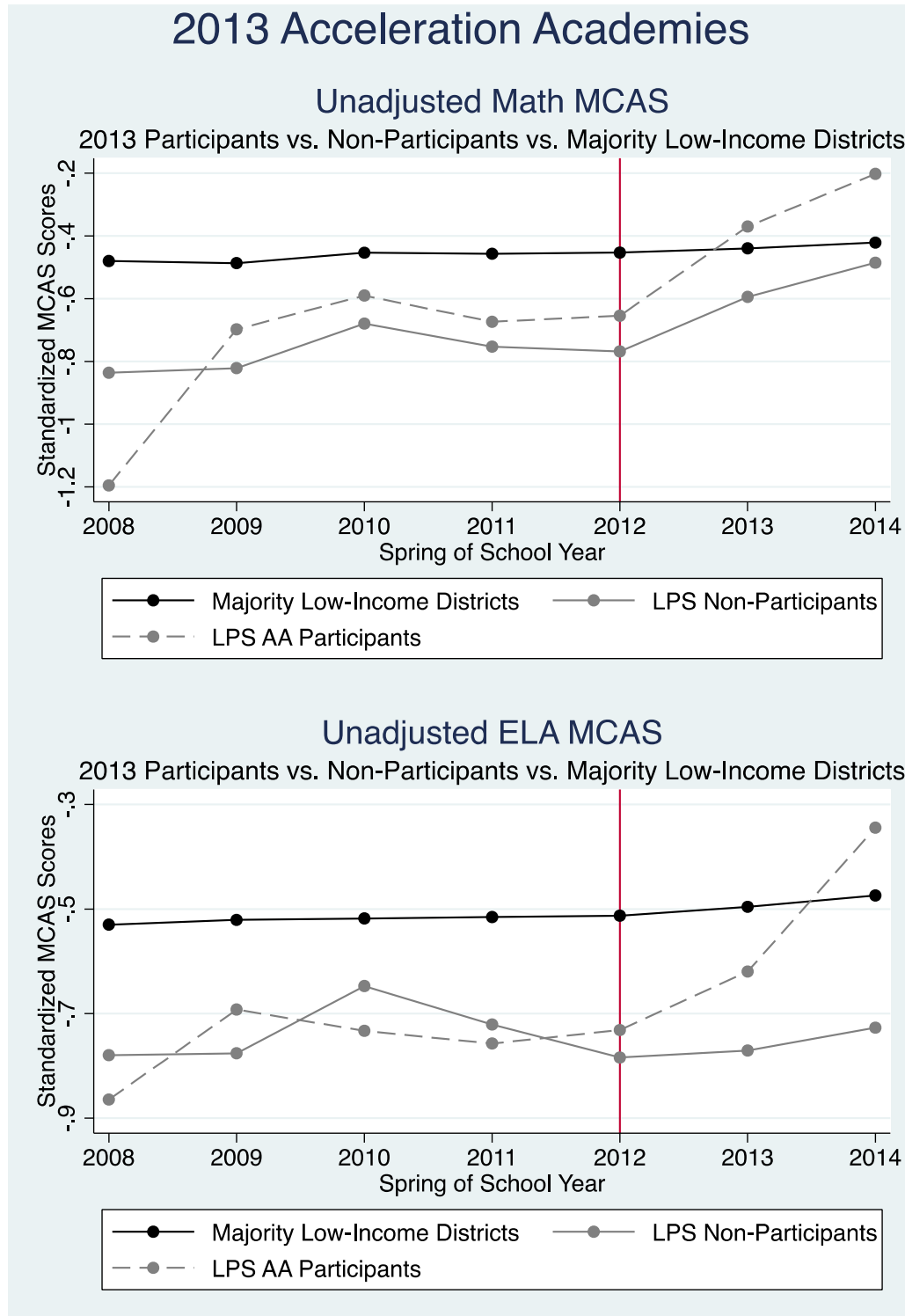


Figure 5. Mean MCAS Scores by 2013 Acceleration Academy Participation

Table 5. Acceleration Academy Participation Effect on Test Scores

	Math		ELA	
	2013	2014	2013	2014
2013 Math Acceleration Academy	.123** (.027)	.060 (.041)	-.005 (.029)	.059 (.040)
2013 ELA Acceleration Academy	.037 (.026)	.038 (.038)	.091** (.028)	.073^ (.039)
Rest of Lawrence Turnaround	.105** (.011)	.193** (.013)	-.036** (.012)	.011 (.016)
N of students	149,988	147,508	150,288	147,794
2014 Math Acceleration Academy		.182** (.027)		.114** (.030)
2014 ELA Acceleration Academy		.061* (.026)		.114** (.028)
Rest of Lawrence Turnaround		.134** (.016)		-.042* (.018)
N of students		147,508		147,794

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the student level (^p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01). All estimates come from a regression of the listed outcome on two three-way interactions between the year, an indicator for enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools, and an indicator for participation in an Acceleration Academy by subject, as well as a two-way interaction between the year and enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools. All models include lagged test scores and attendance, as well as grade-by-year and student fixed effects. For all 2014 estimates, we use 2012 values for the lagged test scores and attendance. The sample for the 2013 estimates excludes 2014 observations and 2014 estimates exclude 2013 observations. All samples include only students in districts outside of Lawrence that were majority low-income in 2008.

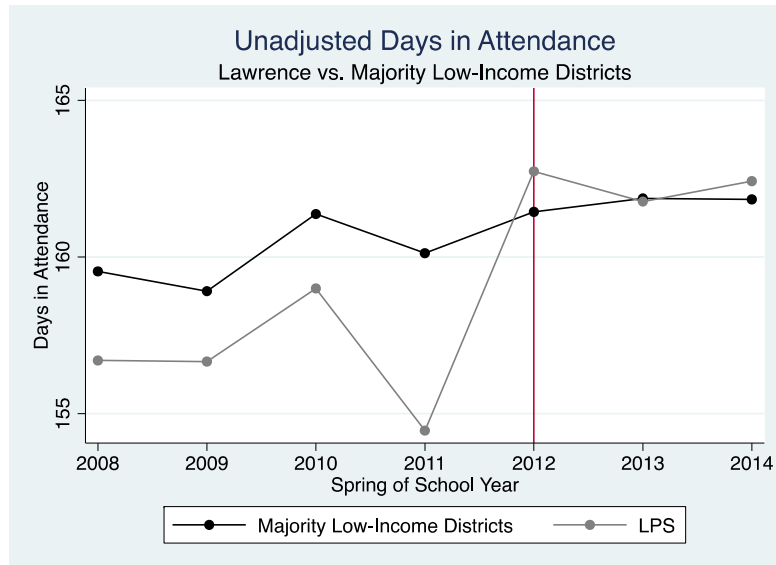


Figure 6. Overall Mean Days in Attendance

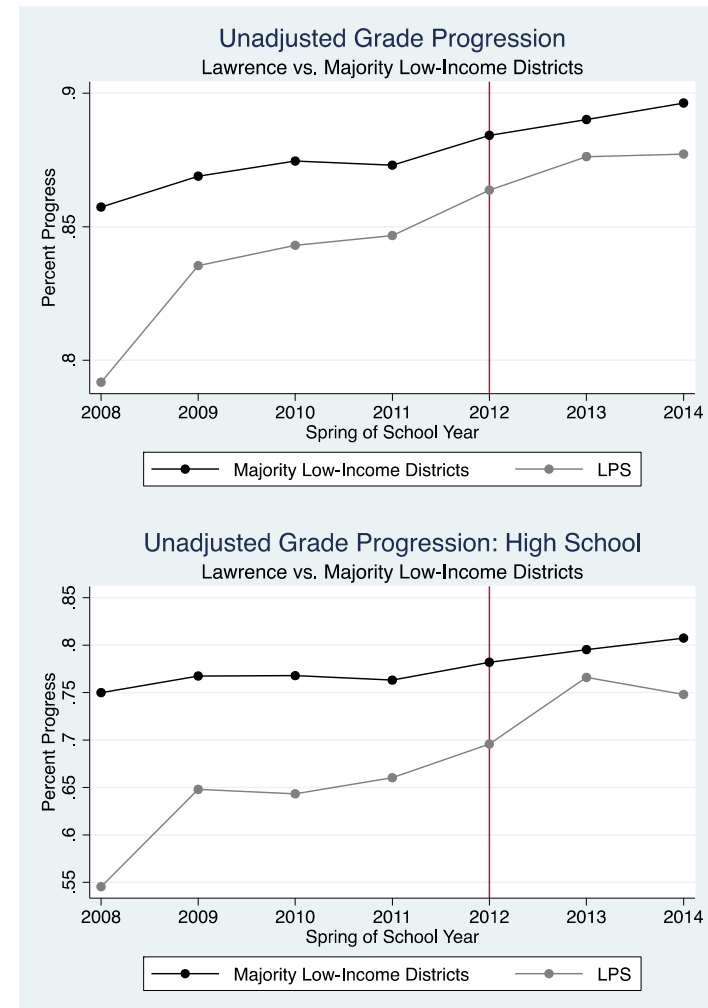


Figure 7. Percent of Students Making Grade Progress, Overall and Among High School Students

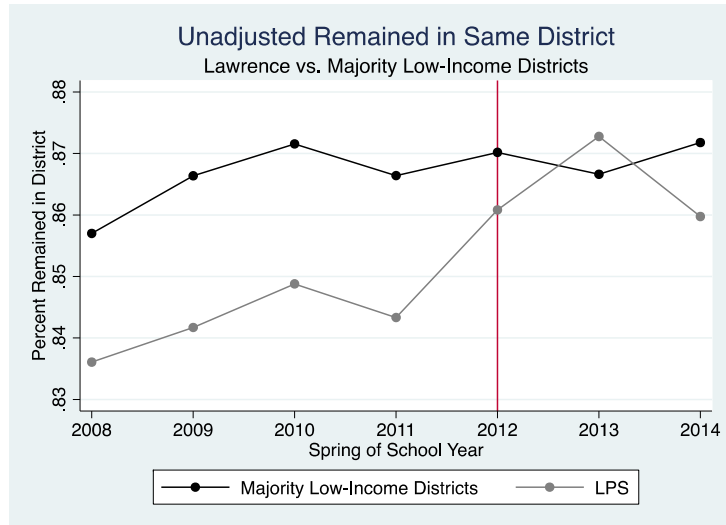


Figure 8. Overall Percent of Students Remaining in the Same District

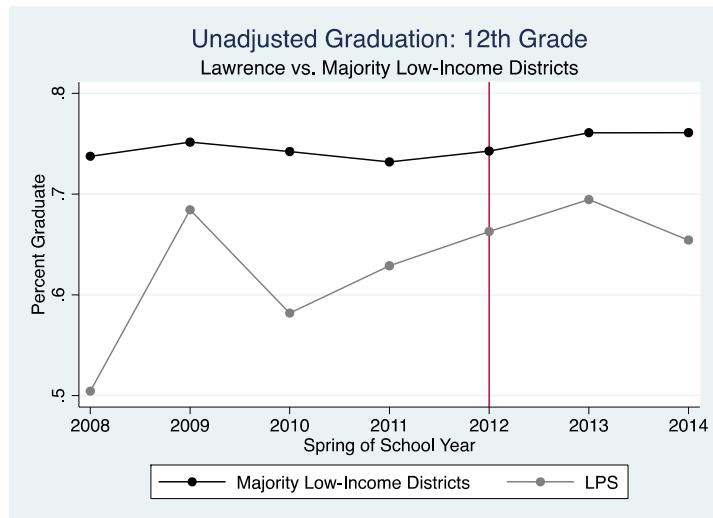


Figure 10. Overall Graduate Rate Among 12th Grade Students

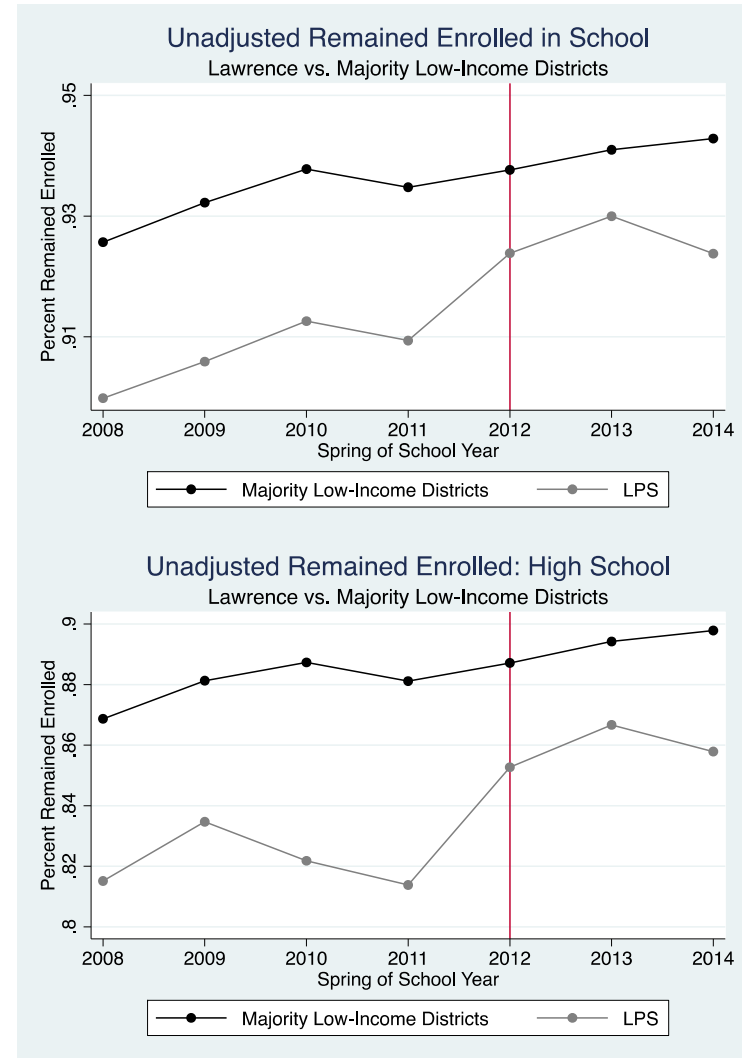


Figure 9. Overall Percent of Students Remaining Enrolled in School

Table 6. Turnaround Effect on Non-Test Score Outcomes

	<u>Days in attendance</u>	<u>Grade progression</u>		<u>Remain in district</u>	<u>Remain enrolled in school</u>		<u>Graduation</u>
			High School			High School	12th Graders
2013 Turnaround	2.665** (.542)	.028** (.009)	.099** (.011)	.020** (.006)	.009* (.004)	.015 (.009)	.054** (.020)
N of students	281,902	286,710	168,389	273,386	286,710	168,389	82,517
Comparison mean	161.87	.89	.80	.87	.94		.76
2014 Turnaround	2.971** (.560)	.025* (.010)	.091** (.014)	.012^ (.007)	-.001 (.007)	.015 (.014)	.014 (.029)
N of students	304,830	309,914	185,898	295,284	309,914	185,898	82,476
Comparison mean	161.84	.90	.81	.87	.94	.90	.76

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the school-by-grade level (^p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01). All estimates come from a regression of the listed outcome on an interaction between the year and an indicator for enrollment in the Lawrence Public Schools. All models include demographic controls, lagged test scores and attendance, school-by-grade fixed effects, and grade-by-year fixed effects. The sample for the 2013 estimates excludes 2014 observations and 2014 estimates exclude 2013 observations. All samples include only students in districts outside of Lawrence that were majority low-income in 2008.

Table 7. Comparing Lawrence 2013 Turnaround Effect Magnitudes to Other Educational Interventions

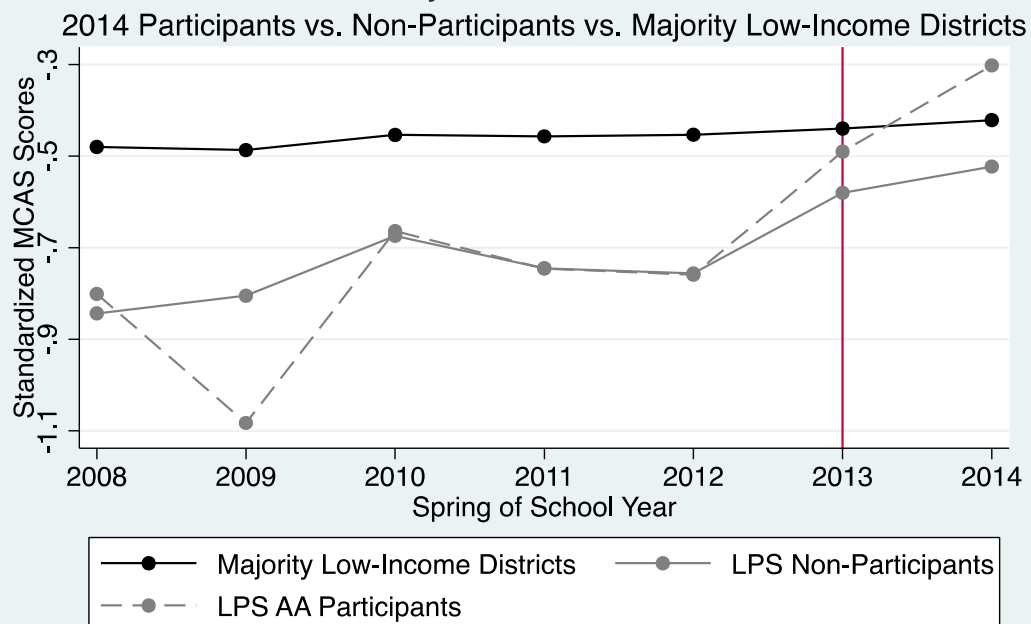
Study Authors				Fryer (2014)	Abdulkadiroglu et al. (2014)	
Intervention Location	Acceleration Academies	Rest of Turnaround Lawrence	Total Effect of Acceleration Academies and Rest of Turnaround	Injecting Charter Practices into Traditional Public Schools Houston	Grandfathering Traditional Public School Students Into Charter Schools New Orleans Boston	
Math Effects	.12 sd	.11 sd	.23 sd	.15 to .18 sd	0.21	0.32
ELA Effects	.09 sd	-.04 sd	.05 sd	.02 sd	0.14	0.39

Note: Lawrence effects are based on 2013 estimates provided in Table 5.

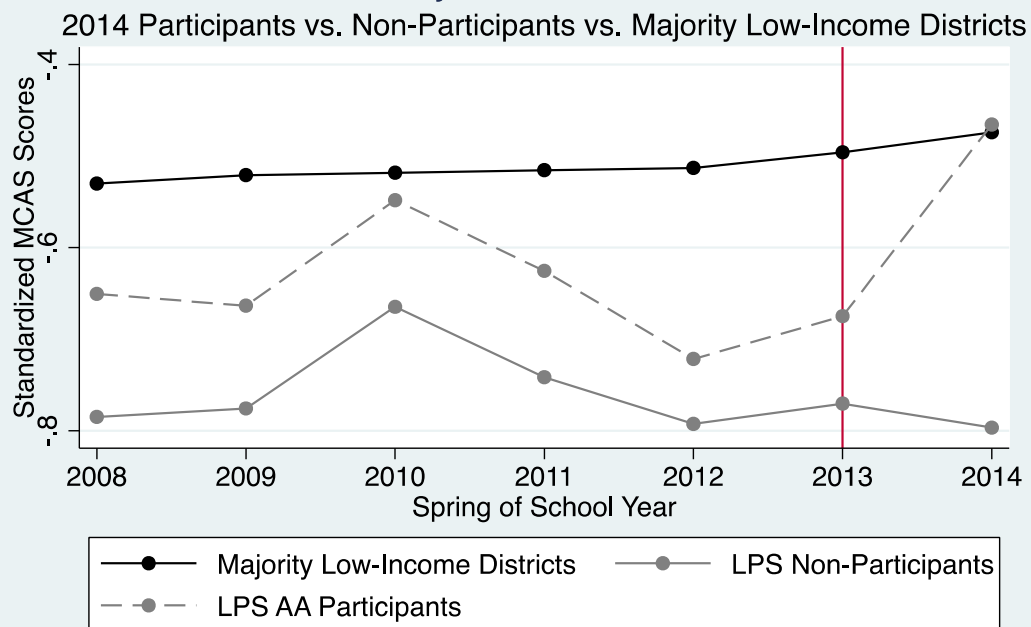
Appendix

2014 Acceleration Academies

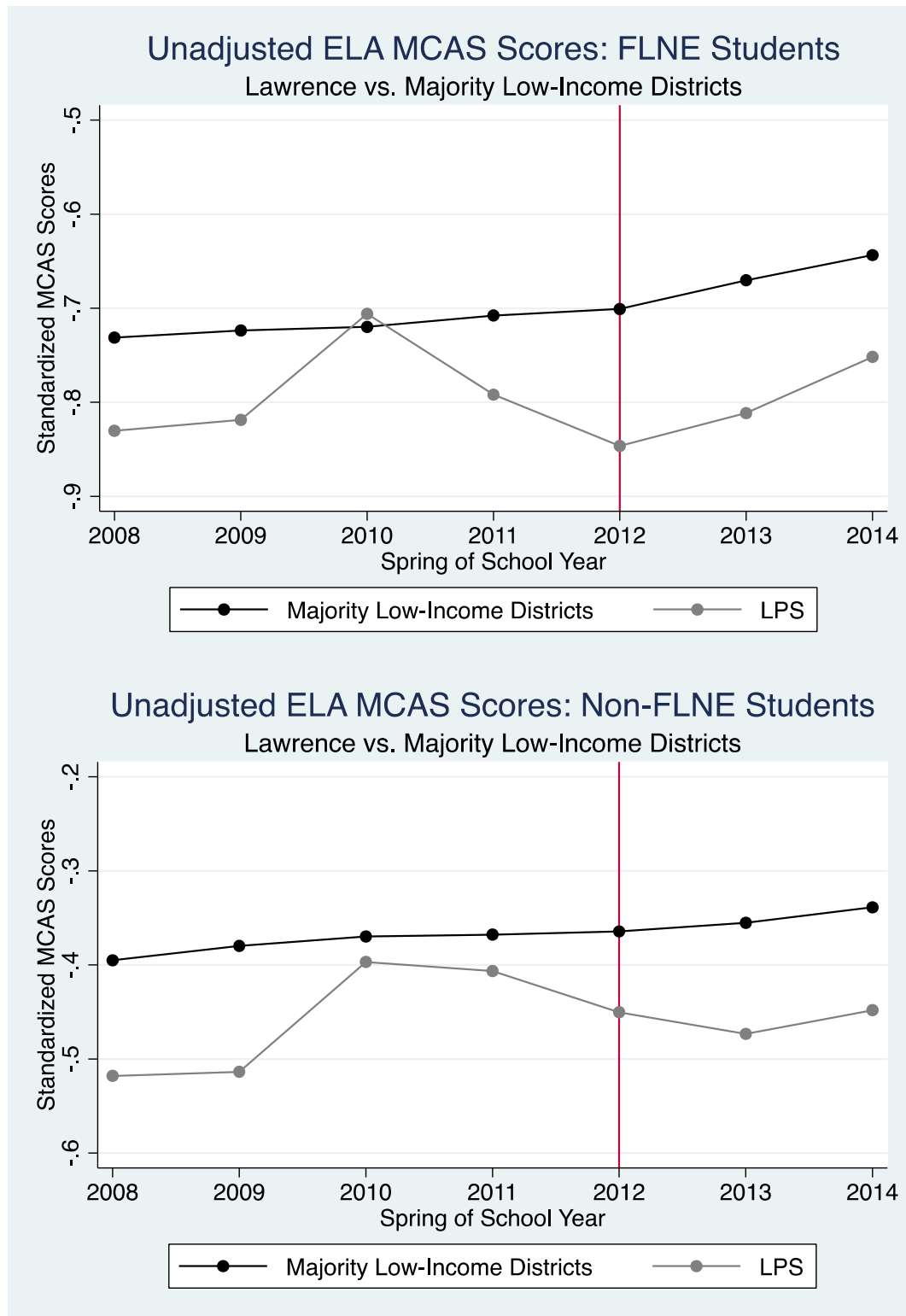
Unadjusted Math MCAS



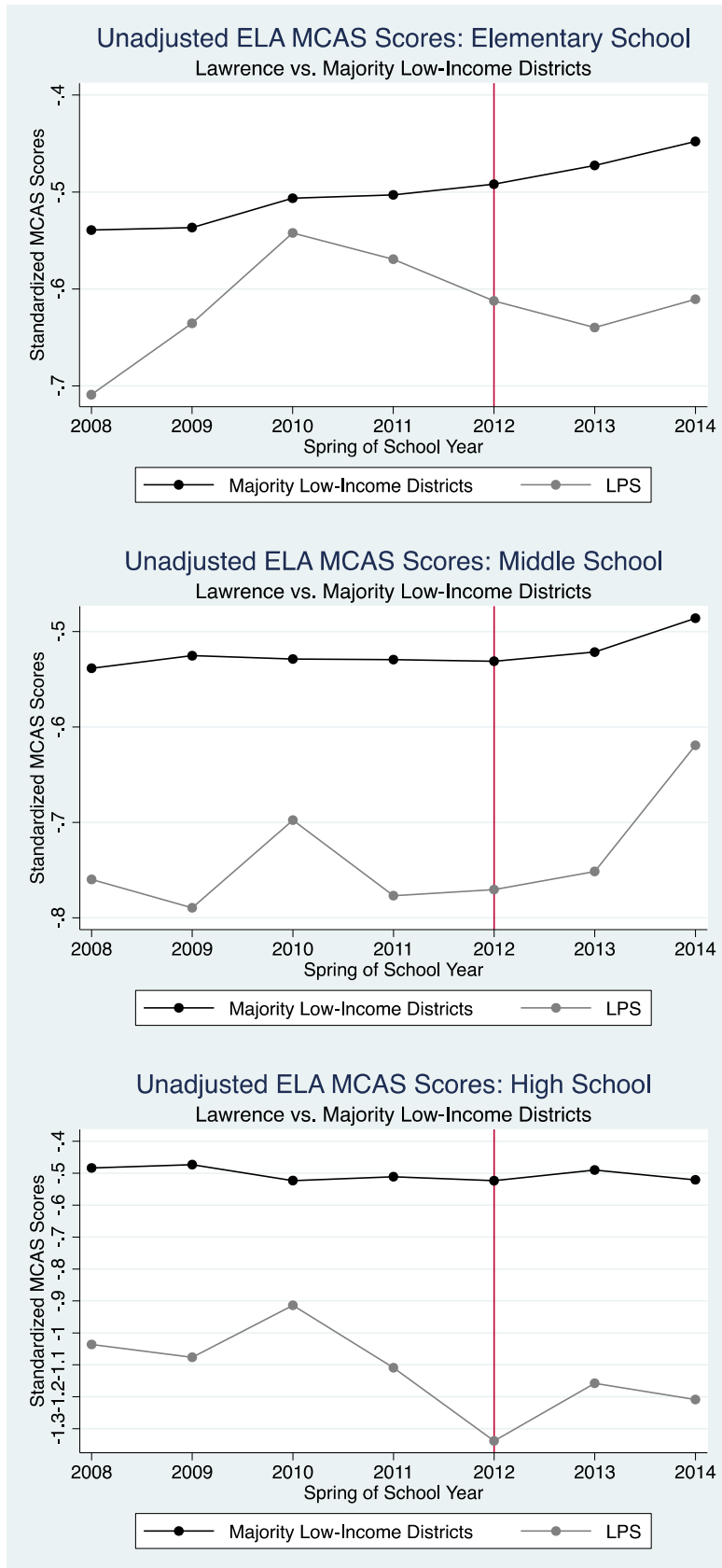
Unadjusted ELA MCAS



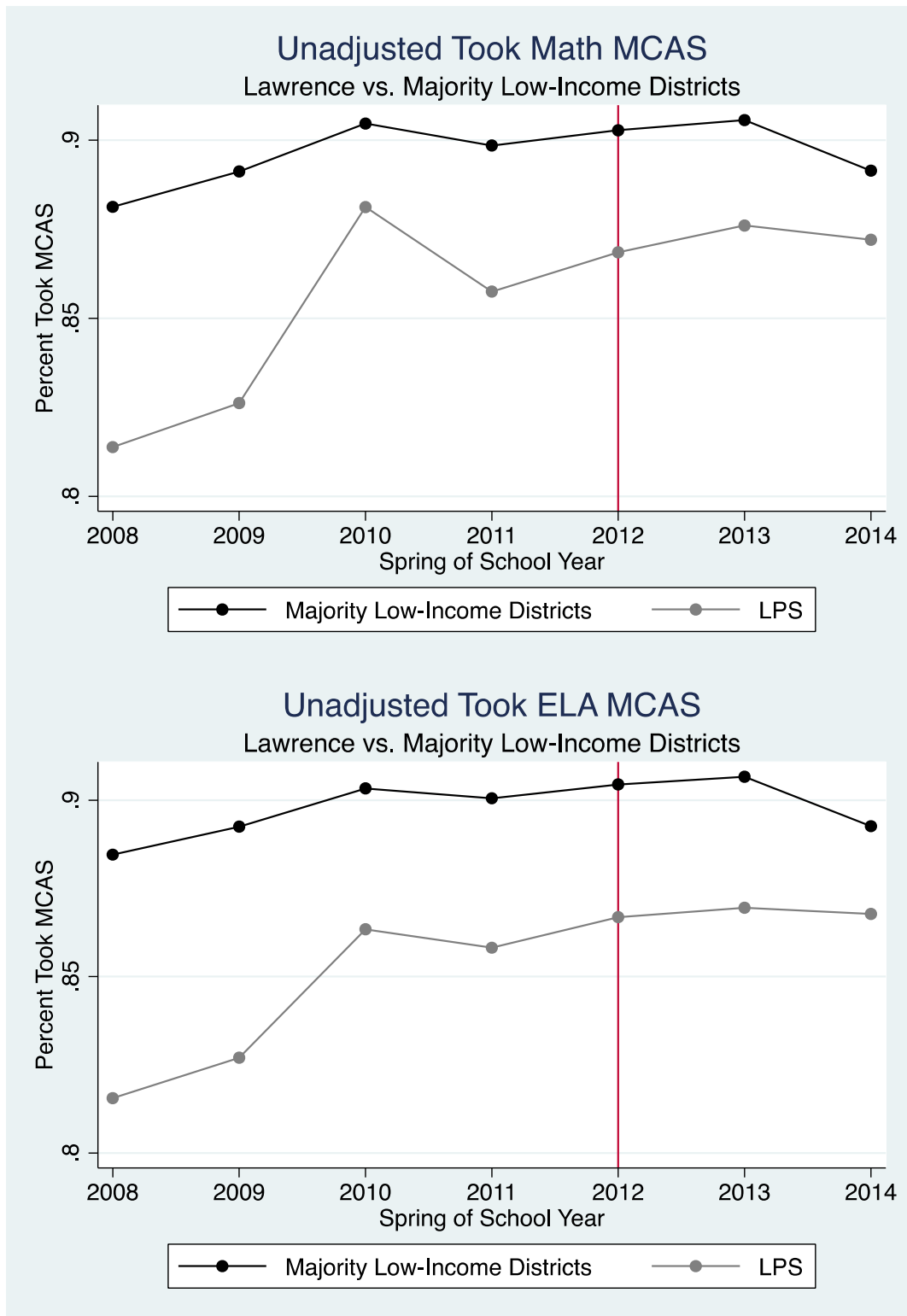
Appendix Figure A. Mean MCAS Scores by 2014 Acceleration Academy Participation



Appendix Figure B. Mean ELA MCAS Scores by ESL Status



Appendix Figure C. Mean ELA MCAS Scores by Grade Level



Appendix Figure D. Overall Percent of Students Taking the MCAS Exam

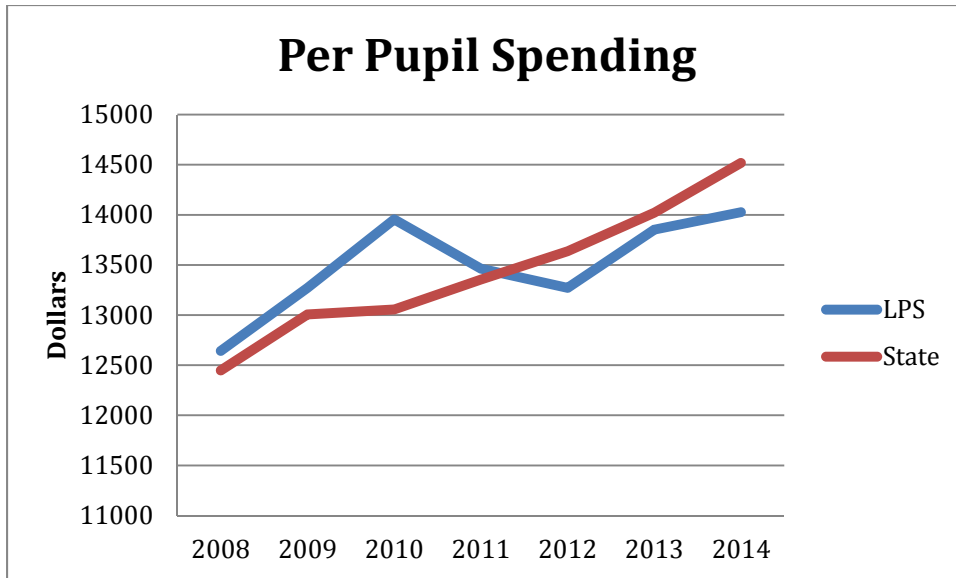


Figure 1. Per pupil in Lawrence and Massachusetts as a whole over time as reported by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

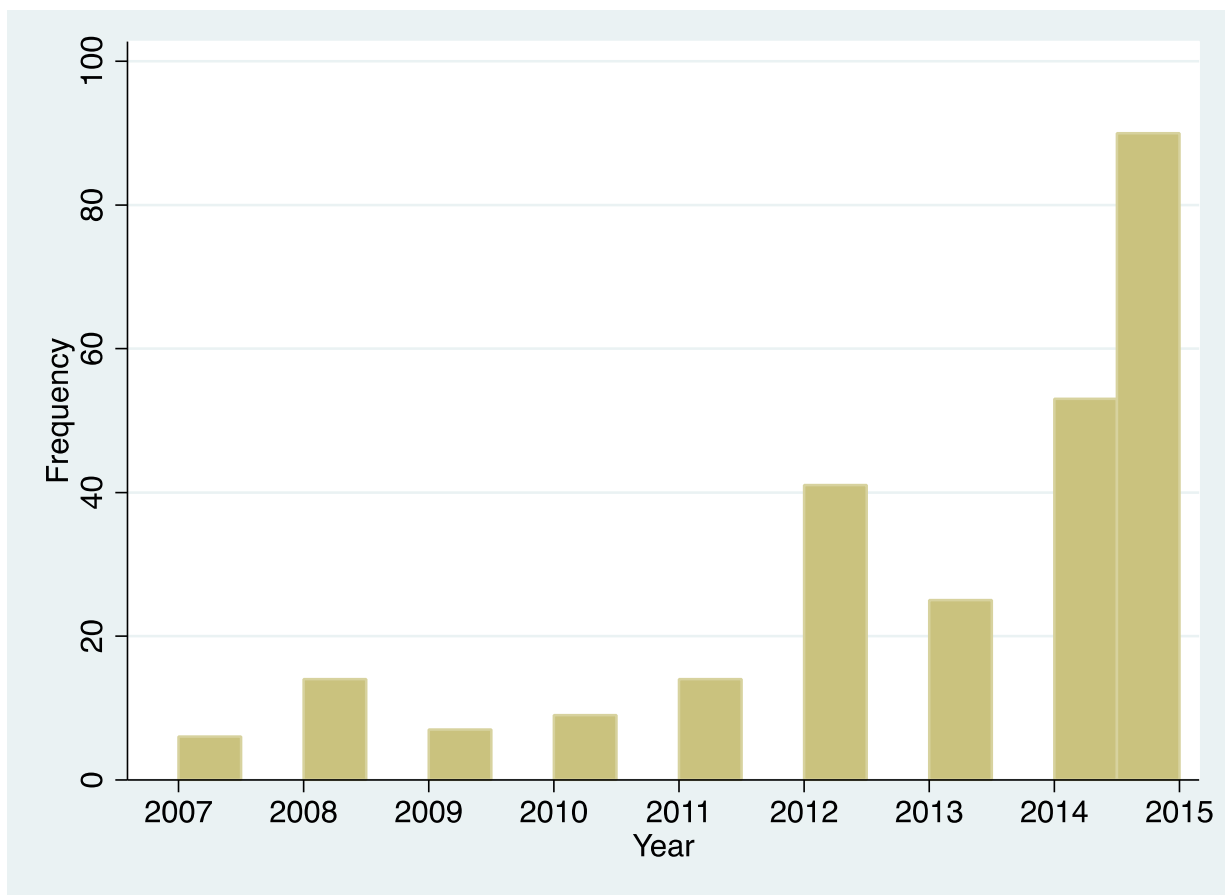


Figure 2. Frequency of press articles on Lawrence Public Schools from fall 2007 to fall 2015.

Table 1. MassINC Polling Group data on Lawrence parents' perceptions of Lawrence schools (n=404)

Overall approval of turnaround plan

As you may know, the state has appointed a receiver to overhaul the Lawrence public schools, and the receiver has recently published a plan for improving the schools.	Strongly approve	.45
	Somewhat approve	.23
	Somewhat disapprove	.02
Based on what you have heard or read about this plan, do you approve or disapprove of the receiver's plan? And do you strongly (approve / disapprove) or just somewhat?	Strongly disapprove	.03
	Heard about it, undecided	.05
	Not heard about	.17
[IF RESPONDENT SAYS DON'T KNOW] Have you heard about the plan and are undecided about it? Or have you not heard about the plan?	Don't know / refused	.05

Charter involvement in turnaround

As a part of the plan to improve Lawrence's schools, the receiver has recommended significant involvement in the process from charter schools. Do you think it is a good idea for charter schools to be involved in this process, or should charter schools not be involved?	Charters should be involved	.80
	Charters should not be involved	.10
	Don't know / refused	.10

Overall approval of turnaround plan (with plan description)

The state receiver's plan calls for extending the school day, providing targeted support for English Language Learners and special education students, making it easier to dismiss ineffective principals and teachers, and working with charter school operators to improve school performance in the city's worst schools. Based on what you now know, do you approve or disapprove of the receiver's plan or disapprove of it? And do you strongly (approve / disapprove) or just somewhat?	Strongly approve	.55
	Somewhat approve	.28
	Somewhat disapprove	.07
	Strongly disapprove	.05
	Don't know / refused	.06

		Poll	2010 Census
Race/ethnic background	Hispanic or Latino	.80	.74
	Other	.19	
	Don't know / refused	.01	
Age	18 to 29	.15	
	30 to 44	.42	
	45 to 59	.30	
	60+	.12	
	Don't know / refused	.01	
Gender	Female	.75	.52
Education	Less than high school	.35	
	High school graduate	.32	
	Some college	.22	
	Bachelor's degree or higher	.10	.12
	Don't know / refused	.01	

Table 2. Mass TeLLS survey data on educator perceptions of their working environments in Lawrence vs. Massachusetts as a whole

	Lawrence		Massachusetts	
	2012	2014	2012	2014
Response rate	78.2	71.7	52.4	48.1
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	76.6	79.1	82.6	83.6
Time use (percent agree)				
Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	57.9	56.7	59.3	60.1
Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	65.2	75.4	52.2	56.0
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions	54.6	63.2	63.9	62.7
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	54.7	63.2	55.7	56.2
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	49.6	62.5	55.3	47.5
Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	63.6	76.2	60.1	58.5
Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	76.6	81.4	69.1	69.4
Facilities and resources (percent agree)				
Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials.	68.8	70.5	71.4	72.4
Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, printers, software and internet access.	70.8	64.4	63.7	64.1
Teachers have access to reliable communication technology, including phones, faxes and email.	82.0	77.5	78.5	81.2
Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens, etc.	74.4	73.5	74.8	74.4
Teachers have sufficient access to a broad range of professional support personnel.	66.8	76.2	69.8	73.6
The school environment is clean and well maintained.	73.1	82.9	75.1	79.2
Teachers have adequate space to work productively.	82.4	82.0	78.8	80.4
The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning.	77.8	80.5	77.8	80.1
The reliability and speed of Internet connections in this school are sufficient to support instructional practices.	70.6	53.0	64.9	62.7
Teachers and staff work in a school that is environmentally healthy.	64.5	72.6	68.9	71.8
Community support and involvement (percent agree)				

Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.	31.2	45.5	70.9	73.8
This school maintains clear, two-way communication with the community.	72.0	83.6	84.7	88.0
This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.	80.3	87.3	86.1	88.2
Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.	88.1	91.3	93.5	94.9
Families help students achieve educational goals in this school.	30.8	40.4	62.8	66.6
Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.	53.6	62.8	74.8	79.0
Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	42.5	50.4	67.7	71.2
Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	44.2	61.1	68.4	72.8
The community we serve is supportive of this school.	48.6	67.5	74	79.3

Managing student conduct (percent agree)

Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct.	78.8	81.1	81.3	84.6
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	54.6	55.9	69.3	75.3
Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by the faculty.	78.9	79.3	76	78.1
School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	56.7	63.7	62.6	66.8
School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	67.9	73.4	75.7	78.9
Teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	80.8	82.6	75.5	79.4
The faculty work in a school environment that is safe.	81.9	85.1	91.3	91.6

Teacher leadership (percent agree)

Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	73.2	80.5	77.1	78.2
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	72.9	81.4	79.4	78.4
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	73.3	79.4	75.3	74.1
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	79.6	90.0	82	84.2
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	63.8	74.0	57.6	60.0
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	74.5	81.1	72.6	74.7
Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	77.3	82.4	77.6	78.6
Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	51.1	63.2	53.2	55.6

School leadership (percent agree)

The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	74.4	80.6	67.9	70.2
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There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	65.3	71.3	63.5	66.3
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	64.0	65.7	64.4	65.9
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	67.6	76.9	67.2	69.9
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	93.1	94.4	90.8	93.4
The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.	91.1	93.7	87.2	89.2
Teacher performance is assessed objectively.	76.8	83.7	81.1	82.3
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.	77.7	85.5	77.2	80.3
The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.	75.4	79.2	76.4	74.3
The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.	68.2	80.3	65.4	69.1
The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.	69.5	80.3	71.8	73.1

The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about:

Leadership issues	67.8	75.5	62.6	66.3
Facilities and resources	76.2	80.8	73.9	76.4
The use of time in my school	71.1	78.7	67.4	68.6
Professional development	70.3	75.5	63.7	65.8
Teacher leadership	72.9	80.8	69.9	73.0
Community support and involvement	74.7	81.1	76	80.1
Managing student conduct	64.7	69.4	69.4	72.9
Instructional practices and support	78.5	84.0	78.7	80.4
New teacher support	70.5	76.1	75.5	79.0

Professional development (percent agree)

Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school.	67.4	74.3	54.9	58.0
An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	77.9	81.0	58.5	60.4
Professional development offerings are data driven.	76.9	84.2	65.1	67.4
Professional development opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.	81.4	91.6	78	81.4
Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.	44.9	60.8	39.9	41.8
Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.	66.8	75.2	56	53.8
Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	87.1	93.3	78.3	83.7
In this school, follow up is provided from professional development.	63.6	70.8	48.3	51.0

Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	67.9	78.0	56.5	59.2
Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	47.0	55.1	38.3	40.3
Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.	77.4	81.3	64.6	63.8
Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.	79.2	85.2	70.3	69.6
Instructional practices and support (percent agree)				
State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	72.8	75.3	65.1	62.1
Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	84.9	90.2	79.3	81.5
Teachers use assessment data to inform their instruction.	89.6	94.1	86	88.7
Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.	74.3	85.3	70.1	75.7
Provided supports (i.e. instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers.	72.7	83.4	68.2	70.8
Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction.	87.9	88.8	87.5	87.9
Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.	56.8	60.5	56.3	57.5
Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy).	63.1	69.6	72.1	70.6
The faculty are committed to helping every student learn.	91.7	94.6	93.5	94.4
The curriculum taught in this school is aligned with Common Core Standards	89.6	95.4	86.8	91.5
The curriculum taught meets the needs of students.	72.6	77.0	80	79.5
Social services are available to ensure that all students are ready to learn.	67.1	71.5	74.4	76.6

Appendix A: Interviewees

Lawrence Public Schools

- Receiver / Superintendent (1)
- High-Ranking district officials (4)

State of Massachusetts

- Former MA Secretary of Education (1)
- MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education official (1)
- Former State Senator representing Lawrence at time of receivership (1)

Teachers Union

- High-ranking leader of Lawrence Teachers Union (1)
- MA American Federation of Teachers officials involved with Lawrence (2)

Educators

- Principals (2)
- Former teachers who left under receivership (3)

Partner Organizations

- Leader of non-profit partner organization (1)
- Leaders of Lawrence-based non-profit enrichment provider (2)
- Leader of Lawrence-based non-profit community group (1)

Appendix B: Codes

Stakeholders

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Unions
- Parents
- Students
- Public/ community
- Outside partners
- Local organizations
- School Committee
- Philanthropists
- Elected officials
- Bystanders
- Insiders/outsideers
- School operators

Central office

- Bureaucracy
- Service to schools
- Compliance
- Fairness across schools
- Tailored support
- Funding
- Corruption
- District-school relations
- Coherence
- Pedagogical practices
- Portfolio management model

Labor

- Collective bargaining
- Compensation
- Unfair labor practice
- Teacher leadership
- Teacher union representation
- Ethnic makeup of labor force
- Union-district relations
- Teacher representation
- Union-parent alliance
- Make the best of the situation
- Union-district partnership school

Turnaround components

- Expectations
- School autonomy
- Differentiation
- Staff turnover
- Teacher quality
- Principal quality
- Attracting talent
- Extended learning time
- Enrichment programs
- Dropout recovery
- New teacher contract
- No charter schools
- Retaining staff
- Increased pay
- Acceleration Academies

Communication

- Collaboration
- Listening
- Teacher input
- Public input
- Top-down
- Bottom-up
- Blame
- Trust
- Relationships
- Inclusion
- Recognition/credit
- Transparency
- Information gathering
- Identifying failure
- Identifying success
- Representation
- Compromise
- Measured/restraint
- Ownership
- Buy-in
- Responsiveness

Educational approaches

- No-excuses
- Test preparation
- Culturally relevant
- Bilingual
- Focus on critical thinking skills

Outcomes

- Low-performance
- Success
- Standardized testing
- Graduation/dropout
- College
- Long-term outcomes
- Early wins

Context

- District size
- Enrollment growth
- Demographics

State Authority

- Political cover/shield
- Recruitment
- Leverage
- Not using full extent
- District/state: good cop / bad cop

Ideology/pragmatism

- Conflict/polarization
- Above politics
- New paradigm
- Market-based reform
- Charter schools/operators
- Traditional public schools
- Third/middle way
- Boundary crossing
- Framing
- Level playing field

Miscellaneous

- Sustainability of reforms
- Minimizing disruption
- Sequencing reforms

2007-2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Scandal/allegations against public officials					
	Low-achievement				
	State takes over				
	Mayor pro-takeover				
		Turnaround plan			
		Riley			
		Charter partners			
			Academic improvement		
			How they got results		
			Union criticism of turnaround		
			Union run school		
				New contract	
				School activities	
				Union support for turnaround	
				Union-district cooperation	
					Lawrence as model

Figure 3. Dominant themes in press coverage of the Lawrence Public Schools from fall 2007 to fall 2015.

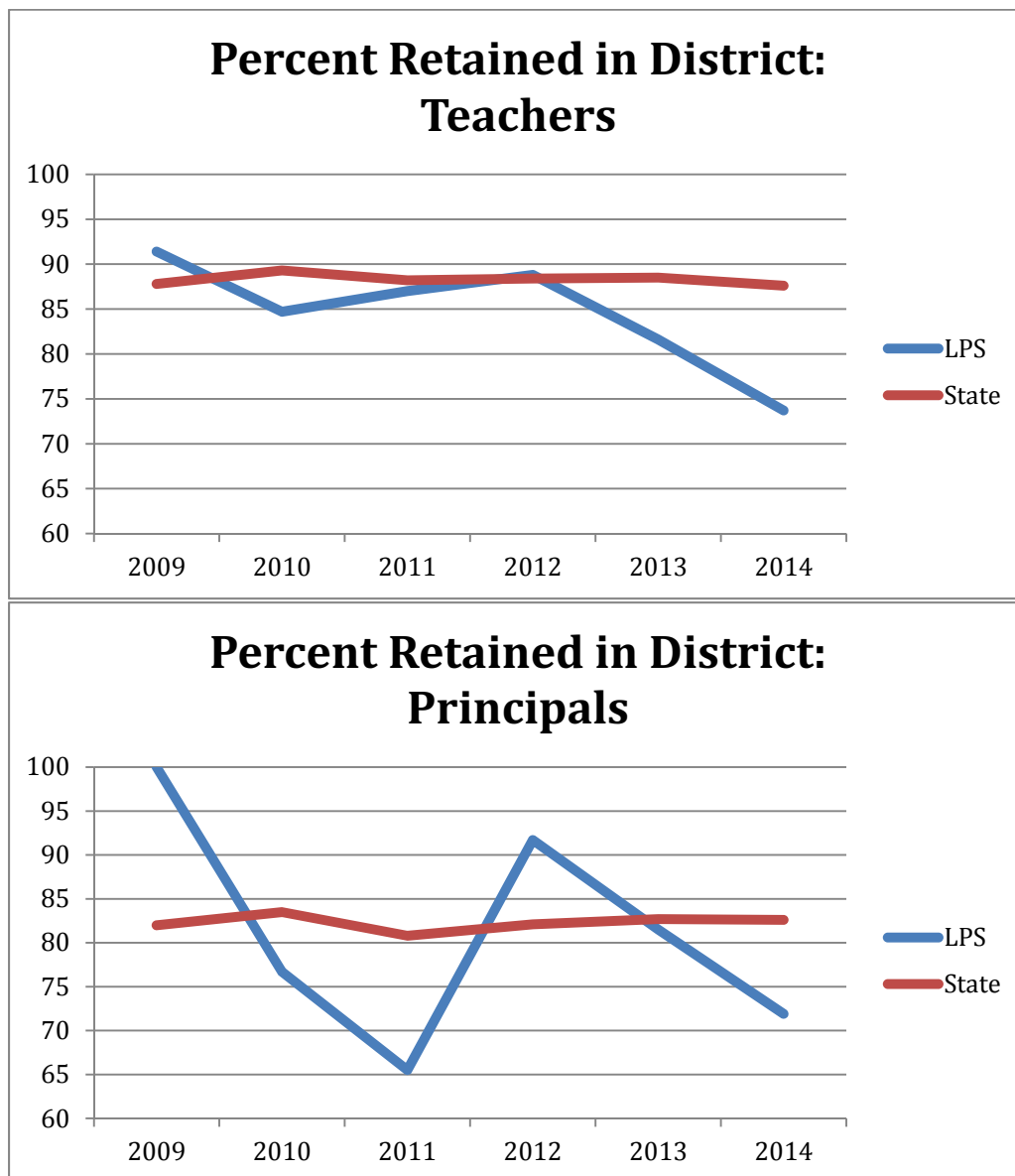


Figure 4. Educator retention rates in Lawrence and Massachusetts as a whole over time as reported by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

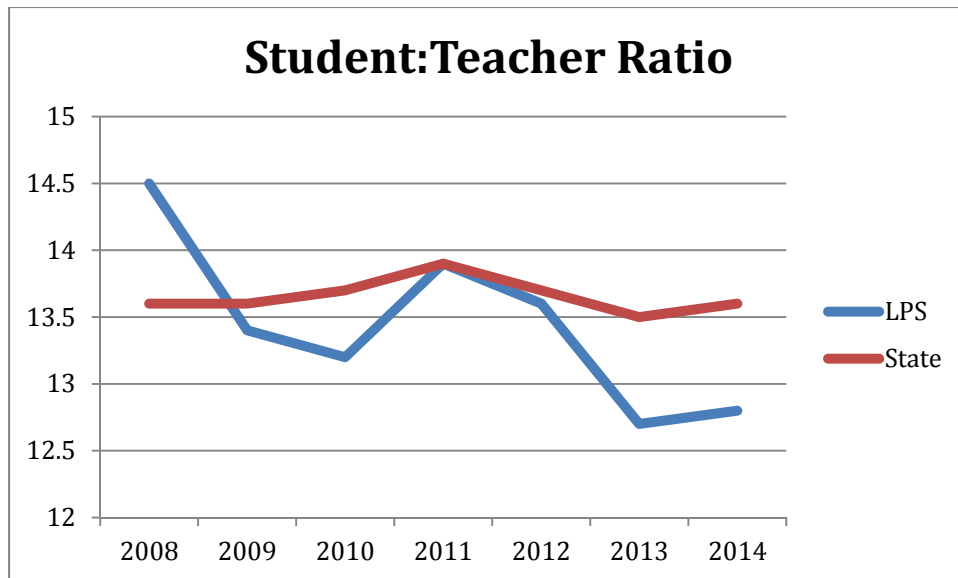


Figure 5. Average student to teacher ratio in Lawrence and Massachusetts as a whole over time as reported by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Grade levels of schools with new management during the first two years of the turnaround

Original School Name	New School Name	Manager Name	Manager Description	Grades	
				Year 1 (2012-13)	Year 2 (2013-14)
Arlington Elementary	Community Day Arlington	Community Group	Lawrence-based early childhood education and charter school operator	K-1	K-4
South Lawrence East Middle	SPARK Academy	SPARK	Duo of educators run a fitness- themed program that integrates physical activity throughout an extended school day	5	5-6
Leonard Middle	UP Leonard	Unlocking Potential (UP)	Boston-based non-profit middle school turnaround organization	6	6-8
Oliver	UP Oliver	Unlocking Potential (UP)	Boston-based non-profit middle school turnaround organization	-	6
Oliver	Oliver Partnership	Lawrence Teachers Union	Local labor union	-	1-5
N/A (new school)	Phoenix Academy	Phoenix Foundation	Chelsea-based high school charter school provider targets students at risk of dropout	9-12	9-12

Figure 6. Grade levels of schools with new management during the first two years of the turnaround.

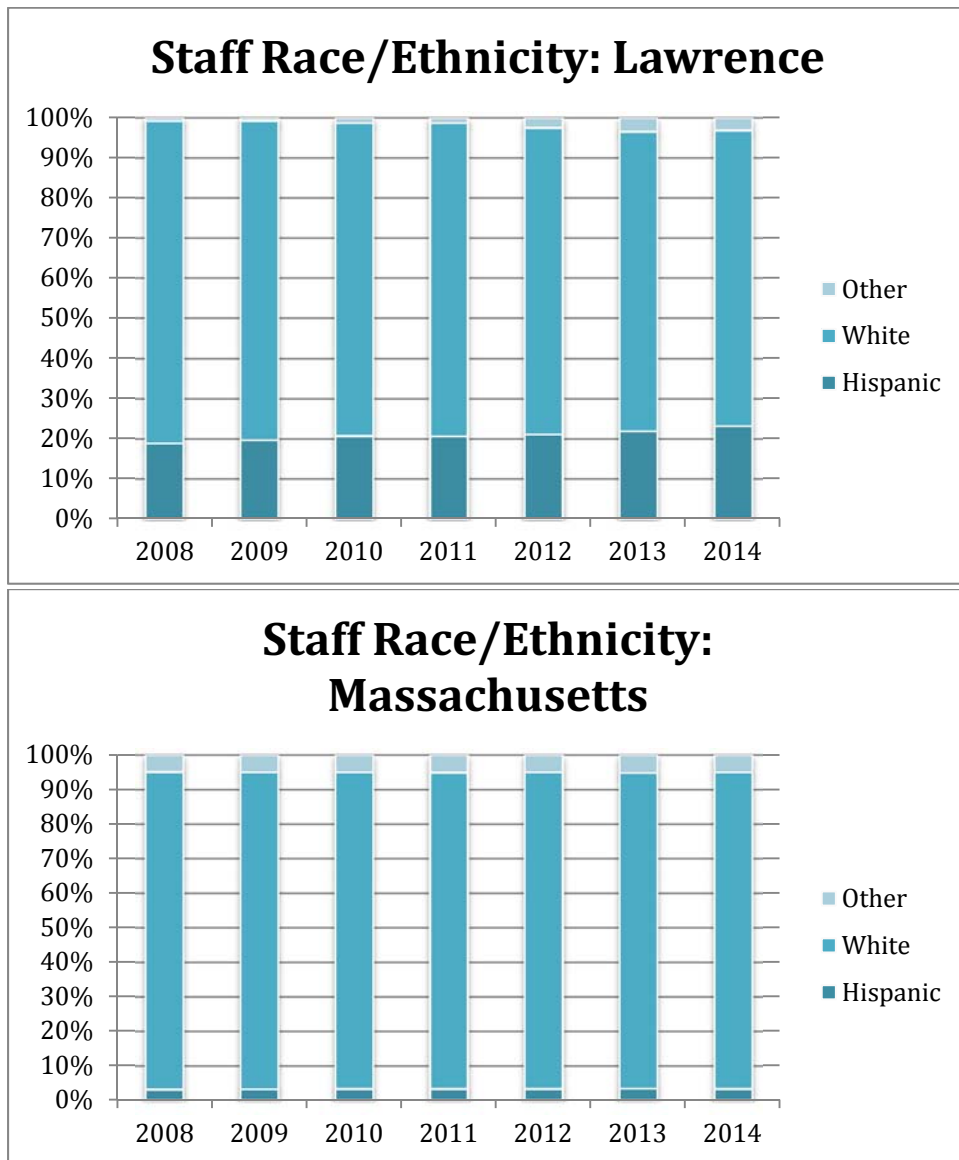


Figure 7. Staff race/ethnicity in Lawrence and Massachusetts as a whole over time as reported by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

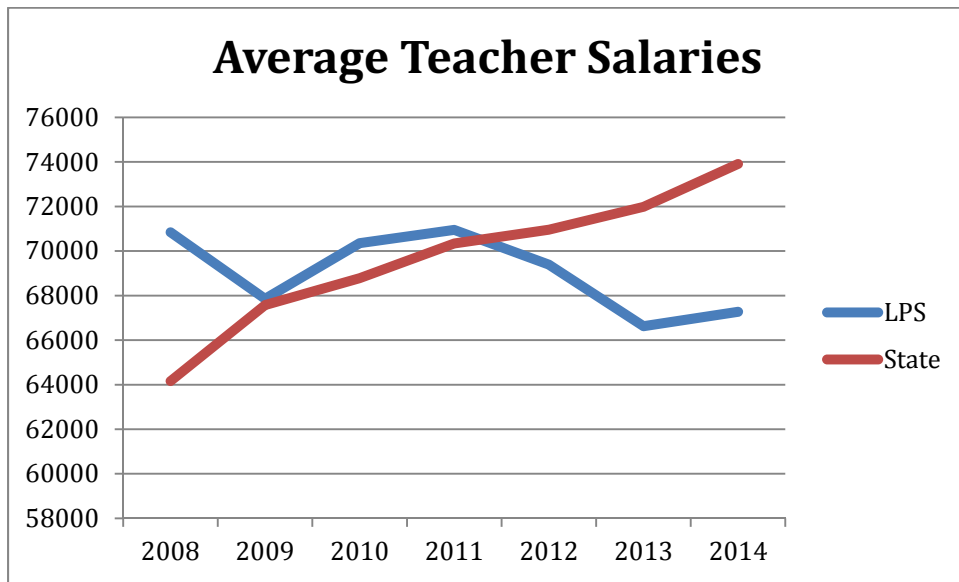


Figure 8. Average teacher salaries in Lawrence and Massachusetts as a whole over time as reported by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

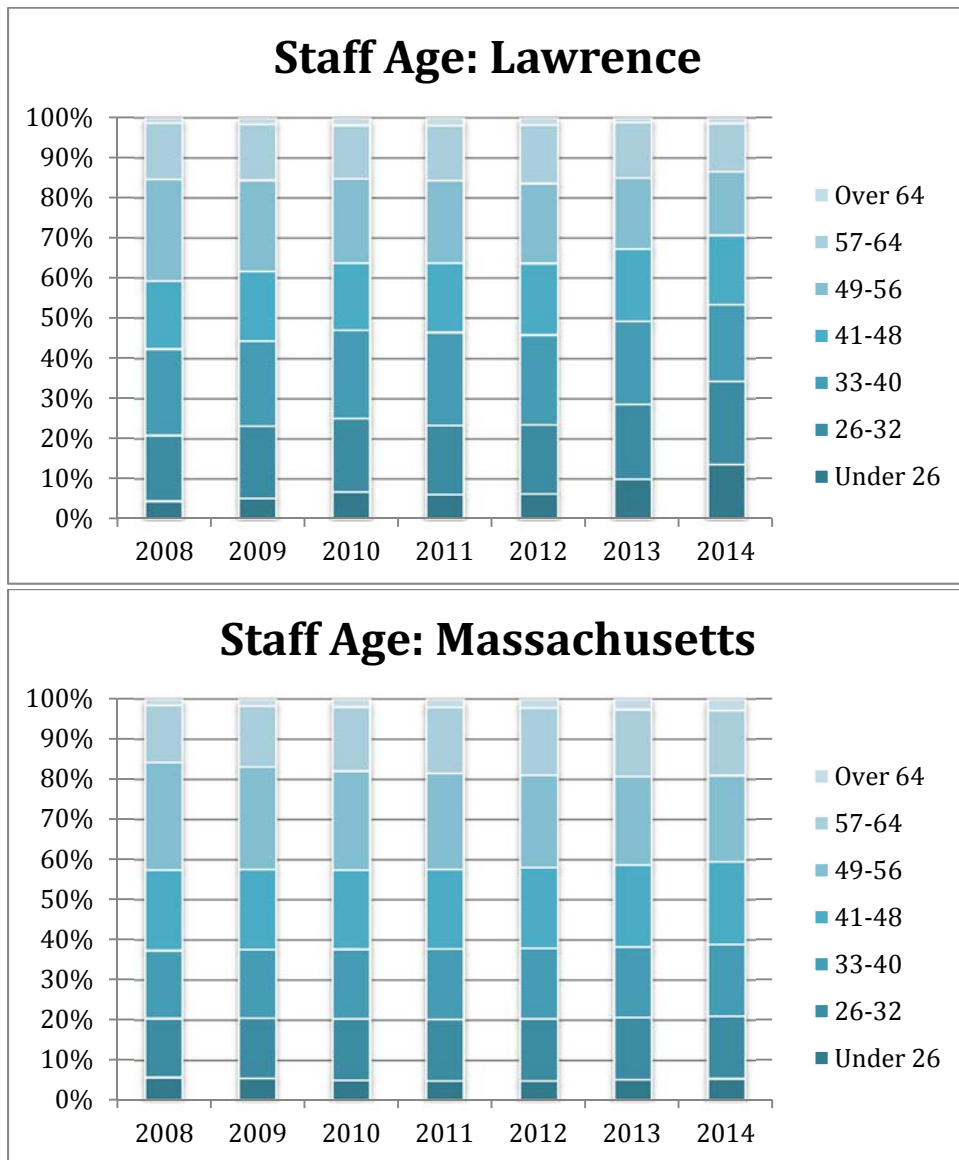


Figure 9. Staff age in Lawrence and Massachusetts as a whole over time as reported by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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