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History of Public School Governance in the District of Columbia  
January 2004**

## **HISTORY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: A Brief Summary<sup>1</sup>**

Mary Levy, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights  
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Throughout the two hundred years of their existence, the District of Columbia public schools have operated under multiple systems of governance. These systems have periodically and sometimes frequently changed, but the concerns and complaints about the systems and their perceived consequences have persisted in remarkably similar terms, changing only to cover wider territory as governance has come to be held responsible for student outcomes as well as the system's management and resources.

Historical studies find that the governance of the D.C. Public Schools has consistently been characterized by:

- Responsibility and authority divided among multiple governing officials, each with their own sphere of authority
- Conflict among these governing officials, especially over budget and funding
- Complaints and findings of insufficient resources in the schools
- Intensified criticism and calls for change during periods of social tension and rapid change
- For the last 50 years, belief that the school system is in crisis, and urgent concern about low student achievement, low standards and lack of discipline
- Discontent with the governance system and the performance of the governing officials and a hope that changing the system would change the above-cited problems
- A failure of change in school governance to alleviate the larger social tensions or to improve the quality of education for children

Although the District has had a number of differing governance arrangements, two have not been tried, at least for a century:

The District has never had an independent elected school board with taxing authority

Since 1906 no fully appointed school board has been chosen by the same officials who provide the system's funding.

Public schools in the District have always been directed by a school board, usually appointed, but fully elected from 1969 to 1996 and partially elected since 2001. School boards actually

managed the schools until superintendents became part of the system in the 1860s. The school board has never had independent taxing authority, and has always received its appropriation from officials in charge of overall local government, locally elected at first, federally appointed from 1871-1974, and locally elected since then.

For the last 100 years, responsibility and authority over the system have been divided. Until 1974, local officials appointed by the U.S. President provided the funding, while a school board appointed by district court judges ran the school system. The funding officials had the right of line-item authority over school budgets. Thereafter the elected Mayor and City Council provided funding without having line-item authority, though in 2001 they gained partial power over school board member selection (four of nine members).

Steven Diner's 1982 study of the history of D.C. school governance describes the situation of divided governance as growing out of a tension between the desire for centralized administration of all city services versus the protection of education from the potential political influence of central city government. This study found that whatever its structure and provenance, the governance of public schools in the District has always been characterized by the conditions listed at the beginning of this paper.<sup>2</sup> Under three different systems of governance in the 22 years since Diner's study, none of that has changed.

In recent years calls for change have focused on the school system's failures to provide effective education, as well as on charges and findings of mismanagement and built-in conflict. D.C. citizens have always expressed dissatisfaction with those performing school governance and governance systems in general. Those most involved with the system have usually found funding, curriculum, teacher quality and the like inadequate, while others have usually charged mismanagement. It is only in the last 50 years, however, that student achievement, standards and discipline have become an important basis for seeking changes in governance.

Diner found in 1982 that with or without student outcomes as a focus, changes in governance have never produced sustained, discernible improvement in student achievement, nor had they resolved the social tensions associated with conflict over the public schools, nor had they quieted public discontent. He did find that when progress in school achievement, management and public satisfaction occurred, it was attributable to a few strong superintendents who secured political support from many influential segments of the community.<sup>3</sup> Under three more systems of governance since 1982, student achievement, management and public discontent have not improved.

## **Formal Structures**

During its history, the District of Columbia has had as many as four school systems: whites-only systems in Washington City, Georgetown, Washington County (the rural remainder of the District) and a system of black schools. The four were unified, while retaining racial segregation, in 1874. A table showing all of the different configurations of governance appears at the end of this paper.

The School Board. From the beginning of public education in the District in 1804 until 1969, public schools were governed by appointed boards with varying degrees of authority. The entity with the power of appointment changed from time to time, usually as governance of the District changed:

- elected City Councils from 1804 until 1858
- the elected Mayor from 1858 until 1871
- the Secretary of the Interior for the newly established black school system from 1862 to 1874
- the presidentially appointed Territorial Governor (white schools) from 1871 until 1874
- the presidentially appointed Board of Commissioners from 1874 until 1906
- the judges of the D.C. Supreme Court, and later the D.C. federal district court from 1906 until 1969, when a popularly elected board assumed power

After 27 years of a fully-elected board, DCPS reverted to fully appointed governance from 1996 to 2000, under the Financial Control and Management Assistance Authority ("Control Board") that had been appointed by the President, pursuant to congressional legislation, in order to prevent the District from going into bankruptcy. In November 1996 the Control Board fired the incumbent Superintendent and took over governance of the system itself,<sup>4</sup> relegating the elected Board to an "advisory" capacity and appointing the superintendent. At about the same time the District's Chief Financial Officer took over control of the school system's fiscal operations, a power he retains and exercises today.

As the Control Board prepared to shut down, in anticipation of the District's having achieved the requisite number of years of balanced budgets, city leaders approved a proposed amendment to the Home Rule Charter, changing the Board of Education to a body of an elected president, four elected members representing two wards each, and four members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. That proposal was ratified by the voters in a special election with very low turnout in June 2000. The margins of acceptance in both the Council and the referendum vote were extremely narrow, and divided by race, with most whites supporting the change and most blacks opposing it. The public support even of Council members who had voted for the change was weak to non-existent. Since the beginning of 2001 DCPS has been governed by the "hybrid" part-elected and part mayorally-appointed Board. However, by its terms the Home Rule Charter amendment sunsets this structure as of July 7, 2004, providing that thereafter the Council will legislate the composition and means of selection of school board members.

**The Superintendent.** Although the Superintendent now plays a critical role in governance, D.C. public schools had no superintendents until 1862, when a superintendent of black schools was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. A superintendent for white schools first appeared in 1869, appointed by the elected Washington City Mayor, then in 1871 by the presidentially appointed Territorial Governor. After the four different systems were combined in 1874 under the authority of the newly established Board of Commissioners, superintendents were appointed by the Commissioners. In 1900 the school board received the authority to appoint the superintendent, a power it has retained since, and now holds under the Home Rule Charter.

**Fiscal Authority.** School boards in the District have never had independent taxing authority, having always been funded by the local government, with Congress exercising ultimate budget authority since 1874. The local Council also exercised line-item authority over the school budget until the advent of the Home Rule Charter in 1974, and again during the Control Board period.<sup>5</sup> But during the period of fully or partially elected school boards, the Council and Mayor have had the power under the Home Rule Charter only to determine the amount of the DCPS appropriation, while only the Board and Congress have had the authority to determine how that appropriation is spent. Since 1996 DCPS fiscal operations have been controlled not by the Superintendent and Board, but by the city's Chief Financial Officer

## **1804-1968: Appointed Boards**

Public discontent with the system of governance and the way in which the school board carried out its job was prevalent throughout the decades of governance by appointed school boards. About 1810, for example, "taxpayers complained of the wild extravagances that ate up 15 percent of the municipal budget."<sup>6</sup> An 1865 complaint charged that Washington spent "more than any other city in the United States" on its public schools.<sup>7</sup> In 1900, the District's federally appointed Board of Commissioners fired a superintendent who had modernized the curriculum and fired poorly trained but politically well-connected teachers; in response, Congress gave greater independent authority to the school board, though it remained appointed by the Commissioners. The newly vigorized board then came under criticism for micro-management of the schools, resulting in congressional legislation in 1906 to change the authority to appoint the board from the Commissioners to the local court judges and to define the roles of the board vs. the superintendent.<sup>8</sup>

The 1906 legislation split responsibility for schools between two different local entities. The District government, which providing the schools' funding, continued to be run by the three-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the President, while its public schools were run by a Board of Education appointed by local court judges and a superintendent appointed by the Board.<sup>9</sup> Conflict among the major actors in school governance and demands for change like those of today were frequent and persistent:

In general, the superintendent complained that the Board tended to usurp his administrative prerogatives, and that the Commissioners and Congress did not give him sufficient administrative autonomy and financial support to run the schools adequately. Board members often complained on the one hand that the superintendent did not respect and follow their authority, and that on the other hand they were hamstrung by the financial control of the Commissioners and the Congress. The Commissioners complained that the Board of Education, as a body charged with an executive function, should be appointed by and subordinate to them, and disapproved of the Board's efforts to get Congress to increase the appropriations for education beyond what they, the Commissioners, proposed to Congress. ... Parent, citizen and teacher groups, unhappy with this divided authority, struggled continuously to gain greater autonomy for the school system.<sup>10</sup>

## **1945-1968: Appointed Board, Wider Issues**

Demands to change the governance system, as described in the previous section, have always cited dissatisfaction with the manner in which governance itself is operating. Diner's study of the history of governance from 1804 to 1982 is replete with examples of conflict over the allocation of power, control, responsibility, and funding. Proposals for change in governance were justified by appeals to administrative efficiency, unification of funding and control, protection of the schools from political influence, elimination of conflict, reduction of red tape, responsiveness to the citizenry, and hopes for obtaining more funding. Public school governance also became part of larger issues, including civil rights, desegregation and home rule. Then in the latter half of the 20th century controversy over governance came to be based also on dissatisfaction with the schools themselves. Since then, the school board has been blamed for poor student outcomes as well as mismanagement in the system and its own behavior. Disputes about governance have invoked a mix of arguments based on good governance practice, democratic responsiveness, home rule, and effective management and student outcomes.

Prior to the Second World War, both in the District and nationally, student achievement was scarcely a factor in public opinion about public schools. "[S]chools were judged by what was put into them - by facilities and equipment, teacher-student ratios, administrative and supervisory systems, the curriculum, the qualifications of teachers, and the like. Schools were not judged, as they are today, by their outcomes, that is, by what their student knew and could do when they left school."<sup>11</sup> Achievement problems were not absent- in fact, they were exactly the same in nature, though not in volume, as today<sup>12</sup> -- but they received little public attention.

After the Second World War, issues of home rule for the District, civil rights, and desegregation, intensified already existing conflicts among the different actors in the school governance system and provided additional bases for demands for change. Home rule proposals included an elected school board as an important element. At the same time, as blacks became an increasingly large majority in the city, they sought increased political power, including power over the schools incompatible with the existence of a court-appointed board of education. The fact that that board tried to avoid addressing black demands for equity and desegregation, and that the actions it did take aroused enormous acrimony among both blacks and whites, intensified the quest for change.<sup>13</sup>

The quality of education was an issue in these controversies, but the desire for control itself seems at least equally important. Education itself as a public issue still focused largely on inputs - the inadequacy of facilities, problems of recruiting and retaining an adequate teaching staff, and the inequalities between black and white schools. Declining test scores, weak promotion standards and problems of student discipline were known and discussed, but not with the urgency of today.<sup>14</sup>

Diner's 1982 study of history found that it was the implementation of desegregation in 1954 that brought major change to the way in which the public considered public schools. "Segregationists, who wanted only to prove that integration could not work, attacked the schools. So did black activists and liberals angered over years of inequality and by the continuing inability of the schools to raise student achievement. And so did home rule activists, because the local population had no say in the selection of the members of the Board of Education or in the appropriations for education."<sup>15</sup> Segregationists and skeptics cited low test scores, low standards,

and discipline problems, while proponents of desegregation responded by citing inadequacies in facilities and budget.<sup>16</sup> Civil rights activists argued that poor, black children received a grossly inadequate education, and viewed the school board and superintendent as unresponsive to them and the black community. The appointed board became the subject of public protest and discontent.<sup>17</sup>

A chapter of the Passow Report of 1967, a massive study of all aspects of the school system considered the structure and operations of the court-appointed school board, describing its problems in terms familiar today: lack of institutional mechanisms to ensure high caliber board members; lack of representation of the community; perception of its role as "rubber stamp" (example: budget, "the most important policy discussions of the year," given only a few days consideration); lack of board member training and information, use of standing committees' leading to repetitive discussion and intrusion on administrative functions; no compilation of Board policies; lack of information for the public; acting as individuals rather than as a board, and procedural wrangles.<sup>18</sup> Most of the same criticisms have been made many times since, both of the elected board that succeeded the courtappointed board and the part-appointed, part elected board that assumed office in 2001.

### **1969-1996: The Elected Board**

The first elected board took office in 1969 amid hopes that "an elected Board would have an easier time addressing the difficult question of what to do about the city's schools."<sup>19</sup> The new school board quickly became the subject of intense and harsh criticism arising from conflicts over its conduct and issues including superintendents, the Clark Plan (for a "reading mobilization year"), "equalization" and teacher transfers required by court order in the *Hobson v. Hansen* case, a teacher strike, and implementation of recommendations of the Passow Report. In 1975 an elected Mayor and City Council replaced the federally appointed local leadership. Issues of civil rights and home rule connected with the schools began to diminish, while controversy associated with educational issues increased.

Conflicts and division continued unabated, and studies, news stories and editorials castigating the Board became routine and harsh.<sup>20</sup> In fact, for its entire existence, the public, commentators and experts had almost nothing good to say about the performance of the fully elected Board. For example, D.C. residents in a 1975 survey gave all actors-Superintendent, Mayor, Board of Education and teachers-more negative than positive ratings, with the Board ranked worst of all.<sup>21</sup>

The complaints were similar to those of the previous 60 years. Reports on the subject, numerous news stories and editorials, and public comment by citizens as well as government officials asserted that the Board of Education (1) lacked focus on student achievement and the "big picture" policymaking important to the health of all DCPS schools; (2) failed to provide effective oversight; (3) micro-managed the system; and (4) was prone to too much internal dissension and personal politicking.<sup>22</sup> Findings of a 1992 "Curriculum Audit," for example, (under the heading "Finding 1.6: School Board Functions and Behaviors Restrict Educational Progress") criticized the Board for acting as individuals rather than a board; micro-management; information requests "out of control;" and non-existent, inadequate and obsolete policies.<sup>23</sup> The 1995 report of a civic group, the D.C. Committee on Public Education, charged that "the Board, despite having a large

staff and budget and despite the time that its members put in, seems incapable of exercising any meaningful oversight to ensure that school funds are spent where they are budgeted," while individual members "manage to exert undue influence over the day-to-day operations of the system and even some local schools."<sup>24</sup>

Clashes with superintendents throughout the period of the elected board increased dissatisfaction with it. From the late 1970s through the late 1980s, during the terms of two strong and popular superintendents, a prime source of worry "was that the elected school board would make life unendurable for the superintendent."<sup>25</sup> It was a short period of relative stability, modest improvements in test scores and adoption of educational practices generally urged by system critics (the "competency-based curriculum," a ban on social promotions, tighter discipline). The 1980 departure of Superintendent Vincent Reed was blamed on the board, and "some people demand[ed] the recall of the entire Board and others a return to the elected Board."<sup>26</sup> According to Diner, "[t]he Board fared so poorly in public opinion not only because of the manner in which it conducted its business and because of embarrassing charges of administrative incompetence, but more fundamentally because the educational problems facing the schools seemed so severe."<sup>27</sup>

Succeeding years returned to turmoil, rapid changes in leadership and educational programs, layers of new initiatives, falling budgets due to the District's fiscal crisis, mushrooming special education enrollments, deterioration of management systems and school buildings and stagnant test scores. The board of education remained the focus of intense criticism and protest, though superintendents received some blame also. Report after report condemned the school board for deficiencies of school operations and student outcomes.<sup>28</sup> This period culminated in the November 1996 takeover of the school system by the Control Board.

### **1996-Present: The Same Problems Persist**

The poor state of student achievement was an important factor in the 1996 takeover by the Control Board, as was mismanagement. The first indictment in the document justifying the takeover was "Education Outcomes Are Inequitable and Weak." The next three were "Violent Behavior Persists," "Graduation Rates Remain Poor," and "A System of Mismanagement."<sup>29</sup> After laying out its case, the Control Board concluded, "The lack of oversight by the Board of Education is a primary cause of these failures."<sup>30</sup> Where the 1992 Curriculum Audit had condemned the Board for micromanagement, the Control Board condemned the "complete delegation of functions to the Superintendent." Like others, the Control Board also condemned weak and ineffective policy making, ineffective process with over-generous results in evaluating the Superintendent, overspending on itself, and over-preoccupation with its own perquisites.<sup>31</sup>

The Control Board and its appointed Emergency Board of Trustees did not suffer from accusations of micro-management, internal dissension, personal politicking or pursuit of perquisites. They were the subject of bitter complaints, however, of disregarding the concerns of parents and community, lack of oversight, and failure to communicate with the public. Moreover, as its term drew to a close, nothing seemed to have improved. Those who had worked with the Control Board on school issues cited frustration over its failure to institute changes rapidly and thoroughly, failure to amend a fragmented, multi-layered governing structure, failure

to support the superintendent on certain critical issues, and a general failure to improve the school system.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, the elected Board had come into continuous conflict with the Control Board and its board of trustees, and was largely excluded from any role in governing the school system. Even in its limited role, without opportunity to conduct oversight, over-delegate, or micro-manage, the Board's conduct continued to subject it to criticism for political self-seeking, infighting, and lack of attention to education and long-term goals.<sup>33</sup> Almost no one considered it "a credible source for positive reform,"<sup>34</sup> and during the battle over the referendum to change the Board's structure, opponents did not defend it on the basis of its performance. Opposition was based, rather, on concerns over political control, loss of access to decision-makers, reduction of the number of elective offices, and discontent with the governance of the Control Board - a carryover of the larger issues of which school governance had been a part.<sup>35</sup>

The successor system now in place, the partially appointed, partially elected Board is gradually coming under criticism for many of the same flaws and failures as the pre-1968 appointed board and a considerable number of those of the fully elected school board. They are charged with lack of oversight, budget irresponsibility, mismanagement, and lack of policies and strategies, especially for improving student performance.<sup>36</sup>

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What the preceding narrative adds up to, is the same set of conclusions that Diner reached in 1982, reinforced by events of the succeeding 22 years: Changes in the structure of governance have not so far resolved the conflicts or cured the complaints about the performance of the school board, nor have they resulted in the hoped-for improvements in resources or management. Fifty years of accelerated changes in the constitution of school governance have actually seen a worsening of poor student achievement, school dropout, and discipline, as well as more frequent superintendent turnover, management failures, and frequent changes and identified deficiencies in the instructional program.

Two systems of governance have not been tried. The District has never had an elected school board that raised its own revenues. Though it long ago had a school board appointed by elected officials, then by federally appointed local officials with whom they regularly clashed, the school system has changed greatly since, and it has been over 130 years since elected city officials controlled the school system through a school board they had appointed.

[Back to top of page](#)

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## **HISTORY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

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Year	System	Local Government	DCPS Governance	Board authority	Funding
1804	Wash. City White boys 2 schools	Washington City Council elected by voters, also appoints Mayor	13 member Board of Trustees, 7 chosen by Council and 6 elected by donors of over \$10. No Superintendent	Spend funding, pass by-laws not in conflict with Council laws-true ever since	Council appropriations + donations + tuition (free to poor)
1816	Wash. City White boys		Second school district added with Board of Trustees chosen solely by Council	Curriculum, set criteria for textbooks, hire teachers, order supplies	
1818	Wash. City White boys		All Trustees chosen by Council		
1820	Wash. City Poor white boys only	Mayor elected by voters			
1841	Wash. City White girls (3rd school)				
1842	Georgetown White schools	Georgetown City Council	7 member Board of Guardians chosen by Geo. City Council		
1844	Wash. City White schools	Elected Council & Mayor	Single school district w/ 13 Trustees, 3 chosen by Council from each of 4 wards + Mayor		Council + tuition by those who could afford it
1848	Wash. City White schools				Council - first school tax. No tuition - free to all.
1858	Wash. City White schools 2,900 students (1860)		Trustees appointed by Mayor Sub-boards for different districts	Request budget, year-end report, hire & fire teachers, select texts, oversee school affairs	
1862	Wash. City Mandatory for all whites				
1862	Black schools City, County,	Federal government	Board of Trustees for Colored Schools + Superintendent appointed by U.S.		Local government contribution

	Georgetown		Secretary of the Interior		
1864	County of Wash. All schools	Levy Court - taxes & administration for rural DC	7 person School Commission (for 7 school districts) appointed by court		Annual school tax
1869	Wash. City White schools 4,600 students (1867)	Elected Council & Mayor	Superintendent appointed by Mayor	Set rules under which Superintendent works	Council
1871	Wash. City, County, Georgetown White schools	Reorganization: Territorial government. Governor and one house appointed by President; other house elected	Superintendent for 3 local systems appointed by Governor; 3 boards remain		
1874	All schools in the District of Columbia 19,000 students	Reorganization: 3 person Board of Commissioners appointed by President	One 19-member Board of Trustees, mixed black and white; 2 Superintendents for white and black all appointed by Commissioners	Delegated from Commissioners	Congressional appropriation at Commissioners' request
1882			Board of Trustees cut to 9 members		
1885	31,362 students		Commissioners take over temporarily, retreat on public outcry	Advisory only, then some powers restored	
1895			Board expanded to 11 members		
1900			7-member Board of Education appointed by Commissioners Board appoints Superintendent for the first time	Complete over all administrative + appoint single Superintendent; Commissioners control budget	
1906	65,000 students (1920)		Board appointed by judges of DC courts - becomes	All questions of general policy, appoint	Congressional appropriation at Commissioners'

	93,000 students (1935) 95,000 students (1950)		an independent agency	Superintendent who directs instruction; other appointments only on his recommendation. DC and federal governments do construction, procurement and maintenance	request
1967	166,000 students	Reorganization: Mayor and Council appointed by U.S. President			Council, then Congressional appropriation; Council has line-item authority
1968	150,000 students		11 member Board elected, 8 by ward, 3 at large	Same as before	
1974	132,000 students	Home Rule: Mayor and Council elected by voter	Home Rule Charter provides for 11-member Board as constituted in 1969.	"Control of the public schools" including line-item budget authority. Construction, maintenance and procurement	Council, then Congressional appropriation; but no line-item authority for Council
1995	80,450 students	Control Board appointed by President, responsible to Congress can change or veto Mayor and Council actions		Now subject to Control Board change or veto	Council still decides appropriation and has line-item authority
1996	78,648 students		Control Board take-over, with elected board purely advisory; Control Board appoints Superintendents. City CFO takes over fiscal operations	Advisory only	
2001	68,925 students	Control Board closes; Mayor and Council	9-member Board of Education, 5 members elected, 4 appointed	Establish policies, hire and fire Superintendent,	Council, then Congressional appropriation;

		resume former powers	by Mayor	personnel policies but no hiring authority. Approve annual budget, but City CFO control fiscal operations.	but no line-item authority for Council
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Sources: Steven J. Diner: The Governance of Education in the District of Columbia: An Historical Analysis of Current Issues (1982) Constance McLaughlin Green, Washington: Village and Capital, 1800-1878 (1962) Constance McLaughlin Green, Washington: Capital City 1879-1950 (1963)

[Back to top of page](#)

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## FOOTNOTES

1. The information in this paper for the period up to 1982 is summarized principally from two papers by Steven J. Diner: The Governance of Education in the District of Columbia: An Historical Analysis of Current Issues (1982) and Crisis of Confidence: The Reputation of Washington's Public Schools in the Twentieth Century (1982). Other sources for that period and the period since 1982 are cited in footnotes but also include the author's personal knowledge from observation and participation in some of the events described.

2, Governance of Education, p. 2.

3. Governance of Education, pp. 2, 72.

4. Initially, the Control Board established a board of trustees appointed by itself; when that action was declared invalid by the federal courts, that board became an advisory body. Throughout its tenure, however, the Control Board appointed superintendents and retained ultimate authority over school system policy and budgets.

5, The federal legislation establishing the Control Board suspended the provision in the Home Rule Charter prohibiting the Council from exercising line-item authority over DCPS budgets for the active duration of the Control Board.

6. Constance McLaughlin Green, Washington: Village and Capital, 1800-1878 (1962), p. 44.

7. Green, Village and Capital, p. 305.

8.'Diner, History of Governance, pp. 12-13.

9. From 1874 to 1906, the Commissioners appointed the school board; in 1967 the Board of Commissioners was replaced by a federally appointed Mayor and City Council, who were elected started in 1974.

10. Diner, *Governance of Education*, pp. 15-16

11. Diner, *Crisis of Confidence*, p. 8.

12. For example, a teacher group in 1914 alleged "the graduation of pupils in spite of deficiencies." Diner, *Crisis of Confidence*, p. 10. "Teachers complained in the 1920s and 1930s about the collapse of standards, and about high school students who could not read, and standardized test scores confirmed the educational problems in both the black and white divisions." *Ibid.*, p. (i) A 1935 teachers union editorial called for "classes in remedial reading ... at all levels: elementary, junior high and senior high." In November 1939, a school official reported a critical problem of vandalism

in the white schools, and the school board voted to request police protection for the schools from the city government. In 1944 a school official reported a problem of white high school pupils unable to do simple arithmetic; a teachers' committee response called for "the establishment of clearly defined mastery goals on each grade level." *Ibid.* pp. 11-13. In the late 1940s, there were reports of widespread truancy, vandalism, high school students who could not read, social promotion, and low test scores. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

13. Diner, *Governance of Education*, pp. 33-46. The judges eventually asked Congress to relieve them of the responsibility of appointing school board members, because their role had become so political and controversial. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

14. Diner, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 14-21.

15. Diner, *Crisis of Confidence*, p. 24.

16. Diner, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 23-32.

17. Diner, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 33-34.

18. A. Harry Passow, *Toward Creating a Model Urban School System: A Study of the Washington, D.C. Public Schools*, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1967, pp. 171-80.

19. Diner, *Governance of Education*, p. 53.

20. E.g., "reckless and demeaning conflict" and questions as to "whether we really need a school board;" Diner, *Governance of Education*, pp. 39-42; "Who Should Lead D.C. Schools?" *The Washington Post* (March 13, 1999), p. A20: "The damage done to District children on the elected school board's watch was almost criminal. As divided and self-indulgent board members played ward politics and squabbled over office space, staff and job perks, SAT scores plummeted, almost half of all high school students dropped out ... classrooms went without textbooks, and cafeteria food was terrible."

21. Diner, *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 42-43.

22. Greater detail on the nature of these complaints appears in D.C. Appleseed Center, *Reforming the D.C. Board of Education: A Building Block for Better Public Schools* (1999), pp. 13-15. [www.dcappleseed.org](http://www.dcappleseed.org)
23. *A Curriculum Audit of the District of Columbia Public Schools*, Washington D. C. , National Curriculum Audit Center, American Association of School Administrators.
24. COPE, "Our Children Are Still Waiting," pp. 24-25.
25. Jeffrey R. Henig, "Washington, D.C: Race, Issue Definition, and School Board Restructuring," IN *Mayors in the Middle: Politics, Race, and Mayoral Control of Urban Schools*, ed. Jeffrey R. Henig and Wilbur C. Rich (2004), p. 199.
26. *Governance of Education*, p. 54.
27. *Crisis of Confidence*, pp. 39-43.
28. E.g., the Curriculum Audit (1992), District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority, "Children in Crisis: A Report on the Failure of D.C.'s Public Schools (1996s
29. "Children in Crisis," pp. 1-37.
30. "Children in Crisis," p. 40.
31. "Children in Crisis," pp. 40-47.
32. Stephen C. Fehr and Valerie Strauss, "Analysis: Then and Now, School System in Turmoil," *The Washington Post* May 30 2000, p. B1.
33. Examples appear in Appleseed Center, *Reforming the D.C. Board of Education*, p. 15
34. Henig, *Mayors in the Middle*, p. 192.
35. Discussed at length in Henig's paper in *Mayors in the Middle*. Henig argues persuasively that the race-based experience of blacks in local history played a critical role in the opposition of so many to the institution of the hybrid board.
36. E.g., *The Washington Post*, "The Mayor's School Plan," November 3, 2003, p. A18 (no confidence in the existing system); *The Washington Post*, "Takeover of Schools Supported on Council," p. B1 (Council members citing "contentious relations" with the Board president, "annual dramatics over school budgets," lack of financial oversight, "million of dollars of overspending that we have to face from this school board;" Council of the Great City Schools, "Restoring Excellence to the District of Columbia Public Schools," December, 2003, pp. 27-30, 83-84.