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A Case Study of a Predominantly African American School District and Federally  
Mandated Education Reform, 2000-2010

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

### A Case Study of a Predominantly African American School District and Federally Mandated Education Reform, 2000-2010

By Sheryl Jones Croft

Researchers who have critiqued federal reforms have used a top-down conceptual orientation to evaluate the success of reform (Brown & Clift, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gray, 2005; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Payne, 2010; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005; Theoharis, 2009). Frequently, a top-down assessment of reform fails to interrogate the agency of stakeholders. In contrast, this research used a “bottom-up” (Sabatier, 1986) conceptual orientation and Critical Race Theory to explore school reform from two vantage points. First, the study interrogated state and district level political responses to federally mandated reform initiatives. Second, this study explored school reform from the vantage point of six African American school leaders who served within the selected predominantly African American school district. Using *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and *Race to the Top* as the federal mandates from 2000 to 2010, this case study relied on a review of newspaper articles, interviews with elite informants and interviews with principals, as well as ancillary data found in schools’ Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIP), to glean information about state-level implementation and its potential impact on reform for local school leaders. Specifically, this study explored the following questions:

1. What school reforms were initiated in Georgia from 2000 to 2010?
2. What explanations did stakeholders provide to explain state-sponsored reform initiatives?
3. How were these state mandates implemented in a local predominantly African American school district?
4. What were the responses of local school leaders to state and district reforms?
5. How did federal, state, and local interests converge or diverge?

Results indicate that there was no congruency between federal, state, and district level implementation of reform. Results also demonstrate that principals in this study did not make decisions about school needs based on mandated reform. Instead, they made reform decisions based upon what they believed was in the best interest of their schools.

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## Acknowledgments

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths”  
(Proverbs 3:5 King James Version)

I am aware that this season in my life has been specifically ordained for my return to Graduate School. I am also aware that pursuing a Ph. D. has been a life-long dream and aspiration, an extension of my life’s work and passion. Inasmuch as education of young people, particularly African American students has been my life’s passion, I am indebted to those who have also assisted me in fueling this passion through this program. Without doubt, attaining this degree represents the pinnacle of my quest for life-long learning. I do not take lightly the many people who have supported and encouraged me during this journey. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge and thank my family for providing the time and space to complete this work, specifically my mother and my sisters, Thelma Jones, Marilyn Linsey, and Stephanye Ware, and my children, each of whom in her or his own way has encouraged me to persevere. I thank Sharienne, my daughter, for reminding me that I was never too old to begin this endeavor, and Errol and Michael, my two sons, for continuing to encourage me during the process.

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## Chapter 1: Statement of Problem

In the 30 years since the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education)<sup>1</sup> education reformers have created a virtual maelstrom of rhetoric and political debate, media coverage, and financial support in the name of school reform. Focused on African American and minority students, these reform initiatives have attempted to ameliorate “inequities in education that resulted from socioeconomic disadvantage, discrimination, and language background” (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2009, p. 82). Beginning with the Bush Administration’s proposed America 2000 Excellence in Education Bill through President Obama’s Race to The Top program and now his 2011 Blueprint for Reform, the emphasis in education has been “rooted in top down reform strategies” (McClafferty, Torres, & Mitchell, 2000, p. 9) and focused increasingly on accountability, often couched in terms of “excellence and equity” (Gray, 2005, p. 96).

Federal architects of these highly politicized and publicized reforms have designed strategies to protect the U.S. reputation abroad, to improve its educational ranking and performance in world markets, and to advance its domestic, political, and economic interests (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Henig, Hula, Orr & Pedesdeau, 1999; Peterson & West, 2003). For example, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) documented the nation’s failure to meet the need for a competitive workforce. Likewise, President Obama’s Blueprint for Reform (U.S. Department of Education [US DOE], 2010) grows out of a concern for a perceived diminished U.S. standing compared to other industrialized countries. When scholars cite statistics such as “about 70% of U.S. jobs now require specialized skills and training

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<sup>1</sup> *A Nation at Risk* represented the initial impetus for reform of U.S. public education (Reyes, 2003).

beyond high school” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 2), their critiques of reform also derive from a desire to maintain the nation’s comparative ranking and economic productivity (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Despite these federally-led efforts to improve schools, much of the burden for their implementation is a state or local problem. Major federal reform efforts purport to engage local control and much of the reform literature speaks to local autonomy (Rorrer & Srkla, 2005). Similar to No Child Left Behind, which allowed states to determine their specific curricula, design appropriate assessments, and determine incremental benchmarks, Blueprint for Reform (US DOE, 2010) stipulates four specific reform strategies that states may adopt (p. 12).<sup>2</sup> These efforts to achieve state and local reform range from removal of the principal and some faculty members to total reorganization and school closure. Federal legislators and state politicians both support these efforts to achieve so-called local control although, in practice, a disconnect exists between the broad goals of the legislation and states self-serving implementation (Brown & Clift, 2010).

Few scholars have researched the impact of these overarching reforms. In 2004, in a meeting of 11 editors of leading educational journals concluded that “scholarly research on NCLB has been one of the most important under-researched areas in the field of education” (Valenzuela, Prieto, & Hamilton, 2007, p. 1). Subsequent to this meeting, editors of major journals agreed to bring attention to the challenges of NCLB; their

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<sup>2</sup> The 2010 Blueprint for Reform outlines four “school turnaround grants” (US DOE, p. 12): (1) the Transformation model replaces the principal and strengthens staffing, instructional program, governance and increased flexibility; (2) the Turnaround model replaces the principal and rehires no more than 50 percent of faculty; (3) the Restart Model converts or closes and reopens the school under new management under a charter or management or organization; and (4) the School Closure Model closes the school and enrolls students in other higher-performing schools.

efforts resulted in increased investigative studies. The studies examined state behaviors in the context of prescriptive reform mandates. In these studies, researchers focused on how well, and to what extent, states implemented the guidelines and what progress, if any, states had made under these mandates. However, very little research explored how states and local districts worked within federal guidelines to appropriate and or enhance their own political agendas, particularly when those agendas may or may not have aligned with the federal agenda for reform. Neither have studies explored the systemic impact of educational reform on the population that reform was designed to help – low-income children of color, specifically African American students.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this multi-layered case study is to interrogate the politics of federally mandated reform initiatives by exploring the influence of school reform on the state and local level in a predominantly African American southern school district. Using a case study approach that examines local practices of African American leaders within the context of state-implemented reform, this study poses the following research questions:

1. What school reforms were initiated in Georgia from 2000 to 2011?
2. What explanations did stakeholders provide to explain state-sponsored reform initiatives?
3. How were these state mandates implemented in a local predominantly African American school district?
4. What were the responses of local school leaders to state and district reforms?
5. How did federal, state, and local interests converge or diverge?

## **Significance**

This study is significant because it explores the socio-political context of the origins, impetus, and impact of state and local reform, as well as the implications of the implementation of state-initiated modifications, within the context of federal reform mandates. The motivation for federal reform proposed to help all children achieve through (Hanushek & Raymond, 2003) innovations such as charter schools and laws to support vouchers, school closings, and faculty removals (US DOE, 2010). However, states may also have other motives for their support of specific policies. By interrogating the confluence of federal intent with a state's and district's legislative and political response to federal initiatives, this study elevates the language of reform as articulated on the state and local levels.

Second, this work is significant because recent reforms have not significantly improved education for low-income, African American and other students of color that reforms purport to support. For example, in Georgia, the graduation rate for African Americans was reported at 61.2% as compared to 73.1% for their white counterparts (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008-2009). This statistic mirrors national graduation rates (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008-2009), and the disparity between groups has persisted since 1983 when reform was first initiated. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), the achievement gap between African American and white students across the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels persists despite all the reform efforts (p. 20). Exploring reform on the level of states, districts, and local schools leaders in one district may uncover the ways in which efforts to help all children succeed may be altered across the varied levels of reform. Inasmuch as local leaders are responsible for implementing

reform and little attention has been given to their perceptions of hindrances and challenges, this study elevates their perceptions of implementation of federal, state, and district-level reform.

### **Conceptual Orientation**

This study examines state and local reform from the perspective of key players who initiate the phenomena as well as other district actors who support policy changes. It also explores the origins of key legislation and identifies key actors engaged in and/or related to the legislation. Aligned with this focus, this study relies on a “bottom-up” conceptual framework (Sabatier, 1986). According to Sabatier (1986) a “bottom-up” framework approaches policy implementation from the perspective of response to key initiatives rather than, though not exclusively, from the perspective of how well an initiative fulfills its goals. This particular framework is appropriate because this study seeks to explore iterations of reform from the level of the state and to examine specific strategies that key actors and players use to address mandates that emanate from the top-down.

This “bottom-up” framework is particularly valuable as the literature indicates that educational reform has been rooted in “top-down” strategies, and through my research, I explore how players respond from the bottom up (Hess, 1999). The bottom-up movement is practical for understanding how local agencies and states respond to reforms that have been mandated from the top down. A “bottom-up” framework informs this study in four main ways. First, this framework allows me to focus on how key players respond to initiatives rather than evaluating the initiatives themselves. Second, because the framework I used does not begin with a governmental program but rather

with actors' perceived problems and the strategies developed, this framework frees the researcher to explore and discover “unintended consequences of governmental programs” (Sabatier, 1986, p. 34). Third, this framework allows me to investigate multiple responses to an initiative rather than focusing on the initiative alone. Fourth, because of a focus on a wide range of actors, this framework allows me to interrogate strategic actions and players “overtime” (Sabatier, 1986, p. 34).

Another equally important and informative theoretical lens is that this work is viewed from a critical race theory perspective. Because Critical Race Theory originated to explain the law's complicity in the perpetuation of racism, it serves as an appropriate tool to examine how the law in Georgia has served specific public education interests. Inasmuch as my study explores Georgia's legislative response to federal educational mandates and its impact on a predominantly African American school district, CRT is a singularly powerful lens with which to examine the intent and implications of Georgia's educational reform. Since, according to Taylor, (2009), racial inequality and discrimination in matters of education is so widespread as to be almost invisible, the use of CRT in this study exposes the “historical and institutional” hegemony embedded in Georgia's educational reform (p. 5). In this regard, a CRT lens enables the exposure of interest convergence, prevalence of racism, and the power of counter narratives to refute majoritarian narratives in education reform (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

Specifically, this work elevates the counter narratives of stakeholders in a predominantly African American school district whose opinions are not usually solicited. In this manner, I have been able to counterbalance majoritarian narratives with the



counter narratives of silenced others (Solorzana & Yosso, p. 136). Also, of historical note is the fact that CRT critiques the deeply rooted tradition of local autonomy and how it has been used to justify the maintenance of white superiority in the public school setting (Bell, p. 24). As such, CRT can be used to reveal how Georgia has used local authority as a means to “preserve superior educational opportunities and facilities for whites at the expense of blacks” (Bell, p. 24).

### **Definition of Terms**

Between 2002 and 2010, three terms recur throughout school reform literature: No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and sanctions. Inasmuch as the literature often refers to these terms as barriers, “barrier” is also included in the definition of terms. Because these terms are crucial to understanding critiques of this legislation, their definitions and context follow.

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB).** No Child Left Behind, though no longer the most recent iteration of federal school reform, was the name of the legislation that served as the federal driving force from 2002 to 2010. Beginning in the 1950s through the 1970s, as related in States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project (2009) synopsis, “the primary goal of most federal aid to education was equity—attempting to redress the inequities in education that resulted from socioeconomic disadvantage, discrimination, and language background” (p. 82). In its original form, NCLB was designed to raise the academic achievement of all students and close the achievement gap between groups of students that historically performed poorly and their better-performing peers while imposing deep undeniable changes on public education in America. The States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project (2009) also reports that in recent decades, the

emphasis on school improvement has shifted from equity to an emphasis on “closing achievement gaps” (p. 82). This shift purports to focus on elevating the effectiveness of education for all students (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2009; White-Hood, 2006).

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).** Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is determined by the following guidelines: (1) by the year 2014, all students must be performing in reading, mathematics, and science at the “proficient” level; (2) in each school each year, student “adequate yearly progress” must increase at such a rate that 100% proficiency would be met by 2014<sup>3</sup>; and (3) the annual rate of progress applies not only to the aggregate student enrollment of a school, district, or state but also to “disaggregated” groups of students according to income, race, gender, English language ability, and special education status. If any of the groups perform below expected progress rates, the entire school is considered “failing and in need of improvement to be realized through presidential sanctions” (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2009, p. 74).

**AYP sanctions.** White-Hood (2006) posits that sanctions “occur once schools fail to meet AYP,” that schools “are placed on a ‘watch list’ and must improve their performance in the next school year to avoid future consequences; those failing to meet AYP two consecutive years or more are identified as ‘in improvement’ (NCLB, 2002, 1111(b) 2)” (p. 5). White-Hood (2006) also notes that “schools with highly diverse populations or schools in states with more demanding achievement targets are more

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<sup>3</sup> “During 2005, the U.S. Department of Education expanded efforts to work with states on incremental adjustments to implementing NCLB. Increased numbers of schools were identified as failing and in need of improvement.... No changes were made in the law” (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2009, p. 80).

likely to fall short of making AYP” (p. 5). In addition, she contends that “schools that meet test score targets can still fail to make AYP if they do not meet the graduation rate, attendance, or other indicators (NCLB, 2002, 1111 (b) 2)” (White-Hood, 2006, p. 5).

**Barriers.** For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to define barriers, challenges, impediments and/or obstacles, as perceived by school leaders or found in the literature, that prohibit local school leaders from effectively implementing school reform.

**Title I Funding.** Title I funding, dating from the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was designed to improve education by directing resources for disadvantaged children. Further, it is the “centerpiece of federal aid to education” (Peterson and West, 2003, p. 25-26). States had the option to opt out of NCLB by refusing to accept Title I funding.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

Notwithstanding NCLB's initial intent of improving education for all, particularly low-income and disadvantaged students, from its inception, NCLB was the impetus for critiques on the federal level and also presented fundamental challenges on the state level.

On the federal level, these critiques reflect a broad array of issues that range from funding and curricular concerns to credentials of teachers. These critiques reflect a broad array of issues and consider issues such as underfunding, the hardship placed on states and districts in trying to acquire highly qualified teachers and the limited focus and resulting hardships of AYP targets and sanctions. On the state level, the critiques include narrowed curricula and limited assessments, threats of state sanctions and take-over accompanied by micro-managers and relaxation of teacher credentials to fulfill the highly-qualified teacher mandate. Locally, obstacles have been teacher-related, parental and personal challenges. Because Race to the Top is too new to have generated a substantial body of research, this review considers critiques on school reform on NCLB from each of these levels. For a more detailed explanation of the search process I used to locate critiques of NCLB, see Appendix A.

### **Critiques of Federal Mandates for Reform**

Though the federal program intended that 100% of the children in every school should reach proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014 (Balfanz et al., 2007; Brown & Clift, 2010; Federal Educational Policy, 2009), NCLB has occasioned critiques regarding its implementation. These critiques have been derived, in large part, from underfunding of the program, the hardship placed on states and districts in procuring

highly qualified teachers, the limited focus and the resulting hardships of AYP targets, and sanctions imposed by federal guidelines.

**Funding.** Ironically, one of the most common complaints regarding NCLB's implementation is that it has been an unfunded mandate (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gray, 2005; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; McClafferty et al., 2000; Noguera, 2003; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005). Even though the Bush administration contended that the costs of meeting NCLB's mandates were both "state and local responsibilities" (Gray, 2005, p. 96), this funding rationale proved problematic because of the implicit assumption that schools already "have adequate resources to get all students to a proficient level" and made no provisions for "large class sizes, inadequate books, and outmoded technology..." (Guisbond & Neill, 2004, p. 13)<sup>4</sup>. The effect was that reform legislation fell short of addressing school needs and was labeled another "unfunded federal mandate" (States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2009, p. 77). As a result, this legislation forced states, districts, and schools to supplement needs that occur because of consequent mandates. In fact, most education interest groups "claim that the high cost of meeting the law's demands, combined with the low level of federal aid included in the law, would create a financial crisis for state and local education agencies" (States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2009, p. 76). Exemplars of a trickle down lack of funding exhibit themselves most often in discrepancies between "city and suburban schools" (Darling-Hammond, 2010), especially in the dilapidated facilities and shortage of instructional materials in urban schools (Foote, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Theoharis, 2009). Hence, even though "NCLB has been presented as a panacea" for

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<sup>4</sup> Even though the federal government provided additional support, largely in the form of Title I funds and enforced comparability provisions, these largely ended in 1981 (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 39).

closing the academic disparities using a deficit model, it failed to account for “the much lower educational resources that low income and African American students start out with, nor does it propose to remedy the discrepancy” (Gray, 2005, p. 97). In essence, as NCLB purportedly “moves [students] toward proficiency in basic-skills development,” in its implementation and underfunding, “it shirks at the notion of educational excellence for all children” (Gray, 2005, p. 95), particularly African American children and other children of color.

**Mandate for highly-qualified teachers on federal level.** Researchers lament that nationally children with the lowest socio-economic backgrounds are assigned teachers with the least credentials (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Payne, 2010). Further, Darling-Hammond (2010) reports that minority schools and low-income schools are “disproportionately staffed by inexperienced and unprepared teachers hired on emergency credentials” (p. 41) rather than more experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Foote, 2005; Payne 2010). Illustrative of this dearth of qualified teachers, Payne (2010) continues that in high poverty, high-minority middle schools, “7 out of 10 classes are taught by someone who doesn’t even have a minor in a related field” (p. 71). Darling-Hammond (2000) adds that nationally, “minority and low-income students in urban settings are most likely to experience inadequately prepared, inexperienced, and ill-qualified teachers because funding inequities, distributions of local power, labor market conditions, and dysfunctional hiring practices conspire to produce teacher shortages” (p. 272). Moreover, in the age of technological domination, these incoming teachers are less likely to have the most “up-to-date teaching methods” (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 273).

**AYP targets and sanctions.** Using a top-down implementation-driven assessment, researchers who have critiqued NCLB focus on sanctions that accrue when mandated and targeted demands turn out to be unattainable. With this realization, school officials and the public face the contradiction between explicit and very harsh policies and a patchwork of policies that have been compromised in inconsistent and unpredictable patterns (Foote, 2005; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Sunderman & Orfield, 2007). AYP targets are particularly problematic and offer additional complications (Brown & Clift, 2010) because they represent an “average yearly increase proposed by the Bush White House” (Gray, 2005, p. 99), commonly referred to as moving targets (Balfanz et al., 2007; Brown & Clift, 2010) that are increasingly difficult to achieve (Gray, 2005; Kim & Sunderman, 2005). Even though schools may achieve the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) one year, this moving target forces schools to strive to make the next set of benchmarks (Brown & Clift, 2010; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Shirley, 2009; Theoharis, 2009; White-Hood, 2006).

At the core of AYP sanctions resides an accountability system based on punishment rather than reward. In this light, Stringfield and Yakimowski-Srebnick (2005) further suggested:

Assessment programs can have equally documentable negative effects, such as punishing schools for small variations in year-to-year test scores. Furthermore, a mandated assessment/accountability program lacking provision of substantial, additional ongoing investment in human capital is unlikely to produce documented positive effects on student achievement (p. 67).

Hence, sanctions for failing to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) pose another perplexing dilemma. Given that schools with more diverse populations are far more likely to experience less success on standardized accountability exams (Kim & Sunderman, 2005) and conversely are more likely to experience sanctions that are imbedded within the legislation, at some point,

Almost all schools will fail to meet AYP targets within a few years. If proficient achievement is set at a high level, as it is now in many states, then no school that does not have highly selective admissions standards will be able to meet the goal of 100% proficient or above in 2014. (Gray, 2005, p. 99)

Guisbond and Neill (2004) concur that at “NCLB’s core is a link between standardized testing and sanctions through the rigid and unrealistic ‘adequate yearly progress’ (AYP) formula” (p. 12). Further, if any of the groups perform below expected progress rates, the entire school is considered “failing and in need of improvement to be realized through presidential sanctions” (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2009, p. 73).

Once schools have been deemed as failing, Stringfield and Yakimowski-Shrebnick (2005) report that equally as challenging were threats of schools deemed in need of corrective action as a result of sanctioning (p. 66). Such a status would allow the state’s department of education to completely disband the school board and central administration and begin anew. Hence, whether the reform resided “at either the school or district level,” sanctions that mandated strategies that have previously failed suggest their inability to achieve a “greatly increased rate of improvement” [and that] “NCLB has no stated classification for stay the course as systemic improvement continues producing positive effects” (p. 66).



Contrary to intent, NCLB's sanctions divert funds from schools and cause them to be labeled as failing despite the fact that only one or two groups may cause the school to fail to achieve AYP (Brown & Clift, 2010; Daly & Finnigan, 2011; Guismond & Neill, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Stringfield, & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2006; Theoharis, 2009; Whitehood, 2006). Further, Daly and Finnigan (2011) suggest that districts that educate African Americans and other traditionally underserved populations are frequently disproportionately impacted by these sanctions and forced to siphon off already inadequate resources. Additionally, Guismond and Neill (2004) maintain that sanctions are impediments to reform and that "NCLB also harms rather than helps schools..." in that "sanctions intended to force school improvement eventually divert funds away from efforts to help all children succeed..." (p. 14). Hence, as Brown and Clift (2010) suggest, NCLB reinforces "negative stereotypes rather than succeeding in closing [a] testing gap" (p. 785).

An additional criticism of NCLB's systemic sanctions occurs when schools fail to meet NCLB standards but make incremental improvement (Balfanz et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Theoharis, 2009; White-Hood, 2006). Gray (2005) further relates that with this type of accounting and sanctioning:

Schools that serve students, where the vast majority of students score far below the cut score in a given year, might make great improvements in student learning that show up in only a small fraction of the students scoring above the cut score the following year. Substantial increases in the percentage of students who are near the cut score or who are performing better than their peers the previous year, but still considerably below the cut

score, go unrecognized if only the increases in the percent above the cut score are credited. (pp. 99-100).

These schools, in effect, are given “no credit for increases on student achievement that occur in the broad range either below or above the cut score” (Gray, 2005, p. 99).

As a result of this failure to acknowledge incremental gains and resultant labeling of schools as failing, though not an intended consequence, movement toward privatization emerges as another outgrowth of NCLB. Concomitant with this labeling, Guismond and Neill (2004) further assert that NCLB’s ultimate sanctions result in privatization, firing, and state takeovers that “have no proven record of success” (p. 14). Gray (2005) raises an even more incisive critique of NCLB when he suggests that states come in and exacerbate this failure to move towards other measures. In other words, the more schools are deemed as failing, the more powerful the urgency to move to alternatives that may involve “private, not-for-profit schools and home and charter schools” (Guismond & Neill, 2004, p. 14).

In summary, assessments of current education reform derive from the “top-down” and focus on how well institutions have implemented federal reform. When discussing and analyzing challenges to implementation of federal reform, much of the literature originates “from the perspective of ... decision-makers”, focuses on the merits of implementation, and tends “to neglect strategic” actions of other key actors, officials, and from other policy subsystems” (Sabatier, 1986, p. 30). Whether these conversations elevate lack of funding, mandates for highly-qualified teachers, the inherent unattainability of AYP goals with their concomitant sanctions, or the legislation’s failure to recognize incremental improvement, the research and literature fail on this level to

engage questions of how states work within given federal mandates to achieve reform, or their motives for their pathways to reform.

### **Critiques of State-Related Implementation of Reform**

In attempts to comply with federally mandated reform, states resort to strategies that include relaxing standards for hiring and narrowing curricula and subjects to be tested. More recently, states have been critiqued for their attempts to deprive already underfunded schools of valuable resources. Other challenges that this legislation occasions on the state level trickle down to the district level range from shifting and ambiguous political goals to problems with supplying a cadre of highly qualified teachers. Even though studies regarding school reform have discussed in detail the deleterious effects of NCLB, others have elevated the resulting privatization (Payne, 2004; Watkins, 2004; Cross, 2010; Fabricant & Fine, 2012). These researchers discuss the increasing role that state governments play in the reform movement; however, none provide a clear delineation of the steps involved in this process—that of undermining public schools. Interestingly, Kohn (2004) provides a critique of how legislators with other motives could use NCLB as a subterfuge. Even though Kohn (2004) addresses how states' educational policies undergirded by rhetoric of “educational excellence” and supported by massive public school failure under NCLB undermine public education, he does not unearth the process by which an entire state school system is influenced by an alternative system.

**Mandate for highly-qualified teachers.** If funding presents a formidable obstacle for school leaders, equally as daunting is the challenge imposed on them by state interference and relaxation of standards to comply with NCLB mandates of hiring highly

qualified teachers to work in their schools. Admittedly, procuring competent and highly qualified teachers is the purview of individual districts and local school leaders.

Nevertheless, when qualified teachers are unavailable, states often resort to “lowering or waiving credentialing standards just to fill classrooms in high-minority, low-income schools” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 41).

When states and districts relax qualifications as well as advocate alternative certification for teachers in efforts to procure teachers, they find themselves contending with incompetent teachers (Farmer-Hinton, 2002). When qualifications are relaxed, researchers find that the training teachers received from their teacher preparation programs renders them unable to cope with the exigencies of teaching low-income, minority students (Darling-Hammond, 2010, 2000; Foote, 2005; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005). For example, Darling-Hammond (2010) reports that with students in North Carolina their achievement was higher under the following circumstances:

If they were taught by a teacher who was certified in his or her teaching field, fully prepared upon entry, had higher scores on the teaching licensing tests, graduated from a competitive college, had taught for more than 2 years, and was national board certified. (p. 43)

This conclusion reiterates one difficulty of implementation—that is, how states procure teachers and the degree to which state willingness to relax standards inhibits successful reform efforts. As with other evaluations, the literature continues to focus on difficulties and challenges regarding implementation rather than the means by which local agencies respond to or create their own pathways to comply with reform directives. In short,

assessment of implementation is the emphasis of these inquiries rather than actions that may have impeded implementation.

**Curricular-related critiques.** Though not critiqued as stringently as inadequate funding and teacher competency have been, two other potential problems arise from prevailing analyses of NCLB's top-down implementation that significantly impact state curricula and its subsequent implementation on the local level. According to the literature, states determine how AYP standards should be measured and met. Reliance on these assessments often forces teachers and administrators to focus instruction on very narrowly constructed instruments. Further, in efforts to control how fast AYP benchmarks approach 100%, states choose to define proficiency benchmarks. When benchmark proficiency levels are low, more schools achieve AYP, but at low standards. When benchmarks are high, fewer schools achieve AYP, but standards are significantly higher (Brown & Clift, 2010).

Another component of the "top-down" assessment of NCLB is an investigation of the import of reform in curricula and assessments. As researchers assess problems associated with procuring highly qualified teachers, they also assert problems with curricula. With NCLB, researchers (Brown & Clift, 2010; Balfanz et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2010; Farmer-Hinton, 2002; Foote, 2005; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Sreblick, 2005) emphasize that states responsible for its implementation also determine how AYP should be measured, what should be measured, and at what pace incremental benchmarks should change. From this perspective, one of the most prevalent complaints about NCLB is that it has forced districts to design narrowly and rigorously limited assessments to measure academic achievement

(Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Lee, 2008; Mathis, 2003; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005). In any case, NCLB legislation had, in effect, led states to having “reverted to multiple-choice tests, reduced curricula to fit the narrow focus of tests, lowered standards for writing by focusing on drill, recall, and recitation as opposed to more rigorous strategies” and use of technology (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 71). Notwithstanding these critiques, another assessment of states’ compliance with NCLB resulted in the weak alignment of curricula to the standardized tests (Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Lee, 2008; Marshall, 2003; Rorrer & Skrla, 2005). Missing in the literature is the extent to which states, local districts, and schools address these concerns.

Further, according to Guisbond and Neill (2004) educators confirm through surveys “that the model [for NCLB] promotes teaching to the test and narrowed curricula” (p. 14) particularly in schools that support African American, low-income, and other minority populations. Concomitant with the relaxation of standards, another problem that emerges is the fact that standards for states and levels of proficiency are necessarily different and unequal (Balfanz et al., 2007; Lee, 2008). Brown and Clift (2010) also purport that because all accountability measures of NCLB are tied to individual students, teachers ultimately differentiate between those students deemed salvageable and those for whom there is little hope of success. Hence, marginal students receive very little meaningful attention and focus is placed on “bubble students,” those for whom remediation is most likely to shift students to proficiency (p. 779). Supporting this assertion, Brown and Clift (2010) report that they witnessed “shifts in the curriculum towards tested areas and in choices regarding which students receive teacher’s attention” (p. 781).

In addition to narrowing curricula, limiting the scope of assessments, and focusing on bubble students<sup>5</sup>, the literature suggests that to comply with NCLB, states, districts, and local leaders making curricular changes to address NCLB generated challenges. For example, in many cases, districts inadvertently stymie progress through (1) shifting and unfocused organizational goals, (2) layered academic assistance and (3) centralized prescriptive curricula in the forms of district calendars and pacing (Brown & Clift, 2010, p. 782). What is unclear in the studies is the specific degree and methods that local actors employ in school reform. Moreover, in the past, the urgency of achieving AYP forced states to include layers of academic assistance with the intent of supporting, coaching, or guiding local school leaders.

Regarding top-down reform implementation, the literature specifically refers to shifting district level organizational goals based on “educational fashion, fancy, funding, and politics” (Tucker & Coddling, 2002, p. 257). These district challenges are often caused by persons who engage in frenetic activity to oversee a school’s reform efforts. Another district level challenge resides in the interference of what White-Hood (2006) calls “bureaucratic, micromanagers” (p. 7). These state assigned persons or supervisors whose responsibility it is to oversee, monitor, or make recommendations regarding a school’s progress or lack thereof, frequently interfere with schools’ ability to enforce reform and often further encumber and complicate an already beleaguered delivery system. Daly and Finnigan (2011) suggest that district interference may stymie progress by marginalizing local administrators and by keeping them on the periphery of the decision-making and information-networking process.

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<sup>5</sup> Brown and Clift (2010) use Booher-Jennings’s (2005) definition of bubble students as “those students on the cusp of scoring at the proficient level” and those “who provide the most payoff for the least effort in a single cutoff incentive system such as NCLB” (p. 783).

Equally as detrimental to reform as other state-related measures, Ravitch (2012) suggests that under the guise of a politicized motivation to improve education, Global Educational Reform (GERM), “those at the top of the education system, the elected officials, and leaders who make the rules, create the budgets, and allocate resources, are never accountable for the consequences of their decisions” (Ravitch, 2012). She does not explicate how these budgets are derived or how resources are allocated. Along with this lack of accountability for reform measures, Watkins (2004) insists that capitalism has now begun to dominate educational reform in the form of competition, “consumerism and privilege, and ethnic antagonism” (p. 9). Lipman (2004) contends that the ultimate motivation for a monetized emphasis on reform is intentional, rather than unintentional as much of the literature suggests. Rather, she contends that more recent efforts toward reform, all under the guise of No Child Left Behind have as their impetus, the destruction of existing institutions and the creation of new structures. These studies, however, do not reveal how this process occurs or the overall impact of this paradigm shift on schools and school systems.

Even though studies regarding school reform have discussed in detail the deleterious effects of NCLB, others have elevated the privatization (Payne, 2004; Watkins, 2004; Cross, 2010; Fabricant & Fine, 2012). These researchers discuss the increasing role that state governments play in the reform movement; however, none provide a clear delineation of the steps involved in this process—that of undermining public schools. Interestingly, Kohn (2004) provides a critique of how legislators with other motives could use NCLB as a subterfuge. Even though Kohn (2004) addresses how states’ educational policies undergirded by rhetoric of “educational excellence” and



supported by massive public school failure under NCLB, he does not unearth the process by which an entire state school system is undermined, subverted, and replaced by an alternative system.

In summary, the literature suggests that reform on the state level is crippled by several challenges, including attempts by states to comply with the federal mandate of a highly-qualified teacher in every classroom, a dictate that in many cases is prohibitive because of the relaxation of requirements to give the appearance of compliance.

Concomitant with AYP threats and sanctions shifting goals, narrowed curricula and limited assessments have also accompanied state reform. On the surface, research reveals that states and local districts in efforts to reach AYP targets often shift goals and targets and reduce already stretched resources, particularly in African American school communities. From a top-down belvedere, states in their efforts to comply with escalating federal targets often have resorted to narrowly scripted curricula and assessments designed to achieve minimal educational goals rather than broader goals. Even though literature documenting states' failure to achieve federal reform goals abounds, researchers have viewed state-related implementation in light of their implementation inadequacies. Therefore, overt reform efforts critiqued from a top-down vantage point may obscure actions by state and local actors designed to achieve their own ends (Sabatier, 1993). Without an understanding of machinations on the state level, steps that local leaders take to mitigate local obstacles may also go unnoticed.

### **Critiques of Local-Level Implementation of Reform**

Key stakeholders on the local level offer an additional subsystem from which to investigate reform. Even though local school leaders form a major group of key players

who implement and may re-shape reform on the ground level (Rorrer & Srkla, 2005), within their sphere of influence exists a subgroup of “street level bureaucrats” composed of reluctant teachers, self-serving parents, and poorly prepared principals who may interfere with reform (Sabatier, 1986). The literature is explicit regarding the impact of teachers on reform efforts (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2010; Foote, 2005; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Sreblick, 2005; Tucker & Coddling, 2002). Specifically, analysis of challenges on the local level includes actions of teachers, as key players, who often exhibit low expectations and negative perceptions of their students, feel pressured to teach to the test, and resist perceived threats to their personal autonomy in the classroom. Notwithstanding concerns regarding teachers, parental and personal pressures that local leaders experience also exude themselves on the local level.

**Teacher attitudes regarding reform.** Teachers become key players in reform on many levels. First, school leaders must find teachers willing to teach in inner-city schools. For principals who serve low-income African American and other minority students in the absence of the most competent teachers, they must accept those with the least training and minimal experience (Guisbond & Neill, 2004). The impact of ill-prepared teachers can prove an insurmountable barrier (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Even when adequately prepared, whether wittingly or unwittingly, teachers can divert reform through pervasive pessimism and negativism combined with low expectations and a sense of futility and burnout as they “regard themselves as hard-working martyrs in a hopeless cause” (Marshall, 2003, p. 108; Noguera, 2003). Further complicating the negativism, Marshall (2003) reports that in this climate, a school leader is continually off guard, loses confidence in his ability to lead, fails to set limits on “outrageous and

insubordinate behavior” (p. 109), fails to exercise his prerogatives as a principal and eventually loses face with faculty members. In addition to pessimism, low expectations, and a sense of futility, school leaders also experience the barrier of teachers who were accustomed to having their demands met – called maintaining status quo in the form of a “staff that had ‘grown comfortable with weak and complacent leadership’” (Theoharis, 2009, p. 91).

**Pressures to teach to the test.** Equally as significant as procuring qualified teachers is how teachers respond when forced to teach what they consider “watered-down” curricula under the pressure from states and local districts. To this end, Gray (2005) asserts that these pressures cause teachers to be concerned about whether to be considered successful they must “teach to the test” (Gray, 2005, p. 97; Noguera, 2003). Brown and Clift (2010) report that one school leader encourages teachers to shift from more open-ended teaching to an emphasis on “how to” strategies. In addition, many teachers refuse to teach narrowed curricula notwithstanding that their refusal to teach prescribed, standards-driven curricula poses problems and almost insures that students will not pass the test. Among other exigencies of NCLB is the anxiety that teachers experience when student performance on tests is linked to teachers’ ability, skill, and effectiveness. Further, pressures to teach to the test are complicated more by the confluence of two factors: (1) the urgency to move students from proficiency to an advanced level and (2) the desire to improve scores for children at the basic level or below level (Gray, 2005; Noguera, 2003). The ways school leaders respond to the challenges teachers face is not reported.

**Teacher resistance to reform.** After hiring teachers, principals must also contend with staff whose goal was teacher-centered, not student-centered and who assume postures of negative, self-centered autonomy that often forestalls school wide projects and assumes the form of resistance and stagnation (Theoharis, 2009; Tucker & Coddling, 2002). Insightfully, one principal commented that “talented but often cussedly independent teachers working in isolation from their colleagues and external standards” are often seen as a barrier to reform (Marshall, 2003, p. 105). Another form of resistance is teachers who sometime refuse to employ standards complaining that they want to preserve their “academic freedom” (Marshall, 2003, p. 107). Along this same line, another challenge for principals is the weak alignment of curricula to the standardized tests (Marshall, 2003). Hence, even when principals can overcome teacher negativism, they must still surmount isolation and curricular skepticism. The missing link, however, exists in how local leaders work within federal, state, and sometimes district dictates to implement their visions for reform.

**Parental barriers to reform.** When considering key players on the “street level” (Sabatier, 1986), parents also exercise agency in the implementation of reform. Often viewed as irritants by local educational leaders, parents resist reform when they expect that their children’s needs will not take precedence over the needs of the collective, when they expect too little from the school, or when they leverage their political strength (Brown & Clift, 2010; Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Theoharis, 2009). According to Theoharis (2009), these parental expectations are characterized as “insular or privileged” (p. 92) and assume the form of “entitlement and privilege” (p. 94) by insisting that their children’s education takes first place. When their demands are not

met, these parents often threaten consequences (Theoharis, 2009, p. 95). Theoharis also asserts that this type of “my child first” attitude is frequently displayed by white parents. Harris describes this attitude as a “white privilege” paradigm (Harris, 1995). Further, Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) report that this “individualistic approach” that targets “their efforts mostly toward their own children” and desire to express their own interests, “can be harmful and alienating to working-class and poor children and their families” (p. 975) thereby creating a lack of solidarity with which school leaders must contend. Another problem that surfaces for administrators of previously African American neighborhoods is that middle and upper class citizens either have no school-aged children or enroll their children in private school.

**Personal consequences of reform.** Finally, given the numerous reported challenges that school leaders must overcome to implement reform and occasion success for their students, the stress of contending with the various impediments extracts a personal toll. Considering the nature of the job, in the few cases when school leaders are consulted, they report that too much time is absorbed in the managerial tasks of running a school and societal problems that make it difficult to focus on instruction. In addition, employing experienced teachers becomes a challenge. Likewise, these leaders report pressures from testing and accountability as well as dissatisfaction with the job (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2010; Foote, 2005; Gray, 2005; Tucker & Coddling, 2002). Regarding job-related stress, Tucker and Coddling (2002) and Theoharis (2009) report that many principals acknowledge discouragement, depression, and exhaustion that may be easily attributed to long hours, and marital struggles.

Even when local leaders address negative perceptions and low expectations of teachers and parental pressures, other factors that preclude a leader's effectiveness include the need to expand the principal's capacity to implement necessary change for improvement (Noguera, 2003). Further, an investment in "long-term development of a new generation of urban educational leaders with an unprecedented level of skills" (Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005, p. 68) is also critical. This strategy would produce highly trained principals who "understand how to create effective, equitable learning" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 322) environments for their students. Expanding principals' capacity for leadership, then, becomes a district and state level challenge. Notwithstanding those obstacles, "principals saw their principal preparation programs as being barriers to advancing social justice" (Theoharis, 2009, p. 107). School leaders in Theoharis' study also concede that "race and equity were never addressed directly in my administrative training" (p. 107); for the most part programs dealt with management, effective leadership and administrator skills (Theoharis, 2009, p.107). In a climate where these building-level leaders in an urban area are likely to work with minority and low income students, principal training or lack thereof becomes a challenge. Among other concerns, in general, research suggests that "teacher and principal turnover, high student mobility, community rivalries, budget pressures" limited resources (White-Hood, 2006, p. 7), poor preparation and demanding parents exact a personal toll.

In general, researchers have tended to review obstacles to effective reform with a focus on how well improvements have been implemented. These researchers have not reviewed obstacles from the local stakeholder's perspective, nor have they solicited school leaders' voices as to how they use their agency to circumvent obstacles that

emanate from outside their purview. In effect, their voices are silent. Likewise, the literature does not consider the ways principals respond to districts' efforts to implement reform. This study seeks to determine the obstacles from local school leaders' perspectives as well as how they use their own agency to overcome impediments and effect change in their schools.

### **Summary**

Over the course of its introduction to schools and its subsequent implementation, researchers have critiqued NCLB for a plethora of shortcomings including underfunding, sanctions, mandates regarding teacher qualifications, negative impact on school image, narrowing of curriculum and, most detrimental, its use as a tool to destroy public school education. Researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2010; Foote, 2005; Guisbond & Neill, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Theoharris, 2009; White-Hood, 2006) lament underfunding, but they typically lay the blame at the feet of the federal legislation, NCLB. They fail to discuss the ways that state legislators led by governors can exacerbate already beleaguered schools through their actions. Additionally, they fail to discuss the ways that schools formerly deemed "In Need of Improvement" were subject to state monitors, a district liaison, supervisors from their direct district report, or area assistant superintendents. As early as 2004, researchers (Meier & Wood, 2004; Sunderman, Kim & Orfield, 2005; Rorrer & Sklra, 2005; Hess & Petrilli, 2006) began to question whether the real intent behind NCLB was to actually destroy public schools. Admittedly, some researchers (Cross, 2010; Watkins, 2004; Kohn, 2004) have predicted state initiated emergence and imminence of privatization; however, other studies have not examined the ways a state's implementation of reform may have led to dismantling public schools.

Through this literature review, we can see that researchers have used a top-down approach to assess the implementation of legislated reform on the federal, state, and local levels. For example, on the federal level, addressing issues of underfunding, achieving AYP targets, avoiding and addressing sanctions, and procuring highly qualified teachers have dominated. Other challenges to reform arise from overt state mandates such as having highly qualified teachers in every classroom, narrowing curricula, shifting goals, and interfering district micro managers. Similarly, reform-related challenges emerge on the local level in the form of resistant teachers, insistent parents, poor principal preparation programs as well as exacting personal demands on school leaders. These critiques derive from a top-down valuation of school reform.

Although school reform literature is replete with top-down assessments, very little literature addresses the actions, motivations, or intentionality of actors on the state and district level that may serve as impediments to reform on the local level. Ironically, little research focuses specifically on covert barriers to school improvement as contrived and implemented by key players on the state level or as perceived and experienced by school leaders on the local level. Nor does the research address how leaders on the local level contend with impediments that may arise from the actions of key players on the ground level.

This study fills a gap by providing a chronological and thematic description of Georgia's implementation of reform. Although the literature is clear about the challenges related to NCLB, less clarity exists about how key players have shaped federal and state reform to their own ends. Even less explored are the ways in which educators



respond to and reflect on how reform mandates hamper their attempts to enhance African American student achievement.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The state of Georgia served as a bounded case study to explore the state and local initiatives in response to federal mandates and the perspectives of stakeholders regarding the various reforms. Using a case study approach that examines local practices of African American leaders within the context of state-implemented reform, the following research questions guide this study:

1. What school reforms were initiated in Georgia from 2000 to 2011?
2. What explanations did stakeholders provide to explain state-sponsored reform initiatives?
3. How were these state mandates implemented in a local predominantly African American school district?
4. What were the responses of local school leaders to state and district reforms?
5. How did federal, state, and local interests converge or diverge?

In as much as the literature suggests that low income, urban, and suburban students of color receive the least benefits from recent national reforms (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2010; Noguera, 2003; Sunderman & Orfield, 2007), I conducted my study in one of the largest and most diverse districts in the state. Conquest<sup>6</sup> school district serves a student population of 95,481, 71% of which are African American children, 12% Hispanic, 11% white, 5% Asian, and 2% mixed (2010 – 2011 Report Card All Schools Conquest County). In 2010, 67.5% or 69,087 students received free or reduced price meals (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). Academically, the school system did not meet adequate yearly progress for the 2010 school year. The demographics of this school

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<sup>6</sup> Conquest is the pseudonym for the district where the case study will take place.

system serve as a microcosm for other predominantly African American systems in the United States and fit the profile of those systems and students most underserved by recent federal mandates. As a result, this district is appropriate for this case study.

The case study is an appropriate methodology because, as reported by Lancy (1993), this study sought to infer “direct policy implications” (p. 140) that may derive from the research. Lancy (1993) continues that “the case study used alone or as part of large-scale quantitative study, is the method of choice for studying interventions or innovation” (p. 140). In as much as this study’s focus is the implementation of reform measures, a case study is an appropriate methodological framework. By examining contemporary events, case studies can contribute “uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena” (Yin, 1989, p. 14). They are also appropriate to explain “causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies,” to “describe the real-life context in which an intervention has occurred,” and to “explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes” (Yin, 1989, p. 25). Further, Creswell (2003) suggests that case studies explore “in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process”... and “are bounded by time and activity” (p. 15).

To explore Georgia’s response to federally mandated reform from 2000–2010 and to answer my research questions using a bottom-up framework, this study requires an examination of various sources including documents and interviews. Additionally, because the time frame for the investigation is recent, specific data sources included the following: (1) local and national newspapers, (2) selected government documents such as information from the Georgia legislative website, government press releases, and (3)

school-related documents obtained from each school's website in addition to the Georgia Department of Education's website (Cullen, 2009). Other data sources included interviews with elite and key informants. Following is a description of the data collection and data analysis processes for each of the informational sources.

### **Data Collection**

Several types of data were utilized in this study. Each is discussed below.

Documents consisted of three types: newspaper articles, state legislative bills, and school-related information. Interviews consisted of two types: elite and key informants. The following is an overview of the methodology for collecting data from these sources.

**Documents.** Local and national newspapers served as primary sources and initially were used to create a story of school reform as it has been implemented in Georgia, specifically in a large urban/suburban district. Using the search terms, "Georgia Educational Reform" ranging from 2000–2010, I found 161 articles. Narrowing the search focusing on "Georgia Educational Reform" and "No Child Left Behind" rendered 131 news articles. I selected news articles that included the gamut of topics from the state's reform efforts to protest over reform to vouchers for students in failing schools. Initially, I selected and organized news articles gleaned from 2000-2010 by year. Next, I expanded the search to include articles from 2011. My rationale for including 2011 was that at the end of each governor's term, newspapers print summaries of the governor's tenure. In the case of exiting Roy Barnes in 2002, newspapers printed in early 2003 reviewed Barnes tenure and made projections regarding Perdue's tenure.

Legislative bills and other documents served as primary data sources.

To verify and retrieve the titles and contents of educationally-related legislative bills referenced in newspapers, I used the Georgia General Assembly website, referencing Title 20, Education, from 2000 to 2010.

**Methodology for research on legislation.** To research legislative documents, I accessed [www.legis.ga.gov](http://www.legis.ga.gov) under Title 20, education. Using the drop-down menu, I began in the legislative year 2000-2001 using “all bills” including House Bills (HB), House Resolutions (HR), Senate Bills (SB), and Senate Resolutions (SR) to discover all enacted legislation related to education. These years represent the tenure of Governor Roy Barnes from 2000 through 2002 and Governor Sonny Perdue who experienced two tenures from 2002 through 2010. After researching the bills, I summarized the content of the bills and created a master list in chronological order of the bills. I next identified specific categories into which bills and acts fell. Using interviews and articles as well as the content of the bills and acts, I was able to create from the master list a schema of education legislation in the Georgia Assembly from 2000-2010. I further divided the legislation into nine broad categories that consisted of: 1) general legislation; 2) flexibility legislation; 3) charter school legislation; 4) alternative schooling legislation; 4) student financial legislation; 5) general financial legislation; 6) tax exemptions for general population; 7) curricula legislation; 8) teacher-related legislation; 9) other miscellaneous legislation as represented in Appendix B.

In this manner, I examined bills that were referenced in newspaper articles as well as found other bills related to education that were not mentioned in the news articles. I also analyzed bills that had been passed as well as other bills that were introduced to either the House or Senate. This differentiation allowed me to distinguish between

reforms represented by bills that had been passed and trends in reform represented by bills that were offered to the legislature for consideration but were not passed.

As additional information, I accessed other school-related documents such as a school's most current Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIP) found on schools' websites and the schools' report card found on the website for the school system. According to Creswell (2003), this type of document enables a researcher to obtain and corroborate information contained in the interviews and to create a context to inform the type of environment in which the key informants serve.

**Interviews.** A key component of the interview process was the solicitation of the unique perspectives from elite and key informants through deliberative reflective protocols. Through these reflections (Gitlin & Price, 1992; Schon, 1983) local school leaders had the opportunity to reflect on hindrances to school reform while at the same time providing a voice to explain how they make decisions about their schools. This idea of voice is critical because it allows leaders to reflect publicly on local practices and possibly identify how to either eliminate or mitigate hindrances to school reform. It also provides an opportunity for local school leaders to voice in-depth reflections or new ideas that may or may not be visible in their practices (Rorrer & Skrla, 2005). In the case of local school leaders, their "reflective conversations" (Schon, 1983, p. 103) about barriers shift the paradigm from what outsiders intend to the leaders' own practices.

To this end, elite informants in this study are persons who can inform the research across federal, state, and local levels because of the unique positions that they either now hold or have held in the recent past. Selected based on their strategic positions in organizations, their expertise, and their singular knowledge regarding aspects of reform

in Georgia (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the elite informants for this study consisted of a former Governor of the state, a legal counselor for charter schools, a former head of a teacher advocacy organization, a former chief finance officer, a president of a teacher advocacy organization, and a liaison between a district and the state for implementation of reform initiatives as well as a former government relations advocate.

The Governor served the state from 1998 to 2000 and laid the foundation for Georgia's accountability system. The former finance officer served the Conquest district for over 15 years. His credentials included a Bachelor of Arts and Master's degrees in finance. He also provided information regarding budgetary cuts that affected implementation of state reform on the local level. The former state lobbyist served as chief state educational lobbyist for four years. Interestingly, his background included four years as a fourth grade teacher. Similar to the lobbyist, the president of an educator's advocacy organization was also a former elementary school educator. As a charter school advocate and legal representative, this elite informant provided invaluable information regarding perceived differences in charter schools. The district liaison served as a former principal and assistant principal. All six elite informants shared important and unique insights and perspectives as to the challenges of state initiatives (Yin, 1989).

Access to some elite informants was gained on the basis of my prior working experience with them and my knowledge of their functions within the district being studied. Access to other elite informants was gained through recommendations and introductions from "community nominations" (Foster, 1997, p. xx). I interviewed each elite informant once.

To interrogate implementation of federal mandates on the local level, I interviewed a “purposeful sample” (Berg, 2007; Galvan, 2006; Maxwell, 1992; Patton, 2002, p. 230) of six African American principals who lead predominantly African American schools in the local district. Inasmuch as this study interrogates implantation of state reform in a local and predominantly African American school district, my most important criteria for principal selection was that they serve middle and high schools with predominantly African American student populations and that they have at least three years of experience in the principalship. Because of the demographics of the district under observation, the majority of African American schools operate on the central and south sides of the county where schools are labeled Title I based on their student population receiving free and reduced lunches. I stipulated three or more years’ experience because I believed that long-term principals offer more insight regarding reform over time. I later modified my criteria to include principals with at least one year’s experience based on my belief that principals with less longevity in leadership might offer slightly differing perspectives from those who experienced longer leadership tenures. As expected, my interviews with these key informants yielded “information-rich” data that provided “insights and in-depth understandings” regarding implementation of reform on the local level (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Unlike elite informants, these key informants were local stakeholders with whom I have experienced access over time, and because they have worked closely with the local school district, many of the key informants offered unique perspectives as to the inner workings of the local educational agencies. Specifically, in their roles, they experience, negotiate, interpret, and enact first-hand policies that emanate from state and federal



levels and as such are what Berg (2007) refers to as a “purposive or judgmental sample” because of their “special knowledge or expertise” representative of their group or population (p. 44).

**Collection procedure.** Prior to interviews with elite and key informants, I conducted, taped, and transcribed a pilot interview with a stakeholder who is not a part of the study. The purpose of the pilot interview was to identify, develop, define, and expand codes generated from documents as a start code list. For the elite and key informant interviews, I used semi-structured, open-ended interview protocols. However, the two protocols differed in that each interview protocol was developed separately drawing explicitly upon each informant’s varying experiences that uniquely inform this study. Specifically, interview protocols for each elite informant was designed based on (1) the informant’s position and questions related to the position that he/she holds, (2) information gleaned from newspaper articles, and (3) and the information related to reform implementation that I expect to glean from the interview. Appendix C provides a sample protocol with an elite informant. Further, each interview with an elite informant was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

To create the interview protocol for key informants, I applied information generated from the review of literature to construct a semi-structured, open-ended, two tiered interview protocol (Merriam, 2009). I used the same interview protocol with each key informant because they serve in the same position. Use of the same protocol also allowed me to identify recurring, convergent, and divergent perspectives.

An open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol offers key informants an opportunity for reflective dialogue which then gives public voice to their ideas (Gitlin &

Price, 1992, p. 61). The use of this protocol to interview school leaders may also reveal their perceptions of the hindrances or barriers to school reform from the federal, state, and district (Patton, 2002). The first tier of the key informant interview protocol consisted of general questions related to the leaders' background and school. The second tier of the protocol related to the interviewee's experiences with federal and state school reform. The last section of the protocol related specifically to the impact that school reform has had on their agenda and on them personally. See Appendix D for example of key informant protocol. Additionally, each interview with a key informant was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using initial code lists, document summaries, transcriptions, analysis of interviews, and member checks.

**Documents.** To analyze documents, I developed a code list derived from the literature review as well as ideas and themes that emerged from an initial investigation of newspaper articles during the time period and pilot interview. After developing this initial code list (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58), I organized and surveyed articles by year. Next, I reviewed themes that recurred within years as well as themes that recurred across years in order to discern a pattern of events and key players across time.

Throughout, I used the newspaper articles to provide insights and clarification of information gleaned from the interviews and legislative documents. This process fulfilled Miles and Huberman's expectation that the varied document sources provide explanations for "conditions, interactions among actors, strategies and tactics and consequences" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57).

I organized the articles by year from 2000-2002 to reflect Governor Barnes' tenure and thematically from 2003 -2010 to represent the major bills during Governor Perdue's tenure. Just as some articles published in 2003 (the termination of Barnes' tenure) summarized and critiqued the impact of Barnes' career, articles published in 2011 after the termination of Perdue's service summarized the impact of his gubernatorial term. As a result, I deliberately reviewed articles published in 2011. This search revealed several comparisons between Barnes' and Perdue's terms as governor.

As a secondary level of analysis, after generating general patterns, I looked for "explanatory" or "inferential" codes that allow the formation of "emergent themes, configurations or explanations" or larger more generalized "constructs" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). From each school's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, I constructed a brief school profile and asked each respondent to review the profile in order to provide additional information. According to Creswell (2003), this type of document enables a researcher to obtain and corroborate information contained in the interviews and glean salient themes that were not revealed in either the interview or the interview summaries.

**Interviews.** Analysis of elite interviews occurred in five stages: 1) verbatim transcription of interviews; 2) initial coding of interviews; 3) organization of individual interview responses by research question and gross coding; 4) collation of all responses by research question; 5) 1<sup>st</sup> thematic coding; 6) tally; and 7) identification, final tally, and computation of frequency of major themes and patterns. From this tally, I was able to identify overarching and recurring themes and patterns across questions and informants. Details on each of these steps follow.

After transcribing each interview, I submitted summaries of elite and key interviews to the informants for corrections, clarification, or oversights (Patton, 2002). After receiving corrections from no elite nor key informants, I coded the interviews using the initial start codes developed from the literature and pilot interview as outlined by Rubin and Rubin (1995).

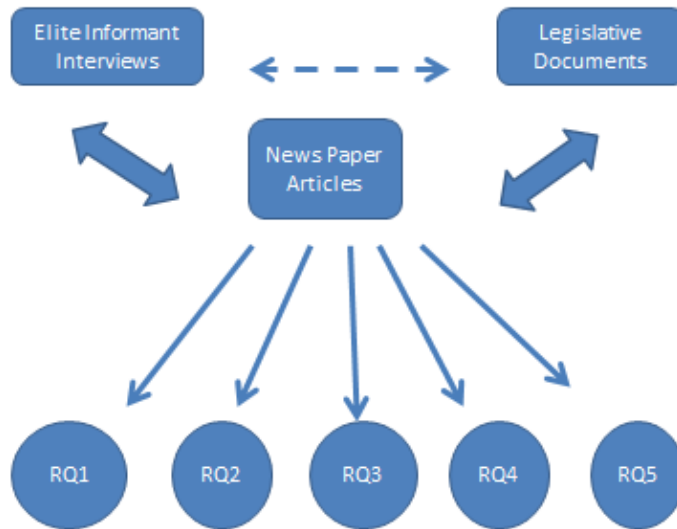
Next, I developed pattern codes to make inferences and provide explanations for “conditions, interactions among actors, strategies and tactics and consequences” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57) by labeling each coded response by research question. After labeling each response by research question, I collated all of the separate interviews into one document entitled “interview synthesis” organized first by research question then by patterns derived from the first coding. From this initial coding, I identified “explanatory” or “inferential” codes and grouped ideas thematically into major categories or “more generalized constructs” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). Next, I revised and checked my coding and groupings by recoding parts of the document and comparing my frequency tally. In this way, I checked for organization and coder drift. I found that the final tabulation from which I wrote my notes was consistent.

With the last coding, I re-checked my organization of headings and themes. For example, I originally thought that District Personnel Decisions would be a category. After reviewing all of the themes, I realized that this category would be labeled Personnel Decisions about school leaders by Administration. I checked other codes in similar ways and made adjustments as necessary.

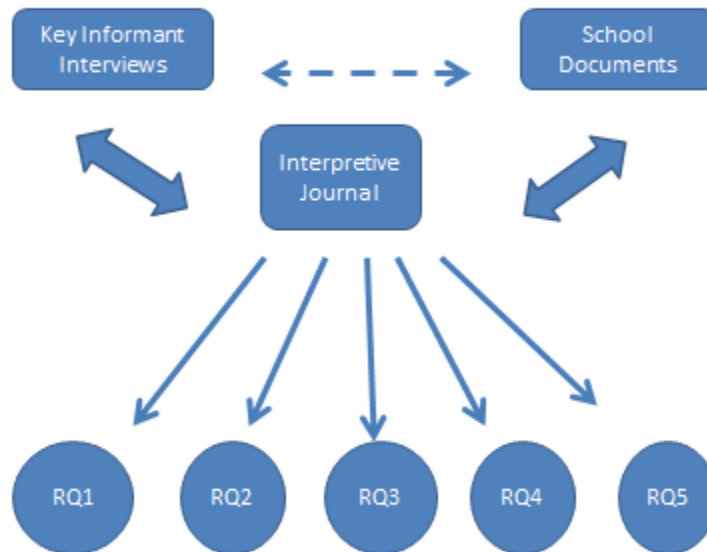
## **Reliability and Validity**

Triangulation is critical to the validity of this study. By using a combination of local and national news articles, state and school-related documents, and interviews with elite and key informants, I sought a convergence of themes that would triangulate data across people and time (Yin, 1994, p. 92). Of note, I held each source independently and, as I discovered particular ideas, I allowed each source to be its own discovery and compared it with others as the analysis continued.

Furthermore, triangulation of data sources served as an internal validity check. For example, newspaper articles and state legislative documents were used to verify, check, and triangulate information from elite interviews. Similarly, information from key informant interviews, school-related documents were used to verify and triangulate data. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the ways the data sources were triangulated to answer questions related to state level reform. Figure 2 depicts the triangulation of documents to verify local school reform.



*Figure 1: Chain of Evidence: Sources Related to State Level Education Reform*



*Figure 2: Chain of Evidence: Sources Related to Local Level School Reform*

Table 1 provides an overview of the relationship of all data sources to the research questions.

Table 1

*Data Sources and Research Questions*

<b>Type of Source</b>	<b>Research Question 1</b>	<b>Research Question 2</b>	<b>Research Question 3</b>	<b>Research Question 4</b>	<b>Research Question 5</b>
<b>Documents</b>					
<b>Newspaper</b>	✓	✓			
<b>State-legislative Documents</b>	✓	✓			
<b>School-Related</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Interviews</b>					
<b>Pilot interview</b>					
<b>Elite</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Key Informants</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In addition to attending carefully to triangulation, I also used several other measures to enhance reliability and validity. To insure and maintain internal or construct

validity (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989), I used emergent themes derived from primary sources in the form of newspaper articles, state legislative documents, school documents, interviews with elite and key informants, as well as secondary sources in the form of articles and books where available as multiple sources of evidence (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2009). To increase construct validity, I used multiple sources of evidence such as school profiles taken from each school's website in addition to information gleaned from the Georgia Department of Education's website.

To increase the reliability, I maintained a chain of evidence (Yin, 1989) and allowed key informants to review summaries of the interviews to clarify main concepts. To verify "internal consistency" I had an outsider read the report and compare conclusions with mine (Lancy, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As an additional reliability check, using the code definitions, two members re-coded selected sections of interviews to insure clarity of definitions.

### **Generalizability**

Regarding generalizability, Lancy (1993) states that with case studies, generalizability is related to the significance that the reader gleans from the work and ultimately, the reader "decides whether the findings apply or not" (p. 165). Yin (1994), however, suggests that an exploratory case study may be analytically generalizable rather than statistically generalizable and, according to Yin (1994), the study lends itself to analytical generalizability. Berg (2007) concurs that a case study should "not only fit the specific individual, group or event studied but also generally provides understanding about similar individuals, groups and events" (p. 295). In this sense, I cannot say with



specificity that the findings from this study are applicable to any other state or district during this time period.

### **Researcher Perspective**

When considering researcher perspective, Lancy (1993) suggests that “one must deal with a multiplicity of perspectives” first of which is “one’s own perspective which reflects personal training and experience...” (p. 140). As a public school educator for over 34 years, my positions as teacher, department chair, assistant principal, principal, director of curriculum, and area assistant superintendent in the Conquest district afforded me the opportunity to view how nationally mandated reforms have been translated from directives on the federal level to the state level where they are reinterpreted and disseminated. These positions provided me the opportunity to experience first-hand the myriad hindrances to school reform that can be generated from every level including federal mandates and regulations, and state laws. Although I bring a bias, I have used multiple measures to enhance interpretation of data.

### **Delimitation**

Even though NCLB has a component that addresses violence in schools, I have deliberately elected not to explore that aspect. Instead this study explores the operational and political ramifications of the law.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is that the information gleaned from primary sources may reflect the bias of the particular newspaper or magazine from which the articles are taken. Another limitation is that because the research interrogates policies and actions that are contemporary, a dearth of scholarly information is available.

Moreover, because the study only engages African American school leaders who supervise predominantly African American schools, no consideration is given to school leaders who are of other ethnicities or who lead schools in which populations are more diverse and may not experience similar barriers. Moreover, this study engages elite informants and key informants. It does not engage other community stakeholders such as parents, teachers, community leaders, or students. As a result, this study may be limited by a lack of representation of their perspectives.

#### **Chapter 4: Reforms in Georgia from 2000 to 2010**

*“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, ... we were all going direct the other way- in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. ”* (Dickens, n.d.)

Georgia’s tale of reform is best understood on the state level through the reforms initiated by two successive governors, Roy Barnes and Sonny Perdue. One could argue that the state’s approach to the federal initiatives were as different as good and bad, or spring of hope and despair of winter. Under Governor Roy Barnes’s leadership, except in the opinion of some disgruntled educators, education reform promised to be the “best of times” encased in wisdom, light, and “hopes” followed by increased student achievement for African American and Hispanic students enrolled in Georgia’s public schools. His tenure was short lived, and in the opinion of some, he tried to do too much. Conversely, under the leadership of Sonny Perdue (who experienced widespread support of Georgia’s educators), education reform in Georgia may be characterized as “the worst of times” where millions of Georgia’s public school children were left bereft of adequate educational opportunities. In contrast to Barnes’s inclusive agenda, one might conclude that Perdue ran and, subsequently, won office on measures directly oppositional to Barnes.

From 2000 to 2010, these two distinct time periods served as demarcation points for Georgia's educational reform movements. The first and most short-lived movement was marshaled by Governor Roy Barnes, and the second movement was sustained over the eight year tenure of Governor Sonny Perdue. The following is a chronological and thematic description of two approaches to educational reform in Georgia.

### **Educational Reform During the Governorship of Roy Barnes: 2000–2002**

Roy E. Barnes, a home-grown Georgian, was born in Marietta Georgia in 1948, attended South Cobb High School, and “received his first exposure to politics listening to the conversations in his family’s general store (personal interview, November 15, 2012). While simultaneously experiencing his first political lessons, he also received his first lessons about the importance of a public education. A first generation high school and college graduate, Barnes was quick to credit public education with his success. In fact in an interview, he credited a teacher with his early educational success. He described how this teacher saw potential in him and, because she did, she developed his own program, a program designed to master the classics and mine his “highest potential” (Walker, 2009).

Most important, however, these early educational experiences helped to solidify his convictions regarding the importance of public education and to frame ideas that would eventually become his reform bill. When asked, how long he had planned the bill, he remarked, “six months, but I had been thinking about the ideas for a long time” (R. Barnes, personal interview, November 15, 2012). He added proudly that his three children attended public school when he could have easily afforded private school. One holds a Ph.D., and the other is an engineer. He even proudly stated that his grandchildren, who are in the minority, attend a public school.

Following his early public school education, Barnes completed the University of Georgia's undergraduate and law program. Barnes served first as a prosecutor in the Cobb County District Attorney's Office (R. Barnes, personal interview, November 15, 2012; Thornton, 2010). In 1974, he began his political career when he was elected to the Georgia State Senate at the age of 26, becoming the youngest member to serve. He served eight years in this capacity and in 1990 made his first bid for governor running against Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young and Lt. Governor Zell Miller (Brooks, 2011). Barnes returned to the House of Representatives in 1992 where he officiated as vice-chair of the Judiciary Committee and chair of the Subcommittee on General Law. In 1998, running on a platform of education and health care reform, Barnes defeated Guy Milner, a Republican businessman (Brooks, 2011) and assumed office in January 1999.

No stranger to controversy during his tenure, Barnes successfully led the charge to change the Georgia State Flag, established Georgia's Child Advocate Office, supported the outer perimeter north of Atlanta, and fought for an overhaul of schools. Regarding the controversy surrounding the "massive education act," Barnes commented that "it was meant to be controversial" (Cumming, 2000, p. H3). He jokingly continued, "If there's not something to offend everybody in House Bill 1187, let me know, and I'll try to do something about it next year" (Cumming, 2000, p. H3). Seemingly, from the beginning of his tenure, he was focused and determined to make a difference in the Georgia's educational system even though "making teachers and administrators accountable for the performance of their students" constituted a "'hot issue" (Hendricks, 2000, p. XII6).

Barnes's reform package contained potentially contentious issues: (1) vouchers, (2) equalized funding for smaller districts, and (3) elimination of teacher tenure. However, one of the areas from which Barnes experienced some push back from Republicans centered on private school vouchers for parents with kids in "failing schools... and even the opposition was not hard-edged" Cumming & Salzer, 2000, p. H1). Ironically his package was imbued with a Republican-led agenda and included items to which Republicans agreed (Brooks, 2011). Besides elimination of teacher tenure, the most objectionable part of his reform package included steps to equalize money that districts raised above and beyond the basic education. His plan to equalize funding to poorer districts "so these districts could "provide a level of education closer to those that have the money to enhance education on their own" (Cumming & Salzer, 2000, p. H1). In this regard, Barnes's bill was scheduled to "give the 135 eligible districts state dollars for every extra mill they raise up to the 20-mill limit"(Cumming & Salzer, 2000, p. H1). Ironically, Barnes's detractors predicted a financial calamity because of the money that would be stripped from affluent districts according to the formula.

Regarding teacher tenure, Badertscher, Diamond, and Sarrio (2011) reported that the fight regarding teacher tenure had "been going on for years and goes beyond the schoolhouse" (p. A1). They continued that "as a part of a major education reform initiative, then Governor Roy Barnes persuaded lawmakers in 2000 to eliminate the fair dismissal rights law for teachers. Absorbing attacks from both The Georgia Association of Educators and the Republican state school superintendent, Linda Schrenko, Barnes faced a "double-barreled wrath" (Shipp, 2000, p. 2).

As a precursor to NCLB, and before accountability became a reform buzz word, Governor Barnes's primary legislation, his A+ Education Reform Act of 2000 evoked the state's constitutional guarantee "to provide an adequate public education for its citizens" (Cumming & Salzer, 2000, p. H.1), and sought to equalize the playing field and institutionalize a "system that gives those children additional assistance" (Cumming, 1999, p. H8). Touted as "the most sweeping reform in 15 years" (Kent, 2000, p. XJ1), Barnes's educational reform package was designed to use accountability, increased standards, and improvement of teaching to "level the playing field" for all (Cumming & Salzer, 2000, p. H1). Notwithstanding extensive dialogue around reform, the political and economic impetus for a better educated constituency, and a long tenure in state government, Barnes embarked on an educational coupe that would incorporate and expand ideas dating back to Zell Miller's P-16 initiative on July 26, 1995 (Rochford, 2007, p. 18).

Using his considerable political cache – earned over his eight-year tenure in politics-- "as one of the most powerful governors in history, King Roy," commandeered the support of a majority Democratic General Assembly to push through his A+ School Reform Package despite political opposition (Young, 2004). In fact, during this time, Barnes and his lieutenants were accused of being "too high-handed, too inaccessible, too mean, and worst of all, trying to do too much" (Shipp, 2000, p. 1) and only received one Republican vote for the package (Kent, 2000, p. XJ1). In attempting to accomplish "too much," admittedly, Barnes's A+ Reform package tackled all aspects of education including pre-K through high school, the funding allocation for the HOPE scholarship program, teacher raises, establishment of a career ladder for teachers, extension of

academic study in middle school, funding for higher education through HOPE, improved teacher quality by eliminating teacher tenure, and “more counselors in all grade levels (Salzer, 2000, p. H1). Though not implemented until 2010, Barnes also advocated End of Course Testing (EOCT) as a part of the accountability system. In addition, Barnes’s education reform portended NCLB in accountability, testing, and improved teacher quality and proposed school report cards. In line with a P-16 vision, not only did Barnes’s Phase I tackle pre-K through high school education, the “seed corn for his University System in the future” (Cumming, 2000, p. H3) but phase II of his reform package targeted other aspects of education by (1) “holding colleges of education more accountable,” (2) mandating school report cards by 2003, (3) improving science education, and (4) eliminating out-of-field teaching (Cumming, 2000, p. H3; Salzer, 2001, p. A1).

The year 2001 saw amendments to the comprehensive A+ Education Reform Act of 2000. Equally as comprehensive with a focus on pre-kindergarten through middle schools, HB656 undergirded the provisions of the original act by providing for early prevention programs for K-3: 3-7; providing instructional aides for kindergarten and kindergarten early intervention programs, by instituting a promotion policy for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Regarding the school day, the bill provided for a minimum of five hours instruction for middle grades to include remediation in English, mathematics, science, and social studies, if necessary. Further, it struck the provision that if students were performing well, they could have four and one-half hours of instruction. HB656 also provided for an interdisciplinary team of teachers with 55 minutes of common planning period. Regarding teachers, the bill provided a pay raise and monetary incentives for



career level advancement on four tiers: “teacher, professional teacher, mentor teacher and master teacher” (Salzer, 2001, p. A1). To fund the additional classrooms that would be required for the class size reductions, this bill allowed capital outlay for additional educational facilities and increased the cap from 100 million to 200 million and provided funds for systems with low-wealth. Along with the extended five hours, this bill, if enacted, would have changed the eligibility for HOPE scholarships for seniors attending post-secondary institutions. SB200 would have provided low-income students who were eligible to receive scholarships toward the cost of college.

Focused on ensuring the most comprehensive educational opportunities for all students, SB384 included provisions for “recovery” programs to prevent drop-outs, more counselors on all grade levels, and suggested equalization funding. Teachers received clarification of the 10% raise for persons holding National Board certification. A review of the legislation passed regarding alternative educational programs indicates that HB1200 established that approval of charter schools resided at the pleasure of local school boards. His precursors to tax credits though few in number and not enacted were captured in HB70 and HB588.

However, unlike NCLB’s underfunding, Barnes’s educational reform package differed significantly in that it was fully funded and comprehensive in scope. Specifically, Barnes’s bi-partisan-crafted reform package purported to level the playing field, and it also provided the funding. For example, a mid-term adjustment to Barnes’s budget called for nearly \$470 million to pay for extra classrooms needed to accommodate his call for smaller classes. In addition, Barnes requested \$68 million for kindergarten

aides, and \$150–300 million for pay raises. In effect, he promised to “put our money where our mouths were last year” (Salzer, 2001, p. A.1)

Despite a clear P-16 vision and comprehensive plans for reform, Barnes would be soundly defeated and his educational reform dismantled on the matter of his successful crusade to eliminate teacher tenure. Many suggest that eliminating teacher tenure and changing the state flag were Barnes’s Waterloo. Even though improving Georgia’s schools may have been at the heart of the thrust to eliminate teacher tenure, teachers felt threatened. In retrospect, in his bid for Governor again in 2010, Barnes recanted by commenting that he “never suggested that huge numbers of teachers needed to go” (Sarrío, Diamond, & Badertscher, 2011, p. D1). He explained that he wanted the state to be in a position to dismiss incompetent teachers.

On November 7, 2002, Barnes lost his bid for re-election to Sonny Perdue who became the first Republican governor in Georgia since Reconstruction. Even though Barnes offered the most sweeping educational reform since 1995, he lost his bid for a second term to Sonny Perdue. In a move that would foreshadow much of his tenure, following his gubernatorial upset, Governor Sonny Perdue signed SB193, which restored teacher tenure. Ironically, before Governor Barnes’s term expired, his educational reform efforts demonstrated a desire to reform them through strategic and focused efforts to provide equity. Further, during the years of educational reform in Georgia, the stark political differences between the men would become apparent.

### **Educational Reform During the Governorship of Sonny Perdue: 2002–2010**

On the surface, George Ervin Perdue, III, Sonny Perdue, and Roy Barnes looked very similar. Both graduated from the University of Georgia, and both had service in the Georgia Assembly. Originally, both also served as Democrats. However, Perdue “switched party affiliation from Democratic to Republican in 1998 and won both the 1998 and 2000 elections as a Republican (*National Journal Almanac*, 2010). Moreover, unlike Barnes who spent 26 years in the legislature, Perdue’s stint in the Georgia legislature was truncated when in 2001 he resigned from the legislature and pursued the governorship full time. Elected on November 7, 2002 and winning with 58% of the vote (Georgia Secretary of State, 2002), Sonny Perdue became the first Republican governor in Georgia in over 130 years. He was re-elected to a second term in 2006 and served as governor until 2010.

During the next years of Georgia reform, the stark differences in the men would become apparent. Unlike Barnes whose reform captured the spirit of national reform through its language, the Perdue years would capture the potentially hidden intent of the reform as evidenced by its loopholes. Admittedly, Perdue’s public statements advocated a sincere desire to improve public education in Georgia via innovation, flexibility, and accountability. However, his private actions suggested an intent to undermine public education through a series of legislative acts that stripped funds from public schools, allocated finances for charter schools, established tax exempt scholarship funds and foundations for private schools, reduced the amount of a HOPE scholarship, and revised the HOPE scholarship program to establish the new Zell Miller scholarship based on merit, and instituted austerity cuts. Appendix B provides a summary and listing of major pieces of legislation during his tenure.

Unlike Barnes, who offered essentially one comprehensive educational reform package during his tenure, Perdue would support a flurry of activity, not in one big package, but through a variety of bills. The result of his cumulative proposals was the underfunding of the public school system and the development of enriched alternatives. Even though Perdue's educational reform occurred overtime, from 2003 up through 2010, legislative acts during his tenure can be grouped into several thematic categories: teacher tenure, financial cuts, austerity cuts, tax exemptions, tax credits, charter schools, flexibility, cuts to the HOPE scholarship, and curricular changes. Appendix E details the frequency of types of legislation. Of these types of legislation, 25% involved tax exemptions and financial cuts. Even though another type of financial reduction, "austerity cuts," did not occur as a result of legislation, they were, nevertheless, a part of his administration. (M. Taylor, personal interview, September 30, 2011).

**Teacher tenure legislation.** One of Perdue's first acts, in stark contrast to Barnes's legislation, was the restoration of teacher tenure through SB193 (Act 391, 2003). Along with the reinstatement of teacher tenure, a series of other teacher related bills followed, some of which mirrored Governor Barnes's legislation. For example, the following chart displays the bills enacted from 2003 through 2010. Beginning with the restoration of teacher tenure in 2003 and up through May 2007, the General Assembly passed and Perdue signed a series of bills that would be considered "teacher friendly." After restoring teacher tenure, HB1428 (Act 725) reduced the qualifications of a homeschool tutor who worked with students to earn a GED or high school diploma.

Another bill, SB34 (Act 142, 2005), established the Georgia Master Teacher Program, provided for "academic coaches," and established a 10% pay increase for

National Board certification. However, by 2007, the teacher-friendly tenor of Perdue's legislation shifted to allow alternative certification with the prohibition of discrimination against alternatively certified teachers. By July 2009, legislation repealed the 10% salary increase enacted under Barnes's administration. Ironically, legislation provided for compensation for teachers of math and science. Yet, in a final act regarding teachers, HB923 (Act 456, 2010) stipulated that teachers would no longer be paid on the master's level if they were not teaching in those fields. Prior to this bill, teachers could be paid on the master's level if they obtained a Master's degree whether they were teaching in field or out of field. In short, Perdue enticed teachers by restoring tenure. By the end of his term, however, many teachers experienced salary reductions because they were teaching out of field. Further, despite earlier promises that attracted teacher votes, Perdue's teacher friendly tenure shifted toward financial expediency and the promises that initially lured teacher votes vaporized.

**Financial cuts.** When I reviewed legislation during Perdue's tenure, 33% of the legislation fell under finances that included cuts in student finances, HOPE, general tax cuts such as tax-free spending days, and tax Cuts to individuals and corporations. One of the most pervasive and consistent actions over time that occasioned financial consequences for local school districts came in the form of unlegislated austerity cuts. Financial cuts to schools received the greatest amount of attention in the press and from my informants. Interestingly, the legislature allowed substantial tax credits and cuts while first using austerity cuts to regular public school funding before and during a recession. For example, a 2003 article in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC)* reported that in addition to the 6 billion dollar deficit incurred because of NCLB, Perdue projected to cut

\$131 million for state funds ordinarily allocated to school systems (“Our Opinions,” 2003). This article astutely surmised that “both state and national reforms will only set public education up for failure if they cut resources at the same time that they raise expectations” (p. A.16). A recent *AJC* article (2011), in reviewing Perdue’s term, Badertscher, Diamond, and Sarrior (2011) suggested that “deeper cuts came in recent years as the state’s economic crisis reached a fever pitch, with some metro systems such as Conquest canceling all professional development days at the height of the budget crisis” Interestingly, state austerity cuts came at a time when the state economy had not begun to go through a recession.

**Austerity cuts.** Unlegislated austerity cuts represented one of the most consistent forms of financial deprivation to local systems during Perdue’s tenure. For example, both elite informants Taylor and Dailey concurred that school budgets in the state were cut by \$4.5 million (personal interview, September 30, 2011; personal interview, October 4, 2011; Henry, & Pope, 2010, p. A16). Taylor further commented that “from 2003 up until June 2012, the district lost 319 million over almost ten years” (personal interview, September 30, 2011; in-district document). Taylor also provided an interesting coincidence—that “austerity cuts began in 2003 up until 2006–2007, the cumulative amount of the austerity reductions were equal to or real close to the increase in the state’s reserve” (personal interview, September 30, 2011; Martin, 2007). This coincidence in reserves is equally as interesting when one considers that in 2007, the reserves amounted to \$142 million with the austerity cuts totaling \$143 million (Martin, 2007). In fact, tax refunds were issued in this year because of the amount in the reserves. In the same

interview, Taylor suggested that even after” times got better, the austerity never went away” (personal interview, September, 30, 2011).

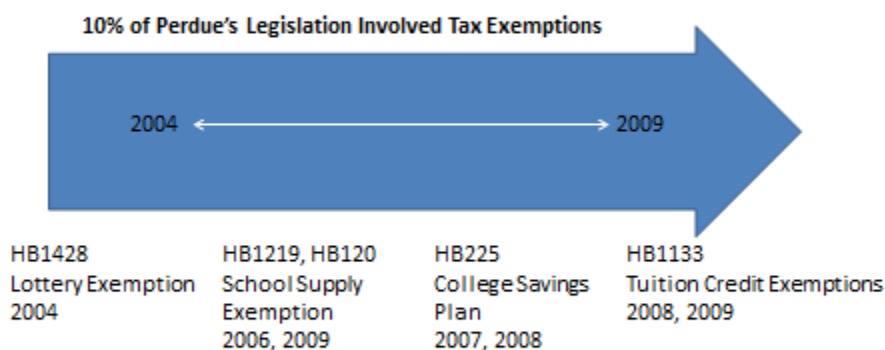
Austerity cuts continued until 2010 when Perdue left office. In 2012, a local journalist, Maureen Downey reported that “the state of Georgia is undermining our public schools” with the “24.8 % ... in austerity cuts.” Her opinion in 2012 was not dramatically different from her opinion voiced in 2003. Ironically, Taylor’s comments explained fully the devastation incurred by these cuts. Revealingly, nowhere in the legislative acts from 2003 to 2010 did the word “austerity” emerge. Yet, the district finance officer and newspapers discussed the governor’s budget cuts as well as the devastation that they caused. One can only surmise that given NCLB’s short-falls, well-intentioned states would supplement funds as much as possible. In Georgia’s case, an exemplar to the contrary, not only did the state not supplement NCLB, but it imposed additional cuts. As early as 2003, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in an article entitled, “School reform’s no brainer: smaller classes, more cash suggested harmful repercussions of legislative cuts (p. A.16). Figure 3 offers a depiction of the time line of major legislative trends during Perdue’s tenure.

**Tax exemptions.** In addition to austerity cuts, Georgia’s public schools lost additional funds through various bills that allowed tax exemptions. One such bill, HB1133,<sup>7</sup> the first tuition credit bill, authorized in 2008, may have been deemed as a

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<sup>7</sup> HB1133 ACT 773 Effective May 14, 2008. Provides an income tax credit for qualified education expenses; tax exemption for “nonpublic primary or secondary schools; grant allows students to attend any qualified school of parent’s choice; provides scholarships of grants without limiting availability to only student of one school; must obligate 90 percent of its annual revenue for scholarship or tuition; up to 25 percent of the amount may be carried forward for the next fiscal year; may transfer funds to another student scholarship fund; “The revenue shall provide a list of all student scholarship organizations receiving contributions from businesses and individuals granted tax credit. the parent of guardian must restrictively endorse the scholarship award to the private schools for deposit; may not designate individual associate with the parent; individual \$1,000 or actual amount expended; a married couple actual amount expended up to 2,500.00; a corporation shall be allowed a credit up to 75% of corporations income tax liability not to exceed 50 million per tax year. All of this was enacted at the beginning of the recession.

fight to “control primary education in Georgia” (Sheinin, 2008, pp. A.1) but it represented a culmination of a long line of legislative measures begun in 2004 up through 2008. Figure 3 provides a time line for tax cuts during Perdue’s tenure.



*Figure 3: Types of tax cuts during Perdue’s tenure*

Beginning in 2004 with HB1428, the legislature passed a law that granted the winner of the lottery a lifetime exemption from Georgia individual income tax. The year 2006 saw tax exemptions for school supplies, clothing, footwear, computers, and computer related accessories through HB1219 (Act 618). The legislature followed in 2007 and 2008 with HB225 (Act 41, 2007) that allowed certain college savings plans for incomes up to \$100,000. The coupe de gras occurred in 2008 and 2009 with the all-encompassing HB1133 (Act 773) that allowed corporations to donate up to \$50,000,000 in tax deductible funds to nonpublic primary or secondary schools. Dailey (2011) raises the issue of vouchers, called scholarships, “that would benefit the students who are accepted by private schools and can afford the tuition not covered by the voucher. She continues



that Georgia taxpayers are already allowed to “divert a portion of their tax payments to entities that support private schools, with very little accountability or disclosure” (personal interview, October 4, 2012). In a significant comment, Sheinin (2008) suggests that many of the “GOP lawmakers... represent overwhelmingly suburban districts that have excellent public schools. They make changes that are seen as harmful to those schools at their own peril” (p. A. 16). On the surface this may be true, but the question that arises would be what would they and their districts gain from such alliances.

Sheinin (2008) describes the impetus behind such bills in his comment that “neither would benefit many students and both would further weaken an education system already hurt by funding cuts (p. A.1). In addition to the allowance for substantial amounts of donations, this bill when passed, pandered to those who could already afford tuition in private school, not those most in need of assistance. Another article reveals that “the state provided nearly 60 % of the combined total of state and local revenues for Georgia’s schools in Fiscal Year 1999,<sup>8</sup> but its share dropped to less than 53% a decade later. Figure 3 also demonstrates the consistent and varied ways that the state allowed tax cuts during and throughout a recession. It should be noted as well that while the general population experienced tax exemptions in the form of “tax free” days, the more substantial tax exemptions occurred through college savings plans and exemptions for private school. When questioned regarding these tax credits, informant Dailey stated that “allowing states not to pay their property tax allows resources for public school to go untapped” (personal interview, October 4, 2011).

**“Loopholes” in tax credit legislation.** HB1133 provided opportunities for parents of private school children to take advantage of the loopholes in the law. In

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<sup>8</sup> Barnes served as governor from 1998 to 2002.

addition to the financial drain that austerity cuts and tax exemptions or credits imposed on public schools, the “prevalence of loopholes” was another theme related to implementation of reform on both the state and local levels. For example, on the state level, elite informant Dailey discussed how certain constituents were able to use loopholes in the HB1133 (Act 737) legislation. HB1133, a law designed to provide tuition credit for under privileged and low income students, essentially provided persons with funds for scholarships on an individual basis. However, he added, “people can’t have a pass because they contribute to a students’ scholarship fund” (Dailey, personal interview, October 4, 2011). State legislation continued to provide and allow tuition cuts, tax credits for individuals in the amount of \$2, 000.00 for couples, \$2,500.00 and corporations in the amount of \$50 million dollars.

When asked how these loopholes came about, Dailey opined, “Good lawyers look for loopholes in the law (personal interview, October 4, 2011). Moreover, Dailey revealed that HB1133 contained a loophole to permit the transfer of funds to a school subsequent to a student being enrolled. He also described how parents of students previously enrolled in private schools used this law to fund their education. Confirming Dailey’s assertion, a *New York Times* article emphasized that the intent of HB1133 (Act 773) was to provide “a way to give poor children the same education choices as the wealthy” (Saul, 2012). However, the *New York Times* article examined the means by which students and parents in private schools used the law to provide additional funds for their children rather than underprivileged students for whom the scholarship was intended. To this point, the *New York Times* article described the scene at a meeting of private school parents where school administrator Wyatt Bozeman informed parents that

“a very small percentage of that money will be set aside for a needs-based scholarship fund.... The rest of the money will be channeled to the family that raised it.” Another official added that “if a student has friends, relatives or even corporations that pay Georgia income tax, all of those people can make a donation to that child’s school” (Saul, 2012, n.p.). The article goes on to explain that in many cases these schools are private Christian schools.

Subsequent to the *New York Times* expose the Georgia House offered HB100 (2009), a bill that would have prevented disclosure once the loophole had been exposed, was signed by the Governor, but vetoed by the General Assembly. To insure confidentiality and protection from exposure, HB100 forbade the Department of Education from releasing information. Subsequent to the exposé, names of students who received scholarships were disclosed via HB251 (ACT 164, – effective May 5, 2009) under the Choice alternative, which allowed a student in a local system to transfer to any school system under the Quality Basic Education Act. Immediately following the signing of this bill, nine days later, the Governor signed HB100 which disallowed the disclosure of any student receiving the scholarship. HB100 (May 11, 2009), though vetoed, was offered as a remedy that would limit the amount of information that could be disclosed regarding tuition credit scholarships.

A deliberate response to the scandal reported in *New York Times*’ article exposing the loopholes in Georgia law as a result of HB1133 (Act 773, 2008) would have allowed students to be transferred during the fiscal year (Saul, 2012, n.p.) to enroll in a public school, to be notified of scholarship availability, withdraw from the public school, and to re-enroll in the private school to receive that scholarship. Interestingly, because HB100

would have allowed a maximum of 25% carry over into the next year, not only would this bill have restricted access to information regarding scholarship recipients, but it would also provide for continuance of the scholarship through the carry over into the next year. Not only did the bill provide for the scholarships, but lines 112–116 of the bill assured that, once the Department of Revenue approved scholarships, the donation would remain approved and that the Department of Revenue shall not take any adverse action against donors to such scholarship. In effect, this law, had it been approved, would have rendered those guilty of taking advantage of loopholes immunity.

The time line for these three bills allowed tax credits for donations for scholarships, provided for the transfer of students from any public school to a school of his/her choice and granted immunity to corporations for persons who donated to these scholarships. In essence, the legislature provided large amounts of money for scholarships to private schools, allowed through HB1133 (Act 773, 2008), for any student to transfer to a school of his choice, not just those who attended underperforming schools.

**Charter school legislation.** Even though former Governor Zell Miller signed into law the first charter school bill in 1993 (Downey, 2011d), Perdue’s leadership sanctioned the deliberate and methodical establishment through legislation of a separate charter school system, sometimes at the expense of public schools. Analysis of legislation during Perdue’s tenure revealed the evolution of the “charter school system” by Georgia legislators and how they have gradually and persistently laid the foundation for funding, building, and governance of charter schools.

At stake in the establishment of a charter school system is money and power. Using the public desire for innovation in education and capitalizing on the stigma of failing schools (Mathis, 2003; Theoharis, 2009; White-Hood, 2006), charter schools are marketed as the panacea for educational woes. From 2004 to 2010 the legalization and legitimization of charter schools assumed two trajectories to insure charter schools are viable educational alternatives in Georgia. One line of legislation established funding for charter schools and the other established state control. Regarding funding, for example, from 2004 through 2010 nine bills were enacted that established charter schools as a preferred educational reform model in Georgia. By allocating funds from tax dollars for capital outlay; providing for accountability flexibility for these systems; allowing organizations to donate tax deductible funds for the construction of charter schools, HB831 (Act 574, 2008); providing for transportation to charter schools, HB1190 (Act 449, 2004); allowing provisions for internet-based instruction, SB610 (Act 604, 2006), Georgia promoted and fostered a “charter friendly” policy environment. In some cases, bills tackled funding and governance issues simultaneously. Funding for charter schools provided transportation, capital outlay for building projects and facilities, allowed organizations to donate tax-deductible funds for the construction of charter schools with state board approval and appropriated money for a facilities fund for local charter schools. For example, as early as 2004, the Georgia legislature created a path to fund charter schools through HB1190 (Act 449, 2004). Along with authorizing the establishment of funding for charter schools, this bill also mandated that local school systems pay for charter school transportation. HB1065 (Act 431) authorized in 2008, provided for charter schools inclusion in capital outlay projects. Significantly, HB831

(Act 574, 2008) allowed organizations to donate tax deductible funds for construction of charter schools with the state board setting up guidelines and dates. HB555, a significant bill, appropriated money to create a facilities fund for local charters, state chartered schools, and charter commission schools.

Another facet of funding lay in the subtle distinction between locally authorized charter schools and state authorized charter schools. According to an article in the *AJC*, if a charter school is rejected by a local board and approved by the state charter commission, the school would receive federal and state funding, but not local funding. Conversely, while the Georgia Charter School Commission functioned, if it approved a charter request over the objections of a local board, a state approved charter would divert monies from local schools (Downey, 2011d). The persistent lack of funding has not gone unnoticed. For example, in 2008 an opponent of the Charter Commission Bill, Rep. Barbara Massey Reese, commented that “we have not supported our current public school systems in the manner that we should have. Had we done that, I don’t think we’d be standing here and sitting here today discussing another type of public school” (Gutierrez, 2008, p. D8).

In some cases, one bill provided for many components of charter schools. For example, as early as 2004, HB1190 (Act 449) provided funding for charter schools, established governance, provided for waivers, and allowed the General Assembly to petition for charter schools. The first charter school bills that explicitly stated the “intent to encourage” charter schools appeared in SB35 (Act 155) in 2005. This bill also afforded the state board the authority to override local school boards regarding the establishment of charters, provided that charter schools would not be subject to the laws

of local boards, and that they could use “for profit” entities as educational providers. In 2006 and 2007, SB610 (ACT 604) and SB39 (Act 116) were enacted, respectively. Senate Bill 604 established operating requirements along with the control and management of charter schools, and provided for virtual and internet-based instruction. Moving from guidelines for management to exemptions, SB39 (Act 116) allowed flexibility for “charter” school systems to tailor their educational programs to meet the “unique needs of the communities.”

Two bills following each other, first in 2008 and then in 2009, effectively solidified the Charter Commission’s preeminence over local school boards. In 2008, the legislature passed HB881(Act 571) establishing the Georgia Charter School Commission with the authority to provide chartering authority to commission charter schools. HB555 (Act 148) followed in 2009, and it effectively transferred authority to establish charter schools from local school boards to the Charter School Commission. In 2010 SB457 (Act 492) was passed that allowed the approval or rejection of charter schools if 60% of faculty and parents voted to have a charter. Over a six-year period of time, this series of bills allowed flexibility that public schools did not enjoy, funded transportation, and lastly established a Commission with the power and authority to override local school systems.

Regarding increased flexibility, elite informant Clark admitted that charter schools enjoyed more flexibility regarding special needs children and in their ability to (permanently) expel students out. Fabricant and Fine (2012) offer an enlightening critique of charter schools and concur with elite informant Clark when they suggest that charter schools poorly served disadvantaged populations. Clark (personal interview,

September 28, 2012) admitted that charter schools do not have to serve special needs students if there is a local public school that offers the services that the child needs. In an additional revelation, he also confided that despite the fact that student selection is purported to be purely objective, charter school administrators sometimes utilize some degree of flexibility when deciding which of the students on their waiting lists to offer slots, presumably to offer those who best fit the openings. Lastly, charter schools exhibit a degree of flexibility in ridding themselves of disruptive students. In comparison, unlike regular public schools, charter schools are not mandated to serve special needs students, they can rid themselves of undesirable students, and they can “pick” students from their waiting list, relieving them of the mandate to serve all students.

Even though charter school supporters touted local control, Dodd (2011) maintained that the battle was about “power, money and the exclusive right to open neighborhood schools” (p. A-1)<sup>9</sup>. In this regard, charter school legislation rather than supporting and fostering local control has diminished it. Consider the measures from 2003–2010 that limited local control culminating with HB881 (Act 571, 2008) that created the Georgia Charter School Commission. Further, House Bill 881 opened the door for “for-profit education management companies” to provide alternative public education in Georgia. As a result of the charter approvals, “four of the new charters would be managed by corporations with regional or national clout, expert resources, and track records for running high performing schools (Dodd, 2009, pp. B.1). Subsequently, this act was ruled unconstitutional (Downey, 2011; Washington, 2012).

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<sup>9</sup> Dodd (2011) continues that Georgia is one of only a few states that constitutionally grant locally elected school boards the right to establish and maintain schools. Further, state approval of a charter school portends “potentially millions of dollars” that would “leave school budgets and follow charter school enrollees” (p. A-1).



However, according to the Governor’s press release dated Tuesday, May 22, 2007, Governor Perdue in support of SB 39 (Act 116 effective July 1, 2006), suggested that “Charter Systems offer the truest form of local control of public education.” ... Following the time line, HB555 (ACT 148, effective July 1, 2009) was created specifically to allocate funds from the state to provide facilities for charter schools approved by the Charter Commission. This Act stripped the power of local school boards to allocate funds and gave that power to the Charter Commission. Further, this bill provided that local school systems “may not lease” surplus properties, but it mandated that local school systems allow charters and “conversion charters” to use their facilities free of charge. Hence, this legislation denied another source of income to public schools, the leasing of their property. Table 2 provides a summary of charter school legislation during Perdue’s tenure.

Table 2

*Perdue’s Charter School Legislation*

Year	Funding	Governance
2004	Act 449 Funded transportation from local districts	HB1190 allowed the state to petition of charter and changed to composition of the local school council to reflect a majority of parents (thus supporting parental control)
2005	Act 155	SB35 Established State “intent to establish charter

		schools”
2006		SB604 Established Requirements for management and control of charter schools
2007	Charter Systems Act	SB 39 Allowed flexibility to “tailor instructional needs”
2008	HB449 Funded transportation from local districts  HB881: : Georgia Charter Schools Commission Act  Allowed state, federal, and local funding for state approved charter schools.	HB831 (Act 574)Allowed State Board To set up guidelines for charter schools  HB881: : Georgia Charter Schools Commission Act Established Charter School  Commission to override local school boards; opened the door for “for profit” educational management
2009		
2010	HB555 (Act 148) Appropriated money to create facilities fund	

**“Loopholes” for charter schools.** Along with charter schools, as early as 2001, efforts were made to strengthen alternative schools through the use of public funds and

loopholes. In similar fashion to the loophole provided for tuition credits for private school tuition, as early as 2001, NCLB made provisions for charter schools through a loophole in the law. In doing so, it created enough ambiguity such that states could enact legislation to move toward the proliferation of charter schools. Although charter schools have been grouped and touted as choice options, NCLB stipulated by law that a student attending a school that failed to make AYP could transfer to any school in the district, “which may include a public charter.... unless such option is prohibited by state law (NCLB, 2002, § 6311 (b1) (2) (D) (ii)” (James, Sunderman, K. & Sunderman, G. 2005, p. 40). Clearly, as early as 2001, charter schools were already viewed as viable alternatives to public schools.

Another loophole for charter schools is that charter schools do not have to serve students with special needs if those students can be served in the public schools (G. Clark, personal interview, September 28, 2012). In effect, not only do public schools experience reduced funds, but loopholes provide means by which charter schools are not mandated to serve the entire population of children. They can pick and choose the students whom they serve.

In summary, even though the establishment of charter schools is not a component of NCLB (2002), it is a component of the Blueprint for Reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Specifically, one of the restart models for school reform in the Blueprint offers an alternative of converting or closing and then re-opening a school under new management under a charter or management or organization. Ironically, operation of “failing” schools under the management of a charter was not formally presented as an alternative to public education by the federal government until 2010.

Yet, under Perdue's leadership, legislative movement toward solidifying a Georgia charter school system began as early as 2003 with the first enacted legislation appearing in May 2004.

**General legislation to allow school flexibility and exceptions.** In positioning itself as a progressive leader of educational reform, in addition to enacting legislation to establish and fund charter schools, offer tax credits, and implement non-legislated austerity cuts, during this time period, law-makers legislated class size increases, expansion of remedial education, a joint early learning initiative, a uniform grading system, and the Move when Ready Act of 2009. Many of the measures were enabled by the dissolution of the Office of Accountability.

Although not viewed as a measure designed to enhance flexibility, the elimination of this office, one of Perdue's first pieces of legislation, seemed to have accomplished two things. First, it reestablished the authority of the state board of education in the decision making process. Secondly, once re-instated as the decision-making entity, this bill provided the foundation for school systems and districts to petition the state board for exceptions and waivers to federal regulations rather than having to be regulated by an accountability office. For example, HB1190 (Act 449), enacted in 2004, allowed flexibility for "schools and school systems to tailor their educational programs to meet the "unique needs of their communities." Although "unique needs" is not clearly delineated, the ambiguous wording, in effect, waives "regular rules" for charter school systems (HB1190, section 19). As an additional facet of flexibility, HB1190 also allowed regular public school systems to utilize a paraprofessional, "aide," to increase class size by 20% except in kindergarten (HB1190, section 19). Moreover, these waivers through

HB1190 changed the composition of local school councils to include a parental majority. The subtle change in the composition of local school councils connected privileged parent voices over administration. Further, the bill diminished the principal's authority by mandating that the principals would not be the head of the council.

Following HB1190, in 2007, the legislature passed SB39 (Act 116), which specifically allowed flexibility for schools and school systems to "tailor their educational programs to meet the "unique needs of their communities." In 2008, when HB1209 (Act 394) was passed, school systems were allowed to enter into a contract with the State Board of Education for increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability. Additionally, sections 30–35 of this bill read as follow:

Each school within the system, shall not be subject to the provisions of this title or any state or local rule, regulation, policy, or procedure relating to schools within an applicable school system regardless of whether such rule, regulation, policy, or procedure is established by the local board, the state board, or the Department of Education.... (Act 394, 2008)

The bill continues,

In exchange for such a waiver, the charter school agrees to meet or exceed the performance based goals included in the charter and approved by the local board or for the charter system, the system agrees to meet or exceed the system-wide performance based goals included in the charter and approved by the state board. (Act 394, 2008)

The wording of this bill makes it unclear from which rules a charter school is released or what is being waived, or what the consequences are when a charter school fails to meet

specific goals. In reviewing the vote on this bill, only one African American representative or senator voted yes for this measure. In exchange for mandated accountability, charters are given the added flexibility of stipulating the level of their student achievement that they expect to attain (G. Clark, personal interview, September 28, 2012).

In summary, these three bills HB1190 (Act 449, 2004), HB1209 (Act 394, 2008), and SB39 (Act 116, 2007) allowed flexibility in governance in the form of local school councils, class size, and latitude to “tailor educational programs” to meet the needs of their communities. To this point, M. Dailey, state educator lobbyist, observed that of all the bills, the flexibility bill HB 1190, referred to as IE<sup>2</sup>, was the one with which he had the least disagreement. He indicated that even though he lobbied against the bill, he saw it working in his child’s school district because “he had access to his children’s teachers, and his son had smaller classes” (M. Dailey, personal interview, October 4, 2011). Even though he saw flexibility working in his son’s school, he admitted that he did not know the class size in other grades in the school and did not know other ways that the school may have cut corners. He also admitted that some school systems that argued against the flexibility saw class sizes of 34. Regarding how other school systems used the money, he suggested that other systems did use their money on education. Ultimately, he surmised, that HB 1190 (Act 449, 2004), IE<sup>2</sup>, was a “tool to help Georgia reach its goals.” Whether flexibility laws have been used to support or undermine public education is still not determined.

**HOPE legislation.** Perhaps indicative of the legislative focus during Perdue’s tenure, curricular legislation represented only 5% of total legislative acts consisting of

three pieces of legislation. Interestingly, HR1258 (Act 916, 2006) established an Appalachian Studies Center in North Georgia, SB79 (Act 523, 2006) funded history and literature courses in the Old and New Testament eras, and SB170 (Act 203, 2007) provided that American sign language proficiency could be substituted for 2 units of foreign language as a requirement on a college preparatory diploma.” One can surmise that, at least legislatively, curricular issues were not paramount in Perdue’s legislation.

Ironically, the outcome of non-stated curricular decisions manifested themselves in the HOPE scholarship. In this regard, if other legislation in Georgia affected education broadly, legislation related to the HOPE scholarship affected students personally. Initially established by Governor Zell Miller in 1993 as one way of providing equity and thereby improving Georgia’s economic status, Perdue’s predecessor, Barnes, expanded HOPE to include more recipients. However, over the course of Perdue’s tenure, HOPE evolved from a scholarship with an income cap of \$100,000.00 to the Zell Miller Scholarship with no income cap, dubbed “A welfare system for Georgia’s affluent” (Hudson, 2011). To accomplish this transformation, HOPE legislation assumed two directions. The shift in HOPE mirrored Perdue’s overall trajectory of taking from one group and giving to another. One bill, HB1325 (Act 720, 2004), increased the groups of students who would be HOPE recipients by adding students from private schools, independent schools, and technical schools as HOPE recipients. SB561 (Act 942), enacted in 2006, also allowed HOPE for home-schooled students and students who graduated from a non-eligible high school if they maintained a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) during their first year in college.

The second type of HOPE legislation restricted HOPE funds. Beginning in June 4, 2003, HOPE legislation placed limitations on the total number of semester hours. Following this trend, in April 2006, SB506 (Act 550) decreased the book allowance for HOPE to \$150 per semester and \$100 per quarter. In 2008, SB480 (Act 492) placed hourly caps for students to receive HOPE. Last, HB340 required school systems to adopt a uniform reporting system to determine HOPE eligibility. As a result of concern over the sustainability of HOPE, as early as 2003 Governor Perdue commissioned a study to determine the viability of requiring a minimum SAT score and requiring a B average (Salzer, 2003, p. B1). Even though tying HOPE to SAT and a higher GPA was only being considered, one hesitation derived from a similar Michigan lawsuit in which the American Civil Liberties Union challenged “a scholarship program that used state standardized tests” to determine scholarship recipients (Salzer, 2003, p. A14). The result was that HOPE morphed into the Zell Miller Scholarship, requiring a 3.7 GPA and an SAT score of 1200. To placate smaller counties that may not have these higher scores, a compromise stipulated that in addition to students with the increased scores, all valedictorians and salutatorians<sup>10</sup> would receive the full HOPE Zell Miller Scholarship. For others who maintained a 3.0 GPA but did not achieve the 1200 on the SAT, students would receive the “HOPE Lite” and would “have to come up with \$1,800 to cover their costs or \$35.00 a week” (Downey, 2011b, p. 1). Other estimates suggest that “in-state students who were essentially receiving a free college education may now pay a minimum of \$1,973—not including books, housing and tuition increases” (Bunn, 2011).

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<sup>10</sup> According to Downey, in the original plan as proposed by Nathan Deal, in parts of rural Georgia, “...no students in the top ranks of their classes would have qualified for the full HOPE.” Further, “to prevent a rural revolt, full HOPE now also goes to each high school’s valedictorian and salutatorian so at least two students in a county get it” (2011, March 20).



In addition to tying receipt of the HOPE scholarship to higher GPAs and SAT scores, course requirements increased. As a result, the proposed plan suggested that by the year 2015 graduating seniors must have taken at least two advanced courses in either math, science, advanced foreign language, or Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses in core subjects. By 2016, graduates who hope to receive the HOPE scholarship must take at least three courses from this category (Diamond, 2011). Again the publicly voiced rationale is that because HOPE does not pay for remedial courses, the more rigorous the courses, the more likely the student is to be successful.

The rationale for the change in HOPE was that legislators feared a “\$200 million shortfall” by 2010 (Salzer, 2003, p. B-1)). The unspoken reality, however, was that changing HOPE would alter the number of African American recipients. For example, one report indicated that if HOPE had been tied to at least a 1000 SAT in 2000, “African Americans would have been twice as likely as whites to be declared ineligible” (Salzer, 2003, p. B-1)). Other reports indicate that over the years African Americans and Latinos have benefited from HOPE.

For example, the *Journal for Black Higher Education Foundation* reported the following:

[A] Harvard study found that between 1993 and 1997 black enrollments at state-chartered colleges and universities in Georgia increased by 21 %. At private colleges in the state, black enrollments rose 16 %. In contrast white enrollments at public colleges were up only 5 %. At private schools white enrollments were up 12 %. Thus, in terms of overall enrollments, the HOPE program appears to have helped blacks more than whites. (JBHE Foundation, 2002, p. 74)

Under the new HOPE, however, “the racial impact is totally predictable,” and if adopted “African American and Hispanic kids will lose out and white kids will get more” (Salzer, 2003, p. B1). In 2003, tying HOPE to SAT and a higher GPA seemed a distant threat; however, in 2011, as reported by Laura Diamond (2011), “HOPE will continue, but it won’t resemble the college scholarship students and their families have come to expect.”

In summary, HOPE reform has changed to “prevent students who lose HOPE from being able to regain HOPE”; a time limit has been imposed, thus preventing working students access to HOPE, HOPE no longer pays for remedial courses “for those not fortunate enough to have attended” schools that offer the higher level courses and programs (Downey, 2011a). The present “HOPE- limited” serves as another indication of the move toward excellence and exclusion rather than equity and inclusion during Perdue’s administration. The changes in HOPE reify the notion that while Perdue’s administration gave lip-service to improving educational opportunities in Georgia, one of the primary vehicles for providing access and opportunities -- HOPE -- was diminished.

### **Summary of Governor Barnes’s and Perdue’s Legislation**

Barnes and Perdue, two governors on opposite ends of the political spectrum – Democratic and Republican; urban and rural; centrist and conservative; proponent of equity and proponent of elitism—Roy Barnes and Sonny Perdue represent the extremes in educational reform in Georgia from 2000 through 2010. Interestingly, several similarities and differences between Barnes’s and Perdue’s educational reform emerge: their differences in political affiliation, amount of legislation, and funding.

The most striking and evident difference lies in the fact that Barnes was a Democratic governor and Perdue Republican. For example, Cumming (2000) says that

although clearly a Democratic reform, Barnes' reform package initially enjoyed bi-partisan support especially from "House Republicans [who] worked with him and [who] were the sources of most of the changes put into the bill in the House"(p. H3).

Paradoxically, notwithstanding their political affiliations, the reform that Barnes espoused entailed a degree of compromise in that "85 to 90 percent of this bill is Republican dogma" that held "high schools to high standards and not dumb down the test scores." Barnes further added that, "you know I looked at it, and they were right" (Cumming, 2000, p. H3).

Another difference is the number of legislative acts and the time span under which they were enacted. For example, Barnes's educational reform package, presented in the form of one major platform with a few additions in Phase I and Phase II, was the product of bi-partisan efforts and an attempt to ensure equity through legislation. Despite the fact that Perdue's educational reform was a product of a majority Republican House and Senate, Perdue's reforms would take place over seven years under several thematic categories aligned with tax exemptions, flexibility, alternative schooling, teacher-related, curricula, general legislation, and financial legislation. As summary, an overview of the themes of Perdue's legislation is provided in Figure 4.

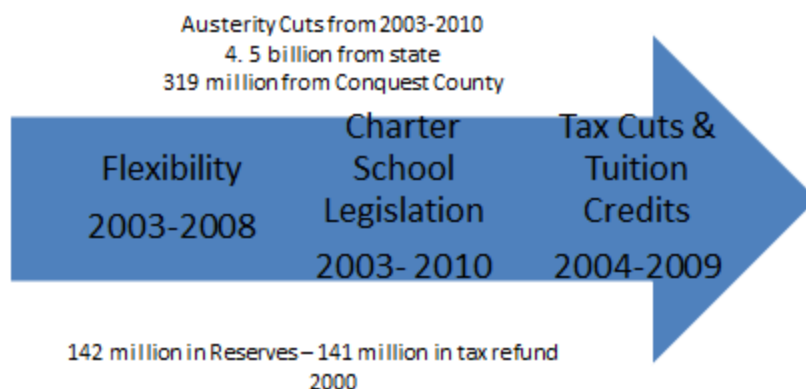


Figure 4: Timeline for Perdue's Legislation

These trends contrast strongly with Barnes' intent to provide support for all children.

Although both governors proposed spending, Barnes's spending came from state coffers to support all schools while Perdue's measures to establish charter schools either derived from local school systems or corporate donations in the form of tax deductions. Regarding funding, Barnes's tenure was characterized by massive funding, from pre-k through college, exemplifying the influence of the P-16 initiative. In contrast rather than funding education, Perdue helped to orchestrate the continual syphoning of funds through austerity cuts totaling over \$4 million, tax credits up to \$50,000 and his diminishing of the HOPE scholarship. For example, he was instrumental in redefining the criteria of HOPE and shifting the emphasis from a need-based scholarship with an income cap of

\$40,000 to a merit-based scholarship with no income cap, by redefining it as the Zell Miller Scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

Another area in which the two Governors differed was with local school councils. Under Barnes's leadership, local school councils were composed of the principal, teachers, community members, and parents with the principals chairing the committee. Under Perdue's tenure, reflecting the call for increased parental control, Perdue's legislation called for the majority of council members to be parents with the principal serving as a member. Prompted by Georgia's receipt of Phase II P-16 grant, Georgia-initiated legislation to limit classes in core areas emerged as well as a commitment to "create and execute a communications plan to build and sustain public will for high school redesign" (Rochford, 2007, p. 15).

The Governors' impetus for reform also derived from ideologically conflicting forces. On the one hand, Governor Barnes's reform impetus derived from the Governor's Summit and Zell Miller's P-16 initiative based on equitable distribution of resources directed toward educational access for as many students as possible. Instead, Zell Miller is the Georgia governor who most set in motion Georgia's response to federal initiatives. As early as 1995, Zell Miller led an initiative to improve educational reform based on a "state level P-16 reform" and ideas discussed at the 1995 Governor's Education Summit (Rochford, 2007, p. 18). Convening a 38-member group known as the Georgia P-16 Council, former Governor Zell Miller and the council decided the ultimate goal of p-16 education was providing "every student with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed as citizens and workers" (Krueger & Rainwater, 2003). Conversely, much of the

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<sup>11</sup> The Zell Miller Scholarship required a 1600 SAT score and at least a 3.7 GPA. Valedictorians and salutatorians at all public schools would be automatically eligible.

legislation introduced during Perdue's tenure was heavily influenced by the Governor's desire for autonomous state government that advocated for alternative schooling. Under Perdue, public education was depicted as of poor quality. Beyond the legislation, several bills use language to shape the meaning of public education in the minds of the public and, thereby, paved the way for a proliferation of alternatives to traditional public education.

Ironically, two distinct reform paths emerged in Georgia from 2000 to 2010. On the one hand, Barnes's early legislation in Georgia preceded, included, and funded many of the aspects of NCLB. Not the least of these precursors to reform were provisions for an accountability system that would eventually include end of course testing. Unlike NCLB's underfunding, however, legislation under Governor Barnes allocated full funding for his programs. Conversely, legislation under Governor Perdue mirrored recent provisions such as establishment of charter schools as well as end of course testing found in the more recent competitive RT3 grants. In the same light, while Governor Perdue's legislation substantially cut funding, RT3 provided funding. Hence, in the case of both Governors Barnes and Perdue, legislation in the state mirrored forthcoming national education reform legislation.

## **Chapter 5: Explanations for State- Sponsored School Reform**

The sum of the legislative packages reveals that from 2003 through 2010, 60 % of the legislation passed during Governor Perdue’s tenure focused on diminishing and depriving funds from public schools. During this time, finances comprised 33 % of the legislation; 17 % related to charter school legislation; 7 % related to flexibility and exceptions to public school regulations; 3 % related to alternative schooling. See Appendix E. When questioned about the driving force behind these state-level decisions, elite informant Dailey, a former state educator advocate, offered the following comments. First he commented that decisions drive the process and that emotions influence the decision-making process (M. Dailey, personal interview, October 4, 2011). For example, according to Dailey, some state-level decisions derive from personal opinion that “personal issues rise to the level of legislation” (personal interview, October 4, 2011). He adds that sometimes legislators “have their own ideas and invest their resources.” He elaborated that when emotions drive the political decision making process, no objective standards exist.

This chapter seeks to provide possible reasons to explain legislative behavior beyond the purely idiosyncratic reasons Dailey provides. While this chapter acknowledges these private influences, it also seeks to uncover other rationales that might explain the legislative changes in Georgia from 2000 to 2010.

## **Influence of Outside Organizations**

To make decisions, lawmakers sometimes employ the assistance of outside organizations such as All Children Matter and The Alliance for School Choice (Sheinin, 2008). Sheinin (2008) further explains the connection between these organizations and lawmakers:

All Children Matter, based in Michigan, has given money to Georgia legislators. The Alliance for School Choice, which bills itself as the nation's largest 'organization promoting school vouchers and scholarship tax credit programs' is helping fund lobbying efforts for Casas' bill. And the Republican leaning American Legislative Exchange Council has provided research and sample legislation. (p. A1)

Employing and spreading their model legislation, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has been responsible for shaping educational reform for the last two decades with the goal of undermining and ultimately destroying public schools "by systematically defunding and ultimately destroying public education as we know it" (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 52).

An examination of several bills Perdue supported in Georgia, such as the Education Savings plans and Charter School Acts, reveals that these bills have been offered in several states and that several senators and representatives who sponsor certain bills are also affiliated with ALEC. ALEC is a conservative think-tank and a proponent of "limited government, free markets, federalism, and individual liberty" ([www.alec.org/about-alec](http://www.alec.org/about-alec) [Sourcewatch, 2012]). Underwood and Mead (2012) report that "of 114 listed members of the group's Education Task Force, 108 are Republicans"



(p. 52). They add that corporations, foundations, and “think tanks” “can join ALEC and often donate to each state’s scholarship fund” (p. 42). Essentially, ALEC supports privatization through what it calls “model legislation.”

For profit companies are also linked to ALEC -sponsored legislation. For example, Graves (2011) cites that “98.6% of ALEC’s money comes from ... funds from for-profit corporations and foundations” (Graves, 2011, p. 1). Coors’ Castle Rock Foundation, Koch Foundation, Lamb Foundation, and Exxon Mobil are a few of the foundations and companies involved in ALEC (Graves, 2011; Sourcewatch, 2012). Sponsored by major corporations and special interest groups, “ALEC boasts that it has over 1,000 bills introduced by legislative members every year, and more than 20% become legally binding” (Graves, 2011; Sourcewatch, 2012), many of which support privatization in multiple forms: vouchers, tax incentives for sending children to private schools, and charter schools operated by for-profit entities” (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 54). Further, Mead and Underwood (2012) explain that in order to assist states in developing school choice “without running afoul of state constitutional limitation,” ALEC published a “state-by-state analysis of programs designed to foster privatization” (Underwood, & Mead, 2012, p. 54). Mead and Underwood further cite specific legislation in Georgia that reflects ALEC’s influence: “special education vouchers and the newer ALEC proposal—tax incentives for contributions to scholarship-granting organizations,” (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 54), specifically found in the following legislation: HB 225 (Act 41, 2007), HB1133 (Act 773, 2008), HB881 (Act 571, 2008), HB1014 (Act 427, 2008). They further contend that “by elevating parental choice over all other values, ALEC pushes for privatization and supports schools that can be segregated

by academic ability and disability, ethnicity, economics, language and culture” (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 54).

A listing of sponsors of bills reveals that several of Georgia legislators have affiliations with ALEC. For example, Chip Rogers, Senate Majority Leader and sponsor of many of the bills in Georgia, also serves on the board of ALEC. Revealingly, in a document entitled, “Politicians on ALEC’s ‘Public’ Board of Directors,” Rep. Calvin Hill, Jr., State Chair of the Telecommunications and Information Technology Task Force and International Relations Task Force member was also “recipient of ALEC’s State Chair of the Year Award” (2011)<sup>12</sup>. Other Georgia legislative members with ties to ALEC include Reps. David S. Casas (R), a member of The Education Task Force; Ed Setzler, Tax and Fiscal Policy Task Force; Larry E. O’Neal (R), Tax and Fiscal Policy Task force; Howard R. Maxwell (R), Education Task Force; Jan Jones (R), Education Task Force; Mike Douglas (R), Education Task Force. Senators include Senate Majority Leader, Chip Rogers (R), State Chairman, and “recipient of ALEC’s 2011 State Chair of the Year Award.” Other senators include Fran R. Millar (R), Education Task Force, and Greg Goggans, (R), Education Task Force; and formerly, Rep. Tom Graves, currently U.S. Representative from Georgia. This list provides a clear example of the influence of ALEC on Georgia’s leaders (Sourcewatch, n.d.).

Further, a review of the bills that legislators either sponsored or co-sponsored reveals legislation has been sponsored by persons with affiliations with ALEC. Appendix F offers a listing of legislators who were affiliated with ALEC and who offered ALEC modeled legislation. These bills included “Resolution Supporting Private Scholarships Tax Credits Exposed; The Great Schools Tax Credit Program; The

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<sup>12</sup> Both Representative Hill and Senator Rogers received State Chair of the Year Award for 2011.

Innovation Schools and School Districts Act; Parental Choice Scholarship Accountability Act and Programs, Acts 1, 2, and 3; The Parental Choice Scholarship Tax Credit Accountability Act” (Bills Affecting Americans’ Rights to a Public Education from ALEC Exposed, 2012).

Although these bills are attached publically to Perdue’s term, a private group appears to be behind the legislation described in the previous chapter. A similar rendering occurs with tax cuts. Not surprisingly, bills related to college savings plans, private scholarship tax credits, family Education Savings plans, Charter School Acts have also been a part of the legislative package that ALEC may have instigated (ALEC exposed, 2012). Under ALEC’s influence, HB1133 (Act 773, 2008), allowed for tax payer scholarships, was offered and approved in Georgia’s General Assembly under the term “scholarships.” Additionally, not only has Perdue’s legislation been guided primarily by ALEC, but a Bill and Melinda Gates scholarship supporting P-16 education prompted sporadic reforms similar to Perdue’s initiatives. Interestingly, one criterion for the award was the state would need “to create and execute a communications plan to build and sustain public will for high school redesign” (Rochford, 2007, p. 15). In particular, SB 35 (ACT 155, 2005) allows charter schools to use “for profit” entities.

Of note is the fact that in a document entitled, “National Education Report Card Ranks Massachusetts First, West Virginia Last,” Georgia is ranked 27 out of the 51 states in performance and received a B grade in “education policy” (Buss, 2012, n.p.) This “comprehensive report grades all 50 states and the District of Columbia according to data from national test scores, state education policy, and charter school regulation” (Buss, 2012, n.p.). Notwithstanding a policy change, this improved ranking attests to the

influence of ALEC on educational policy in Georgia. As a result, this review of the relationship between ALEC, other outside forces, and Georgia legislation is important because on the surface, one believes that this legislation is sponsored by legislators who, acting out of their own agency, offer bills that they believe to be beneficial to all children. The involvement of ALEC and similar organizations indicates that legislators' unstated motivations may be aligned with the interests of private groups. In this regard, Underwood and Mead (2012) maintain that "the aim is clear: defund and dismantle public schools, particularly low-income, urban schools... with the motivation for dismantling the public education system—creating a system where schools do not provide for everyone—is ideological and motivated by profit" (p. 54).

### **Shift in Language to Convey Hidden Meanings**

One of the few parallels between NCLB and Perdue's legislative reform is revealed in the use of negative labeling of schools. Regarding the use of language to convey various meanings, according to Gee (2012), a well-known literacy scholar, when words or phrases are used in specific situations and take on different meanings within the context of the situation, "situated meanings" ensue (p. 4). Beginning with NCLB, negative language occurs as schools fail to meet AYP. When schools were labeled as failing, even though schools may have failed to meet the benchmark by only one or two students, or by a subgroup, the school is cited as having failed to make annual yearly progress. As a result, this phrase has since evolved into "failing schools." The paradox, however, exists in the fact that when used over time, the "situated meaning" or "token meaning" dissipates and the public remembers only the negative uttered meaning, in this

case, “failed schools.” Ironically, as a result of NCLB’s labeling, schools that might have been deemed good schools are now considered failing.

In a more nuanced manner, the shift in language, although subtle, has also changed the perceptions of choice so that choice has gradually moved from an alternative for children in low performing schools to alternatives for anyone—choices designed specifically to “meet the unique needs” of a particular community. On an even more subtle level, choice has again moved from choice for the underperforming student in a failing subgroup to students in good standing whose parents are able to exercise the choice option. Elite informant Schultz describes this movement as an “AYP roller coaster” effect and also discusses the impact of negative labeling and school choice (D. Schultz, personal interview, September 29, 2011; T. Bookman, personal interview, July 31, 2012; V.. Everson, personal interview, August 15, 2012; and F. Peterson, personal interview, August 2, 2012). Shultz informs that “a successful child is able to transfer if their subgroup made AYP. Further, in some cases the brightest kids move out of a school causing “brain drain”, with parents “constantly moving kids out” as well as schools labeled as “roller coaster schools” (personal interview, September 29, 2012,).

Moreover, the shift in emphasis from *under-performing students* attending schools that failed to meet AYP to *underperforming schools* solely allowed students who were achieving to seek alternatives. As a result the shift in the language’s emphasis contributed to the AYP roller coaster and shifted the focus from helping underperforming students to labeling the school. Hence, NCLB became a vehicle for leaving behind the students it was designed to help. Moreover, through this shift in language, it became a vehicle for institutionalizing alternatives that cater to those least in need of help. In as

much as all schools would eventually be labeled as failing, this state used the failing label to promote “innovate and creative” educational alternatives. Equally as ironic is the fact that once most schools in Georgia failed to make AYP, the state requested and received a waiver from AYP. Hence, in appropriating the label, “failed schools,” legislators fostered the impression that alternatives would offer better educational choices. In short, through the subtle use of language on the state level, NCLB emerged as the mechanism by which a two-tiered system has been re-established.

It is also revealing how language within recent Georgia legislation used situated meanings to promote specific educational alternatives. Along these lines, in promoting charter schools, the state borrows the pejorative label of “failing schools” and appropriates its connotation to imply that alternatives offer more promise. For example, the language of SB35 (Act 155, 2005) reveals the state’s “intent to encourage charter schools; that the state board can override local school boards regarding the establishment of charters; that charter schools will not be subject to laws of local boards or state board and it establishes by law that charter schools may use “for-profit” entities.” Importantly, the former phrase, “to provide an adequate education for its citizens is struck from the language and “to encourage and aid the education of all children in this state...” is inserted in its place. The language is curious because, according to Dailey (personal interview, October 4, 2011), it’s the state’s responsibility according to the constitution to provide an adequate education for all its citizens. The inclusion of “encourage and aid” prompts one to question the intent of the difference in the language.

Even if state legislation has not used explicitly negative depictions of schools, it has allowed subtle shifts in phrasing to foster the impression that public schools are not

progressive and are antiquated and that charter schools are innovative and foster student achievement. A poignant example of the use of situated meaning is in the phrasing in SB35 (Act 155, 2005) that increased class size in regular public schools by 20% while stating that “it is the intent of the general assembly to increase academic achievement through academic and organizational innovation by encouraging local school systems to utilize the flexibility of a performance based contract called a charter.” Two factors are at work in the juxtaposition of this phrasing. First, legislatively increasing class size in regular public schools gives the impression of overcrowded classrooms. Second, the bill indicates that it allows for innovation and flexibility in alternatives. By combining these two statements in one sentence, legislation offers two extremes: over crowdedness or flexibility. Hence, the choice becomes one of good and bad with public schools assuming the label of bad and charter schools assume the label of good.

Another example, HB1209 (Act 394, 2008), offers an equally contrasting example of the use of language. This bill maintains that in exchange “for increased flexibility” a system can opt for “increased accountability” or that the local system “can opt for the status quo.” The Georgia Charter Schools Commission Act exemplifies a further step in the de-valuing of public schools and the re-imagined value of charter schools when its language states that “charter schools have contributed to enhanced student performance, greater efficiency, and increased parental satisfaction.” Conversely, in a report on Charter Schools in Georgia, the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) refuted statements about enhanced student performance in a document entitled “Charter Schools in Georgia Perform Significantly below Their Traditional Public School Peers in Math.” In addition to asserting that charter schools perform significantly below their traditional

public school peers in math, the document further purports that in the aggregate, students in charter schools do not fare as well as students in traditional public schools”

(Kantrowitz, 2009, p.1). Seemingly, in a politicized climate geared toward undermining one system and bolstering another, situated meaning can or has been used to convey ideas not necessarily aligned with facts. The evolution of the use of language to convey the perception that charter schools offer a better alternative is clear. Hence, with little or no data, language has depicted charter schools as the new saviors of education and public schools as the problems with education.

In summary, from 2005 through 2008, language in Georgia educational legislation transitioned from intent to foster charter schools to intent to promote the proliferation of charter schools as critical to successful education in Georgia. The implication is that to maintain a regular public school is maintaining a certain level, mediocre status quo. These distinctions and subtle shifts in language are important because without documentation of increased student achievement, legislators have subtly co-opted situational meanings to imply viable alternatives to public schools. Moreover, if language has been designed to propel charter schools as viable alternatives, it has also served the purpose of projecting a sense of inadequacy related to public schools.

### **Elite Stake-holder Explanations of Georgia’s Reform**

The spasmodic shift in Georgia’s conformity to the national model may be explained by elite informants, all of whom offer several explanations for the legislative shifts. According to elite informants Dailey and Schultz, the political nature of legislated reform has shaped the direction of legislative shifts in Georgia. In doing so, they concur that education in Georgia has focused on good for a few versus good for the whole



resulting in children not being the focal point for the legislation. In fact, elite informants Dailey and Schultz suggest Georgia's shift from the NCLB's original intent was fueled in part by a lack of political advocacy on the part of some constituents, outside influences in the decision-making process, and the state's austerity cuts.

**Importance of political advocacy.** In general, three of the six elite informants emphasized the political impetus of education reform. In this regard, their comments suggested that education was a political buzz word used by politicians to gain political leverage and that constituents exercise low political awareness or advocacy on the state level. Hence, because of the timeliness of education topics in political circles, those who exercise the greatest amount of political advocacy are often those whose concerns are most likely addressed (M. Dailey, personal interview, October 4, 2011; D. Schultz, personal interview, September 29, 2011). In this light, even though only three of the elite informant responses voiced the importance of activism, activism was mentioned by informants on both the state and local levels as an important and missing vehicle in educational reform in Georgia. Regarding the lack of political advocacy from the perspectives of constituents, both elite informants Dailey and Schultz stressed the need for educators' voices in leveraging legislation. Specifically, Schultz commented that "when more politicians are talking about education than educators [are], it's problematic because they are not experts in the field" (D. Schultz, personal interview, September 29, 2011.). Both Dailey and Schultz indicated that neither educators, educational advocates, nor practitioners were consulted when crafting state legislation. Schultz also contended that activism is necessary to "make legislators aware of their story" (D. Schultz, personal interview, September 29, 2011).

Dailey offers a less dramatic and more optimistic perspective on political activity. He asserts that another vital aspect of the decision-making process on the state level is the lack of activism or representation by the state-level government. Dailey commented that lawmakers and “politicians need to put a face to the legislation” (personal interview, October 4, 2011). Dailey also emphasized that people turn out for federal elections, but not for local and state elections. He offered an interesting parallel in discussing how the state controls everything related to a person’s life. ... and how the state level is where everything happens relative to your life..... “I don’t think its [lack of political efficacy] limited to minorities, I think America has low political efficacy” (personal interview, October, 4, 2012). He added in the absence of political advocacy, the citizenry is unaware that most of the issues that affect citizens occur on the state level, not the federal level. For example, he adds:

What hurts us is that we don’t know who makes the decisions that affect us. If you asked the average citizen who raised their taxes, they would probably say president Obama as opposed to saying my property taxes got increased ... which is determined at a state and local level, and so a lot of times people don’t understand what place the decisions are being made.

He further reiterates that:

Your state determines everything that happens to you every day... how old you are when you get your driver’s license or when you’re old enough to drop out of school or drink ... [the] state controls the amount of tax [Ipay] when I go to the store . (personal interview, October 4 ,2011).

Equally important, he ascribes this lack of advocacy to a gap in education and suggests that this lack of knowledge can be attributed to “an educational component that’s just been missing... it starts when you are young, compared to segregated schools that taught civics” (M. Dailey, personal interview, October 4, 2012). Hence, he argues that the average citizen is largely unaware of how states can impact critical aspects of a person’s life.

Elite informant Dailey’s statements evidence several important variables related to the lack of political advocacy. First, Dailey emphasized that a lack of political advocacy seems to be ubiquitous. Second, this lack of activism seems connected to a lack of understanding about who makes day to day life decisions. As a result, despite this widespread lack of advocacy, the stakes seem to be much higher and the urgency much greater for underserved populations. Third, he emphasized the necessity of political advocacy to “put a face” to the problem or dilemma.

According to Dailey, one would surmise that because the general populace exercises low political efficacy, the state is able to change and manipulate laws and people are not aware of where or how the laws are enacted. Schultz, another district level teacher/educator advocate, also stressed the importance of activism, but from the perspective of having more educators involved in the process. He reiterated that “teachers will tell a person what works and what doesn’t work” (D. Schultz, personal interview, September 29, 2011). According to *Sourcewatch* (2012) and Underwood & Meade, 2012, legislators are not interested in hearing from educators, their respondent is big corporations. As a result, laws are changed and systems undermined before the

general population or educators who are most affected can organize to counter manipulations.

Further, according to Dailey, the general population fails to give politicians a counter story or put a different face to the issues. That allows politicians to not see how their actions impact the majority of students served in public schools (personal interview, October 4, 2011). Along these lines the lack of political advocacy by African Americans proves detrimental. Along with a lack of representation by African Americans, elite informants reveal that legislators tend to support legislation based on demands of constituents who “look like them” and have similar interests (M. Dailey, personal interview, October 4, 2011; R. Barnes, personal interview, November 15, 2012). This implies that parents, as well as constituents who exercise the most advocacy, also receive the most educational benefits. Concomitantly, elite informants reveal that white parents exercise a high degree of advocacy on the state and local level. Their influence can be especially damaging for Title I funded principals as the white parents lobby against resources that Title I funds could provide. In this way racism and white privilege dictated state funding priorities.

In summary, elite informants critiqued the lack of political action of the general citizenry as a way to explain the legislative shift in addition to the failure of law makers to solicit the opinion of teachers and administrators. As a result, these informants find legislation lacks the insight of teachers’ unions and educators on the ground. This explanation may be significant in explaining the different foci of Barnes and Perdue. Under Perdue, the voices of educators were not heard; under Barnes their presence can be noted. While educators may not have had a voice in the crafting of legislation during

Barnes' tenure, their voices were heard as educators and teachers' organizations collectively worked to overthrow Roy Barnes in the November 7, 2002 election. While it may be overly simplistic to suggest that teacher displeasure alone was responsible for the demise of Roy Barnes, the data indicate that teacher displeasure was one of the important factors. Moreover, their collective voice was influential enough to persuade Sonny Perdue to reinstate teacher tenure as one of the first pieces of legislation after he assumed office.

**Other ways political advocates influence the state legislative decision-making process.** Because of a lack of political advocacy by those most affected by political decisions, elite informants suggest that this lack of political advocacy also affects the decision-making process. Elite informant Dailey suggested four reasons for legislation: 1) "legislation comes from constituents who have a particular problem; 2) legislation is based on personal issues that rise to the level of legislation; 3) legislators have their own ideas; 4) and legislators often use "ALEC" (personal interview, 2012, l. 177- 179). Ironically, ALEC was only mentioned by one elite informant even though it has been an influencing factor in generating school reform in Georgia. In this regard, legislation seemed to represent the voices and interests of a few. Moreover, Dailey clearly suggested that in the absence of political advocacy, other voices fill the void. As a result, those for whom the legislation held the most significant impact remained virtually silent whether from a lack of political advocacy or whether their opinions remained unsolicited. In this light elite informants suggest that the political machine responds to those who exercise the greatest amount of political leverage.

**Austerity cuts.** In the absence of political advocacy by educators and minority constituents, on the one hand, and the vocal and sustained political advocacy of a few on the other hand, state legislators utilized the void to exercise cuts to the state budget in the form of austerity cuts. Two of the elite informants, the former district chief finance officer and the state education lobbyist, commented on austerity cuts, one of the most persistent and continual acts during Perdue's tenure. These cuts, over a period of 10 years totaled more than \$4.5 billion on the state level and \$319 million on the district level. According to elite informant Taylor, a former chief financial officer in a local district, from a period of 2003 to 2010, the loss of these funds, coupled with recessions in 2003 and 2008, forced school officials to resort to measures directed at "maximizing" available funds (M. Taylor, personal interview, September 29, 2011; in-district document). Newspaper accounts reported that not only did Perdue cut funds from public schools, "but in 2003, the state cut funding for training by one-third and has yet to restore it" (Badertscher, Diamond, & Sarrio, 2011, pp. A1, A10).

One justification for the cuts, according to Taylor, was the weak economy. However, regarding this rationale, informants questioned the efficacy and necessity of the cuts during periods when there was no economic recession. Another informant, Dailey, commented on the ramifications of the cuts further adding "but austerity, I cannot comprehend, I cannot fathom why that was instituted. It's definitely not beneficial. I think it has hurt the morale of public school employees. I think it has definitely compromised our children's resources, without question and their opportunity to, to be more competitive (personal interview, October 4, 2011).

In summary, elite informants offer several rationales for legislative shifts under Governor Perdue's tenure. In discussing reform, they note the impact of a lack of political advocacy and activism that lends itself to a lack of representation in the legislative process, the lack of political awareness that lends itself toward political inactivity and finally the deprivation of funding through austerity cuts. While other reasons were mentioned, these appeared to be the most cogent explanations to explain why and how Georgia's educational reform shifted on the state level.

## **Chapter 6: Ramifications of Federal, State, and District Level Reform on the Local Level**

To examine how federal and state legislative reform is implemented on the local level, this study illuminates the response of Conquest County school district to the federal and state reforms. Additionally, it utilizes the perspectives of principals to analyze the impact of the reform measures on six predominately African American schools in Conquest County School District.

### **Overview of Conquest District**

Located in an urban center that is highly populated and diverse, Conquest was considered the second-most-affluent county with an African-American majority in the United States, behind Prince George's County, Maryland, in suburban Washington D.C. In 2010 the population of Conquest County was 691,893. The racial and ethnic makeup of the population was 54.3% black or African American (53.6% non-Hispanic black), 33.3% white, and 9.8% Hispanic or Latino” with 12.4 %” comprised of Native American, Asian Indian and others reporting two or more races ([http://www.ask.com/wiki/Conquest County,\\_Georgia](http://www.ask.com/wiki/Conquest_County,_Georgia), 2011; USA.com, 2010).

However, unlike Prince George's County, an economic divide separates Conquest's majority African-American population in the southern part of the county, from its majority White population, which tends to have incomes above the county's median and resides in the northern part of the county. In recent years, some communities in North Conquest have incorporated, following a trend set by other suburban areas around this metropolitan area. The result is a clear divide between the north end of the county and the south in taxation, property evaluation, and racial separation. North



Conquest is predominantly white. South Conquest is predominantly black. This district provides an important lens through which to examine the day-to-day influence of federal, state, and local legislation on the African American population in South Conquest.

### **Implementation of Federal and State Mandates in a Local School District**

In response to a flurry of legislation that accrued from 2002 to 2010, Conquest District implemented three identifiable programs. The first program, STAR<sup>13</sup>, linked directly to state legislation, and the other two reform initiatives linked directly to federal mandates: America's Choice and Parental Choice.

**STAR.** STAR was initiated in 2009 by the chief finance officer and the chief human resource officer to offset the shortfalls that Conquest experienced as a result of the austerity cuts imposed on school districts during Sonny Perdue's tenure. The purpose of the School Teaching and Administrative Resources program (STAR) was to maximize resources by allocating staff based on earned funding from student enrollment, inclusive of administrators and counselors. This program diverged from a previous district procedure that allocated resources based on principals' abilities to lobby. Initiated in 2009 and extended through 2011, the underlying purpose of STAR was to insure equal staffing of all schools based on earned funding. In response to state austerity cuts, district level leaders made decisions that, on the surface, seemed expedient and practical, although, based on the response of the district state liaison, the program had the effect of

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<sup>13</sup> STAR was a personnel distribution and staffing formula designed by elite informant M. Taylor, a former chief financial officer, and a former chief human resources officer to address financial shortfalls because of Governor Perdue's austerity cuts and the economic recession. Equally important, another purpose of this formula was to strictly assign personnel to schools based on their FTE earnings. The rationale for this measure was to ensure equal distribution of human resources. Ironically, this measure was designed to overturn the previous habit in the district of providing more staff for some schools. In their thinking, regardless of need, schools would receive only what they earned.

limiting autonomy or “operational flexibility” of the school leaders (S. Eberhart, personal interview, September 4, 2011).

In creating STAR, elite informant Taylor, former chief finance officer, commented that to cope with austerity cuts from the state level the district was forced to implement a program that would “maximize resources” (personal interview, September 30, 2011). Maximization of resources entailed the following: “1) elimination of positions; 2) reduction in size of staff; 3) reductions in days of work; 4) reduction in substitute pay<sup>14</sup>; 5) reduction in travel; and ( 6) increased class size” (M. Taylor, personal interview, September 30, 2011). Ironically, maximizing resources placed an unintended burden on schools already reeling from efforts to compensate for state budgetary actions.

For example, in an effort to maximize resources, all schools were allowed staffing based solely on their enrollment. Taylor explained the process in this way:

One of the things we implemented this year was a new staffing formula for the schools. You may be aware of the points process. Points are gone. We are not using points anymore. We are using the School, Teaching, and Administrative Resources, STAR formula for resources. And it makes sure that schools based on size get the same quantity of positions in [fiscal] year. (personal interview, September 30, 2011)

Rather than providing resources to schools according to need, elite informant Eberhart, district level liaison for state implementation, commented that “there has to be some consideration given to those schools “beyond that of the masses. We don’t do that. [This

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<sup>14</sup> A substitute, Ramsey, reported that substitute pay was reduced from \$120/day to \$90/day, (personal interview, May 17, 2012).

county does not give consideration to smaller schools that may be in Needs Improvement” (personal interview, September 4, 2011). As a result, a district that had been able to provide resources to meet the needs of all of its students, as well as compensate for early austerity cuts, suddenly found that it could only provide minimal staffing. In effect, schools that needed more resources to successfully implement reform, because of state artificially imposed financial exigencies, received *equal* resources, but not *equitable* resources. Thus, the result was that high need schools received only the staffing they earned rather than the staffing they needed.

Even though the STAR program was designed to address financial shortcomings, the result is that its implementation violated state guidelines for staffing schools in Needs Improvement status. The district liaison explained that the state<sup>15</sup>:  
Has an expectation that consideration be given to NI schools beyond what is done for the masses, but they cannot mandate it. The state has an expectation as to how districts will respond to lowest achieving schools. A portion of the grant should go to putting money in place for lowest achieving schools. (S. Eberhardt, personal interview, September 4, 2011).

With STAR, the disconnect between designing a program to address state cuts conflicted with expectations of state board of education officials. While state legislators cut financial resources, state board of education officials expected that districts would provide for the needs of schools labeled “in needs improvement.” The result was a series of disconnects from the state level to the district level that inevitably trickled down to the local level.

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<sup>15</sup>State can mean state legislature and \*state department of education that is called the Office of School Turn Around and the focus is on the lowest performing schools in each one of the 26 districts involved in RT3. In this case, the informant means the state department of education.

These disconnects resulted from state legislators cutting funds while state educators expected local school systems to provide additional resources. They also manifested themselves in the form of a local school district cutting resources in the form of fewer teachers—human capital—with the expectation that local leaders would still provide quality instruction.

**America's Choice.** A second response to federal reform by Conquest School District was to use the America's Choice program. America's Choice, one of the reform programs that focused on language arts and math, was selected by the district. Unlike STAR which emanated directly from state legislation, America's Choice links directly to federal mandates to improve student achievement in language arts and math and was one of the options funded with Title I monies. It does not link to any particular state reform mandate.

Title I is one of the means provided by the federal government to deliver funds to high poverty populations. According to district level informants, this funding is accompanied by specific guidelines as to how the funds should be spent. Title I monies were originally designed to provide educational funding for students who receive free and reduced lunch. In Conquest, for example, Title I funding was used to augment district-wide reform under the programming of America's Choice. Though initially a county-wide reform mandated for all schools, as funds diminished, the implementation of America's Choice changed. Instead of governing reform for the whole district, America's Choice, with its Title I restrictions became a mandate for high poverty schools, predominantly on the South end of the county. Title-I mandates became a one-size fits all

program for principals who received their Title I funding. Also, inherent in the reform model was a focus on language arts and math.

**Parental Choice.** Parental Choice is an example of district level reform that does not relate to the state but to federal reform under NCLB guidelines. Under federal guidelines, when schools fail to make AYP, districts could offer options ranging from supplemental services to parental choice (H. Harris, personal interview, March 28, 2013). In Conquest, district leaders offered alternatives through Parental Choice to parents whose children attended schools that failed to make AYP. In implementing this program, the district provided information for parents and facilitated student withdrawals from failing schools from the district level.

### **Principals' Response to Mandated Federal and State Reforms**

Six African American principals were interviewed to reveal how reform filters through the varied levels into local schools. All of their schools were more than 90% African American and received Title I funding for students from low income families. The principals' tenure ranged from one and one-half years to nine years. They represented three middle schools and three high schools. All currently serve in South Conquest, although three have had administrative experience on the north end of the county. Two served as assistant principals on the north end, and one served as a principal. All of their current schools are Title I schools meaning that more than half of the student body qualifies for the federal free or reduced lunch program. Each principal offered a unique glimpse into the nature of his or her job as they have experienced federal, state, and district level reform. See Table 3 for an overview of the characterization of these

principals and their schools. Pseudonyms are used to replace real names of principals as well as the high schools in which they served.

Table 3

*Administrative Description of Conquest Study Principals*

Name of Principal (pseudonyms)	Type of School	Number of Years as Principal	Number of Years as Assistant Principal	Number of Years with Other Experience	Total North/South End Experience
	High =H Middle = M	North end = N South end = S	North end = N South end = S		
B. Tillson	M	5 yrs. S	Asst. Principal 2 yrs. N	3 yrs. as area coordinator	5 S 2 N
T. Bookman	M	9 yrs. S	Asst. Principal 6 yrs. S	N/A	15 S
V. Everson	M	4 yrs. S	Lead Teacher 6 yrs. N	1 ½ yrs. as area coordinator	4 S 6 N
Q. Codley	H	1 ½ yrs. S	Asst. Principal 8 yrs. S		9 ½ S
H. Harris	H	6 yrs. S	Asst. Principal 6 yrs. S		12 S
F. Peterson	H	3 yrs. N 4 yrs. S	Asst. Principal 6 yrs. N		4 S 9 N
<b>Total</b>	3 M 3 H	30 ½ yrs. S 3 yrs. N	20 yrs. S 14 yrs. N	4 ½ District level experience	

**District implementation of programs.** The principals expressed direct concerns about the implementation of STAR and parental choice on the district level, and America's Choice, specifically as it related to Title I. All of the principals shared similar views in this area.

**STAR.** In conversations, principals' primary concern about STAR was that it limited the size of their staff. For example, overall, they believed this program was a one-size fits all approach that failed to address their specific staffing needs. Principal Everson best expressed the attitude with

You have to look at ... the decisions that you're making, and not give it a cookie cutter type approach where everything's applicable for everybody, and everybody's going to do it. You have to look at individuality. You know, you have to see how it's going to impact individual schools. (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

District level "one-size fits all" reform efforts surfaced in several areas. District level "one-size fits all" reform also surfaced in the areas of Human Resources and Finance to "maximize resources" (M. Taylor, personal interview, September 30, 2011) based on funds.

In the principals' description, the district's attempts at reform also hampered the efforts of Title I principals in the area of staffing. On the one hand, schools relied on district formulas to staff their schools and on the other hand, they relied on district staff to determine how funds were appropriated to implement particular reform efforts. In each case, these district decisions were made unilaterally and did not help principals in their schools.

**America's Choice.** America's Choice proved problematic for principals as well because it did not address the needs of the schools. Because funds could only be used to address language arts and math, principals whose schools could benefit from either a different or wider focus found themselves unable to spend funds on their perceived needs.

As was the case with STAR, principals expressed frustration with the “one-size fits all” approach that also characterized America’s Choice. Harris complained, “But one size doesn’t fit all” (personal interview, August 18, 2012). He further reiterated that in a county as large as Conquest with “137, 138 schools... you don’t pick one uh, alternative for every school, and make every school participate in that. And that turned a lot of people off... particularly leaders that had other ideas of what they needed for their schools (H. Harris, personal interview, August 17, 2012). Painting a picture of the irrelevance of a cookie cutter reform, Bookman remarked, “I would like to have been able to have seen several models that we could have selected from, based on the needs of our individual schools, not just you know one size fits all” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). For example at Springfield High School where Mr. Harris serves as principal, America’s Choice was totally inappropriate because it failed to address the school’s academic needs. Springfield High School, as explained by Principal Harris, already had high scores in English. His areas of need, science and math, went unaddressed because of the district mandate (H. Harris, personal interview, August 17, 2012).

Mr. Harris describes his frustration with a mandate that clearly did not meet his school’s needs:

There are certain policies, several policies that I’ve liked, but I didn’t like how it has been rolled out at our local level. We didn’t have choice but we had to participate in -- America’s Choice. And we spend a lot of money with the America’s Choice program. But the one size doesn’t fit all. Rather than having something forced down our throats and then we have to spend a lot of time with training for these new programs and we have to use these programs because



they've been paid for with the county dollars. (personal interview, August, 17, 2012)

In effect, America's Choice<sup>16</sup>, a program Conquest purchased to help meet NCLB AYP goals, often restricted principals rather than meeting their schools' needs. However, five principals cited the initiation and implementation of STAR, Parental Choice, and America's Choice as problematic reform efforts from the local level. One principal, Principal Peterson, provided a clear distinction between his experiences as a principal in a predominantly white non-Title I funded school in North Conquest and his experiences in South Conquest. He described his experience in a non-Title I school thusly:

...because when you're out at schools like ... Destiny High or Creekside nothing is really ever, you don't get programs pushed on you...not to this extent because most of us are Title I schools. And I guess Title I schools have always had stuff pushed on them. (personal interview, August 2, 2012)

Conversely, he contrasted his ability to make choices about his programs in a non-Title I funded school with his present situation in a pre-dominantly African American Title I funded school:

When it comes to America's Choice they're coming in and working with one part of your population, you have to spend your money on it. Because even when they were paying for it, you still had to put some part of your money into it and you build your schedule differently to accommodate for it. I didn't really feel that at Destiny High. I really didn't feel that I had to do this. (F. Peterson, personal interview August 2, 2012, )

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<sup>16</sup> Because America's Choice is a for profit program, any district that opted to purchase the package could avail itself of the program.

His outlier responses suggest that the way reform is implemented in North Conquest was different from the other principals in the South.

*Parental Choice.* Principals expressed concern about how the district executed the Parental Choice policy as well. However, their concerns are less with the policy and more linked to Title I's mandated implementation of it in the district. In this regard, principals in the study magnified the impact of parental choice on schools failing to achieve AYP. In some cases, the district facilitated parental choice based on the NCLB requirement that parents in "failing schools" be advised regarding their choice of options. However, parental choice carried with it consequences for local schools.

An additional unintended consequence also occurred. Principals report that the district staff member who was responsible for implementing Title I actually served as a catalyst for parental withdrawals by publishing the NCLB mandatory "status of the school" letter. Upon receiving the letter indicating whether their child's school had achieved AYP, parents sometimes exercised their right to transfer to another school. In this regard, principals in the study discussed the impact and consequences of district implementation of parental choice letters on schools failing to achieve AYP. Two of the main consequences that accompanied parental choice to remove students are described as "brain drain" and an "AYP roller coaster."

Further, regarding the distribution of the Parental Choice letters as mandated by Title I, district-level personnel also initiated the withdrawal of students without the principals' knowledge. Initiating the withdrawal process had a negative effect. For example, Principal Codley was adamant about wanting to have the opportunity to make her case before students withdrew from her school when she said, "I think principals of

labeled schools should be given the opportunity to make their case with their stakeholders (personal interview, August 15, 2012). Everson concurred that principals needed an opportunity to sell their schools first (personal interview, August 15, 2012). Codley emphasized that parents have those rights, but because the labeling often does not present a full or accurate picture, parents may be withdrawing their children based on erroneous information (Q. Codley, personal interview, August 15, 2012). In her case, even though the district deemed the particular letter to parents as a “customer service,” the district letter failed to inform parents that Pine Cone missed AYP by only two students. However, without consulting principals, the customer service became a disservice for schools involved. In short, parents were only provided one side of the story. As a result, parents removed students from situations that may not have merited removal. Moreover, this facet of school reform had an impact on schools in that when students were withdrawn, in many instances, the students who scored higher on standardized tests were withdrawn, thus resulting in a “brain-drain” on the schools (T. Bookman, personal interview, July 31, 2012; V. Everson, personal interview, August 15, 2012).

Further, the districts’ actions, rather than helping schools retain their students, actually facilitated students’ transfers. In the case of Conquest school district, in an attempt to be proactive and comply with state law (ACT), district-level officials also sent letters at the beginning of the school year to parents whose children would be upcoming ninth graders to alert them of their right to transfer their children to another school that was not “failing”. Mrs. Codley, principal of Pine Cone School, described how prior to the beginning of the school year, “the county withdrew 100” of her students without her knowledge. She expressed her frustration thusly:

I have a burden in my heart because of NCLB I started my year with a loss of 101 students. They either went to Lebanese High School, Destiny High School, or Creekside<sup>17</sup> High. I don't feel that they will get a good education. ... I am bothered by the district b/c they withdrew the children electronically without [allowing] me to plead my case. 90% of the people who come here did not withdraw their kids. [I missed] "AYP in English. I needed 209 and I had 208 to pass. Now the kids are somewhere else—they created brain drain in my school. I had 35, now I have 7" (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

Another outcome of this the district sending letters notifying parents of their choice is what elite informant Schultz referred to as the "AYP roller coaster" (personal interview, September 29, 2011). In his description, Schultz, district level educator lobbyist, discussed what occurred once a school makes AYP, and offered an explanation contradictory to that of Principal Codley. For example, Schultz offered that when students transferred from one school to another that makes AYP, the influx/migration of students from other schools sometimes causes the test scores of the receiving school—the one that made AYP—to decrease (personal interview, September 29, 2012). That school then works diligently to regain its AYP status and the cycle begins anew.

Brain drain, a result of the AYP roller coaster that accompanied the labeling of schools and subsequent student transfer from labeled schools, was often critiqued by principals. Peterson commented that despite NCLB's intent of "pulling up the lowest kids" those students who actually left the school were in his words "the better students" (personal interview, August 2, 2012). This exodus of his better students created smaller

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<sup>17</sup> These school names represent pseudonyms for other schools to which students transferred and were contributors to "brain drain" and "AYP

classes, but also resulted in “brain drain.” Consequently, the AYP roller coaster had a two-pronged effect: on the one hand when many of the more capable students left their home school (residentially assigned schools), their departure created a brain drain in the home. On the other hand, according to Principal Peterson, the influx of students actually hurt the scores of his receiving school. He explains the paradox with “I didn’t know where the better kids went” (personal interview, August 2, 2012)

Everson (personal interview, August 15, 2012) explains another aspect of this AYP roller coaster. Everson suggested that parents withdraw their children from one school that fails to make AYP to attend another school that made AYP for two years in a row. He suggested that because a school made AYP does not mean that the school that did not make AYP was not doing the same things that the achieving school was doing. He did suggest, however, that a variety of factors could affect whether two schools that were doing very similar things and might have very different results. For example in his interview, Everson provided this insight

[Parents] ... were not educated enough on No Child Left Behind and the mandates of it; and made a judgment to leave that school, that was in that neighborhood, doing well, and they made that decision not fully informed.

He adds that he believes that parents have to be educated first (V. Everson, personal interview, August 15, 2012). In the same manner that Codley believed that she had the right to sell her school, Everson concurs and suggests that “before you just give opportunities like that, you have to sell your school to make sure” that they [parents] are informed about the particulars that caused the school not to make AYP with the ultimate goal of keeping your kids in your school (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

### **Principals' Response to the Unintended Consequences of Federal and State Reform**

The six principals in Conquest expressed other responses to reform that had little or nothing to do with direct district implementation of either federal, state, or district reform programs. In providing additional responses, principals discussed areas of implementation that derived from the failure to achieve AYP such as negative labeling, the stigma attached to principals, teachers, and students who serve in Title I funded schools, their limited capacity to use accelerated programs, the lack of sustainability for programs in general and their lack of voice regarding reform.

**Response to negative labeling of local schools.** In addition to their concerns regarding parents withdrawing students as a result of district letters, principals were also concerned about the overall negative labeling of their schools. They spoke extensively about the negative perception that accompanied failure to make AYP. Whether that perception is perpetuated by the media, by the district itself, or carried by word of mouth, parents with misperceptions of African American schools often send their students to schools on the northern end of the county in order to get what they think is a better education. Regarding the negative labeling of schools, whether deliberate or inadvertent, the state and Conquest district actions coincide to help children withdraw from their low-performing home schools. The state used the negative labeling of failing schools to convince parents that their low performing home schools have failed their children and that they needed alternatives.

Principals Everson and Codley continue to be aggravated with the pejorative labeling of their schools and the district's response. To this point Mrs. Codley remarked, "Most of Conquest' schools were labeled as "flunk" but they don't print the breakdown.

It says “failing school and the only ones who can transfer are economically disadvantaged kids” (personal interview, August 15, 2011). Codley also explained how, because of uninformed acceptance of labeling, parents spread the word about the perceived non-performance of schools and the labeling negatively impacts students by lowering their self-esteem and reducing their school pride. In this instance, Codley counter-acted this perception by going around to classrooms and telling her students “you know, we’re a really good school.” She continued that the student did not know or think that she was in a good school and she [the student] was not aware that “over 80% of the students were performing.” Ultimately, Everson and Codley concluded that having uninformed parents can hurt the school. According to Codley, another aspect of the negative labeling was that newspapers only report whether schools make AYP with a yes or no. They fail to capture the nuances of student achievement and thus present only one side of the picture: pass or fail. In contrast to all the other principals, Peterson clearly appreciated the labeling because along with labeling came a state-assigned coach who “forced” the school to look at their data (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

The principals reported that much of the information about their schools came from the media. Supported by both Codley and Everson, parents accepted media stereotypes readily without first exploring or investigating what might be going on in the schools. Parental reliance on commercial media was troubling to these principals because some parents were more likely to believe the truncated descriptions of schools rather than talk with the principals regarding the schools’ progress or lack thereof.

Everson explained the sources thusly:

Who puts out the information? The State of Georgia puts it out on their website, and they obviously put it out to the local media, and newspaper outlets, and television broadcasts... They put it out but the district also puts the information out as well to the parents. And the local schools, we put it out as well; as AYP, whether we made it or not. (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

Even when schools may be performing well, the local media may place a negative slant on their performance. In the case of Conquest, Principal Harris reported that headlines in a local newspaper described his school as having lost 60 graduates. Upon closer scrutiny; however, Principal Harris explained that his school had 297 seniors of which 237 graduated. While the paper reported the loss, it failed to capture the reasons for the loss. Hence, in many cases, even when schools are performing above state and district levels community and media often portray schools as non-performing.

Although principals did not name it, their observations provide a link with the state. In this case, the state seemed to capitalize on the negative labeling. Specifically, the state's goal was to further the growth of charter schools in this state that "has contributed to enhanced student performance, greater efficiency and parental satisfaction" (ACT 155, 2008) and "provided parents with the ability to make choices that best fit the individual needs of their children." As mentioned earlier, HB881 (Act 155), a second piece of legislation, specifically outlined the states' intent to establish alternate schools to enhance student achievement.

**Stigma attached to schools as a result of Title I designation.** One of the most interesting and unsuspected findings is the way in which the Title I designation



stigmatizes the schools, principals, students, and parents. Just as principals voiced concern regarding negative labeling related to AYP, they also described stigma related to Title I. Even though there is no explicit statement that indicates that principals in Title I funded schools lack the knowledge, skill, or expertise to run their programs, district actions belie unspoken attitudes. Principal Codley suggested that Title I funded schools do indeed suffer from stigma. Ironically, the perception exists that a principal who serves in a Title I funded school that is also an underperforming school is, thereby, considered an underperforming or poorly performing principal.

The assumption that principals who serve on the south-end of the district lack skills or expertise necessary to help their students succeed was reiterated in a follow-up interview with Harris, Codley, and Everson (TITUS interview, March 28, 2013). In this interview they indicated that the district also perceived that principals on the south end of the county lacked skill as supported by its shifting of north-end principals to serve in low performing schools on the south-end of the district. These south-end principals asserted that the district moved principals from the north end of the county to serve in low performing schools on the south end because they felt the north-end principals had better skills. In addition to moving these principals, the district also gave them an additional \$10,000.00 bonus to serve in the low-performing schools on the south-end (Q. Codley, H. Harris, V. Everson, personal interview, March 28, 2013).

Further, whether a reform program was mandated or not seems to be a minor distinction, principal interviews revealed that principals serving in Title I funded schools perceived themselves to be “micromanaged” and overly directed. Bookman added, “It’s just a controlling mechanism... they don’t have enough confidence in the people that

they have in place to allow them to do the things that are necessary for children” (personal interview, August 31, 2012).

**Lack of acceleration with Title I funding.** Another limitation placed upon these principals was their constraint to only use Title I funds for remediation rather than acceleration. Both principals Tillson and Everson offered critiques of reform as mediated through the allocation of funds. While Everson critiqued Title I funding for its limited emphasis on courses, in another example, Tillson critiqued Title I’s emphasis on remediation rather than achievement. In her critique, she provides an example of when she wanted to purchase Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) books for her children to better prepare them to take the PSAT. Because PSAT represented enhancement instead OF remediation, her district denied her request to use Title I funds.

**Sustainability of reform programs.** One of the main challenges of reform on the district level that relates directly to the distribution of federal funds is how those funds are utilized and their sustainability. Codley discussed contributing factors to this lack of district-wide sustainability: lack of proper training, hurried implementation and changing reform delivery models (personal interview, August 15, 2012). All in all Principal Codley commented that even when reform measures are implemented on the district level, they are executed haphazardly and fail to give teachers or principals adequate preparation to adequately train. When this occurs, principals report that faculty take a wait and see approach to the reform. In taking this wait and see approach, they fail to embrace the reform and often waste district resources.

**Absence of principals’ voice in reform matters.** Perhaps because of their perceived lack of skill, one of the most prevalent and pervasive challenges in Conquest,

as emphasized by principals, is the lack of communication with the superintendent and other members of her cabinet. This lack of communication is characterized by a top-down philosophy in which directives and information flow from the top down and very rarely from the bottom up. With top-down reform “no one asks the principal what he feels or thinks” (H. Harris, personal interview, August 18, 2012). Only in the case of principal communication with a Regional Superintendent does the communication flow emanate from the bottom-up. Even then, Harris suggested that when principals talk to their supervisors regarding their ideas about reform, “there’s usually no feedback... given back to the local schools” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). Harris further commented that “I was one of the few that voiced my opinion and [was] told that it was a federal mandate and to be quiet.” Further, principals “are not allowed to talk to the people that make decisions... and we’re not supposed to talk to board members.... Like if someone brings an idea then we are allowed to talk to them. But usually, that doesn’t happen... but usually there’s not feedback given back to us [at] the local schools. I can’t call the Superintendent...I’ve been told not to pick up the phone” (H. Harris, personal interview, August 18, 2012). The communication flow in Conquest has assumed a “top-down” dynamic. In this model principals are isolated except for tenuous communication channels that may exist with their regional superintendents. With little or no feedback, principals are left to their own resources for guidance. Even though principals are silenced, when interviewed, they expressed specific perspectives regarding reform in their schools.

### **Convergence or Divergence of Federal, State, and Local Interests**

In addition to their perspectives about federal, state, or district level reform, the principals also expressed ideas that are not related to reform. In the section that follows, I overview responses that show how they respond to reform in ways that have nothing to do with the mandates. Five of the principals expressed similar concerns. A sixth principal provided responses that are different from the other five. The section that follows outlines all concerns.

**Principals' disregard for reform.** All principals expressed their disregard for federal and state mandated reform. Because of their disregard for federal and state mandates, these principals expressed that federal and state reform seemed to diverge from their schools' interest. Ironically, even though the state engaged in legislative actions to impact school reform, when asked about their knowledge of federal or state legislation, some principals indicated that they felt the legislation was all the same whether it derived from the federal, state, or district levels. For example, Codley commented that "at my level I see it as one" (personal interview, August 15, 2012), and Principal Bookman commented that there were no differences between federal and state mandates (personal interview, August 31, 2012). Harris aptly summarized the sentiment when asked whether he perceived a difference when he responded,

not really because whatever the federal government hands down, the state adopted first and it trickles down to the district and we follow what the *filtered* mandates are. We have not deviated from anything that's been given from the federal government (personal interview, August 17, 2012).

Their responses to district level reform illustrate that these principals gave little or no regard for the reform of the day. Further, rather than seeing reform as helpful, the

principals viewed reform as something to work around. For example, Harris stated that “I’ve told people for years unofficially that the AYP mandate was a joke. We found that out in the last couple of years. As you see, we’ve steered away from AYP.” He further added, “It was a sham. It was given to us by legislators ... most had no educational background” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). He added that NCLB would not get his school where it needed to be. In a PTA Curriculum Night parental meeting, Harris further reiterated his lack of regard for NCLB in his opening remarks: “NCLB and AYP that’s not what drives us... what drives us is student achievement. We want them to have the same opportunities that we had as young people” (H. Harris, curriculum night transcript, August 25, 2011).

Concurring with Harris’s comments, when asked which of the reform mandates that Tillson had experienced were helpful, she vehemently replied, “I would say none.” When probed to clarify whether she meant reform on federal, state, or district levels, she reiterated, “I would say none” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). To further illustrate the extent to which these principals reject “trickle-down” school reform, Principal Tillson opined,

...in most cases, I do things for compliance, but it doesn’t impact my kids at all... We’ve always analyzed the data, looked at the domains, and taught that way or whatever the teachers think the students needed to know. Well, my results illustrate far higher than my colleagues’ results. Yes, some people may have bought the Coach books, I didn’t.

So I do what’s best for my kids.... I comply 10% and 90% is what’s needed for our children.... (personal interview, August 18, 2012)

Even though principals say that they did not focus on and saw little value in federal, state, or district reform they did focus on self-imposed strategies to increase achievement. These included their sense of responsibility, vision, laser-like focus on instruction and agency to serve their student populations. All of these are chronicled below.

**Principals' foci and responsibility.** Each principal in the study expressed a heavy responsibility to see his or her school succeed. An aspect of principals' foci and responsibility derives from recognition that if student achievement is to occur, the principal must lead. This sense of responsibility emanates from principals feeling that "if things fall apart, the principal is blamed" (B. Tillson, personal interview, August 3, 2012). For example, Ms. Tillson expressed that, despite the problems imposed on her school by the district, "I really look at it as if, it's just me -- that I'm responsible," implying that the sole responsibility for her students rests on her shoulders.

Codley expressed that it was her responsibility to "take the hurt and [spin] it positively so it won't influence the children and that it can help the children" (personal interview, August 15, 2012). She continued that "my goal... this year, is to shield as much as the things that we can't control, that may influence my teachers, my students, and my parents negatively from that." In essence, this principal thought it was her responsibility to shield her staff from forces that might have a negative impact on her school.

Principals also expressed the belief that, concomitant with other responsibilities, the responsibility for school success weighed firmly on their shoulders. They expressed a keen sense of responsibility for developing thinking skills that would enhance their

ability to move their students to the next level (B. Tillson, personal interview, August 3, 2012; T. Bookman, personal interview, August 31, 2012; Q. Codley personal interview, August 15, 2012; V. Everson, personal interview, August 15, 2012; H. Harris, personal interview, August 17, 2012). Harris discussed his instructional responsibility as principal, when he admitted that “it was my responsibility to support the agenda and the vision of the district but I always told my people, always, and they’ll tell you, that regardless of what acronym they send to us, or what agenda they send to us, our agenda is to give these kids the same opportunity” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). Codley added that her responsibility was also to prepare a place where children can learn: “I do believe that my love for children and my desire to see them succeed, evidenced by my walk; it filters down to the teachers in the building, and I think ultimately a parent does want their children in a place where... they can achieve academically...” (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

**Principals’ agenda or vision.** Each of the principals in the study expressed a particular agenda, vision, or goal for her school. For example, Harris, emphasized that “I just told our teachers to teach and make sure that our kids graduate and that was my mandate” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). Part of his vision was in demanding that teachers teach embodied a perspective and expectation from his faculty and students. This notion was embodied in his statement that “You’ve got to have good teachers in front of these kids. And people say all the time that kids don’t want to learn. It’s who stands in front of those kids.” Harris admitted that he admonished his teachers to give his students opportunities so that when they leave, they can be whatever they want to be. Codley emphasized that “my agenda is good teaching. I remain convinced that if you

have good teaching and engaged students, that success just has to be a natural outcome” (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

An additional aspect of the principals’ vision was that, at least in the case of Harris, he is not trying to change education in general or the world or Conquest (personal interview, August 17, 2012). He expressed, however, that he might be able to effect change in his school. This agenda, though singularly focused, narrows his vision and insured that he remained focused on his school’s needs. In this way, he insisted the he must “stay in his lane; that I’m staying in my corner”.

**Principals know what their schools need.** Without exception, each principal expressed that s/he knew the needs of his/her school and tailored instruction to meet those needs despite district mandates. More often than not, principals indicated that they were very much in touch with their students’ educational needs because they used their schools’ data to drive instruction. Mr. Harris most succinctly affirmed his status as an educator, when he vehemently asserted that “I am a practitioner of education and I know what my kids need” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). As a practitioner conversant in the needs of his students, he used data to drive the instruction. In this regard, Harris provided a clear portrait of his school’s needs:

NCLB concentrated on math and English. And if you look, our English scores... had been very high. That was a waste of money... and so since the English scores were already high in the county it didn’t make sense to concentrate on that.

This confidence exudes from other principals who also describe their understanding of what their own schools need. For example, in at least two cases, principals rejected district mandated reform measures and opted to place emphasis on



areas of student need indicated by a thorough knowledge of the school's data. In another example, Principal Tillson emphasized that her students "experience what I know is best for them." For example, she explained how several years ago [the district mandated] Coach Books to help students pass the CRCT and "I never used the Coach books" (personal interview, August 3, 2012). She continued, not only did she exhibit knowledge of her students' needs, but in doing so, she rejected the district's recommendation, used her own recommendation and experienced higher scores. She explained the process thusly:

We've always analyzed the data, looked at the domains, and taught that way or whatever the teachers think the students needed to know. Well my results illustrate far higher than my colleagues' result. So, yes, some people may have bought the Coach Books, I didn't.

In short, Principals Harris, Codley, Bookman, Everson, and Tillson discovered what was in the best interest of her students and told their teachers to teach in that manner, regardless of the mandates.

**Principals create climates of high expectations.** All principals focused on maintaining the kind of atmosphere where students could come to school to learn. This included focusing on and insuring that students could achieve their dreams. Embedded in this attitude, principals held high expectations for their students. Although multi-faceted, their emphasis always focused on the children and what was in their best interest. For example at Pine Cone High School, the catch phrase is "keeping the main thing the main thing." In conversation with the principal, the principal explained that she wants to always remind her teachers that the children are the main thing, main focus and that has

to be their singular focus (Q. Codley, personal interview, August 15, 2012). Everson, for example, suggests that “day to day accountability is more important because we are held accountable for ensuring students’ time with us, on a daily basis” (personal interview, August 15, 2012).

Equally important, these principals espoused a commitment to giving students the best opportunity to succeed. For example, Mr. Harris explained his focus when he said, I’m committed to seeing that they get what they need while they’re in high school. That whatever dreams that they as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader had before they came to high school they can receive before they leave as a senior. (personal interview, August 17, 2012).

Repeatedly, the principals in this study expressed their knowledge and confidence in their ability to create positive learning environments that would meet the needs of their children. In many ways, these principals expressed a sentiment similar to Governor Barnes when he continually stressed that good education was not “rocket science” but required a knowledge of what is best for students (personal interview, November 15, 2012).

**Emphasis on quality classroom instruction.** A large part of their concern for students grew out of a focus on the quality of classroom instruction. Harris summarized the impact of quality instruction when he said, “the rubber meets the road in the classroom. That has never changed” (personal interview, August 17, 2012). According to Harris, this emphasis on quality classroom instruction ran the gamut from insisting that having highly qualified teachers is the minimal requirement for students that these principals serve (personal interview, August 17, 2012). The principals also emphasized

the necessity for a clear focus on test data. Next, they emphasized the importance of teaching critical thinking skills (H. Harris, personal interview, August 17, 2012). In his interview, Harris was emphatic: “I want to always emphasize the importance of [how] we teach to make sure students develop skills, critical thinking skills, that are going to help them currently, and in the future, and in whatever endeavor they pursue. Post high school. Post-secondary.” Embedded in his observations was the clear mandate that as he lead his school, he was not just concerned with students passing a test, but he was more concerned with preparing students for the future. He was equally confident that “if you do the right things, you make sure students are progressing, students are learning, students are developing skills. Then when they are assessed, on a standardized test, they’re going to do well if they have the foundation on the basic skills.”

In every instance, principals in this study insisted that the most important aspect of the school day is what goes on in the classroom. Beginning with the quality of the teacher, Principal Codley was quick to emphasize that being highly qualified is not enough to serve her students. She extended NCLB’s definition of “highly qualified” beyond a person who is certified in an area and can only teach in that area as a minimum requirement. Along with that definition, she insisted that not only must her teachers be highly qualified in terms of content, but they must also be “called to teach” and have a specific desire to teach children who qualify for Title I funding (Q. Codley, personal interview, August 15, 2012).

**Use of their own sense of agency and autonomy.** In the face of a district that consistently used a cookie cutter mentality in dealing with schools, principals in this study often resorted to their own agency to make things happen. Sometimes their actions

disregarded district mandates. Two examples exemplify how these principals operated within their schools and without regard to district mandates. Traditionally schools have set their own open house dates and times as long as they occurred within the first two weeks of school. One year, the new administration mandated a specific date for high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools with no input from the principals. They mandated two hours for middle school. Principal Tillson commented that she needed more time because her parents liked to come in and visit with their teachers. The district also mandated that teachers attend staff development training on the same day. In essence, the district wanted the teachers in training all day and then wanted them to host Open House the same evening. Exercising her authority and agency, Principal Tillson set her own Open House hours, 1:30–6:30, so that parents had flexibility in their hours. She sent one representative to the training and told her staff to report at 11:00 a.m. or use flex time. In this way, she maximized her faculty time and provided a viable visitation for her parents (B. Tillson, personal interview, 2012).

In another instance, Codley reportedly exemplified a sense of agency when the district inadvertently withdrew 100 children from her school. Instead of requesting permission, she declared a moratorium on withdrawals until the parents had the opportunity to conference with her personally. To counter the district's actions, the principal remarked that "When I got 60 [withdrawals], I declared a moratorium and told them don't withdraw another child unless they talked to me" (Q. Codley, personal interview, August 15, 2012). Exercising her own autonomy, not only did she counteract the district's actions, but she saved students who might otherwise have gone to other schools because of the parents' lack of knowledge regarding the schools. The implication

is that the parents who came to the school physically and actually had an opportunity to experience the atmosphere in the school did not withdraw their children. Although this principal was able to make school decisions irrespective of district guidelines, this capacity is not typical.

Of the six principals in the study, all discussed district restriction on their autonomy. Frustrated by the county mandate to make AYP, Mr. Harris offered this commentary:

People are making decisions about how to make AYP, yet principals do not know the goals – re: the 2011-2012 school year and in August after school has started, principals do not know how AYP will be measured. How are they to prepare students? (H. Harris, personal interview, August 18, 2011).

With these comments Mr. Harris demonstrated how, despite mandates, he exercised his own autonomy and did what was best for his students:

No one has given us any verified data that AYP did anything for any of these schools that were placed in needs improvement. It was a sham. It was given to us by legislators, with a lot, most had no educational background. When it came to us, I was one of the few that voiced my opinion and, told that it was a federal mandate and to be quiet. It was something we were going have to do. But I didn't place a lot of emphasis on it at my school. I just told our teachers to teach and make sure that our kids graduate and that was what my mandate was. But the No Child Left Behind and Adequate Yearly Progress as I think it took us back to be honest with you as far as educators and as far as the system. I know the intentions

were well intended but it did nothing to advance student achievement (personal interview, August 18, 2011).

Despite consensus in the above areas one principal's perspective was different from his colleagues. This principal is the same one discussed in the previous chapter who began his principalship on the north end of the county. Unlike the other principals who discussed a desire to work with their schools' constituents inclusive of parents and students, Principal Peterson said he was "done," and "wants out" (personal interview, August 2, 2012). Among the main reasons that he provided for "wanting out" from his school are the complexities associated with extracurricular activities such as band and football, the workload, the long hours, board interference, and the parents who complain. Although all the other principals experienced these same demands, Peterson considered all of the distractions "foolishness" and said he would rather focus on academics (F. Peterson, personal interview, August 2, 2012).

Peterson was also different from his colleagues in that he was the only principal in the study who expressed gratitude for being a "needs improvement" school because, with this designation, came a state facilitator. Unlike the other five principals who knew their schools' needs, held a laser-like focus on instruction, and who analyzed their own data, Peterson revealed that he was grateful that the state facilitator forced him to analyze data. Further, unlike the other five principals, Peterson welcomed the directives. He praised his state facilitator, a former district coordinator and principal.

**Summary.** Several key points emerge from reform on the district level. First, the district reforms were not related to the state. Interestingly, the district seemed primarily concerned with reform that related to monetary matters: STAR was a district level

staffing formula that related directly to state level cuts and America’s Choice, the district’s designated reform program, was related to federal mandates and funded through Title I. Another district level requirement to fulfill federal mandates was the requirement of Parental Choice Letters. Though a federal mandate, the way the district implemented the federal policy proved most problematic for principals. No other district level reforms related to the goals of federal legislation are evident. These findings also reveal that the principals find reform restrictive, feel that they are not a part of reform conversations or decisions, and for the most part ignore reforms. Instead, they focus on the following areas to improve achievement: they did not follow district level reform, they tried to work around the negativity, they tried to create autonomy, and they focused on the needs of their own schools, and most importantly, the needs of the children in their schools. Table 4 demonstrates the disconnections between federal, state, and district reform and principal

Table 4

*Alignment of Federal, State and District Reform Measures*

Federal Mandate	State Legislation and Actions	District Actions
NCLB		America’s Choice: One Curricular Reform Model
AYP Sanctions		Parental Choice Letters
Highly Qualified Teachers		
	Austerity Cuts	STAR
	Tax Exemptions/Vouchers	
	Flexibility in Schools	

This table shows that there is little congruence between federal reforms and state reforms. Instead of implementing federal reform, Georgia appears to have used federal

guidelines as a subterfuge for its reform actions. The district implemented few reforms and when it did, it is likely to link to federal or state reform. Rather than being driven by ideology, the district seemed driven by money, particularly Title I monies.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

This dissertation set out to understand the convergence of state, and local reform under the federal NCLB mandate by answering the following research questions.

1. What school reforms were initiated in Georgia from 2000 to 2010?
2. What explanations did stakeholders provide to explain state-sponsored reform initiatives?



3. How were these state mandates implemented in one local predominantly African American school district?
4. What were the responses of local school leaders to state and district reforms?
5. How did federal, state, and local interests converge or diverge?

The results of this study indicate that regarding the educational reforms in Georgia, two distinct trends emerged. The first trend was marshaled by Governor Roy Barnes from 2000 to 2002 and represented period of educational equity for all. Reform under his leadership ran the gamut from pre-K to College with funding along every level. Conversely, Governor Barnes' successor, Sonny Perdue, assumed a totally different posture for educational reform. From 2003 to 2010, Governor Perdue's tenure set in motion a series of education reform legislation that was largely characterized by 1) funding cuts to public education; 2) establishment of educational alternatives; 3) tax exemptions and tax credits for private institutions; and 4) gradual cuts to HOPE and the re-establishment of a new HOPE for the wealthy, the Zell Miller Scholarship. Despite these two distinct trends, informants suggest that the success of Perdue's reform resided in the low political advocacy of minority and low-income parents juxtaposed with the vocal advocacy of white majority parents and the influence of outside conservative legislative organizations such as ALEC.

On the district level, three reform responses emerged: issuance of Parental Choice letters, use of America's Choice, and implementation of STAR. Parental Choice Letters proved problematic for local principals because their issuance left principals without a means to counteract the withdrawals that accompanied the letters. America's Choice, the district selection of a reform program failed to meet the unique needs of the schools.

Last, the STAR program, designed to offset state austerity and financial cuts and insure equity of staffing within the schools, fostered “operational inflexibility,” and was forced to furlough administrators and teachers, increase class size, and reduce support staff and professional development funds. As a result, state measures under Governor Perdue, exacerbated school resources rather than helping them.

Notwithstanding the impact of state actions from 2003 to 2010, the disconnect of district reform, and their silencing local school leaders persisted with their own academic agenda and largely ignored federal, state, or district reform except for mandatory compliance. To run their schools, they assumed responsibility focused on the best interest of the students, set high expectations in climates conducive for learning, demanded quality classroom instruction and maintained a degree of autonomy. Despite the singular focus of principals, the study reveals that while these principals were virtually voiceless and without advocacy, majority White parents and conservative legislative organizations advocated for reform geared to meet the needs of the majority rather than minority, low-income students.

Hence, from 2000 to 2010, extant studies and research, using a top-down belvedere, have critiqued No Child Left Behind from the standpoint of its underfunding, its sanctions, its demand for highly qualified teachers, and its narrow curricular focus (Cross, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Noguera, 2003). Other studies have critiqued NCLB’s focus on children whose scores can increase the outcome of AYP. Other researchers have critiqued the state-instigated onslaught of privatization of public schools as a type of reform (Watkins, 2004; Lipman, 2004; Cross, 2010). Other researchers have critiqued the role of district micro-managers in implementing reform (Tucker & Coddling,

2002; White-Hood, 2006). With the exception of Rorrer and Sklra (2005), few researchers have traced reform from its inception on the federal level to its implementation at the local school level.

This study expands these reform studies in several fundamental ways. Using a bottom-up policy implementation perspective and Critical Race Theory lens, it examines the actions of key players at the state and district levels regarding educational reform and delineates how key actors with specific design have re-shaped and undermined the original intent of federal legislation. A principal finding is that from 2002 to 2010, state legislation under the guise of educational reform actually bore little or no resemblance to federal mandates and resulted in a host of laws that strategically undermined the intent of reform in public schools. Largely, this dissertation demonstrated that the connections between federal, state, and local reform were tenuous and disconnected with little congruence in the implementation. For an overview of the lack of congruence, or disconnections among reform on the various levels see Table 4.

Viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), this study reveals that the interest convergence of White parents and Republican state legislators drove state level reform. Interest convergence emerged in that Republican state law makers, rather than working independently, relied on conservative legislative organizations to supply legislation. Where White parents advocated on the state level, they got legislation that provided more options for White children. In other cases, White parents prohibited African American students in Title I schools from receiving resources that Title I monies were designed to provide. This finding suggests that the interests of a few majority parents converged with those of conservative legislative organizations and partisan

legislators to further undermine public schools that served largely African American students. These actions align themselves with the tenets of white privilege, a central concept in CRT.

This study also demonstrates how one district responded to various iterations of reform. From 2002 to 2010, in response to a financial crisis precipitated by state actions and federal mandates, the district initiated several reform measures: STAR, America's Choice, and the way parental choice was implemented by the district. In attempting to counter financial short falls precipitated by state "reform measures," the district still complied with federal guidelines. Because the reform message was not consistently articulated or implemented from the top down, disconnects in the reform implementation existed from the federal level to the state level to the district level.

Despite federal, state, and district disconnects, the findings suggest that local level reform in six predominantly African American schools in this study is driven by the agenda and foci of the six principals involved. Concomitantly, they say their agendas were singularly driven by the alignment of their interests with the needs of their students. Notwithstanding their concern about achieving AYP through and their schools' performance on the mandated tests, these principals believe that by focusing on the students, their needs, students' data and insisting on quality instruction, they will insure both their schools' and their students' success. Although this dissertation cannot confirm the influence of principals' foci and admitted strategies, these findings may well suggest that what happens to African American children on the school level may be more associated with the local leader's perspective than by any federal, state, or district reform

measures. See Table 5 for an overview of the positive and negative effect principals report the legislation having in their schools.

Table 5

*Principals' Perceptions of Impact of State and Federal Legislation on Schools*

Federal Mandate	Negative Impact on Local Schools	Positive Impact on Local Schools
NCLB		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AYP Sanctions</li> </ul>	Negative Labeling Stigma on Schools Parental Withdrawals	None* <sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Even though principals indicated that there was no positive impact, one principal, the outlier, indicated that he was grateful for the support of a state facilitator. His response is not indicated on this chart because the facilitator was assigned to his school during the 2011-2012 school year, outside the time frame of this study.

	“AYP” Roller Coaster “Brain Drain”	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly Qualified Teachers</li> </ul>	Minimal Qualifications (not the best fit)	None
State Legislation and Actions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Austerity Cuts</li> </ul>	Furloughed days Overcrowded classrooms Inadequate support staff	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tax Exemptions/Vouchers</li> </ul>	Reduced Tax Base	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility in Schools</li> </ul>		None
District Actions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selected One Reform Model</li> </ul>	Did not fit needs	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Execution of Parental Choice Letters</li> </ul>	AYP Roller Coaster Brain Drain	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>STAR</li> </ul>	Operational Inflexibility Understaffing	None

Hence the findings suggest that the confluence of disconnects at federal, state, and district levels served to undermine reform and left principals to their own devices to implement adequate reform in their schools.

The difficulty the principals express, particularly those related to funding and perception may be explained by the lack of advocacy of African American parents on the south end of Conquest. While White parents made demands at state and district levels that positively influenced reform for their children, African American parents exercised very little political advocacy. As a result, the schools of these principals received few benefits from state or district initiatives. In contrast, the majority of African American schools in this study have been left behind through policies that left their leaders voiceless. From the perspective of those on the bottom, separate and unequal seems to

have been the effect, if not the motive. Moreover, although narratives typically disparage African American school leaders, the counter narratives of these principals reveal a resiliency, skill, and expertise. These principals' counter narratives can become tools to refute majoritarian narratives of deficient leaders serving in underachieving minority schools. Last, this dissertation points to the difficulties involved in increasing student achievement when key players from the state to the district to the local levels respond independently federal mandates with little regard for those responsible for increasing student achievement.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Based on the findings of this study, several implications emerge from federal, state, and district level for research. One area of study should investigate the implementation of more recent reforms such as RT3 and Blueprint for Reform. Additionally, researchers should compare contemporary reforms to earlier reforms such as of ESEA, Title I and Goals 2000. It is interesting that in this case Georgia's state reform preceded the national. Another area for study would be an inquiry into factors that would explain how a state could implement reform before it is enacted federally. Further, has "brain drain" and the AYP roller coaster occurred in other districts, and in other states as they have implemented NCLB.

Another area for research is to explore the relationship, agenda, and alignment between ALEC and federal policy across state lines to raise important questions about the influences on public school policy. A survey of the extent to which ALEC is also aligned with the interests of white parents may be useful to gain a fuller understanding of the

reform being implemented on the district level. Another line of inquiry would be to explore the influence of ALEC in other states.

Inasmuch as this study focused on six African American principals who serve in one predominantly African American school district, more work needs to be done to determine how representative their experiences and perspectives are across other African American principals in the same and other districts. For example, one principal who shares ethnicity with the other five African American principals espouses a very different perception of his leadership role. More work is needed to understand the factors that influence his, and others, perceptions of leadership. These principals should also be directly asked about their perceptions of race in Conquest.

Because this study only focused on the perceptions of principals, only part of the reform story has been revealed. The perspectives of other stakeholders such as community members, parents, teachers, and students would be needed to capture a more complete story of reform.

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

Several implications for practice and policy emerge from this study. These areas would encompass implications for legislators and professional politicians such as school lobbyist, implications for schools of education involving principal training and courses in policy.

**Implications for state legislators and school lobbyists.** Inasmuch as this dissertation reveals that this state implemented reform as it deemed necessary, an investigation of how policy makers can build in mechanisms to hold states accountable for how money is spent. Further, because NCLB left reform implementation with the



states, reform faltered in Georgia. New reform measures should build in a mechanism that holds states accountable for how money is spent as well as actions that may or may not preclude successful reform.

**Implications for courses in educational policy.** Courses in educational policy might begin to stress and investigate the influence and power of state politicians to change or alter reform as well as the vehicles available to work with systems. Further, inasmuch as school leaders experience reform on the ground level, their input would be invaluable in shaping policy.

**Implications for district policy.** The findings of this study also suggest that districts should hold regular meetings with principals to solicit their perspectives on school reform in order to determine the effectiveness of their policies and the implementation of their policies.

**Implications for principal training.** Universities and Schools of Education might place more emphasis on the influencing factors of leadership such as the care ethic for parents and students, relationship building, and the stigma and impact of socio-economic status.

Additionally, Schools of Education might focus on what principals do to positively impact reform. One area might explore the African American Pedagogical Model (Walker, 2009) and how it might impact on student achievement. Areas of study might include emphases on the care ethic, relationship building, and development of perspectives that disregard the stigma of socio-economic status.

**Implications for curriculum and instruction.** Based on the finding that citizens generally exercise low political advocacy and are largely unaware of the political process,

my findings suggest the need required curriculum on the elementary and secondary school levels prior to age 16. This focus would encompass required study of state policy that would explore how policy is derived, implementation of policy, effects of advocacy and activism on policy as well as the overall impact of policy on the lives of citizens.

**Implications for parents.** This study suggests the need for education of parental groups on the role of the state government in their lives, the role of the state government in the educational process, as well as the role the media plays in projecting negative images of schools. This study points to the need for organization and advocacy for parents who have been left out of the process. Finally, this study demonstrated that principals need to participate in all levels of educational reform conversations: with state legislators, in universities, in schools of education, and with district personnel. Because they know their schools' needs, reform would better serve schools and children by soliciting the ideas of principals responsible for implementing reform.

In summary, when one considers the trajectory of educational reform in Georgia from 2000 to 2010, I am reminded of Dr. Lomotey's conclusion: "Reform is things changing slowly and insignificantly. ... I am not aware of one reform in the U. S. that has benefited people of African American descent" (W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture, 2011). A review of Georgia's educational reform demonstrates that while African American, minority and low-income students saw a brief moment of change, that season of educational enlightenment was quickly dimmed by later more conservative reform initiated to marginalize the group federal reform was purported to assist. Georgia's educational reform reflected the interest of a vocal white majority, conservative legislators, and legislative organizations. Dr. Lomotey's indictment on the benefit of

educational for African American, minority and low-income students proved prophetic and also echoes the sentiments of Theodore Mitchell (2000) when he said,

I think we fool ourselves when we think that the problems of urban education can be solved at a structural level or at a policy level. We direct a lot of attention and energy there. But that's really just superstructural, epiphenomenal ... and problems in urban education are issues of race, and class and power. (p. 299)

If nothing more, I believe this study has elevated that in this state, race and power have been used to undermine public education and to provide alternate forms of educational structures designed to solidify a power structure based on race.

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## Appendix A

### *Sources for Review of Literature*

This review focuses on the critiques of federal, state and local implementation of federal policies. Because data are not available on *Blueprint for Reform* (2010) and *Race To the Top* (2010), I used the search terms *No Child Left Behind*, barriers, and reform and the time frame from 2000-2010, I was able to mine articles that critiqued *No Child Left Behind* as a reform measure.

### **Sources for Local Leaders' Perceptions**

Even though a plethora of sources on effective schools was found during the 1990s, only recently have researchers begun to address NCLB specifically. Beginning initially with the terms “school leadership” and “educational reform,” I uncovered 188 entries, none of which proved relevant. A search using the terms “school leaders,” “implementation of NCLB” and “barriers” produced 49 entries. For a cursory review of literature in EUCLID, I initially used the search terms “the principal and barriers to educational reform” and found one article. I then used the search terms “educational leadership,” “dilemmas,” and retrieved 283 citations all of which I reviewed by reading the abstracts to determine their relevance. Next, I added the term “dilemmas” to my search for which eight articles surfaced, three of which I already used and five of which were not relevant. Afterwards, using the search terms, “challenges for African American principals” and “urban school reform,” I gathered 377 articles, most of which centered on subjects related to specifics regarding effective school leadership. As a result of pulling sources that seemed helpful, and looking through the table of contents, I was able to mine particular sources related to barriers in the leadership of principals.



For JSTOR, using 1990-2010, and the search terms “African American principals” and “effective school leadership” ten articles surfaced. Using the terms “African American principals” and “barriers to successful school leadership”, 171 articles surfaced. By far, the most fruitful search was derived from adding the terms “African American principals.” Culling and using relevant sources from this list, I constructed my review of literature. In order to broaden my search to include not only barriers but also the benefits of NCLB, I used the search terms “Study of effectiveness of “No Child Left Behind” and “Secondary Schools” from which I gleaned and reviewed 458 articles. Using a format similar to for the data collection in phase I, State Level Implementation of Reform, the researcher will collect and analyze data.

## Appendix B

*Summary of Legislative Acts during Perdue's Tenure*

Type of Legislation			
<b>Type of Legislation: General Education Legislation 8</b>			
<b>ACT #</b>	<b>Bills</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Summary of Bills</b>
ACT 606	SR 760	May 17, 2004	Creates a commission to study Georgia's pre-K program
ACT 155	SB 35	May 4, 2005	Increases class size
ACT 747	SB515	2006	Expands grades for remedial education
ACT 352	SR	2006	Creates Joint Early Learning Initiative Commission
ACT 713	HB 637	July 1, 2008	Allowed systems to elect to administer nationally norm-referenced tests with state funding
ACT 39	HB 39	July 1, 2008	Establishes a uniform grading system
Other Educational Alternatives			
ACT 164	HB 251	May 5, 2009	Allows a student in local system to transfer to any school system under Quality Basic Education ACT
ACT 63	HB149	July 1, 2009	"Move When Ready ACT" allows 11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade students to attend postsecondary colleges for high school credit
<b>Flexibility and Exceptions</b>			
ACT 30	SB 249	May 20, 2003	Eliminates the Office of Education Accountability; change provisions of local school councils; increase maximum class size
ACT 393	SB 244	Jan. 01, 2004	Limits number of semester or quarter hours that a student may receive a tuition equalization grant
ACT 449	HB 1190	May 4, 2004	Changes local school councils; increases maximum class size can exceed 20%; <b>an aide can increase class size</b> ; allows waivers in rules for charter schools; allows <b>general assembly to petition for charter schools</b> ; creates state funds for charter schools; <b>mandates district paying for transportation</b> ; options similar to Race To
ACT 116	SB 39	May 18, 2007	Allows high <i>flexibility</i> for schools and school systems to tailor their educational programs to meet the " <i>unique needs of their communities</i> " cv to Governor's press release Tuesday, May 22, 2007

ACT 394	HB1209	April 2008	Provides that a local school system may enter into a contract with the state board of Education for increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability; to provide that a system can opt for the “status quo”
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Type of Legislation			
Legislation to Establish and Fund Charter School System – 9			
ACT #	Bills	Effective Date	Summary of Bills
Offered by not signed	HB 515, SB 216  HB 985	2003	Overrules local school boards Provides governance for charter schools; requires transportation <i>To allow joint enrollment for students in certain private and home schools (add to private schools section)</i>
ACT 449	HB1190	May,4, 2004	Allows <i>waivers</i> for charter schools; allows general assembly to petition for charter schools; <i>creates funds</i> for charter schools; mandates <i>district paying for transportation</i> (cv to T. interview); increases maximum class size; minimum of 5 hours instruction in middle school; EOCT cv to newspaper articles in 2004;
ACT 155	SB 35	July 1, 2005	Establishes <i>the intent to encourage charter schools</i> ; that the state board can override local school boards regarding establishment of charters; charter schools not subject to laws of local boards or state board; charter schools may use “ <i>for-profit</i> ” entities.  <i>Cv to Schultz’s comment that public schools should have the flexibility that charter schools have... was this creating a scenario in which charter schools acted like private schools?</i>  <i>*establishes the intent of the state to encourage charter schools</i>  <i>**State board can override local school boards regarding establishment of charters.</i>  <i>***charter schools will not be subject to laws of local boards or state board</i>  <i>**** establishes by law that charter schools may use “for-profit” entities So in effect, the state will be using public money</i>
ACT 604	SB 604	July 1, 2006	Waives provisions of Title 20 for charter schools; establishes operating requirements and the control and

			<i>management</i> of charter schools; allows virtual or remote setting; provides that nothing shall preclude the use of internet based instruction for students in a virtual or remote setting
ACT 116	SB 39	May 18, 2007	Allows high flexibility for schools and school systems to tailor their educational programs to meet the “unique needs of their communities” <i>cv to Governor’s press release Tuesday, May 22, 2007</i>
	HB 469 offered, by not enacted. Precursor to HB881	February 2007	To authorize the establishment of public charter schools by public charter school authorizers; to provide for funding. <i>Rationale: entities other than the board of education should be allowed to authorize public charter schools to establish competition and to encourage innovative methods of education</i>
ACT 574	HB831	July 1, 2008	Allows organizations to donate tax deductible funds for the construction of charter schools with the state board of education setting up guidelines and dates. This can be traced back to the act that gave powers back to the state board of education <i>and previews the state board of education setting up the Georgia Charter Commission.</i>
ACT 571	HB881	July 1, 2008	Establishes the Georgia Charter Schools Commission which was later ruled unconstitutional. The intent is to establish the Georgia Charter Schools Commission; to provide chartering authority for commission charter schools; **** overrules local school boards. Effective July 1, 2008 <i>Cites that the growth of charter schools has contributed to enhanced student performance</i>
ACT 431	HB1065	May 6, 2008	Authorizes local charter schools and state chartered specials schools as capital outlay projects for purposes of tax, local charters and special schools could be included in capital outlay projects
ACT 148	HB555	July 1, 2009	Effective July 1, 2009 appropriates money to create a facilities fund for local charter schools, state chartered schools, and charter commission schools allowing the charter commission to receive moneys from the facilities fund if the charter school has received permission instead of from the local school board, from the charter commission. This bill establishes the authority of the Charter Commission over the local school board.
ACT 492	HB457	July1, 2010	Effective July 1, 2010 allows for approval or denial of charter if 60 % of faculty and parents vote to have a charter.

<b>Type of Legislation</b>			
<b>Type of Legislation: Legislation That Provides For Alternate Schooling: Home School, Private School, Virtual School - 2</b>			
<b>ACT #</b>	<b>Bills</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Summary of Bills</b>
ACT 154	SB	May 5, 2005	“The Quality Basic Education Act” – to authorize the establishment of the Georgia Virtual School; to provide a <i>Georgia Virtual School Grant</i> account to provide for statutory construction for Effective May 5, 2005
ACT 708	HB1169	July 1, 2008	Frees certain private schools, k-12, from regulations of daycare centers.
<b>Type of Legislation: Student Finances</b>			
<b>General -1</b>			
ACT 427	HB1014	May 6, 2008	Establishes 2,000.00 as a cap for income tax credit for a college savings plan. Individual cap of 50,000 for individual and 100,00 for couple (check)
<b>HOPE - 9</b>			
ACT 422	SR 220	June 4, 2003	Created Improvement of HOPE Scholarship Joint Study Commission [more than 675,000 Georgians have received HOPE scholarships totaling 1.8 billion (cv to article from Journal of higher Education; discuss disparity between amount minorities spend on lottery and others spend on lottery)
ACT 393	SB 244	June 4, 2003	Places limitations on total number of semester hours or that student may receive a tuition equalization grant; to provide for an exception
	HB 1101	Senate 3/31/2004; House 3/5/2004	relative to HOPE scholarships and grants, <i>so as to add public and private schools accredited by the Southern Association of Independent Schools to the definition of eligible high schools for the purposes of the HOPE program; and for other purposes.</i>
ACT 720	HB1325	May 17, 2004	Adds private schools accredited by the Southern Association of Independent Schools; sets 80 GPA for college prep courses and 85 for technical courses
	HB 116	2006	Renders any person guilty of misdemeanor or felony ineligible for HOPE*** indicative of vestiges of the “school to prison pipeline (though not a part of this study, laws passed under Title 20 escalate criminal activity of students and connects them with the criminal system

ACT 550	SB 506	April 21, 2006	decreases HOPE by allowing only 150.00 for books per semester of 100.00 per quarter
ACT 942	SB 561	July 11, 2006	Allows HOPE for home-schooled students; students who graduated from a non-eligible high school if they maintain a 3.0 their first year, then the scholarship is retroactive; student is eligible until he earns a baccalaureate or <b>attempts</b> 190 hours; books – 100.00/quarter or 150.00/semester <i>Ironic that while HOPE allowances are cut for public school students, the door is opened for those other than public school students, home school students to receive the HOPE after their first year in college.</i>
Signed by Governor – Vetoed V16	HB363	July 1, 2008	Would give HOPE to military students; Si
ACT 492	SB 480	July 1, 2008	Provides for hourly caps for receipt of HOPE
ACT 76	HB157	April 30, 2009	Provides for a trigger to revise amounts of HOPE for reduction in HOPE benefits when lottery accounts reach a certain level
ACT 441	HB 340	July 1, 2010	Requires school systems and private schools to adopt a reporting system for the purpose of determining HOPE eligibility

Type of Legislation			
Legislation Related to General Finances - 4			
ACT #	Bills	Effective Date	Summary of Bills
ACT 61	HB27	July 1, 2005	Discharges state’s responsibility to provide grants based on need; specifically strikes language that says, “to provide an adequate education for its citizens...” and adds “ declares it to be the purpose and intent of this article <i>to encourage and aid the education of <u>all</u> children</i> in this state by implementing Article VIII”.
ACT 440	HB 1335	July 1, 2008	Changes program weights for funding purposes
ACT 385	HB 905	May 20, 2010	Relating to capital, it repeals funding for exceptional growth, and low-wealth capital outlay grants of the Quality Basic Education Act to provide a sunset date of June 30, 2015
ACT 384	HB 908	May 20,	waives certain <b>expenditure controls</b> and allows system

		2010	maximum class sizes: kindergarten 18; with full time aide, 20; Primary grades (1-3), 20; Upper elementary (4-5), 28; Middle grades (6-8), 28; 9-12 not to exceed maximum class size by 39%
<b>Type of Legislation: Tax Cuts for the General Population -6</b>			
ACT 725	HB1428	July 1, 2004	Provides that winner of the lottery shall have a lifetime exemption from Georgia individual income tax (reduced the qualifications of homeschool tutor to GED or high school diploma)
ACT 618	HB 1219	April 28, 2006	Provides tax exempt for school supplies, clothing, footwear, computers, and computer related accessories
ACT 41	HB 225	May 14, 2007	Changes provisions regarding the deduction for contributions to certain college savings plans; <i>allows tax adjustments for incomes up to 100,000 to go towards school in the amount of 2,000.00 Effective May 14, 2007 (during austerity cuts)</i>
ACT 773	HB 1133	May 14, 2008	<i>Provides an income tax credit for qualified education expenses; tax exemption for “nonpublic primary or secondary schools; grant allows students to attend any qualified school of parent’s choice; provides scholarships of grants without limiting availability to only student of one school; must obligate 90 % of its annual revenue for scholarship or tuition; up to 25 % of the amount may be carried forward for the next fiscal year; may transfer funds to another student scholarship fund; “The revenue shall provide a list of all student scholarship organizations receiving contributions from businesses and individuals granted tax credit.. the parent of guardian must restrictively endorse the scholarship award to the private schools for deposit; may not designate individual associate with the parent; individual \$1,000 or actual amount expended; a married couple actual amount expended up to 2,500.00; a corporation shall be allowed a credit up to 75% of corporations Completed at the beginning of the recession.</i>
Vetoed V2	HB 100	May 11, 2009	HB100 bill is a direct response to the scandal reported in the time article exposing the loopholes in Georgia law as a result of HB1133 that allowed scholarships to be transferred during the fiscal year. In effect, this bill allowed students to enroll in public school, be notified of scholarship availability, withdraw and receive that scholarships. <i>This bill also strikes the statement “adheres to the provisions of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964</i>

			<i>and inserts instead the phrase, “complies with the antidiscrimination provisions of 42 U.S.C. Section 1981; “student scholarship</i>
ACT 117	HB120	May 4, 2009	Establishes tax exempt day for the purchase of school supplies, clothing, footwear, computers, and other energy efficient products
<b>Type of Legislation: Curricula Legislation - 3</b>			
ACT 916	HR 1258	May 5, 2006	Established Appalachian Studies center a North Georgia College and State University in Dahlonega as Georgia’s official Appalachian Studies Center
ACT 523	SB 79	July 1, 2006	Funded high school courses in the History and Literature of the Old Testament Era and the History and Literature of the New Testament Era.
ACT 203	SB170	May 23, 2007	Provided that American Sign Language proficiency can be substituted for 2 units of foreign language as a requirement on a college preparatory diploma.

<b>Type of Legislation: Teacher Related Legislation - 10</b>			
ACT 391	SB 193	June 4, 2003	Restored teacher tenure; provide for a tribunal and hearing for teachers
	HB 337	January 1, 2004	Provides income tax credit for teachers or home study program instructors not to exceed 250.00 Effective January 1, 2004
	HB1172		Provides that the PSC shall not require a test of computer competency for certification*** used to pander to teachers
ACT 725	HB1428	July 1, 2004	<i>Reduced the qualifications of homeschool tutor to GED or high school diploma (provide for winner of Tax Lottery Act (to provide that winner of the lottery shall have a lifetime exemption from Georgia individual income tax)</i>
ACT 142	SB 34	May 3, 2005	Established the “Georgia Master Teacher Program”; to establish the “Academic Coach”; establish 10% for national Board certification 05
ACT 142	SB72	May 18, 2007	authorizes that each school system may use alternative certification programs
ACT 572	HB 1277	May 13, 2008	“Provides for teachers and employees of charter schools to be considered employees for the purposes of participating



			in health insurance programs
ACT 538	HR 1103	May 12, 2008	Creates Joint Study Committee on Teacher Training and Certification that it would be beneficial for students to initiate the Grade Integrity Act “to provide that no classroom teacher shall be required, coerced, intimidated or disciplined in any manner to change the grade of a student
ACT 35	HB 243	July 1, 2009	Repeals 10% salary increase for National Board Certification <i>Note that during the recession, he repealed salary increases that would lead to increased teacher proficiency.</i>
ACT 51	HB 280	July 1, 2009	Provides additional compensation for teachers in mathematics or science
ACT 456	HB 923	July 1, 2010	Under Quality Basic Education Act is revised to stipulate that a teacher shall not receive credit for a Master’s degree out of field; shall not be paid on the master’s level for a degree in leadership. <sup>19</sup>

<b>Type of Legislation: Other Legislation - 4</b>			
ACT 62	HB 25	July 1, 2005	Repeals provision a provision which grants the Governor the power to close any school or institution under the control of the board of regents [limits the powers of the governor]
ACT 63	HB 372	July 1, 2005	Removes provision that allows the Georgia Education Authority to lease public property and <i>grants that authority to county boards of education, city boards of education, or governing bodies of independent districts of systems</i> ; gives authority to enter into contracts and lease agreements for the use of any structure, or building. <i>[This bill moves toward the Georgia School Commission having the right to use public facilities]</i>
	HB 208		Offered but not signed to provide that the parent members make up a majority on the school council; <i>to provide that the chairperson shall be a parent member</i> (regarding the operations of school- autonomy of principal)

<sup>19</sup> Prior to this ruling persons could earn Master’s degrees in leadership but not be in a leadership position and still receive pay on the master’s level. This act insures that a person should have a master’s degree in the content to receive remuneration on the master’s level of the pay scale.

ACT 142	SB 72	May 18, 2007	Provides that the local school councils shall be composed of the majority parents with the recommendation to and authorizes that each school system
<b>Length of School Year</b>			
ACT 547	HB1300	May 12, 2008	Establishes 180 days; allows local boards to elect not to make up days due to disaster

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol for Elite Informant

#### President of a Teacher Advocacy Group

1. Would you share a little about your background and how you came to be involved with and president of Organization for Teachers<sup>20</sup>?
2. In general, what are the problems that you saw with implementation of *No Child Left Behind* and now *RT*<sup>3</sup>?
3. In what way(s) have you seen state politics affect education in Georgia, specifically *Conquest*<sup>21</sup> and have you seen any differences between south and north *Conquest*?
4. According to an article in \_\_\_\_\_ your organization has fought major legislation that it deemed oppositional to educational efforts in Georgia? Can you cite specific legislation that has impeded educational progress? Can you pinpoint the origin and motivation, from your perspective of this legislation (e.g., Charter Commission, new HOPE guidelines, now redistricting)
5. In your opinion has this legislation supported the intent of *No Child Left Behind*?
6. In your opinion, what is needed to insure successful school reform?
7. In your opinion, what are the greatest barriers to successful school reform?
8. How have you seen principals overcome these barriers? (Additional question)

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<sup>20</sup> Organization for Teachers is a pseudonym for the teacher organization.

<sup>21</sup> *Conquest* is the pseudonym for the District being researched Dailey

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol for Key (Principal) Informants

#### Background

1. What is your administrative background and how long have you been principal?

#### Federal and State Concerns

2. What are the federal and state mandates that you have experienced over the last 10 years?  
Follow-up: Were you also aware of \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Of these mandates/reforms, what do you think was most helpful in your work with your students?
  - a. Follow-up? What evidence do you have for these perceptions?
4. Of these mandates/reforms, in your perception, what was most problematic? Why?
5. Which of these mandates/reforms, in your perception, was least problematic? Why?
6. Are there examples of policies over the last 10 years that you might have liked, but not how it was rolled out? If so, what role does the way the reform measure is presented impact the outcome?
7. If you could have restructured the reform initiatives over the last 10 years, what would you have done differently?
8. Overall, do you think these reforms as a package were helpful for what you were trying to do in your school?
9. Did you perceive a difference in federal and state mandates in the way they came across to you?
10. Did you like it and what did you think about it?
11. Do you believe the reform as it was presented to you was designed to help children in your district? In your school? Why or why not?
12. Is there anything else about the way the state reform has played out that I haven't thought to ask about but you believe they are important as to whether they hurt or helped children—and why?

#### Local Concerns

13. Did you buy into the reforms over the last 10 years or did you have another agenda that remained constant? If so, what was your agenda?
14. What are the ways you believe local implementation of policy undermines implementation in your school?
15. Are there local practices that you believe undermine state and federal initiatives and your vision?

a. Board, personnel, structure?

16. What is the cost of being a principal? Have the reforms taken you in a direction from where you wanted to go, if so, what are the cost?

## Appendix E

## Frequency of Perdue's Reform 2003-2010

Legislation Related To	Date Range	Frequency	Percentage of Total	Major Provisions of Legislation
General Education	2003-2009	10	15	Established a uniform grading system; eliminates office of Accountability; increases minimum class size; established a uniform grading system
Flexibility and Exceptions	2003 - 2008	4	7	Limits # of hours for tuition grant; changes local school councils; allows an aide to increase class size; allows for flexibility for school systems to "tailor their programs" to meet the "unique needs of their communities" Cv to press release dated Tuesday, May 22,2007; can exchange accountability flexibility
Establishment and Funding of Charter Schools	2003-2010	10	17	Establishes intent to encourage charter schools, Allows waivers for charter schools; allows general assembly to petition for charger schools; mandates districts to pay for transportation; (cv. To Turk interview); establishes by law that charter schools may use "for profit organizations"; waives provisions in Title 20; allows for tax deductible funds for charter schools; establishes Georgia Charter Schools Commission <sup>22</sup> ; appropriates money for building of facilities; allows for approval or denial of charter by faculty and parents
Alternate Schooling	2005-2008	2	3	Authorizes virtual schools; frees private schools of daycare regulations
Finances Student -1 HOPE – 9 General -4 Tax Cuts - 6	2003-2010	20	33	Establishes cap for income tax credit for college savings; Allows HOPE for private schools; decreases HOPE funding; provides hourly caps for HOPE; uniform reporting systems for public and private schools; discharges state's responsibility to provide grants based on need; changes language of "providing and adequate education" to encourage and aid the

<sup>22</sup> Georgia Charter Schools Commission ruled unconstitutional in 2011; HR1162 asks that the constitution be changed to allow the state board to partner with local boards of education to establish charter schools. If passed, this referendum will overturn the supreme court ruling in 2011

				education of all children; repeals exceptional growth and low-wealth capital outlay; waives expenditure controls for maximum class sizes; Lottery winners receive life-time tax exemptions; tax exempt days for school supplies; tax exemptions for incomes of over 100,000 (tax exemptions for upper income); provides tax credits and scholarships for schools
Curricula	2006 - 2007	3	5	Established Appalachian Studies Center at North Georgia College; funded course in history and literature of Old and New Testament; provided American Sign Language as substitute for 2 units of foreign language on college preparatory diploma
Teacher Related Legislation	2003-2010	8	13	Restored tenure; income tax credit for home study instructors; repealed requirement for computer competency; reduced qualifications for home tutors; 10% for NBC; alternative certification; allowed
Other Legislation	2005	4	7	
Total		60	100%	

## Appendix F

## Georgia Legislators and Legislation Related ALEC

The following is a listing of major legislation and Georgia lawmakers who introduced the legislation.

- SB 35/ACT 155- increased class size – *Chip Rogers*
- SB79/ACT high school courses in Bible – *Chip Rogers*
- \*SB 39/ACT 116 (2007) – gives schools and school systems high flexibility to “tailor their educational programs to meet the needs of their communities” and allows a private organization of state or public entity to petitions for a charter and be approved by the Charter School Commission and allows that the new systems shall not be subject to the provisions of any state regulation, policy or procedure – *Chip Rogers*
- HB225/ACT 41 (2007) – allows tax adjustments for incomes up to 100,000 to go towards school- *Larry O’Neal*
- \*HB831/ACT 574 (2008) – allows organizations to donate tax deductible funds for the construction of charter schools with state board setting up guidelines (This takes the building decision and guidelines out of the hands of local boards.)
- \*HB1065/ACT 431 (2008) – authorizes state chartered special schools as capital outlay projects – *Jan Jones*
- \*HB881/ACT 571 (2008) – establishes the Georgia Charter Schools Commission and states that “charter schools are a critical component in this state’s efforts to provide efficient and high-quality schools within this state’s uniform system of public education – *Jan Jones and Fran Millar*



- HB313/Act 39 (2009) – establishes a uniform reporting system to determine eligibility of students seeking educational scholarships, *Fran Millar*
- SB72/ACT 142 (2007) – establishes that local school councils shall be composed primarily of parents and that the principal of the school is only a member and not the chair as during Barnes’ administration. HB100/signed by governor but vetoed (2009) to prevent the state board of education from requiring releasing information regarding “qualified income tax credit or; allows for transfers of students funds into the fiscal year – *David Casas*
- SB72/ACT 142 (2007) – establishes that local school councils shall be composed primarily of parents and that the principal of the school is only a member and not the chair as during Barnes’ administration. HB100/signed by governor but vetoed (2009) to prevent the state board of education from requiring releasing information regarding “qualified income tax credit or; allows for transfers of students funds into the fiscal year – *David Casas*
- HR1103/Act 538 (2008 ) – a resolutions that authorizes the forming of a joint committee to study teacher certification – *David Casas, Jan Jones, Howard Maxwell, Fran Millar;*
- \*HB1133/ACT 773 – (2008) provides income tax credit and scholarships for students, outlines provisions for receiving the scholarships in the amount of 1,000.00 for individual; 2,500.00 for couple; and up 75% of a company’s income tax liability not to exceed 50,000.00 – *David Casas*
- HB193/Act 118 (2009) – revises provision for 180day school year and revises provision for a full day kindergarten – *David Casas, Tom Graves, Howard Maxwell*

- HB908/Act 384 (2010) waives class size restrictions and allows increases up to 39% - *David Casas, Howard Maxwell*
- \*HB1209/ACT 394(2008) – to allow a local school system increased flexibility in exchange for more accountability – Howard Maxwell. Of note, only one African American senator voted yes on this bill, *Ed Tarver*. The other African American senators and representatives voted no.
- HB243/Act 35 (2009)– repeals salary increase for teachers with national board certification *Howard Maxwell*;  
HB251/Act 164 (2009) – allows any student to transfer to any school in the school district – sponsors
- HB280/Act 51 (2009) allows a 10% salary increase for teachers in math and science- *Howard Maxwell*
- HB55/Act 148 (2009) – state board shall create a facilities fund for local charter schools and state chartered special schools; local boards are required to renovate, repair, and maintain the school facilities of charter schools in the district to the same extent as other public schools- sponsors