

SHAME OF THE SCHOOLS

**How the democrats have destroyed
public education in the inner cities.**



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How the Democrats Have Destroyed
Public Education in the Inner Cities

By John Perazzo

Democrats always congratulate themselves on being the only party truly concerned with education, especially of the underprivileged, and regularly attack conservatives and Republicans for their “callous indifference.” The Democratic Party Platform, presenting itself as a savior of the underclass, calls for billions of dollars in “bold new investments” by federal and state governments to make good public schools available to every child, “no matter what zip code they live in.”¹ Shamelessly playing the race card, leftwing Democrats work overtime to establish the idea that the failure of our inner-city schools is wholly the responsibility of mean-spirited, tight-fisted, and outright racist Republicans ready to consign minority children to the social ash heap.

What they say:

- The Texas Democratic Party says: “Owing to inadequate investment in public education, minority and economically disadvantaged Texas students continue to suffer from a persistent achievement gap.”²
- Illinois State Board of Education Superintendent Tony Smith, a Democrat, laments the “deep inequity” built into the state’s system of funding public education: “We

¹ <https://www.democrats.org/party-platform>

² <https://www.txdemocrats.org/our-party/texas-democratic-party-platform/>

have a population of very high-need students in Chicago and they are not getting enough currently.”³

- Graie Barasch-Hagans, an activist affiliated with the leftist group Philadelphians Organized to Witness Power and Rebuild (POWER), says: “There is a clear racial bias in schools funding in Pennsylvania. The more black your school district is, the less money you will get compared to a comparable white district.”⁴
- Former NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Jealous has lamented what he claims are inadequate expenditures on the public education of black children: “Today, there is no greater threat to civil rights accomplishments than the state of our country’s education system and its impact on young African American youth. Failing schools, college tuition hikes, and shrinking state education budgets are narrowing the promise of education for young people all across the country.”⁵

But their actions speak more honestly than their words. In fact, the record of inner-city education over the last half century—a time when Democrats have been in control of our inner cities and their schools—is a tale of gross corruption, fraud, theft, and racist exploitation of mainly poor black and Hispanic kids for political and monetary gain. On the Democrats’ watch, inner-city kids have fallen further and further behind academically, victims of political cynicism and the soft bigotry of low expectations. In the shameful educational reality that Democrats have created, hundreds of thousands of children go

³ <https://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2017/03/02/urban-league-research-highlights-ongoing-racial-disparity-education>

⁴ <http://www.delcotimes.com/general-news/20170501/racial-bias-in-school-spending-upsets-naacp>

⁵ http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National_News_2/article_7739.shtml

through twelve years of public education—if they don't drop out earlier and melt into the shadows of the ghetto—without ever learning how to read, write, or perform mathematical tasks with even a basic level of competence.

Take Detroit as an example, a city where no Republican has served as mayor since 1961, and where only one Republican in the past 48 years has even held a seat on the City Council. The math and reading proficiency rates of public elementary and middle-school students in Detroit are consistently below 10%, sometimes as low as 3%. The story is very much the same in Baltimore, also a Democratic Party fiefdom for over a generation, where in one recent year, 13 of the city's 39 high schools had exactly *zero* students who tested as "proficient" in math.

When asked why the students under their control fail, Democrats always respond by claiming, as in the comments above, that their schools are underfinanced, starved of the taxpayer money that flows munificently into privileged white communities. This is their Big Lie. In city after city under Democrats' control, more money is spent annually per student in many cases than the cost of tuition at local colleges. But despite the tsunami of taxpayer dollars flowing into the K-12 public school systems that Democrats control, students remain hopelessly marooned in swamps of incompetence and educational backwardness. New Jersey's Camden Central School District, for example, spends an astronomical \$25,000 annually per pupil, yet by any objective measure, it mimics the scholastic equivalent of a train wreck, with 90% of the district's public schools ranked in the bottom 5% statewide.

In big city after big city, public school superintendents and other administrators presiding over failing schools nonetheless

earn colossal, six-figure salaries that come with guaranteed annual pay raises, Cadillac healthcare coverage, and additional stipends to cover expenses for things like automobiles, transportation services, computers, I-pads, and other state-of-the-art, high-tech tools.

The teachers' unions, a key element of the Democrats' hegemony in many of these inner cities, feather the nest of their dues payers by demanding pay hikes, better benefits, additional paid sick days, less-stringent attendance requirements, and smaller class sizes, even as the children in their districts remain unable to read or write at levels that are anywhere near the norms for their respective age groups. In an 18-year period during which public school teachers in Chicago had been appeased after going on strike no fewer than nine times, an astounding 33 of the city's 64 public high schools ranked in the bottom 1% of all high schools across the United States, prompting the U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett to describe Chicago's school system as the very worst in America.

And in some of these Democratic Party political regimes, we see corruption of enormous proportions by high-level school officials. Detroit, for instance, recently had more than 250 "ghost" employees—some of whom fraudulently used the names of dead people—illegally receiving paychecks for no-show jobs from the city's public school system. Atlanta, for its part, went through a decade-long scandal where more than 175 school administrators and educators orchestrated a secret campaign of deceit that was intended not only to conceal their own woeful educational track record, but also to win themselves large sums of money as a reward for their wholly fictional successes.

What all of these inner-city school systems have in common,

in addition to being dominated politically by Democrats, is a record of fiscal profligacy, bureaucratic bloat, and academic failure. Indeed, the only things that Democrats, who now fully “own” these schools, actually seem to have mastered are the tools of denial and deception—the moral preening and sermonizing that allow them to escape answerability for the millions of children, particularly nonwhite minorities, whom they have condemned to lifetimes of struggle and underachievement.

The following portraits of ten of our most important big cities show the true face of inner city education. It is not a pretty picture. The Democratic Party and its leftist allies who have painted it over the past 50 years, and who continue to weep crocodile tears for the children whose educational lives they have mangled, should hang their heads in shame.

DETROIT

Although its name is now synonymous with failure and decline, Detroit was once the emblem of American progress and prosperity. In his book, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81*, University of Michigan historian Jeffrey Mirel puts it this way: “Throughout the 1920s, Detroit was the shining star of the new era, the very center of the American economic universe, where capitalism and technology combined to produce the greatest goods for the greatest numbers.”⁶

Largely because it was home to the “Big Three” auto makers—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—Detroit had grown to

⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/y79pf6en>

become the fifth largest city in the United States by the 1950s.⁷ And by 1960, it had the highest per capita income of any city in the country.⁸

During its heyday, Detroit's political leadership was dominated almost entirely by the Republican Party. Indeed, between 1913 and 1961, no fewer than 15 of the city's 18 mayors were Republicans who occupied City Hall for 42 of those 48 years.⁹ Detroit's remarkable success in the realms of industry and culture during the first half of the 20th century extended also to its public education system. In 1923, for instance, Alice Barrows of the U.S. Bureau of Education stated, "Detroit must be put foremost in the ranks of cities which have made a newer and better education possible." In a nationwide survey of school superintendents two years later, Detroit schools ranked first in organizational efficiency and visual instruction, and third in terms of "excellence in teaching reading, writing, composition, and arithmetic." And in 1927, *New Republic* magazine described the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) system as "one of the finest in the world."¹⁰

But signs of deterioration began to emerge in the 1950s, when, as Jeffrey Mirel writes, "the liberal-labor-black coalition that [had] formed in the late 1940s took control of [Detroit's] school system" and "unquestionably diluted [its] quality." Specifically, school officials in the city started to de-emphasize traditional basic skills while focusing instead on the need for "interesting, attractive and constructive courses" to hold students' interest.

⁷ <http://nationalpost.com/news/graphics/graphic-detroit-then-and-now>

⁸ <https://www.nationalreview.com/2013/07/detroit-goes-down-kevin-d-williamson/>

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mayors_of_Detroit

¹⁰ https://books.google.com/books?id=5ceGeWusD7gC&pg=PA217&source=gs_toc_r&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false

Conservative critics lamented that “a majority of . graduates” could not “spell many of the simple words in everyday use”; had “no grounding in literature, English, arithmetic, discipline, or any practical knowledge”; and were “totally unprepared for advanced study or the ordinary tasks of life.” But they were ignored.¹¹

In 1961, the reins of political power in Detroit fell permanently into Democratic Party hands with the election of Mayor Jerome Cavanagh. In the 57 years that have passed since then, Detroit has not had a single Republican mayor and only one Republican has served on the City Council since 1970.¹²

As Detroit became a Democratic Party political monoculture, it also became a failed city. Poverty and crime rates soared to stratospheric levels. Between 1967-87, the percentage of Detroit residents who were on the rolls of one or more welfare programs quadrupled, nearly 200,000 jobs disappeared from the city, and its homicide rate tripled.¹³ At that moment, in a development that clearly followed these trends, the Detroit Public Schools (DPS), as *City Journal* magazine reports, “gained a reputation for financial mismanagement,” thus “fostering the impression that Detroit’s schools were being operated as a jobs program for adults, rather than to educate kids.... By the late 1980s, the system ran a \$180 million deficit, with a high-school dropout rate of 50 percent and daily absenteeism averaging almost 20 percent of all students.”¹⁴

DPS’s descent into fiscal chaos prompted the state of Michigan

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/working-mans-blues-what-democrats-and-unions-have-done-to-detroit/article/2533313>

¹³ <https://books.google.com/books?id=O0EV9CFXkZMC&pg=PA75&lpg=PA75&dq=&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false>

¹⁴ <https://www.city-journal.org/html/real-reform-detroits-kids-14433.html>

to place the city's school system under new management, whose principal task would be to impose some measure of stability upon its budget and overall operations. And while some useful reform efforts were in fact pursued during that period (e.g., permitting school principals to select their own staff members and determine their own curricula) a 26-day teachers' strike in September 1992 undid whatever progress had been made. As one Detroit school board member told reporters: "[The strike] hit the reform effort upside the head like a two-by-four."¹⁵

Soon thereafter, Detroit's board of education mishandled \$1.5 billion in borrowed money that had been earmarked for the funding of structural improvements and renovations to local public school buildings. In 1999, the Michigan state legislature voted to transfer control of DPS from the board of education to the mayor, who proceeded to name an entirely new, seven-member governing board. While the 11,500-member Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) supported this measure, the union subsequently rejected the reform proposals that were then put forth by Mayor Dennis Archer and this board, such as calls for a merit-pay system tying salaries to student achievement; a longer school day and school year without salary increases; and a plan to replace "failing schools" with charter schools.¹⁶

At that time, a mere one-third of DPS seventh-graders were capable of meeting state standards for grade-level work in reading and math. Moreover, some 50% of all DPS students were failing to graduate from high school, and about half of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.; <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1997/02/05/19sos.h16.html>; <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/31/us/on-eve-of-new-school-year-detroit-teachers-vote-to-strike.html>; <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/1999/09/det-s04.html>

those who did manage to graduate were academically lagging.¹⁷ By 2009, DPS's yearly deficit had reached \$219 million.¹⁸ Despite the claims of leftist politicians and teachers' union officials, this huge shortfall was not the consequence of taxpayer stinginess. At that time, DPS was spending more than \$14,000 per year on the education-related costs of each pupil in the district¹⁹—far more than the \$10,591 average for elementary and secondary public school systems nationwide.²⁰

These high per-student budgets had few positive results. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—a U.S. Department of Education standardized test designed to measure the academic capabilities of elementary and junior-high-school students—Detroit fourth-graders in 2009 were reading at a level that was 73% below the national average of their peers; moreover, a mere 22% of those Detroit youngsters met basic reading requirements for their age group. The city's eighth-graders fared little better, with only 34% of them meeting basic reading requirements for their age bracket.²¹ As the Michigan-based news website Mlive.com reported: “Fourth- and eighth-graders at Detroit Public Schools placed the lowest reading scores among urban school districts in the country.”²² Further, the NAEP math scores of DPS students in 2009 were the

¹⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/31/us/on-eve-of-new-school-year-detroit-teachers-vote-to-strike.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.electablog.com/2015/09/from-surplus-to-ballooning-deficit-the-legacy-of-government-takeover-emergency-managers-in-detroit-public-schools.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.mackinac.org/archives/2011/2011-04LocaleEducationFunding.pdf>

²⁰ https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/expenditures/tables/table_06.asp

²¹ http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2010/05/nations_report_card_detroit_st.html

²² Ibid.

lowest ever recorded in the then-40-year history of the exam.²³

The more closely one examines DPS's numbers, the more dismal they look. For instance, the percentage of Detroit fourth-grade public school students who tested as "proficient" or better in various subjects on the 2009 NAEP exams were as follows: 3% in math, 5% in reading, and 4% in science. For the city's eighth-graders, the proficiency rates were similar: 4% in math, 7% in reading, and 3% in science.²⁴ The situation was no better in Detroit's public high schools, where the overall graduation rate had fallen to a paltry 25%.²⁵ These dispiriting numbers prompted then-U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan to bluntly characterize DPS as a "national disgrace."²⁶

In an effort to address DPS's fiscal crisis, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm in 2009 placed the city's school system under the control of an emergency financial manager—the former president of Washington, D.C.'s board of education, Robert Bobb—in an attempt to avoid bankruptcy.²⁷ Before long, Bobb found that many of DPS's monetary problems stemmed not merely from ineptitude, but also from willful corruption²⁸:

- In June 2009, Bobb's team of forensic accounting

²³ http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2009/12/detroit_students_notch_lowest.html

²⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/y9edanm8>

²⁵ <https://www.city-journal.org/html/real-reform-detroits-kids-14433.html>

²⁶ <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/07/31/37detroit.h28.html?qs=Decline+and+Fall:+Crisis+Financial+Manager+Tries+to+Fix+Detroit+Schools%27+Budget>

²⁷ <https://www.city-journal.org/html/real-reform-detroits-kids-14433.html>; <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/186067/toxic-government-democrats-detroit-arnold-ahlert>

²⁸ <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/175644/detroit-public-schools-bankrupting-minority-arnold-ahlert>

analysts discovered that 257 “ghost” employees—some of whom were fraudulently using the names of dead people—were illegally receiving paychecks for no-show jobs from DPS.²⁹

- Two months later, seven additional public officials were charged with felonies for operating an embezzlement scheme that siphoned tens of thousands of dollars out of the school system.³⁰
- It was also discovered that some 500 people who had been illegally enrolled as dependents on employee healthcare plans were costing the school district millions of dollars per year.³¹

Though Bobb was successful in uncovering examples of malfeasance, his revelations did nothing to close the school system’s budget deficit, which stood at approximately \$330 million in 2010, \$280 million in 2011, \$80 million in 2012, \$90 million in 2013, \$170 million in 2014, and \$215 million in 2015.³²

Nor did the huge taxpayer subsidies yield any significant academic dividends. In the 2012-13 school year, a mere 1.8% of Detroit’s high-school seniors were considered capable of

²⁹ <https://www.city-journal.org/html/real-reform-detroits-kids-14433.html>

³⁰ <https://www.judicialwatch.org/blog/2009/08/more-corruption-detroit/>; <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/175644/detroit-public-schools-bankrupting-minority-arnold-ahlert>;

³¹ <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/175644/detroit-public-schools-bankrupting-minority-arnold-ahlert>

³² [https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/SchoolAid/DPS_Historical_Budget_Trends\(Feb16\).pdf](https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/SchoolAid/DPS_Historical_Budget_Trends(Feb16).pdf)

doing college-level work.³³

By contrast, the mostly white Wyandotte Public Schools system, located just 17 miles from DPS, received the comparatively paltry annual sum of \$8,242 in taxpayer funds for each of its students—or \$5,583 less, per pupil, than DPS. Despite this much lower level of funding, the reading and math proficiency rates of Wyandotte students exceeded 60% and 40%, respectively.³⁴

In 2015, by which time DPS’s yearly per-pupil expenditures had climbed to nearly \$15,000,³⁵ the NAEP test scores of Detroit’s public school students remained as pitiful as ever:

- 5% of all Detroit fourth-graders performed well enough to be classified as “proficient” or better in grade-level reading—vs. 35% of fourth-graders nationally.³⁶
- 4% of Detroit fourth-graders performed well enough to be classified as “proficient” or better in grade-level math—vs. 39% of fourth-graders nationally.³⁷
- 7% of Detroit eighth-graders performed well enough to be categorized as “proficient” or better in grade-

³³ <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/175644/detroit-public-schools-bankrupting-minority-arnold-ahlert>

³⁴ <http://www.michiganapitolconfidential.com/20546>; <http://education-places.startclass.com/l/10031/Wyandotte-MI>

³⁵ <http://jamieglazov.com/2018/03/22/glazov-gang-the-lefts-racist-war-against-the-black-family/>

³⁶ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xr4.pdf>

³⁷ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xr4.pdf>

level reading, vs. 32% of eighth-graders nationally.³⁸

- 4% of Detroit eighth-graders performed well enough to be deemed “proficient” or better in grade-level math, vs. 32% of eighth-graders nationally.³⁹

Parents of Detroit’s underachieving schoolchildren are by no means blind to the fact that DPS is an academic basket case that is profoundly failing their youngsters. One survey of Detroit-area parents finds that 79% of them do not want their children to continue attending the city’s public schools,⁴⁰ knowing that the poor education they receive there sets the stage for a lifetime of underachievement..⁴¹

In January 2017—after a seven-year period during which DPS had been under the control of emergency managers appointed by the governor of Michigan⁴²—a school board was re-empaneled to run the district.⁴³ Like the mayor’s office and the Detroit City Council, this school board is dominated by Democrats, which means that the city’s children will see more of the same.⁴⁴

³⁸ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xr8.pdf>

³⁹ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049XR8.pdf>

⁴⁰ <http://reason.com/blog/2012/10/11/detroit-schools-are-well-funded-terrible>

⁴¹ <http://detroit.cbslocal.com/2011/05/04/report-nearly-half-of-detroiters-cant-read/>; https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/07/detroit-illiteracy-nearly-half-education_n_858307.htm

⁴² <https://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/after-six-years-and-four-state-appointed-managers-detroit-public-schools-debt-is-deeper-than-ever/Content?oid=2302010>

⁴³ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2017/01/11/detroit-school-board/96452920/>

⁴⁴ <http://detroitk12.org/board/members/>

ATLANTA

When Atlanta was formed in the 1840s, it was a convergence point of three major railroad lines that connected the fledgling city to far-flung regions of the Southeast and thereby enabled it to grow at a rapid pace. By 1860, it was the fourth largest city in Georgia, with a population exceeding 9,500. By 1900, Atlanta's population was almost 90,000, making it the largest city in Georgia and the third-largest in the Southeast.⁴⁵

The city's population tripled in size by 1930, a trend whose momentum was fueled in 1925 when Ivan Allen Sr. and W.R.C. Smith of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce decided to launch "Forward Atlanta," a national advertising campaign that was highly successful in attracting new businesses—and many thousands of jobs—to the city. Among the newcomers were corporate giants like Sears-Roebuck, which made Atlanta the site of its southeastern retail and mail-order headquarters, and General Motors, which established a manufacturing plant in the city.⁴⁶

While it was growing economically and shrugging off its history of social backwardness, Atlanta was falling under the political control of the Democratic Party, which has led the city since the 1960s and early '70s, a time when it fell predominantly under the sway of its left wing. In large part because of the ill-advised policies of the city's Democratic political leadership, it was also at this time when Atlanta's public school system began to fail.

One of Atlanta's key political figures in recent decades was

⁴⁵ <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/atlanta>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

its first African-American mayor, Maynard Jackson, who held that office for three (non-consecutive) four-year terms between 1974 and 1994. Shortly after he was first elected, Jackson caused deep divisions when he demoted the incumbent (white) police chief, John Inman, to “director of police services,” and made that position subservient to the newly created “public safety commissioner,” a post to which Jackson appointed the black activist Reginald Eaves. With no police experience whatsoever, Eaves appointed an ex-convict as his personal secretary and instituted a quota system that gave preference to African-Americans for hirings and promotions within the police department. Eventually, in 1978, Mayor Jackson was forced to fire Eaves for the role the latter had played in a scandal where he had helped police officers cheat on promotions exams.⁴⁷

Under the race-obsessed leadership of Jackson and Eaves, Atlanta’s crime rates rose dramatically. Between 1978 and 1979 alone, the city experienced a 69% increase in homicides—giving it the highest murder rate, and the highest overall crime rate, of any city in the United States.⁴⁸ And while crime rates rose, poverty remained an intractable problem. In 1980, the black poverty rate in Atlanta was 28%.⁴⁹

These negative trends have continued throughout the nearly four decades since that time. Today Atlanta has an overall poverty rate of 24%, almost double the

⁴⁷ <http://biography.yourdictionary.com/maynard-holbrook-jackson-jr>; <https://books.google.com/books?id=yaseH2ICEX4C&pg=PA88&lpg=PA88&dq=&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false>; <http://www.atlantamagazine.com/great-reads/reginald-eaves1/>

⁴⁸ <http://crimevictimsmidiareport.com/?p=938>

⁴⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/01/20/us/atlanta-mecca-for-middle-class-blacks-also-harbors-poverty.html?pagewanted=all>

national average.⁵⁰ And the incidence of violent crime in the city is nearly 3 times higher than both the Georgia state average and the U.S. national average; this includes a murder rate that is almost 5 times the national average.⁵¹

As in so many Democrat-run U.S. cities, Atlanta’s public school system—under the sustained stewardship of Democratic political leaders and Democrat-dominated boards of education—has grown, over time, into a bureaucratic monstrosity of waste and ineptitude. The Atlanta Public Schools (APS) system receives about \$13,000 in taxpayer funds—41% more than Georgia’s statewide average of \$9,202—for each K-12 pupil in its jurisdiction.⁵² This money supports the bloated salaries of Atlanta’s school administrators such as Meria Carstarphen, who, when she became the superintendent of APS in July 2014, had a starting pay of \$375,000, with a built-in guarantee of 2% annual raises for the following three years, plus a \$2,000 monthly expense account.⁵³

But while school administrators may have prospered in Atlanta, children have not. When the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams were administered to assess the academic competence of Atlanta’s public school students in 2015:

- Just 26% of all fourth-graders performed well enough to be classified as “proficient” in either grade-level reading or grade-level math. For black students, the figures were

⁵⁰ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/atlantacitygeorgia/PST045217>;
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217>

⁵¹ <http://www.areavibes.com/atlanta-ga/crime/>

⁵² <https://www.myajc.com/news/local-education/georgia-ranks-near-the-bottom-school-spending-but-does-matter/FILqcMz1V5225YqliX9X9N/>

⁵³ https://ballotpedia.org/Atlanta_Public_Schools,_Georgia

twice as bad: 13% for reading and 11% for math.⁵⁴

- Similarly, a mere 21% of Atlanta eighth-graders performed well enough to be categorized as “proficient” in either grade-level reading or grade-level math. For black students, the figures were, once again, 13% and 11% for reading and math, respectively.⁵⁵

The following year, Atlanta’s public school students were given the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS) tests, a comprehensive set of exams designed to gauge how well pupils from the third grade through high school had mastered the basic skills associated with English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.⁵⁶ Of Atlanta’s third-graders who took the test in 2016, a mere 32% scored at or above grade level in ELA, and 33% did the same in math. For fifth-graders, the corresponding figures were 36% for ELA and 30% for math. For eighth-graders, it was 34% for ELA and 17% for math. And among high-schoolers, 31% of students were at or above grade level in American literature and composition, while just 22% were at or above grade level in analytic geometry.⁵⁷

In 2016, Georgia passed legislation stipulating that schools which were “chronically failing”—as determined by their

⁵⁴ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xa4.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xa4.pdf>

⁵⁵ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xa8.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xa8.pdf>

⁵⁶ <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Georgia-Milestones-Assessment-System.aspx>

⁵⁷ <https://www.ajc.com/news/local-education/state-test-results-third-atlanta-students-read-grade-level/iSvLLMK5AAcJxArjsPOdiP/>

persistently low ratings on the College- and Career-Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)—would be eligible for state intervention aimed at helping them improve the academic achievement of their students. Georgia state officials currently list 16 public schools in Atlanta in that category. All of those schools have three-year (2015, 2016, 2017) CCRPI averages that place them in the bottom 5% of schools statewide.⁵⁸

Though the recent performance of students in APS’s well-funded public schools clearly has been abysmal, there was a significant period during the first decade of the new century when it appeared that APS was suddenly making significant academic strides—and that the large subsidy of taxpayer dollars was actually buying basic knowledge for its students. But this apparent progress turned out to be one of the greatest public-sector hoaxes ever perpetrated against the taxpayers—and children—of any American city.

A cabal of Atlanta educators and school administrators had orchestrated a secret campaign of deceit intended to conceal APS’s woeful educational track record—and to enrich themselves in the process. The roots of the campaign can be traced back to 1999, when Beverly Hall, a committed Democrat⁵⁹ who had just finished serving four years as superintendent of the Newark Public Schools, was hired as APS superintendent and was hailed as a highly innovative reformer—even as she remained the target of a New Jersey State Senate probe investigating a \$58 million school-

⁵⁸ <https://www.myajc.com/blog/get-schooled/atlanta-public-schools-down-from-failing-schools-eligible-for-state-intervention/wKzUE2sj1mklkuBcav6nXP/>;
<https://www.georgiastandards.org/CCRPI/Pages/CCRPI.aspx>

⁵⁹ <https://www.opensecrets.org/donor-lookup/results?name=Hall,+Beverly&state=GA&zip=&employ=&cand=&old=Y&sort=N&capcode=wsmx&submit=Submit+your+Donor+Query>

budget deficit that had accrued under her watch in Newark.⁶⁰

Under Hall's leadership, the standardized-test scores of APS students began to rise noticeably and somewhat inexplicably in 2001 and continued to do so for several years thereafter. At one particular school where a mere 1% of students had registered test scores in the highest range in 2006, for instance, the corresponding figure for 2007 was 46%.⁶¹ In 2008, according to standards set by the federal No Child Left Behind law, *every* elementary school in Atlanta demonstrated "adequate yearly progress" as measured by student scores. In many cases, Atlanta pupils from poor and minority backgrounds were outperforming their white peers from wealthier suburban districts on the exams.⁶² In other instances, children who recently had been unable to read were now registering astronomically high scores on the state reading test.⁶³ In recognition of these truly startling trends, the American Association of School Administrators in 2009 rewarded Hall with its coveted National Superintendent of the Year award and credited her "leadership" for having "turned Atlanta into a model of urban school reform."⁶⁴ That same year, President Obama's Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, invited Hall to be honored at the White House.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/178370/dem-controlled-atlanta-schools-rob-minority-arnold-ahlert>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/15/nyregion/state-bailout-to-rescue-financially-troubled-newark-school-district.html>

⁶¹ <http://www.hartmanfirm.com/the-atlanta-public-schools-cheating-scandal-a-crop-of-corrupt-educators/>

⁶² <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/30/us/former-school-chief-in-atlanta-indicted-in-cheating-scandal.html>

⁶³ <https://theconservativetreehouse.com/2011/07/07/atlanta-public-schools-systemic-failure-fraud-corruption-top-to-bottom/>

⁶⁴ <http://jewishworldreview.com/cols/thomas040413.php3#.WrOzC4jwaUl>; <https://www.cnn.com/2013/03/29/us/georgia-cheating-scandal/>

⁶⁵ <http://jewishworldreview.com/cols/thomas040413.php3#.WrOzXYjwaUl>

But then, in late 2009 and 2010, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* published a series of articles examining the large gains that APS students had been making in their Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) scores, and estimated that the odds of all those scores being legitimate were about a-billion-to-one.⁶⁶ A subsequent probe by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI)—the results of which were made public in July 2011—found that a significant number of teachers and principals at 58 Atlanta schools had secretly corrected and/or fabricated many of the answers on the CRCT tests, so as to give the false impression that student performance was improving.⁶⁷ The GBI report also concluded that these individuals had also altered, hidden, or destroyed records that documented the school system’s horrible academic track record. In one case, said the report, Hall’s chief human-resources officer, Millicent Few, had “illegally ordered” the destruction of some early drafts of an outside investigative attorney’s account of test-tampering at Atlanta’s Deerwood Academy. On another occasion, after *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* had asked to see a case log of internal investigations related to the cheating scandal, Few ordered staffers to destroy the log and replace it with a fraudulent one.⁶⁸

The APS scandal was far more wide-ranging than anyone could have initially imagined. When investigators began questioning classroom teachers about the matter, one principal, Armstead

⁶⁶ <https://www.ajc.com/news/local/are-drastic-swings-crct-scores-valid/1uNxbbiLUZjvYQx6gMkyyN/>; <http://www.substancenews.net/articles.php?page=1866>

⁶⁷ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/04/13/atlanta-school-cheating-race/2079327/>; https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/aps-atlanta-public-schools-embroiled-in-cheating-scandal/2011/07/11/gIQAJ19m8H_blog.html?utm_term=.b26a169809ab; <https://www.cnn.com/2013/03/29/us/georgia-cheating-scandal/>

⁶⁸ <https://theconservativetreehouse.com/2011/07/07/atlanta-public-schools-systemic-failure-fraud-corruption-top-to-bottom/>

Salters, told the teachers: “If anyone asks you anything about this just tell them you don’t know.... [J]ust stick to the story and it will all go away.” Another principal, Gwendolyn Benton, warned teachers that she would “sue them out the ass” if they “slandered” her to the GBI investigators. Similarly, a number of area superintendents, each responsible for overseeing the operation of multiple Atlanta schools, enforced a code of silence, as in the case of one superintendent who told a teacher that she would be “gone” if she failed to “keep her mouth shut.”⁶⁹

“In sum,” wrote the investigators, “a culture of fear, intimidation and retaliation permeated the APS system from the highest ranks down.⁷⁰ All told, the GBI investigation implicated 38 principals and 140 teachers, making it the most extensive cheating scandal in the history of American education.⁷¹

Prior to these revelations, many of the educators involved in the scandal had been handsomely rewarded for their malfeasance. Atlanta’s *Channel 2 Action News* reported that teachers at 13 schools in particular had received a combined \$500,000 in merit-pay bonuses in 2009 alone.⁷² And Beverly Hall, for her part, had raked in approximately \$580,000 in “performance” bonuses during the course of her tenure as APS superintendent.⁷³ These examples of self-enrichment took place as the APS was racking

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2011/0705/America-s-biggest-teacher-and-principal-cheating-scandal-unfolds-in-Atlanta>

⁷² <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/cheating-atlanta-schools-received-500k-bonuses-what-now>

⁷³ <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/178370/dem-controlled-atlanta-schools-rob-minority-arnold-ahlert>

up a budget deficit that, by 2014, amounted to \$45 million.⁷⁴ Following the Georgia state investigation into the APS cheating scandal, Superintendent Hall was allowed to resign without penalty.⁷⁵ By contrast, the children who had attended Atlanta’s failing public schools during Hall’s tenure paid a very steep price indeed. According to Binghamton University Professor Lawrence C. Stedman, APS students lagged 1-2 years behind national averages on the NAEP, and “vast percentages” of them were incapable of reaching even a basic level of competence. “At current rates,” wrote Stedman, “it will take from 50 to 110 years to bring all students to proficiency.”⁷⁶

This would not be the last scandal involving APS officials. Amid a district-wide effort to increase graduation rates at Atlanta high schools in the 2013-14 school year, one principal, Charlotte Davis, changed 144 students’ grades from failing to passing. As *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reports, “The changes meant [that] students who had failed courses were not required to repeat them.” Davis remained in her job for nearly a full year after APS first learned of the allegations against her. When one teacher, during that year, complained about what Davis had done, the principal laid her off as punishment.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ <https://www.ajc.com/news/local-education/atlanta-school-board-faces-budget-gap/foGFiLbDPwSV9SoOyZdIxI/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2013/03/29/us/georgia-cheating-scandal/>; <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/178370/dem-controlled-atlanta-schools-rob-minority-arnold-ahlert>

⁷⁶ <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/178370/dem-controlled-atlanta-schools-rob-minority-arnold-ahlert>

⁷⁷ <https://www.ajc.com/news/local-education/atlanta-principal-changed-nearly-150-student-grades/1wFd5LeUhVg0SZ9EE6b7rL/>

BALTIMORE

In the post-Civil War era, Baltimore, which had been founded in 1729, became an industrial giant. By the 1880s, it was the world's largest supplier of oysters, America's leader in canned fruits and vegetables, and the nation's top importer of guano, a key ingredient in the fertilizer that became vital to the productivity of the farms along the Chesapeake Bay during that era. As of 1880, Baltimore was home to 27 factories that together produced some 280,000 tons of fertilizer each year. From 1850-1900, the city's population tripled, from 169,000 to 509,000. And between 1881 and 1895, the number of corporations based in Baltimore grew from 39 to more than 200.⁷⁸

By the turn of the 20th century, Baltimore's economic and business environment was thriving as never before. Baltimore City.gov describes what life in the city was like at that time: "Hundreds of passenger trains were funneled through its five railroad stations; 13 trust companies controlled large areas of Baltimore manufacturing; 21 national banks and 9 local banks controlled Baltimore's financial interests; 13 steamship companies were engaged in coastal trading; and 6 steamship companies connected Baltimore to foreign ports." Moreover, the city was one of the world's leading manufacturers of chrome, copper, and steel products, and a major center of garment manufacturing.⁷⁹

As word of the abundant employment opportunities in Baltimore spread far-and-wide, large numbers of jobless rural southerners migrated there to find work. In large part because of this, the city's population grew from 558,500 to nearly 734,000

⁷⁸ http://www.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/5_History.pdf

⁷⁹ Ibid.

between 1910-20. This trend continued through the World War II era, when various types of Baltimore factories were refitted to produce whatever items the war effort required—e.g., tanks, jeeps, airplanes, and superfortress bombers.⁸⁰

In the 1950s, Baltimore was home to a host of thriving industries—particularly manufacturing and shipping—which created some three-fourths of all the jobs held by people in its metropolitan region.⁸¹ The city’s residents had a median income that was 7% higher than the national median; the percentage of Baltimore families earning middle-class wages was about one-fifth higher than in the U.S. as a whole; and the proportion of Baltimoreans living in poverty was roughly one-fifth lower than the corresponding national figure.⁸²

Throughout these decades of prosperity, Baltimore’s political leadership shifted back-and-forth between Democrats and Republicans. Of the 16 men who served as mayor between 1895 and 1967, nine were Democrats and seven were Republicans.

But in 1967, control of Baltimore’s government was taken over by Thomas D’Alesandro, the first of a series of eight Democratic mayors who have continually held power, without interruption, ever since. In those more than five decades, Baltimore’s industry and productivity have disappeared, while poverty and crime have become its growth industries. The city’s residents today have a median household income that is roughly 40% below Maryland’s state average, and a

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ <http://www.nathanielturner.com/robertmooreand1199union3.htm>

⁸² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903480904576510794280560566>; <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/blame-taxes-baltimores-rot>

21.9% poverty rate that is 1.7 times the national average.⁸³ Meanwhile, the violent crime rate in Baltimore is currently 4.6 times higher than the national average—a figure that includes astronomical rates of murder (10 times the national average) and robbery (8 times the national average).⁸⁴ During this Democrat-dominated epoch, Baltimore has also developed one of the worst public school systems in America, with the city’s students consistently registering National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores that rank among the nation’s lowest. In 2015, for example, NAEP results showed that only 11% of Baltimore’s fourth-graders and 13% of its eighth-graders were able to read with proficiency, whereas the corresponding national figures were 35% and 32%, respectively.⁸⁵ In math, the proficiency rate for Baltimore’s fourth- and eighth-graders alike was 12%, while the national rates were 39% for fourth graders and 32% for eight graders.⁸⁶

The situation is no better at the high-school level. According to a 2017 report by investigative journalist Chris Papst of Project Baltimore, a long-term study of public education in Maryland, the reading proficiency rate among Baltimore High School graduates is about 11%, while their math proficiency is near 12%.⁸⁷ The same study found that in 2016, fully 13 of the city’s 39 public high schools had no students at all—*zero*—who

⁸³ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Baltimore-Maryland.html>

⁸⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-Baltimore-Maryland.html>

⁸⁵ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xm4.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xm8.pdf>

⁸⁶ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xm4.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xm8.pdf>

⁸⁷ <http://thehill.com/opinion/education/350315-baltimores-failing-schools-are-a-tragedy-of-criminal-proportions>; <http://weartv.com/news/local/project-baltimore-investigation-into-school-system>

were “proficient” in math, while another 6 schools had student bodies where only 1% of all pupils tested as “proficient” in math. To state the foregoing facts in raw numbers, a mere 14 of the 3,804 students who were tested in these 19 schools displayed mathematical proficiency. Moreover, six Baltimore schools had *zero* students who tested as “proficient” in *either* the math or English exam administered by the state.⁸⁸

Notwithstanding these abysmal scores, the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) system churns out high-school graduates at a fairly brisk pace. Roughly 70% of its students earn a diploma, although they are largely illiterate and unable to perform even basic mathematical tasks. For instance, at Frederick Douglass High School, which boasted an 87% graduation rate, only 1 of the 185 students who in 2016 were tested in math registered a score high enough to qualify as “proficient” in that subject. Critics have pointed out the obvious: that Baltimore schools distribute worthless diplomas to deflect from the fact that teachers don’t teach and students don’t learn.⁸⁹

One of the major underlying causes of this tragedy was made evident in a May 2017 Fox News report exploring the reasons why the high-school graduation rate for BCPS students had increased dramatically, from 61% to nearly 71%, between 2010 and 2017. “In Maryland,” Fox explained, “there are two ways to graduate. The traditional way of earning credits and passing

⁸⁸ <https://www.theblaze.com/news/2017/11/09/alarming-number-of-baltimore-high-schools-had-zero-students-proficient-in-math-study-shows>; <http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/13-baltimore-city-high-schools-zero-students-proficient-in-math>; <http://weartv.com/news/local/project-baltimore-investigating-public-schools>

⁸⁹ <http://thehill.com/opinion/education/350315-baltimores-failing-schools-are-a-tragedy-of-criminal-proportions>; <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2017/05/29/yikes-these-five-baltimore-schools-dont-have-a-single-student-proficient-in-math-and-english-n2332719>

tests, or the Bridge Plan. Bridge started in 2007, and according to the Department of Education, it was intended for students with disabilities, test anxiety and English Language Learners. It's not a test, but rather a project that students complete to get a diploma."⁹⁰ Whereas in 2009, about 20% of Baltimore City High School graduates earned their diplomas via the Bridge Plan, by 2015 that figure had risen to 37%--nearly 4 times higher than the statewide average. One Baltimore school, the Renaissance Academy, currently graduates 73% of its students through Bridge, a figure that has grown more than fourfold since 2014. Former Baltimore City Council member Carl Stokes, who now serves as CEO of the Banneker Blake Charter School, says that the Bridge program was originally "intended for a limited number of students" but has now become essentially a way "to inflate the graduation rates." "What the school system is telling us," Stokes adds, "is that they [the schools] are doing a very, very poor job of educating students, academically. And [the students] are not prepared to get their diploma the standard way."⁹¹

In a September 2017 op-ed piece, black intellectual Armstrong Williams writes:

"Individuals and firms that service the Baltimore school system are making off with literally billions of taxpayer dollars with nothing to show for it. In any for-profit corporation, dismal results such as these would have caused it to go bankrupt long ago, pushed out of the market by companies that could better serve the consumer.... But in the tortured logic of Baltimore's political bureaucracy, failure is incentivized. It is at

⁹⁰ <http://foxbaltimore.com/news/project-baltimore/graduation-rates-for-baltimore-city-schools-a-look-behind-the-numbers>

⁹¹ Ibid.

best a massive fraud committed against students who are cheated out of a future, and taxpayers whose hard-earned money is being wasted. At worst, Baltimore's performance is a genocidal crime against generations of children who are then turned out into the streets to face a world of crime, drugs, prison and death that has resulted in a murder rate of over 300 per year. The buck has to stop somewhere. Cutting off the flow of unaccounted tax dollars to an underperforming, bloated school system that is cynically betraying children should be seriously considered."⁹²

No intellectually honest assessment of BCPS's pitiful track record could attribute that poor record to a lack of funding. The city's public school system currently spends, on average, about \$16,000 per year in taxpayer funds on each K-12 student in its jurisdiction.⁹³ This figure is about 34% higher than the \$11,984 average for elementary and secondary public school systems across the United States.⁹⁴

Much of BCPS's spending goes toward the salaries and benefits of far greater numbers of bureaucrats than a school system of that size actually requires. Though Baltimore's population has declined from 939,000 in 1960 to 621,000 today,⁹⁵ and its public school enrollment figures have dwindled at a similar pace, there are still *thousands* of BCPS-affiliated individuals—mostly consultants, contractors, and administrators—who are paid in

⁹² <http://thehill.com/opinion/education/350315-baltimores-failing-schools-are-a-tragedy-of-criminal-proportions>

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ <http://www.nea.org/2017-rankings-and-estimates>

⁹⁵ <http://population.us/county/md/baltimore-city/>

excess of \$100,000 per year.⁹⁶ For instance, interim superintendent Verletta White, who was installed by the Baltimore County Board of Education in May 2017, not only rakes in \$265,000 in salary each year, but is also given an additional budget for travel costs and a vehicle, as well as a \$450 monthly stipend for “communication and technology” expenses.⁹⁷ In the words of Armstrong Williams, “The [Baltimore] school system, it seems, has become a platform for political patronage, and rewarding allies of the city’s political class. How else could the school system’s budget be so saddled with bureaucracy and blight?”⁹⁸

CHICAGO

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Chicago was the home of such technological and commercial innovations as the first refrigerated railroad car (1878), the first mail-order retailing corporations (Sears-Roebuck in 1893 and Montgomery Ward in 1872), and the first car radio manufacturer (1920s). Also during the Twenties, new construction boomed throughout the city, punctuated by the completion in 1930 of such landmarks as the Chicago Board of Trade Building and the famed Merchandise Mart, the world’s largest building at that time. A postwar economic boom saw the development of huge housing tracts in the city’s Northwest and Southwest Sides and the consolidation of the city’s reputation for dynamism and robustness.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ <http://thehill.com/opinion/education/350315-baltimores-failing-schools-are-a-tragedy-of-criminal-proportions>

⁹⁷ https://ballotpedia.org/Baltimore_County_Public_Schools,_Maryland

⁹⁸ <http://thehill.com/opinion/education/350315-baltimores-failing-schools-are-a-tragedy-of-criminal-proportions>

⁹⁹ <https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/about/history.html>; https://www.radiomuseum.org/forum/first_car_radios_history_and_development_of_early_car_radios.html

Many of the Democratic mayors that have led Chicago since 1931¹⁰⁰ were pragmatists, but beginning in the late 1960s, the Democratic Party definitively rejected such centrists and embraced a radical leftist agenda that continues to guide its activities to this day. Under the progressive policies of Michael Bilandic(1976-79),JaneByrne(1979-83),andHaroldWashington (1983-87), the city’s economic and social fabric deteriorated markedly.¹⁰¹ The policies that those mayors espoused, according to urban analyst Aaron Renn, caused Chicago to become “a grim, decaying city” that “was failing on nearly every measure.”¹⁰²

Also during the 1980s, crime rates in Chicago exploded: Between 1982 and 1987, the annual incidence of robbery rose by 44%, while the corresponding increases in other crime categories included 37% for burglary, more than 20% for both larceny-theft and auto theft, over 40% for arson, and at least 300% for aggravated assault.¹⁰³

The eroding economy and rising criminality that plagued Chicago during the Eighties were accompanied by a steep dropoff in the city’s population—from 3.36 million in 1970 to 2.78 million by 1990.¹⁰⁴ There was a similar decline in the number of students enrolled in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). As middle-class families fled to the suburbs or placed their children into private schools to escape the increasingly chaotic and dangerous schools of CPS, the white student population in Chicago’s public school system decreased by 60%

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1443.html>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.city-journal.org/html/second-rate-city-13471.html>

¹⁰² <http://www.urbanophile.com/2012/06/24/state-of-chicago-the-decline-and-rise/>

¹⁰³ <https://archive.org/stream/uniformcrimerepo1982unit#page/n7/mode/2up>;
<https://archive.org/stream/uniformcrimerepoa1987unit#page/74/mode/2up>

¹⁰⁴ <http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/chicago.html>

between 1970 and 1980. This plummeting enrollment, coupled with the school district's fiscal mismanagement, helped push CPS into dire financial straits.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, in 1980 the Illinois state legislature established the Chicago School Finance Authority, which was tasked with taking emergency control of the school system and reining in its runaway budget deficit.¹⁰⁶

But even as Chicago's public schools were hemorrhaging students, the city's teachers initiated nine separate work stoppages from 1969-87—demanding higher salaries, more generous benefits, and greater job security.¹⁰⁷ By this time, CPS had become infamous not only for its financial woes, but also for an academic environment that was steeped in failure—e.g., high student dropout rates as well as reading and mathematics test scores that were far below national norms.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, an astounding 33 of Chicago's 64 public high schools in 1987 ranked in the bottom 1% of all U.S. high schools, in terms of their students' American College Test (ACT) scores.¹⁰⁹ The standardized test results for third-, sixth-, and eighth-graders in Chicago were likewise very poor. On exams designed to measure reading ability, for instance, only 13% of Chicago third-graders registered scores equal to those of the top 25% of third-graders nationwide. For math, the corresponding figure was 18.8%.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.chicagoreporter.com/cps-history/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2016/0120/Will-Illinois-take-over-Chicago-s-debt-ridden-public-schools>

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-chicago-teacher-strikes-timeline-20160331-htmlstory.html>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/10/02/us/parents-angry-as-chicago-school-strike-lingers.html>

¹⁰⁹ http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1987-10-29/news/8703210667_1_percentile-act-scores-report-cards

¹¹⁰ http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1987-10-29/news/8703210667_1_percentile-act-scores-report-cards/2

Given these bleak numbers, in November 1987 U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett described the Chicago Public Schools system as the very worst in America.¹¹¹ In 1988, the Illinois General Assembly passed the first Chicago School Reform Act, creating local school councils at each individual school.¹¹² But no clear pattern of improvement resulted from this measure, either academically or fiscally. By 1995, CPS was projecting that its budget deficit would reach an astounding \$1.4 billion within four years.¹¹³ So unsound were the school system's finances, that banks were refusing to lend any money to the district.¹¹⁴

To deal with this situation, the state of Illinois gave total control of CPS to Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley.¹¹⁵ But once again, this did not yield much lasting change for the better. As the *Chicago Tribune* reports:

“The 1995 overhaul ushered in badly-needed improvements. But records and interviews show that lax budget rules written into the legislation paved the way for [a subsequent] financial crisis. Instead of imposing lasting fiscal discipline, Illinois lawmakers gave the district a smorgasbord of new ways to hide annual shortfalls. Rather than address underlying

¹¹¹ http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-12-13/opinion/ct-emanuel-byrd-bennett-cps-education-perception-s-20131213_1_cps-schools-chicago-public-schools-mayor-and-schools-chief

¹¹² <https://www.wbez.org/shows/curious-city/were-chicagos-public-schools-ever-good/98e6ce6f-0e76-4836-bd17-8f0c54183d1b>

¹¹³ <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/The-312/June-2013/Chicago-Public-Schools-Pension-Bomb/>

¹¹⁴ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/watchdog/ct-cps-budget-crisis-met-20150821-story.html>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.wbez.org/shows/curious-city/were-chicagos-public-schools-ever-good/98e6ce6f-0e76-4836-bd17-8f0c54183d1b>

structural budget problems, they relaxed the rules governing school spending. CPS got back unfettered access to borrowing and gained the power to divert tax dollars earmarked for pensions to other uses.”¹¹⁶

Over the past two decades, CPS’s finances have continued to drown in red ink. In fiscal years 2016 and 2017, for instance, the district’s budget deficits amounted to \$480 million and \$798 million, respectively.¹¹⁷ “Chicago’s public school system is on the verge of facing financial insolvency,” *The American Interest* reported in May 2016, “and it’s not because selfish taxpayers have been starving it of revenue—both the Windy City and the state of Illinois have significantly higher than average tax rates. Much of the school district’s acute fiscal distress can be chalked up to mismanagement, plain and simple—short-sighted decisions by blinkered public officials who chose to mortgage the school system’s future against pension benefits for current retirees.”¹¹⁸

Today CPS spends more than \$16,400 per year on the education-related expenses of each K-12 student in the city—an amount exceeding the \$11,984 national average by about 37%.¹¹⁹ But it is difficult to see benefits accruing from these huge expenditures. In the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams:

¹¹⁶ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/watchdog/ct-cps-budget-crisis-met-20150821-story.html>

¹¹⁷ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-met-0121-chicago-public-schools-budget-deficit-graphic-graphic.html>

¹¹⁸ <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/05/26/the-tragic-mismanagement-of-chicagos-public-schools/>

¹¹⁹ <http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20160525/OPINION/160529895/the-real-cost-of-cps-borrowing-district-now-owes-38-000-per-student>; <http://www.nea.org/2017-rankings-and-estimates>

- Just 27% of Chicago fourth-graders performed well enough to be classified as “proficient” or better in grade-level reading. (For black fourth-graders, the corresponding figure was just 18%).¹²⁰
- Only 30% of Chicago fourth-graders performed well enough to be classified as “proficient” or better in grade-level math (for black fourth-graders, 16%).¹²¹
- A mere 24% of Chicago eighth-graders performed well enough to be categorized as “proficient” or better in grade-level reading (for black eighth-graders, 13%).¹²²
- Just 26% of Chicago eighth-graders performed well enough to be deemed “proficient” or better in grade-level math (for black eighth-graders, 11%).¹²³

These poor results have become the norm for Chicago’s public schools, even while CPS teachers rank among the highest-paid members of their profession—earning, on average, \$76,000 per year not including benefits.¹²⁴

As bad as CPS public schools are generally, the failure of the city’s *lowest*-rated schools almost defies description. At the

¹²⁰ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xc4.pdf>

¹²¹ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xc4.pdf>

¹²² <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xc8.pdf>

¹²³ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xc8.pdf>

¹²⁴ <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2012/06/12/how-much-do-chicago-public-school-teachers-make/>

Chicago elementary schools that rank in the city's bottom 10% in terms of student achievement, barely 25% of the pupils are able to meet even the most basic competency standards on state exams—as compared to 82% of all students in Illinois. Similarly, at the bottom 10% of high schools in Chicago, a mere 5% of students meet the state standards for academic competency, vs. 51% of their peers across Illinois. According to a report by IllinoisPolicy.org: “Students at Chicago’s lowest-performing high schools drop out at nearly 12 times the rate of average Illinois students—36 percent compared to 3 percent, respectively.” This of course has enormous implications for the future of those students, because adults who fail to graduate from high school or to obtain a GED, subsequently go on to earn some 40% less than their counterparts who do manage to achieve either of those two objectives.¹²⁵

Defenders of CPS point out that despite the system's poor overall track record, its four-year high-school graduation rate has risen markedly in recent years, to 74.7%—substantially below the national average of 83%,¹²⁶ but much higher than the 60% CPS figure of just four years ago.¹²⁷ However, this rising graduation rate has not been accompanied by rising academic competency—as evidenced by the fact that of those Chicago students who do manage to get a high-school diploma and go on to post-secondary education, only 26% are college-ready, and 91% need to take remedial courses in college.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ <https://www.illinoispolicy.org/reports/trapped-in-chicagos-worst-schools-education-outcomes-in-chicagos-lowest-performing-public-schools/>

¹²⁶ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-chicago-school-graduation-rate-increase-met-20170903-story.html>

¹²⁷ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/hilary-gowins/chicago-public-schools-are-failing_b_5488973.html

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Notwithstanding all the chaos and incompetence that have become the hallmarks of CPS over the past half-century, some leaders of the school system and the teachers' union reflexively blame racism for the problems they've encountered.¹²⁹ In June 2013, for example, Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis, a Democrat, attributed the failures of CPS not to any shortcomings in the city's educational apparatus, but rather to the "fact that rich white people think they know what's in the best interest of children of African-Americans and Latinos, no matter what the parents' income or education level." She elaborated: "If you look at the majority of the tax base for property taxes in Chicago, "they're mostly white, who don't have a real interest in paying for the education of poor black and brown children." Lewis concluded by charging that it is "racism and inequality that hinders the delivery of an education product in our school system."¹³⁰

In a similar spirit, and ignoring the far-higher-than-average per capita annual spending on its students, the Chicago Public Schools system in February 2017 filed a lawsuit against Republican Governor Bruce Rauner and the Illinois Board of Education, complaining that while nearly 20% of the state's public school students were enrolled in CPS, the district was receiving only about 15% of the \$10.6 billion worth of education funding that the state government doled out each year. CPS chief executive officer Forrest Claypool also played the race card to excuse the system's failure, saying: "Chicago students, who are overwhelmingly students of color, are learning in a separate but unequal system. The message from the State is that their

¹²⁹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/02/14/chicago-sues-illinois-governor-over-school-funding-formula/97907074/>

¹³⁰ <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2013/06/19/chicago-teachers-union-rich-white/>

educations matter less than children in the rest of Illinois, and that is both morally and legally indefensible.”¹³¹ CPS officials went so far as to send home a highly politicized letter with all of the students in its school system, charging that “Governor Rauner, just like President Trump, has decided to attack those who need the most help.” The letter accused Rauner of having “stolen” money from the children and their families.¹³²

CLEVELAND

During the second half of the 19th century, the city of Cleveland developed into an important and thriving industrial center, as reflected in the fact that it became home to John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company and Samuel Mather’s steel-production facilities at that time. As of 1880, fully 28% of Cleveland’s workforce was employed in local steel mills.¹³³

By 1950, Cleveland was the sixth-largest city in America. A Fifties documentary noted that the nearly 2 million people who, at that time, lived and/or worked in Cleveland “recognize[d] it as the best location in the nation.”¹³⁴

But in the 1960s, the political radicalism that left its imprint on so many American cities hit Cleveland especially hard. The summer of 1964, for example, saw the founding of the

¹³¹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/02/14/chicago-sues-illinois-governor-over-school-funding-formula/97907074/>

¹³² <http://wgntv.com/2017/02/07/all-cps-students-sent-home-with-letter-accusing-gov-rauner-of-cheating-kids/>

¹³³ http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Cleveland,_Ohio

¹³⁴ <https://reason.org/reason-saves-cleveland-episode-1/>

Cleveland Community Project, a local chapter of the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The Cleveland branch of SDS laid the foundation for the Cleveland Welfare Rights Movement, which aimed to flood the city's welfare rolls with new beneficiaries while training local grassroots activist leaders in ways to use them politically.¹³⁵

America's rising black militancy movement likewise stalked the city. Racial tensions that began to fester during the early 1960s culminated in the deadly Hough Race Riots of 1966—named after the street where the violence that resulted in 4 deaths and dozens of injuries originated.¹³⁶ Then, during a five-day period in July 1968, yet another series of race riots—sparked by a deadly gun battle between police officers and some two dozen heavily armed Black Nationalists—devastated Cleveland's Glenville section.¹³⁷

Throughout that radical period, Cleveland's political leadership was in the hands of the Democratic Party, as it had been since 1941. In a misguided effort aimed at addressing the city's racial tensions, a federal court in the mid-1970s ordered Cleveland—which now had a Republican mayor for the first time in three decades—to implement a busing program that took children out of the public schools they had been attending and transported them to other, sometimes distant, campuses¹³⁸—all for the purpose of injecting a measure of

¹³⁵ <https://case.edu/ech/articles/s/students-for-a-democratic-society/>; <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/groupProfile.asp?grpId=6723>

¹³⁶ <https://case.edu/ech/articles/h/hough-riots/>; <http://www.policemag.com/blog/swat/story/2008/07/the-40th-anniversary-of-the-glenville-riot-and-shootout.aspx>

¹³⁷ <http://www.policemag.com/blog/swat/story/2008/07/the-40th-anniversary-of-the-glenville-riot-and-shootout.aspx>

¹³⁸ <https://reason.org/reason-saves-cleveland-episode-1/>

“racial balance” into the city’s classrooms.¹³⁹ As in other northern cities, however, this initiative inflamed interracial enmity throughout Cleveland and triggered a “white flight” that greatly exacerbated the economic downturn which hit the city very hard in the Seventies.¹⁴⁰ From 1970-80, the population of Cleveland dropped from 751,000 to 574,000.¹⁴¹ Moreover, large numbers of businesses relocated either to the American South or to places abroad, and the city never really recovered.

As Cleveland’s population shrank, so did enrollment in its public school system. Between 1975-1980, the total number of students in the Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD) dropped from 135,000 to 92,000.¹⁴² But even as children were leaving the city’s schools in droves, the CMSD bureaucracy refused to undergo a similar contraction in terms of its size and budget. Consequently, the district’s annual per-pupil expenditures during that same five-year period nearly doubled, putting Cleveland in the top 10% of all big-spending school districts in Ohio, and racking up tens of millions of dollars in annual budget deficits. As one Case Western University report notes, this trend continued unabated into the early 1990s, with no academic benefits to show for it: “[T]he majority of students [in Cleveland] were not able to pass Ohio’s new proficiency test for 9th-grade students,” and “many graduates couldn’t qualify for entry-level jobs.”¹⁴³ In a 1991 poll taken by the Citizens League Research Institute, a majority of Cleveland residents registered their disgust with CMSD by giving the district a grade of “D” or

¹³⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/09/us/official-busing-ends-in-cleveland.html>

¹⁴⁰ <https://reason.org/reason-saves-cleveland-episode-1/>

¹⁴¹ <https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/cleveland-ohio>

¹⁴² <https://books.google.com/books?id=PYyR-Hye8gwC&pg=PA155&lpg=PA155&dq=Cleveland+public+schools+and+spending+#v=onepage&q&f=false>

¹⁴³ <https://case.edu/ech/articles/c/cleveland-public-schools/>

“F” for its inability to adequately educate the city’s children.¹⁴⁴

At that time, Cleveland’s Democrat mayor Michael White was in the second year of his first term in office. And in the 27 years since then, the city has had only Democratic mayors. By 1994, CMSD’s budget deficit had grown to \$51 million. When a school levy failed to pass in May of that year, the school board—hoping to persuade voters to reconsider their opposition to the budget—threatened to eliminate the jobs of several hundred school-district employees. But local taxpayers were in no mood to be strong-armed into supporting a school system where the reading-comprehension test scores of students were actually *declining* the longer those students stayed in school, and where nearly half of all pupils were failing to graduate from high school. In November 1994, the public again refused to pass the levy.¹⁴⁵

In the summer of 1997, the Ohio state government passed a law shifting control of the Cleveland city schools from an elected school board—like the kind that headed every other district in the state—to the mayor, who would now be authorized to appoint a new school governing board and a chief executive officer to oversee the system.¹⁴⁶ This measure was vehemently opposed by the city’s 5,000-member teachers’ union and the NAACP, both of which claimed that it violated the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. “Most of our claims relate to the community being deprived of their right to vote for a school board,” said James A. Ciocia, the attorney representing the teachers’ union.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.; <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1998/09/16/02cleve.h18.html>; http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2011/08/mayoral_control_of_the_clevela.html

Moreover, lawyers for both the union and the NAACP charged that the new law was being “purposely and systematically ... utilized to exclude African-Americans ... from the opportunity to participate in the educational policymaking process.”¹⁴⁷ In 1999, CMSD began exploiting a provision in federal law which held that if 80% or more of the children in a particular school district lived in homes poor enough to qualify for free, federally funded meals at school, then free meals would be provided to *all* students in that district, regardless of their individual needs or circumstances.¹⁴⁸ The freebies, however, did nothing to improve student performance. According to a 1999 report by the Citizens League Research Institute, scarcely a quarter of Cleveland fourth-graders were able to read at grade-level; the city’s public high-school graduation rate was a mere 38%; and the odds of a Cleveland ninth-grader graduating from high school within four years *and* passing all elements of the twelfth-grade exams, were about 1-in-15.¹⁴⁹

CMSD continued to deteriorate over the ensuing decade. In 2010, 50 of Cleveland’s 107 public schools received an “F” rating on a state report card based on students’ Ohio Achievement Assessment standardized-test scores, while 27 others were rated “D.”¹⁵⁰ Only 12% of the district’s schools earned a state rating of “Effective” or better.¹⁵¹ “Cleveland’s public schools,” said a CNN report in 2011, “mirror many of the problems of

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1997/09/17/03cleve.h17.html>

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.politifact.com/ohio/statements/2012/apr/10/sandra-williams/rep-sandra-williams-says-9997-percent-cleveland-pu/>

¹⁴⁹ <http://pryan2.kingsfaculty.ca/pryan/assets/File/Scores.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ https://reason.org/policy_brief/fix-cleveland-schools/; http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2012/09/cleveland_schools_expecting_an.html; <http://ohio3-8.success-ode-state-oh-us.info/>;

¹⁵¹ <https://reason.org/reason-saves-cleveland-episode-2/>

inner city life: gang activity, drug infestation, poverty, low academic achievement, and a dismal graduation rate.”¹⁵²

For the 2011-12 school year, CMSD student scores on the Ohio Achievement Assessments declined from those of the previous year on 15 of 24 academic measures, and the district as a whole received a grade of “F.”¹⁵³ Eric Gordon, chief executive officer of CMSD, said that these terrible results ought to be met by such responses as basing teacher pay increases and layoff decisions and on performance rather than mere seniority; allowing some principals to have greater control over their school’s budget; empowering the district to make changes at failing schools; and imposing a large new school tax on the people of Cleveland.¹⁵⁴ In November 2012, Cleveland residents did in fact vote in favor of a massive 50% hike in their local school taxes, and Gordon said he planned to use the added funds for such purposes as attracting and retaining good teachers, improving the district’s graduation rate, making schools safer, expanding the use of technology in the classroom, and making students ready for college or careers when they graduate.¹⁵⁵

But these efforts did not lead to improvements in student performance. When the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math tests were administered in 2013, Cleveland students scored worse

¹⁵² <http://www.cnn.com/2011/US/04/19/cleveland.schools/index.html>

¹⁵³ http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2012/09/cleveland_schools_expecting_an.html

¹⁵⁴ http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/12/cleveland_schools_do_worse_tha.html; http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/05/cleveland_teachers_union_appro_1.html

¹⁵⁵ http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2012/11/cleveland_school_levy_sails_to.html; http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2012/07/cleveland_schools_seek_big_tax.html

than their counterparts in every urban district in the United States except Detroit, with about half of its pupils unable to demonstrate even the most basic, elemental capacities in either subject. Of the eleven big-city school districts which the NAEP had been monitoring consistently since 2003, Cleveland was the only one that had not improved at all during the course of that decade.¹⁵⁶

When the NAEP was administered again in 2015:

- Just 11% of Cleveland fourth-graders performed well enough to be classified as “proficient” or better in grade-level reading—vs. 35% of fourth-graders nationally.¹⁵⁷
- Only 14% of Cleveland fourth-graders performed well enough to be classified as “proficient” or better in grade-level math—vs. 39% of fourth-graders nationally.¹⁵⁸
- A mere 10% of Cleveland eighth-graders performed well enough to be categorized as “proficient” or better in grade-level reading, vs. 32% of eighth-graders nationally.¹⁵⁹
- Just 9% of Cleveland eighth-graders performed well enough to be deemed “proficient” or better in grade-level math, vs. 32% of eighth-graders nationally.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/12/cleveland_schools_do_worse_tha.html

¹⁵⁷ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xv4.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xv4.pdf>

¹⁵⁹ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xv8.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xv8.pdf>

The news was equally grim in 2016, when WKYC.com reported: “It’s F’s across the board for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. The district received failing grades in each of the 16 categories on the Ohio Department of Education’s report cards.... Grades are awarded in a variety of what are dubbed ‘performance measures,’ including graduation rates, overall achievement, if the achievement gap is closing, and how well students in kindergarten through third grade are reading.... CMSD received the lowest grades out of all of Ohio’s ‘Big 8’ urban districts.”¹⁶¹

But because of the liberal educational establishment’s success in convincing Americans that its failure is the result of inadequate funding, the worse things get in Cleveland’s public schools, the more money the district throws randomly at its many problems. Today CMSD spends about \$20,875 per student each year¹⁶²—nearly double the national average of \$11,984¹⁶³—and all without even a hint of evidence that those vast sums of cash are doing any good whatsoever for the children. Cleveland’s public school teachers today earn a median annual salary of \$76,652 (plus benefits), but their average of 15.6 absences per year exceeds that of teachers in every other school district in the nation. Indeed, more than a third of Cleveland teachers miss at least 18 work days per school year, an average of one absence every two weeks.¹⁶⁴ Given their inability to provide their students with the basics, this may be a good thing.

¹⁶¹ <http://www.wkyc.com/article/news/education/cleveland-metropolitan-school-district-earns-failing-grades-on-states-report-card/319102145>

¹⁶² <https://3rdrailpolitics.com/article/185>

¹⁶³ <http://www.nea.org/2017-rankings-and-estimates>

¹⁶⁴ <http://dailycaller.com/2016/08/15/cleveland-teachers-lead-america-in-sick-days-while-taking-home-76652-per-year/>

MILWAUKEE

The city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which was once a thriving metropolis renowned for its beer production and its manufacturing industries, has not had a Republican mayor since 1908. Every mayor since then has been a Democrat, with the exception of three who were Socialist: Emil Seidel, who held office from 1910-12; Daniel Webster Hoan (1916-40); and Frank Paul Zeidler (1948-60).

By the end of Zeidler's mayoralty, Milwaukee's black population had nearly quintupled during the preceding 15 years, from 13,000 in 1945 to more than 62,000 in 1960.¹⁶⁵ A major cause of this trend was the massive northward migration of Southern blacks which was set in motion by the outbreak of World War II, and which transformed African Americans from a largely rural to a mostly urban people.

As Milwaukee's black population grew, local black radicals, allied ideologically with the black militancy that was sweeping many American cities in the Sixties, were wholly dissatisfied with what they viewed as the inadequate pace of racial reforms. And in the summer of 1967, the race riots that rocked cities like Detroit and Newark sparked a similar—though less devastating—outburst in Milwaukee. All told, the Milwaukee disturbances resulted in 3 deaths, about 100 injuries, and 1,740 arrests.¹⁶⁶

In response to the rioting, Democrat Henry Maier, who served as mayor of Milwaukee from 1960-88, swiftly unveiled a “39-Point Program” designed to address the inner-city problems of poverty

¹⁶⁵ <https://milwaukeehistory.net/education/milwaukee-timeline/>

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

and racism that liberal Democrats widely cited as the causes of the riots.¹⁶⁷ Alternatively dubbed the “Little Marshall Plan,” this program sought to enlist government at all levels—local, state, and federal—to pour money into initiatives like housing construction, youth programs, and “community renewal” as a means of pacifying an angry populace.¹⁶⁸ But in the eyes of local black leftists, it was too little, too late. Vel Phillips, a black member of Milwaukee’s Common Council, said in April 1968 that the mayor’s 39-point program had failed to demonstrate any “visible effect on the root causes” of ghetto unrest. “Every day is growing worse,” she stated. “We’d all better realize that many young Negroes have reached the point where they’re ready and willing to die because they figure they have nothing to lose.”¹⁶⁹

When the Sixties ended, Milwaukee was still known chiefly for its manufacturing industries. But between 1970 and 2011, it lost no fewer than 40% of its manufacturing jobs—a trend that dealt a severe economic blow to the entire city. From 1970 to 2007, the percentage of families in the Milwaukee metro area that were middle-class declined from 37% to 24%, while the percentage of households that were poor spiked from 23% to 31%.¹⁷⁰ Today, per capita income in Milwaukee is 31% below the national average,¹⁷¹ and the violent crime rate is nearly 4 times the national average.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19680109&id=QX9QAA-AAIBAJ&sjid=mRAEAAAIAIJ&pg=6074,2636309>

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/45005251/>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/12/free-falling-in-milwaukee-a-close-up-on-one-citys-middle-class-decline/250100/>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/milwaukeecitywisconsin/PST045216>; <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>

¹⁷² <http://www.city-data.com/crime/Milwaukee-Wisconsin.html>

Milwaukee's descent into poverty and criminality has been mirrored by the decline of its education system. Though the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) system spends some \$14,156 (nearly 20% more than the national average) in taxpayer funds on the education-related costs of each K-12 student in its jurisdiction,¹⁷³ the overall high-school graduation rate in the city is a paltry 58.2%—far below Wisconsin's 88.4% statewide average.¹⁷⁴ On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) standardized tests that were administered in 2013 to measure students' academic abilities, Milwaukee's fourth-graders scored as "proficient" or better in math and reading at rates of 18% and 16%, respectively.¹⁷⁵ The corresponding figures for math and reading proficiency among eighth-grade students were even worse: 11% and 13%.¹⁷⁶

Another key barometer of the performance of public-school students in Milwaukee is the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS), a series of exams designed to evaluate the math and reading abilities of youngsters in grades 3 through 8, and also grade 10. The reading-exam scores of all Milwaukee students who took the WSAS in 2014 showed that only 13% of them were capable of reading with proficiency.

¹⁷³ <https://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/news/2016/12/16/databasehow-southeastern-wisconsin-public-schools.html>

¹⁷⁴ <https://patch.com/wisconsin/waukesha/numbers-milwaukee-public-schools-graduation-rates-consistently-below-state>

¹⁷⁵ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014468XK4.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014467XK4.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014468XK8.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014467XK8.pdf>

For math, the corresponding proficiency rate was 17%.¹⁷⁷

According to Wisconsin’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI), in 2014 a total of 78,516 students were enrolled in 134 MPS schools that were graded, by the state, under a standard rating system. 31,595 of those students—i.e., 41% of all students in MPS—were enrolled in 55 schools that, by DPI’s calculus, “failed to meet expectations.”¹⁷⁸

In 2016, the results were slightly better but still disastrous: Of the 75,766 students enrolled in MPS, some 42,421 attended schools that either “failed to meet expectations” or met “few expectations.”¹⁷⁹

In an effort to remedy this colossal failure, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed a bill in 1990 creating the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), the nation’s first publicly funded school voucher initiative.¹⁸⁰ Though lawmakers initially restricted MPCP to just 1,000 low-income public school students who resided in the city, it has since grown to become America’s largest voucher program, providing more than 28,000 low-income students in 126 private schools with vouchers whose average value is approximately \$7,500.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ <http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/District/About-MPS/School-Board/Office-of-Accountability-Efficiency/Student-Test-Results.htm>

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.badgerinstitute.org/Commentary/MPS-needs-an-overhaul-Milwaukee-kids-deserve-better.htm>

¹⁷⁹ https://www.watchdog.org/issues/education/that-s-how-many-students-are-in-failing-mps-schools/article_90d98fdd-2de7-5768-9400-4304da841b76.html

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.city-journal.org/html/schools-vouchers-built-12134.html>

¹⁸¹ <https://www.dailysignal.com/2011/01/12/voucher-students-soar-in-milwaukee/>; <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/programs/wisconsin-milwaukee-parental-choice-program/>

In 2010, a study by University of Minnesota Professor John Robert Warren found that high-school students participating in MPCP had a graduation rate of 77%, vs. 65% for students in the city's public schools.¹⁸² According to data provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, MPCP students in 2016 registered an average score of 17.5 on the American College Testing (ACT) exam, as compared to just 15.4 for low-income students in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), and 16.5 for all students in MPS.¹⁸³

And in a March 2017 study comparing schools whose student populations were equivalent in terms of poverty, race, and English as their primary language, the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty found that: "Private schools in [MPCP] significantly outperform traditional Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). On the Forward Exam, students in the MPCP were approximately 5% more likely to be proficient in English/Language Arts and about 4% more likely to be proficient in Math. On the ACT, students in the MPCP score, on average, 8% higher than students in traditional public schools."¹⁸⁴

The nine-member Milwaukee Board of School Directors¹⁸⁵ that now presides over the continuing decline of the city's public schools ignores these statistics and continues to oppose the voucher program because it is overwhelmingly dominated by Democrats and leftists who see vouchers as a mortal threat to

¹⁸² <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20100202006097/en/New-Study-Graduation-Rate-Milwaukee-Voucher-Students>

¹⁸³ https://www.watchdog.org/issues/education/students-in-choice-schools-outperforming-district-peers/article_4c0321c0-2518-5289-8436-1b7adc771c73.html

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/apples.pdf>; <http://www.will-law.org/test-scores-student-achievement-school-performance/>

¹⁸⁵ https://ballotpedia.org/Milwaukee_Public_Schools,_Wisconsin

their continued dominion over public education. One of those board members, Wendell Harris Sr., an activist in the Socialist Party for a number of years, ran for mayor of Milwaukee in 2000 on the Socialist Party ticket.¹⁸⁶ Other current school board members have received the support and endorsement of the Working Families Party, a pro-socialist entity whose mission is to incrementally move the Democratic Party ever farther to the political left.¹⁸⁷ This grouping has continued to blame white flight, the federal government, and advocates of lower taxes for the failure of Milwaukee schools—everything, in short, but its own educational philosophy and its own stewardship over multiple generations of children.

PHILADELPHIA

The 1940s and '50s in Philadelphia were a time of surging affluence and prosperity, manifested in a postwar consumer spending boom on innovations such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, televisions, and automobiles.¹⁸⁸ Numerous shopping centers were built to meet the needs and appetites of local consumers, and between 1945 and 1960 the number of cars registered in the city doubled, from about 250,000 to half-a-million.¹⁸⁹

In this climate of progress and enterprise, Philadelphia's

¹⁸⁶ https://ballotpedia.org/Wendell_Harris_Sr.

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/education/2017/03/16/district-suspends-mps-teacher-running-school-board/99176422/>; [https://ballotpedia.org/Larry_Miller_\(Wisconsin\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Larry_Miller_(Wisconsin))

¹⁸⁸ https://books.google.com/books/about/Philadelphia_Stories.html?id=QGMVtJRLZG0C (See p. 279)

¹⁸⁹ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/northeast-philadelphia-essay/>

blue-collar workers enjoyed steady, dependable employment and were paid higher wages than average Americans had ever previously earned. While about one-eighth of the city's population lived in poverty, "a clear majority," writes Frederic Miller—author of the book *Philadelphia Stories*—"shared in the prosperity of the decade."¹⁹⁰

Until 1952, Philadelphia was run exclusively by Republican mayors. That changed in November of that year when Joseph Clark, a Democrat, was elected to that office. In the 66 years that have passed since then, Philadelphia has never had another Republican mayor. In the 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 presidential elections, Philly voters cast their ballots for the Democratic candidate at rates ranging from 82% to 95%.¹⁹¹ In the 2012 election, Republican Mitt Romney did not receive even a single vote in 59 separate districts clustered in West and North Philadelphia.¹⁹²

The Democrats' political stranglehold on Philadelphia tightened at a time when the city was losing the prosperity and optimism that it once enjoyed. Today Philly's median household income is 28% below the national average, its poverty rate is twice the national average,¹⁹³ and its violent crime rate is 2.6 times higher than the national average.¹⁹⁴ In a related development, the city's population has dropped from about

¹⁹⁰ https://books.google.com/books/about/Philadelphia_Stories.html?id=QGMVtJRLZG0C (See p. 279)

¹⁹¹ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Philadelphia-Pennsylvania.html>

¹⁹² <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/176284/cheated-sham-education-minority-students-dem-run-arnold-ahlert>

¹⁹³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/philadelphiacitypennsylvania/PST045216>

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Philadelphia-Pennsylvania.html>

2 million in 1960 to approximately 1.56 million today.¹⁹⁵ Meanwhile, paralleling these indicators of societal decline, Philadelphia’s public education system has become a colossal failure. A watershed moment in that process occurred in 1965, when the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) became the exclusive bargaining unit for the city’s public school instructors. Between 1970 and 1981, the PFT went on strike six times—resulting not only in higher salaries and more generous benefits for its members, but also in much heavier financial burdens on taxpayers.¹⁹⁶ The city now had the highest-paid public school employees in all of Pennsylvania, and they taught smaller classes while enjoying greater job security than ever before.¹⁹⁷

Also during that 11-year time period (1970-81), the School District of Philadelphia’s (SDP) annual budget grew from \$312 million to \$711 million. “At the same time,” says the *Philadelphia Encyclopedia*, “a rare combination of slow growth and hyper-inflation compromised the district’s financial situation. The Board of Education was forced to raise class size and furlough teachers, angering parents as well as PFT leaders. It even resorted to carrying deficits over from one budget year to the next, prompting questions about its fiscal leadership.”¹⁹⁸

SDP deficits remained large throughout the Eighties and Nineties, and scholastic underachievement became increasingly

¹⁹⁵ <http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/philadelphia.html>;
<http://uspopulation2017.com/population-philadelphia-2017.html>

¹⁹⁶ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/public-educationthe-school-district-of-philadelphia/>

¹⁹⁷ http://www.workingeducators.org/a_brief_labor_history_of_philadelphia_s_public_schools_part_2

¹⁹⁸ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/public-educationthe-school-district-of-philadelphia/>

pronounced.¹⁹⁹ As of 1996, fewer than 6% of the city's high-school students tested as competent in reading. Around that same time, a poll commissioned by Democrats in the Pennsylvania legislature showed that approximately 80% of Philadelphians believed that their city's education system was in need of dramatic change. Indeed, nearly half the city's white residents and three-quarters of its black residents favored proposals for a voucher plan that would enable students from low-income households to attend private schools.²⁰⁰

As a result of the Philadelphia school system's repeated appeals for more state money, the governor and the state legislature in 2001 created a five-person School Reform Commission (SRC) to replace the board of education and thereby institute state control over public schools in the city.²⁰¹ This Commission remained in effect until 2017, at which time it was supplanted by a mayor-appointed local school board whose members required the approval of the City Council.²⁰²

Student enrollment in SDP dropped from about 207,000 in 2006 to approximately 152,000 in 2011, at which point one-third of all public school classroom seats in the city were empty.²⁰³

By 2012, SDP was facing a \$312 million budget shortfall and was on the brink of bankruptcy. When the district

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/04/06/opinion/philadelphia-school-wars.html>

²⁰¹ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/public-educationthe-school-district-of-philadelphia/>

²⁰² <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/Philadelphia-School-Reform-Commission-Has-Dissolved-So-Now-What-458049873.html>

²⁰³ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/public-educationthe-school-district-of-philadelphia/>; <https://www.phillyhistory.org/blog/index.php/2011/12/the-rise-and-fall-of-philadelphias-schools/>

proposed shutting 64 schools over the ensuing five years, leftists claimed that the proposal was part of a conservative conspiracy to privatize more schools and abandon the public education model entirely. James Lytle, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education, detected threads of racism and classism in the fabric of the plan: “Is this the dissolution of urban public schools? Is this treating schools as a commodity? Are we essentially saying that if you’re poor and of color, you’re out of luck?”²⁰⁴

In September 2013, SDP Superintendent William R. Hite Jr. requested \$180 million of emergency aid—\$120 million from the state, and \$60 million from the city—in order to keep the schools adequately funded. In response, Philadelphia Mayor Vincent Nutter borrowed \$50 million in general obligation bonds on behalf of the schools, but teachers and principals alike lamented that this would not be nearly enough.²⁰⁵

The School District of Philadelphia currently spends close to \$16,000 on the education of each K-12 pupil in the city²⁰⁶—about 50% more than the national average.²⁰⁷ Yet student performance is abysmal. On the standardized National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests which were administered in 2015 to gauge children’s academic abilities, Philadelphia’s fourth-graders scored as “proficient” or better

²⁰⁴ <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/remaking-philadelphia-public-schools-privatization-or-bust>

²⁰⁵ <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/18610-the-systematic-murder-of-philadelphia-public-schools>

²⁰⁶ <https://www.cato.org/blog/dont-blame-school-choice-phillys-school-funding-fiasco>

²⁰⁷ <http://www.governing.com/gov-data/education-data/state-education-spending-per-pupil-data.html>

in math and reading at rates of 15% and 14%, respectively.²⁰⁸

For eighth-graders, the corresponding proficiency figures in math and reading were similarly dismal: 19% and 16%.²⁰⁹ In recent years, the on-time, four-year graduation rate of students attending Philadelphia public high schools has ranged between 52% and 67%.²¹⁰ But those who do manage to graduate from SD P high schools are, for the most part, inadequately prepared for what comes next. Eighty percent of the city's eleventh-graders read below grade level, and 85% cannot do grade-level math.²¹¹ A ten-year longitudinal study that tracked the progress of Philadelphia students who entered public high schools in 1999, found that only 10% of them had earned either a two-year or four-year college degree a decade later.²¹²

Philly schools in recent years have also been plagued by exceedingly high levels of violence. In a 2011 investigative series titled "Assault on Learning," the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that more than 30,000 serious violent incidents had occurred in the city's schools over the course of a five-year period.²¹³ So bad

²⁰⁸ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xp4.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xp4.pdf>

²⁰⁹ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016049xp8.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xp8.pdf>

²¹⁰ <http://www.projectturn.net/docs/PUTResearchBrief.pdf>; <http://www.philly.com/philly/education/philly-school-graduation-rates-up-mayor-2017-20171109.html>

²¹¹ <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/176284/cheated-sham-education-minority-students-dem-run-arnold-ahlert>

²¹² <http://thenotebook.org/articles/2010/10/01/new-data-only-10-of-philly-students-earn-a-degree>

²¹³ http://www.philly.com/philly/news/special_packages/inquirer/school-violence/20120118_It_s_official_Report_says_Philadelphia_schools_fall_short_on_dealing_with_crime.html

has the violence been, that as of March 2017, SDP employed more police officers (351) than school counselors (284).²¹⁴

The failure of SDP schools to properly educate the children who pass through them, has enormous long-term implications for those youngsters. Indeed, nearly half of the 1.2 million adults who currently reside in Philadelphia lack the basic skills necessary to qualify for college or to hold jobs that pay enough to support a family. Many of these individuals function at intellectual levels below those of the average eighth grader.²¹⁵

ST. LOUIS

“More than a century ago,” reports the *Washington Post*, “St. Louis embarked on a revolution in education that made the city’s schools the jewel of the Midwest and a model for urban school districts around the nation.” The renowned architect William Ittner, described by the *Post* as “the man most integral to revolutionizing St. Louis’s schools and transforming urban schools across the nation,” was hired by local leaders in the 1890s to design and build scores of new schools for the city. Before Ittner, urban schools typically had been situated on narrow city blocks without playgrounds or landscaping. The school buildings themselves, meanwhile, had often lacked adequate heat and lighting. According to Andrew Weil, executive director of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Ittner’s schools were the first in the city to be equipped with heating, indoor plumbing, adequate ventilation, and fireproofing. Moreover, says Weil,

²¹⁴ <http://thenotebook.org/articles/2017/03/16/school-police-outnumber-counselors>

²¹⁵ <http://www.governing.com/topics/education/phillys-adult-literacy-problem.html>

“Ittner’s designs were intentionally formulated to inspire students and parents” and to serve as “spaces conducive to learning.”²¹⁶

Ittner’s schools were configured according to an “open plan,” which featured E-, U-, and H- shaped floor layouts flanked by windows that allowed sunlight to illuminate the hallways, the large classrooms, and the specialty areas like libraries, music rooms, and art rooms. The exteriors of these buildings, notes the education writer Valerie Strauss, “frequently featured stone carvings, towers, cupolas, and grand entryways designed to create an impression of schools as civic monuments rather than just utilitarian structures.” All told, Ittner designed 50 separate school buildings in St. Louis—more than one-tenth of the 480 schools which he designed nationwide.²¹⁷

During Ittner’s heyday and throughout the first half of the 20th century, St. Louis was a bustling, prosperous city whose political leadership was dominated mostly, though not exclusively, by Republicans.²¹⁸ But when Joseph Darst took office as the city’s 37th mayor in April 1949, it was the beginning of an era of unbroken seven decade Democratic rule that continues to this day. This entrenched preference for Democrats is reflected by the fact that in the 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 U.S. presidential elections, voters in St. Louis cast between 79 and 84 percent of their ballots for the Democratic candidate.²¹⁹

At the onset of the Democrats’ political hegemony, 1950-70, St. Louis became a laboratory for urban renewal, one factor that

²¹⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/09/07/the-sad-story-of-public-education-in-st-louis/?utm_term=.eeb58d5a5726

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*; <https://nextstl.com/2012/09/the-st-louis-schools-of-william-b-ittner/>;

²¹⁸ http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/list_of_mayors_of_st_louis

²¹⁹ <http://www.city-data.com/city/St.-Louis-Missouri.html>

led close to 60% of the city's white residents to relocate.²²⁰ But whites were not alone in their eagerness to escape St. Louis's increasingly crime-infested streets. According to University of Iowa history professor Colin Gordon, author of *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City*, "White flight in St. Louis was followed closely by black flight, leaving large tracts of the North Side virtually vacant and much of the 'urban crisis' now located in North County's inner suburbs."²²¹ Between 1970 and 1980, as St. Louis's overall population fell from about 622,000 to just 453,000, the city's black population likewise shrank from 317,000 to about 206,000.²²²

By 2000, after a half-century of Democratic Party rule, the total population of St. Louis—which had peaked at about 857,000 in 1950—stood at a mere 348,000, a smaller number than the one that had been recorded in the city's census 120 years earlier.²²³ According to NewGeography.com: "Among the world's municipalities that have ever achieved 500,000 population, none have lost so much as the city of St. Louis."²²⁴

This overall population decline across St. Louis was mirrored by dwindling enrollment in the city's public schools, where since 1967 the total number of students has fallen from 115,543

²²⁰ <http://mappingdecline.lib.uiowa.edu/map/>; <http://www.thewellstonloop.com/colin-gordons-mapping-decline-introduction>

²²¹ <https://www.stlmag.com/Mapping-the-Divide/>

²²² <http://mappingdecline.lib.uiowa.edu/map/>; <https://books.google.com/books?id=X9XG-2fWgWcC&pg=PA207&lpg=PA207&dq=&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false>

²²³ <http://mappingdecline.lib.uiowa.edu/map/>;

²²⁴ <http://www.newgeography.com/content/002078-city-st-louis-suffers-huge-population-loss>

to approximately 26,000.²²⁵ Today, more than 40 public schools across the city are completely vacant and in various states of disrepair. Marred by broken windows, graffiti, and crumbling plaster, the decaying facades of these buildings—some of which were the creations of the legendary William Ittner—now serve as little more than melancholy ghosts from a lost age.²²⁶

One journalist’s account of a visit to such a building reports that “the majestic swimming pool with its ornate tiled walls” is now “smeared with graffiti”; “the Olympic-size pool” has “shrunk to a black, fetid puddle in the deep end”; the “darkened mezzanine and decorative chandeliers” of “the cavernous auditorium” are now “barely visible in the motes of daylight piercing through holes in the high ceiling”; the gymnasium’s hardwood floors are now “warped and buckled from rot”; and “in what was once the library, a carpet of green mold has sprouted.”²²⁷

In an effort to turn around its fortunes, the St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) district in 2003 contracted with Alvarez & Marsal, a consulting firm that specializes in helping struggling companies and organizations eliminate areas of inefficiency and stagnation. In turn, Alvarez & Marsal made former Brooks Brothers CEO William Roberti the acting superintendent of SLPS. But none of these outsiders had any expertise or experience in the field of education, and, in the words of former St. Louis school board member Peter Downs, “They quickly ran the district into the ground.” While Roberti reduced SLPS’s operating deficit to \$38.2 million by 2004, he did it by taking a five-year, \$49.5 million loan from the state’s desegregation

²²⁵ http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/st-louis-public-schools-tries-to-shed-vacant-buildings/article_4c24e3f6-9b63-51f1-8095-631579f5148d.html

²²⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/09/07/the-sad-story-of-public-education-in-st-louis/?utm_term=.118273d38fc4

²²⁷ Ibid.

program, thereby increasing the district's \$73 million debt to \$87.7 million. "The school system was in worse shape financially than Roberti had predicted it would be if he did nothing," Downs maintains. By 2006, SLPS was on the verge of bankruptcy.²²⁸

SLPS was a disaster zone academically as well as financially. The graduation rate of its high-school students, for instance, stood at 56%. In 2007 the state of Missouri took over the St. Louis school district, stripped away its accreditation, and installed an appointed school board to oversee its operations. This arrangement would remain in effect until 2014, at which time SLPS regained its accreditation.²²⁹

Though SLPS spends approximately \$15,000 per year on the education of each pupil in its K-12 public schools—about 25% higher than the national average—the children (and the taxpayers) of St. Louis get very little in return.²³⁰ As of 2012, some 70% of SLPS students were reading below grade level, and fewer than 60% of high-schoolers were graduating in four years.²³¹ The following year, according to Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which publishes an Annual Performance Report evaluating every school district in the state, SLPS scored a meager 24.6% on a

²²⁸ Ibid.; <https://www.nysun.com/new-york/consulting-firm-aiding-the-city-may-see-its/44770/>

²²⁹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/09/07/the-sad-story-of-public-education-in-st-louis/?utm_term=.474e9ed1191e; http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/st-louis-public-schools-fully-accredited-once-again/article_adac0d40-d05b-55e6-9b3d-6d6680509128.html

²³⁰ <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/accountability/how-much-do-saint-louis-area-schools-really-spend>

²³¹ http://www.stltoday.com/opinion/columnists/st-louis-students-still-trapped-in-a-failing-school-district/article_3f68f294-4ea2-51a8-8ca5-2cf5d23c3e6b.html

scale of zero-to-100%.²³²

Students in the vast majority of the city’s public schools also performed poorly on Missouri Assessment Program tests designed to measure proficiency in English, math and science. For example:

- In 87% of St. Louis public schools, fewer than half of all students registered scores high enough to qualify them as “proficient” in English. In 37% of the schools, fewer than one-fifth of students were proficient.²³³
- In 92% of the city’s schools, fewer than half of all students registered scores high enough to qualify them as “proficient” in math. In 39% of the schools, fewer than one-fifth of students were proficient.²³⁴
- In 85% of St. Louis public schools, fewer than half of all students registered scores high enough to qualify them as “proficient” in science. In an astonishing 62% of the schools, fewer than one-fifth of students were proficient in science. In fact, in 31 separate schools the proficiency rate was below 10%, and in 7 schools the figure was a flat 0%.²³⁵

On the standardized National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests which were administered in 2015 to measure students’ academic abilities, St. Louis fourth-graders scored as “proficient” or better in math and

²³² <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/st-louis-schools-score-unaccredited-range-under-new-grading-scale-wont-lose-accreditation#stream/0>

²³³ http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/interactive-map-st-louis-city-school-test-scores/html_968f94e4-b851-529a-88fd-be036d17fcb9.html

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid

reading at rates of just 18% and 16%, respectively.²³⁶ The corresponding math and reading proficiency figures for eighth-graders in the city were even worse: 11% and 13%.²³⁷

CAMDEN

Located directly across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, the city of Camden, New Jersey was incorporated in 1828 and went on to enjoy a long period of economic prosperity. Its strategic geographic location enabled Camden to establish it-self as a major player in the shipping industry. The city's position became even more desirable in 1834 with the completion of the Camden and Amboy Railroad, which served as a key link between Philadelphia and New York City. In the post-Civil War era, many immigrants moved to Camden in search of jobs in the city's rapidly growing industrial economy. Over the course of the ensuing decades, Camden became home to a multitude of small firms as well as a number of major manufacturing enterprises such as the Campbell Soup Company, the New York Shipbuilding Corporation (a.k.a. New York Ship), RCA Victor, and the Esterbrook Pen Company. Between 1860-1900, the city's population grew from 14,358 to 75,000.²³⁸

After weathering the Depression, the city continued to be an

²³⁶ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014468XK4.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014467XK4.pdf>

²³⁷ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014468XK8.pdf>; <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2013/pdf/2014467XK8.pdf>

²³⁸ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/camden-new-jersey/>

economic powerhouse during World War II. As a result of its growing wealth and ever-expanding range of opportunities, Camden's population increased from about 75,000 to 125,000 between 1900-1950.²³⁹

But the city's luck then began to run out. In the 1960s both RCA and Campbell's Soup, hit by rising labor costs, shut down their Camden operations and relocated. Meanwhile, as a consequence of the rise of new shipbuilding facilities elsewhere in the U.S., New York Ship, which had employed some 47,000 workers during WWII, permanently shuttered its operations in 1967.²⁴⁰

All told, half of Camden's manufacturing jobs vanished between 1950-70, a phenomenon that caused many people to seek out better work opportunities in the suburbs and elsewhere.²⁴¹ Thus, by 1970, Camden had lost approximately one-fifth of the 125,000 residents who had lived there just 20 years earlier, when its population was at its height.²⁴² As a 2001 report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation put it, middle-class flight from Camden in the Sixties left behind "an enclave of concentrated poverty, with no pockets of wealth to balance the city's demographics."²⁴³

²³⁹ Ibid.; <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315755519.ch3>

²⁴⁰ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/camden-new-jersey/>; http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/04/pew_state_role_in_local_government_financial_distress.pdf?la=en; <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315755519.ch3>

²⁴¹ http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/04/pew_state_role_in_local_government_financial_distress.pdf?la=en

²⁴² <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/camden-new-jersey/>

²⁴³ http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/04/pew_state_role_in_local_government_financial_distress.pdf?la=en

By 1980, Camden had lost yet another 25,000 residents.²⁴⁴In addition to economic turndown, there were other reasons that Camden became a virtual ghost town. Chief among them was black radicalism that took hold during the 1960s, encouraged by the resentments and protests that arose in response to an aggressive urban-renewal program which featured the demolition of many aging dwellings that had long been occupied by black resident.

Tensions finally boiled over in 1971, when three days of violent riots—featuring arson, robbery, vandalism, and assaults against police—erupted in response to a police officer’s shooting of a Puerto Rican motorist. This tumultuous atmosphere terrified white residents and caused them to flee the city in droves. In the ten years that followed the riots, Camden’s white population fell from about 61,300 to 26,000—a 58% decline. In that same period, the proportion of Camden’s population that was African American rose from 39% to 53%.²⁴⁵

Camden was also seriously harmed by the bad decisions of its government officials—all of whom were Democrats (Camden has not had a Republican mayor since 1936). One Democrat mayor, for instance—in exchange for money to help close a budget deficit—agreed to place a county waste-processing plant in the heart of a south Camden neighborhood. Another Democrat mayor in the 1980s arranged for the construction of a state prison along Camden’s waterfront, a move that the public reviled as a colossal waste of prime real estate. And in 1991, Camden County erected the Camden Resource Recovery Facility, a trash-to-steam plant in a location immediately adjacent to the only remaining working-class enclave in the

²⁴⁴ <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315755519.ch3>

city.²⁴⁵

Camden Democrats also developed a reputation for political corruption that gave the city's overall decline added momentum:

- Angelo Errichetti, a Democrat who served as mayor of Camden from 1973-81, was sentenced to six years in prison for his role in the so-called “Abscam” sting operation that investigated legislative corruption in the late Seventies. In that initiative, undercover FBI agents posed as representatives of a fictitious company called “Abdul Enterprises” and offered bribes to more than 30 members of the U.S. House and Senate, in exchange for political favors.²⁴⁶
- Milton Milan, Camden’s Democratic mayor from 1997-2000, was convicted in 2000 on 14 counts of laundering drug money, taking bribes from organized crime, receiving financial kickbacks from city contractors, engaging in insurance fraud, and using campaign funds in an illegal manner. For these transgressions, he was sentenced to seven years in prison.²⁴⁷
- In 2008, Democrat Wayne Bryant, who had spent the previous 13 years as a New Jersey state senator

²⁴⁵ http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/04/pew_state_role_in_local_government_financial_distress.pdf?la=en

²⁴⁶ <https://www.courierpostonline.com/story/news/local/new-jersey/2015/04/01/gallery-new-jerseys-crooked-politicians/70802448/>; http://www.nj.com/inside-jersey/index.ssf/2013/11/jersey_hustle_the_real-life_story_of_abscam.html

²⁴⁷ <https://www.courierpostonline.com/story/news/local/new-jersey/2015/04/01/gallery-new-jerseys-crooked-politicians/70802448/>; <http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/03/09/the-list-a-rogue-s-gallery-of-the-15-most-corrupt-politicians-in-nj-history/>

representing Camden and its environs, was sentenced to four years in prison for bribery, mail fraud, and wire fraud convictions..²⁴⁸

Camden's population decline and its continued loss of businesses were accompanied by plummeting property values that made it impossible for the city to raise enough tax revenue to meet its financial obligations. Because of the city's astronomical budget deficits, the state of New Jersey was forced to provide enormous levels of financial assistance to Camden throughout the 1990s, and the state had to take over the city's government between 2003-2010.²⁴⁹

By 2013, Camden's annual city budget had reached \$150 million, but its tax revenue was less than \$25 million.²⁵⁰ It was a city in ruins, with a population of about 77,000 residents who lived in an atmosphere of oppressive poverty, unemployment, violence, illiteracy, and drug trafficking.²⁵¹ Today, some 47.5% of Camden households with children live below the poverty line.²⁵² The median household income in the city is \$27,027,²⁵³ about half the national average. And Camden has a violent crime rate that is 6.8 times the national average, including a murder rate of 18.4 times the national average.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁸ <https://www.courierpostonline.com/story/news/local/new-jersey/2015/04/01/gallery-new-jerseys-crooked-politicians/70802448/>

²⁴⁹ <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/camden-new-jersey/>

²⁵⁰ <http://www.governing.com/columns/urban-notebook/col-pontiac-camden-pew-state-aid-municipal-financial-crisis.html>

²⁵¹ <http://www.nje3.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Future-of-the-Camden-City-School-District-NJSCERA-9-17->

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-Camden-New-Jersey.html>

In recent decades, the now-decrepit Camden Central School District (CCSD) has become a failed school system in the same way that Camden has become a failed city. In 1997, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that students from poor families, like those in Camden, were being systematically shortchanged by the formula which the state used to calculate its funding for New Jersey's various public school systems. To rectify this, the Court ordered that millions of dollars in additional funding be directed to Camden and 30 other chronically poor school districts. To this day, many of those districts continue to outspend the most affluent schools in the state. But as Eric Hanushek, a Stanford University scholar who studies education funding, notes, that money has largely failed to yield any academic dividends: "They're currently spending 2.5 times the national average, and there's no real evidence that they're closing the achievement gap or that they're doing significantly better."²⁵⁵

In 2011, the students at Camden's two main high schools registered lower scores on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) exam than their counterparts anywhere else in New Jersey. Between those two schools, more than 60% of all seniors scored below the level of "proficient" on the literacy test, and more than 88% scored below "proficient" on the math test. Moreover, the dropout rate among students was a staggering 50%.²⁵⁶

But these schools were merely a microcosm of a system that had become, by any objective measure, an educational train wreck.

²⁵⁵ <https://www.wnyc.org/story/what-happened-when-one-new-jerseys-poorest-school-districts-increased-spending/>

²⁵⁶ <http://www.nje3.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Future-of-the-Camden-City-School-District-NJSCERA-9-17->

In 2011-12, CCSD was spending an astronomical \$23,709 on the education-related costs of each of its public school students. But only 2% of Camden high-school students scored above 1550 out of a possible 2400 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), a far cry from the 43% figure among all SAT takers nationally.²⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Camden’s exceedingly low graduation rate, lower than 50%, is even worse than it appears at first glance, since a large proportion of students in the city obtain their diplomas not by completing all the required coursework and passing the requisite examinations, but rather by exploiting a loophole known as an “appeal” to the state. In place since 2010, this appeal process allows students who fail their graduation exams to nonetheless acquire a diploma by submitting, for evaluation, “satisfactory” samples of their classwork. As WNYC News reports, “Valid samples include a single algebra problem, or a persuasive essay with a teacher’s comments in the margins.” In 2014, fully 48% of seniors in Camden who were unable to pass their high-school exit exams received their diplomas anyway via such appeals. While conceding that “this process” reflects the fact that “in many respects the [education] system has failed” Camden’s children, CCSD superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard defends the practice in a statement that epitomizes the soft bigotry of low expectations: “Holding back half the senior class because they can’t pass a test should not be an option.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ <https://www.cnn.com/2013/03/25/us/new-jersey-camden-schools/index.html>

²⁵⁸ <https://www.wnyc.org/story/hundreds-nj-students-graduate-high-school-through-appeals-process/>

In January 2012, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed into law the Urban Hope Act, which allowed for the creation of so-called Renaissance schools in the cities of Camden, Newark, and Trenton. Renaissance schools are run by private, non-profit organizations; they receive more money per student than traditional charter schools, but slightly less than district schools; and they are required to admit any child living within the schools' catchment areas. Camden's first three Renaissance schools opened in the fall of 2014. By 2017, the English Language Arts proficiency rates of students at these schools exceeded those of their public school counterparts by margins ranging from 5.1 percentage points to 24.3 percentage points. In mathematics the differentials were smaller, but still noteworthy.²⁵⁹

In March 2013, Governor Christie announced that New Jersey was imposing "full state intervention" to take control of administering Camden's public schools. "We're taking the lead because for too long, the public school system in Camden has failed its children," he said. "Each day that it gets worse, we're failing the children of Camden, we're denying them a future, we're not allowing them to reach their full potential."²⁶⁰

The Camden Board of Education, meanwhile, was relegated to the status of an advisory body.²⁶¹ Christie also approved

²⁵⁹ <http://www.nje3.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Future-of-the-Camden-City-School-District-NJSCERA-9-17->

²⁶⁰ <https://www.cnn.com/2013/03/25/us/new-jersey-camden-schools/index.html>

²⁶¹ <http://www.nje3.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Future-of-the-Camden-City-School-District-NJSCERA-9-17->

state oversight of a program under which private nonprofit companies would build a number of new schools in Camden.²⁶²

The problem Christie was reacting to was acute. In 2013, *USA Today* reported that “three of Camden’s [public] schools are the lowest-performing in the state, and 90 percent are in the bottom 5 percent [statewide]. [Under] 20 percent of fourth-graders are proficient in language arts literacy, and just 28 percent of 11th-graders are proficient in math.”²⁶³ That same year, only three CCSD high-school students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) registered scores indicating that they were academically ready for college.²⁶⁴ Moreover, just 19% of third- through eighth-grade students in Camden tested as “proficient” in English Language Arts; for math, the figure was 30.4%. Both numbers were far below the statewide averages.²⁶⁵

Today, no fewer than 23 of CCSD’s 27 public schools are among the 75 lowest-performing schools in the state of New Jersey. According to the New Jersey School Choice and Education Reform Alliance: “Even compared to districts with similar socioeconomic characteristics, Camden students achieve at about

²⁶² http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/04/pew_state_role_in_local_government_financial_distress.pdf?la=en

²⁶³ <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/gregory-kane-camdens-lesson-in-failure/article/2525824>

²⁶⁴ http://www.nj.com/camden/index.ssf/2013/12/only_3_students_scored_college-ready_in_camden.html

²⁶⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2013/03/25/us/new-jersey-camden-schools/index.html>

half the rate that students in other impoverished districts do.”²⁶⁶

Annual expenditures in CCSD have now reached approximately \$25,000 per pupil. But even this astronomical figure does not adequately reflect the extent of the school system’s failure, because more than one-fourth of the 14,000 students who are currently enrolled in CCSD attend charter schools, which operate on an annual budget of about \$13,000 per-pupil. When charter schools are subtracted from the equation, the per-pupil costs of Camden’s traditional public schools is an astonishing \$33,000 a year.²⁶⁷

Perhaps more than any other school system in the country, Camden gives the lie to assertions by teachers’ unions and Democrat officials that more money will solve the educational deficits of minority students. Despite a dramatically lower per capita expenditure during a ten-year period from 2004-14, CCSD’s charter school students consistently scored much higher than their traditional public school counterparts on standardized tests like the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (ASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). As the New Jersey School Choice and Education Reform Alliance (NJSCERA) reported in 2015: “Over the last decade, a consistent 20% more charter school students than public school students have scored ‘proficient’ or better on these standardized tests.” In 2013-14, the differential was even greater, with approximately 60% of charter school

²⁶⁶ <http://www.nje3.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Future-of-the-Camden-City-School-District-NJSCERA-9-17->

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

students in Camden scoring as “proficient,” as opposed to just 30% of students from traditional public schools.²⁶⁸

There has likewise been an enormous disparity in the respective abilities of students in traditional public schools, vs. those in charter schools, to earn a high-school diploma. “Graduation rates for the charter high schools have remained above 95% since the first charter school graduating class in 2005,” says NJSCERA. “In comparison, the CCSD’s self-reported graduation rates have hovered closer to 60%, and a rate of closer to 50% has often been reported.” Moreover: “[W]hile only 40% of CCSD students were able to pass the HSPA in 2013, [...] closer to 65% of charter school students passed. In 2014, that gap ... expanded to almost 40%.”²⁶⁹ “Students’ SAT scores show similar differences,” adds NJSCERA. “Not only are CCSD students much less likely to take the SAT, 52% of CCSD students as compared to 92% of charter school students, [but] the CCSD students who take the test still score 50 points lower than charter school students.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Washington, D.C. was founded in 1790. Beginning in 1878, the city's government was headed by a three-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the U.S. President. The District would retain this political arrangement for nearly a century, until 1967, at which time Congress passed a law installing a single Commissioner aided by a Deputy Commissioner and a nine-member City Council, all appointed by the President. Six years later, Congress passed the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, which, for the first time, placed the city under the governance of a directly elected mayor and a thirteen-member Council endowed with legislative authority. The first elected mayor under this new arrangement was Walter Washington, who was, like every mayor who has served in D.C. since then, a Democrat.²⁷¹

From 1968-2000, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) were run by an eleven-member school board elected by city residents. In 2000, a city referendum gave the mayor the authority to appoint four of those eleven board members.

And in 2007, D.C. passed the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA), which stripped the school board of all its decision-making powers and placed control of the public schools entirely in the hands of the mayor.²⁷² This was done in

²⁷¹ <https://www.dcvote.org/inside-dc/history-local-government-washington-dc>

²⁷² <https://sandiegofreepress.org/2018/03/the-awful-plight-of-washington-d-c-schools-reveals-the-failure-of-portfolio-style-reform/>

an effort to address the fact that the city’s public school students were far likelier than their counterparts in other school systems nationwide, to lack basic competency in math and reading.²⁷³

When Adrian Fenty became Washington’s mayor in 2007, DCPS, despite spending nearly \$29,000 per year on the education-related costs of each pupil,²⁷⁴ was an academic disaster area whose principal hallmarks were low graduation rates and abysmal student test scores—e.g., a mere 8% of District eighth-graders were capable of doing math at grade level.²⁷⁵ Fenty, a contrarian Democrat, tried to do something about this outrage. He hired Michelle Rhee, an education reformer, as the new school chancellor. Rhee closed a number of dangerous and underused schools; waged a two-year successful battle to negotiate a new teachers’ union contract that ended lifetime tenure and connected financial reward to teacher performance; fired 241 incompetent teachers and put another 737 on notice for being rated “minimally effective”; offered buyouts to at least 700 teachers while pressuring hundreds more to resign; and fired scores of employees at the central school office.²⁷⁶

But the teachers’ unions struck back in 2011, spending at least \$1 million and mobilizing massive numbers of volunteers in

²⁷³ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/09/AR2007060901415.html>

²⁷⁴ <https://www.dailysignal.com/2012/07/25/d-c-public-schools-spend-almost-30000-per-student/>

²⁷⁵ http://voices.washingtonpost.com/dcschools/2010/09/rhee_election_result_devastati.html

²⁷⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/24/education/24teachers.html>; <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/06/the-failure-of-american-schools/308497/>; <https://www.city-journal.org/html/democrats%E2%80%99-education-divide-10454.html>; <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-answer-to-failed-urban-schools/>

support of another Democrat, Vincent Gray, who pledged to turn back the clock on the Fenty-Rhee reforms.²⁷⁷ The party backed Gray, and the head of the AFL-CIO himself came into town to campaign against Fenty and seal his defeat. In the process, he also sealed the fate of the many students, most of them black, who were stuck in the city’s failing public schools.

Following Rhee’s departure in 2011, D.C. swiftly implemented a number of Obama-administration initiatives, such as Common Core curriculum standards, increased expenditures on early-childhood education,²⁷⁸ and “Race to the Top” program grants.²⁷⁹ The Obama administration, in turn, repeatedly cited the D.C. school system—with a graduation rate that had risen from scarcely 50% in 2011 to 68% in 2016—as an example of what could be achieved by following federal guidelines and making judicious use of federal funds. In October 2016, President Obama himself visited Washington’s Benjamin Banneker High School and announced: “What all these numbers mean is that more schools across D.C. and across the country are starting to catch up to what you guys are doing here at this school.”²⁸⁰

But as *National Review* noted: “While the high-achieving, highly selective Banneker was having real success, the rest of D.C.’s schools were not. What all those numbers actually

²⁷⁷ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/06/the-failure-of-american-schools/308497/>

²⁷⁸ <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/02/dc-public-school-graduation-rate-scandal-problem-with-top-down-education-reform/>

²⁷⁹ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

²⁸⁰ <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/02/dc-public-school-graduation-rate-scandal-problem-with-top-down-education-reform/>

meant was that DCPS was engaged in a massive scandal.”²⁸¹ Specifically, 937 of the 2,758 students who graduated from D.C.’s public high schools in 2017 were given diplomas despite having racked up at least 54 days of unexcused absences (equivalent to 30 percent of the school year), while 11% of D.C. graduates missed *at least half* the school year (i.e., 90+ days of instruction) without explanation. Though official District policy stipulates that a mere 30 unexcused absences mean automatic failure and, by logical extension, ineligibility for graduation, these students often faced no consequences whatsoever for their habitual truancy. All told, DCPS graduated 88 percent of students who missed 54 days or more of the school year, and 49 percent of those who missed 90 days or more.²⁸² The 73% overall graduation rate which DCPS reported in 2017—a figure that represented roughly a 20-point climb since 2011—was a farce.²⁸³ If normal standards had been applied, the graduation rate that year would have been a paltry 51%.²⁸⁴

Turning a blind eye to excessive absenteeism was not the only scandal in Washington’s public schools. As the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) reports: “In clear violation of DCPS policy, credit recovery courses—condensed and often dumbed-down versions of courses that students take to meet requirements for graduation—were given to students who had not yet failed or even taken the original courses.” These efforts to artificially boost graduation

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² <http://www.aei.org/publication/d-c-public-schools-serious-graduation-rate-fraud-necessitates-serious-consequences/>; <https://newsone.com/3771799/district-of-columbia-public-schools-graduated-failing-high-school-students/>

²⁸³ <http://www.aei.org/publication/d-c-public-schools-serious-graduation-rate-fraud-necessitates-serious-consequences/>

²⁸⁴ <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/02/dc-public-school-graduation-rate-scandal-problem-with-top-down-education-reform/>

rates occurred at both the school and the district level.²⁸⁵

Further, a National Public Radio (NPR) investigation revealed that D.C. school administrators were pressuring teachers to give students a minimum score of 50, rather than zero, on assignments that either had been done poorly or had not been done at all, because “it would most likely be impossible to pass with a zero on the books.” “If teachers pushed back against these practices,” NPR added, the “administration retaliated against them by giving them poor teacher evaluations.” Consequently, many teachers preferred to keep their mouths shut. As NPR put it: “Playing by the game can have financial benefits. If an evaluation score is high enough to reach the ‘highly effective’ status, teachers and administrators can receive \$15,000 to \$30,000 in bonuses.”²⁸⁶ Even after DCPS’s shameful practices were publicly exposed, the school system was not inclined to institute reforms. Rather, the opposite occurred. In 2017, academic standards were lowered to the point where students could be promoted to the next grade, or could graduate from high school, even if they failed three out of the school year’s four semesters.²⁸⁷

Predictably, this policy made for some very impressive graduation-rate statistics. D.C.’s Ballou High School where in 2016 a mere 3% of students had met citywide competency standards in English, while not a single student

²⁸⁵ <http://www.aei.org/publication/d-c-public-schools-serious-graduation-rate-fraud-necessitates-serious-consequences/>

²⁸⁶ <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/11/28/564054556/what-really-happened-at-the-school-where-every-senior-got-into-college>; <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/02/dc-public-school-graduation-rate-scandal-problem-with-top-down-education-reform/>

²⁸⁷ <http://freebeacon.com/issues/dc-teachers-slam-policy-passing-students-fail-three-four-quarters/>

had met the math standards²⁸⁸—was praised for raising its graduation rate from 57% to 100% in just one year’s time.²⁸⁹

The story was much the same at D.C.’s Anacostia High School, where 70% of graduates in 2017 failed to meet the school’s traditional graduation requirements, and at Eastern High School, where the corresponding figure was nearly 45%. Rob Barnett, a 12th-grade math teacher at Eastern High, described the DCPS system as one “that cares more about passing [children] than teaching them.” In January 2018, the professional-services firm Alvarez & Marsal released a damning report (commissioned by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education) that portrayed DCPS as a school system steeped in “a culture in which passing and graduating students is expected of administrators and staff, sometimes at the cost of academic rigor.”²⁹⁰

Unfazed by such criticisms, David Pinder,²⁹¹ the Instructional Superintendent for Cluster IX of DCPS, staunchly defends his school district’s low standards for promotion and graduation. “I don’t apologize for that,” he says. “I think the goal is to get kids to the finish line, and if there are kids who are going to meet you there, we should find ways to do it. One of the things DCPS has been trying to do is to make sure we have a grading policy that is fair and rigorous but also

²⁸⁸ <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/11/28/564054556/what-really-happened-at-the-school-where-every-senior-got-into-college>;

²⁸⁹ <http://reason.com/blog/2017/11/30/dc-miracle-turnaround-school-exposed-as>

²⁹⁰ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/investigation-finds-dc-schools-fostered-a-culture-of-passing-students/2018/01/30/623dd108-05e7-11e8-94e8-e8b8600ade23_story.html?utm_term=.04f6c3c6df6f; <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/local/dc-public-schools-audit-and-investigation-report/2735/>

²⁹¹ <https://dcps.dc.gov/biography/david-pinder>

gives kids multiple opportunities to get back on track.”²⁹²

Thanks in part to policies of the type that Pinder seeks to advance, Washington youngsters are routinely herded through an education system that exploits them in order to leverage large sums of taxpayer dollars into the coffers of DCPS and the teachers’ unions, but ultimately leaves them completely unprepared for the intellectual challenges of college or a career. Indeed, NAEP test results indicate that a mere 19% of D.C. eighth-graders are able to read with proficiency,²⁹³ while just 17% are proficient in math.²⁹⁴ Similarly, student scores on a standardized test administered by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) show that among black D.C. pupils in grades 3 through 8, only 17% are on pace to obtain either the English language skills or the math skills that they will one day need in order to be successful in college or at a job.²⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

The shame of our nation’s inner-city schools is a searing indictment of the Democrat party machines that have run these cities for so long. Their claim that the epic failure of these schools on their watch is a result of the indifference of whites

²⁹² <http://freebeacon.com/issues/dc-teachers-slam-policy-passing-students-fail-three-four-quarters/>

²⁹³ <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2015/pdf/2016048xw8.pdf>

²⁹⁴ https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#mathematics/district?grade=4

²⁹⁵ <http://www.afro.com/d-c-public-schools-fail-to-meet-benchmarks/>

and of Washington is rank hypocrisy. Their insistence that the schools they control fail because of lack of money is the educational establishment's Big Lie.

The failure is directly the result of Democrat fiscal and social policies that have hollowed out our great cities, once engines of prosperity that were the envy of the world. Indeed, these policies have created an atmosphere of decay and hopelessness that have produced catastrophic demographic changes, as citizens voted against these regimes of violence and corruption with their feet. And these policies have afflicted the cities' school systems themselves, where corruption thrives, blame is shifted, and responsibility is shirked. School bureaucrats and teachers' unions reward themselves handsomely while the children under their stewardship fall by the wayside, their educational lives blighted and their life prospects stunted.

Democrats have become the party of the racial accusation, always virtue signaling about their moral superiority on racial issues and smugly asserting that they alone care about the downtrodden. But what they have done to the children in our inner-city schools shows all this rhetoric to be worse than a sham. The school systems whose respective track records have been outlined in this pamphlet are not only beyond repair; they are an ongoing civil rights atrocity.

No amount of additional funding or of oversight by higher political authorities can rehabilitate these academic disaster zones. Compelling children—mostly nonwhite minority children—to continue to waste the best years of their lives in these violent and intellectually bankrupt institutions is a national tragedy. If the Democrats were truly concerned about inner-city children, they would support the liberation

of these youngsters from the cancerous schools that multiple generations of Democrat rule have created. But this will not happen, because these politicians and policy makers would then lose the hostages they need to keep pushing their mendacious narrative of American racism and indifference to the fate of the underprivileged.

The failure of the schools where inner-city students are warehoused requires a decisive solution that reverses utterly the status quo. The only thing that can save the current generation of minority/black students who are trapped in these schools would be the equivalent of an educational Marshall Plan in the form of school vouchers with a value comparable to the astronomical per-capita dollar amounts that are currently spent on students who are forced to attend the rancid public schools in the cities featured in this pamphlet, and other school systems that comparably fail our young people.

If Camden and Cleveland families received vouchers for \$25,000 and \$20,000 a year—what is currently spent on the compulsory miseducation of their children—they could find schools that would provide the possibility of achievement and success. This is what this educational Marshall Plan would do.

If the Trump administration is to make good its promise of a New Deal for Black America, this is where to begin. But it will not be easy. Because vouchers would pry minority children out of their grasp, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers—both Democratic Party support organizations—are, of course, opposed to them. They claim that vouchers would “destroy the public school system.”

The godfather of vouchers, Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman, demolished this assertion as far back as 1975 when he said: “Claims like this are never accompanied by any evidence that the public school system is in fact, under current conditions, achieving the great results claimed for it—whatever may have been true in earlier times. Nor is it ever made clear why, if the public school system is performing so magnificently, it need fear competition from nonpublic, competitive schools.”²⁹⁶

During the more than 40 years that have passed since Friedman made this statement, the public school systems of the Democrat-run cities profiled in this booklet have continued their steep decline. And the teachers’ unions, fearing the destruction of the corrupt regime of which they are such a key element, have stepped up their opposition to vouchers, the one thing that might remedy the damage they have done to poor minority children.

Because of this ferocious opposition, advocates of vouchers have been content to dream small, timorously designing low-budget plans that they hope will be innocuous enough to fly under the radar of the leftist educational establishment. At present, school vouchers are being utilized in 15 states by approximately 178,000 students²⁹⁷—i.e., fewer than one-half of 1% of all public school students.²⁹⁸

The most significant voucher program in the United States, as we have noted, is the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), the nation’s first publicly funded voucher initiative. Another noteworthy program is the federally funded D.C.

²⁹⁶ <http://newlearningonline.com/new-learning/chapter-9/friedman-on-school-vouchers>

²⁹⁷ <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/site/metroblog/2017/06/05/school-vouchers-what-are-they-and-what-does-the-research-say/>

²⁹⁸ <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>

Opportunity Scholarship Program (DCOSP),²⁹⁹ which in 2004 was instituted in the District of Columbia over the fierce objections of the Washington Teachers Union and the National Education Association.³⁰⁰ Since its inception, this program—whose vouchers are currently valued at up to \$8,653 apiece for elementary and middle-school students, and up to \$12,981 for high-school students³⁰¹—has helped more than 7,500 low-income youngsters in Washington to enroll in private schools of their choice, rather than remain trapped in their disastrously inferior public schools.³⁰² More than 97% of these youngsters are black or Hispanic,³⁰³ coming from families with an average annual income of less than \$22,000.³⁰⁴

Students who participate in DCOSP are selected for the program by means of a random lottery system, since the number of applicants far exceeds the number of students who are ultimately admitted. These DCOSP participants eventually graduate from high school at rates ranging from 91% to 98%—far higher than the 56% figure for all D.C. students and the 70% figure for those who apply for DCOSP but are not selected.³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20104018/index.asp>

³⁰⁰ <http://educationnext.org/howvoucherscametodc/>; <http://www.nea.org/home/36414.htm>

³⁰¹ <https://www.rollcall.com/news/committee-to-consider-d-c-school-voucher-measure>

³⁰² <https://servingourchildrendc.org/>

³⁰³ <https://www.federationforchildren.org/d-c-osp-continues-help-needy-students-succeed/>

³⁰⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/vouchers-work-for-dc-schoolchildren/2015/10/20/aa31cfd0-7757-11e5-b9c1-f03c48c96ac2_story.html?utm_term=.8e84427718d4

³⁰⁵ <http://www.aei.org/publication/what-research-tells-us-about-school-vouchers/>; <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/the-devil-is-in-the-details-of-the-latest-supposedly-negative-study-of-dcs-voucher-program>

Moreover, 88% of DCOSP students who graduate subsequently go on to attend two- or four-year colleges.³⁰⁶ The fact that these students are awarded their vouchers via lottery, powerfully refutes the claims of critics who contend that voucher programs essentially cherry-pick students who have already demonstrated good work habits and scholastic ability, and that the programs' effectiveness is therefore nothing more than a mirage.

According to the Heritage Foundation, "The DCOSP has a stellar track record of increasing academic success, student safety, and parental satisfaction."³⁰⁷ Yet in 2015, when it came time to reauthorize this program, a large majority of House Democrats voted "No."³⁰⁸

Teachers' unions oppose vouchers mainly because of their impact on jobs, but also because they bring true accountability for schools as well as freedom for the low-income minority families trapped in the Democratic Party plantation. Because teachers are such a key element of the Democrats' electoral plans, the party opposes what they oppose.

The Trump administration should act now to counter the educational racism of the Democrats. The educational Marshall Plan must think bigger than the handful of miserly voucher

³⁰⁶ [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/house-gop-passes-dc-private-school-vouchers-white-house-objects/2015/10/21/cb72de80-776d-11e5-bc80-](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/house-gop-passes-dc-private-school-vouchers-white-house-objects/2015/10/21/cb72de80-776d-11e5-bc80-9091021aeb69_story.html?utm_term=.f377edbd87f2)

[9091021aeb69_story.html?utm_term=.f377edbd87f2](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/house-gop-passes-dc-private-school-vouchers-white-house-objects/2015/10/21/cb72de80-776d-11e5-bc80-9091021aeb69_story.html?utm_term=.f377edbd87f2)

³⁰⁷ <https://www.dailysignal.com/2012/02/13/presidents-budget-eliminates-funding-for-d-c-opportunity-scholarship-program/>

³⁰⁸ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/house-gop-passes-dc-private-school-vouchers-white-house-objects/2015/10/21/cb72de80-776d-11e5-bc80-9091021aeb69_story.html?utm_term=.956029159b36

plans—exclusive of the Milwaukee and Washington, D.C. initiatives—that have gotten past union opposition. A \$2,000 voucher that enables low-income parents to cut their tuition costs at a private school from, say, \$10,000 to \$8,000, won't enable them to escape failing public schools. A plan to rescue poor and minority children currently mired in our corrupt and educationally bankrupt big city schools must be for vouchers worth the full amount that public school bureaucracies spend on the kids under their control—e.g., \$16,000 in Philadelphia or \$15,000 in St. Louis or \$25,000 in Camden. This would cover tuition for minority families at private or parochial schools and allow them finally to liberate their children from the cycle of failure that is the hallmark of the status quo.

A Marshall Plan of vouchers should be the demand of all who believe in *true* social justice, and of all who care about the future of poor and minority children. This goal will not be easily achieved, because of the opposition of the educational establishment that has driven these children into failure over the last generation. But then, as Martin Luther King Jr. noted, “We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.”³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ <https://blackthen.com/timeless-words-from-dr-king-that-reminds-us-freedom-is-never-voluntarily-given/>