



School District Governance Models and Interventions

Presentation to the
Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee by the
Office of Education Accountability
October 15, 2024

Study Description

- OEA reviewed:
 - Statutes and regulations, KY and nation
 - OEA 50 state analysis of state and local board laws*
 - Data from the National Center for Education Statistics
 - Research on state intervention and other state policies that change district governance
 - Media reports
- Study provides context for local district governance
 - Does not make recommendations

*Contained in Appendixes D (state board) and E (local boards)

Presentation Outline

- **Major Findings**
- Governance Structures
- State Policies And Governance Changes
- Conclusion

Major Findings

- KY state and local board governance structures similar to other states
- State policies that address governance concerns include:
 - Small district consolidation
 - District deconsolidation (attempted)
 - Mayoral control
 - Secession of local communities from existing districts
 - State takeover

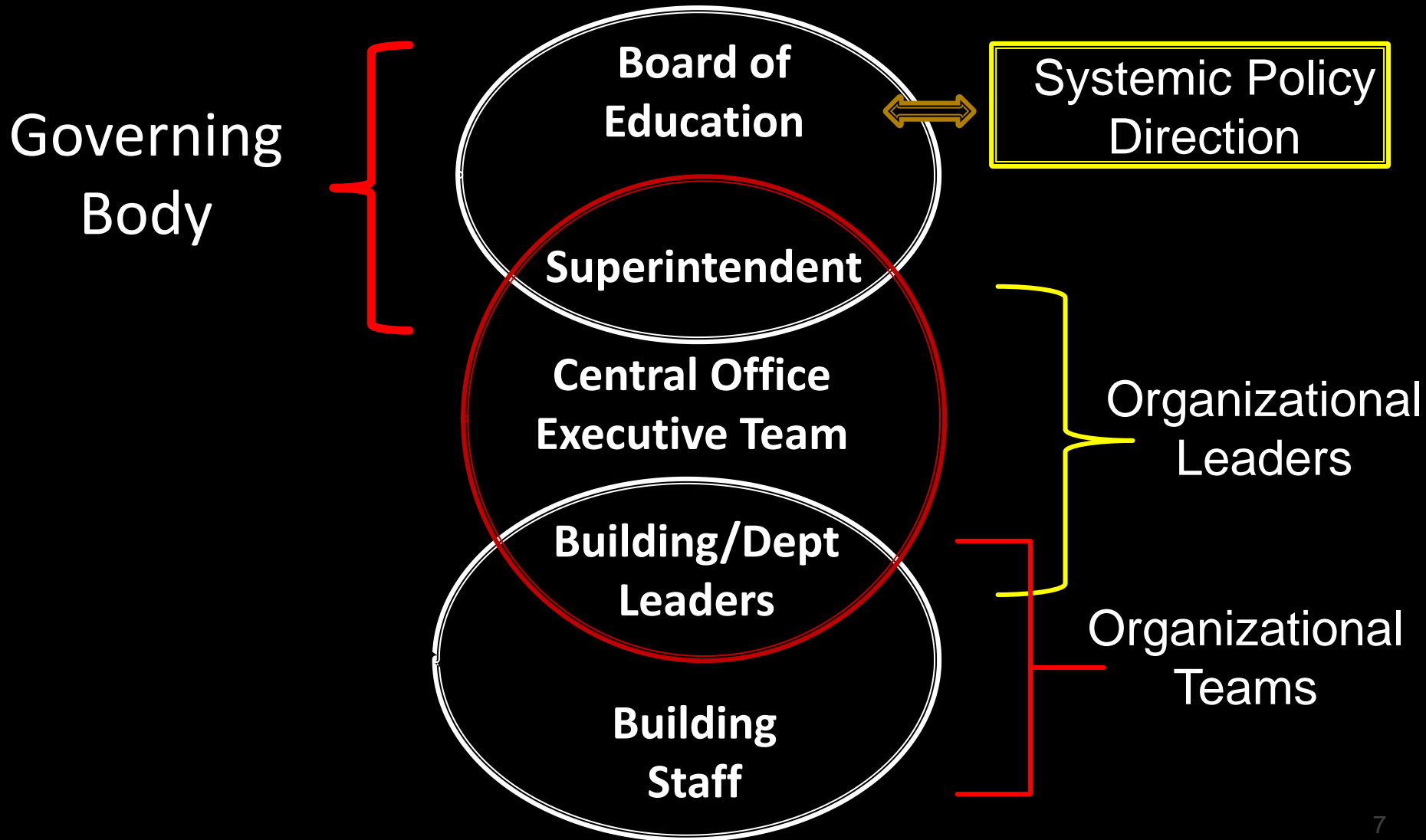
Major Findings

- Reforms achieve intended outcomes in some cases, but none have proven effective in all cases or come without challenges
- Common challenges include
 - Community concerns
 - Implementation/technical issues

Presentation Outline

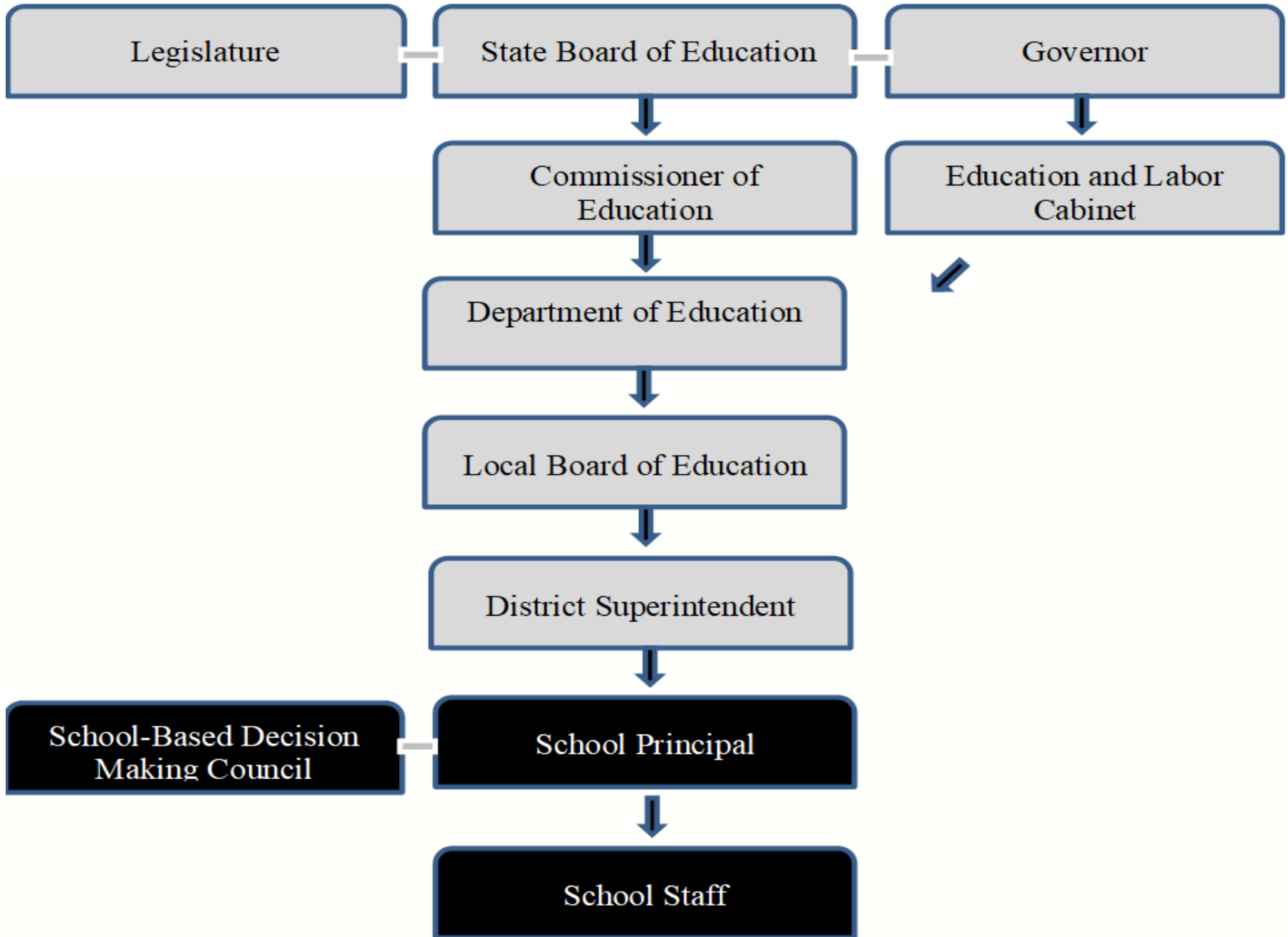
- Major Findings
- **Governance Structures**
 - District governance
 - Kentucky's educational governance model
 - National comparison state and local boards
- State Policies And Governance Changes
- Conclusions

What Is School District Governance?



Local Board Governance

- The local board is the governing body of the district:
 - Sets policy directions on a wide range of financial, operational, and educational issues
 - Has general control and management of the district
 - Approves budgets and local tax rates
 - Selects the local superintendent
- Little research and no consensus on best governance models
- Research does highlight general best practices, including
 - Common vision
 - Accountability for outcomes
 - Collaborative relationships



Charter School Governance In Kentucky

AUTHORIZERS

- Local board
- Collaborative local school boards
- Mayor
 - Lexington and Louisville

GOVERNING BOARDS

- Board requirements set by authorizers in charter contracts
 - Must include two parents
 - Individuals qualified in leadership, finance, curriculum and instruction

State Board of Education

Process	Kentucky	Number of Similar States
Selection	Governor appoints*	32
Terms	4 years	25
Number of voting members	11	15 (similar range)

*Most often subject to additional requirements such as senate confirmation or board member representation by jurisdiction or personal characteristics (such as political party, status/lack of status as a professional educator)

Local Board of Education

Process	Kentucky	Number of Similar States
Selection	Elected	36*
Terms	4 years	25
Number of members	Varies (7 for JCPS and 5 for all others)	40

* In eight states, board members can be elected or appointed. For example, mayors in some big cities appoint all or most board members.

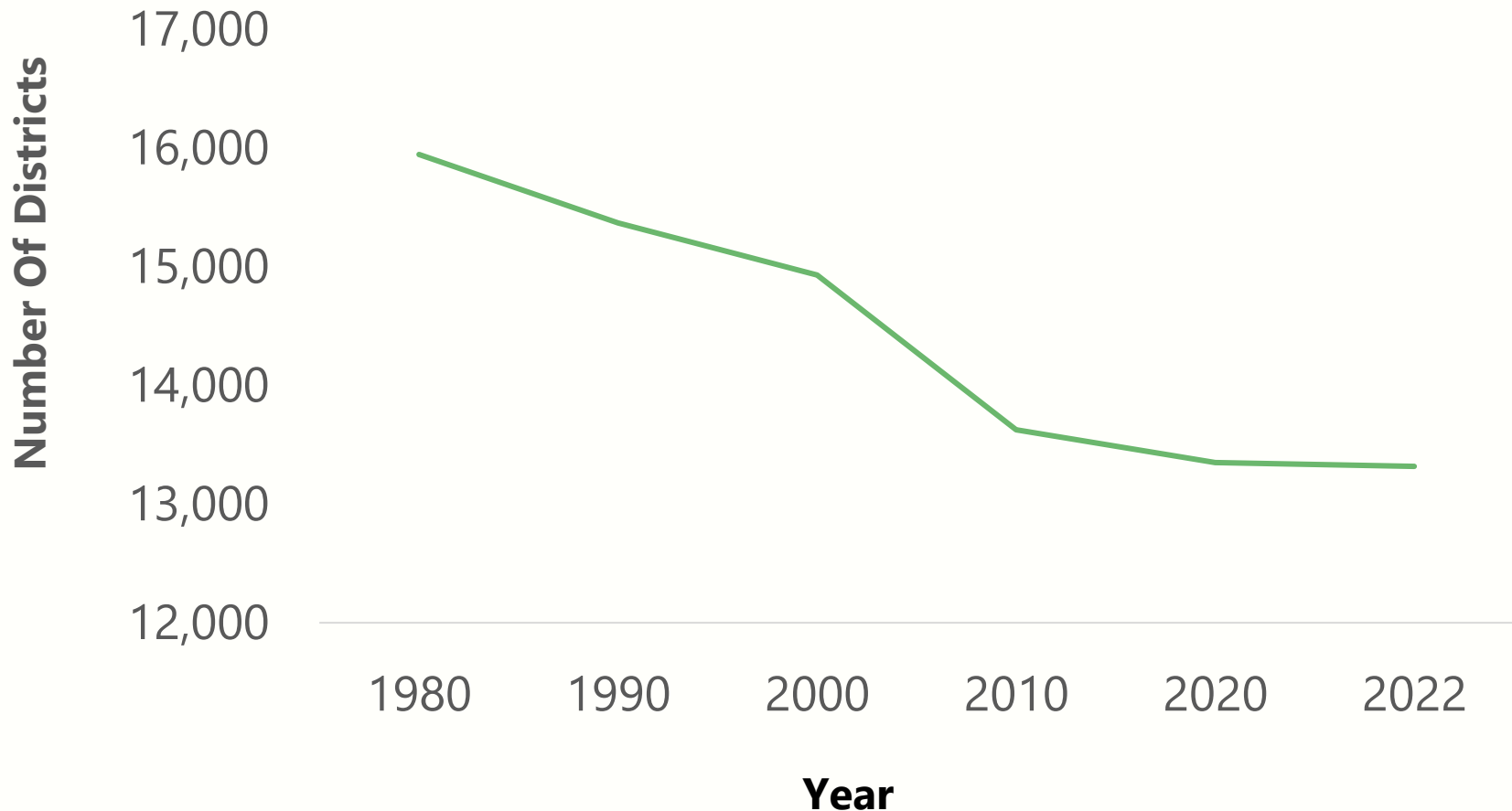
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- Major Findings
- Governance Structures
- **State Policies And Governance Concerns**
 - District size
 - Consolidation of small districts
 - Secession of local communities
 - Deconsolidation of large districts
 - Board authority
 - Mayoral control
 - State Intervention
- Conclusions

Consolidation Of Very Small Districts

- Concerns about small districts
 - Increased costs due to inefficiencies of scale
 - Access to broad array of educational resources
 - No consensus on ideal size but 1,000 students or fewer considered small
- Laws in 15 states incentivize small district consolidation
 - A few have mandated in the past
- Kentucky permits consolidation
 - Does not incentivize or mandate

Number Of School Districts In The United States 1980-2022



Note: as shown in the report, the number of school districts had also been declining steeply prior to 1980.

Consolidation

Advantages

- Cost savings*
- Educational benefits
 - Expanded curricular options
 - Access to more resources
- More instructional support for teachers

Disadvantages

- Short-term cost increase**
- Reduction in closeness to staff
- Reduction in parental involvement
- Increased distances between schools and students' homes
- Community resistance

*District administrative staff decreases

**Due to capital spending of new school buildings

Secession Laws And Effects

- Laws
 - 28 states have secession laws
 - Kentucky does not
 - Laws vary in permissiveness
 - AL, AK, TN require seceding district voter approval only
 - Most also require approval from voters in district left behind, the state, or both
- 40 districts seceded since 2000
 - Many others failed; some challenged on legal grounds
- Effects
 - Advantage – greater local control
 - Disadvantages – more segregated districts
 - Not necessarily more segregated schools

Policymaker And Stakeholder Concerns About Large Districts

- District may not be responsive to community needs or values
- Low academic achievement
 - Achievement in most large school districts lower than the state
 - Cause difficult to determine
 - District practices vs. larger percentages of typically lower-achieving students
 - A 2019 study suggests that large districts do not underperform others, once populations are considered

State Policy Efforts Directed At Large Districts

- Legislative efforts to deconsolidate large districts
- Mayoral control of local boards and districts

Attempts to Legislate Deconsolidation Of Large Districts

- **Clark County, Nevada**
 - Legislation proposed 1997 but did not pass; efforts ongoing
- **Omaha, Nebraska**
 - Legislation passed in 2006 but later repealed
- **New Mexico**
 - Legislation proposed in 2017 but did not pass
- **North Carolina Legislative Committee**
 - Joint committee established in 2017 to study deconsolidation

Issues That Have Been Identified In Deconsolidation Efforts In Other States

- OEA analysis of committee meetings, task force minutes, and media reports identified issues that were considered including:
 - District boundaries
 - Property value disparities
 - Taxing authority
 - State funding and local effort
 - Capital costs
 - Existing debt and cost of new debt
 - Division of assets
 - Possible segregation issues
 - Specialty school status

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Mayoral Control

Problems

- Low student achievement
- Perceptions of
 - Lack of board accountability
 - Inefficiency in district operations

Potential Benefits

- Effective leadership
- Strategic resource allocation
- More directly accountable to voters

Effects

- Student achievement improved in some districts but not
 - Consistent
 - Sustained
 - Effective at reducing achievement gaps
- Community resistance

Currently in 9 states and a total of 11 cities including New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C.. Phased out in many others including, recently, Chicago.

State Takeover Of Local Districts

- State departments of education remove decision-making functions and authority from local leaders
 - Authority may be given to state personnel, mayors, or private management organizations
- 34 states, including Kentucky have takeover laws
- Reasons for state takeovers
 - Financial reasons (75%)
 - Academic reasons (50%)
 - Other reasons (30%)*

*Such as mismanagement or noncompliance

Effects Of State Takeover

Based on analysis of state takeovers nationwide, researchers have concluded that they:

- Are associated with improvements in district financial health on some indicators*
 - May be associated with increase in state assistance
 - Unclear whether efficiency increased
- Are not associated, on average, with improvements in academic performance**

*104 takeover districts included in analysis.

** 35 takeover districts included in analysis.

Effects Of State Takeover: Case Studies

- The full report contains case studies
 - Houston
 - Tennessee – Achievement School District
 - New Orleans
- Case studies show
 - Positive results related to academic achievement in some (New Orleans) and not others (Tennessee)
 - Common challenges
 - Teacher protests
 - Community concerns
 - Lawsuits

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Conclusions

- Kentucky laws related to state and local board governance are similar to other states
- State policies that change district governance have had intended results in some cases but have not proven effective in all cases or come without challenges

Conclusions

Reforms Related To District Size

- Consolidation of small districts
 - Increases fiscal efficiency; expands curricular options
 - Communities may oppose change and loss of personal connections
- District secession
 - Since 2000, 40 districts have seceded
 - Advocates value local control
 - Critics cite increased segregation
- District deconsolidation
 - Attempted by lawmakers in several states
 - Not finalized into law
 - Identified issues for consideration

Conclusions

Reforms Related To Board Authority

- Mayoral Control
 - Reform in previous decades
 - Research on effects inconclusive
 - Continues in 11 cities, phased out in many

- State Takeover
 - Authorized in Kentucky and most other states
 - Associated with some improvements in fiscal health
 - Student achievement gains in takeover districts not greater than in nontakeover districts

End

Questions?