

**Making Local School Councils Work:
The Implementation of Local School Councils
in Chicago Public Elementary Schools**

S. Raja Krishnamoorthi*

Chicago's public schools have undergone massive reform in the past decade. The most radical of these reforms has involved decentralizing operational decision-making for the schools from the central Board of Education to parent-dominated Local School Councils (LSCs).

The dual purposes of this paper are to determine what aspects of LSC governance, if any, matter for student achievement and what, if anything, the legislature can do to help LSCs perform better in these areas. The paper begins with a brief examination of the history behind Chicago school reform and a description of these reforms. This is followed by a description of the rationale behind this reform. Next, the paper presents the procedure used to perform the empirical analysis of this paper, and after that the results of this analysis. The paper turns finally to an interpretation of the results and what they mean for legislators.

The results show that training LSCs might be important for their proper functioning and might, in turn, lead to higher student achievement. The Illinois state legislature has taken important steps toward mandating some training and encouraging more; however, further action in this direction might be necessary. In any case, more research must be done to answer lingering questions about the training of LSCs. Currently, the link between the training of LSCs and student achievement remains under-researched.

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Pre-Reform Chicago Schools

In 1987, then-Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett, labeled Chicago's schools as "the worst in the nation."¹ While Bennett's remarks might not have been completely accurate,² statistics show that he was not far off the mark. Sixty-seventy percent of elementary school students read below national norms on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).³ Math scores ranged in the thirtieth percentile.⁴ Thirty-four of Chicago's fifty-five public high schools scored in the lowest 1% of American College Test (ACT) scores,⁵ and as many as two-thirds of freshmen dropped out of high school.⁶

The result was a loss of confidence in the public schools. In 1971, Chicago public schools enrolled approximately 571,000 students.⁷ By 1986, only 431,000 students were

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¹ See Linda Lenz, *Punching Up Reform* (last modified November, 1997) <<http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/11-97/117punch.htm>>.

² Detroit had lower test scores, and Boston had a higher dropout rate. See *id.*

³ G. ALFRED HESS, JR., RESTRUCTURING URBAN SCHOOLS: A CHICAGO PERSPECTIVE 33, 35 (1995).

⁴ Herbert J. Walberg & Richard P. Niemiec, *Is Chicago School Reform Working?* 75 PHI DELTA KAPPAN 713, 714 (1994).

⁵ Only fifty-four schools nationwide comprised the population of schools in this percentile. See Hess, *supra* note 3, at 33.

⁶ See *id.* at 35.

⁷ See Donald R. Moore, *Voice and Choice in Chicago*, in CHOICE AND CONTROL IN AMERICAN EDUCATION 154 (William H. Clune & John F. Witte eds., 1990).

enrolled.⁸ More than half of Chicagoans gave schools a "D" or "F" in their performance.⁹ School teachers and administrators had lost confidence in the very schools in which they worked. Nearly one half of public school teachers sent their children to private schools,¹⁰ and even the school board president sent her child to a private school.¹¹

Part of the reason for the school system's problems lay in changes induced by past crises. The schools were still undergoing change wrought by a desegregation consent decree.¹² The schools were also feeling the effects of the 1979-80 financial crisis in which the school system could not meet its payroll. Under a bailout plan ordered by the Chicago School Finance Authority, the schools laid off approximately 8,500 employees, the majority of whom were teachers and contact personnel rather than administrators and central staffers.¹³

This latter effect had important consequences. Spending for administrative reasons artificially inflated overall expenditures for Chicago students.¹⁴ Consequently, the legislature was reluctant to spend more money on Chicago schools even though students were deprived of crucial assistance. Further, the bureaucracy steadily grew, thus making the school system more inefficient. Between 1976 and 1986, the number of

⁸ Enrollment had declined by 25%. *See id.* at 153. Between 1970 and 1990, the school-aged population of Chicago had declined by approximately 18% due to demographic shifts. *See* UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES: CITY AND COUNTY DATA 679 (1970) and UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES: CITY AND COUNTY DATA 132 (1990).

⁹ *See* Walberg and Niemiec, *supra* note 4, at 715.

¹⁰ *See id.* at 714.

¹¹ *See id.* at 715.

¹² Noteworthy is that by 1985, schools were still only 15% white. *See* Hess, *supra* note 3, at 34. By then, many white families had left the city for the suburbs, taking their tax dollars with them.

¹³ These 8,500 personnel were laid off over a four-year period between fiscal years 1979 and 1982. Sixty-four percent, or roughly 5,400, of these 8,500 personnel were "student-contact" personnel, i.e., teachers, counselors, speech therapists, etc. *See* G. ALFRED HESS, JR., SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING, CHICAGO STYLE 24 (1991).

¹⁴ CPS spent more per student than many suburban and downstate districts including those with even greater percentages of poor children. *See* Walberg and Niemiec, *supra* note 4, at 715.

students in Chicago Public Schools fell by 18%. During this same time, the number of central staffers grew by 30%.¹⁵ Last, the school system's teacher layoffs fueled increasingly fractured labor relations with the teachers union. By 1986, five teacher strikes had occurred in the last ten years.¹⁶

Initial Reforms Enacted

In 1985, Illinois enacted school reform on a broad scale. The Illinois plan called for Local School Improvement Councils.¹⁷ These parent-teacher councils were empowered to review discretionary spending by school principals and to engage in school improvement planning.¹⁸

As a whole, however, these reforms were ineffective. The Chicago school system was resolute in resisting changes to school governance, and in general, to reform of any kind. The superintendent of the schools viewed reform as an encroachment on his personal authority.¹⁹ In addition, funding policies adopted by the central Board still prevented schools from controlling the expenditure of all state Chapter I remedial funds to which they were entitled.²⁰ Because a significant portion of these funds remained in the hands of central staffers, Local School Improvement Councils and school principals had little say in how it would be spent.²¹ Finally, principals and the Local School Improvement Councils had little direct control over the employees, teachers and non-

¹⁵ *See id.* at 714.

¹⁶ *See id.*

¹⁷ *See Hess, supra* note 3, at 35.

¹⁸ *See id.*

¹⁹ *See id.* at 50, 53.

²⁰ Illinois provides compensatory aid, or state Chapter I aid, to school districts with impoverished students. District administrators are supposed to distribute this money directly to schools for their discretionary use. The Chicago Public Schools did not distribute all its Chapter I money to schools for their discretionary use. Rather, it siphoned off roughly 1/5, or \$40mm, for "program support," in other words, administrative costs. This diversion of aid for administrative purposes has since been called "illegal." *See id.* at 41.

teachers, staffing their schools.²² Thus, school improvement planning was limited to making changes on the periphery.

1988 Reforms Enacted

In 1988, proponents of reform successfully lobbied the legislature to address problems unresolved by the 1985 reforms. On December 2nd, 1988, the Illinois Legislature passed P.A. 85-1418.²³ The law's goals were many, but two among them were the focus of the reforms: raising student achievement²⁴ to equal or surpass state performance standards and raising student attendance and graduation rates to equal or surpass national norms.²⁵ To achieve these goals, the law enacted three major reforms. First, eleven-member Local School Councils (LSCs) replaced the central bureaucracy as the primary authority for operational decision-making in each school.²⁶ Second, the law radically altered the way in which Chapter I funds would be controlled. Whereas previously the Central Board controlled a significant portion of this source of "discretionary" money, now the schools would primarily control it.²⁷ Third, the principal

²¹ *See id.*

²² *See id.*

²³ *See* ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 5/34-2.2 (West 1998).

²⁴ Student achievement means the "mastery of higher order thinking skills." *See id.* at § 34-1.01(A)(1).

²⁵ *See id.* at § 34-2.4(b). The law aimed to achieve these goals within 5 years of enactment. *See* Walberg and Niemiec, *supra* note 4, at 714.

²⁶ *See* ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-1.01(b). The Councils contain eleven members each: a principal, two teachers, two community members, and six parents. *See id.* at § 34-2.1(a). A student is included in councils at high schools. *See id.* at § 34-2.1(m). The principal is appointed by the council to a four-year term. *See id.* at § 34-8.1. The teachers are appointed by the School Board for two-year terms. *See id.* at § 34-2.1(l). The community members are elected for two-year terms by the community in which the school is located. *See id.* at § 34-2.1(d)(vi). The parents are elected for two-year terms by parents of children attending the school. *See id.* at § 34-2.1(i).

²⁷ *See id.* at § 34-2.3(4). In the first year of reform, this additional source of funds from the state amounted to approximately \$53,000 per school. By the fourth year of reform, additional, or "discretionary", funding was projected to rise to upwards of \$230,000. *See* CONSORTIUM ON CHICAGO SCHOOL RESEARCH, A VIEW FROM THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: THE STATE OF REFORM IN CHICAGO 72 (1993).

was given authority to evaluate and suspend all school personnel, subject to the policies of the Board.²⁸

While the second and third prongs of the new legislation were significant, the first was groundbreaking.²⁹ The new law took what were previously central Board responsibilities and gave them to LSCs.³⁰ The following three were the most important:

- 1) Adopting a School Improvement Plan (SIP).³¹
- 2) Adopting a budget to implement the SIP.³²
- 3) Evaluating, terminating, and hiring the principal.³³

The Theory Behind Local School Councils

Like other states that adopted School-Based Management³⁴ reforms, the Illinois legislature vested authority in LSCs for a variety of reasons. The three most prominent

²⁸ See 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-8.1(I). "The right to employ, discharge, or layoff shall be vested solely with the board." See *id.* at § 34-8.1(ii).

²⁹ Joel Handler has called it "the most daring and far-reaching experiment" of reform anywhere in the country. Joel F. Handler, *Chicago School Reform: Enablement or Empowerment?*, 8 THE GOOD SOCIETY 9 (1998).

³⁰ In cases of severely unaccountable LSCs, the Board can intervene through processes of "probation" and "reconstitution" to directly run the schools. See 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-8.3. The Board primarily relies, however, on biannual LSC elections to ensure that schools are run properly.

³¹ An SIP is a three-year action plan for the school that the principal develops in coordination with the LSC and other members of the school community. See *id.* at § 34-2.4. The principal is responsible for developing and implementing the SIP, and the LSC is responsible for approving and monitoring the implementation of the SIP. See *id.* After the termination of one three-year SIP, another must be developed. See *id.* The SIP must be geared toward the following goals: significant progress toward meeting state student performance standards, achieving or surpassing national norms in graduation and attendance rates, preparing students for transition to further education or employment, and achieving to the extent possible a high quality common learning experience. See *id.* at § 34-2.4(1)(a),(b),(c),(d),(e). The SIP must also specifically enumerate how it will attain these goals as well as an analysis of its current performance. See *id.* at § 34-2.4(2).

³² As in the case of the SIP, the principal initially develops the budget. The LSC approves the budget. See *id.* at § 34-2.3(4).

³³ See *id.* at § 34-2.3(1),(2), and (3). The principal retains an important role in assisting the LSC in performing its duties. The law tasks the principal, in consultation with the LSC, with initiating the creation of the SIP, drafting and amending the budget, and making personnel decisions. See *generally id.* at § 34-8.1. The principal, in turn, receives assistance from the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC), which advises her regarding curriculum and other academic issues. See *id.* at § 34-2.4(a). The PPAC is a group of teachers elected by the teachers at a school to advise the principal and the LSC regarding curriculum and other pertinent issues. See *id.*

were increasing schools' accountability to parents, increasing school actors' job

satisfaction and productivity, and achieving a measure of democratic empowerment.³⁵

³⁴ LSCs are a version of "School-Based Management" (SBM), the general category of reforms in which LSCs fall. SBM has been defined as

a formal alteration of governance structures, as a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvement might be stimulated and sustained.

Betty Malen, et al., *What Do We Know About School-Based Management? A Case Study of the Literature-- A Call for Research*, in CHOICE AND CONTROL IN AMERICAN EDUCATION 290 (William H. Clune & John F. Witte eds., 1990).

SBM has been a widespread phenomenon. The United States saw the first use of SBM in Florida and California in the 1970s. Brian Knight, *Delegated Financial Management and School Effectiveness*, in SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS 118-119 (Clive Dimmock ed. 1993). For example, Dade County, Florida initiated SBM in its schools in 1973. The county then rescinded this reform in 1981. *See* Malen at 297. Other countries, most notably Canada, England, and Australia, have utilized SBM as well. Edmonton, Alberta had a fully operational program of SBM in 1980. Vancouver, British Columbia began SBM in 1985. England's Local Financial Management (LFM) reform under the Education Reform Act of 1988 was a version of SBM that would affect 25,000 schools by 1994. Victoria, Australia began SBM in 1984. *See* Knight at 118-19.

Various forms of SBM have taken root under different names. For example, SBM includes Participative Decision-Making (PDM) and School-Based Decision Making (SBDM). PDM has been associated more with teacher-dominated councils. For example, see Joseph R. Jenkins, et al., *Effects of Using School-based Participatory Decision Making to Improve Services for Low-performing Students*, 94 ELEM. SCH. J. 370 (1994). SBDM is a generic form including the LSC form of SBM. *See* Jane L. David, *School-Based Decision Making- Kentucky's Test of Decentralization*, 75 PHI DELTA KAPPAN 706 (1994). Furthermore, Employee-Involvement (EI) and Financial Delegation are also associated with SBM, although not directly. EI, a reform based on the practice of various companies to involve their workers in nonroutine decisionmaking, involves teachers helping to control schools. *See* C. Brown, *Teacher Involvement and Educational Restructuring*, in INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ECONOMICS OF EDUCATION 332 (Martin Carnoy ed. 1995). Financial delegation is what England has mainly done in its drive to empower schools to control themselves. *See* Tim Simkins, *Economics and the Management of Schools*, in ECONOMICS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION 81 (Hywel Thomas and Tim Simkins, eds. 1987).

According to Betty Malen, these models have differed along primarily three dimensions. One is the type of authority that has been delegated; in other words, whether the school has control over budget, program, and/or personnel. *See* Malen at 301-02. For instance, Chicago's LSCs have some control over all three areas. *See generally* 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.3. Another is the division of powers at the school level, i.e., whether parents, principals, or teachers dominate. *See* Malen at 301-02. In Chicago, parents dominate. *See generally* 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.1(a). The last is the actual amount of discretion that school actors possess. *See* Malen at 301-02. Here, Chicago LSCs have wide discretion. *See generally* 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.3.

³⁵ Other common reasons in the SBM literature for instituting SBM include wanting to increase the effectiveness of decision-making and increasing managerial efficiency. The former theory rests on the notion that decisionmakers closest to the classroom have the most information about what goes on there. Since the people with the most information are the best decisionmakers, and the people closest to the classroom are teachers and principals, teachers and principals will be the best decision-makers in schools. Therefore, the schools should devolve power to teachers and principals. *See* JOSEPH MURPHY AND LYNN BECK, SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AS SCHOOL REFORM: TAKING STOCK, 27-31(1995).

According to Brian Knight, Britain, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, and Belgium utilize the latter theory as the primary justification for their adoption of SBM. It is thought that by devolving power to

Legislators believed that increasing schools' accountability to parents would make increasing student achievement more prominent among schools' goals. They had reason to believe that this was not the case in the past. Prior to reform, it was thought that many principals considered increasing student performance a futile effort in light of students' poor socio-economic backgrounds.³⁶ Moreover, the central Board of Education did little to persuade principals to believe otherwise.³⁷ The result, it was postulated, was that students' challenges became self-fulfilling prophecies.

Reform advocates desired a change in schools' mindsets about what was possible for their children. They wanted principals and teachers to believe that students were capable of higher student achievement.³⁸ To ensure that schools would modify their beliefs, the state made school actors directly accountable to the people who had the highest expectations of students: parents.³⁹

Another reason the legislature devolved authority to LSCs was a belief that such authority would increase the job satisfaction of school actors⁴⁰ and would

schools, and then rewarding the highest performing schools with increased resources, schools will act in ways to achieve higher performance. For example, using its new-found financial powers, schools could perhaps contract out the education of certain students to meet certain standards in a cost-effective way. *See* Knight, *supra* note 34, at 137-39.

³⁶ The principals were strongly influenced by the 1966 Coleman report that correlated low achievement with poor socioeconomic background. *See* Hess, *supra* note 3, at 47-48.

³⁷ *See id.*

³⁸ The "effective schools" research suggests that the most successful schools are ones where principals believe that all students can be high achievers. *See id.* at 47-48.

³⁹ *See id.* If parents supervise principals, and principals wish to remain in good standing with parents, it is hoped that principals will adopt the mindsets of their supervisors. Namely, like parents, principals will establish high expectations for students. In Mark Smylie's model, this notion of accountability is called "control" by external forces. It is a form of compulsion by outsiders, as opposed to self-induced action. *See* Mark A. Smylie, et al., *Instructional Outcomes of School-Based Participative Decision Making*, 18 EDUC. EVAL. & POL'Y ANALYSIS, 183 (1996). No concrete data show that in reality, principals' expectations of students have risen. It would be safe to say, however, that principals whose expectations remain low will need to explain their positions to unsympathetic LSCs.

⁴⁰ *See* Hess, *supra* note 3, at 49-50. Taylor and Bogotch note that SBM is supposed to lead to higher teacher attendance as well. *See* Dianne L. Taylor & Ira E. Bogotch, *School-Level Effects of Teachers' Participation in Decision Making*, 16 EDUC. EVAL. & POL'Y ANALYSIS 304 (1994).

correspondingly produce higher productivity among them.⁴¹ In turn, this was supposed to lead to higher student achievement.⁴²

The theory was based on the results of devolving authority in the private sector from management to workers. It was found that giving workers more authority over how they worked and what they did led to more contentment with their jobs. It also led to greater productivity as a consequence.⁴³ Similarly, it was thought that by giving school actors such as teachers a greater say in how the school was run, they would be happier and more productive.⁴⁴ The difference was that rather than leading to the production of more widgets, the increased productivity would lead to better-educated students.⁴⁵

A third major reason for the reform was to achieve a measure of democratic empowerment. Democratic empowerment meant giving authority to stakeholders in the school; i.e., parents, teachers, the principal, and community members. Democratic empowerment was justified on two grounds. One was that democratic empowerment would lead to better outcomes from the reform process. Only by placing power in the

⁴¹ See Hess, *supra* note 3, at 49-50.

⁴² See Murphy and Beck, *supra* note 35, at 27-31.

⁴³ "Employee-Involvement" is the common name for this process. See Brown, *supra* note 34, at 332. See generally Sandra E. Black & Lisa M. Lynch, *How to Compete: The Impact of Workplace Practices and Information Technology on Productivity*, (last modified in August, 1997), <<http://nberws.nber.org/papers/W6120>> (describing how industrial relations practices that promote joint decision making between management and unions leads to higher productivity than without such joint decision making practices).

⁴⁴ This was possible through allowing teachers to occupy two positions on the LSC and by enabling teachers to contribute their academic expertise in other ways through the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC). See 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.1 regarding composition of LSC. See *id.* at § 34-2.4(a) regarding the PPAC.

⁴⁵ See Murphy and Beck, *supra* note 35, at 27-31. Educators call this mechanism by various names including "motivation" and "commitment." In Smylie's framework, motivation is the opposite of control. Motivation is self-induced compulsion to act. The theory is that once actors are more identified with the consequences of their actions, and they crave to be successful (say that success is defined in terms of student achievement), they will act in ways to achieve this success. See Smylie, *supra* note 39, at 183. "Commitment" is the idea that school actors will be more committed to the decisions they choose because they have chosen them. In the case of SBM, if school actors participate in decisionmaking regarding programs to improve student achievement, then it is hypothesized that they will be more motivated and committed to carrying them out. See *id.* at 183.

hands of parents and outsiders, it was believed, would a systemic restructuring of the school occur.⁴⁶ The other was less concerned with the outcome. It conceived of empowerment as "a developing sense of self-efficacy."⁴⁷ This suggested notions of helping to improve the ability of parents to govern their institutions and to express themselves politically. While in the long run this empowerment of parents would produce substantive improvements in education, in the short run, the main benefit of the empowerment process was the process itself.

⁴⁶ Otherwise, educators would remain "constrained by existing routines and frames of reference, as well as political bargains and [would] avoid addressing problems that run counter to traditional professional norms, especially self-evaluation." Handler, *supra* note 29, at 11.

⁴⁷ *See id.* at 12.

LSCs Today

Now, almost a decade has passed since reforms were instituted. Questions have lingered about the connection between the advent of Local School Councils and student achievement. Few⁴⁸ studies have tested⁴⁹ the connection between Local School Councils (or School-Based Management elsewhere) and student achievement. Fewer yet have found conclusive results that indicate that LSCs do lead to higher achievement.⁵⁰ Despite the lack of data supporting the link, School-Based Management reforms such as Local School Councils remain a popular reform.⁵¹ Educators have concerns.

Educators do not dispute the basic notion that LSCs and School-Based Management, in general, can help achieve higher student achievement. They do voice concern regarding the implementation of LSCs and whether schools realize the full benefits of LSCs. They question whether LSCs have received enough training to do their

⁴⁸ In the past, one reason cited for the lack of studies was the early nature of reforms. See Taylor and Bogotch, *supra* note 40, at 302. Given the long period of reforms, this can no longer be viewed as a valid reason.

⁴⁹ In her survey of the literature, Malen points out that most of the literature in this area tends to be project statements and opinion pieces. Very few works involve systematic investigations of data from schools. Among opinion pieces and project statements, one tends to find very favorable views of SBM, with only a handful of pieces dissenting from the mainstream view that SBM is a positive development. See Malen, *supra* note 34, at 295-96.

⁵⁰ Smylie examined the extent to which teacher-dominated Participative Decision-Making (PDM) instituted at seven schools in suburban Chicago affected student achievement at those schools. He found that PDM did lead to increased student achievement. His results, however, were adversely affected by a small sample size of schools (seven schools were examined) and weak correlations. See Smylie, *supra* note 39, at 190-91. Jenkins noted that PDM positively affected attitude changes among teachers, but that he could not discern a relationship between PDM and student achievement. See Jenkins, *supra* note 34, at 370. Taylor and Bogotch note in their study that PDM positively influences student attendance and behavior, but that they are unable to detect a relationship between PDM and student achievement. See Taylor and Bogotch, *supra* note 40, at 309-13. Knight detected little effect of SBM on student achievement or other variables including planning, accountability, teacher innovation, or central administrative costs. See Knight, *supra* note 34, at 124-29.

⁵¹ Murphy and Beck note the irony of how School-Based Management (LSCs would constitute one form of School-Based Management) continues to be instituted on the premise that it will lead to high student achievement, and yet this premise has neither been thoroughly explored nor verified. See Murphy and Beck, *supra* note 35, at 156. Murphy and Beck speculate that one reason could be that educators are unable to agree on what constitutes student achievement. More to the point, many dispute that test scores do.

jobs.⁵² They also ask whether districts are sending mixed signals to LSCs in terms of how much authority they possess.⁵³ Further, they question whether the added time demands of serving on LSCs may detrimentally affect council members' performance.⁵⁴ In short, observers question whether schools will ever realize the full benefits of LSCs if the implementation of these governance structures is not done properly.⁵⁵

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to explore, in a limited way, this latter question of implementation. Simply stated, two questions are the focus of this paper:⁵⁶

- 1) What aspects of the performance of LSCs matter for student achievement?
- 2) How can legislators help LSCs perform better in these areas?⁵⁷

The first question is important in order to know the best way in which government should expend its resources in trying to better implement LSCs. Only by determining the areas of LSC governance that might be directly related to student achievement⁵⁸ can

Murphy and Beck speculate that because this metric is usually the only one available to researchers, but they find it an unacceptable measure of student achievement, research might go unperformed. *See id.*

⁵² *See* David, *supra* note 34, at 708-09 (describing how councils in Kentucky usually receive introductory training regarding school-based management, but do not receive more advanced training regarding how to deliberate, resolve conflicts, and communicate their results to the wider school community.)

⁵³ On the one hand, the law states that school-based managers retain broad discretion over school affairs. Yet, districts sometimes usurp this power, thus confusing and frustrating school-based managers. Audrey Noble, Sandra Deemer, and Betsy Davis, *School-Based Management* (last modified February, 1996). <<http://www.rdc.udel.edu/pb9601.html>>. This criticism has also been leveled at the Chicago Board of Education. It is claimed that the Board has emasculated the power of LSCs through, for example, disallowing LSCs to replace their principals. Confidential conversation with current member of an LSC. (February 9, 1999).

⁵⁴ This could be described as burn-out. *See id.*

⁵⁵ *See* Murphy and Beck, *supra* note 35, at 163-73.

⁵⁶ A review of the literature reveals that no study of these questions presently exists.

⁵⁷ Parents and administrators also play a role in improving the effectiveness of LSCs. Therefore, the above question is concerned with how legislators, *as compared to parents and administrators*, can help LSCs perform better in areas relevant for student achievement.

⁵⁸ Higher student achievement should be the most important reason for school reform. This proposition is seldom debated. The sticky issue is determining what is student achievement. Some contend that test scores are a poor indicator of achievement and a poor measurement of school effectiveness. They desire broader measures related to, among other things, student attendance, suspension, graduation rates,

government focus its energies in the right ways. The second question is equally important. Legislators concerned about LSC performance need to know how they might address poor performance. If the discretion to change what needs fixing already rests in the hands of LSCs and the Chicago Public Schools, then legislators may need to encourage these actors either through persuasion or through legislation or both to more effectively use their discretion. If this discretion to change events does not lie with Chicago schools, legislators may need to modify the law to provide more discretion.

The Analysis

General Description:

Certain theories, as outlined above, specify how the existence of LSCs might lead to higher student achievement. No theoretical models, however, exist for specifying the areas of LSC performance that matter for student achievement. As a consequence, it is impossible to hypothesize, in a principled way, how student achievement at a given school will vary with LSC performance in different areas, i.e., their ability to budget, their ability to formulate school improvement plans, or their ability to deliberate. By its nature, then, analysis of this question is exploratory. This analysis is not meant to confirm hypotheses conceived in advance of analysis. Instead, with the proper precautions, it is meant to identify potential grounds for further analysis and exploration.⁵⁹

community wellbeing, environmental legitimacy, and parental satisfaction. See Murphy and Beck, *supra* note 35, at 158. For this paper, test scores will be used as a proxy for student achievement. The reasons are two-fold. One is that these alternative broader measures are unavailable at this time. The other is that test scores can be a useful indicator of achievement so long as their limitations are considered.

⁵⁹ This is the procedure advocated by Robert Klitgaard, an associate professor of public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. He demonstrated this technique in his acclaimed text on statistical regressions: "Data Analysis for Development." ROBERT KLITGAARD, DATA ANALYSIS FOR DEVELOPMENT (1985). The idea behind this method of analysis is to explore the possible relationships that may exist in

One particularly useful tool for exploratory examination of data, and the tool that will be used in this study, is regression analysis.⁶⁰ Given a set of values for independent variables, regression analysis predicts the expected value of a dependent variable:

$$Y = M_1X_1 + M_2X_2 + M_3X_3 + \dots$$

Y = dependent variable

X = independent variable

M = coefficient of independent variable

In the context of this study, the dependent variable is student achievement. Independent variables include LSC performance in various areas; for example, budgeting ability, the general ability to fulfill duties, the ability to formulate a school improvement plan, etc.⁶¹

As described below, numerical data exist for all these variables across different schools.

Data:

The Consortium for Chicago School Research ("Consortium") located at the University of Chicago has assembled student achievement data, numerical data measuring the performance of LSCs in various aspects of their performance, and different school-level data for 270 public elementary schools in Chicago.

the data rather than hypothesize before hand as to what relationships should exist. *See id.* at 6, 22-23. The latter is very difficult to do in the social sciences, especially with education. Klitgaard advocates searching for statistically significant independent variables, as indicated by the best regression equation, in one subset of data and then checking to see whether these variables are statistically significant in other subsets of the data. *See id.* at 24. This procedure guards against "discovering" relationships between dependent and independent variables because of randomness rather than true relationships in the underlying data

⁶⁰ Regression analysis is a statistical tool for estimating relationships among variables. It uses the ordinary least squares (OLS) method for determining a best-fit line among a scattering of data. *See id.* at 6. This statistical tool does not determine the best-fit line in any ultimate sense. Rather, given a set of values for independent variables, it predicts the expected value of a dependent variable. *See id.* This study will use multiple-linear, or multi-linear, regression analysis.

⁶¹ They also include control variables not pertaining to the performance of LSCs. For instance, control variables are included with regard to crime, the socio-economic status of students, teacher experience, teacher education, student-teacher ration, and school size. Results are not controlled for parental

Student Achievement Data:

- 1) *Math:* The average annual absolute gain on the math section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) between 1991 and 1996 for each school.
- 2) *Reading:* The average annual absolute gain on the reading section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) between 1991 and 1996 for each school.

Local School Council Data:

From the spring of 1995 to the winter of 1996, the Consortium conducted a survey of members of LSCs to determine how they perform. The survey asked questions regarding the members' attitudes towards various aspects of their councils' performance. The responses to these questions were then aggregated into summary measures describing broad categories of LSC performance.⁶² These include the following (with variable names in parentheses):

involvement with children's education or for parental background beyond their family's socio-economic status. The latter would be useful control variables, but the data for them are elusive if existent.

⁶² The Consortium on Chicago School Research ("Consortium") tried to validate these survey responses since they were, after-all, self-assessments by members of LSCs. To determine the accuracy of the responses of respondents regarding their respective LSCs:

"[W]e compared the responses of different subgroups of LSC members for each item and measure [on the survey]. For example, teachers' and principals' views were contrasted with those from parents and community members. In general survey responses were quite similar regardless of the particular role of the respondent. We also drew on the Consortium's 1994 survey of 8,800 teachers from elementary and high schools to determine whether teachers' perceptions about the LSC confirmed LSC members' self reports. Here, too, we found remarkable consistency."

THE CONSORTIUM ON CHICAGO SCHOOL RESEARCH, CHARTING REFORM: LISTENING TO THE LSC, 1995: A SURVEY OF LSC MEMBERS, CHAIRS, AND PRINCIPALS IN THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, USER'S MANUAL, VERSION 1 11 (1998) [hereinafter User's Manual].

Overall, the response rate for the survey was fairly high at 33%; that is, 33% of all LSC members at all elementary schools returned surveys. Not all schools participated, but a high percentage, 87%, did. To be safe, the Consortium investigated possible non-response bias by comparing the profiles of responding and non-responding schools. The Consortium reports:

"We found no significant differences across these groups in basic school characteristics, including the percentage of low income students the schools serve and the race of the student population. . . . As a result, we believe the data presented here broadly represent the system as a whole."

- 1) *LSC Behavior* (mbadl): The extent to which the LSC is ethical and/or dominated by conflict.
- 2) *Budget Process* (mbudp): The extent to which the LSC is engaged in actively approving and monitoring the budget.
- 3) *LSC's Capacity* (mcapc): The extent to which LSCs feel that they are capable of fulfilling their duties. For example, this variable tries to assess their ability to understand the school improvement plan, their ability to run meetings, and their openness to new ideas.
- 4) *LSC's and School's Relations to the Community* (mclim): The extent to which the school fosters a good, open relationship with parents and the community.
- 5) *LSC Members' Skills, Commitment, and Support* (mlack): The extent to which there is an absence of obstacles in terms of members' skills, commitment and support. For example, this variable measures members' problems with training, burn-out, conflict, commitment, etc.
- 6) *The Process of Evaluating the Principal* (peval): The extent to which the LSC follows a formal and comprehensive process for conducting an annual principal evaluation.
- 7) *The School Improvement Plan Process* (msipp): The extent to which the LSC plays an active role in developing, approving, and monitoring the school improvement plan.
- 8) *Training Received by LSCs* (mtrng): The extent to which LSC members report that they received training in several different areas.
- 9) *LSC's View of the Chairperson* (mvchr): The extent to which the LSC thinks that the chairperson does a good job handling her leadership responsibilities.

10) *LSC's View of the Principal* (mvpr): The extent to which the members think that the principal helps the council function as an effective governance institution.

School-Level Data:

- 1) *Crime* (crime): The total incidence of crime in 1994 in the neighborhood surrounding the school.
- 2) *SES of School* (csocsta2): The socioeconomic status of students attending the school according to the 1990 census.
- 3) *Teacher Experience* (tbk29m02): Average number of years by the time of the survey that teachers have spent in their schools as teachers.
- 4) *Teacher Education* (tbk32q01): Average level of education for teachers in the school by the time of the survey
- 5) *Student-Teacher Ratio* (stdtch): Number of students per teacher in 1996.
- 6) *Size of the School* (csize): Student enrollment in 1993.

Procedure:

- 1) *Cleansing the Data.*
 - a) Data was collected from a random sample of 270 elementary schools.
 - b) A regression could not be performed using records from all these schools since many records had missing data.⁶³ Records from 93 schools had to be omitted, leaving the overall data set with 177 schools. Since there were approximately 470 elementary schools in Chicago at the time of the Consortium's survey, the sample of 177 schools constituted roughly 40% of all schools.

2) *Dividing the Sample.*

a) The data was divided in two.⁶⁴ The purpose was to run regressions across each of the subsets and the overall data, and then check the consistency of the results across the entire data with results from the two subsets. It was feared that results of regressions on the overall data might mask inconsistencies across subsets. Because of the large size of the data set, it could be divided without overly harming the robustness of results from any one subset. Randomly dividing the sample into two sets of records produced one set of 89 records and another of 88 records.

b) The extent to which the two data subsets resembled one another was checked. This was important to ensure that the overall sample had been randomly divided. Most of the summary statistics for different variables were similar. For example, the average "crime" score, and the average score for the "capacity" of the councils in the two samples were almost the same.

3) *Performing Correlation Analysis Prior to Performing Regression Analysis.*

The extent to which the independent variables were inherently related to one another was tested. Doing so was important in order to ensure that regressions only tested

⁶³ Most omitted records were missing multiple fields of data.

⁶⁴ As mentioned above, the procedure of dividing the data and testing each of the resulting subsets is used to guard against "discovering" relationships that are a product not of a true underlying correlation among variables but because of randomness. Robert Klitgaard used this procedure in conjunction with his exploratory mode of analysis in his text, *Data Analysis for Development*. For more explanation, see Klitgaard, *supra* note 59, at 24.

independent variables.⁶⁵ As it turned out, there were only two instances in which multicollinearity was a problem. As a rule of thumb, a "correlation coefficient" (a high coefficient means that there is a high dependency) of .80 or above is too high. (See Table 1 on attached page). As one can see from the Table, the "mclim" (LSC relationship to the community) and "mcapc" (LSC capacity to fulfill its duties) had a high correlation coefficient of .82. In addition, "msipp" (LSC's ability to formulate a school improvement plan) and "mvprn" (the LSC's view of the principal) also had a high correlation coefficient at .79. Because of these high correlation coefficients, regressions were performed with either "msipp" or "mvprn", and either "mclim" or "mcapc", but did not include both members of these pairs in any single regression. All four combinations of these variables were tested.

4) *Running Regressions.*

- a) Multi-linear regressions were run on all the variables (except those that were strongly dependent on each other) with math gains and then reading gains used as dependent variables. This was done for one sample, then the other sample, and finally for the entire data set. All together, six sets of regressions (three sets of data x two dependent variables) were performed.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ If there are any severe instances of dependency among variables, then the regression analysis should be done with each of the variables that are dependent on one another. This is necessary to avoid the problem of "multicollinearity."

⁶⁶ Each set of regressions consisted of 20-30 regressions. All together, 160+ regressions were performed during this analysis.

- b) In each of these six sets of regressions, a standard routine was followed for determining the best combination of independent variables that could account for variation in the dependent variables:
- 1) As mentioned above, two independent variables from the entire set of variables were omitted at any given time in order to reduce multicollinearity. Since there were initially sixteen independent variables, and two were omitted, fourteen independent variables remained. In each of the six sets of regressions, all fourteen independent variables were included in the analysis. For this first and for each subsequent regression the T statistics, the R-squared statistic, and the F statistics associated with the regressions were recorded.⁶⁷
 - 2) The focus of the analysis was obtaining the best regression possible for each of the six sets of regressions.⁶⁸ This involved obtaining regression equations that displayed the greatest certainty of involving non-random relationships

⁶⁷ A T statistic indicates whether a regression coefficient is significantly different from zero. Roughly speaking, if the T value is greater than 2, one can reject with 95% confidence the null hypothesis that the regression coefficient is 0. The R statistic indicates the extent to which the equation presented by the regression explains variation in the dependent variable. A high R statistic indicates that the regression equation highly explains the variation in the dependent variable. The F statistic tests the statistical significance of the regression equation as a whole. It indicates whether the R-squared statistic is significantly different from zero. The higher the F statistic, the greater the significance of the regression equation as a whole. See Klitgaard, *supra* note 59, at 7.

⁶⁸ This is the procedure advocated by Robert Klitgaard. See note 62 above for more discussion. See Klitgaard, *supra* note 59, at 24.

among the variables in the equation.⁶⁹ It also entailed ensuring that the variables with the highest T-statistics were included in the regressions.⁷⁰

Table 2 on the next page presents the results of the best regression equations.

⁶⁹ This entails ensuring that the F-statistic is significant. A significant F-statistic is one, for instance, that has a P-value less than .05. This means that one can reject with 95% confidence that the R-squared statistic is zero; in other words, that the relationship presented by the regression is random.

⁷⁰ The T-statistic measures the probability that the coefficient is non-zero. Roughly speaking, if the T statistic exceeds 2, one can reject with 95% confidence the null hypothesis that the coefficient is zero.

Results

Table 2

	Sample 1 (n=89)	Sample 2 (n=88)	All Data (n=177)
Reading Gain	F= 5.47 (.0017) ⁷¹ Adj. R= 16.2% ⁷² Coeff= 3.58*mcapc (1.84) Coeff= -3.57*mvrpn (-2.63) Coeff= 3.94*csocsta2 (3.14)	F= 2.24 (.090) Adj. R= 4.1% Coeff= .95*mcapc (1.20) Coeff=-1.84*tbk32 (-1.30) Coeff= -2.17*csize (-1.96)	F= 5.13 (.0020) Adj. R= 6.6% Coeff= 2.77*mcapc (2.50) Coeff= -2.98*msipp (-2.77) Coeff= 2.18*csocsta2 (2.73)
Math Gain	F= 2.50 (.037) Adj. R= 7.9% Coeff= 3.79*mlack (2.29) ⁷³	F= 2.35(.10) Adj. R= 3.0% Coeff= 1.87*mlack (1.38) Coeff= 3.84*csize (1.77)	F= 3.51 (.0048) Adj. R= 6.7% Coeff= 2.97*mlack (2.27) Coeff= 3.99*csize (2.54)

- "mcapc" = capacity of council to perform its duties

- "mlack" = absence of obstacles to the deliberation of the council

- "msipp" = ability of council to formulate school improvement plan

- "mvrpn" = council's view of the principal

- "csocsta2" = socio-economic status of children who attend the school

- "tbk32" = teacher education

- "csize" = size of school

⁷¹ *F statistic.* The F statistic describes the significance of the entire regression relationship. The higher the F, the more confident one can be that the overall relationship specified by the regression is non-random. Also included in parentheses next to the F statistic is the P statistic associated with the F. The P statistic is the probability that the relationship is random. For example, if one looks at the Reading Gain relationship for Sample 1, one sees that the F statistic is 5.47. In parentheses, the P statistic is 0.0017. The P statistic here means that there is a 0.17% chance that the relationship found here is random.

⁷² *Adj. R., or Adj. R-squared (called R for short).* The R statistic explains the amount of variation in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The higher the R, the better. For example, looking at the Reading Gain relationship in Sample 1, one sees that the adjusted R statistic equals 16.2%. This means that the relationship presented here explains 16.2% of the variation that exists in reading scores. The remaining variation is probably explained by variables other than those studied in this analysis.

⁷³ *Coefficients.* The coefficients indicate how a particular independent variable affects the dependent variable. For concreteness, one can look at the first coefficient listed in the Math Gain relationship for Sample 1. The Coefficient expression is "3.79 x mlack (2.29)." One should note three aspects of this equation:

a) *The sign of the coefficient:* The sign on the coefficient of 3.79 is positive. This means that a positive mlack score is correlated with a positive math gain. One would expect this correlation if one believed that the math performance at a school would be associated with a council facing few obstacles to constructive deliberation such as burn-out, a lack of commitment, etc.

b) *The magnitude of the coefficient:* Here the magnitude is 3.79. This means that for every one unit change in terms of the mlack score of the council, there is associated a rise of 3.79 points in the annual gain on the math section of the ITBS. For example, for a one standard of deviation (1.10 points) increase in the average mlack score (3.22), the equation predicts a 4.2 point gain in the math score for ITBS.

c) *The T statistic:* In parentheses next to each coefficient expression is a T statistic. The T statistic indicates the statistical significance of the variable at hand. As a rule of thumb, if the T statistic is greater than 2, then one can reject with 95% confidence the hypothesis that the coefficient is zero, i.e. that the variable is unrelated to the dependent variable. For the example above, the T statistic in parentheses is 2.29. This means one can reject with 95% confidence the possibility that there is no relationship between mlack and math achievement. A T-stat of approximately 2 or greater indicates statistical "significance."

Interpreting the Results:

Three general conclusions arise from the data. One is that very few variables are correlated to student achievement. Second, only the variables mcapc and mlack retain a special power in explaining variation in student achievement. Third, mlack and mcapc appear to correlate differently with different types of student achievement.

Few Variables Correlate With Student Achievement

Only two components of LSC performance, "mlack" and "mcapc," appear to correlate with student achievement either significantly (T-stat is approximately 2) or with a special power (its inclusion in the regression is necessary to achieve the best regression equation) that other variables do not possess. Mlack represents the absence of obstacles to the constructive deliberation of a LSC, and mcapc is the general ability of councils to fulfill their duties.

Some other variables do arise as potentially interesting candidates to explain student achievement. However, they do not correlate or retain special correlative power across all subsets of data. Therefore, they should be disregarded. For example, "msipp", the ability of councils to formulate school improvement plans, appears to be correlated to reading achievement based on an examination of the entire data set. Looking more closely at subsets of the data, though, msipp does not appear in the best regressions for reading achievement.

What is more interesting is that eight out of ten variables pertaining to LSC performance are non-correlated to student achievement. For example, neither the ability

of councils to evaluate principals nor their ability to formulate budgets appears to correlate with student achievement.

One reason might be that, in reality, these variables have little direct correlation with student achievement. This observation might be particularly relevant with regard to the council's ability to formulate budgets. Even if a council possesses high ability to formulate a budget, this ability might not translate into funding the right educational plan for its students. Further, it might be the case that good budgeting might lead to high student achievement. Nonetheless, a council's poor ability to formulate a budget might not mean that a sensible budget will not be adopted. According to the law, the principal is tasked with the job of assembling the budget in the first instance.⁷⁴ The council is then supposed to review and approve this budget. If the principal does a good job of devising the budget, then perhaps the council can safely defer to his good judgment. It need not possess the ability to review and process the budget itself. Thus, high achievement happens despite the council's poor budgeting skills.

Another possible explanation for why most variables fail to correlate with student achievement is that they only have a delayed or remote effect on student achievement. In that case, the effects of these variables on student achievement have not appeared yet in the data and therefore cannot be detected by this study. An example might be a council's ability to evaluate principals. A council might possess a high ability, i.e. a comprehensive process, to evaluate its principal, but this might not translate into high student achievement right away. A council might have done a good job selecting a new principal, and the principal might have done a good job instituting changes in the school. The changes, though, might still be in their infancy. Therefore, they might not have

borne fruit yet. If that is the case, then the data might not reflect the full impact of these changes.

A third possible reason for the absence of correlation is that the data are defective. At bottom, the data consist of self-assessments by survey respondents. It is true that in attempting to validate the accuracy of survey responses, the Consortium found that answers to the LSC survey were mostly consistent with past teacher assessments of LSCs. It is also true, however, that no objective, non-survey based, evaluation of LSCs has been performed in the areas relied upon for this paper's analysis. Hence, it is possible that although teachers and LSC members concur that an LSC is doing a good job, in reality, the LSC is not doing well as compared with other councils or measured on an absolute scale. Thus, it is possible that the analysis in this paper is adversely affected. If a school's students are performing poorly, but the Consortium survey says that the school's council is doing well in a certain skill-area when it is not, the correlation between poor student performance and poor LSC performance in this area is weakened. If objective data were available, the correlation might be stronger and the analysis more accurate.

Variables That Do Correlate

Reading Achievement:

In the overall data, "mcapc," which represents a council's general ability to fulfill its duties, significantly correlates with reading gains. The F statistic is high (5.13), and so is the T-stat for mcapc (2.5). The coefficient is high as well. For a one standard of deviation increase (.82 points) above the mean mcapc score (5.5 points), a gain of 2.9

⁷⁴ See 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.3(4).

reading points is predicted. This translates into a 71% increase above the average annual reading gain across all schools of 4.1 points.

It should be noted, however, that mcapc is not significantly correlated to reading gains in both subsets of the data. In Sample 1, mcapc has a high T-stat of 1.84, indicating with 93% confidence that the coefficient for mcapc is non-zero, in other words, that there is a non-random relationship between mcapc and reading achievement. In Sample 2, mcapc has a much lower T-stat of 1.20, thus casting doubt on the significance of mcapc.

Mcapc retains a special power, though, that other variables do not possess in explaining variation in reading gains. It is required to produce the best regression equation in both subsets of the data, and it is highly statistically significant in the overall data. Furthermore, having mcapc as an independent variable, the best regression for Sample 2 still evidences an F-statistic of 2.24. Therefore, it can still be said with 91% confidence that a non-random relationship between the independent and dependent variables exists. This suggests that mcapc is worth exploring in more detail.

One question is how might mcapc be related to student achievement. Mcapc represents the ability of councils to fulfill their duties. In practical terms, this represents, among other things, their knowledge of new educational practices, their ability to get teachers try out new programs and ideas, and their ability to obtain resources for programs.⁷⁵ It seems possible that this variable is linked to student achievement. For

⁷⁵ As will be later explained, mcapc measures a "latent-trait" of an LSC; in this case, its general ability to fulfill its duties. A council's score for mcapc is based on whether the council possesses specific attributes related to the latent trait. These attributes are tested by individual survey questions meant to test for each attribute. The three attributes mentioned above in defining mcapc were each tested by a specific survey question. For example, one of them said:

*Please check how strongly you agree or disagree with [the following statement]:
'Members of this LSC have worked to bring in new resources.'*

instance, it is plausible that a council, not possessing these abilities, would fail to create and implement programs that enabled teachers to educate children in different ways from the past. As a consequence, student achievement would remain lackluster. Similarly, it is plausible to imagine a council, possessing high ability in these areas, restructuring their children's education in innovative ways to cause higher achievement.

An important question that arises, however, is why *mcapc* would correlate with achievement while other variables do not. As in the case of other variables, the link between *mcapc* and student achievement appears to be indirect. Further, there would necessarily seem to be a delay between any council action and an impact on student achievement. One would no more expect this variable, *mcapc*, to have an impact than one would the ability of LSCs to evaluate principals ("peval"), for instance.

There might, however, be an important difference between *mcapc* and variables such as *peval*. *Mcapc* represents more directly the ability of LSCs to effect change in the school. The ability to evaluate principals, in contrast, represents the LSC's ability to effect change through the principal. Consequently, if delay is a factor affecting both variables, maybe it would have a greater impact in the case of the latter variable than the former because of the former's more indirect link to change.⁷⁶ Whether this is in reality the case is unknown. The data would support, to some degree, this inference.

Thus, the attributes that define the variable *mcapc* are those that define *mcapc* in the minds of survey respondents. It should be reiterated that *mcapc* is a construct of which survey respondents are never aware. User's Manual, *supra* note 62, at 21.

⁷⁶ The question might be asked about why *msipp*, the ability of a council to formulate an SIP, does not correlate significantly. The answer must be that *mcapc* and *msipp* are not well-correlated with each other. Why? Maybe because the council feels that even though it possesses the energy and ability to effect change, it still remains puzzled over the issue of school improvement plans.

Math Achievement:

In the overall data set, "mlack," which represents the absence of obstacles to a council's ability to deliberate, significantly correlates with math achievement. The F-statistic for the best equation here is high (3.51), and mlack's T-statistic is high also (2.27). The coefficient on mlack is moderately large as well. For a one standard of deviation increase (1.10 points) above the mean mlack score (3.22 points), an increase of 4.2 math points results. This represents an increase of 46% above the average annual math gain across all schools of 9.0 points.

Like mcapc in the context of reading gains, mlack seems to correlate with different degrees of statistical significance in the different subsets of data. In Sample 1, mlack has a highly significant T-statistic of 2.29. The equation in which it appears has a high F-statistic (2.50) as well.⁷⁷ Mlack's behavior in Sample 2, though, resembles that of mcapc's behavior in Sample 2 in the context of reading. Mlack's T-statistic is low (T stat = 1.38). While mlack has a low T-statistic, its inclusion is necessary to obtain the best regression equation for this sample. In other words, it retains a special correlative power that other variables do not possess. Therefore, just like mcapc, mlack seems worthy of further study.

One question is why mlack might be correlated to student achievement. Mlack represents the absence of obstacles to the constructive deliberation of councils. For example, some obstacles that might get in the way of such deliberation include burn-out of members, conflict, and a lack of commitment by members. It seems plausible that such a variable would be related to student achievement. Just as in the case of mcapc, a

⁷⁷ Mcapc appears to have some explanatory power as well. In the next best regression, mcapc has a high T-statistic of 1.96.

council plagued by problems of conflict or burn-out might be unable to function. Not only would such factors prevent the LSC from helping teachers and the principal get their jobs done, they might also prevent teachers and the principal from working in a professional atmosphere.⁷⁸ A well-functioning deliberative council, on the other hand, could make important improvements to the school. This, in turn, might lead to student achievement on a steady basis.

Why the Variables Correlate Differently with Different Student Achievement

A curious aspect of the results is that *mcapc* correlates more with reading than math achievement, while *mlack* does just the opposite.⁷⁹ Why this has happened is unclear. In the literature are different theories about which subject is more susceptible to change by a LSC⁸⁰, but the literature does not predict which subjects would be more likely to be affected by certain components of an LSC's performance.

It does not seem logical that either the ability of councils to perform their duties, *mcapc*, or the absence of obstacles to LSCs' constructive deliberation, *mlack*, would significantly correlate with one aspect of student achievement but not the other. This is one of the unanswered questions of this study, and therefore, further research is in order.

⁷⁸ Anecdotes would lend truth to this suggestion. For example, one school had a corrupt principal, and the LSC knew it. Yet, the council was so riven with conflict that it could not decide on a replacement. As a consequence, the corrupt principal remained. Telephone Interview with a member of an LSC in Chicago (February 23, 1999) (confidential interview)

⁷⁹ For the first sample, however, *mcapc* seemed to be the next best variable to explain math achievement.

⁸⁰ Taylor and Bogotch believe that math achievement is more susceptible to academic change than reading achievement. The authors cite evidence that reading is more a function of factors at home than at school. Taylor and Bogotch, *supra* note 40, at 308-09. Note that *cscosta2*, the variable representing the socio-economic background of the children, is significant for reading achievement in the overall data. See Table 2 above. This variable might represent one of those influential factors at home to which Taylor and Bogotch refer.

In any event, both of these variables deserve further attention since they appear to have a statistically meaningful effect on student achievement.

What Does High Performance in Mlack and Mcapc Mean?

Performing well in mcapc and mlack indicates a high "latent" ability-level in these areas.⁸¹ High performance in mcapc means that a council feels strongly that it is capable of fulfilling its duties. Its members are, among other things, open to new ideas, willing to obtain resources to start new programs, and aware of new educational practices. High performance in mlack represents a notable absence of problems with skills, commitment, or support among council members. A council that scores high in mlack faces few problems with burn-out or conflicts among members, for example.

Statistically, performing well in mcapc and mlack also indicates a high ability to answer "correctly" survey questions of high "difficulty" level. Answering a survey question correctly means indicating possession of the skill tested by the survey question, and a high-difficulty question is one testing for higher-order mlack and mcapc skills.⁸² In

⁸¹ In other words, only a council with a high ability to capably perform its duties could score highly on a metric, such as mcapc, measuring its ability to capably perform its duties. The Consortium used a "Rasch Model" to develop such metrics. See User's Manual, *supra* note 62, at 15-16. The Rasch Model is one of a class of "latent-trait" models. See *id.* These models involve the creation of survey questions designed to measure traits or abilities latent in the subject of the survey. For a general description of this model, see MARY J. ALLEN & WENDY M. YEN, INTRODUCTION TO MEASUREMENT THEORY 127-30 (1979) and LEE J. CRONBACH, ESSENTIALS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING 116-17 (1984).

⁸² Metrics for different skill-areas, such as mcapc, were scored based on a council's answers to survey questions regarding that particular skill area. The questions ranged in "difficulty" level. The more difficult questions tested councils on skills or attributes that question- designers believed only higher-ability councils could possess. If a council indicated that it possessed the skills or attributes tested by these more difficult questions, that is, it answered these questions "correctly", the council was given a higher score for the overall skill-area. See Allen and Yen, *supra* note 81, at 127-30.

For example, as part of the mcapc metric, the following questions were posed:

*Please check how strongly you agree or disagree with this question.
"Our LSC is knowledgeable about new educational practices.."
Answer choices: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.*

Please check how strongly you agree or disagree with this question.

fact, only those councils with high ability-level could answer correctly the most difficult questions on the survey. These questions are too difficult for councils of low ability, i.e. low-scorers in mcapc and mlack, to answer correctly.

The reason that this insight is important is that it provides a way to determine how councils of low ability in mcapc and mlack might be helped. Identifying the most difficult questions for mcapc and mlack is the same as identifying the areas in which low ability councils might have trouble.⁸³ Once such areas can be identified, policymakers can then determine how to help low ability councils perform better.⁸⁴

*"Members of this LSC make decisions based on what is best for children."
Answer choices: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree.*

The top question tests a specific skill: knowledge about new educational practices. This skill is one that the question-designers believed that only high-ability councils possess. Thus, this question is a "difficult" question. The bottom question tests for an attribute that is much more general: acting based on what is best for children. This attribute is one that question-designers believed that most councils of all ability levels possess. Thus, this question is a less difficult question than the top question.

If a council answered a question "correctly," it indicated that it possessed the skill tested by the question. Therefore, if it answered the top question correctly, i.e. stating that it "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the question, it indicated that it possesses knowledge of new educational practices. If it answered the bottom question correctly, it indicated that it acts out of the best interests of children. The council is scored on the overall metric, in this case mcapc, based on the extent to which it answers more difficult questions correctly. If a council answered the top question and the bottom question correctly, it would be given a higher score than one that just answered the bottom question correctly.

⁸³ It is possible that even councils of relatively high ability level might have problems endorsing these questions. It is still informative to examine the most difficult questions for both these skill-areas because they present the highest challenges that all councils must meet if they are to attain high ability level in these skill areas.

⁸⁴ One way of going about this task is selecting for analysis several high difficulty questions for each of these skill-areas. Another way is to analyze the most difficult question in each skill-area. The former has the advantage of providing a broader picture of the council's needs in these areas. The latter has the advantage of sharpening the policymaker's focus on the issue that most differentiates high and low ability councils. The latter will be the procedure used here because of its focus on what most differentiates high and low ability councils and because the most difficult question for each area is considerably more difficult than other questions on the survey.

The most difficult question for mcapc is, by far the most difficult, among the questions testing mcapc abilities. Its difficulty level is 1.47 compared to the next most difficult questions, with difficulty levels of 1.07 and .90. The most difficult question for mlack, with a difficulty level of .48, is followed by a question of difficulty level of .40. All other questions are of much lower difficulty levels. The one with difficulty level of .40 asks the question of whether a "lack of ongoing technical support" is a problem. "Ongoing technical support" seems to be shorthand for training and information from the central Board of Education. See User's Manual, *supra* note 62, at 21-25.

The most difficult item for mlack was the following question:⁸⁵

Please check how much of a problem [the following] has been for your LSC.

"Lack of training."

Answer Choices: "Not a problem, Somewhat of a problem, Serious problem"

The most difficult item for mcapc was the following question:⁸⁶

Please check how strongly you agree or disagree with [this statement]:

"Members of this LSC have had enough training to do their jobs well."

Answer Choices: "Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree"

Notable about the most difficult questions for these two measures is their focus on training. Because these are the most difficult questions, the lowest scoring councils in terms of mlack and mcapc did not endorse these questions about training. While a legitimate question arises as to the type of training in shortage, the lowest scoring councils must have found their amount of training to be lacking.⁸⁷ This is a cause for concern.

⁸⁵ User's Manual, *supra* note 62, at 24. Endorsing this question means answering, "Not a problem."

⁸⁶ *See id.* at 21. Endorsing this question means answering, "Strongly agree, or Agree."

⁸⁷ It is possible that the quality of training was also an issue for respondents, but the questions specifically raise the question of whether the training was lacking, or enough. These seem to be queries regarding the amount of training and were probably interpreted as such by respondents.

A question arises as what kind of training is being described by the respondent to these questions. One answer might be that a failure to endorse these questions is indicative of a general lack of training in several areas including the evaluation of school achievement data, formulating an SIP, selecting and evaluating a principal, and deciding on a budget. Identifying a general lack of training, however, as being the root cause of council ineffectiveness is problematic because of other test results. One of the variables included in the regression analysis was a variable measuring a council's exposure to training in all facets of its job. This variable, however, did not correlate with school achievement. Perhaps one reason was that it included too many different types of training related to everything from a council's ability to evaluate a principal to communicating its agenda to the community to formulating its budget. *See* User's Manual, *supra* note 62, at 29.

What the Law Requires

The issue of training has taken on more importance recently. Originally, the law authorized councils to request training from the Board of Education as the councils saw fit.⁸⁸ In 1995, however, the Illinois legislature decided to make training mandatory because not enough councils were trained.⁸⁹ Specifically, the legislature amended the law to require council members to obtain three days of training in the first six months of their tenure.⁹⁰ Notable about the law was its language stating that the Board of Education was not required to pay for it.⁹¹

Another possible answer is that the training described here is training in the context of skills particular to mcapc and mlack. A failure to endorse the training questions might suggest in the case of mlack, a lack of training in group deliberation and dealing with conflict, for instance, and in the case of mcapc, a lack of training in new educational skills. Other questions listed in the category of questions under mlack and mcapc pertained to these subject matter. See User's Manual, *supra* note 62, at 21-25. Overall, however, it is unclear what is the training to which these questions refer. In any case, it is important to examine the prominence of training in the reforms.

⁸⁸ The reform law said and continues to say the following:

[LSCs are empowered] [t]o request of the Board the manner in which training and assistance shall be provided to the local school council. Pursuant to Board guidelines a local school council is authorized to direct the Board of Education to contract with personnel or not-for-profit organizations not associated with the school district to train or assist council members. If training or assistance is provided by contract with personnel or organizations not associated with the school district, the period of training or assistance shall not exceed 30 hours during a given school year; person [sic] shall not be employed on a continuous basis longer than said period and shall not have been employed by the Chicago Board of Education within the preceding six months. Council members shall receive training in at least the following areas:

1. school budgets;
2. educational theory pertinent to the attendance center's particular needs, including the development of the school improvement plan and the principal's performance contract; and
3. personnel selection.

105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.3(10).

⁸⁹ A "consensus" had developed among all groups in the city that training should be required of council members. This translated into action by the Illinois legislature. Telephone Interview with Carlos Azcoita, Deputy Chief Education Officer of the Chicago Public Schools (March 12, 1999) [hereinafter Azcoita Interview].

⁹⁰ The new provision, in pertinent part, says the following:

The board shall collaborate with universities and other interested entities and individuals to offer training to local school council members on topics relevant to school operations and their responsibilities as local school council members, including but not limited to legal requirements, role differentiation, responsibilities, and authorities, and improving student achievement. Training of local school council members shall be provided at the direction of the board in consultation with the Council of Chicago-area Deans of Education. **Incoming local school council members shall be required to complete a 3-day training program requirement established by this Section.** . . . In addition to requiring local school council members to complete additional training

The training requirement has evolved over time. Whereas in the past, council members were required to undergo three days of training, now they are required to undergo eighteen hours of training.⁹² In addition, the Board has funded and run the bulk of the eighteen-hour training itself.⁹³ Furthermore, it has provided additional funds with which further training might be purchased.⁹⁴

Reactions to the Issue of Training

The empirical analysis of this paper suggests that training might be an issue worth examining. It would be useful, though, to conduct a reality-check on this analysis. In other words, it would be instructive to determine whether in reality, administrators and

during their term of office and shall provide recognition for individuals completing that additional training. The board is authorized to collaborate with universities, non-profits, and other interested organizations and individuals to offer additional training to local school council members on a regular basis during their term of office. **The board shall not be required to bear the cost of the required 3-day training program or any additional training provided to local school council members under this Section.**

Id. at § 34-2.3(b). (*emphasis mine*). This provision was enacted in January of 1995. *See id.* The surveys forming the basis of this study were administered from the spring of 1995 through the winter of 1996. *See* User's Manual, *supra* note 62, at 7-9. Elections for new LSC members were held in the fall of 1995. *See* Hess, *supra* note 3, at 54-55 (describing how the first elections were held in October of 1989. If the elections are held every 2 years, then they must have been held in the fall of 1995). Therefore, newly elected council members taking the survey after October may have received training pursuant to the new provision in the law. Others taking the survey before November did not. Thus, the results of this study may not fully reflect the impact of the new training provision in the law.

⁹¹ The provision says, "The board shall not be required to bear the cost of the required 3-day training program or any additional training provided to local school council members under this Section." *See* 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.3(b). When a school is in "remediation" pursuant to 105 ILCS §34-8.3(a), the general superintendent may allow the school to apply to the Board for additional funding for training for its LSC. *See id.* at § 34-8.3(b).

⁹² The eighteen hours are broken down into nine two-hour lessons. Six of the lessons are mandatory and are provided directly by the Department of School and Community Relations of the Chicago Board of Education. This core requirement is called "Basic Training" and covers: roles and responsibilities, conducting effective teams, formulating school improvement plans (2 lessons), formulating budgets, and selecting and evaluating principals. The other three lessons are elective in the sense that councils are required to take three additional lessons, but they may choose the subject matter and the provider of these lessons. Azcoita Interview, *supra* note 89.

⁹³ If councils have the Board provide all nine lessons (Basic Training plus the three elective lessons), they are free. If the councils elect to have another trainer for the elective lessons, then these lessons will have to be funded in another way. For instance, the school could use its discretionary funds to pay for them, or it could obtain a grant from a foundation, or it can ask to have them provided for free. In addition, it should be noted that the Board gives each school \$400 to purchase additional training as they see fit. Therefore, these three extra lessons could be purchased using part of this \$400. *See id.*

members of LSCs feel that training is an issue of concern. The following section reflects the reactions of various people to the issue of LSC training. These people voiced their opinions in telephone conversations with the author.

Reformers and members of LSCs have expressed concerns regarding the training of LSCs. Some have said that the training has amounted to merely "reading a bunch of slides" or talking in a general way about SIPs, budgets, and other matters.⁹⁵ Others have pointed to inflexibility in the training schedule. They complain of inconvenient centralized training classes and not enough dates from which to choose classes.⁹⁶ These latter critics also note problems with the content of the training. They say that it is occasionally inaccessible to non-English speakers, that it is not regularly revised to reflect changes in educational theory, and that it does not include materials designed to expose LSC members to new educational practices.⁹⁷ Finally, some have said that LSC members do not have the resources in time or money to get the proper training they need. They receive some resources from the Board, but they claim that sometimes, it is not enough.⁹⁸

The administration of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) says that some of the issues that critics raise have merit and are being addressed. Other issues, they claim, are politically motivated. For example, with regard to the flexibility of training, one officer

⁹⁴ The Board provides \$400 annually with which to purchase additional training. *See id.*

⁹⁵ Telephone Interview with member of a LSC in Chicago Public Schools (February 23, 1999) (confidential interview); Telephone Interview with James Hammonds, Acting Director of the Chicago Association of Local School Councils (CALSC) (February 9, 1999) (calling the training "bare-boned" and delivered in the style of a "lecture") [hereinafter Hammonds Interview].

⁹⁶ The Chicago Public Schools supposedly advertised only two training dates at the beginning of the summer of 1998. Additionally, training supposedly took place only at the City Colleges, thus causing great inconvenience for LSC members. PARENTS UNITED FOR RESPONSIBLE EDUCATION (PURE), LSC MANDATED TRAINING PROGRAM: RATIONALE FOR PURE'S RECOMMENDATIONS 2 (1998) [hereinafter PURE LSC Training].

⁹⁷ *See id.* at 3-4.

of the CPS says that the CPS has tried to accommodate LSCs. To address the complaint that training is too centralized, for instance, the CPS has run training for clusters of schools.⁹⁹ The CPS has recognized the funding of training as a legitimate issue as well, the officer continues. In an effort to encourage more training, it has provided \$400 to purchase training in addition to the free eighteen hours it provides directly.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the officer contends, other issues are politically motivated. Regarding complaints of some groups that the training has not been administered well or that its content is lacking, he claims that these groups merely want a greater share of the training load.¹⁰¹ The officer also claims that there will always be problems administering training to 560 LSCs in the city, and that some patience is required before all these problems are resolved.¹⁰²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

It needs to be emphasized that grand policy prescriptions cannot be made on the basis of one study, especially one examining educational issues. Education, like many other topics in the social sciences, is wrought with complexities not easily or ever

⁹⁸ Hammonds Interview, *supra* note 95 (complaining that "time is a big pressure" and that the LSC to which he has been an eight-year member does not have enough money to do training).

⁹⁹ Azcoita Interview, *supra* note 89 (describing how training of LSCs in clusters have twin benefits. One is that it is more individualized than centralized training. The other is that it enables LSCs from different schools to share their experiences and communicate with one another).

¹⁰⁰ Azcoita Interview, *supra* note 89. In fairness to the Board, it should also be noted that some groups offer free training to LSCs. For example, PURE provides training free of charge to all LSCs that request it. Telephone Interview with Julie Woestehoff, Director of Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) (February 10, 1999).

¹⁰¹ Azcoita Interview, *supra* note 89 (describing how PURE, for instance, has resorted to complaining about the Board's training because of frustration over its declining share of training. What's more, Azcoita maintains, similar complaints about quality have been lodged in the past about training done by PURE). Julie Woestehoff contends that her group has been shut out of the training process by the Board for political reasons. Woestehoff Interview, *supra* note 100. *See also* PURE LSC Training (alleging that PURE has been blacklisted by the Board for political reasons).

¹⁰² Azcoita Interview, *supra* note 89. There are roughly 6,000 council members sitting on these LSCs. *See* THE CONSORTIUM ON CHICAGO SCHOOL RESEARCH, CHARTING REFORM: LSCS- LOCAL LEADERSHIP AT WORK 5 (1997) [hereinafter Charting Reform].

captured by empirical analyses. Many variables, though having some influence on student achievement, may inadvertently be omitted from this analysis, and it is not clear whether test scores are a proper means for measuring educational achievement. Further, the results of this study show only correlation, not causation between certain aspects of LSC performance and student achievement. Indeed, it is difficult to mechanically describe or prove how some components of LSC performance cause student achievement more than others.

Keeping in mind these caveats, two components of LSC performance appear to be correlated with student achievement based on this study: *mcapc*, the general ability of a council to fulfill its duties, and *mlack*, the absence of obstacles to its constructive deliberation. These are not significant across all subsets of data; however, they retain an explanatory power that other variables do not possess. Therefore, they are worth examining in more detail.

Upon closer scrutiny, these variables point to the training of LSCs as potentially being important to LSCs functioning well. Alteration of the education reform laws to provide LSCs with more training might have recognized the importance of training. Therefore a requirement of more training is a welcome development. Whether this new requirement of training is enough is a difficult question. The data that formed the basis of this study was gathered before the new law fully took effect. Thus, this study cannot answer the question of whether the new training law is sufficient to address the problem of a lack of training.

There is reason to believe, however, that there may be problems with current training. Some of the fighting between reform groups and the Board is probably political. Nevertheless, some of the issues raised by critics may have merit.

Recommendations

1) The issue of training LSCs needs to be further researched. Some questions that need studying include: what should be the objectives and content of this training?¹⁰³ Is it being provided in the most effective manner possible? Who should provide this training and when, where, and how often? The legislature left the manner in which training would be administered to LSCs as an issue for the CPS to decide. Perhaps it would want to re-examine this issue itself or encourage the CPS to re-examine this issue.¹⁰⁴

2) It seems to be an open question whether eighteen hours is enough time to train a LSC or whether \$400 constitutes a sufficient amount of money to purchase additional training.¹⁰⁵ A valid objection to requiring more training is exerting additional demands on already-taxed LSC members.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps training them in their schools would help

¹⁰³ For example, teacher training is far from generic in quantity and type. What should be the type and quantity of training given to LSCs?

¹⁰⁴ Technically, the law requires CPS to direct training after consultation with the Chicago-area Deans of Education. It does not require the CPS to adopt the recommendations provided by the Deans. *See* 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.3(b). Perhaps the legislature could also provide more discretion to the Deans to decide training issues. Introducing more independence to the decision-making process, this measure would help to de-politicize the issue.

¹⁰⁵ As noted earlier, this \$400 comes directly from the Board of Education. The Board provides all schools with the same amount of training money. *Azcoita Interview, supra* note 89. Councils may spend more than this allocated amount if they wish to do so. This additional money, however, would have to come from their discretionary budgets, or from outside sources. *Woestehoff Interview, supra* note 100. Given the time pressures associated with being an LSC member and the already-pressing needs for their discretionary money, it is unclear how much more time or money councils are willing to devote to training. It should be noted, however, that some groups such as PURE provide some free training. *Woestehoff Interview, supra* note 100.

¹⁰⁶ *Azcoita Interview, supra* note 89. According to the Consortium, 1/3 of survey respondents reported that they spent at least 20 hours per month on LSC work. *See Charting Reform, supra* note 102, at 8. This is in addition to the work that LSC members do as part of "volunteering, attending school committee meetings,

alleviate the burdens of training. For that to occur, additional resources would be necessary.

3) Some facets of the training laws might prohibit LSCs from getting all the training they wish. For example, one provision says that if LSCs have the Board contract with outside groups to obtain training, they are not permitted more than thirty hours of training.¹⁰⁷

Further this provision says that no outside group is allowed to act as a contractor if it was hired as a contractor within the past six months.¹⁰⁸ If it is determined that more than thirty hours of training is required, then these laws need to be re-examined. These laws may have been formulated in the spirit of preventing the de-standardization of training of LSCs. While LSCs remain under-trained, however, the benefit of removing these laws might outweigh the benefit of keeping them.

participating in or attending extra-curricular events, and serving on the PTA." *Id.* According to the Consortium, 1/3 of LSC members reported that they spend more than 20 hours per month engaged in these activities. *See id.*

Most LSC members also work. Forty-six percent of all LSC members occupy "Professional" or "Technical/Administrative Support" jobs, where "Professional" is defined as "engineering, teaching, or nursing" jobs and "Technical/Administrative Support" is defined as "sales representatives, claims adjustors, or administrative assistants." *Id.* at 7. The Consortium quotes one member as saying, "[Serving on an LSC] has taken an enormous amount of time away from my job and family. I have found it emotionally upsetting and very stressful." *Id.* at 41.

¹⁰⁷ *See* 105 ILCS, *supra* note 23, at § 34-2.3(10).

¹⁰⁸ *See id.*