

## Chapter 4: Business Influence on the Schools at the Local Level

### ***Introduction***

In Chapter 2, I identified the national Business Roundtable as the originators of the high-stakes testing agenda and began to show how BRT leaders have created a network of organizations to implement their agenda. In Chapter 3, I described how effective such a network has been at co-opting union leadership, parents, community organizers, educational researchers, and teachers. In this chapter, I will show how state BRT organizations have been able to influence district policy through the state government as well as through city organizations. This chapter establishes a pattern of development that the last three chapters will explore in greater detail through the example of how systemic reform in California (Chapter 6) influenced district policy in San Francisco (Chapter 7) which in turn prevented the governance team of Mission High School from pursuing community-based reform (Chapter 8).

This Chapter 4 also serves to illustrate the process by which business leaders generated a consensus behind the agenda of systemic reform as well as identifying further strands of the systemic reform network. Corporate presidents, chairs and CEOs are not a monolithic entity. They debate and disagree with each other — the business community even more so. Nevertheless, the boast made by Edward Rust that the BRT has taken the lead “in developing a Common Agenda for reform endorsed by the business community” is not an idle one (Rust, 1999). In this chapter, some of the differences among business leaders will be revealed as well as the strategies used to forge a “unified voice.” The development of comprehensive systemic reform, high-stakes testing, or the New Standards Movement (they all refer to BRT’s *Nine Essential Components*) has developed in fits and starts in different parts of the country and has taken various routes to the same end. This is true for Houston, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Boston, Massachusetts.

In Houston, Texas, the campaign for systemic reform began in 1989 with the election of a pro-business majority on the school board. In 1991, the school board hired a new superintendent who promised to implement the board’s goal of linking performance with assessment. During the same year, the state’s BRT organizations had succeeded in persuading the state legislature to pass the first of a series of bills that ultimately established the BRT agenda in Texas and in Houston. But the road to systemic reform was not smooth. Business leaders were not always in agreement over the definition of reform. Disagreements arose over performance assessment, vouchers, privatization of school services and how much money should be raised through bond votes. By 1996, however, effective coordination was achieved among business and school organizations so that state mandated systemic reform could be implemented at the district level.

Systemic reform in North Carolina began in 1985 with the formation of the business-dominated Public School Forum (PSF). The Forum sponsored a series of studies, the second of which provided the blueprint for the adoption, in 1989, of North Carolina’s School Improvement and

Accountability Act. In 1991, the national BRT organization and the federal government developed formal ties to PSF, thus making it a de facto headquarters of systemic reform in the southeast part of the U.S. As such, PSF coordinated a regional network of supporting organizations, including the Public Education Network (PEN), North Carolina Partnerships, and NC's BRT organization, Education: Everybody's Business Coalition (EEBC). In 1991, the business community of Charlotte, North Carolina, founded the Charlotte-Mecklenberg Education Foundation (CMEF) to be able to help the district implement state-mandated systemic reform. One of the effects of such reform in Charlotte was the elimination of community influence in educational decisions. Two manifestations of this (and perhaps two halves of the same walnut) were the end of Charlotte's historic desegregation plans and the creation of a publicly funded Education Village for the children of those working in IBM's corporate headquarters.

Pittsburgh's history is one dominated by its location at the juncture of three major rivers in the midst of coal country. Perhaps because of its history of industrial strife and the working class threat to the business leadership at the start of the Great Depression, Richard K. Mellon organized some of the leading industrialists of the 1930s to form the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD). This organization dominated Pittsburgh politics from the 1930s to the 1960s. In 1978, ACCD created the Allegheny Conference Education Fund (ACEF) to develop a program of standards-based reform. In 1992, the ACEF was absorbed by the "implementing agency" of ACCD, the Allegheny Policy Council. The APC established a close working relationship with the superintendent of the city's schools, Louise Brennan. During the 1990s, a national network supporting systemic reform emerged, which the APC and Brennan leaned on for resources and support. In 1993, the state legislature required districts to adhere to state standards. That same year, Brennan hired staff from the Pittsburgh Council on Public Education to help her implement standards-based reforms. By 1998, PCPE had joined the national Public Education Network funded by the Annenberg Center at Brown University.

Before arriving at a national agenda in 1989, business leaders experimented with a variety of business/school partnerships. Through these partnerships, business leaders expected schools to raise student test scores by a set amount. In return, the business leaders promised jobs and college placement opportunities. Boston business leaders, like those in other cities, continued to look for ways to influence school reform without having to negotiate in the public arena through public institutions like school boards. Business preferred to exercise its considerable power behind the scenes. From 1987 to 1991, business was able to engineer the replacement of an elected school board with one appointed by the mayor. In 1996, the appointed school board appointed a new superintendent who vowed to implement standards-based reform based on standardized test scores. In 1988, the state's business leaders had founded a BRT-affiliated organization called the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education. The MBAE persuaded the state legislature to pass the Education Act of 1993 establishing state standards, a state test, rewards and sanctions, and site councils. By 1999, state systemic reform had taken root in the Boston public schools provoking a

backlash against the use of test scores as the only piece of data driving educational decisions in the state.

***Houston, Texas*** (refer to *Chapter4TexasChart*, pdf, during this section)

Every state has its own Roundtable organization. Each state BRT either takes the leadership in pushing the state government to adopt the *Nine Essential Components*, as in California, or creates, as in Texas, organizations that deal exclusively with the BRT educational agenda. In Texas, the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC) and the Texans for Education (TFE) were established in 1989 to “provide a mechanism through which business leaders can . . . influence the direction of state education policy and stimulate local school-improvement activities” ([www.tbec.org/history](http://www.tbec.org/history)). Reflecting the specific nature of Texas politics, Texas corporate leaders decided to form two organizations to achieve its aims instead of one. One organization, the TBEC, decided to cultivate a neutral image of the policy think tank “objectively” analyzing research upon which legislative policy could be written. One might consider the TBEC as the “good cop.” The TBEC describes how it has wrapped its agenda in a cloak of “objectivity.” In this way, policy and program suggestions issuing forth from the “TBEC contribution stream” could be directly introduced by legislators without the appearance of undue influence.

From the beginning, TBEC members believed it was important that the organization not lobby because there were programs the organization wanted to implement, policy issues which it wanted to objectively analyze, and the TBEC contribution stream was targeted for these purposes ([www.tbec.org/history](http://www.tbec.org/history)).

Meanwhile, the second organization, the TFE (the “bad cop”), would ensure that the legislators remain firmly behind TBEC policy initiatives in spite of their unpopularity with other groups.

*Many of the same corporations and individuals who founded TBEC, however, also formed Texans for Education (TFE), a business lobbying group, to give them the capability to lobby for their interests on education matters. They [the TBEC founders] believed this was important because candidates who were helpful to the business community with their policy goals in education were periodically sustaining attacks for their views, so that they needed the business community’s support ([www.tbec.org/history](http://www.tbec.org/history)) [my italics].*

These two statewide corporate organizations were incorporated into a national business-led educational network around 1990.<sup>2</sup> How the Business Roundtable organization engineered coordinated activities with state organizations is suggested by TBEC’s own history of itself on its webpage. Accordingly, the TBEC existed as a statewide organization with no formal ties to the national group. Around 1989, the executive committee of the Business Roundtable assigned Tenneco (a national energy company whose headquarters was in Texas) the responsibility of coming up with a plan to “improve” education in Texas. The centerpiece of this plan was for the Business

Roundtable to fund TFE so it could lobby the state legislature and professional educators consistently throughout the year, instead of merely as a response to educational issues as they emerged. This highly structured support

allowed business professionals and educators to begin and to continue a constructive dialogue about how to . . . *successfully advocate and support reforms that would otherwise have become mired in infighting and controversy* ([www.tbec.org/history](http://www.tbec.org/history)) [my italics].

In other words, to allow “business professionals” to continue to persuade educators to support systemic reform without submitting such “dialogue” to public debate, otherwise known as the democratic process.

The results of “bad cop” enforcement of “good cop” planning were the adoption of the BRT agenda in Texas from 1991 to 1997. TBEC and TFE boast as accomplishments the following state policies “that address most of the objectives in the BRT’s nine-point agenda”(www.tbec.org/history):

1991 – Texas legislature required school districts to develop site-based decision-making.

1993 – Texas legislature established annual testing.

1995 – Texas legislature rewrote the entire Texas Education Code, which included authorization at both the state and local level to establish charter schools.

1997 – Texas legislature enacted a reading program and new student learning standards.

The legislation at the state level had a profound effect at the district level. As a Houston school board trustee during the last ten years, Donald McAdams described in his book (2000) how such state legislation interacted with the reforms he was trying to enact in the Houston Independent School District (HISD).<sup>3</sup> The executive director of TBEC, John Stevens, has corroborated that “Don McAdams’ book is a fair representation of what has happened in Houston” (Stevens, 2000). Not surprisingly, the move for systemic reform in Houston began in 1989 when five of the nine school board members were up for reelection. The five candidates backed by Houston’s business leaders won all five of the contested seats (pp. 2-5). The newly reconstituted board proceeded to develop a mission statement called *Beliefs and Visions*. The core principles were decentralization, accountability and a “common core of academic subjects for all students . . . so that [graduates] could enter college or the workforce fully prepared to be successful and not need remediation” (p. 8).<sup>4</sup> When the superintendent decided to implement the principles of *Beliefs and Visions* in only 10 percent of the schools, the new board members engineered her termination. A new superintendent, Frank Petruzielo, was hired in 1991 on the basis of his promise to implement system-wide reform (pp. 10–21). Both the Hispanic and African American board members had objected to the choice of Petruzielo. The white board members, using time-honored divide-and-conquer tactics, were able to cut a private deal with the Hispanic members. In return for their votes for Petruzielo, the white members promised to vote for an increase in the number of top-level Hispanic administrators, recruit bilingual teachers, and build a new high school in a Hispanic neighborhood (p. 22).

Instead of committing himself publicly to the school board's *Beliefs and Visions*, Petruzielo published his own vision statement, *Blueprint: Houston Schools of Excellence*. This document promised decentralization, community surveys, school report cards, and an Educational Excellence Steering Committee that would coordinate four task forces<sup>5</sup> (p. 24). McAdams expressed his suspicions as to what influenced Petruzielo to come up with his own document.

For several years the Greater Houston Partnership, the business elite of Houston, had been studying public education reform. With substantial business money and excellent leadership by Dr. David Gottlieb, an executive with Mitchell Energy Company, the partnership had produced a first-class report. *A Framework for Educational Excellence 1990*, released in April 1990, put forth, with supporting research, twelve principles for student achievement.

Eager to see their recommendations adopted by Houston-area school districts, the Partnership had spun off a not-for-profit organization to carry forward the banner of school reform. The organization, the Greater Houston Coalition for Educational Excellence [CEE], chaired by Gordon Bonfield, a senior Tenneco executive nearing retirement,<sup>6</sup> expected to be a major player in the reform of HISD. Frank [Petruzielo] could not reject their initiative, but his marching order was *Beliefs and Visions*.

In a wise move that removed a potential conflict and brought into the planning process some of Houston's most informed and committed business leaders, [Petruzielo] invited the coalition [CEE] to take joint ownership of the Houston Schools of Excellence Steering committee. Gordon Bonfield joined [Petruzielo] as cochair, and a business executive from the coalition board joined an HISD administrator as cochair of each of the four task forces . . . [that would] prepare policy and resource recommendations for the board (McAdams, 2000; p. 25).

In order to implement the recommendations of the four task forces, Petruzielo proposed a 47 percent tax increase (\$1.54 rate) for the 1992–93 budget. While the CEE apparently supported this increase, the “real powers” in the Partnership did not. The Houston newspapers attacked the tax increase and the school board voted against it, McAdams being the only vote in favor of the increase. Petruzielo presented a second budget (\$1.44 rate) and linked the smaller tax increase to “accountability.” The Partnership wanted a \$1.34 rate and a more explicit link to “performance objectives”. The second budget was voted down. At this point, many community activists began to put pressure on the school board to pass the \$1.44 rate increase. At an August 27, 1992, meeting “packed with activists,” the school board passed a tax increase of \$1.385 (pp. 35–45). McAdams believes that the battle over the budget revealed how

Power was diffused, but *business leaders were the primary power brokers*. They funded candidates for elective office and they expected to be heard when their interests were at stake<sup>7</sup> . . . Historically, business leaders determined how much they would pay [and it was always low] (p. 45) [my italics].

The TBEC began to have an effect on Houston school policy when it successfully lobbied the

state legislature to use the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills as a means to sanction individual school districts whose performance was unacceptable. McAdams believed that the formulas created by the legislature were too complex. Petruzielo presented McAdams with an alternative. McAdams didn't like it because it didn't "mandate restaffing if performance standards weren't met" (p. 73). McAdams then proceeded to work with the school board to create a "matrix" of performance that would use the TAAS scores, be tied to teacher performance, and yet be simple enough that it "could be explained to a parent in sixty seconds." Charles Miller of the Houston Partnership and chair of the policy committee that came up with TAAS was not pleased with the simplified matrix and sponsored a candidate to run against McAdams in the August 1993 school board elections. After McAdams won with 53 percent of the vote, Miller, in a private meeting, threatened to torpedo McAdams's matrix. At this point, the CEE (the Partnership's spin-off organization) stepped in and brokered a compromise in which all sides were satisfied. Miller supported the Houston accountability formula in return for a promise by the school board to communicate better with the city's business leaders (pp. 81-82).

The Houston Federation of Teachers, however, did not want to see a formula using TAAS scores as the basis of teacher and district evaluations. McAdams complained that the ultimate failure of the school board to link effectively "performance" with assessment in 1993-94 was due to a combination of vigorous political activity by several employee groups with the simultaneous lack of business interest in the issue at the time (p. 101). But before the reform minded school board members could address the issue again, Petruzielo decided to leave and a new superintendent needed to be found and hired.

The school board hired the new superintendent, Rod Paige, in 1994. Paige not only had been one of the school board's coalition of "reform-minded" members since 1990 but also had the advantage of being African American.

Only minority leaders can reform America's urban school districts. . . . School reform is change, and many of the changes needed – higher academic standards, alternative schools, greater employee accountability, and outsourcing, for example – can be perceived as threats to minority self-esteem, minority jobs, and established centers of minority power. Only minority leaders have the credibility and trust to make tough decisions . . . . Most of the reform leaders on the HISD were white. Without Paige, the board's voice would have been muted . . . . One could not effectively play the race card against Paige (p. 255).

By bringing in Paige, the business community was able to undermine black opposition to systemic reform by using the *reverse* "race card." Opposition to Paige's implementation of systemic reform could be rejected as an attack on him personally because he was black. Paige was able to argue that he was promoting test-driven curricula and instruction in order to make sure that white teachers had equally high expectations for their black and their white students. This would be particularly effective when white teachers spoke out against his policies. It was immediately effective in dividing the Hispanic community against the African Americans. The Hispanic Education

Committee filed a lawsuit to prevent the selection of Paige as superintendent (they were upset since they had been left out of the selection process). The Texas Education Administration supported the lawsuit by opposing an emergency administrative credential to Paige. Leaders of Houston's African American communities began to mobilize and eventually the TEA confirmed an alternative credential for Paige (pp. 110-118). With Paige as superintendent, McAdams felt confident that further reform would continue.

While still a HISD trustee<sup>8</sup>, Paige had been discussing with the Greater Houston Partnership how to move the budget process from the central office to districts. Out of these discussions, the Houston Business Advisory Council was established which, in turn, sponsored the Hook Committee, chaired by Harold Hook, Chair and CEO of American General. The purpose of the Hook Committee was to present the school board with the details of how to have each school site-council be responsible for developing annual budgets for its school. Petruzielo had opposed decentralizing the budgetary process and the constant conflict with the reform trustees over this issue may have been the reason he left. When it looked as if Petruzielo was leaving, McAdams had lunch with a member of the Hook Committee and created a plan to implement the recommendations of the committee (p. 126). The school board approved financial decentralization in June 1994.

Paige and McAdams then wished to revisit the performance/assessment issue as well as devise a plan to outsource or privatize as much of the school system as possible. Thirteen task forces were created to "examine every area of HISD in order to improve service delivery to schools and students" (p. 148). One task force was devoted to devising a system that would link professional development with student achievement. Each task force was staffed with many executives from Andersen Consulting, a national accounting firm headquartered in Houston. But the push for privatization led to defeat in the June 1994 school board elections where the "reform" faction lost its majority. A coalition of NAACP, labor, religious and civic leaders opposed privatization of services (p. 160).

When the school board rejected Paige's proposal to increase the number of required courses and credits for graduation, many leaders of the business community (whose membership overlapped with the various business organizations in the city) held a meeting to discuss how to reelect a reform board. The plans were not entirely successful (only one of the two business-backed candidates won) because a confidential memo from the meeting was leaked to the press before the election. The memo identified "talking points". It was intended to be circulated only among the business leaders who were to attend the meeting. The memo was a lengthy explanation of the situation and it also included a plea for financial contributions.

In the past, when we [businessmen] have been involved and have adequately funded Trustee races, we have been successful. Traditionally, school board races are fairly unsophisticated, poorly funded efforts. [Business] dollars have provided organization and well directed campaigns that include phone banking, voter ID, direct mail, and street programs. To achieve success, we [businessmen] must adequately fund these races. Our mechanism will be the

creation of a specific purpose political action committee (PAC) called “Better Schools for Houton PAC.” We will direct our financial efforts to the PAC so as not to cause any problems to the candidates (p. 182).

The “problems” that the business leaders wished to avoid by hiding behind a PAC became unavoidable when the memo was leaked to the press. Many citizens were outraged that business leaders appeared to be dictating the results of the election and refused to vote for the PAC’s slate of candidates. But once the outrage abated, the business leaders were able to continue to pursue their strategies with an amenable school board.

From 1990 to 1995, business led reform had been piecemeal at best. The HISD employee unions and minority activists had been on the defensive throughout, but had managed to slow the pace of a standards movement whose shape was molded by the unique social and political landscape of Houston politics. It wasn’t until 1996 that the overlapping agendas of the reformers on the school board, CEE, the Houston Partnership, TFE, and TBEC came together. McAdams argues that two events – failure of a school bond vote and an audit ordered by the Texas comptroller’s office - gave Paige and the school board the leverage they needed to successfully implement accountability, curriculum alignment, privatization, and deregulation.

Late in 1995, a small group of business leaders, who called themselves the School House Committee, and Paige had begun to develop a strategy to pass a school bond measure to upgrade dilapidated buildings and build new ones to ease the overcrowding in many of the schools. The school board wanted to raise \$597 million. When they went to the Greater Houston Partnership, the board was told to reduce the amount to \$390 million. The Partnership agreed to provide \$400,000 in contributions to fund a campaign to pass the school bond measure but only if the school board continued to pursue site-based decision making, accountability at all levels, public school choice, outsourcing, merit pay, reduction of administration costs, and establishment of a continuous maintenance program (pp. 191–94).

A perceived split in the Hispanic community and explicit opposition to the \$390 million bond measure by the Houston Federation of Teachers led McAdams and his allies to seek out support from the Republican Party. McAdams learned from lobbying the local Republican clubs that these local leaders “hated the public school system.” The only way they would support the bond measure would be if the school board could promise to privatize all noneducational support services, offer vouchers to all students, and abolish the limit of twenty-two children in K–4 classes. Unable to make such a promise, McAdams fell back on the tactic of preventing an anti-bond resolution at the next Republican convention of county precinct captains. This was achieved with the help of moderate Republicans and a professional lobbyist hired by the School House Committee (pp. 195–97). The final tactic to win approval of the bond measure was implemented by the School House Committee. They

determined to hold the election as a single issue election on a weekday [May 28] before school was out and take advantage of a 1991 amendment to the state election code which

allowed early mobile voting. Starting on May 8, voting machines would be set up at schools, sometimes for only a few hours at a time when large numbers of parents were expected. Parents coming to schools for band concerts, parent fund-raisers, award ceremonies, etc., would have the opportunity to vote early at over 200 schools (p. 198).

In spite of such tactics or because of them, the bond measure failed.

In July 1996, the Texas comptroller, John Sharp, announced the results of an audit of HISD. The report made 288 recommendations that, if implemented over a five-year period, promised to save HISD \$116 million at a cost of only \$46 million. The audit itself cost nearly \$1 million and the gross savings promised to be less than two percent of the HISD budget (p. 217). The impact of the report was more political (a PR bombshell) than practical (it only offered fine tuning of the reforms already passed by the school board). McAdams argues that the “failed bond issue revealed the public had no confidence in Houston’s schools. The Sharp audit confirmed for most Houstonians that the bond vote was justified.” This created the climate that allowed HISD to present the community with a “bold new reform agenda” (pp. 229–30).

On October 16, 1997, Paige began a series of media events that unveiled his “new” program. *A New Beginning for HISD* rested upon four pillars: accountability, best efforts, choice, and decentralization. McAdams was disappointed by the poor media coverage at these events, especially given the mounting opposition to these initiatives by the “NAACP, employee groups, organized labor, and others.” Yet in the context of the audit and by “clever scheduling, a great deal of arm-twisting, enormous staff work behind the scenes and very close board votes, HISD began to embrace the principles of competition”(p. 232). The “Reforms of 1996–97” were as follows:

- Reduction of board meetings from two to once a month
- Superintendent’s personnel decisions completely independent of the board
- Contract with Community Education Partners to teach 450 “at risk” students
- Neighborhood schools admissions selectively open to non-neighborhood students
- Increase in number of charter schools
- Implementation of phonics based reading program
- Curriculum alignment among standards, instruction, and testing
- Testing grades 1-11 with the Stanford 9 test
- Elimination of continuing contracts, hearings, and appeals for new teachers
- Teacher appraisal linked to student achievement and discipline
- Complaints supervised by HISD’s chief of staff for business services
- Outsourcing contracts for installing management systems (Main Event Management Corp.); building repairs (Brown and Root); facilities management (ServiceMaster Management Services Company); food service supervision (Aramark); and revising human resources management (IBM) (pp. 232–241).

McAdams believes that these reforms completed a process of reform that began with his election to the school board in 1989. He also believes that this package is responsible for the increase in Houston student’s TAAS scores since 1994.<sup>9</sup> Using the Houston matrix, from 1994 to 1998, the number of what the district labeled as “low-acceptable schools” decreased from 81 to 0;

from 1990 to 1997, the dropout rate declined from 10.4 percent to 2.8 percent and the number of violent crimes fell 38 percent. And all this at a low cost to the taxpayers. HISD has the lowest effective tax rate among large urban school districts and a per-pupil spending rate less in 1999 than in 1992 (p. 253). Stevens, the executive director of TBEC, believes that along with the “significant and constructive force” of the business community, “Superintendent Rod Paige must be given an enormous amount of credit . . . his leadership has been the single most important factor in the success of [HISD]” (Stevens, 2000).

The reality behind the numerical definitions of “success” cited by McAdams and Stevens is poignantly described in the research of Linda McNeil (2000) of the Rice University Center for Learning in Houston. McNeil began her research in Houston’s magnet schools looking for “organizational models of schooling that provided structural support for authentic, engaged teaching and learning” (p. 4). The focus of her research dramatically shifted, however, as she observed the effects of “accountability” and high-stakes testing on how teachers teach and students learn. At first, McNeil was observing students enthusiastically engaged in a “rich and complex” curriculum in schools specifically established as model schools of the “highest quality.” But

[a]s the controls were imposed, and regulations increasingly standardized, the quality of teaching and learning at even these exemplary schools began to suffer . . . The practice of teaching under these reforms [TASS, etc.] shifted away from intellectual activity toward dispensing packaged fragments of information sent from an upper level of the bureaucracy. And the role of students as contributors to classroom discourse, as thinkers, as people who brought their personal stories and life experiences into the classroom, was silenced or severely circumscribed by the need for the class to “cover” a generic curriculum at a pace established by the district and the state for all the schools (p. 5).

McNeil concluded that not only does standardization de-skill teachers and dumb down students, but it “restratifies education by race and class” (p. xxvii). According to McNeil, this happened within the context of the long-standing and intractable correlation of test scores with socio-economic status.<sup>10</sup> As a result, administrators insisted that the teachers in “under-performing schools” substitute curriculum they had developed with “test-prep” materials. Teachers in white affluent schools, in which there was less anxiety about the students’ abilities to pass the state tests, were allowed to continue to teach curriculum that didn’t separate out “the basics” from “higher-order thinking.” McNeil has observed the development of two curriculums in the Houston school system under the pressures of high-stakes testing. Affluent schools continue to teach “academically challenging” college preparatory curriculum in the upper grades and a hands-on, exploratory and thought-provoking curriculum in the lower grades. In schools dominated by poor and minority students, McNeil observed the prevalence of a test-prep curriculum that teaches students “strategies to simplify their thinking” and “practice weeding out ‘distractors’” among multiple-choice options (pp. 245-56). McNeil’s detailed descriptions of what actually goes on in classrooms reveals that an increase in test scores signifies an increase in thoughtless, meaningless, test-taking skills.

McNeil's findings, perhaps, might be news to the experts and professionals, but not so to many parents, teachers, and students. Those who oppose standardization are rarely heard from in the national dialogue over educational reform. McAdams's story of reform in Houston indicates why voices of business leaders have been able to dominate the public discussion. The story is one in which many business organizations, in spite of their differences, were able to unite behind systemic reform in the face of an opposed but divided community of teachers and parents. The appointment of Paige provided the leadership that the business community admired and could rally around. The appointment of Paige, however, also served to create a division between a conservative African American church leadership and the NAACP. The Hispanic community's leadership opposed the appointment of Paige, thus pitting themselves against the African American leadership. Very much on the defensive, the Houston Federation of Teachers continued to pursue its historically narrow focus of job security. Most parents were co-opted by the establishment of site-based community councils that were only in a position to respond to the proposals presented to them by the task forces made up of HISD administrative personnel and business leaders. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the Houston school system has proceeded more rapidly towards systemic reform than other cities, and why George W. Bush appointed Paige to be the U.S. Secretary of Education.

### ***Charlotte, North Carolina***

While McAdams' story of educational reform in Houston provides an example of how business leaders are directly involved in school politics, the example of Charlotte reveals clearly how the interlocking network of BRT allies is effective at promoting systemic reform. The Public School Forum (PSF) was established in 1985 and is headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina. Currently it has 64 members on its board of directors: 20 representatives from business; 15 educational administrators (mostly post-secondary); 12 state legislators; and single representatives from other areas such as a teacher and a representative from the state's Parent Teacher Organization. It has a staff of fourteen, which oversees a wide variety of programs and publications dedicated to advancing an educational agenda aligned with that of the Business Roundtable. These programs developed over the last fifteen years and originated from study groups formed from its board of directors. Kronley's description below (from a report published by a business alliance) reveals the ability of PSF to influence legislation with little public input.

Because the study group process is so thorough and collaborative and its members are key stake-holders, the groups' reports are influential on state policy. The study groups give policy makers an opportunity to examine complex issues *away from partisan arena* and build consensus on educationally sound strategies to address them. In large part because of this consensus, every study group has resulted in the introduction of legislation that includes all or most of the group's recommendations (Kronley, 2000; p. 47) [my emphasis].

In 1985, PSF produced the first of many study group reports that led to the passage of state

educational legislation. In 1986, a state-funded teacher scholarship program was established. Through the teacher scholarship program, PSF has awarded college tuition (\$6,500 per year) to those high school graduates who promise to spend a minimum of four years teaching in the North Carolina public school system. PSF's criteria for selection reveals a desire that future teachers be good test takers (minimum of combined SAT scores of 1100) as well as "good" students (minimum high school GPA of 3.6) (TF, 2000). In spite of a quota system (at least 20 percent minority and 30 percent male), the "academic" criteria create a pool of teachers who are not likely to question the validity of standardized tests as a litmus test of academic achievement. The second study group report published by PSF was *Thinking for a Living: A Blueprint for Educational Growth*. This provided the basic structure for the 1989 North Carolina School Improvement and Accountability Act establishing statewide standardized testing.

The Business Roundtable did not establish a formal relationship to the Public School Forum until 1991, when "influential" CEOs of North Carolina (actually, the BRT's state organization, called Education: Everybody's Business Coalition,<sup>11</sup> became "impatient with the pace of school reform." EEBC asked the Forum, the Council of Local Chambers of Commerce, and North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry to "create a vehicle through which business could make more of an impact on policy," primarily on the state level. EEBC now consists of six organizations of which PSF is one, and it provides the administrative structure for the group (BRT, 1999).<sup>12</sup> The EEBC holds annual legislative briefings for local business organizations as well as posting legislative alerts and distributing mailing lists (Dornan, 2001). Through a collaboration with PSF and local business education foundations, EEBC funds pilot projects and local fiscal and legislative campaigns.

PSF has become the nerve center of systemic educational reform in the southeast region of the United States. In 1991, the federal government funded the establishment of the South East Regional Vision for Education (SERVE). This "research and development educational laboratory" supports a variety of programs in six states, all coordinated by PSF. SERVE sponsors seminars attended by "policy makers" and representatives of business such as the one in December 1998 in Washington, D.C., the focus of which was to determine how to analyze the results of the NAEP tests. In 1995, SERVE used its federal funds to "hire" PSF to administer a network of nine state Business Roundtable organizations (the Columbia Group)<sup>13</sup> funded by BellSouth; the nine states are each of the southeastern states in which BellSouth Foundation operates. Since 1996, the BRT has used the Columbia Group as a sounding board for national educational issues and a vehicle to advance its policies respecting those issues (PSF, 2000; [www.ncforum.org/cg](http://www.ncforum.org/cg)). *Southern Synergy*, a report by the Columbia Group, asserts that the roles of the nine-member organization are

unique: they work in different contexts; they have different histories, different agendas, and different styles. They are, however, united in their dedication to – and success at – communicating the central role that better education plays in the future of their states and in recommending and implementing ways to ensure that education in these states is in fact better (Kronley, 2000; p. 1).

“Better” essentially means “mandating the adoption of higher standards and greater accountability for students, teachers, and schools.” The Columbia Group has begun to focus on aligning teaching standards with state standards for students (Kronley, 2000). PSF is supporting the focus on teacher development through several research publications: an assessment of the first class of Teaching Fellows after their fourth year of teaching (1991); a blueprint to identify and keep “good” teachers (1996 – enacted into state legislation in 1997); and a comparison of teaching conditions in eight southeastern states (1996).

The current focus of PSF study and legislative action is finance. In 1996, PSF published *Things That Matter*. In the report, the authors argue that state funding formulas for public schools should not try to narrow the gap between amounts spent on rich and poor districts. Instead, state funding should “ensure that all young people have a ‘sound basic education’” (PSF, 2000; [www.ncforum.org/forumpub.htm](http://www.ncforum.org/forumpub.htm); pp. 3–4). To do this, PSF lobbied the North Carolina legislature, in 1999, to provide \$86 million in extra funds for those schools whose test scores defined them as “under performing.” McNeil’s (2000) study in Houston suggests, however, that such money is spent on test-prep material and consultants who instruct teachers in ways in which to use such material. Perhaps the authors of *Things that Matter* believe that part of a “sound basic education” is learning how to fill in “bubbles” and learn skills such as “if you answered ‘b’ three times in a row, no, no, no” (test-makers are unlikely to construct three questions in a row with the same answer-indicator) (McNeil, 2000; p. 235). Or perhaps those at PSF want extra funds for “under performing” schools because they hope such funds will assuage the expected backlash against using a test score to determine whether someone has gained a “sound basic education.”

Beginning in the spring of 2001, young people who have not passed several requirements, including the basic competency test given in the tenth grade and re-administered in subsequent years to those failing the first time, will not graduate from high school. *With the very real prospect of tens of thousands of young people being held back from promotion to the next grade level or denied a high school diploma, the related questions of how much is spent on schools and how that money is spent have never been more important to North Carolina* (PSF, 2000; [www.ncforum.org/forumpub.htm](http://www.ncforum.org/forumpub.htm); pp. 3–4) [my emphasis].

The research from PSF study groups invariably ends up as legislation. The research finds its way to state elected and appointed officials through the North Carolina Institute for Educational Policy Makers (NCIEPM). This Institute, also directed by PSF, provides orientation sessions for all newly appointed and elected officials at the state level. Symposia are developed by the Institute “tailored” to the members of the media in order to train them in how to interpret for the public test scores and other accountability data. The briefing sessions, orientation conferences, symposia, and position papers are funded by BellSouth Foundation and Burroughs-Wellcome Fund.

PSF as well as EEBC work primarily on the state level. But they do coordinate reform efforts on the local level as well. One staff member of PSF is dedicated to administering NC

Partners. This program is dedicated to developing and supporting partnerships among various state and local organizations devoted to “improved student achievement.” PSF Director of Policy Research, John Poteat, organizes training, materials and marketing for existing partnerships among and between the following kinds of organizations:

- Local Education Foundations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Foundation and corporate donors
- Nonprofits
- Local schools
- State Board of Education
- Colleges and universities
- School/Business partnerships
- School-to-Work programs
- PTA/PTOs
- Community-based organizations.

One of the links on the NC Partners web page takes you to the Public Education Network (PEN). The Network exists to support Local Education Foundations. These LEFs are the vehicles through which local business groups pursue Standards-Based Reform in their cities. The *Ten Point Framework* which guides the work of these LEFs looks remarkably like the Business Roundtable’s 9 point plan (see Appendix H for *Ten Points* and a list of corporate and foundation funders of PEN).

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation (CMEF), founded in 1991, is one of many members of the Public Education Network. CMEF are “active members” in NC Partnerships, “involved in annual legislative briefings of EEBC . . . on all legislative alert and updated mailing lists” and can be called upon by EEBC to “support specific issues like the recent successful \$2 billion bond package for higher education” (Dornan, 2001). Locally CMEF is active on many fronts. It gives out grants to teachers, helps parents be better “coaches” of their children, conducts annual surveys, coordinates high school application process to the state’s university system, instructs the public on finance issues and school board elections, and honors those who show a “dedicated interest in education” ([publiceducation.org/lef/nc.htm](http://publiceducation.org/lef/nc.htm)).

Business leaders were also directly involved in educational policy formation in Charlotte-Mecklenburg during the last twenty years. Mickelson (2000) argues that during the 1980s “Charlotte corporate leaders began to complain about the shortage of entry-level workers” (p. 132).<sup>14</sup> These leaders blamed the city’s public school system for not contributing to a pro-business climate as well as not producing the kinds of workers they desired. The new superintendent in 1991, John Murphy, established a close working relationship with the business leaders of the city, many of whom belonged to CMEF. He convened a panel of experts to advise him on “systemic reform.” Business leaders served on educational task forces and adopted schools. Charlotte business leaders were delighted with the cooperation that Murphy provided. At the end of Murphy’s first year, the CEO of

First Union Bank lobbied the school board for a substantial raise in pay for Murphy as well as a bonus for his first year of work (p. 133).

In 1992, Charlotte's historic desegregation plan was replaced with a "parental choice" plan centered on magnet schools, increasing the segregation in the school system (which is ironic given that federal "desegregation money" was used to fund the pilot magnet schools). While many middle-class African Americans supported the creation of magnet schools, many from the working class did not. Opposition to the new "choice" plan was expressed in "criticism that the new magnet schools had diverted resources from older inner city schools" (p. 134). In response to this criticism, Murphy presented the school board with results of the first year of Project First in August 1994. This project, funded by IBM and Americorps in partnership with the Public Education Network and CMEF, was intended to provide technology and expertise to ten non-magnet elementary schools. Mickelson's study questions how a program could rectify the imbalance of funds between magnet and non-magnet schools. For example, in 1993, one magnet school received \$750,000 in technology resources while a Project First school received an Americorps volunteer and several IBM computers. The volunteer was neither a technology expert nor had been trained in the technology. The IBM computers were never used because the existing infrastructure could not support them (p. 135). Mickelson believed, from talking to those who put together Project First, that IBM executives were motivated by the "increased share of the IBM computer market" and the greater "legitimacy" such a project gave to a business role in education (p. 162). This is consistent with "point nine" of Public Education Network's Ten Point Framework for LEFs: "Technology must be included in teaching, special education, and information management" ([publiceducation.org/lef/nc/charlotte.htm](http://publiceducation.org/lef/nc/charlotte.htm)) [See Appendix H for all ten points of PEN's framework].

From 1993 to 1996, IBM engineered a more ambitious educational project in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Murphy and Stanley Litow, IBM's Vice President of Corporate-Community Relations, designed a four-school complex named Education Village. The district, in 1993, paid IBM \$6 million for 200 acres adjacent to the IBM facility in University Research Park (Corporate HQ). In the fall of 1994, the Chairman of IBM, Louis Gerstner, announced that the first of 10 national Reinventing Education Grants (\$2 million) would be given to Charlotte to support the development of technology in Education Village. The school district, to receive the grant, would have to raise \$82 million dollars to pay for construction of the complex, which it did when a 1995 bond measure passed (pp. 138-39).

In the fall of 1996, the first of the four schools in Education Village was to open. It was only at this point that the school board had anything to say about the process. Many of the school board's constituents were angered at the attendance formula that gave 2/3 of the seats to University Park children or the wealthy white adjacent subdivisions. The newly elected school board cancelled the attendance formula citing lack of compliance with the 1971 desegregation court decision and began a process of open forums to come up with one believed to be fair. The "corporate actors" were furious. The President of University Research Park, Chapel Hill, wrote an editorial in the *Charlotte*

*Observer:*

These companies [that donate to the school] do not need to have their motives questioned. They do not need to be hassled . . . . They need to be persuaded to offer even more support . . . . If our school board can't understand the grant's purpose, won't honor agreements, and can't act graciously, other companies will think twice before extending new offers of support (p. 142).

One CEO of a Research Park firm told Mickelson that business leaders “were very upset that the school board got involved . . . . It is business . . . . It was not an issue of quality education, it was an issue of development of University Research Park” (p. 144).

While IBM is not a member of EEBC, it is represented on the board of directors of both CMEF and PSF as is another inhabitant of Education Village, First Union National Bank. IBM has a national presence through its membership in the Business Roundtable as well as its own programs such as Reinventing Education grants. While the “business interest” in education is not monolithic, the interlocking networks created by business leaders do create a process that reinforces a cultural value system among business leaders. Fundamental to that value system is a belief in top-down decision making and a belief also that business leaders are the ones to decide what shall be taught to the nation's children and how.

### ***Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania***

Business leaders influence in education, of course, is not a new phenomenon. In the 1930s, Richard K. Mellon brought together the business leaders of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania<sup>15</sup> (among whom were the “heads of many of the nation's industrial leaders”) to form the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD) (Portz, 1999; p. 57). From the 1930s to the 1980s, ACCD influenced the city's development, in part, by creating “new civic organizations staffed with experts and insulated from the conflict-ridden electoral arena” (Portz, 1999; p. 59). As one ACCD leader reported in 1984, ACCD

[i]s more than a collection of business leaders. It has come to occupy a position at the heart of Pittsburgh's civic activity. As initiator, broker, supporter, monitor or facilitator, it touches nearly every major civic or development undertaking in the city (Portz, 1999; p. 59).

In the 1960s, parents and teachers began to challenge ACCD's control of the formation and implementation of public policy issues. One manifestation of this effort emerged over the issue of racial balance in the school system. In 1968, Pennsylvania's Human Relations Commission (HRC) required the Pittsburgh public school system to submit a desegregation plan. The school board, part appointed and part elected at large, rejected four plans in a row. In 1976, the school board members were elected by district. In spite of the election of three pro-integration members (out of a total of nine), no desegregation plan was passed by the board. The patience of the state's HRC was running out. In 1980, ACCD stepped in and created the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC,

chaired by the executive director of ACCD, drafted a “desegregation plan” which called for magnet schools and “school improvement plans to address achievement gaps in the African American schools that would remain segregated” (Portz, 1999; p. 60).

Earlier, in 1978, ACCD had created the Allegheny Conference Education Fund (ACEF), which began the more long-term process of creating the kinds of networks upon which the future standards movement would be built. ACEF funded programs that brought professional educators and business leaders together, promoted partnerships between schools and businesses, and gave grants to teachers and principals who were “innovative” (Portz, 1999; p. 61). After laying the groundwork, ACEF went out to find leadership consistent with its vision of school reform. In 1980, the new superintendent of the Pittsburgh school system, Richard Wallace, “quickly developed working relationships with the business community represented by ACCD, the school board, community organizations, and the educational research community” (Portz, 1999; p. 61).

Wallace hired the Learning Research and Development Corporation housed at the University of Pittsburgh to conduct a “needs assessment” survey.<sup>16</sup> Presumably using the results from this survey as well as other data, Wallace developed his *Excellence Agenda*. This six-point program anticipated the Business Roundtable’s push for standards and accountability. Wallace called for frequent testing, teacher training, management of enrollment decline, establishing magnet and gifted programs, establishing discipline committees at each school, and training principals in the development of model school improvement plans. A \$200 million Mellon grant helped to develop a city-wide standardized test – Monitoring Achievement in Pittsburgh (MAP). The grant also funded the deployment of computer systems in 1982 that allowed for “more efficient maintenance of student records and implementation of data-based decision making” (Portz, 1999; pp. 62–65). Wallace cultivated teacher support by appealing to their sense of being experts, encouraging them to think of themselves as professionals. It is conceivable that this strategy had the same divisive effect in Pittsburgh as it has had historically since its inception in the Progressive Era. If teachers tie their esteem to the status of experts and their expertise depends on successfully teaching to the test, then parents and students are placed in the role of supplicants while teachers ally themselves with the administrators of tests. This dynamic is not conducive to collaboration between parents and teachers. One manifestation of this came in 1994 when the teacher union questioned the establishment of school site councils. The teachers were worried that they would have to spend with parents time “better” spent, perhaps, in meetings with other teachers or educational researchers (Portz, 1999; p. 71).

When parents agitated to be allowed to participate in district decisions, Wallace created “advisory committees.” These did not successfully co-opt parental concerns for the school board became increasingly “populist.” Portz argues that from 1986 to 1992, the school board began to micromanage the school system, presumably in response to parental demands. This did not fit with Wallace’s corporate leadership style. That the school board turned down the district’s membership to the National Alliance for Restructuring Education is the only concrete evidence that Portz provides

to indicate what is meant by a “populist” school board (Portz, 1999; p. 67). The conflict between the school board and Wallace ended, however, when the superintendent resigned and went to work for LRDC at the University of Pittsburgh.

Wallace’s successor, Louise Brennan (1992–1997), proceeded to implement the recommendations of the task forces put into place by Wallace. The five areas these task forces were asked to explore were high standards for all students, effective schools, community partnerships, high quality staff and effective volunteer partnerships, and site-based management decision making (Portz, 1999; p. 71). Brennan worked with the newly created Allegheny Policy Council. In 1992, the ACEF was absorbed by the “implementing agency” of ACCD, the Allegheny Policy Council. Membership of this council included the CEOs of the major corporations in Pittsburgh, the mayor, the Allegheny county commissioner, Brennan, staff members from several major Pittsburgh foundations, and a representative from LRDC. By 1993, the state legislature passed statewide standards or “learning outcomes” to which all public schools had to adhere. In response, Brennan promulgated a six-year strategic plan to ensure that all students in the Pittsburgh schools mastered the sixty-two “outcomes” while adding nine of their own. The plan included training parents to participate on school councils responsible for creating annual comprehensive educational improvement plans (Portz, 1999; p. 72).

In 1993, Brennan hired staff from the Pittsburgh Council on Public Education to train parents and support parental involvement in school site councils. In 1998, PCPE joined the national Public Education Network funded by the Annenberg Center at Brown University and headed by Paul Reville<sup>17</sup> who is also the cofounder and executive director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education.<sup>18</sup> PEN is devoted to helping local education foundations like PCPE “to hold educators accountable for children’s education long after the standards have been written and public attention has ceased” (web page). PCPE does this through publications, roundtables, and community forums. They “inform parents and other citizens about the district’s academic standards: what they are, why they are needed, and ways they can be used as powerful tools for change.” PCPE also gives grants to teachers and schools to “encourage innovation” (web page).

### ***Boston, Massachusetts***

In Boston, formal business interest in education began in 1974 when the Boston Trilateral Council for Quality Education (created by the Boston Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Businesses) initiated twenty business–school partnerships (Portz, 1999; p. 85). This rather tepid foray into educational reform occurred during the height of the school desegregation fights. But as the courts and the state legislature took over monitoring of desegregation of the Boston schools, business became more confident of its ability to have sustained but low profile influence in the development of educational policy (Portz, 1999; p. 86).

In 1982, the leading businessmen in Boston and the school board signed the first of several

Boston Compacts, agreements between businesses and the school district. The agreement committed the school system to improving student test scores, attendance, and dropout rates.<sup>19</sup> If there were measurable improvement in these areas, then businesses, labor organizations, and colleges would provide “post-secondary opportunities” for the high school graduates (Portz, 1999; p. 86). The Boston Private Industry Council provided the office and staff to support the agreement. The Council’s staff funneled federal job training dollars to nonprofits, orchestrated the formation of business–school partnerships, and supported the eleven work groups coordinated by the Compact’s executive and steering committees (Portz, 1999; p. 88).

By 1984, the city’s corporate business leaders created the Boston Plan for Excellence. The plan “provided a safe and reliable avenue for business involvement with schools” for its “staff was not subject to the political ventures of the school committee” (Portz, 1999; p. 89). But such “political ventures” would not last much longer. Beginning in 1987, business leaders launched a sustained attack on the way in which the school board governed.<sup>20</sup> This led to the replacement of a thirteen member elected school board with a seven-member board appointed by the mayor in 1991 and the appointment of a new superintendent in 1996. The new superintendent established four goals:

- improve teaching to enable all students to achieve higher standards
- change schools to focus on student performance and serving the community
- provide safe, nurturing, and healthy schools where students receive the support they need in order to succeed in school
- engage parents in school improvement (Portz, 1999; p. 97).

While the Boston corporate leaders were moving the city’s schools towards standards-based reform, corporate business leaders were organizing on the state level. In 1988, the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) was created and claims to have been the “driving force behind the passage of the sweeping Education Reform Act of 1993” (BRT, 1999). Bolon (2000), an opponent of MBAE, agrees.

[The MBAE], led by John C. Rennie, then CEO of the former Pacer Infotec, Inc. . . .and S. Paul Reville, then director of the Worcester Public Education fund, wrote the reform bill sponsored by the education committee of the [state] legislature. In 1991 the Business Alliance produced a document entitled *Every Child a Winner*. A story from the May 2, 1993, northwest edition of the *Boston Globe* quoted Rep. Mark Roosevelt as saying that the House education reform bill then pending “is essentially [the Business Alliance document].” In publications of Mass Inc., Rennie is quoted as saying, “We bought change” (p. 1).<sup>21</sup>

The Education Act of 1993 stipulated the following:

- New goals, standards, and indicators of performance for schools, students, and teachers
- Financial rewards to teachers and schools that excel
- Decentralized authority, limiting school committees to policy making<sup>22</sup> and oversight, making CEOs of superintendents, and giving hiring and firing power to principals
- Preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds

- Expand professional development for teachers
- Use state funds to equalize spending among school districts.

The MCAS, the state test, driving the direction of all the above reforms,<sup>23</sup> was first administered in 1998. Boston School Board responded to test-driven educational reform by voting to end “social promotion.” The board required that all third, fifth, and eighth grade students pass the state test or the city test in order to be promoted to the next grade (Portz, 1999; p. 102). In 1996, anticipating MCAS and jumping on the bandwagon of comprehensive school reform, the Boston Plan for Excellence<sup>24</sup> developed a “model for whole-school change . . . to raise student achievement” on the MAEP, the precursor to MCAS. To encourage the adoption of the model, the plan offered as much as \$300,000 (over four years) for any school wishing to implement the model. In 1997–1999, the Annenberg Foundation provided the Boston school district \$30 million (to be administered by the Boston Plan) to implement the plan’s model on a district wide basis. “For the Boston Plan–Boston Annenberg Challenge and the district, as well as the schools, the single goal is improved student performance” ([publiceducation.org/about us/bostonplan](http://publiceducation.org/about-us/bostonplan)).

Several organizations in Massachusetts have formed to oppose the use of a single test to determine whether students are learning what they should be learning in school. Bolon (2000), writing for one of these groups, MassParents, doesn’t understand why the state board of education is using the MCAS as the sole measure of student achievement.

The Massachusetts Board of Education . . . has received many recommendations to improve its practices and make its system of assessments more realistic and fair. It has had more than \$25 million to spend on developing MCAS. It is also well aware that “high-stakes” testing systems in other states have sharply narrowed the school curriculum and increased the population of school dropouts, who are likely to be eligible only for the “McJobs” of the future. Thus far, however, the Massachusetts Board of Education remains rigid, programmatic and hostile to the facts . . . . A weakness of all current school-based testing programs is lack of proven significance. It is well known that scores on school-based standard tests tend to increase with incomes of student households. It is also known that students from higher-income households tend to achieve higher status in adult life. However, none of the so-called “achievement tests” used in state accountability systems has ever been shown to predict success in adult life significantly beyond what can be associated with incomes of student households . . . . The students from households that already have the least suffer the most from such a system, tending to widen the economic gap between the haves and have-nots in our society, already among the greatest of the industrial nations (Bolon, 2000; pp. 3–4).

In the light of such criticism, it is not surprising that in MBAE’s 1999 progress report to the national Business Roundtable, the Massachusetts’ business leaders agreed that “the major challenge will be to close the student performance gap that was so evident on last year’s first round of assessments. Massachusetts’s business leaders and policy makers now must shift focus from developing policy to improving practice” (BRT, 1999; p. 27).

- <sup>1</sup> Please refer to Figure 4.1 (p. 98a) while reading this section.
- <sup>2</sup> I am referring here to the network of organizations described earlier – BRT, BCER, IEL, Public Agenda, Achieve, ECS, and regional research laboratories.
- <sup>3</sup> All pages cited in this section are from McAdams (2000).
- <sup>4</sup> Avoiding “remediation” in college is a major objective of the Education Trust.
- <sup>5</sup> The four task forces were Staff Development and Recruitment; Increase Productivity through Technology and Reduction of Paperwork and Bureaucracy; Twenty-first Century School Facilities and Programs; Partnerships.
- <sup>6</sup> It would be good to remember at this point that the Business Roundtable’s assigned Tenneco to be its corporate agent in Texas.
- <sup>7</sup> They argued for a dominant voice in school politics because they paid seventy percent of HISD taxes. The same argument has been made throughout American history by the wealthy, especially during the Progressive Era. The more money a person has, the more say they should have in the political process. This is particularly anti-democratic given that, generally, 15 percent of the U.S. population controls 85 percent of the wealth in this country.
- <sup>8</sup> In Houston, school board members are called trustees, perhaps to encourage a “trustee” rather than “delegate mentality” (see Zerchykov, 1984).
- <sup>9</sup> Not including special education students (p. 253).
- <sup>10</sup> Close reading of the history of the development of standardized testing will reveal that such a correlation is not by chance. Furthermore, one reason for the development of standardized testing was because administrators did not want to rely on the judgment and expertise of teachers in evaluating students, even though those very judgments were used to measure the validity of the first IQ tests. I particularly recommend: Thorndike, R. M. and D. F. Lohman (1990), *A Century of Ability Testing* (Chicago, Riverside Publishing Company).
- <sup>11</sup> Corporate members of EEBC are BellSouth, Carolina Power and Light, Duke Power, Food Lion, Glaxco-Wellcome, Guildford Mills, Jefferson Pilot Life Insurance, RJR Tobacco, Sprint, and Wachovia Bank and Trust.
- <sup>12</sup> Others not already mentioned are the NC Business Committee for Education, the NC School Boards Association, and the NC Association of School Administrators.
- <sup>13</sup> Current members of the Columbia Group are A+ Education Foundation of Alabama, Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Prichard Committee of Kentucky, Council for a Better Louisiana, Public Education Forum of Mississippi, Public School Forum of North Carolina, South Carolina Chamber of Excellence in Education, and Tennessee Tomorrow.
- <sup>14</sup> All page references in this section are from Mickelson (2000).
- <sup>15</sup> Beginning in the spring of 1993, John Portz, Lana Stein, and Robin Jones worked under the direction of Clarence Stone in studying “civic capacity and urban education” in three cities – Pittsburgh, Boston, and St. Louis. Their central research questions were: “Why do certain cities show greater initiative than others? What are the roles of institutions and leadership in creating and activating that capacity?” (p. vii). The researchers chose to use “ten innovations” as their definition of reform. The innovations (pp. 53, 164–69) closely resemble the Business Roundtable’s “Nine Essential Components.” Privatization, charters and vouchers represent the only explicit departures from the BRT agenda.
- <sup>16</sup> LRDC was founded in 1963 and receives funding from a combination of private and public sources. Almost all of the 23 “faculty” positions at LRDC are joint appointments with University of Pittsburgh departments. For example, the present dean of the University’s School of Education, Alan Lesgold, was the executive associate director of LRDC and continues to be a “faculty” member of LRDC (*University Times*, 2000). Those who hold positions at LRDC are and have been presidents and board members of organizations such as the National Academy of Education, the American Educational Research Association, the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Scientists, the Society for Research in Child Development, several divisions of the American Psychological Association and the National Assessment of Educational Progress. LRDC’s “faculty” and 164 research and support-staff develop and evaluate programs in professional development and classroom modules. The LRDC web page proclaims their researchers’ goals as seeking “to describe what learning is, where and how it happens best, how it can improve, and how research can help.” In 1999, LRDC scientists and researchers were engaged in more than 50 research projects, one of which was an evaluation of the AFT’s Educational Research and Dissemination (ER&D) program (LRDC, 2000a & 2000b).

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 27 in Chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> The MBAE was instrumental in the passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993.

<sup>19</sup> New student assignment plans and decentralization were later added to the deal.

<sup>20</sup> Until 1993, the business community in the state was divided over whether to commit itself to reforming the public school system. This rift was healed through the compromise of adding limited school choice options to the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 (Bolon, 2000; p. 1).

<sup>21</sup> MassINC stands for the Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. MassINC is a nonprofit organization primarily funded by 53 organizations among whom are Verizon, PG&E, FleetBoston, and IBM (MassINC, 2000b). The organization also solicits memberships from individuals, universities, government agencies, and trade unions/associations. The mission of MassINC “is to develop a public agenda for Massachusetts that promotes growth and vitality of the middle-class” (MassINC, 2000a). The organization cosponsors quarterly forums, funds research reports, lobbies politicians, and feeds information to the media based on four initiatives. One of its initiatives is “Lifelong Learning” whose three goals are to: “(1) ensure that the state’s pre-K and K–12 Education Reform effort stays on track; (2) transform the state’s public college and university system into a powerful catalyst for economic growth; and, (3) explore innovative new ways to educate and train adult workers so that they have the skills in demand by Massachusetts employers” (MassINC, 2000c).

<sup>22</sup> “Limiting school committees to policy making” is a euphemism for stopping school boards from interfering with the superintendent’s implementation of state mandates. The architects of the 1993 act use “policy making” to describe the new role for school boards. Massachusetts’s systemic reformers wish to inhibit school board members from preventing district administrators from enforcing data-driven decision making throughout the system (see my discussion of school boards in Chapter 2).

<sup>23</sup> Just how crudely the tests can drive administrative and teaching practice has been indicated by Dr. James Garvey, superintendent of the Worcester, Massachusetts, public schools. Garvey participated in a forum in June 1997 cosponsored by MassINC, the Bank of Boston, the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable and the Massachusetts Taxpayer’s Foundation. The moderator of the forum was S. Paul Reville. The topic of the forum was “Are Schools Improving?” During the discussion among the panelists, Superintendent Garvey explained how he intended to instruct the principals in his district on how to use MCAS test results. Garvey argued that school principals would need to do an “item analysis” of test results, “see where you are weak, and you get that back into the classroom in an organized fashion” (MassINC, 1997; p. 7). If the test results reveal a weakness in mathematics, then the principal needs to “encourage the teachers to work in that area, and as a system we need to provide through staff development and in-service education those mathematics courses that are going to help the system achieve the goal that they’ve set” (p. 12).

<sup>24</sup> The Boston Plan for Excellence is a “Local Education Foundation” that participates in the Public Education Network. One of PEN’s board members is S. Paul Reville, lecturer and coordinator of state relations at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Reville is also Codirector of the PEW Forum on Standards-Based Reform. Many LEFs, including the Boston Plan, receive challenge grants from the Annenberg Center for Educational Reform at Brown University (see the end of Chapter Two for the network in which the Annenberg Center operates).