

The **FACTS** about State Takeovers of Public Schools

Lawmakers in nearly a dozen states have passed, or are considering legislation that creates a state-run school “district” that is empowered to seize control of individual low-performing schools. The districts – often called “Achievement School Districts” or “Opportunity School Districts” – are touted as a way to improve student academic outcomes. State-run districts are in place in Louisiana, Michigan and

Tennessee. They have not improved academic outcomes for most students. Instead, they have served as a mechanism for wholesale conversion of public schools to charters, and to disenfranchise tens of thousands of African American and Latino voters. What’s the real story behind state takeovers? *Is there a better way to support struggling students and schools?*

Stealing Control from Black and Brown Communities

- **The takeovers are targeted:** There are 116 schools currently operating in state takeover districts in Louisiana, Michigan and Tennessee. Of the 44,000 students enrolled in these schools, 96% are African American or Latino.
- **Most schools, once absorbed by the state district, are converted to charters.** Although all 3 state takeover laws provided for other options, 107 of the 116 schools currently operating have been converted to charter schools.
- Charter schools are not governed by elected representatives but by appointed, non-profit boards.
- In New Orleans now, there are 44 separate governing authorities over the city’s schools. In Detroit, there are at least 45.
- A new takeover district is on the ballot in Georgia this year. In Georgia, 50% of public school students statewide are African American and Latino, and 62% are considered economically disadvantaged. In the schools targeted for takeover should the proposal pass, 94% of students are African American or Latino, and 95% are economically disadvantaged.

“The way that (the ASD) was implemented, it gave the families a feeling that they were being punished or isolated from the rest of the school system because of the performance of the school.”

Chris Caldwell, Shelby County School Board

Read more: *Out of Control: The Systematic Disenfranchisement of African American and Latino Communities through School Takeovers.* Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools. August 2015. <http://bit.ly/taveover-report>

A Record of Academic Failure

- The designation of schools “eligible” for takeover is often arbitrary. Lawmakers have lowered the bar when they want more schools absorbed...and sometimes pick and choose schools despite their promised bright-line criteria.
- **Student results have not justified the takeovers.** In Louisiana where the Recovery School District (RSD) is the nation’s first all-charter district, 41% of the schools received a D or F grade under the state’s accountability system.
- In Tennessee, student results under the Achievement School District (ASD) lagged behind those of students in schools that were being supported by the local district.
- In 2015 the Shelby County (Tennessee) School Board (which oversees the Memphis schools) passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on any new ASD takeovers.
- In Michigan’s Educational Achievement Authority (EAA) 79% of students either showed no improvement, or lost ground on state assessments.
- In the ASD’s first year, over 30% of teachers in the state-run district had never taught before. After the first year, 46% of teachers left their jobs.
- In the EAA’s first two years, teacher turnover was at *least* 50%.

“I think everyone would like to find a way to gracefully put an end to the EAA.”

President of Michigan’s State Board of Education

Read more: *State Takeovers of Low-Performing Schools: A Record of Academic Failure, Financial Mismanagement & Student Harm.* Center for Popular Democracy. February 2016. <http://bit.ly/cpd-takeover>

There Is a Better Way!

Research and analysis of successful school reform efforts has pointed to several supports that are consistently associated with stronger student outcomes. These include:

1. **Access to high quality early childhood and pre-K programs.**
2. **Collaboration, and Stability in School Leadership.**
3. **Good teaching, by experienced educators**
4. **A learning environment centered on students, and positive and restorative discipline practices instead of zero tolerance, often used in charter schools.**
5. **A rigorous curriculum that is broad, engaging and culturally relevant.**
6. **Wraparound supports like health services, vision and dental care, after-school sports leagues and more, for both students and the broader community**
7. **Deep parent, community and school ties.**
8. **Investment in schools, not constant budget cut backs and efforts to educate students on the cheap**

Read more: *Investing in What Works: Community Driven Strategies for Strong Public Schools in Georgia.* Southern Education Foundation and Annenberg Institute for School Reform. December 2015. **And also:** *Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools.* Center for Popular Democracy. February 2016

The truth is, state takeover districts aren’t really about improving student learning. They’re about money, power and control. They are being promoted by national charter advocacy groups, and groups seeking to privatize public education.

**THE ALLIANCE
TO RECLAIM OUR SCHOOLS**

To learn more, visit us at
www.reclaimourschools.org