Incentivizing Improvement or Imposition?
An Examination of the Response to Gubernatorial School Takeover and Statewide Turnaround Districts

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Abstract: Although state-run school districts and gubernatorial school takeover have become popular turnaround strategies among some states, little is known about how district and school leaders perceive and respond to these changes in educational governance. Using Georgia as a case study, this paper employs sensemaking and exit, voice, and loyalty as frameworks to examine how district and school leaders interpret and respond to the threat of state takeover. Similar to prior studies, results indicate that urban schools and districts largely populated by low-income students and students of color are most likely to be affected by state takeover. Several themes emerge from district and school leaders' interpretation of state takeover policy, including: (a) principals and teachers are to blame, (b) too many changes, too little time to reflect, (c) lack of trust between school districts and the state, and (d) market-based reforms and the illusion of choice. Although a non-trivial number of teachers and principals have expressed their intent to leave for charter schools or leave the teaching profession in response to the threat of state takeover, voice was the more

common response, particularly among teachers in takeover-eligible schools who were more experienced and had students performing well on state tests. There are also noteworthy differences in the response of district and school leaders based on the eligibility for state takeover.
Keywords: school takeover; school improvement; school reform; statewide turnaround districts; state takeovers; educational governance; education policy

¿Incentivar la mejora o la imposición? Un examen de la respuesta a la adquisición estatal de las escuelas y distritos de *turnaround*
Resumen: Aunque los distritos escolares administrados por el estado y la adquisición estatal de las escuelas se han convertido en estrategias de cambio populares entre algunos estados, se sabe poco acerca de cómo los líderes distritales y escolares perciben y responden a estos cambios en la gobernanza educativa. Utilizando a Georgia como caso de estudio, este documento utiliza el *sense-making*, la voz y la lealtad como marcos para examinar cómo los líderes del distrito y la escuela interpretan y responden a la amenaza a la amenaza del poder del estado. Al igual que en estudios anteriores, los resultados indican que las escuelas urbanas y los distritos en gran parte poblados por estudiantes de bajos ingresos y estudiantes de color son más propensos a verse afectados por la toma del poder estatal. Varios temas surgen de la interpretación por los líderes escolares de la política de adquisición estatal, incluyendo: (a) los directores y maestros son los culpables, (b) demasiados cambios, muy poco tiempo para reflexionar, (c) falta de confianza entre los distritos escolares y el estado, y (d) las reformas basadas en el mercado y la ilusión de elección. Aunque una cantidad de maestros y directores han expresado su intención de irse a escuelas autónomas o abandonar la profesión docente en respuesta a la amenaza de la toma del poder estatal, la voz fue la respuesta más común, especialmente entre los docentes de las escuelas elegibles más experimentado y tuvo estudiantes que obtuvieron buenos resultados en exámenes estatales. También hay diferencias notables en la respuesta de los líderes del distrito y la escuela en función de la elegibilidad para la adquisición estatal.
Palabras clave: adquisición de la escuela; mejora escolar; reforma escolar; distritos de turnaround; adquisiciones estatales; gobernanza educativa; política educativa

Incentivar a melhoria ou imposição? Um exame da resposta à aquisição estatal de escolas e distritos de *turnaround*
Resumo: Embora os distritos escolares geridos pela aquisição estadual e estadual de escolas tenham se tornado estratégias populares de mudança entre alguns estados, pouco se sabe sobre como os líderes distritais e escolares percebem e respondem a essas mudanças na governança educacional. . Usando a Geórgia como um estudo de caso, este documento usa a *sense-making*, voz e lealdade como estruturas para examinar como líderes distritais e escolares interpretam e respondem à ameaça à ameaça do poder estatal. Como em estudos anteriores, os resultados indicam que escolas urbanas e distritos amplamente povoados por estudantes de baixa renda e estudantes de cor são mais propensos a serem afetados pela tomada do poder do estado. Várias questões surgem da interpretação dos líderes escolares da política de aquisições do estado, incluindo: (a) principais e professores são os culpados, (b) muitas mudanças, muito pouco tempo para refletir, (c) falta de confiança entre os distritos escolares e do estado, e (d) reformas baseadas no mercado ea ilusão de escolha. Embora vários professores e diretores tenham manifestado a intenção de frequentar escolas charter ou abandonar a profissão docente em resposta à ameaça de aquisição estatal, a voz foi a resposta mais comum, especialmente entre professores de escolas qualificadas.

experientes e tiveram alunos que pontuaram bem em testes de estado. Existem também diferenças notáveis na resposta dos líderes distritais e escolares com base na elegibilidade para a aquisição do estado.

Palavras-chave: aquisição da escola; melhoria escolar; reforma escolar; distritos de *turnaround*; aquisições estaduais; governança educacional; política educacional

Incentivizing Improvement or Imposition?
An Examination of the Response to Gubernatorial School Takeover and Statewide Turnaround Districts

State takeover of chronically low-performing schools is an increasingly prominent school improvement strategy in the United States (US). In the past decades, several major cities and states have employed school takeover, which occurs when the mayor or state strips local education agencies (LEAs) of their power and places struggling schools or districts under the authority of the mayor or state (Wong & Shen, 2003, 2007). More recently, the takeover of local district-run schools by a state-run district has become popular (Burns, 2010; Morel, 2018; Welsh, Williams, Little & Graham, 2017). States such as Louisiana, Michigan, and Tennessee have taken over persistently low-performing schools using state-run districts and other states such as North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Nevada are in the process of creating a statewide turnaround district or are in the preparatory stages of state takeover (Morel, 2018; Smith, 2012, 2013; Welsh, 2018; Welsh et al., 2017). State takeover is also relevant for educational equity implications. Race and power undertones permeate state takeover policy, given that urban districts and schools primarily attended by low-income and minority students are more likely to be taken over (Anderson & Dixson, 2016; Morel 2018; Oluwole & Green III, 2009; Welsh, 2018).

State takeover as a school improvement policy has acquired even greater importance with the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. Prior to ESSA, intervention strategies were largely mandated by the federal government through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT). Under ESSA, states have flexibility to leverage their resources and pursue effective ways to improve schools that fall in the bottom 5% of schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Given this greater latitude to choose their school improvement policy, it is conceivable that in the ESSA era more states will consider state takeover as a school improvement strategy. Hence, it is timely and important to better understand the effects, mechanisms, and implications of state takeover policy.

Research on school takeover by a state-run school district is lagging behind the pace at which the policy is being considered or implemented (Burns, 2010; Welsh et al., 2017). There is a robust literature on mayoral takeovers (Wong & Shen, 2003, 2007), but the recent wave of school takeover—characterized by the prominent role of governors and state-run turnaround districts—has not received much attention (Mason & Reckhow, 2016, 2017; Welsh, 2018 ; Welsh et al., 2017). The work of district and school leaders in relation to this emerging wave of school takeover has been largely overlooked. Thus, there is a need for informed thought on how school leaders might be influenced by impending state takeovers for several reasons. School leaders have been a major focus of ESSA, as the role of the principal continues to expand and there is a greater focus on students' academic outcomes in principal evaluations (Haller, Hunt, Pacha, & Fazekas, 2016; Pollitt & Leichty, 2017). Few studies focus on the voice of teachers as well as school and district leaders with regards to policymaking and implementation (Bangs & Frost, 2011; Ishimaru, 2012; Vilegas-Reimers &

Reimers, 1966). Illuminating the voices of school and districts leaders is important given the pivotal role that they play in the changes in students' experiences and outcomes resulting from education reform. In essence, there is a need for a richer understanding of the policy and practice implications of school takeover, especially how changes or the threat of changes in educational governance affect educational leadership.

Georgia provides an exemplary case to examine the threat of gubernatorial school takeover and its influence on school leadership. The identification of under-performing schools and school improvement interventions have garnered considerable attention in Georgia in the recent years. Following the example of the Recovery School District (RSD) and the Achievement School District (ASD), in 2015, the state legislature passed Senate Bill 133 that proposed to create the Opportunity School District (OSD), a state-run district that would takeover persistently under-performing schools. In November 2016, a constitutional amendment that empowers the state to takeover failing public schools and place them in the OSD failed to pass in the general election. The proposed OSD provides an intriguing case of the recent wave of gubernatorial school takeover through statewide turnaround districts given that there were three interrelated changes in educational governance in the proposed OSD: (a) statewide takeover districts, (b) gubernatorial control of public schools, and (c) market-based reforms. Despite a failed constitutional amendment, Georgia remains an insightful case to examine the ways in which school leaders respond to the threat of state takeover and build on prior studies that highlight the changes schools and districts attempt to make to avoid being labeled failing and subjugated to market-based reforms (Figlio & Rouse, 2006).

We use Georgia as a case study to examine how leaders in districts and schools interpret and respond to the threat of takeover by a state-run turnaround district. First, we provide a descriptive overview of the schools, districts, and neighborhoods most likely to be influenced by the recent wave of governor-led school takeover efforts. Next, we use semi-structured interviews with school and district leaders, teachers and state-level officials to gain a granular understanding of how school and district leaders perceive and respond to the threat of state takeover. This study provides a better sense of how educational leaders may perceive and respond to the threat of takeover, which in turn may shed light on how the implementation and sustainability of policies intended to improve educational achievement may be influenced by the school and district leaders. As such, our study provides a richer understanding of the context and implications of school takeover and the results offer insights into possible implementation (e.g., why some school improvement efforts are implemented with fidelity and others are not) and sustainability issues that may accompany state takeover policies. In particular, we address the following research questions:

a) Which schools, districts, and neighborhoods are likely to be most affected by gubernatorial school takeover and statewide turnaround districts?
b) How might district and school leaders make sense of and respond to the threat of takeover by a state-run district?

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. We first briefly review the extant literature on state school takeover policy and the response to state takeover. Next, we outline our theoretical framework and its appropriateness to this study. Following that, we describe the data and methods employed in this study before presenting findings. We conclude with a discussion of the practice, policy and scholarly implications of our findings.

State-run Turnaround Districts and the Response to the
Threat of School Takeover

Although school takeovers were initially largely due to fiscal mismanagement, in recent decades, academic performance has become the driving force behind recent waves of school takeover (Glazer & Egan, 2018; McDermott, 2007; Ziebarth, 2004). As federal legislation and educational stakeholders demand improvement in student achievement and accountability, mayors and states increasingly employed school takeover as a means of district and school reform (Kirst & Edelstein, 2006; Wong & Shen, 2003, 2007). In the past decade, there is an ongoing shift from mayoral takeover to gubernatorial takeover. In 2003, Louisiana created the statewide RSD, which has become the center of national attention and is widely viewed as the model for successful school reform (Smith, 2012; Steiner, 2005; Wong & Shen, 2007). As a result, several states have increasingly considered state takeover as a viable option to improve failing schools (Galey, 2015; Smith, 2012). Tennessee's ASD and Michigan's Education Achievement Authority (EEA) are examples of the state assuming control of the operations of low-performing schools that were modeled after the RSD (Smith, 2013). Numerous states are closely tracking the progress of those states that have implemented statewide takeover districts (Smith, 2012; Welsh 2018; Welsh et al., 2017).

State-run turnaround districts represent a novel approach in a long history of intervention by states to remedy the fiscal and academic woes of local districts and schools. It is the response to states' need to design a new governance structure to oversee and implement the takeover process (Steiner, 2005). There are various forms of takeover entities, including: governor appointment of an executive official or board to manage the district; state board of education takeover; mayoral appointment of an official and/or board to manage the district; or a hybrid of the forms and in some instances, allowing the elected local board to remain as an advisory board (Oluwole & Green III, 2009). Although takeover reform typically varies as each case involves a unique set of political and educational institutions, states often refrained from entirely dismantling local administration, such as the school board and the superintendent (Wong & Shen, 2003, 2007). However, this has changed in recent decades as states started dismantling local district administration. In recent times, when takeover occurs, the powers of local elected or appointed school boards are curtailed and sometimes a new state takeover district or superintendent assumes some or all of the powers and duties of the elected or appointed board (Burns, 2010; Welsh 2018). State takeover of schools are normally accompanied by market-based reforms, specifically the chartering of schools that are taken over (Welsh, 2018).

Governors play a central role in the recent wave of school takeovers through statewide turnaround districts. There are a few differences in the role of governors in the latest wave of school takeover versus educational governors in the past (Layton, 2016; Welsh, 2018; Welsh et al., 2017). These differences include: (a) the rationale for school takeover—the motivation for the recent wave of school takeover is rooted in the failure of local boards and persistent underperformance of schools that serve "underserved children" or "at risk youth" rather than economic productivity and job creation; (b) a largely Republican-led policy—the recent wave is spearheaded by mainly Republican governors, whereas earlier education governors crossed party lines; and (c) the nature of the educational governance changes and resultant structure also vary—in the most recent wave statewide turnaround districts typically housed in the Governor's Office or state boards are more prominent whereas in the earlier wave the chief state school officer and state boards of education played an important role. In sum, gubernatorial school takeover via state-run turnaround districts is a growing trend that is likely to increase with the implementation of ESSA, combined with a

Republican president and legislature at the federal level and a majority of Republican governors and legislature at the state level.

Response to the Threat of Takeover

School takeovers are generally involuntary and historically, takeovers have produced tensions between states, LEAs, and teachers' unions (Garda, 2011; Steiner, 2005). There is a growing backlash to state takeovers for various reasons (Burns, 2010; Garda, 2011; Welsh et al., 2017). For instance, opponents of state takeover in post-Katrina New Orleans argued that the state capitalized on a tragic storm to gain control of the schools and suggested that state takeovers were implemented to push the agenda of privatization of schools and to strip local constituents of their power (Garda, 2011). Some scholars argue that school takeover is a disempowerment strategy aimed at Black communities in the guise of a school improvement strategy (Morel, 2018), whereas others posit that this policy lever weakens democratic control of public schools, especially for the lowest performing schools (Burns, 2010).

Studies investigating responses to state takeover have found reactions to the policy can be organized into two categories: (a) community-led opposition that challenges the social legitimacy of state takeover (Henig et al., 2001; Morel, 2018; Orr, 1999; Russakoff, 2015), and (b) politicians, unions, and other interest groups that challenge the legal standing of state takeover (Burns, 2003; Morel, 2018). In general, lawsuits to deter state takeover have been unsuccessful whereas community driven opposition that challenges the social legitimacy of state takeover on the grounds that it disproportionately targets and detrimentally harms minority communities appears to be more effective (Burns, 2003; Glazer & Egan, 2018; Henig et al., 2001; Morel, 2018; Orr, 1999; Russakoff, 2015; Welsh et al., 2017). One response to state takeover is the filling of lawsuits where plaintiffs (those who oppose state takeover) argue that the policy in unconstitutional. For instance, in post-Katrina New Orleans, the teachers' union responded to state takeovers with unsuccessful lawsuits (Garda, 2011). Some scholars posit that responses to state takeover have largely been driven by community members who seek to limit school takeover (Henig et al., 2001; Morel, 2018). For instance, opposition to Bloomberg's plans to expand his mayoral influence over education in New York led to the creation of organized community groups that advocated for increased transparency, local control of schools, and limits to the mayor's and chancellor's authority over education related issues (Henig et al., 2001). Similarly, the EEA in Michigan faced community-driven "sustained political opposition" that led to shifting mandates, leadership churn, multiple pieces of legislation and eventually to its disbanding (Glazer & Egan, 2018; Mason & Arsen, 2014).

Even though there is a growing literature on state turnaround districts, especially how the changes in educational governance may influence the politics of education and student outcomes (Bulkley & Henig, 2015; DeBray, Scott, Lubienski, & Jabbar, 2014; Reckhow, Henig, Jacobsen, & Alter, 2016; Schueler, Goodman, & Deming, 2017; Welsh, 2018; Welsh et al., 2017; Welsh & Hall, 2018), less attention has been paid to how state takeovers may affect district and school leaders. Although the phenomenon of school and district takeover has been present since the early 1990s, there is a general lack of systematic study on the changing relationship between state, district, and school officials (Wong & Shen, 2003). In particular, there is little research on how leaders in districts and schools interpret and respond to the threat of state takeover (Rogers, 2012). The response of educators to school takeovers, and the threat of takeover may be an important determinant of the efficacy of this policy. Implementing state takeover policies has been fraught with challenges, ranging from states' capacity to run schools to poor school and district conditions that make effective implementation elusive (Mason & Reckhow, 2016, 2017).

This study provides some answers to the burgeoning questions surrounding how the recent wave of gubernatorial school takeover through statewide turnaround districts might shape educators' roles, expectations, and practices. The resulting insights contribute to a better understanding of how educators interpret and respond to gubernatorial school takeover and statewide turnaround districts. Such an understanding opens a window into how education policy and school reforms may affect the roles of key stakeholders and the learning environments of students. We also build on prior work that elucidates the processes used by school and district leaders to make sense of policy changes and how such a process shapes their responses to them. This study adds to the school improvement literature by shedding light on how state takeover may change the relationship between state, district and school officials, which in turn, may influence the implementation and sustainability of these improvement efforts. Policymakers considering state-run takeover districts will also find the results useful in order to gain a richer understanding of how district and school leaders may interpret and respond to state takeover.

Theoretical Frameworks: Sensemaking and Exit, Voice and Loyalty

We use two theoretical frameworks to guide our analysis: (a) sensemaking theory to analyze the interpretation and perception of state takeovers among district and school leaders, and (b) exit, voice, and loyalty to analyze the response to state takeover. Both of these theories have roots in the field of organizational studies and have been applied to education contexts. The political nature of school takeover in Georgia makes these theories fitting to examine how individuals who lead organizations, such as districts and schools, respond to seismic organizational, institutional and political changes (or the threat of these changes) and to better understand how district and school leaders not only interpret the policy, but also how they might choose to respond to it.

Both sensemaking theory and exit, voice, and loyalty frameworks have explanatory power to show how actors respond to unsuspecting changes that are likely to disrupt their work environments. The combination of the two theoretical frameworks allows for the identification and analysis of individual sensemaking of educational policy within the greater landscape of organizational change that generally accompanies school reforms. The theories are important to use together because they each address gaps in one another, and cumulatively shed light on the full process of interpretation through actions. Exit, voice, and loyalty is a good extension of sensemaking as it focuses on micro-level, individual responses to change. In this framework, the actions actors choose to make are much more visible and applied, rather than abstract, as can be the case in some sensemaking studies. Sensemaking is useful in explaining the why behind what actors choose to do. The theory shows how one's perception of a change informs his or her responses to it, particularly whether or not they will exit the situation, seek to change it, or accept it. The frameworks also link perceptions to possible actions that may affect not only individual teachers and educators but larger organizations such as schools, districts, and communities. As such, these two frameworks are well situated to examine district and school leaders' responses to state takeover because the theories, both individually and collectively, shed light on the process of interpretation and decision-making among school and district leaders as they navigate the threat of state takeover.

Sensemaking: What's the Story of State Takeover

Sensemaking is an issue of language, talk, and communication. It is a process of interpreting circumstances and information, which then leads to further calls for action (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Within the sensemaking framework, 'sense' corresponds to meaning (or to interpretation) and 'making' to the how events are processed to generate such interpretation (Coburn, 2001; Evans,

2007; Honig & Coburn, 2008; Jensen, Kjærgaard, & Svejvig, 2009; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). The theory explicates the relationship between interpretation and action by paying particular attention to the cognitive and social mechanisms for dealing with unsuspecting events and change (Jensen et al., 2009). Individuals must make sense of new messages and information in order to determine the range of appropriate responses for them and this is most often done as they place the motivations spawning changes and new information into their cognitive frameworks (Porac et al., 1989; Vaughan, 1996; Weick, 1995). Although sensemaking is an ongoing process, the need to make sense is heightened when actors are faced with change, particularly when they are surprised by it, when they have not thought about or rehearsed how they would respond, and when they experience a high degree of ambiguity (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Often times, the meaning of information or motivations behind impending environmental changes are not given, which leaves individuals and groups to actively construct their own understandings and interpretations. In this way, sensemaking is not solely an individual affair, but is social because it stems from interaction and negotiation, as people seek to make sense of messages in their environment through interactions with their colleagues (Porac et al., 1989; Vaughan, 1996), constructing what Coburn (2002) calls "shared understandings" (p. 147). Sensemaking is an ongoing process that is (a) derived from multiple streams of information, and (b) socially constructed by peers (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking is also social because it is inextricably linked to customs and routines of organizations' values and traditions (Lin, 2000; Porac et al., 1989) and overall culture (Barley, 1986; Spillane, 1998; Vaughan, 1996). Individuals in an environment construct meaning and interpretations of messages and information, via their experiences, collaboratively and individually (Jennings, 1996; Spillane, 1999; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Sensemaking theorists posit that action is precipitated by how people acknowledge or select information from their environment, derive meaning from it, and then act on those interpretation (Coburn, 2001).

Sensemaking theory is useful when investigating how and why actors or change agents appropriate, act, and make sense of institutional changes (Jensen & Aanestad, 2007). It places microscopic attention on micro-level actions by individuals, but such actions are not assumed to be solely attributive to individual agencies, but also to institutional constraints, organizational premises, values, and beliefs, and to traditions and norms (Jensen, Kjærgaard, & Svejvig, 2009; Weber & Glynn, 2006). Although several theories such as Institutional Theory seek to better understand how new policies and practices are interpreted and responded to by actors, these theories have largely focused on organizational settings and have failed to explicitly address the question of how changes are internalized and manifested through human actions (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2009). Fligstein (2001) argued that other theories that examine human behavior in response to institutional changes regard organizations' actors as being passive recipients who simply accept and rely on readily available instructions from government, professionals, or other institutional carriers to structure and determine their actions. Other scholars criticize such theories for lacking explanatory power of what forces drive actors' behavior and what interests motivate them to behave in the manner they do (DiMaggio, 1988). Sensemaking theory fills this gap by focusing on both the interpretation and how it drives individuals' behavior.

Sensemaking has been employed in the education research literature to analyze how actors understand policies and respond to them as well as the policy implementation implications (Honig & Coburn, 2008; Spillane et al., 2002). Prior studies have used sensemaking theory to investigate how teachers construct meaning from reading policy (Coburn, 2001), evidence use in central district offices (Honig & Coburn, 2008), and how sensemaking is a key element of effective policy implementation with regard to recent educational accountability reforms (Spillane et al., 2002). Sensemaking theory has also been applied to school discipline disproportionality to better

understand how teachers make sense of data related to school discipline (Irby, 2018). Whether trying to make sense of data use or evidence (Honig & Coburn, 2008), or of impending changes to their workplace (Jensen et al., 2009), practitioners rely on their past experiences, their own working knowledge, and the information immediately available to them to determine their response (Marsh et al., 2005; Spillane et al., 2002).

We extend this literature by using sensemaking theory to examine how district and school leaders make sense of gubernatorial school takeover through statewide turnaround districts in Georgia. Specifically, how district and school leaders have adapted to, incorporated within their practices, or have disregarded the threat of state takeover of their schools, and how these ranges of actions influence their practices. The sense-making approach allows district and school leaders to understand the new policy and reform and suggests that the identities and positions of district and school leaders will influence their understanding of the law (Choo, 2001; Coburn, 2001; Datnow & Park, 2009). State takeover likely triggers a range of cognitions, emotions, and reactions, as school-level personnel worry about their job status, how their environment might be impacted, and the ramifications of being labeled a "failing school." This worrying leads to what Weick referred to as a 'shock' and it triggers an intensified period of sensemaking (Anderson, 2006), which then informs actors of how best they should respond to sustain self and social continuity.

Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responding to the Threat of State Takeover

Following Hirschman's (1970) work on the decline of firms, organizations, and state, we use the exit, voice, and loyalty framework to examine district and school leaders' responses to the test-based and market-based accountability policies that characterize the most recent wave of school takeover. Employees who perceive deterioration in their work environment or insecurity in their job status can respond in one of three ways: exit (leave the occupation), voice (an attempt to change the workplace environment, sometimes by acting through a third party such as a union or by voicing concerns to those with capacity to make change), or loyalty (where actors deal with and accept conditions as they are; Hirschman, 1970; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988). Hirschman (1970) posited that not all organizations are equally sensitive to exit, voice, and loyalty. For instance, Hirschman (1970) contends that in order for exit to have substantive impact, the effect of those exiting must threaten the existence of the organization they leave. Additionally, organizations that are sensitive to voice may only minimally react when unhappy individuals choose exit and may be relieved that those voicing concerns about declining quality decide to exit (Hirschman, 1970). Organizations may perceive exiting workers as troublemakers and conclude that a more peaceful work environment will result from their decision to exit (Matland, 1995).

The exit, voice, and loyalty framework is often used in studies examining employees' responses to change in their work environments (Bernston, Naswall, & Sverke, 2010; Davis-Blake, Broschak & George, 2003). Downsizing and organizational restructuring often leave employees worrying about their job status and can cause feelings of uneasiness (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Prior evidence suggests that workers are responsive to changes that threaten their job status, often electing to rally against them or leave their occupations for jobs they perceive as safer (Bernston et al., 2010; Davis-Blake et al., 2003; Jensen et al., 2009). For example, Davis-Blake et al. (2003) evaluated the ways in which the use of non-standard employees affects the responses of standard employees and found that the use of non-standard workers worsened relationships and interactions between managers and employees, was inversely related to employees' loyalty, and increased their interest both in exiting their occupations and in exercising voice through unionization. Bernston et al. (2010) examined the extent to which job insecurity shared a positive relationship with exit and an inverse relationship with voice and loyalty. They found that individuals

who feel insecure at their occupation are more likely to leave, are less likely to voice their concerns about changes or the things with which they are unsatisfied, and are less likely to be loyal to their employers.

Few studies have applied the exit, voice, and loyalty framework to K-12 education (Labaree, 2000; Matland, 1995). Matland (1995) used exit, voice, and loyalty to the manner in which parents' choose to exit urban, public schools with which they are unhappy. He analogizes urban schools and educational quality with declining firms with regard to education quality to investigate. Unlike the case of for-profit manufacturers where having a substantial number of consumers switch to a competitor is enough to cause a large drop in revenue and mass exit is likely to produce changes, Matland (1995) argued that public schools might be less susceptible to exit. Larabee (2000) extended the exit, voice, and loyalty framework to education by examining the ways in which market-oriented, choice-based reforms have given parents the ability to exit the public education sector due to discontentment with its quality. Labaree (2000) concluded that public education is most sensitive to "voice," but is most affected by exit. Exercising voice when dissatisfied with the quality or direction of public education may be more effective than exiting the system if the goal is to catalyze systemic change. This is due to the political nature of public education, which involves voting, school boards, and a host of channels for dissatisfied educational stakeholders to voice their concerns (Larabee, 2000). Labaree (2000) noted that because it takes time to vote out elected officials in public education when dissatisfied with their performance, parents with social and financial capital, who are among the most likely to be heard, elect to simply exit the schools they are dissatisfied with and this often leaves schools clustered with students from families with lower social and financial capital and less ability to have their voices heard.

Although public education provides a relatively stable work environment, school takeover threatens the job status of school leaders by (a) outsourcing their roles and responsibilities, (b) severely limiting the scope of their influence, or (c) firing them for an appointed district CEO (Burns & Thomas, 2012). An increase in state takeover is likely to result in more clashes and a tense relationship between the state- and local- level educational stakeholders. Our hypotheses of school and district leaders' response to state takeover is informed by: a) the response to market-based reforms (competition) and b) workers' response to organizational restructuring. Similar to how schools are theorized to respond to competition catalyzed by market-based reforms such as school choice (Belfield & Levin, 2002; Hoxby, 2000; Lubienski, 2005), the threat of takeover will pressure district and school leaders to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations with the primary goal of boosting student achievement. It is also reasonable that there will be a heightened focus on instructional frameworks or strategies. Prior research has illustrated that school leaders emphasize the importance of developing people, setting directions, redesigning organization structures, increasing community involvement, and managing the instructional programs of the school while being cognizant of the importance of contextual factors when attempting to implement change in high needs schools (Klar & Brewer, 2013). Several tensions will likely have to be navigated by individuals and organizations and the response to competition catalyzed by the threat of state takeover is not always as intended by policymakers (Jabbar, 2015).

We also posit that district and school leaders may respond to state takeovers similarly to how workers respond to organizational outsourcing and downsizing (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sundin & Wikman, 2004). Similar to employees faced with downsizing and outsourcing, school and district leaders facing the threat of takeover may also wrestle with the exit, voice, or loyalty conundrum. Questions about their job status will leave them searching for new employment opportunities, being less loyal, which will likely lead them to feeling less compelled to follow rules (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke, Hellgren, & Naswall, 2002). Teachers who are secure, however, are

more likely to voice their frustration, as they recognize they are less likely to be fired (Bernston et al., 2010). District and school leaders may exit the current system by leaving a school or district eligible for takeover in favor of schools and districts with higher educational quality or leaving the profession all together. They may voice opposition to state takeover and through changes in their practices. District and school leaders may also show loyalty to the system by pursuing unethical means of increasing achievement due to added pressure and adopt practices that teach towards the performance measure. In an effort to test our assumptions of district and school leaders' responses to OSD, we interviewed several leaders to gain a deeper understanding of their interpretation and intended actions. Data from school leaders' interviews will be analyzed to "hear" how leaders articulate their understanding of SB 133 and how they plan to "act" in response to the legislation.

Data and Methods

This study uses a complimentary mixed methods design to answer two interrelated research questions. The complimentary mixed methods design involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, which affords researchers the opportunity to investigate underlying phenomenon through both lenses (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). As noted by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 17), "its logic of inquiry includes the use of induction (or discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypotheses), and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding one's results)." Mixed-methods designs are empirical and intuitive in nature and increasingly used by researchers because it provides the opportunity to receive the rich data yielded from personal experience as well as the empirical data gathered for robust statistical procedures (Bryman, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In our study, the patterns uncovered in the quantitative analysis help inform the collection and interpretation of qualitative data. For instance, we extend prior research by including additional indicators of layers of inequality that may influence which schools are taken over such as neighborhood characteristics and pay particular attention to the role of race, class, and neighborhood characteristics in interviews based on the patterns of schools and districts that are most affected by state takeover. The mixed methods design facilitates probing the notion that certain schools and districts are more susceptible to being taken over as well as examining how school and district leaders in those places are likely to respond to the threat of takeover. In the first research question, we gather data that sheds light on the types of schools, neighborhoods, and districts that are most likely to be affected by gubernatorial takeover. The second research question relies on the unique experiences of educational leaders, which will help researchers to better understand how leaders make sense of and respond to the threat of state-run school takeover.

In order to address the first research question, we use a four-year panel of publicly available school- and district-level data from the 2011-12 through the 2014-15 school year. The data come from multiple sources including: the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES), and the Stanford Education Data Archives (SEDA). The data are merged across sources and years using unique school and district identifiers. School-level data include: College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) scores and the scoring components (In Georgia, school performance is measured using the CCRPI and each school and LEA are provided with a letter grade (A-F) based on the CCRPI score), eligibility for takeover by the OSD (Schools with a CCRPI score below 60 for at least three consecutive years are eligible for state takeover), and enrollment and demographic characteristics. Data from the GOSA and NCES provide information on districts' demographic and achievement characteristics. The GOSA and NCES also provide data on expenditure at the district-

level, which serves as a proxy for resources. SEDA provides information on district-level racial/ethnic achievement gaps (White-Black and White-Hispanic), average achievement and demographic and socioeconomic data (Reardon et al., 2016). The GOSA also provides districts' fiscal data including total revenues (number of dollars received from local, state and federal sources) and expenditures and revenue and expenditures per full time equivalent student (FTE), a method of accounting for students for funding purposes. The GOSA also provides the amount spent on the salaries and benefits for teachers and paraprofessionals, administrative staff in schools and district administration staff. Indicators on neighborhood attributes are obtained from the SEDA and provide extensive information on contextual factors that may influence school performance along four dimensions: social, economic, housing and demographic. We use two sided t-test for differences in means across school-, district-, and neighborhood-level characteristics.

In order to address the second research question, this study draws from semi-structured interviews with educational leaders at the state-, district-, and school-level who have agency over the interpretation and response to the threat of takeover. Prior studies using sensemaking theory and exit, voice, and loyalty have relied on interviewing to gather data on emergent themes and patterns with regard to the process of making sense of unsuspecting change and how individuals and organizations respond to it (Coburn, 2001; Evans, 2007; Honig & Coburn, 2008; Jensen, Kjærgaard, & Svejvig, 2009; Spillane et al., 2002). Coburn (2001) argues that in-depth interviewing (Spradley, 1979) supplemented with document analysis is a useful way to analyze how organizational processes unfold (Yin, 1984). Interviewing allows researchers to probe deeply into the process by which actors come to understand change (sensemaking) and what they intend to do with that understanding (exit, voice, or loyalty). Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate way to gauge leaders' responses to state takeover – a forum for them to share not only their decision on how to respond to SB 133, but also how they came to make those choices.

We employed purposeful sampling and carefully selected a group of individuals who represented the various subgroups of educational leaders who interpreted and responded to state takeover policy. As Patton (2002) notes, "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance" (p. 230). Thus, special attention was paid to ensure that each of the various subsectors of educational leaders were affected by the threat of takeover. Interviews were conducted via telephone, and each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. We acknowledge that conducting interviews via telephone limits the researchers' ability to observe the context in which the leaders work and engage; however, we acknowledge that time constraints was a major factor for our interviewees, thus we elected to conduct interviews over the telephone. In an effort to conduct a quality interview, we attended to the following as suggested by Kvale (1996) and Roulston (2010a, 2000b): (a) the extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee; (b) the shorter the interviewer's questions and the longer the subjects' answers, the better; (c) the degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers; (d) the ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout the interview; (e) the interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subjects' answers in the course of the interview; and (f) the interview is 'self-communicating'—it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra descriptions and explanations (Kvale, 1996, p. 145). Attending to the aforementioned tenets of qualitative interviewing helped us to gain confidence in the quality of the data collected from our participants.

We interviewed a total of 31 educational leaders. We interviewed participants who serve at the various levels of educational governance including the state-, district- and school-level. Six of our interviewees worked for the district offices of their respective districts, 18 of them served as

teachers, six were principals, and one worked in education policy at the state-level. Of the leaders interviewed, there was a mix between those who worked in schools and districts that were on the eligibility list for school takeover and those who worked in schools and districts were not on the list for school takeover. Specifically, 54% of our sample served in schools that were eligible for state takeover. Additional information on our sample can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Participant Sample

Name	District	Position	Gender	Size	% SES	OSD Eligible
Interviewer 1	State	Governor	Male	NA	N/A	N/A
Interviewer 2	Harper	District	Male	92.046	59	N/A
Interviewer 3	Erroll	District	Female	113,310	72	N/A
Interviewer 4	Graham	District	Male	103,274	47	N/A
Interviewer 5	Baxter	District	Female	58,563	77	N/A
Interviewer 6	Neptune	Teacher	Female	5,027	62	No
Interviewer 7	Baxter	District	Male	58,563	77	No
Interviewer 8	Harper	Principal	Male	1,305	77	No
Interviewer 9	Barley	Principal	Female	519	92	No
Interviewer 10	Neptune	Principal	Male	400	55	No
Interviewer 11	Harper	Teacher	Female	1,405	42	No
Interviewer 12	Baker	Teacher	Female	N/A	N/A	N/A
Interviewer 13	Copper	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 14	Metal	Tacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 15	Gold	Teacher	Male	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 16	Nitrogen	Teacher	Male	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 17	Apple	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 18	Nitrogen	Teacher	Female	N/A	N/A	N/A
Interviewer 19	Gold	Teacher	Male	519	92	Yes
Interviewer 20	Silver	Teacher	Female	1,405	42	Yes
Interviewer 21	Baker	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 22	Orange	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 23	Buffer	Teacher	Femail	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 24	Basket	Teacher	Female	519	92	Yes
Interviewer 25	Gold	Teacher	Female	400	55	Yes
Interviewer 26	Pipe	Principal	Male	178,000	47	No
Interviewer 27	Plane	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 28	Ball	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 29	Cake	Principal	Male	400	55	No
Interviewer 30	Bell	Principal	Female	519	92	No
Interviewer 31	Coke	District	Female	98,000	59	No

Making sense of the data required us to revisit the design, research questions, and interview protocol as we analyzed data (Kvale, 1996). We relied heavily on how we asked questions, how participants understood our questions, and how they ultimately responded to the questions we

asked. The interview protocol was designed to center around how leaders' perceptions and practices were shaped by test-based accountability and the threat of state takeover. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using emerged themes and patterns as a main focus of analysis. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously throughout the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and we used coding to identify emerging themes and highlight areas for additional data collection. We developed codes inductively by allowing participants' responses to codify themes and patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, we sought to analyze how district and school leaders constructed meaning from state takeover policy. After establishing clear patterns on interpretations related to state takeover, we moved to better understand how such sensemaking influenced responses to state takeover. Exit, voice, and loyalty helped to guide our understanding about how school and district leaders act in response to threat of state takeover. We focus intently on a sub-set of data that emerged from interviews with leaders working in schools and districts that are classified as underperforming because these leaders are likely to be most affected by the threat of state takeover.

Results

A total of 127 "failing" schools in 22 districts were identified by the GOSA in May 2016, and were eligible to be placed in the proposed OSD. In January 2017 (after the constitutional amendment to create the OSD was defeated in November 2016), GOSA released a list of 153 chronically failing schools in 35 districts (up 26 schools from the previous year). Based on the May 2016 list, roughly 6% of schools in Georgia (in 12% of districts) were eligible to be placed under the jurisdiction of the OSD. DeKalb County had the most eligible schools (28), followed by Atlanta Public Schools (22), Richmond County (19), Fulton County (10) and Muscogee County (8). The majority of schools eligible for state takeover were elementary schools (70%) followed by middle schools (21%) and high schools (9%). Schools eligible for state takeover were largely located in large suburbs and cities (small, mid-size and large). Fifty-six percent of schools eligible for state takeover were located in cities (relative to 16% for ineligible schools), 33% were located in suburbs (relative to 37%) and 11% in rural/town areas (relative to 47%).

Figure 1 shows the differences in student demographics between schools eligible for state takeover and ineligible schools. The results indicate that schools eligible for state takeover, on average, have a significant concentration of African American and low-income students. Nearly half of the student population of schools eligible for state takeover was African American males (46% compared to 19% in ineligible schools). Almost all of the schools eligible for state takeover are Title I schools, whereas roughly two-thirds of ineligible schools were Title I schools. Schools eligible for state takeover were smaller schools (average enrollment of 569 vs. 762). Roughly the same percentage of charter schools were eligible for state takeover as are ineligible (6.23% vs. 5.89%). On average, schools eligible for state takeover have fewer full-time teachers (37 vs. 48) but a slightly lower student-teacher ratio (16:1 vs. 17:1). There are statistically significant differences across all school-level characteristics except charter schools and teacher-student ratio.
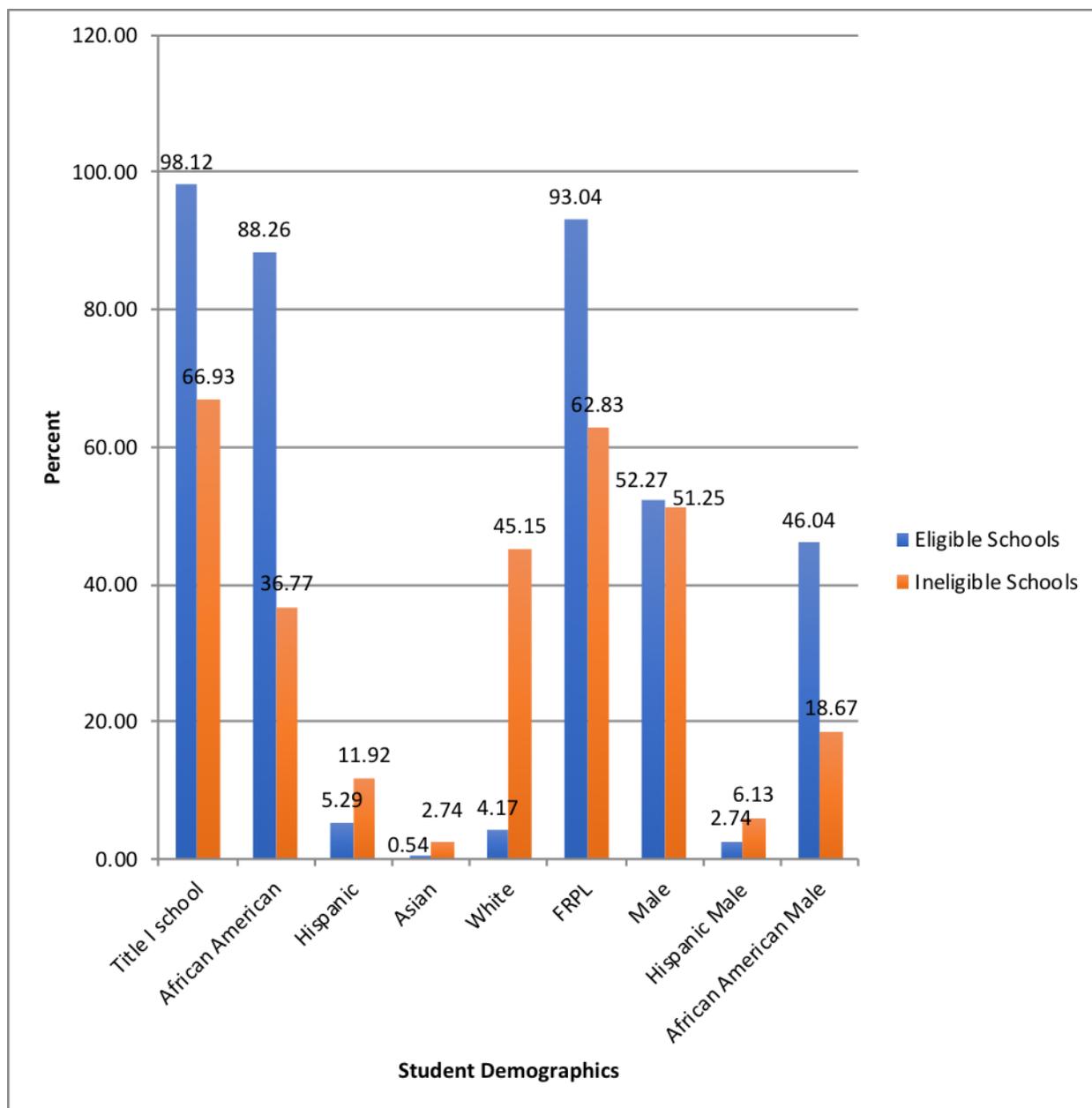
Figure 1. Comparing School Characteristics in Eligible vs. Ineligible Schools

Next, we compare the student demographics of the overall district and charter school enrollment in eligible and ineligible districts. The results indicate that the majority of districts with schools eligible for state takeover are urban districts (67%). Only 16% of ineligible districts are urban districts. Eligible districts are larger districts with a higher number of students enrolled (48,734 vs. 38,113) and a greater number of schools (80 vs. 47). Districts with eligible schools have a greater number of charter schools (8 vs. 3) and a higher proportion of students enrolled in these schools (7% vs. 4%). White and Hispanic students have the highest enrollment in charter schools in eligible districts. Eligible districts have a greater proportion of low-income (76% vs. 63%) and non-White (82% vs. 55%) students. On average, the district CCRPI for districts with schools eligible for state takeover is about 10 points less than districts without schools on the eligibility list (64 vs. 74). This difference is consistent across elementary, middle and high schools (slightly lower than high

schools). The graduation rate in districts with eligible schools is lower than districts with ineligible schools and this is consistent across racial/ethnic and income subgroups. The achievement gap in math and ELA between minority and White students is higher in districts with eligible schools.

Figure 2 shows the variation in student mobility, student discipline and segregation between eligible and ineligible districts. There are a higher number of discipline incidents in eligible districts. The student mobility rate is also higher in districts with schools eligible for takeover indicating an increased level of sorting between schools. The percentage of students missing five days or fewer is also higher in eligible districts. In eligible districts, the percentage of free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) recipients in an average student's school is higher, especially for African American and Hispanic students. The results indicate that eligible districts are more segregated: the information index between schools is higher in these districts: Black-White (0.39 vs. 0.17), Hispanic-White (0.23 vs. 0.13), and FRPL-Non-FRPL (0.22 vs. 0.11)
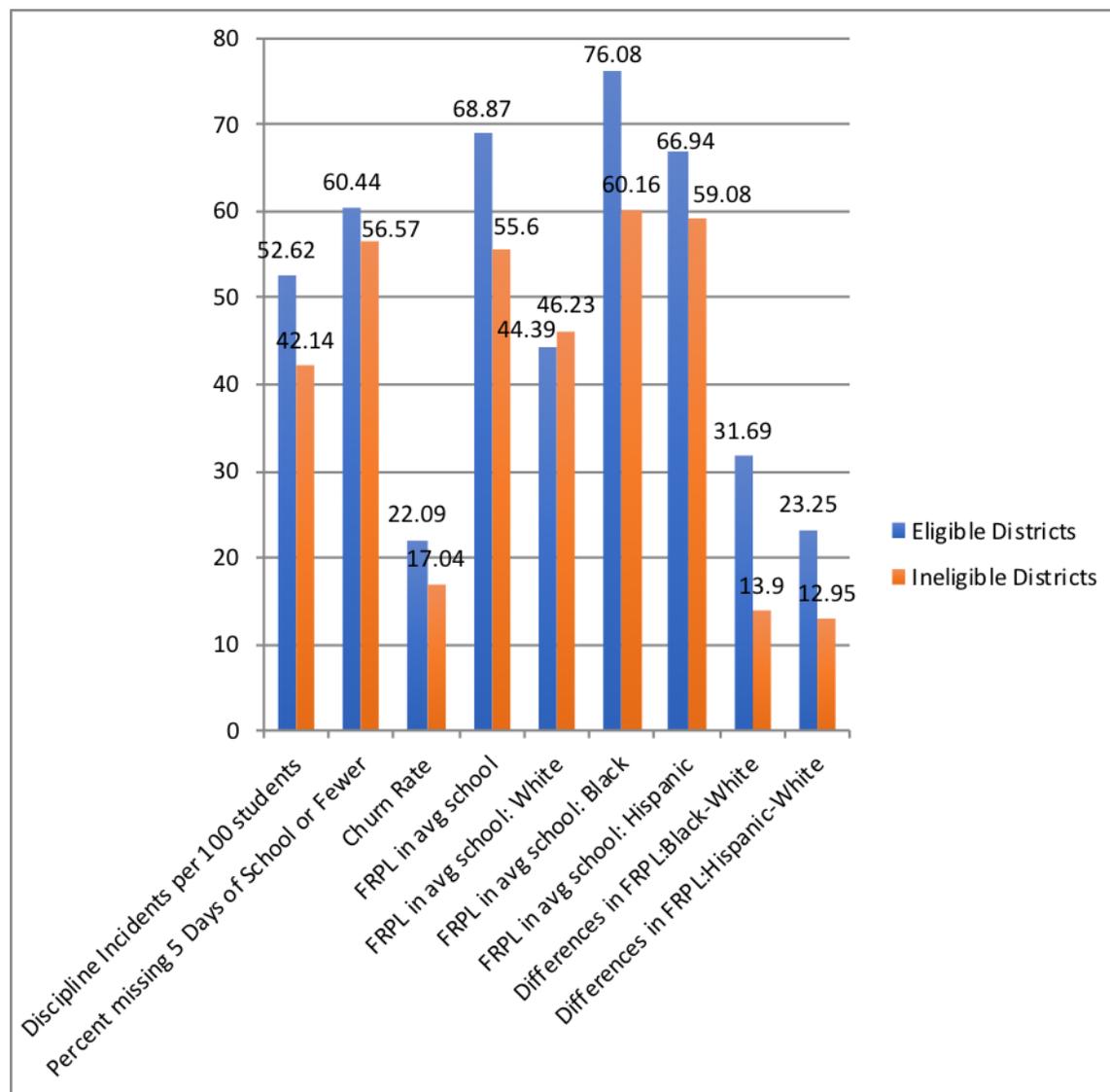
Figure 2. Student Discipline, Student Mobility, and Segregation in Eligible vs. Ineligible Districts

The difference in resources is an important yet contentious issue in the school improvement debate. In Georgia, the average district spends $9,288 per student, more than $2,000 less than the national average. There is substantial variation in what districts in Georgia spends per student ranging from $15,571 per student in Taliaferro County to $6,964 in Bryan County. We compare expenditure and revenue per FTE between eligible and ineligible districts as well as the percentage of revenue and expenditure (separately) that is spent on general administration, school administration, and teachers and paraprofessionals. On average, districts with schools eligible for state takeover spend more per FTE overall and across a range of expenditures including: general administration per FTE, school administration per FTE, instruction per FTE, instructional support per FTE, maintenance and operations per FTE, pupil service per FTE, and transportation per FTE. Districts with schools eligible for state takeover have more revenue but differ in the amount from federal, local and state sources. Eligible districts receive more from federal sources ($50 vs. $32) and local ($4634 vs. $3514) sources but less from state sources – QBE ($4072 vs. $4357) and other ($34 vs. $102). The percentage of general and school administration of K-12 expenditure and revenue was slightly higher in districts with eligible schools.

Districts with eligible schools spend roughly 5% less on teachers and paraprofessionals (both as a percentage of expenditure and revenue). This may hint at salary differences between the districts. Ineligible districts have less teachers but spend more on instruction as a proportion of their revenues and expenditures whereas eligible districts have more teachers but spend less on instruction. One possible interpretation is that teachers in ineligible districts are better paid than those in ineligible districts. The results may also speak to differences in challenges which dictate the allocation of resources. For instance, eligible districts have higher numbers of disciplinary incidents and a larger proportion of hard to educate students, thus in these districts funds may be allocated to school resource officers or psychological resources rather than instruction. There are statistically significant differences across all district-level characteristics except progress points of high school, FRPL in average White student's school, student-teacher ratio of White students, student-teacher ratio of Hispanic students, differences in student teacher ratio, and expenditure on transportation per FTE.

Finally, we examine differences in neighborhood characteristics. The results illustrate differences in education at the neighborhood-level and gaps in parent education. Districts with eligible schools have a higher proportion of its adult population with a bachelors or higher, mainly due to differences among Whites. Whites in districts with eligible schools are more educated than Whites in districts with ineligible schools. The gaps in parent education between White and minorities are greater in districts with eligible schools. The White-Hispanic gap in parent education is larger than the White-Black gap across all districts (whether eligible or not).

Figure 3 illustrates differences between eligible and ineligible districts across a range of indicators of poverty and unemployment. Districts with eligible schools have higher levels of poverty—a higher proportion of children in poverty (roughly a third) and households with 5-17 years olds in poverty (driven largely by differences in poverty of Blacks, and to a lesser extent, Hispanics). Unemployment is slightly higher in districts with eligible schools with the largest difference among Blacks. The proportion of households receiving SNAP benefits is also higher in districts with eligible schools due in large part to differences among Blacks.
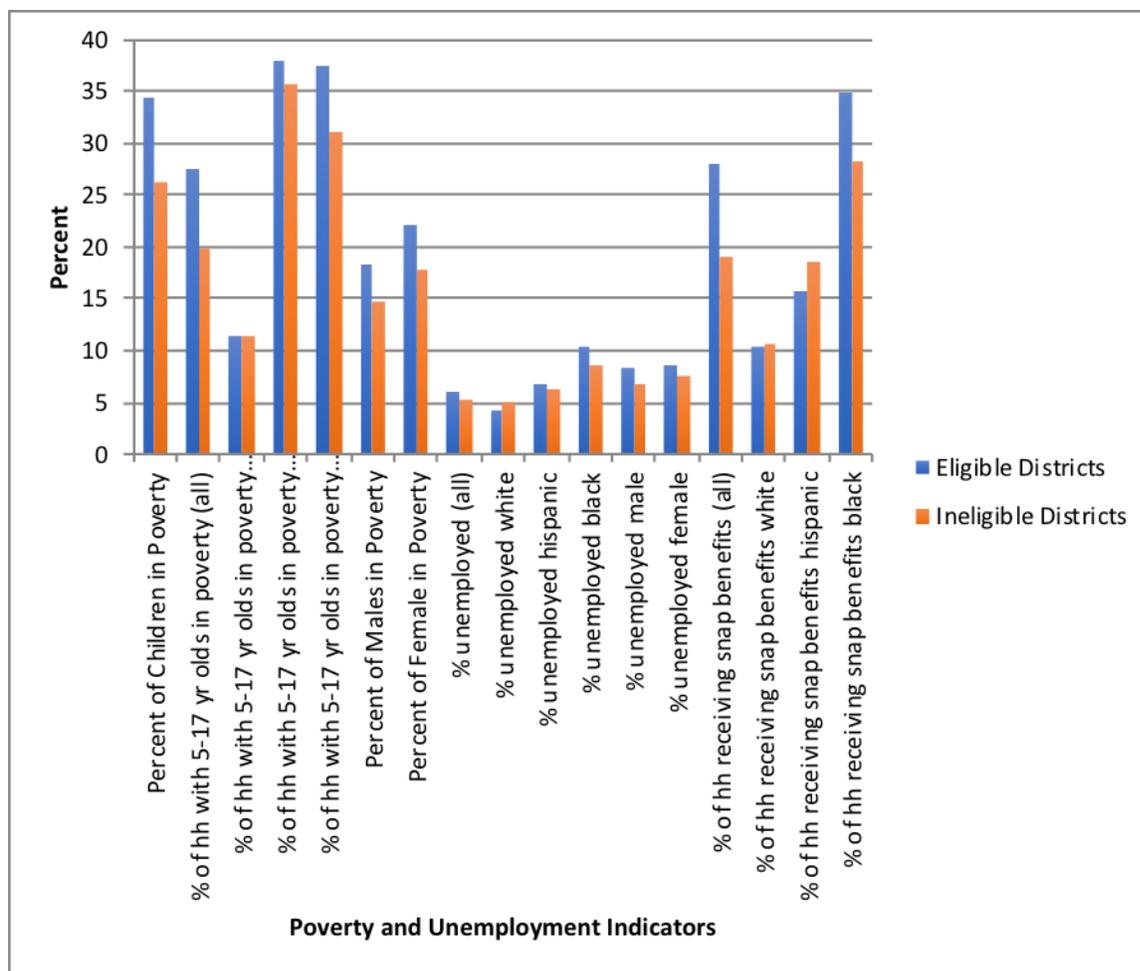
Figure 3. Comparing Poverty and Unemployment in Eligible vs. Ineligible Districts

Figure 4 shows income differences between the districts across race/ethnicity. Average income is lower in districts with eligible schools. Minorities earn less than Whites across districts (eligible or not). The income difference is higher in districts with eligible schools. On average, Whites in eligible districts earn more than Whites in ineligible districts, whereas the opposite is true for Blacks and Hispanics. Districts with eligible schools also have a lower proportion of the working age population in professional occupations. We also compare the family structure and residential mobility. In districts with eligible schools nearly half of the households with children have a female head (driven largely by Black females). Homeownership and residential stability (especially among Hispanics) is lower in districts with eligible schools. There are statistically significant differences across all neighborhood-level characteristics except the percentages of Black adults with bachelors or higher, of poverty White, of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits White, of living in same house White, of professional occupation for Black and Hispanic, of females in health practitioners and technical occupation, and of standardized composite of Hispanic. In the next section, we discuss how district and school leaders interpret and respond to the threat of takeover in Georgia.
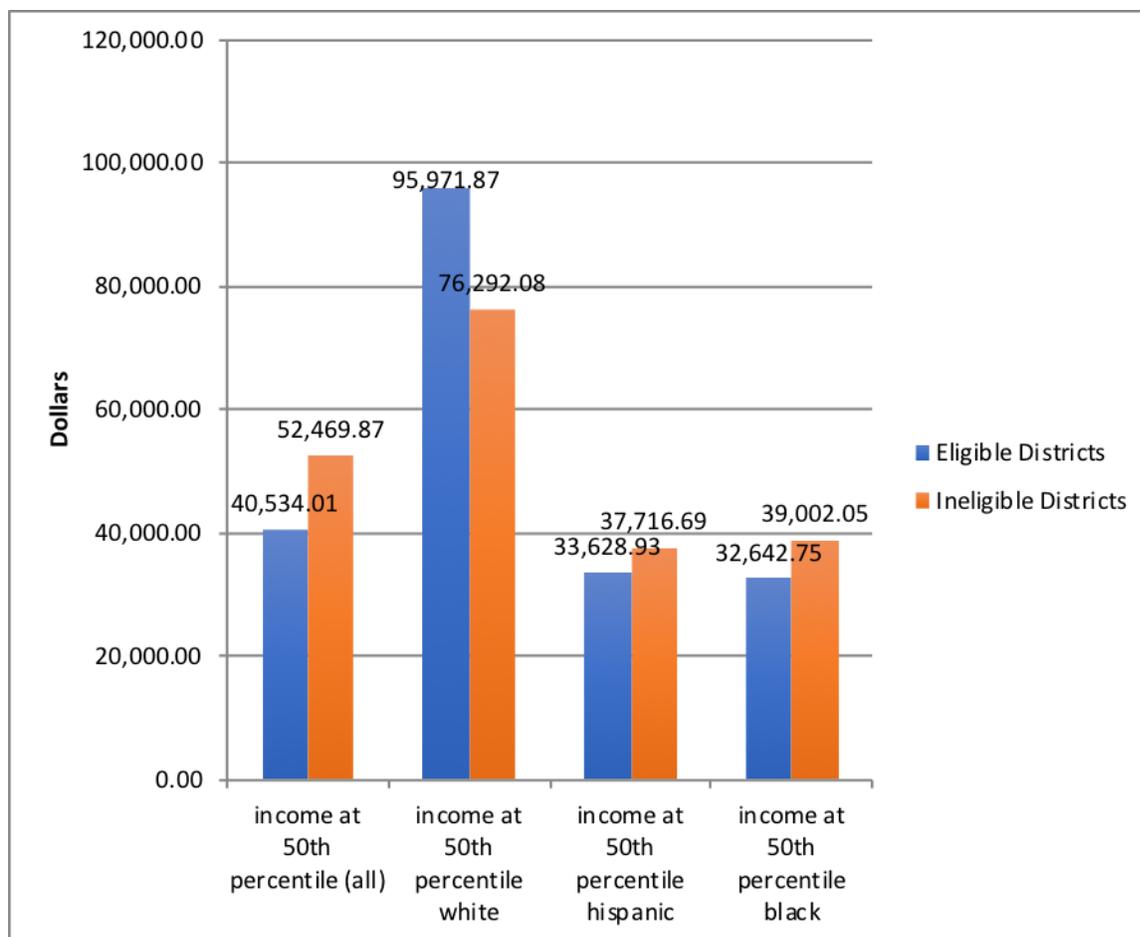
Figure 4. Income in Eligible vs. Ineligible Districts

Sensemaking of Gubernatorial School Takeovers and Statewide Turnaround Districts

A few important themes emerged from interviews with district and school leaders regarding how they interpret the creation of a statewide turnaround district within a post-ESSA context.

Principals and teachers are to blame. One of the prevailing interpretations of the creation of the OSD is that teachers and principals are responsible for failing schools. There was widespread agreement among participants that the onset of a state takeover district is accompanied by the notion that teachers and school leaders feel they are culpable for under-performing schools. Principals and school leaders feel as though they are losing their autonomy and that takeover assumes that they alone are responsible for the failing school while other factors are largely ignored. Additionally, some interviewees also took issue with the labeling of schools as "failing". One participant noted, "I think anytime you label a school with a title of failing it's extremely detrimental. Not just to the schools and the people in the schools, but to the community as well. So I think we should be very cautious in labeling schools." Still others point out how the rhetoric of state takeover "assumes that school leaders alone are responsible for the failing school," while contextual factors such as poverty and insufficient resources are not taken into the equation.

Several interviewees highlighted that other contextual factors such as poverty in communities are not adequately considered in explaining chronically low-performing schools. For instance, one school leader said, "Schools work hard… [We} understand where children come from,

all that they deal with. So many factors go into educating children. We have gotten our growth scores [to be] good, so some progress being made." A teacher echoed that sentiment, citing, "I think states will fire teachers [if schools are taken over] and do away with everything teachers have been doing. So many factors go into educating children, many factors involved. Other issues are not being addressed, so few improvement [will be made] if other areas are not addressed. [We need] more pre-k programs, health programs, parent education, and so on." One interviewee suggested that the there is a real potential for the number of schools eligible for state takeover to increase over time as school performance worsens due to contextual factors.

Our findings highlight how teachers perceive their performance is viewed through the lens of state takeover policies. They feel that their "performance is inaccurately captured by students receiving poor standardized test scores" and that "policymakers also don't recognize the important role that contextual factors play in educating students," as noted by a school leader in a takeover eligible school. Participants specifically cited poverty, low parental engagement, and other socioeconomic factors as major barriers to academic success, which they did not feel policymakers actually understood. In response to being asked to what extent he or she feels policymakers understand and account for contextual factors that affect educating, one school leaders said, "[Even if you have] leaders and teachers who are very good, [they] will struggle to teach poor students… Economics play a role in how leaders are able to lead. Leaders' evaluations are not informed by these realities."

Too many changes, too little time to reflect. Another important interpretation of the OSD is that the role of district and school leaders is changing with the onset of the OSD in addition to ESSA, and there is not enough time to adjust. Interviewees concurred that there is an increased spotlight on teachers and instructional quality with the advent of a statewide turnaround district. Several interviewees shared that what is being asked of principals and teachers is somewhat unfair. One district leader pointed out that "Before, [being a] principal was like [being a] mayor, [they] deal with discipline, but have fewer [instructional] roles." Some district leaders posited that incentives and performance evaluations may be linked to an increased demand for school improvement that is driven by the threat of state takeover. This has led to a hyper awareness of job performance for district and school leaders, which was specifically expressed by teachers and leaders in takeover eligible districts. One teacher remarked that, "It [state takeover] has made me feel more pressured to become aware of policy that will affect me," while another pointed out that, "the pressures of takeover were very real and are dramatically affecting school practices."

The process of sensemaking also led many school leaders, particularly those in eligible districts, to feel a sense of "hyper awareness" pertaining to job performance, as indicated by one teacher who cited,

"Takeover threat is a bad thing for me because it is not good for the overall system. If you want to retain employees, you cannot make them feel like they are in a career where they are so closely watched or where they are not valued."

A school leader, in response to being asked how the threat of takeover affects leadership practices, cited:

"I think so [yes, takeover affects leadership practice], knowing that it's out there and that we are a big district and people are looking at us to see what we do… all eyes on us. Makes me more aware of my job performance, makes me want to make sure my kids do well."

When asked about the changing role of the principals in schools, the added responsibilities and limited time to handle them, one interviewee highlighted that:

> "The role of the school leader has changed the past 10 years. Before, [They only] dealt with discipline and administration stuff, not really instruction. [Now] they have to be sound in instruction, which involves a lot of learning on top of everything else they have to do."

Another mentioned that "[Principals have to] make sure they are knowledgeable about school topics; they have to know about everything that teachers know about. This is a lot of added work." Interviewees tended to recognize the importance of having principals knowledgeable in school content and strong in terms of pedagogy, but tended to express the general sentiment that "this was a lot to ask of principals."

Lack of trust between school districts and the state. District and school leaders also perceived the OSD with a growing mistrust of the state. District and school leaders alike reported having little clarity as to why state takeovers will work. Some interviewees argue that it appears as if the state is withholding some secret formula for school improvement, citing, "what magic thing will the state do that districts aren't trying? If they have the answer, then why not tell the districts what to do?" A district leader asked a similar question by commenting, "If the governor takes over schools, then I want to know what he is doing that is different from districts." Additionally, some interviewees interpreted the OSD as a manifestation of capacity issues at the state superintendent level. For instance, an interviewee noted that instability at the state superintendent position led to the governor exerting additional power over K-12 public education through the OSD.

Other interviewees posit that there is some dishonesty by the state that they expect to continue over time. For instance, some interviewees posit that the rules of the OSD will change and evolve as states have more power under ESSA. One instance of suspected change is an increase in the cap on schools that can be taken over in a given academic year to more than 20 and the overall number of schools under the jurisdiction of the OSD will be more than 100. There is a sense that the eligibility criteria make it fairly easy for schools to become eligible for state takeover and this has contributed to the growing distrust of the state. A school leader referenced the cap on the number of schools that can be taken over, pointing out, "[that without one] things could get crazy," raising concerns that numerous schools "would be handed to the governor."

Market-based reforms and the illusion of choice. District and school leaders expressed that school takeover was often associated with market-based reforms in education and these types of school reforms were widely viewed as the privatization of public schools. For example, a principal noted,

> "I think we get on very dangerous grounds when we start talking about taking over schools, especially when talking about the privatizations of schools, when we talk about the potential loss of funding. Also you're talking about bringing folks in from the private sector that may not know education or that community and having those people make decisions for kids in a community that they just don't know. And you're talking about long lasting impacts that may be five or 10 years down the road with unintentional consequences that you can't see. People that are left there will have to figure out late, while meanwhile, folks who have taken the school over are gone."

The school leader went on to comment, "I think we have to be very cautious with some of the unintentional consequences of the school takeover."

Overall, district and school leaders demonstrated an informed and nuanced understanding of the specific details for eligibility for state takeover and the parameters of the OSD. District and school leaders were quite knowledgeable about OSD, though they are quite skeptical of what it means in terms of their districts and schools. There is a pervading threat of uncertainty with the changes that ESSA may bring coupled with the governor having more control of K-12 public education through the OSD. There is widespread disagreement with state takeover and a preference for local interventions among school and district leaders. This is likely due to the central conjecture underlying state turnaround districts—district and school leaders as well as teachers are largely to blame for the malaise in student achievement. There is palpable fear there will likely be implementation issues with both the OSD and ESSA as changes will be rolled out without being vetted. Interviewees typically acknowledged the role of the politics of education reform in the creation of the OSD. As one leader noted, "This is a power play by the governor to consolidate more educational power underneath him… since we have no research that it works." Many district and school leaders are faced with choices of how to respond to the OSD. In the next section, we use Hirschman's (1970) exit, voice, and loyalty framework to examine the response to the threat of state takeover.

Response to State Takeover

Exit. Consistent with prior literature on how employees respond to threats to their job status (Davis-Blake et al., 2003; Jensen, 2009), we found evidence that several participants reported that a non-trivial number of teachers and principals have expressed their intent to leave for charter schools or leave the teaching profession in response to the OSD. One district leader commented, "Looking at APS [Atlanta Public Schools], their retention is bad, experiences are not good, even without takeover. With all this negative attention, teachers will leave." If teachers begin to leave a district that already faces challenges in hiring highly effective teachers, then the threat of state takeover may compound a problem instead of being a solution. Another district leader from an OSD eligible school noted, "Principals will leave the school, some may need to go, but other [good ones] will leave. These changes won't be good for retention." A teacher in an eligible district also pointed out that their "Principals and school leaders feel as though they are losing their autonomy," which has led many to consider leaving the profession. These findings are congruent with prior research as employees are likely leave professions when they do not feel that their job status is secure.

Other participants pointed to a recent report on Georgia's declining teaching profession as evidence that teachers are "getting fed up with being blamed for everything that goes wrong with schools," as remarked by a state level employee. The report cited the rhetoric around school struggles among the leading reasons teacher elect to leave teaching and dissuade their students from becoming teachers (Owens, 2015). In particular, one district employee from a non-OSD eligible school responded, "Absolutely [teachers will leave schools]! Look at many districts and how bad their retention is." Another district leader highlighted that "Many teachers and principals have gone to work for the state, find other jobs, leave [a teaching] career for ones less stressful." Some interviewees feared that there will be mass teacher firings and a rapid increase in teacher churn which may further harm student achievement.

Voice. There is an overall displeasure among a variety of school and district leaders with the advent of a statewide turnaround district. Our analyses reveal that even though a non-trivial number of school and district personnel showed an intent to leave the profession in response to the OSD, voice was the more common response to the proposed legislation, particularly among teachers in

OSD eligible schools who were more experienced and had students performing well on state tests. These teachers and school leaders exercised voice in several ways.

With regard to the OSD, district and school leaders may voice their frustrations through their vote on the constitutional amendment. Our study found that many feel as though they are not "allowed to overtly comment on their feelings about OSD," as one school leader put it. A teacher in an OSD eligible school shared that their "voices are essentially muted until the November election." Teachers and school leaders in OSD eligible schools were particularly likely to endorse such feelings because there was fear among them that the governor might seek retribution against those who critiqued the proposed legislation (Welsh et al., 2017). One interpretation of the election outcome may be that their voice matters in regards to the school improvement policy and state takeover.

Another way teachers and school leaders may exercise voice was by not participating in changes being taken by their schools or districts to prepare for the passage of the OSD. For instance, teachers described "Making the changes my own by superficially incorporating them" as well as a mentality that focused on "making lemonade out of lemons." Another teacher mentioned that she would simply "ignore the changes" and that the school "wanted to fire me, but my kids got 100% [passage rates] and so they couldn't." Teachers in our study pointed out that the ability to be a rebel and not be reprimanded was afforded only to those teachers for whom rebelling produced consistent academic gains for students.

Loyalty. District and school leaders also indicated that although some school leaders wanted to leave, their commitment to their children and public education in general have prevented their exit. For instance, a number of school leaders pointed out that though they consistently felt "targeted by the OSD rhetoric," that they would remain committed to their students and accept the changes because, "the kids are who matter most." The students, they argue, are more important than politics at the national, state, or local level. Therefore, they will remain in their districts and schools for the sake of the children.

Loyalty was most explicitly endorsed by a number of teachers in poor-performing schools and classrooms. These teachers shared that the lack of substantial gains in academic achievement among their students did not give them the leverage to react through voice nor the résumé to exit. Therefore, these teachers were more likely to "accept the OSD ruling [if it had passed] and do whatever they were told to do [in preparation for possibly being taken over] to avoid ruffling feathers."

Differences in responses to state takeover. It is important to note that there are differences in the response of district and school leaders based on the eligibility for state takeover. A district leader highlighted the uncertainty and variety in the responses to the threat of state takeover - "either hire one of Governor Deal's appointees (done in APS); know that selection is shady (hundreds of schools eligible but only 20 selected); or divert money to lobbying. Most districts have no viable game plan." The response of district and school leaders with no eligible schools can be classified into two categories: "business as usual" and "aware but not worried," whereas those from takeover eligible schools can be classified as "very aware and very worried."

Business as usual. A district leader in the "business as usual" camp noted, "I don't foresee a lot of our business practice changing and we have done a lot to ensure that schools are not on that list we are just doing what we've always done… regardless of what stipulations are in place or accountability measures are in place, if we focus on our core business of teaching and learning everything else will take care of itself. It really won't change how we function as a leader."

A district leader commented, "It's [the takeover eligible list] a threat not a promise. The Governor wants the power to takeover more so than to actually takeover." A teacher in a school not eligible for takeover remarked, "We won't be in that situation [where we have to fear being taken over]. [so] There is no pressure from our [above average] achievement scores, but we want our kids to succeed and we value what we are doing." When asked how the threat of state takeover might affect his leadership, a school leader from a district that would not be affected by the legislation responded, "It doesn't, honestly. If we're going to do what's right by kids, you're talking about bringing a student into your school district, pre-k or kindergarten, putting supports in place to ensure that they are taught a very rigorous curriculum." Another echoed these sentiments by saying, "Regardless of what stipulations are in place or accountability measures are in place, if we focus on our core business of teaching and learning everything else will take care of itself. It really won't change how we function as a leader." When asked about how the OSD might affect leadership, another participant pointed out, "Currently we don't have any schools [on the eligibility list] that are going to be in the OSD so it really has no bearing on us here, but we do appreciate any effort taken to ensure that students are being supported."

  Aware but not worried. Some interviewees expressed awareness of the OSD but were not worried because the threat could have positive implications. For instance, a district leader cited, "The threat will lead schools to take preemptive measures to avoid takeover. I don't think it is a bad thing, while another pointed out that, "The threat places an importance on what you are doing and how you can do [your job] better… This will benefit students and teachers." Using the same line of thinking, another responded, "The threat isn't necessarily a bad thing… There will be more interventions [taken to improve schools] because of the threat of takeover. This might help [students]." Such a sentiment highlighted the potentially possible benefits the threat of being taken over can produce, and as such, highlights a level of optimism with regard to the OSD and not as much worry for some.

  Very aware and very worried. In general, those with schools on the list, disclosed, at length, how concerning it was that they could possibly be taken over, and as such, "were very aware and very worried." For instance, when asked to share thoughts on how school leaders might respond to the threat of state takeover, one respondent noted, "Schools will continue to take measures to avoid takeover. There will be more interventions because of the threat of takeover." Others highlighted how, "Threat of takeover has caused them to become increasingly aware of their job status and has pushed them to be far more intentional about all measures they take to improve achievement."

  Overall, schools and districts that are OSD eligible are taking pre-emptive steps to avoid being eligible for state takeover. Other leaders were actively taking steps to remain off the eligibility list and these steps typically centered around instructional coaching to bolster teacher content and principals' evaluation of teachers. One district leader highlighted, "that we [her district] have spent additional resources to ensure that students are prepared for tests and are actually learning instructional content." These include additional support and training, test taking skills, and teacher coaching and observation in schools at risk for takeover, instructional learning for principals and teachers, test taking tips, and "teaching to the test" to ensure that students close to 60 will be bumped up. Many schools are implementing these strategies to show that they have taken necessary steps to solve problems, hoping to avoid takeover by showing progress. These steps have resulted in an intense spotlight on teachers and instruction.

  Atlanta Public Schools (APS) is one district that has taken major strides to keep their schools away from OSD. In light of the takeover threat in APS, district Superintendent Meria Carstaphen

has stated the system is "developing an aggressive and targeted course of action for school improvement." This plan is comprised of several components, including the hiring of Erin Hames, the former governor's deputy chief of staff for policy and legislative affairs, to assist in accelerating the district's efforts to turnaround at-risk schools (Carstarphen, 2015). In addition, the system also developed a five-year initiative entitled "Strong Students. Strong Schools. Strong Staff. Strong System." The plan focuses on four key areas: academic programming, talent management, systems and resources, and culture (Atlanta, 2015). The district has also proposed hiring charter school groups to run five of its lower performing schools (Bloom, 2016).

Interviewees also highlighted that there are already unintended and sinister responses to the threat of takeover as teachers and principals respond by increasingly "teach to a test, rather than focusing on student learning," which was a sentiment expressed by many teachers and leaders in OSD eligible schools. Teachers and leaders in these schools also highlighted how takeover has prompted a focus on "bubble students," referred to by a number of participants, as schools disproportionately focus on students whose scores are right below the proficiency cut-off.

Discussion

Our findings imply, as we hypothesized, that the response of school and district leaders to the threat of takeover resembles the response of competition spurred by market-based reforms and workers' response to organizational restructuring. We find that overall there is a negative sentiment towards statewide turnaround districts among school and district leaders. School and district leaders have also responded in desirable and undesirable ways to the threat of state takeover. There is a greater emphasis on instructional quality and techniques but it appears that the threat of state takeover will lead to unintended consequences similar to the response to test-based accountability (e.g., focusing on "bubble kids" or teaching to the test). More importantly, there is budding sentiment among interviewees that the unintended consequences due to the pressures associated with threat of state takeover may become normalized over time. In other words, teaching to the test is increasingly viewed as a necessary response rather a negative act.

Our findings suggest that the threat of takeover will spur an increase in interventions as district and school leaders aim to avoid takeover. There may be a "Race to the Top" effect associated with state-run turnaround districts. States may use the threat of takeover rather than actual takeover to spur school improvement in schools and districts, in a similar fashion to how RTTT incentivized states to implement school reforms. Whereas RTTT used funds to entice states to support charter schools and implement accountability measures ("the carrot"; Smith, 2013; U.S Department of Education, 2016), state takeover policy uses the threat of sanctions ("the stick") to encourage leaders in districts and schools to improve student outcomes. Our findings indicate that schools are taking pre-emptive action to avoid state takeover, thus the motivating effect of the threat to spur school improvement is real. As one interviewee aptly stated, "There will be more interventions because of the threat of takeover."

Our results indicate that state takeover policy and the threat of state takeover takes a toll on educators. Even though the academic gains of state takeover in places such as New Orleans and Tennessee have been contested (Welsh, 2018), there is consensus on the toll that state takeover has taken educators and the community (Anderson & Dixson, 2016; Garda, 2011; Glazer & Egan, 2018). For instance, in post-Katrina New Orleans, Black teachers and school personnel lost their jobs, Black school board members were displaced (Anderson & Dixson, 2016; Garda, 2011). Our findings indicate that principals feel unprepared for their new role and the pressure to improve student achievement. In particular, several school leaders expressed that they did not have enough

content or instructional knowledge to evaluate teachers and help them improve their teaching and student outcomes.

State takeover appears to lead to further detachment of communities via the disenfranchisement of educators. Similar to prior studies that have highlighted that resistance from the community at various junctions—whether at the outset or the first round of intervention results —have characterized state-run turnaround districts (Anderson & Dixson, 2016; Glazer & Egan, 2018), our findings suggest that state takeover may contribute to the dissolution of school-community relations. State takeover does not cultivate a collaborative environment among educational stakeholders. Although robust debate and disagreement about the direction of school reform is expected, there is a bitterness and resentment to state takeover among educators that may be difficult to reconcile. School leaders and teachers play an important role in school-community relationships. Scholars have highlighted the importance of the bonds of community in a school and how these relationships may affect how teachers change their practices in response to reforms (Coburn, 2004; Coburn & Stein, 2006). If schools are taken over by the state, these relationships may undergo additional disruption and deepen disconnections. This is in addition to extant community concerns about state takeover policy and reforms that are done "to" rather than "with" the community (Welsh, 2018).

The impacts of state takeover on educators and communities may have important implications for the implementation and sustainability of these school reforms. Complexity and pluralism pervades the policy environment (Honig, 2006) and the perceptions of teachers and educators may be overlooked in the policymaking but pivotal in the implementation of reforms. Indeed, collaboration with educators and communities are a necessary but not sufficient ingredient for school improvement. The sustainability and implementation of state takeover is undermined by negative perceptions. Our findings suggest that state takeover undermines this collaborative process. Civic capacity is necessary for the sustainability of policies (Welsh & Hall, 2018) and although state takeover catalyzes the involvement of several non-traditional stakeholders, there is a palpable backlash against state takeover that may undermine the sustainability of the policies.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

A few policy implications emerged from the findings of our study. The results underline the importance of paying attention to school leaders and teachers in school improvement as they are the implementers of the policy and pivotal to the sustainability of school reforms. First, the response of district and school leaders suggests that the creation of statewide takeover districts may result in difficulties in the retention of school leaders and teachers in high poverty schools and schools with larger numbers of students of color. Thus, policymakers ought to consider addressing these possible retention issues and consider ways to mitigate exit in response to educational governance changes as they contemplate state takeover districts. Research on the effectiveness of turnaround reforms highlight the importance of teacher quality (Lauen & Henry, 2016) and turnaround efforts in Tennessee suggest that raising the salary of teachers in districts eligible for state takeover may results in positive effects on students' outcomes (Henry et al., 2014). Thus, it may be worthy to explore mandating a raise in the salaries of teachers and paraprofessionals in low-performing districts to attract and retain effective teachers in schools and districts where they are most needed. Pay increases for teachers appear to be a key component of the success of iZone schools in Tennessee (Zimmer et al., 2017). Similarly, policymakers should also deeply consider how to address the unintended consequences of state takeover districts such as 'normalized teaching to the test'. Teaching to the test and other actions that attempt to game the system in response to accountability pressures affects daily activities in classrooms and narrows students' overall learning experience.

While students' achievement scores might increase under a "teaching to the test" model, their actual learning might decrease.

Second, the professional development of school and district leaders will play an increasingly important role in the future. Ultimately, the threat of state takeover will not only affect educational leaders, but it might also place pressure on educational leadership programs and professional learning opportunities to prepare leaders for the evolution of their roles and responsibilities. Given the importance of preparing and supporting school leaders for changes in educational governance, policymakers should focus on bolstering professional development programs for district and school leaders to support school improvement efforts. Enhanced professional development may also help with the retention of school leaders. There are district-specific professional development programs that can be scaled thus there is a need for scholars and policymakers to gain a better understanding of what works and the application professional development programs across contexts.

Third, there is a lack of additional resources associated with state takeover policy that warrants reconsideration. Policymakers ought to increase their focus on Title I schools (especially those located in cities) with a high proportion of African American males. It may also be prudent to increase the resources for school improvement provided to these schools from state resources. Additional resources may also bode well for the implementation of reforms at the local-level. In particular, the results suggest that policymakers may invest in additional school resources can be directed at transformation and instruction coaches in schools with a high concentration of low-income students.

Finally, identifying, recruiting, and supporting high quality charter school operators may become increasingly important for state and district leaders. In response to the threat of state takeover, APS has explored hiring charter school operators to operate underperforming schools and charter schools is one of a handful of school improvement options available to the OSD. Thus, the demand for proven charter school operators that can deliver significant improvement in student achievement is likely to increase substantially. This, in turn, places greater emphasis on the recruitment and support strategies for these operators. It may be prudent for policymakers to fine-tune these processes.

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