



## School District Takeover & the Achievement Gap

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### Results

- Following long-standing political strife between the school board, mayor, and the governor, Philadelphia implemented a mixed strategy. The mayor and the governor share authority of appointing the school board and choosing the CEO. In addition, private groups manage some of Philadelphia's schools.
- Due to the Reed Amendment, school board corruption, and financial problems, Harrisburg SD implemented a mayoral takeover directly following the Empowerment Act of 2000. The mayor appoints the school board and the superintendent.
- Due to a history of failing state assessments, Chester-Upland SD was immediately taken over by the state. Unlike in the other takeover districts, the state privatized the majority of Chester-Upland's schools.
- On average, Philadelphia schools have increased the percentage of students passing the state exam. In fact, all of Philadelphia's students, regardless of ethnic group, have improved their test scores (see graph below).
- On average, Harrisburg SD and Chester-Upland SDs' test scores have stalled over the past few years.

**The Takeover Model** Mayoral or state takeover of school districts is an option for political figures looking to intervene in failing school districts. The achievement gap—the test score gap between black and white students, between low-income and wealthy students, and between urban and suburban schools—is one of America's most urgent and publicized social problems. With the present push for accountability, political conflict on school boards, and district financial problems, a takeover that brings with it the flexibility to implement innovative interventions, streamlined political authority, and financial support seems very promising.

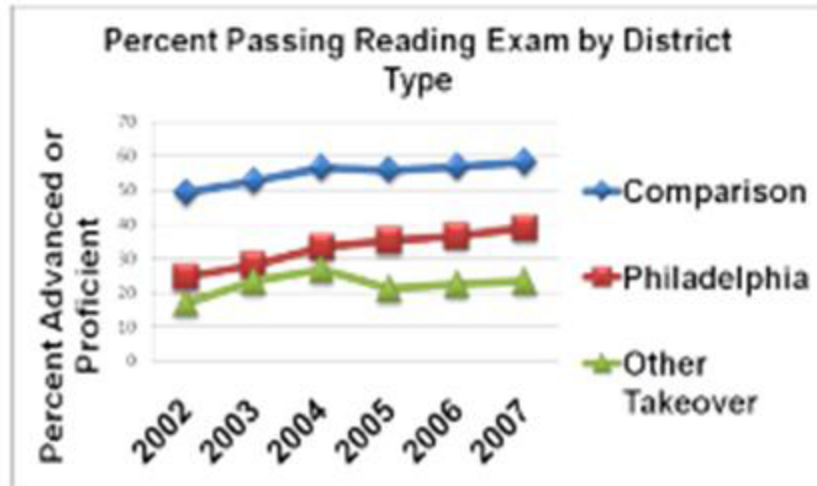
**This Research** examines if Pennsylvania's takeover districts—Philadelphia SD, Chester-Upland SD, and Harrisburg SD—have made progress in closing the achievement gap.

**Methodology (Sample, Sources, Analysis)** Of the 501 school districts in Pennsylvania, this study includes 55 school districts separated into the following subsets: takeover (3) and Comparable (52).

**Descriptive Analysis** Using test results from the PSSA, I examined each subset's achievement trends from 2001-2007.

#### Regression Analysis

- Linear regression analysis to determine what factors affected student achievement from 2002-2007
- The independent variables include: changes in student population and district financials. I control for previous levels of student achievement.
- One-way analysis of variance to determine if the means of the variables (dependent and independent) differed by district subset



Note: Other Takeover Includes Chester-Upland SD and Harrisburg SD

### Conclusion & Discussion

- Philadelphia School District improved across grade levels and ethnic groups more so than the other takeover districts and the average comparison school district
- While Harrisburg School District has a slightly higher percentage of students passing the state assessment, both Chester-Upland and Harrisburg have not made progress in closing the achievement gap
- The regression analysis suggests that other factors may be overshadowing the takeover's implementation. These include: changes in the percent of student population that is Black, Asian, White, or low-income and changes in district level per-pupil revenue.

Statistically Significant  
Independent Variables  
(At .05 level)

- Change in student population
- Change in per pupil revenue