Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability (2019) 31:315–347
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-019-09301-y

Acing the test: an examination of teachers' perceptions of and responses to the threat of state takeover

Richard Welsh[1] · Jerome Graham[2] · Sheneka Williams[2]

Received: 30 October 2018 / Accepted: 3 June 2019 / Published online: 28 June 2019
© Springer Nature B.V. 2019

Abstract

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act, states have increased latitude over school improvement and accountability policies. At the same time, school takeover via state-run turnaround districts has emerged as a prominent education reform. Although policies takeover influence how teachers are prepared, supported, and evaluated, little is known about how teachers may perceive and respond to the threat of state takeover. Using Georgia as a case study, this article (a) examines the ways in which teachers' perceptions and practices shift in response to the threat of state takeover and (b) explores how accountability pressures associated with the threat of state takeover may result in organizational changes at the school level. We find that teachers have negative attitudes toward the threat of state takeover and there have been marked changes in practices. It appears that teaching to test is being normalized. School administrators and teachers appear to display a cognitive dissonance between their moral and ethical reactions to the practice and their use of the practices in response to heightened accountability pressures. Teachers acknowledge the difficulties of overhauling the inclusion of students' test scores in evaluations, but they also raise several concerns regarding the process of testing.

Keywords State takeover · Accountability · School improvement · Teacher quality · Test-based accountability · School takeover · Teacher evaluation · Educational policy · Testing

Although there is a crystallizing consensus among educational policymakers and stakeholders on the important role that accountability plays in the school improvement process, there is less agreement on how it should be used to improve student outcomes

✉ Richard Welsh
row3@nyu.edu

[1] New York University, New York, NY 10003, USA

[2] University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, USA

and its effects on practices within schools. Over time, federal policy in the USA (U.S.) has consistently encouraged test-based accountability (TBA) or the use of students' test scores to determine the effectiveness of educators and schools (Figlio and Loeb 2011; Kober and Rentner 2012; Loeb and Grissom 2013). Even though the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (the most recent reauthorization of the main federal education policy, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)) in 2015 has given states greater latitude in crafting accountability and school improvement policies (Darling-Hammond 2015), TBA remains a central feature of education reform in the USA.

The entrenchment of TBA in federal education policy has been accompanied by the growing popularity of market-based reforms (Ladd 2002; Ladd 2011; Trujillo and Woulfin 2014). A number of 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 and Shen 2003; Wong and Shen 2007). In recent decades, school takeover using state-run turnaround districts is a prominent school improvement policy that typically incorporates school choice and charter schools (Burns 2010; Morel 2018; Welsh, Williams, Little, and Graham 2017; Welsh and Williams 2018; Welsh 2018).

Since 2010, states such a Louisiana, Michigan, and Tennessee have established state-run turnaround districts to improve consistently low-performing schools. Following these examples, 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. It is conceivable that in the ESSA era, more states will consider state takeover as a school improvement strategy given the 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). Importantly several equity concerns undergird the discussion about state takeover policy. First, race and power undertones permeate state takeover policy, given that urban districts and schools, primarily attended by low-income and minority students, are most likely to be taken over (Morel 2018; Oluwole and Green III 2009; Welsh 2018). Secondly, state takeover may destabilize the teacher labor market and worsen the inequitable distribution of teacher quality that leaves underserved students disproportionately exposed to less-qualified teachers than their more advantaged peers (Hanuskek 2014; Welsh 2018).

A robust body of research has indicated that the quality of the teacher is the most influential school-related factor on student achievement (Darling-Hammond 2000; Hanushek, 1971; Hanushek 1981; Hanushek 1989; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, and Hamilton 2003; Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain 2000; Rivkin et al. 2005; Wright, Horn, and Sanders 1997). There is also cementing consensus that recruiting, preparing, and retaining effective teachers are central to school improvement and educational equity (Boyd et al. 2005; Ronfeldt et al. 2013). Scholars have found that linking teacher effectiveness to student achievement is fraught with challenges (Eberts, Hollenbeck, and Stone 2002; Kingdon and Teal 2007) and how teachers are evaluated (e.g., the inclusion of student performance and tough accountability sanctions in evaluation systems) affects not only teacher recruitment, retention, and the professionalization of teaching (Kraft, Brunner, Dougherty, and Schwegman 2018; Mawhinney 2013) but also student performance (Alexander et al. 2017). Another equity concern associated with linking teacher evaluation to student test score gains is inflation of student

achievement via teaching to the test (Jennings and Bearak 2014). Using standardized test scores to evaluate teachers provides an incentive for teachers, principals, and districts to inflate student achievement, which offers a false sense of student improvement, as students learn only how to pass tests, but do not necessarily master content necessary for successful completion of school (Booher-Jennings 2005; Jennings and Bearak 2014; Koretz, McCaffrey, and Hamilton 2001; Shepard 1988; Stecher 2002). Lastly, linking teacher score gains to evaluation is related to narrowing curriculum, cheating, and other unethical behavior in schools (Cullen and Reback 2006; Figlio and Getzler 2006; Jacob 2005; Jacob and Levitt 2003; Wong & Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness). Given the centrality of teacher quality to student outcomes and school improvement and the growing popularity of statewide turnaround districts, it is important to examine how teachers' practices and perceptions are shaped by the threat of state takeover.

Even though the confluence of the threat of state takeover and TBA has significant implications for the evaluation of teacher effectiveness and school improvement (Alexander et al. 2017; Davis and Darling-Hammond 2012; Darling-Hammond 2015), only a small body of scholarship has examined educators' perceptions of and responses to the threat of state takeover (Welsh and Williams 2018; Williams and Welsh 2018). For instance, teachers may perceive state takeover policy as another attempt to blame educators for students' subpar academic outcomes and avoid schools that might meet eligibility for state takeover. Alternately, teachers may view the changes in educational governance as positive and a necessary condition for improving struggling schools. These perceptions about the reform are likely to produce reactions by teachers in their classrooms and schools, which in turn may have important ramifications for students.

Although there has been a sizable body of evidence on how pressures accompanying TBA manifest in schools (Darling-Hammond 2007; Jennings and Bearak 2014; Linn, Baker, and Betebenner 2002), less is known about how teachers' practices in classrooms and schools are influenced by such accountability pressures. The threat of state takeover is a confluence of several pressures that have been linked to a number of detrimental practices, which signals how teachers may respond to the threat of state takeover in various ways (Jacob and Levitt 2003). Schools near or at the eligibility thresholds for state takeover are subjected to heightened accountability pressure and evidence suggests that these schools differentially reclassify low-performing students as learning disabled (Cullen and Reback 2006; Figlio and Getzler 2006; Jacob 2005) or suspend them around testing times so that their scores are not accounted for in schools' evaluations (Figlio 2006). Accountability pressures for state takeover eligible schools may be compounded by competitive pressures that arise when state policies mandate that schools deemed as failing provide vouchers for their students (Figlio and Rouse 2006; Rouse et al, 2007). Additionally, there may also be marketing pressure that stems from the stigma of being labeled a failing school that compels schools to respond the potential enrollment ramifications of being listed as failing (Rouse, Hannaway, Goldhaber, Figlio 2007). A better understanding of how teachers may response to these pressures has important school improvement and educational equity implications.

The state of Georgia in southeastern U.S. provides fertile grounds to learn more about how the threat of state takeover shapse teachers' perceptions of evaluations and their practices. Following the example of the Recovery School District (RSD) and the Achievement School District (ASD), in 2015, the state legislature in Georgia passed Senate Bill

133 that proposed the creation of the Opportunity School District (OSD), a state-run district that would takeover persistently underperforming schools. In November 2016, a constitutional amendment to empower the state to takeover failing public schools and place them in the OSD failed to pass in the general election. We posit that Georgia is a microcosm of national trends regarding state takeover—the campaign for the OSD featured contentious debates about the path to school improvement with state takeover being supported and opposed by varying educational stakeholders (Welsh et al. 2017).

This study examines whether and how teachers' perceptions and practices (adaptive and/or maladaptive) are shaped by threat of state takeover. We explore the ways in which teachers respond to the threat of state takeover and alternative approaches to the use of TBA to evaluate teachers. Using semi-structured interviews with teachers, school leaders, and district and state personnel in Georgia, our analysis is guided by the following research questions:

a) How are teachers' perceptions and classroom practices shaped by the threat of state takeover?
b) To what extent and how are schools and districts affected by changes in teachers' perceptions and practices in response to the threat of state takeover?

Given the important role teachers play in improving student achievement, highlighting their voices in policy discussions about teacher effectiveness, accountability, and education reform remains a salient challenge in education research and policymaking. This is particularly important, as teachers' voice, perceptions, and practices have important implications for recruiting, preparing, and retaining effective teachers (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff 2005; Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff 2013). The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we provide an overview of the extant literature on teachers' changes in perceptions and practices in response to TBA and school takeover. Following this, we detail our theoretical framework and describe the data and methods employed in this study. Next, we present findings and conclude with a discussion of policy implications and directions for future research.

1 Teachers perceptions of and practices related to test-based accountability

The majority of the extant literature has found that teachers tend to have negative perceptions of TBA. Teachers perceive the use of TBA as a significant contributor to the deprofessionalization of teaching (Milner 2013). Scholars have found that teachers perceive the test-driven culture created by the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as frustrating (Byrd-Blake et al. 2010). NCLB, a reauthorization of the ESEA in 2003, mandated that all students meet adequately yearly progress and threatened sanctions to schools where this did not happen. Although teachers recognize the need for reform and accountability measures, they perceive measures that accompanied NCLB as being excessive and counterproductive (Sunderman et al. 2004). Evidence elucidates how teachers regard the requirements of NCLB as unfair for teachers serving the most difficult to teach students and that the sanctions were pushing good teachers away from the schools that needed them the most (Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor 2005;

Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff 2002). Tydeman (2009) found that teachers' perceptions of school organizational cohesiveness decreased with the implementation of sanctions. Researchers also found that teachers for whom effectiveness is evaluated by sole use of standardized tests are found to have higher levels of anxiety than those who do not and their students' performance is negatively correlated with increased levels of anxiety (Haladyna, Haas, and Allison 1998; Mulvenon, Stegman, and Ritter 2005).

Although most studies found negative attitudes and perceptions toward TBA among teachers, a few studies have found positive perceptions toward TBA. Grissom et al. (2014) found that there was an increase in teacher perception of job satisfaction and commitment under NCLB. Some teachers felt that NCLB provided schools with clear expectations for students and brought much needed attention to the needs of disadvantaged students (Murnane and Papay 2010). Other scholars reported that teachers' sense of autonomy was increased and this led to positive perceptions of changes in schools as a result of NCLB (Hamilton et al. 2007). Researchers have also found that teachers perceived student engagement was positively impacted by NCLB (Dee et al. 2013).

NCLB also had important implications for teachers' practices (King and Zucker 2005; Linn et al 2002). The increased levels of anxiety developed from and negative attitudes toward federal policy (NCLB, Race to the Top (RTTT), and the NCLB waivers, influenced many educators to adopt practices counter-conducive to learning (Center on Education Policy 2006; Hargrove et al. 2000). Under RTTT and NCLB, schools that increasingly tied educator evaluations to student tests scores could apply for competitive grants, which further illustrates how federal policies contribute to a culture of testing in school. In response to these policies, many schools, districts, and states devoted exclusive attention to raising tests scores to meet mandates handed down by the federal government (Center on Education Policy 2006; Hargrove et al. 2000; King and Zucker 2005). This narrowing of the curriculum emphasized the teaching and learning of mathematics and language arts because these are the subject areas that federal policies mandated testing (Ehren and Hatch 2013; Jennings and Bearak 2014).

In addition to narrowing the curriculum, teaching to the test became popularized during the era of TBA (Hannaway and Hamilton 2008; Jennings and Lauen 2016). Jennings and Bearak (2014) describe teaching to the test as a spectrum of instructional practices that are utilized by teachers to prepare students for tests. For example, teachers might spend a series of instructional sections emphasizing content that they believe will appear on the test to increase familiarity to students for those types of problems (Jones et al. 1999; Pedulla et al. 2003). Koretz et al. (1996) found that teachers attributed gains in student test scores to increased familiarity with the test and that the use of practice tests and preparation materials explained more of the variance in student test scores gains than did teachers' pedagogy or students' improvements in skills. Prior research has also highlighted an alignment of a limited number of state standards with a considerable proportion of test points and relatively better student performance on these commonly assessed standards (Jennings and Bearak 2014). Some scholars have deemed actions such as teaching to the test rational responses to the TBA pressures (Weinbaum et al. 2012). However, the use of these practices is accompanied by a host of unintended consequences such as limiting students' exposure to other subjects and manipulation of data (Amrein-Beardsley et al. 2010; Phelps 2011) as well as major cheating scandals (Jonsson 2011; Vogell 2011).

1.1 The threat of state takeover

The extent to which the ESSA era of school reform differs from or reinforces the unintended consequences of NCLB and RTTT has significant policy and practice implications but remains relatively unknown. The threat of state takeover may provide similar teacher responses to TBA. State takeovers have historically led to the removal and replacing of teachers in the taken over schools (Smith 2013, 2014). This leaves many educators at low-performing schools, who are the most likely to face state takeover, questioning their job security in a field which was historically lauded as being extremely secure (Inman and Marlow 2004). Evidence suggests that this threat of school takeover and possible job loss influences many teachers to adopt practices not aimed at improving students' education outcomes, but rather those rooted in self-preservation, often times to the detriment of students (Hannaway and Hamilton 2008; Jacob and Levitt 2003).

The unintended consequences the threat of state takeover produces manifest in a number of detrimental ways. For instance, teachers, particularly those in schools at or close to performance thresholds and are in danger of not making adequate yearly progress, report lower levels of job security, relative to teachers who are not in such environments (Reback, Rockoff, and Schwartz 2014). Additionally, teachers in high-stakes environments spend significantly more time on test prep within classrooms, relative to teachers in non-high–stakes testing environments (Lowry 2010).

Overall, with each new wave of reform and accountability, there has been a shift in teacher attitudes and practice in response to changing demands, rewards, and penalties. There is a need to better understand how the threat of state takeover in the ESSA era affects teachers' perceptions and practices. It is plausible that the latest wave of gubernatorial-led school takeover through statewide turnaround districts produces practices similar to those catalyzed by TBA and the earlier era of mayoral school takeovers and takeover driven by fiscal rather than academic reasons. Using Georgia as a case study, this paper sheds light on how teachers perceive the threat of state takeover and how instructional practices may be shaped by the associated accountability pressures.

1.2 Theoretical framework: 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 teachers and (b) exit, voice, and loyalty to analyze the response to the threat of state takeover. 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. 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 but larger organizations such as schools, districts, and communities.

1.3 Sensemaking: interpreting the threat of state takeover

Sensemaking is a useful lens through which researchers can better understand how teachers' and school leaders' actions are informed by how they notice and select pieces of information from their environment and how they subsequently making meaning from that information (Porac et al. 1989). How individuals make sense of problems and solutions are, then, invariably different, and actions are determined as they construct understandings by taking contextual cues from their environment, placing them in what some theorist call "worldviews" or "working knowledge" (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Porac et al. 1989; Vaughan 1996; Weick 1995).

Sensemaking, then, is influence by a number of context-specific phenomenon that cumulatively effect how individuals make meaning from their environment. For instance, language, talk, and communication methods used to frame problems and solutions may be perceived differently by members of an environment, as some might rely on positive cues and respond constructively, while others may have more negative experiences that lead to a different result. Therefore, sensemaking scholars posit that individuals are constantly making sense of change, problems, and solutions, engaging in 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" refers to meaning and "making" to the all of the process individuals rely on to land on such a meaning (Coburn 2001; Evans 2007; Honig and Coburn 2008; Jensen et al. 2009; Spillane et al. 2002). The theory accentuates the relationship between interpretation and action by elucidating cognitive and social mechanisms members of a group rely on to make meaning from change or a given situation (Jensen et al. 2009). Importantly, the process does not occur in a vacuum, as sensemaking is social and occurs collectively within an organization, being shaped by interaction between members, signaling, and negotiation (Coburn 2001; Louis, Febey, and Schroeder 2005; Porac et al. 1989; Vaughan 1996; Weick 1995).

Although sensemaking is an ongoing process, the need to make sense becomes increasingly paramount when individuals deal with surprising changes or attempt to navigate in their roles with ambiguity surrounding how they might shift with reforms (Weick et al. 2005). It is not uncommon for reforms to be handled down in a top-down fashion, with little explanation as to what sparked the change, which requires individuals and groups to actively construct their own understandings and interpretations (Porac et al. 1989; Vaughan 1996). When this happens, members develop "shared understandings" (Coburn 2001, p. 147), which are informed by individual and group perceptions and prior experience.

Several important elements about sensemaking are regarding highlighted by scholars. First, sensemaking is an ongoing process, one in which individuals and groups continue to engage regularly. Second and relatedly, the process is informed by both (a) multiple streams of information gathered, and (b) social constructions facilitated by peer contact (Weick et al. 2005). In these respects, sensemaking theorists draw attention to the ways in which existing social structures and organizational cultures shape how interpretations are formed (Fiss and Hirsch 2005). Within any organization, there exists cultural ideas and norms, which individuals and groups use in their sensemaking process (Coburn 2001). Specifically, individuals and groups use these norms to construct conceptualizations of the problem prospective solutions (Spillane et al. 2002).

An important but dated body of scholarship has established the reality that the sensemaking process functions comparably in schools as it does in other organization, as it plays a central role in how people in schools respond to education reforms (Spillane et al. 2002). For instance, some evidence suggests the fidelity teacher and school leaders express to reforms are shaped by how they understand and interpret the reforms (Guthrie 1990; Jennings 1996). Teachers develop this understanding by drawing preexisting beliefs about their school cultures as well as the practices used in their schooling contexts (Coburn 2001; Spillane and Jennings 1997; Spillane 1999). Like other organizations, too, sensemaking is a collaborative process among teachers, as it is also influenced by the patterns of interaction with members in the school (Coburn 2001; Spillane 1999) and the social and structural conditions of their workplace (Coburn 2001; Gallucci 2003; Siskin 1994; Spillane 1998).

Considering how this phenomenon occurs in schools, sensemaking theory provides a useful lens through which researchers can develop a granular understanding of how individuals make sense of and respond to change (Jensen and Aanestad 2007). By focusing on the micro-level actions by individuals, organizational cultures, values, and beliefs, research can better understand why some reforms are responded well to while others are not (Jensen et al. 2009; Weber and Glynn 2006). Other theories that examine human behavior in response to institutional changes have fallen short of offering this level of granularity by assuming that people invariably comply with top-down mandates, fearing being reprimanded (Fligstein 2001). However, sensemaking theory fills this gap accentuating how reforms can be undermined from within when there is misalignment within an organization about problems and solutions.

Prior studies have used sensemaking theory to investigate how teachers construct meaning from reading policy (Coburn 2001) and highlighted how their perceptions about the policy influenced their response to it. Other scholars have focused on the use of evidence in central district offices (Honig and Coburn 2008), concluding a central role of the sensemaking process. More recently, sensemaking literature has focused on students, suggesting that teachers must make space for students to make sense of science content for effective learning to ensue (Haverly et al. 2018). 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). Together, this body of literature highlights how individuals rely on their past experiences, their own working knowledge, and the organization culture to construct understanding (Spillane et al. 2002).

This theory has a natural extension to state takeover, though it has not been applied to work examining this policy change. We do this by examining how schools 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 sensemaking approach allows teachers to understand the new policy and reform and suggests that the identities and positions of teachers will influence their understanding of the law (Choo 2001; Coburn 2001; Datnow and Park 2009). State takeover likely triggers a range of cognitions, emotions, and reactions, as teachers 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.

1.4 Exit, voice, and loyalty: responding to the threat of state takeover

The exit, voice, and loyalty framework was popularized following Hirschman's (1970) work on the decline of firms, organizations, and states. This theory posits that employees who perceive deterioration or instability in their work environment 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 et al. 1988).

An important element of this framework is the fact that the effect of each responds is heavily dependent on the context of the organization. For instance, Hirschman (1970) contends that in order for exit to spark substantive change, those leaving (or threatening to leave) the system must hold roles deemed necessary to the operations of the organization. One example of where this might be particularly effective occurs when workers go on long strikes, demanding changes to working conditions, increases in pay, or additional benefits. In some instances, organizations may perceive exiting workers as troublemakers and conclude that a more peaceful work environment will result from their decision to exit or may cede to the demands to continue operations as needed (Labaree, 2000; Matland 1995).

Most often, this framework is used in studies examining how employees respond to organizational change in their work environments (Berntson et al. 2010; Davis-Blake et al. 2003). Prior evidence accentuate how employees are sensitive to threats to job stability and may perceive impending reforms as foreshadowing layoffs (Berntson et al. 2010; Davis-Blake et al. 2003; Jensen et al. 2009). In examining how employees respond to the use of part-times works in an organization, Davis-Blake et al. (2003), they worsened relationships and interactions between managers and employees. Further, they also found that the mechanism by which this change occurred was though concern on the part of full-time workers that they were, in effect, training their replacements. Further, this work also indicated that in such instances, employees became far less likely to be loyal to their employers and increased their interest both in exiting their occupations and in exercising voice through unionization.

Additionally, Berntson et al. (2010) sought to better understand the ways in which job insecurity was related to the exit and voice responses. This work concluded a significantly positive correlation with exit, such that as employees perceived more threats to their job security, the increasingly pursued the exit option. Unsurprisingly, these employees were also less likely to display loyalty, often time doing less work, and displaying a low commitment to their firm. While this is not a particularly novel concept, it is interesting when applied to teaching and schooling, relatively stable employment options traditionally.

This framework, however, has sparsely been applied to education, leaving much to be gleaned from better understand how these options might manifest in the schooling process. A rare exception of exit, voice, and loyalty in education is work by Matland (1995), which investigated how parents' choose to exit urban, public schools with which they are unhappy. Specifically, this work points out how exit is how schools might be less affected by the exit option, as traditionally they operated with little competition, as zoning laws typically dictate where children go to school. In an era of increasing choice, however, this notion is not necessarily true, which broadens the importance of using this framework in education.

Although public education provides a relatively stable work environment, school takeover may threaten the job status of teachers by (a) school closures, (b) firing them from being labeled as ineffective, or (c) pushing them out of the profession because of the deprofessionalization of teaching 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 teachers' response to the threat of 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 and Levin 2002; Hoxby 2000; Lubienski 2005), the threat of takeover will pressure teachers 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. 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 teachers may respond to state takeovers similarly to how workers respond to organizational outsourcing and downsizing (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt 1984; Sundin and Wikman 2004). Similar to employees faced with downsizing and outsourcing, teachers 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 likely will lead them to feeling less compelled to follow rules (Cheng and Chan 2008; Sverke et al. 2002). Teachers 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. Given that Georgia is a non-union state, there may be less public voice by teachers; however, they may voice opposition to state takeover through changes in their practices. Teachers may also show loyalty to the system by pursuing unethical means of increasing achievement due to added pressure and adopt practices that teach toward the performance measure.

1.5 State takeover and teachers in Georgia

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. During the early 1990s, school takeovers were employed to disrupt inefficient financial systems, and repeated cases of financial crisis (Glazer and Egan 2018; Wong and Shen 2003). In the late 1990s, school takeovers were rationalized by concerns about academic achievement (Burns 2003, Burns 2010; McDermott 2007; Ziebarth 2002). As local boards failed to produce consistently positive results related to financial management, particularly in large urban schools, society's perceptions toward mayors became more favorable in many places (Edelstein 2008). As federal legislation and public actors demand accountability, mayors became increasingly well positioned to employ takeover mechanisms as a means for education reformation (Bishop 2009; Kirst and Edelstein 2006; Wong and Shen 2003). The passage of federal education policies like NCLB and Race to the Top (RTTT) added to states' proclivity to pursue state takeover as a means to improve education (Hursh 2007). The proposed OSD provides an

intriguing case of 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.

In this study, we posit that Georgia is a microcosm of the national school improvement landscape and provides a suitable case for a few reasons. Georgia is a suitable case study because it simultaneously provides an intriguing case of the challenges associated with evaluating teachers using TBA and the educators' responses to statewide turnaround districts. First, Georgia is one of the few states that had an electoral vote on the creation of a state-run turnaround district; thus, there was a campaign with robust discourse on school improvement. Second, similar to other states, school takeover in Georgia is an urban education issue. The majority of schools eligible for takeover are concentrated in large, urban districts and comprised of mostly low-income and African American students. Black students in Georgia account for 37% of the student population but accounted for 89% of schools deemed failing (Lamar 2017). Third, Georgia also featured a hotly contested debate about the suitability of state takeover, with staunch support and opposition across race, class, and ideological lines, similar to New Orleans' (Buras 2014; Jabbar 2015), Memphis' (Glazer and Egan 2016), and Newark's (Chin, Kane, Kozakowski, Schueler, and Staiger 2019; Morel 2018; Russakoff 2015) state takeover campaigns. As a diverse state, Georgia provides a landscape to capture possible variation in teachers' perceptions and responses.

Fourth, Georgia serves as a suitable case because in many respects, Georgia is archetypical of national trends regarding teachers' displeasure regarding the current landscape of education policy. The state has included student achievement in teacher evaluation policy since 2007 (Alexander et al. 2017) and has experienced difficulties with linking teacher effectiveness to student test scores (Mcneil 2014). A 2015 report by the Georgia Department of Education highlighted the frustration of Georgia's educators pertaining to the field of education, their dissatisfaction with the direction of teacher evaluation policy, and a troubling attrition rate (44% of public-school teachers in the state leave within the first five years of employment). Teachers responded that the most prominent reasons for the attrition are the emphasis placed on standardized tests and the lack of voice with regard to policymaking (Owens 2015). Similar to Georgia, the common reasons teachers leave schools nationwide are due to a perceived lack of administrative support, lower salaries, dissatisfactions with testing and accountability pressures, lack of opportunities for advancement, and dissatisfaction with working conditions (Sutcher et al. 2016).

A 2017 report found that 90% of teachers were retained between 2015–2016 and 2016–2017. Georgia's 90% retention rate, overall, is consistent with national averages, as evidence by a recent report by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017). However, schools with larger proportions of high poverty students saw greater turnover, which is consistent with literature on teacher churching in these schools. Georgia experiences greater turnover challenges in poor schools is also indicative of a national phenomenon (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond 2017). Further, the report suggests that the retention rate for teachers with five or fewer years of experience was significantly higher than teachers overall. In addition to leaving the profession all together, the GOSA report further highlights that newer teachers appear to be especially mobile, as evidence by the approximately 40% of teachers who changed school districts having five or fewer years of

experience working as a teacher. Georgia's challenges with decreasing teacher mobility, particularly in schools with higher proportions of poor students, are also emblematic of a national issue. Specifically, the rates of teacher mobility in Georgia mirror those in other places (Darling-Hammond, Sutcher, and Carver-Thomas 2018; Redding and Henry 2019). In Georgia, like the majority of other states, minority students disproportionately bear the burden of teacher attrition, as evidence suggests greater teacher shortages exist within schools with larger proportions of minority and poor students (Sutcher et al. 2016). Georgia's attrition rate of 44% is lower than the national rate of about 66% (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond 2017National Council on Teacher Quality 2015).

2 Data and methods

2.1 Data

We employ a qualitative interview design that integrates multiple perspectives of participants (Weiss 1995). This study focuses on teachers' perceptions of and responses to the threat of state takeover. We argue that an interview study is the most authentic way to gain teachers' perceptions of the threat of state takeover and to capture teachers' voices on issues concerning their job and professional security, which is consistent with other studies examining teachers' perceptions of policy that influence their day-to-day jobs (Hill et al. 1996; Rhodes et al. 1994). This approach also lets us probe teachers' perceptions in a safe environment without predetermining or judging them for their responses (Greenfield et al. 2010).

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 and Coburn 2008; Jensen et al. 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 teachers' responses to the threat of 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 purposefully selected a group of teachers, principals, and other school, district, or state-level educational stakeholders to interview in order to gain their insights on how teachers make sense of and respond to the accountability pressures applied by the threat of state takeover. This study draws from semi-structured interviews with educational leaders who work in urban districts in Georgia. Our sample of participants works in schools and districts that comprise the metropolitan core of the state—an urban center which includes more students of color than any other region of the state. Our sample of participants is purposeful in that we carefully selected a group of individuals who represented the teachers whose practices and perceptions might be affected by the threat of state takeover. 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 most of the individuals selected for participation in the study were actually affected by the threat of state takeover, as well as were at least somewhat knowledgeable of Senate Bill 133. Some of our participants work in schools that were under the threat of state takeover, while others faced very little threat to ever be taken over. This is particularly important when we think about the implications of the threat of state takeover. The interviews were conducted during a six-month time frame from November 2016 through April 2017.

A total of 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, school leaders, and district and state personnel. More than half of our sample was teachers from schools serving very high proportions of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The table also shows that we interviewed teachers from districts of all sizes that tended to be high poverty districts. Lastly, our sample was relatively evenly split in terms of individuals we interviewed from OSD-eligible schools. Of the teachers interviewed, there was a mix between those who worked in schools and schools that were on the eligibility list for school takeover and those who worked in schools and schools were not on the list for school takeover. Specifically, 54% of our sample served in schools that were eligible for state takeover (Table 1).

Interviews were conducted via telephone, and each interview lasted between 60 and 90 min. We acknowledge that conducting interviews via telephone limits the researchers' ability to observe the context in which the teachers 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. However, in an effort to conduct a quality interview, we attended to the following as suggested by Kvale (1996) and Roulston (2010): (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 teachers.

2.2 Data analysis

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 teachers' perceptions and practices were shaped by 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 et al. 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1990) and we used coding to identify emerging themes and highlight areas for additional data collection.

Table 1 Participant sample

Name	District	Position	Gender	School/district size	% SES	OSD eligible
Interviewer 1	State	Teacher	Male	NA	N/A	N/A
Interviewer 2	Harper	Teacher	Male	92.046	59	N/A
Interviewer 3	Erroll	Teacher	Female	113,310	72	N/A
Interviewer 4	Graham	Teacher	Male	103,274	47	N/A
Interviewer 5	Baxter	Teacher	Female	58,563	77	N/A
Interviewer 6	Neptune	Teacher	Female	5027	62	No
Interviewer 7	Baxter	Teacher	Male	58,563	77	No
Interviewer 8	Harper	Teacher	Male	1305	77	No
Interviewer 9	Barley	Teacher	Female	519	92	No
Interviewer 10	Neptune	Teacher	Male	400	55	No
Interviewer 11	Harper	Teacher	Female	1405	42	No
Interviewer 12	Baker	Teacher	Female	N/A	N/A	N/A
Interviewer 13	Copper	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 14	Metal	Teacher	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	1405	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	Teacher	Male	178,000	47	No
Interviewer 27	Plane	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 28	Ball	Teacher	Female	593	100	Yes
Interviewer 29	Cake	Teacher	Male	400	55	No
Interviewer 30	Bell	Teacher	Female	519	92	No
Interviewer 31	Coke	Teacher	Female	98,000	59	No

We developed codes inductively by allowing participants' responses to codify themes and patterns (Miles et al. 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1990). First, we sought to analyze how teachers constructed meaning from state takeover policy. After establishing clear patterns on interpretations related to the threat of state takeover, we moved to better understand how such sensemaking influenced responses to threat of state takeover. Exit, voice, and loyalty helped to guide our understanding about how teachers act in response to threat of state takeover. We focus intently on a subset of data that emerged from interviews with teachers working in schools and districts that are classified as underperforming because these teachers are likely to be most affected by the threat of state takeover.

3 Findings

3.1 Teachers' perceptions of the threat of state takeover

Overall, we find evidence that the threat of state takeover is associated with negative perceptions among teachers, particularly those in districts eligible for state takeover. Three themes (too much pressure, deprofessionalization of teaching, unfairness in the process of testing) emerge from our analysis that paints a compelling narrative of how teachers perceive the threat of state takeover. Our findings imply that teachers have no problem with testing. They have issues with the process (e.g., testing on computers without training students or inconsistency in assessments) and how test scores are used in their evaluation.

"**Too much pressure**" Our results reveal a compelling narrative about how the threat of state takeover may influence teachers' practices and perceptions. On the one hand, we find evidence that the threat of state takeover is associated with negative perceptions among teachers, particularly those in districts eligible for state takeover. These teachers in our study perceived the threat of state takeover as a policy that adds additional pressure to an already difficult job. A teacher from an OSD-eligible middle school stated, "Teachers also [in addition to principals] feel the pressure from TBA because this [testing] is the only conversation you have in meetings with your principals. An intense focus on tests makes the school really tense." A teacher recently serving in a high-needs, lower-performing school echoed these sentiments citing, "State takeovers have really impacted me as a professional… [they] have caused me to be more involved in policy and hyper aware of what's going on professionally and with policy. School facilitates this pressure through meetings."

We also find that, for teachers in OSD-eligible schools, the pressure was related to increased level of stress and as detrimentally harming performance. One teacher tasked with teach English language learners noted, "Teachers perform better when they do not have the stress on them created by tests." This sentiment was expressed by others as well and is consistent with the extant literature on TBA in the NCLB era (Flynt and Morton 2009; Sherwood 2013). This literature highlights how sanctioned-based accountability policies negatively influence the jobs of teachers by creating additional pressure to their jobs. Further, it accentuates how the threat of state takeover amplifies the uneasiness and tension that teachers feel about their job performance, which we also find in our study. It also appears that the testing fears from the NCLB era will transfer into the ESSA era of education policy.

Importantly, sensemaking scholars postulate that differences in context might explain how people with different backgrounds and experiences can land on different positions during their sensemaking process (Coburn 2001, 2006). As such, it is important to distill how teachers come to make sense of state takeover as a policy lever that creates undue pressure and whether or not looks different across schooling contexts. Individuals construct meaning of and perceptions about changes—or in this case the effects of policies—based in large part on past experiences and by using their own working knowledge (Spillane et al. 2002). As such, teachers in well-resourced schools, where the threat of experiencing state takeover looks markedly different compared to those in under-resourced schools these policies often target.

These differences across school contexts likely explain some of the divergence in perceptions about state takeover between teachers in districts that are OSD eligible and those that are not. Our findings suggest that teachers in the latter are less likely to feel the pressures of TBA reforms. For instance, a veteran middle school teacher from a non-OSD–eligible school 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.

A teacher whose students scored very well on state exams stressed the fact that the threat of state takeover was only "a threat not a promise," and characterized the Governor as one only interested in having "the power to takeover [school] more so than [committing] to actually taking them over. In an especially striking contrast to teachers in OSD eligible schools, another high school teacher exclaimed, "I don't foresee a lot of our practices changing and we just focus on our core business of teaching and learning everything else will take care of itself."

In some cases, teachers in schools where concern for takeover was low, individuals regarded the threat as potentially constructive for teachers and students. A science teacher supporting the OSD exclaimed, "The threat places an importance on what you are doing and how you can do [your job] better… This will benefit students and teachers," which further accentuate the divergence in perceptions. Others saw the threat as, "not necessarily a bad thing" and may lead to "more interventions [taken to improve schools] because of the threat of takeover. This might help students," put by a teacher supporting the intentions of the OSD. These teachers' experiences in schools, likely ones with higher achieving students, sufficient support and resources, influence their sensemaking process positively, allowing them to draw positive implications from the threat of state takeover.

"**Deprofessionalization of Teaching**" A second familiar theme that emerged, which was somewhat more consistent across OSD-eligible and non-OSD–eligible groups, was that teachers also perceived the threat of state takeover as contributing to the deprofessionalization of teaching (Milner 2013), which further affects teacher morale. An English teacher in an OSD-eligible school responded, "Teachers perform better when they are treated as professionals… [When] what you are doing is understood and rewarded, you can actually do your job; you can be the best you without that pressure and stress." Unlike the disposition on additional pressures due to the threat of state takeover, there was more consensus and consistency across OSD-eligible and non-OSD–eligible groups. Our findings suggest that the deprofessionalization of teaching occurs through a few avenues including (a) lack of teachers' voice in education policy and school improvement discussions and (b) excessive focus on testing.

All teachers seemed to agree that the primary way deprofessionalization occurred was through limiting the input that teachers have regarding curriculum, policy, and school improvement. For instance, veteran teacher lamenting the teachers' lack of involvement in the school improvement process remarked, "Currently schools are controlled by people

who are not trained [on how] to educate children." This was further suggested by another tenured teacher who pointed out, "they [politicians] have never set foot in a classroom and yet they are going to tell me what to do with my students. How 'bout' coming in and sitting in my classroom and learning my kids first." This lack of teacher voice is troubling because it contributes to an already complicated relationship between school personnel and politicians, wherein teachers constantly feel blamed for academic woes and respond defensively to such critiques. This does not bold well for improving the professional as a whole.

Another avenue through which deprofessionalization occurs via TBA highlighted by participants in our study was based on the extent to which the threat of state takeover stifled creativity by devoting exclusive focus on test-taking activities and strategies, while other important subject areas are ignored. Teachers described the culture of teaching as very restricted when the focus is only on tests and lamented how it limits their ability and willingness to do more than focus on tests. This narrowing of the curriculum (Cullen and Reback 2006; Figlio and Getzler 2006; Jacob 2005; Jacob and Levitt 2003) sent the message to many teachers, particularly in OSD-eligible schools that "unless you're teaching math, ELA, or science, you don't matter."

"Unfair processes" We also find evidence that teachers perceive accountabilities pressures as unfair. Our interviewees highlighted that more attention should be given to the ways the process of testing may disadvantage teachers. Our findings illustrate a number of concerns regarding the testing process including (a) benchmark tests, (b) timely access to testing materials, and (c) computer adaptive testing.

For instance, our analysis revealed that the state takeover provisions using Georgia's College and Career Readiness Performance Indicator (CCRPI) (the state's benchmark tests) as the sole measure of school's effectiveness were perceived as unfair because for a number of reasons. One, the performance measure for CCRPI, Georgia Milestones, was created during the school year. Two, teachers had no access to testing materials prior to and were measured using data from these tests, which had no previous years of data for comparison. A novice teacher in an OSD-eligible school summarized this problem nicely:

> We honestly done know what's even on the tests to prepare kids. We are handled a book and told to teach from it, but there is not time to go through all of those testing materials and get through lesson plans. What are we supposed to do then—just throw away our lesson plans a teach line-by-line from a book that we do not even understand?

Computer adaptive tests were also a point of concern. Teachers highlighted that tests are also now conducted on computers and many students lack basic typing skills. One teacher in school eligible for takeover mentioned, "When I was teaching middle school, I had the chance to get students to learn on their own. [Now] I spend too much time in CPU lab helping students learn [how to work the] keyboard in preparation for a computerized test." Another middle school teacher remarked, "I take away so much time from lesson planning to teach basic details for the tests," which affected his ability to teach well. This raises grave concerns about what students are actually being assessed on, as typing limitations should not be included in measures of content acquisition. Especially when teachers' evaluations are dependent on the outcomes of those tests, which was a major source of anxiety for teachers in our sample.

Another point of concern raised by teachers felt that they were not given enough time to actually teach and engage students in a way that would make meaningful impacts in the lives of their students and that the tests did not reflect their teaching. Interviewees concurred that there is an increased spotlight on teachers with regard to instructional quality with the advent of a statewide turnaround district, but that quality was reduced to only testing performance that teacher engaged less in tasks outside of test-taking strategies because tests scores "are what count, nothing else," put by a first-year elementary school teacher.

3.2 Teachers' responses to the threat of state takeover

Table 2 summarizes the possible responses, actors, and rationale to the threat of state takeover. Teachers' range of reactions falls along the range of the exit, voice, and loyalty framework. We do find a pattern between job security and the response to the threat of state takeover—the teachers least secure in their job status (e.g., newer teachers in OSD-eligible schools) appear more likely to exit whereas the most secure teachers seem more likely to exercise voice. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests an inverse relation between job insecurity and voice (Berntson et al. 2010). The most common response, however, is that teachers remain "loyal" to the school, and adopt practices such as teaching to the test. Our results suggest that how teachers respond to the threat of state takeover is partly a function of takeover eligibility.

3.3 Exit

Our study indicates that the teachers exercise their "exit" option by leaving schools under the threat of takeover to seek employment at schools or in districts that are not facing state takeover. While we have not directly assessed the number of teachers leaving such schools, the sheer volume of responses we received related to exiting the

Table 2 Applying exit, voice and loyalty to the threat of state takeover

Response to the threat of state takeover	Actors	Possible rationale
Exit	• Newer/less experienced/lower quality teachers in low-performing schools • Incoming/pre-service teachers (avoid teaching profession)	• Additional pressures • Deprofessionalization of teaching
Voice	• Experienced teachers in OSD-eligible schools • Teachers are high-performing, non-OSD-eligible schools • Teachers at all schools dissatisfied with takeover	• Deprofessionalization of teaching • Unfairness in testing process
Loyalty	• Teachers in OSD-eligible schools •Teachers in schools near the threshold for takeover eligibility • Teachers in non-OSD–eligible schools	• Additional pressures • Commitment to students and the ideals of public education

system should concern politicians. For instance, one teacher serving in a high turnover school pointed to the retention rate among teachers in a large OSD-eligible district citing, "Looking at APS [Atlanta Public Schools], their retention is bad, experiences are not good, even without takeover. With all this negative attention, even more teachers will leave." If teachers begin to leave a district that already faces challenges in hiring highly effective teachers, then the OSD will exacerbate an existing equity problem relating to the distribution of effective teachers across districts and schools, rather than solve this problem.

Another challenge related to exiting the system is that state takeover threatens a primary benefit of teaching, which is its provision of job security. Another teacher from an OSD-eligible school suggested as much, noting "some may need to go, but other good teachers will leave these schools for better ones or might quit teacher altogether. These changes won't be good for retention." As Davis-Blake et al. (2003) highlight, employees are likely leave professions when they do not feel that their job status is secure.

Another potential way teachers may be exiting the system is by encouraging other prospective teachers to consider other professions. A poll on Georgia's teachers reveals that a large number of teachers dissuade their students from becoming teachers themselves, citing hyper focus on tests by policymakers as among the leading reasons (Owens 2015).

Our results also suggest that the exit option might be exercised by teachers becoming more selective about the schools where they take jobs—there was a prevailing sense that teachers are avoiding takeover eligible schools or schools near the threshold.

The threat of state takeover may have adverse implications on teacher sorting and school improvement. If teachers begin to leave a district that already faces challenges in hiring highly effective teachers, then the OSD will exacerbate an existing equity problem relating to the distribution of effective teachers across districts and schools, rather than solve this problem. Research on state takeover in New Orleans and Tennessee illustrates the resultant teacher sorting that accompanies state takeover. Similar to that research, we also find that attrition will likely increase as a result of negative perceptions to both policies and increased pressure within low-performing schools.

3.4 Voice

There is an overall displeasure among a variety of teachers with the advent of a statewide turnaround district. Our analyses reveal that, though a non-trivial number of teachers showed an intent to leave the profession should the OSD passed, voice was the much 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. Our results indicate that teachers expressed voice in different ways—largely either through the vote or through changes in practices.

Our findings suggest that teachers voice their frustrations through their vote in November. As teachers process information and their experiences to come to understand the affront to the professional of teaching wrought by state takeover, their actions are likely to be influenced accordingly (Jensen et al. 2009). This is captured by a teacher in our study who mentioned, "voices are essentially muted until the November

election, where we have the opportunity to vote them out." Our study found that many feel as though they are not "allowed to overtly comment on their feelings about OSD," as summarized by one middle school teacher, fearing backlash from the governor who publicly threatened political retaliation against those opposing the OSD.

Another sentiment expressed by a teacher in an OSD-eligible school that captures teachers' perceptions regarding the suppression of their voices is that they feel that their "voices are never really listened to." Teachers 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). Senior teachers, however, tend to be more willing to publically voice their concerns, as they feel less concern over being reprimanded. Given that Georgia is a non-union state, it is unsurprising that our findings suggest that among all teachers, there may be opposition that is voiced at the ballot box rather than publicly. Our findings also confirm the hypothesis that secure teachers, typically more experienced teachers in school eligible for state takeover or teachers in high-performing schools that are not on the list of eligible schools for state takeover, are more likely to voice frustration because they are less likely to be fired or directly impacted by state takeover.

Our findings also suggest that teachers' voice may be manifested through changes in practices. Teachers and school leaders in OSD-eligible schools exercised voice 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." A high-performing social studies teacher in an OSD-eligible school 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, however, 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. These higher performing teachers sought creative ways to bypass unethical practices such as teaching to the test, by doing their best to stick to their principles of teaching while in the classroom. Some teachers are more willing to come together with school community to find additional ways and strategies that work for students.

To better understand these findings, we position our study within the broader literature on the erasure of teacher voice in education policy (Broemmel 2006; Hargreaves 1996; Goldstein 2008; Kirk and Macdonald 2001), which further distill prior comments on the deprofessionalization of teaching (Milner 2013). To the extent that teachers' voice continue to be ignored by policymakers, the responses exhibited by teachers in our study, namely those in hard-to-staff schools, are likely to continue to the detriment of students. As is common in any field, feeling that your hard work is both recognized and valued is necessary for remaining motivated and persisting through challenges that arise in the workplace. As such, it is unsurprising that teachers both catalyzed educations decision-makers as lacking the necessary, "Classroom experience to actually improve schools through policy," further suggesting how teaching has become so "deprofessionalized" that their input is passed over in favor of input from "inexperienced policymakers who have never set foot in a classroom," as was suggested by many teachers.

Therefore, increasing teacher voice is important for a number of reasons. First, a lack of voice will likely continue current inequities in the distribution of teacher quality, which leaves less qualified teachers in school settings with larger proportions of disadvantaged students (Goldhaber, Lavery, and Theobald 2015; Kalogrides, Loeb, & Béteille, 2013; Kalogrides et al. 2015). Additionally, teachers connect with students in a way unlike others involved in the schooling, which gives them unique insights that can inform and bolster policy decisions.

3.5 Loyalty

The most common response, however, is that teachers remain "loyal" to the school, and adopt practices such as teaching to the test. Our findings highlight the reality that teachers often justify teaching to the test as a rational response to the TBA pressures (Weinbaum et al. 2012). These are more likely to be teachers who are new, who teach students who are not excelling, and who comply out of fear of being reprimanded. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests an inverse relation between job insecurity and voice Berntson et al. 2010). For instance, a number of teachers pointed out that though they consistently felt "targeted by the OSD rhetoric," that they would remain "committed to our students" and would accept the changes because, "the kids are who matter most," which were consistent themes emanating from our interviews.

The students, they argue, are more important than politics at the national, state, or local level, which facilitated their choice to comply with changes wrought by threats of takeover. Therefore, they will remain in their districts and schools for the sake of the children and for the sake of local control. Loyalty was most explicitly endorsed by a number of teachers in poor-performing schools and classrooms, who were well aware that their students were struggling. These teachers felt as though lacking substantial gains in academic achievement among their students did not give them the leverage to react through voice nor the résumé to do so through exit. Therefore, these teachers were described as more likely to simply "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."

For those serving in non-OSD–eligible districts, this loyalty manifested differently, such that some teachers and leaders in our sample took active steps to ensure the OSD passed. For instance, a teacher in a state charter school described a process where, "we would have education sessions about the OSD because parents called with questions." Avoiding telling parents how to vote, this teacher also mentioned trying to, "offer details that were real to them and just the rhetoric that made it [the OSD] seem all bad. Similarly, others disclosed having joined local parental choice advocacy groups supporting the OSD, one stating, "we want parents to know their options and not feel forced or trapped in ineffective schools," exclaimed by a social studies teacher in southern Georgia.

In effect, the loyalty expressed by participants in OSD versus non-OSD–eligible schools was stark and manifested very differently. Those in the former tended to comply and accept whatever the ruling for fear of ruffling feathers and out of concern that they did not have the backing to opposed measures taken in response to the OSD. On the other hand, those from non-OSD–eligible groups expressed loyalty by not only supporting the amendment, but by trying to encourage parents to do so as well out of a

sense that they were advocating for the needs of parents unaware of choices that could be made available to them with the passage of the OSD.

3.6 Beyond influencing teachers

Our findings also highlight that the threat of state takeover also influences schools, namely by shaping school climate. Our findings indicate that the threat of state takeover may shape school climate in a few ways including (a) testing hijacks meetings and conversations in school buildings, (b) job status anxiety, (c) less collaboration among teachers, and (d) fidelity of data use and manipulation of data.

Specifically, teachers in OSD-eligible districts perceived the threat of state takeover as having created "this culture of testing where do nothing but focus on test," as expressed by an experienced math teacher. Another veteran teacher noted that "teacher morale is very low" because all the meetings are about how to boost students' tests scores and do not feature the elements "that drove us [teachers] into the field [of teaching] anymore."

The fear of being taken over was enough to disrupt the entire climate of the schools, as it made teachers feel very "anxious about students and job placement," whether they were close to being off the list of potential takeovers or not. Teachers were well aware of the fact that schools that were taken over in other states usually lose a large number of their staff, and this contributed to a poorer school climate. This concern of job placement was not just about the pressure of new teachers finding employment, but also about who would teacher their students. An elementary school teacher captured this well stating:

> I was highly upset [when we got on the list], I was nervous, constantly asking myself what's next, and where I would go from here. I was also thinking about my students. Who is going to teach them? Will they go to other schools. It was a scared straight moment and I knew I would have to work overtime to make sure my students did well.

It is important to note that the school climate facilitated by the threat of state takeover is not one that teachers support. For example, teachers are not satisfied with the reality that their evaluations are determined in large part by students' performance on state-mandated tests. They fear that the climate that high-stakes testing creates pushes them to teach to the test and focus on bubble students, who are those students that are just above and just below thresholds for passing benchmark exams. Data from our study reveal that teachers feel they have little to no choice in these practices, as their actions have long-term effects on their careers and families. Further, even when teachers develop practices that are more effective for student learning, they run the risk of being removed if school administrators do not prefer the alternative. Our findings support the notion that teachers respond to accountability pressures in ways that are rational for their professional and personal lives that also influences schools as organizations.

A major contribution to our study is that teachers interviewed displayed a cognitive dissonance between how they perceived the practice of teaching to the test from a moral and ethical standpoint and how they used the practices in their attempts to avoid sanctions like takeover and being labeled ineffective. For instance, one math teacher commented, "I do not believe in teaching to the test. If we follow standards and consistently have high expectation, our students will excel. Our standards are rigorous

enough to prepare us to teach students," but later mentioned that she does spend "a lot of time on going over the tests when they come up." This is consistent with prior research that shows teaching to the test is not always dichotomous, but that it can be used on a spectrum (Jennings and Bearak 2014). As such, participants found ways to justify the use of teaching to the test, even though they spoke negatively of the practice and of the pressure that led them to use it. This was expressed even among teachers in non-OSD–eligible districts who remarked

> I understand why and know some teachers who do teach to the test. [Their] students are so deep in a whole, 90-100 percent free and reduced lunch, over 70 percent not language proficient and its reasonable for them to think that this is a test taking strategy that will increase scores.

Another teacher from a high school not on the list echoed these sentiments by saying, "I get why some focus only on subjects that students are tested on. The threat and the pressure lead to that, but they know its harmful to students."

Perhaps, this same cognitive dissonance helps to explain, at least in part, some of the teachers and school administrators involved in cheating scandals on tests, as accountability sanctions appear to be clouding the judgment of educators. Teachers know that they sometimes use practices counterproductive to student learning, but feel so pressured to perform to receive good evaluations that they engage in them anyway, further suggesting a strong cognitive dissonance. More importantly, there is crystallizing consensus that teaching to the test and other means of gaming the system are becoming normalized and necessary to survive in the prevailing policy environment. In essence, there is a sense that the combination of state takeover and TBA does not allow teachers to truly respond to students' needs, but pressure them to choose between pedagogies focused on the long process of learning and those featuring test-taking tips that may results in improved test scores but may not produce learning.

3.7 Teaching to the test as an organizational response

Figure 1 illustrates the details of how teaching to the test occurs in schools. Our results reinforce the notion that teaching to the test is an organizational rather than an individual endeavor. Teaching to the test is the result of increased pressure from administrators as well as personal pressure. In other words, teaching to the test is not unilateral decision of teachers as low performance on benchmark testing and end of the year assessments leads to administrative pressure. The first step in teaching to the test is to identify and target the students in the bottom 10–25% of the achievement distribution. Students are identified by triangulating data and this is largely done by principals and administrators. Teachers get a predetermined list.

Interviews illustrated a focus on students with disabilities and a subset of "bubble" students. Teachers noted that students with disabilities were placed into more general education classrooms in order to gain points for these students being in their least restrictive environment for at least 80% of the day. Teachers were asked to focus heavily on "swing students" (students in the bottom 25% that may be able to move out) whereas others falling in the bottom 25% were largely ignored, consistent with other studies (Booher-Jennings 2005). Our findings imply that teachers spent far less time on

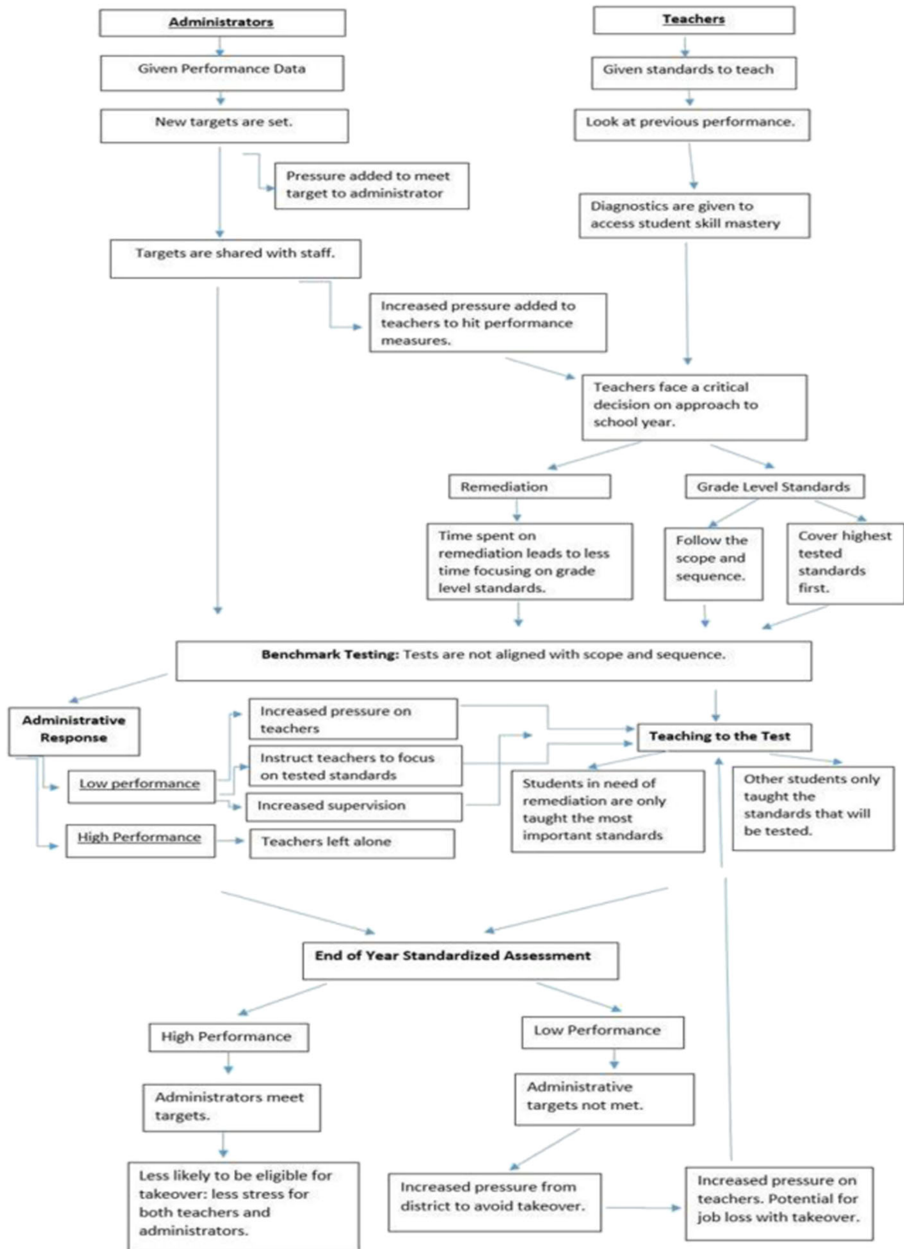

Fig. 1 Responding to accountability pressures and the threat of state takeover

students at or above grade level, while devoting their attention almost exclusively to students very close to the passing threshold. For instance, an elementary school teacher reported that her school started a "Raising the bar tutorial program [that] goes until 5:30 and [for which] we provide dinner. The program focuses on educating students very close to passing and teaches students to "zone in on test [their] taking strategies."

Additionally, our findings suggest that there was variation in pressure and thus teachers' practices by grade level and the grade span of schools. While increased pressure was felt by all teachers, there was greater pressure placed on those who taught in 3rd, 5th, and 8th grades—the grades in which students take state-mandated tests.

Data manipulation of measures that were not associated with student achievement to boost school performance scores was also a way in which teachers' practices were affected. A senior teacher in an OSD-eligible school pointed out how her school, "stopped suspending students or just let them leave early" to improve school discipline scores. The lack of behavioral support left many teachers feeling as though there were no true consequences for student's actions and they saw an increase in disruptive behaviors making it even more difficult to teach in low-performing scenarios. There was a focus on obtaining "easy" points. Teachers were all asked to perform a certain number of clicks within the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) in order to gain CCRPI points. In an effort to improve the use of data in schools, Georgia implemented a policy that allowed teachers and school were rated more favorably in their evaluations if they logged into the SLDS to monitor data. However, the pressure of the OSD appeared to influence some teachers' choices to manipulate the decisions, as they placed heavily emphasis on just logging into the system to score easy points. As such, the focus was on the number of log-ins but not the actual process of using the platform to analyze data for practice.

4 Discussion

A better understanding of how teachers respond to school improvement policies is critical to ensuring that education policy solutions are informed by the insights of teachers. Our study provides insights on how the threat of state takeover may shape teachers' perceptions and practices. The changes in teachers' perceptions and practices due to the threat of school takeover are nuanced. The threat of state takeover appears to intensify many of the undesirable consequences of TBA documented in the literature (Amrein-Beardsley et al. 2010; Hargrove et al. 2000; Phelps 2011).

Our findings have significant equity implications. Practices such as teaching to the test and focusing on bubble students might help teachers receive better evaluations, but do very little to actually ensure that students are learning and progressing through school. The changes in practices catalyzed by TBA and the threat of state takeover have a disproportionate effect on students of color and other marginalized students (Henig et al. 2001; Morel 2018; Orr 1999; Russakoff 2015; Vang 2017). These students are in particular need of best practice for teaching and should not be the ones receiving the brunt of poor teaching practices such as teaching to the test. Further, reductions in the scope of the curriculum, to almost exclusively feature subject areas that will be tested, may send an undesirable and deficit-oriented message that students in certain schools are not capable of learning content. At the same time, so doing also hinders these students access to a diverse curricumlum that equips them for life beyond math and Eglish tests.

Furthermore, teachers serving these students should not have to do so with the added stress of worrying about their job security. This is especially concerning considering the reality that policymakers should be seeking to ensure that the best teachers get hired in hard-to-staff schools. Our results also suggest that state takeover will likely exacerbate existing inequalities in the distribution of teacher quality across and within school

districts. Widespread evidence documents how teachers' pre-teacher characteristics, such as years of experience and test scores, are differentially sorted across schools (Clotfelter et al. 2005; Goldhaber 2008; Isenberg et al. 2013; Jackson 2009; Lankford et al. 2002; Glazaerman and Max 2011). This sorting mechanism leaves poor, urban, and lower-achieving students disproportionately exposed to lower performing teachers (Goldhaber 2008; Lankford et al. 2002). Given that lower-performing, urban schools are more likely to be taken over, there should be considerable concern that the threat of state takeover may worsen these trends.

The exit, voice, and loyalty framework allows us to examine dimensions that should trouble policymakers and practitioners. For instance, teachers in our study serving in disadvantaged schools, where lower teacher quality is evidenced, offered two mechanisms by which exit and voice might manifest. Teachers referenced being aware of a number of teachers seeking employment in other schools—exhibiting exit. Teachers also suggested being less likely to encourage their students to enter the teaching professions—highlighting the power of voice. Both can have important negative ramifications for students most in need of quality teachers.

Further, assuming the threat of state takeover looms large in teachers' practices, our results suggest that it may put teachers who serve in hard-to-staff schools at a crossroads: (a) deliberating between engaging in unethical teaching practices to boost achievement or (b) leaving such schools to avoid lower teacher effectiveness scores. Our findings display this potentially troubling implication through the practices used by teachers in Georgia to avoid state takeover. This finding is also supported by other literature on state takeover (Cullen and Reback 2006; Figlio and Getzler 2006; Jacob 2004; Jacob and Levitt 2003). Further, problematizing this issue is the fact that our study suggests a normalization of unethical practices is becoming increasingly commonplace among teachers striving to meet educational quotas. As a result, this should concern educators and policymakers. Teachers are placed in compromising positions and the resulting dissonance between their perceptions and behaviors is influencing their ability to properly educate students.

The results raise concerns about the sustainability of state takeover as a school improvement policy. Getting the buy-in of educators is critical to translating policies into sustainable improvement in student learning. Our findings indicate that educators appear to lack confidence in the ability of policymakers to develop policies that promote teaching and learning in classrooms. There is a sense that much of the educational policy and school improvement strategies are in the best interest of students, and this is due to a lack of policymakers' granular understanding of learning conditions. Teachers' frustrations illustrate that teachers feel left out of the policymaking discussions and decisions that affect their daily work. The findings also implore policymakers to seek educators' input as they formulate school improvement reforms.

4.1 Implications for policy

Our findings have important implications for future debates and about school improvement strategies going forward. Teachers and school leaders in our study highlight the contentious relationship existing between them and policymakers. This relationship is consistently exacerbated as policymakers continue to paint teachers and principals as responsible for the achievement challenges urban schools face. As such, policymakers should pay more attention to providing more resources to support teachers and

to finding ways to more constructively engage school leaders. This engagement should extend beyond the provision of resources, which are a necessary condition to meet, but should also focus on fostering relationships that are conducive for student success and that span all elements of the education process.

Further, this engagement must be based on a different set of principles and tactics than those used in the promotion of the OSD; ones informed by and attuned to the challenges schools face when educating students and ones that leverage the access teachers, leaders, and community members have to students to effect lasting change. At the same time, teachers and school leaders must consistently assess themselves and seek ways that they can improve their practice, so as to better serve students. A reform of this nature could potentially quell that contentious relationship between policymakers and school leaders and form one more collaborative and less political.

This type of engagement is not a pipe dream, as evidenced by campaigns for state takeover in Massachusetts (Schueler 2019). There, the state took over a consistently low-performing school district, but leveraged community resources, capacity, and involvement to create partnerships that helped improve schools in the district. While this process did involve many structural changes similar to those proposed in the OSD, the manner in which they were described and rolled out did not cast teachers as responsible but worked with them to bring change. Critical to the success of the kind of policy and practice engagement that took place there was the fact that the majority of teachers continued to serve in their schools, further emblematicizing politicians' commitment to working with teachers.

In building this relationship, the importance of targeted provisions of resources cannot be overstated, as is made clear even in the case of Massachusetts. To that end, research consistently highlights how a common element that drives teachers' perceptions of school improvement strategies are access to training and resources (Elliott 1988; Ringwalt et al. 2003). When teachers have such support, they are more committed to reforms (Kam, Greenberg, and Walls 2003; Ransford et al. 2009), which leaves them less prone to engaging in the unethical practices influenced by the threat of state takeover. Teacher policy in these schools is crucial to school improvement. Our findings echo prior suggestions that new resources ought to accompany reforms to have effective outcomes (Harris and Herrington 2006) and strategies to support teachers in school improvement will likely require additional resources (Alexander et al. 2017).

Future work ought to place greater emphasis on the process of testing, in particular, how students' test-taking skills may affect teachers' practices and evaluations. Such work may result in mining the best strategies to enhance students' test-taking abilities that can be implemented in teacher preparation. Another area for further inquiry is the preparation for principals and how to navigate the accountability pressure that lead to teaching to the test. Principals play a major role in these processes; thus, their training process should prepare them to handle these pressures. Principals should relieve rather than add to the pressure faced by teachers.

References

Alexander, N. A., Jang, S. T., & Kankane, S. (2017). The performance cycle: the association between student achievement and state policies tying together teacher performance, student achievement, and accountability. *American Journal of Education, 123*(3), 413–446.

Amrein-Beardsley, A., Berliner, D. C., & Rideau, S. (2010). Cheating in the first, second, and third degree: educators' responses to high-stakes testing. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 18*, 14.

Anderson, M. H. (2006). How can we know what we think until we see what we said?: a citation and citation context analysis of Karl Weick's The Social Psychology of Organizing. *Organization Studies, 27*(11), 1675–1692.

Belfield, C. R., & Levin, H. M. (2002). The effects of competition between schools on educational outcomes: a review for the United States. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(2), 279–341.

Berntson, E., Näswall, K., & Sverke, M. (2010). The moderating role of employability in the association between job insecurity and exit, voice, loyalty and neglect. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 31*(2), 215–230.

Berry Cullen, J., & Reback, R. (2006). Tinkering toward accolades: school gaming under a performance accountability system. In Improving school accountability (pp. 1–34). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Bishop, J. Z. (2009). The Impact of a State Takeover on Academic Achievement, School Performance, and School Leadership in a Rural South Carolina School District. ProQuest LLC. 789 East Eisenhower Parkway, PO Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Booher-Jennings, J. (2005). Below the bubble: 'Educational Triage' and the Texas accountability system. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*(2), 231–268.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005). Explaining the short careers of high-achieving teachers in schools with low-performing students. *American Economic Review, 95*(2), 166–171.

Broemmel, A. D. (2006). No teacher left behind: Valuing teacher voice in elementary reading teacher education reform. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 46*(1), 53–71.

Buras, K. (2014). *Charter schools, race, and urban space: Where the market meets grassroots resistance*. New York: Routledge.

Burns, P. (2010). Race and support for state takeovers of local school districts. *Urban Education, 45*(3), 274–292.

Burns, P. (2003). Regime theory, state government, and a takeover of urban education. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 25*(3), 285–303.

Byrd-Blake, M., Afolayan, M. O., Hunt, J. W., Fabunmi, M., Pryor, B. W., & Leander, R. (2010). Morale of teachers in high poverty schools: a postNCLB mixed methods analysis. *Education and Urban Society, 42*, 450–472.

Carver-Thomas, D., Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher turnover: why it matters and what we can do about it. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-turnover-report. Accessed Sept 2018

Center on Education Policy. (2006). From the capital to the classroom: year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act. Available from www.cep-dc.org. Accessed Jan 2019

Cheng, G. H. L., & Chan, D. K. S. (2008). Who suffers more from job insecurity? A meta-analytic review. *Applied Psychology, 57*(2), 272–303.

Chin, M., Kane, T. J., Kozakowski, W., Schueler, B. E., & Staiger, D. O. (2019). School district reform in Newark: Within-and between-school changes in achievement growth. *ILR Review, 72*(2), 323–354.

Choo, C. W. (2001). Environmental scanning as information seeking and organizational learning. *Information Research, 7*(1), 7–1.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. (2005). Who teaches whom? Race and the distribution of novice teachers. *Economics of Education Review, 24*(4), 377–392.

Coburn, C. E. (2001). Collective sensemaking about reading: how teachers mediate reading policy in their professional communities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(2), 145–170.

Coburn, C. E. (2006). Framing the problem of reading instruction: Using frame analysis to uncover the microprocesses of policy implementation. *American educational research journal, 43*(3), 343–349.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement. *Education policy analysis archives, 8*, 1.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Race, inequality and educational accountability: the irony of 'No Child Left Behind'. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 10*(3), 245–260.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). Can value added add value to teacher evaluation? *Educational Researcher, 44*(2), 132–137.

Darling-Hammond, L., Bae, S., Cook-Harvey, C. M., Lam, L., Mercer, C., Podolsky, A., & Stosich, E. L. (2016). *Pathways to new accountability through the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Palo Alto: Learning Policy Institute.

Darling-Hammond, L., Sutcher, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). Teacher shortages in California: Status, sources, and potential solutions.

Datnow, A., & Park, V. (2009). School system strategies for supporting data use. *Handbook of data-based decision making in education*, 191–206.

Davis, S. H., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). Innovative principal preparation programs: what works and how we know. *Planning and Changing, 43*(1/2), 25.

Davis-Blake, A., Broschak, J. P., & George, E. (2003). Happy together? How using nonstandard workers affects exit, voice, and loyalty among standard employees. *Academy of Management Journal, 46*(4), 475–485.

Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. A. (1982). *Corporate Cultures: TheRitesandRitualsofCorporate Life*. Reading: AddisonWesley.

Dee, T., Jacob, B., & Schwartz, N. (2013). The effects of NCLB on school resources and practices. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 35*, 252–279.

Edelstein, F. (2008). The evolving political role of urban mayors in education. *Handbook of education politics and policy*, 179-194.

Eberts, R. W., Hollenbeck, K. M., & Stone, J. 2002 . Teacher performance incentives, collective bargaining, and student outcomes. In proceedings of the annual meeting-industrial relatoins research association (pp. 180-192). IRRA; 1999.

Ehren, M. C., & Hatch, T. (2013). Responses of schools to accountability systems using multiple measures: The case of New York City elementary schools. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 25*(4), 341–373.

Elliott, S. N. (1988). Acceptability of behavioral treatments: review of variables that influence treatment selection. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 19*(1), 68.

Evans, A. E. (2007). School leaders and their sensemaking about race and demographic change. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(2), 159–188.

Figlio, D. (2006). Testing, crime and punishment. *Journal of Public Economics, 90*(4), 837–851.

Figlio, D. N., & Getzler, L. S. (2006). Accountability, ability and disability: gaming the system?. In *Improving school accountability* (pp. 35–49). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Figlio, D., & Loeb, S. (2011). School accountability. In Handbook of the Economics of Education (Vol. 3, pp. 383–421). Elsevier.

Figlio, D. N., & Rouse, C. E. (2006). Do accountability and voucher threats improve low-performing schools? *Journal of Public Economics, 90*(1–2), 239–255.

Fiss, P. C., & Hirsch, P. M. (2005). The discourse of globalization: Framing and sensemaking of an emerging concept. *American Sociological Review, 70*(1), 29–52.

Fligstein, N. (2001). Social skill and the theory of fields. *Sociological Theory, 19*(2), 105–125.

Flynt, S. W., & Morton, R. C. (2009). The teacher shortage in America: pressing concerns. *National Forum of Teacher Education Journal, 19*(3), 1–5.

Gallucci, C. (2003). Communities of Practice and the Mediation ofTeachers' Responses to Standards-based Reform. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*, 35.

Glazer, J. L., & Egan, C. (2018). The ties that bind: Building civic capacity for the Tennessee Achievement School District. *American Educational Research Journal, 55*(5), 928–964.

Goldstein, L. S. (2008). Kindergarten teachers making "street-level" education policy in the wake of No Child Left Behind. *Early Education and Development, 19*(3), 448–478.

Goldhaber, D. (2008). Teachers matter, but effective teacher quality policies are elusive. *Handbook of research in education finance and policy*, 1.

Goldhaber, D., Lavery, L., & Theobald, R. (2015). Uneven playing field? Assessing the teacher quality gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. *Educational researcher, 44*(5), 293–307.

Greenfield, R., Rinaldi, C., Proctor, C. P., & Cardarelli, A. (2010). Teachers' perceptions of a response to intervention (RTI) reform effort in an urban elementary school: a consensual qualitative analysis. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 21*(1), 47–63.

Greenhalgh, L., & Rosenblatt, Z. (1984). Job insecurity: toward conceptual clarity. *Academy of Management Review, 9*(3), 438–448.

Grissom, J. A., Nicholson-Crotty, S., & Harrington, J. R. (2014). Estimating the effects of No Child Left Behind on teachers' work environments and job attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 36*(4), 417–436.

Haladyna, T., Haas, N., & Allison, J. (1998). Continuing tensions in standardized testing. *Childhood Education, 74*(5), 262–273.

Hamilton, L. S., Stecher, B. M., Marsh, J. A., McCombs, J. S., & Robyn, A. (2007). Standards-based accountability under No Child Left Behind: experiences of teachers and administrators in three states. Rand Corporation.

Hannaway, J., & Hamilton, L. (2008). *Performancebased accountability policies: implications for school and classroom practices*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute and RAND Corporation.
Hanushek, E. (1971). Teacher characteristics and gains in student achievement: estimation using micro data. *The American Economic Review, 61*(2), 280–288.
Hanushek, E. A. (1981). The impact of differential expenditures on school performance. *Educational Researcher, 18*(4), 45–62.
Hanushek, E. A. (1989). Throwing money at schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 1*, 19–41.
Hanuskek, E. A. (2014) Encyclopedia of EEF Ed production functions and productivity.
Hargreaves, D. H. (1996). Teaching as a research-based profession: possibilities and prospects. Teacher training agency annual lecture.
Hargrove, T. Y., Jones, M. G., Jones, B. D., Hardin, B., Chapman, L., & Davis, M. (2000). Unintended consequences of high-stakes testing in North Carolina: teacher perceptions. *ERS Spectrum, 18*(4), 21–25.
Harris, D. N., & Herrington, C. D. (2006). Accountability, standards, and the growing achievement gap: lessons from the past half-century. *American Journal of Education, 112*(2), 209–238.
Haverly, C., Calabrese Barton, A., Schwarz, C. V., & Braaten, M. (2018). "Making Space": How Novice Teachers Create Opportunities for Equitable Sense-Making in Elementary Science. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 0022487118800706.
Henig, J. R., Hula, R. C., Orr, M., & Pedescleaux, D. S. (2001). The color of school reform: race, politics, and the challenge of urban education. Princeton University Press.
Hill, C. E., Nutt-Williams, K., Heaton, K. J., Thompson, B. J., & Rhodes, R. H. (1996). Therapist retrospective recall of impasses in long-term psychotherapy: a qualitative analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43*(2), 207–217.
Hirschman, A. O. (1970). Exit, voice, and loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states (Vol. 25). Harvard university press.
Honig, M. I., & Coburn, C. (2008). Evidence-based decision making in school district central offices: toward a policy and research agenda. *Educational Policy, 22*(4), 578–608.
Hoxby, C. M. (2000). Does competition among public schools benefit students and taxpayers? *American Economic Review, 90*(5), 1209–1238.
Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the rise of neoliberal education policies. *American educational research journal, 44*(3), 493–518.
Inman, D., & Marlow, L. (2004). Teacher retention: why do beginning teachers remain in the profession? *Education, 124*(4), 605.
Irby, D. J. (2018). Mo'Data, Mo'Problems: making sense of racial discipline disparities in a large diversifying suburban high school. Educational Administration Quarterly, 0013161X18769051.
Isenberg, T., Isenberg, P., Chen, J., Sedlmair, M., & Möller, T. (2013). A systematic review on the practice of evaluating visualization. *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics, 19*(12), 2818–2827.
Jabbar, H. (2015). 'Drenched in the past': the evolution of market-oriented reforms in New Orleans. *Journal of Education Policy, 30*(6), 751–772.
Jacob, B. A. (2005). Accountability, incentives and behavior: the impact of high-stakes testing in the Chicago public schools. *Journal of Public Economics, 89*(5–6), 761–796.
Jacob, B. A., & Levitt, S. (2003). Rotten apples: an investigation of the prevalence and predictors of teacher cheating. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 118*, 843–877.
Jackson, C. K. (2009). Student demographics, teacher sorting, and teacher quality: Evidence from the end of school desegregation. *Journal of Labor Economics, 27*(2), 213–256.
Jennings, N. E. (1996). *Interpreting policy in real classrooms: case studies of state reform and teacher practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
Jennings, J. L., & Bearak, J. M. (2014). "Teaching to the Test" in the NCLB Era how test predictability affects our understanding of student performance. *Educational Researcher*, 0013189X14554449.
Jennings, J. L., & Lauen, D. L. (2016). Accountability, inequality, and achievement: the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on multiple measures of student learning. *RSF*.
Jensen, T. B., & Aanestad, M. (2007). Hospitality and hostility in hospitals: a case study of an EPR adoption among surgeons. *European Journal of Information Systems, 16*(6), 672–680.
Jensen, T. B., Kjærgaard, A., & Svejvig, P. (2009). Using institutional theory with sensemaking theory: a case study of information system implementation in healthcare. *Journal of Information Technology, 24*(4), 343–353.
Jones, G., Jones, B. D., Hardin, B., Chapman, L., Yarbrough, T., & Davis, M. (1999). The impact of high-stakes testing on teachers and students in North Carolina. *Phi Delta Kappan, 81*, 199–203.

Jonsson, P. (2011). America's biggest teacher and principal cheating scandal unfolds in Atlanta. Christian Science Monitor, 5.

Kalogrides, D., Loeb, S., & Béteille, T. (2013). Systematic sorting: Teacher characteristics and class assignments. *Sociology of Education, 86*(2), 103–123.

Kam, C. M., Greenberg, M. T., & Walls, C. T. (2003). Examining the role of implementation quality in school-based prevention using the PATHS curriculum. *Prevention Science, 4*(1), 55–63.

King, K. V., & Zucker, S. (2005). Curriculum narrowing. *Harcourt Policy Report. Retrieved May, 20*, 2006.

Kirk, D., & MacDonald, D. (2001). Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change. *Journal of curriculum studies, 33*(5), 551–567.

Kirst, M., & Edelstein, F. (2006). The maturing mayoral role in education. *Harvard Educational Review, 76*(2), 152–164.

Kober, N., & Rentner, D. S. (2012). Year two of implementing the Common Core State Standards: States' Progress and Challenges. *Center on Education Policy.*

Koretz, D., Barron, S., Mitchell, K., & Stecher, B. (1996). *The perceived effects of the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Kraft, M. A., Brunner, E. J., Dougherty, S. M., & Schwegman, D. J. (2018). Teacher Evaluation Reforms and the Supply and Quality of New Teachers.

Kvale, S. (1996). The 1,000-page question. *Qualitative Inquiry, 2*(3), 275–284.

Labaree, D. F. (2000). No exit: public education as an inescapably public good. *Reconstructing the common good in education: coping with intractable American dilemmas*, 110–129.

Ladd, H. F. (2002). School vouchers: a critical view. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 16*(4), 3–24.

Ladd, H. (Ed.). (2011). Holding schools accountable: performance-based reform in education. Brookings Institution Press.

Lamar, N. (2017). After failure of opportunity school district amendment, new bill addresses struggling schools. Retrieved from http://www.gpbnews.org/post/after-failure-opportunity-school-district-amendment-new-bill-addresses-struggling-schools. Accessed Dec 2018

Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: a descriptive analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(1), 37–62.

Linn, R. L., Baker, E. L., & Betebenner, D. W. (2002). Accountability systems: implications of requirements of the no child left behind act of 2001. *Educational Researcher, 31*(6), 3–16.

Loeb, S., & Grissom, J. (2013). What do we know about the use of value-added measures for principal evaluation. *The Carnegie Knowledge Network*.

Louis, K. S., Febey, K., & Schroeder, R. (2005). State-mandated accountability in high schools: Teachers' interpretations of a new era. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 27*(2), 177–204.

Lowry, A. J. (2010, January 1). The relationship of No Child Left Behind Mandates on elementary teacher instructional practices, test preparation, professional development, and school climate. ProQuest LLC,

Lubienski, C. (2005). Public schools in marketized environments: shifting incentives and unintended consequences of competition-based educational reforms. *American Journal of Education, 111*(4), 464–486.

Matland, R. E. (1995). Exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect in an urban school system. *Social Science Quarterly, 76*(3), 506–512.

Mawhinney, H. B. (2013). Reactive sequences in the evolution of Maryland's Consequential Accountability Regime. *Educational Policy, 27*(2), 279–306.

McDermott, K. A. (2007). "Expanding the moral community" or "blaming the victim"? The politics of state education accountability policy. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(1), 77–111.

Mcneil, M. (2014). Georgia forfeits, for now, $9 million in race to top funds. Education Week. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2014/01/georgia_forfeits_9_million_in_.html. Accessed May 2018

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., Huberman, M. A., & Huberman, M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook. sage.

Milner, R. (2013). Policy reforms and de-professionalization of teaching.

Morel, D. (2018). Takeover: race, education, and American democracy. Oxford University Press.

Mulvenon, S. W., Stegman, C. E., & Ritter, G. (2005). Test anxiety: A multifaceted study on the perceptions of teachers, principals, counselors, students, and parents. *International Journal of Testing, 5*(1), 37–61.

Murnane, R. J., & Papay, J. P. (2010). Teachers' views on No Child Left Behind: support for the principles, concerns about the practices. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 24*, 151–166.

National Center for Education Statistics. (1997). *America's teachers: profile of a profession, 1993–94*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Council on Teacher Quality. (2015). *2015 State Teacher Policy Yearbook*. Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality.

Oluwole, J. O., & Green, P. C., III. (2009). State takeover of school districts: race and the equal protection clause. *Independent Review, 42*, 343.
Orr, M. (1999). Black social capital: the politics of school reform in Baltimore, 1986–1998. Studies in government and public policy. University Press of Kansas, 2501 West 15th Street, Lawrence, KS 66049-3905 (paperbound: ISBN-0-7006-0982-2, $17.95; hardbound: ISBN-0-7006-0981-4, $35).
Owens, S. J. (2015). Georgia's teacher dropout crisis. Atlanta: GA: GADOE. *Retrieved from*http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Documents/Teacher%20Survey%20Results.pdf . Accessed Sept 2018
Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: a personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work, 1*(3), 261–283.
Pedulla, J. J., Abrams, L. M., Madaus, G. F., Russell, M. K., Ramos, M. A., & Miao, J. (2003). *Perceived effects of state-mandated testing programs on teaching and learning: Findings from a national survey of teachers*. Boston: National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy.
Phelps, R. P. (2011). Educators cheating on tests is nothing new: doing something about it would be.
Porac, J. F., Thomas, H., & Baden-Fuller, C. (1989). Competitive groups as cognitive communities: the case of Scottish knitwear manufacturers. *Journal of Management Studies, 26*(4), 397–416.
Reback, R., Rockoff, J., & Schwartz, H. L. (2014). Under pressure: Job security, resource allocation, and productivity in schools under No Child Left Behind. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 6*(3), 207–241.
Redding, C., & Henry, G. T. (2019). Leaving school early: An examination of novice teachers' within-and end-of-year turnover. *American Educational Research Journal, 56*(1), 204–236.
Rhodes, R. H., Hill, C. E., Thompson, B. J., & Elliott, R. (1994). Client retrospective recall of resolved and unresolved misunderstanding events. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 41*, 473–483.
Ringwalt, C. L., Ennett, S., Johnson, R., Rohrbach, L. A., Simons-Rudolph, A., Vincus, A., & Thorne, J. (2003). Factors associated with fidelity to substance use prevention curriculum guides in the nation's middle schools. *Health Education & Behavior, 30*(3), 375–391.
Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2000). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement (Working Paper W6691).
Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrics, 73*, 417458 Retrieved from http://edpro.stanford.edu/Hanushek/files_det.asp?FileId=73. Accessed Sept 2018
Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(1), 4–36.
Roulston, K. (2010). Reflective interviewing: a guide to theory and practice. Sage.
Rouse, C. E., Hannaway, J., Goldhaber, D., & Figlio, D. (2007). *Feeling the Florida heat? How low-performing schools respond to voucher and accountability pressure* (no. w13681). National Bureau of Economic Research.
Rusbult, C. E., Farrell, D., Rogers, G., & Mainous, A. G., III. (1988). Impact of exchange variables on exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect: an integrative model of responses to declining job satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal, 31*(3), 599–627.
Russakoff, D. (2015). *The prize: who's in charge of America's schools?* Houghton Mifflin: Harcourt.
Schueler, B. E. (2019). A third way: the politics of school district takeover and turnaround in Lawrence, Massachusetts. In *Annual Meeting of the Association of Public Policy and Analysis,* Washington, DC.
Shepard, L. A. (1988). *The harm of measurement-driven instruction*. Washington, DC: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
Sherwood, J. S. (2013). *A study of the perceptions of leadership behaviors and the morale of elementary teachers in a selected school district* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri–Columbia).
Siskin, L. S. (1994). *Realms of knowledge: Academic departments in secondary schools*. London: Falmer Press.
Smith, N. (2013). Redefining the school district in Tennessee. Part one of a three-part series. Thomas B. Fordham Institute.
Smith, N. (2014). Redefining the school district in Michigan. Part two of a three-part series. Thomas B. Fordham Institute.
Spillane, J. P. (1998). State policy and the nonmonolithic nature of the local school district: organizational and professional considerations. *American Educational Research Journal, 35*(1), 33–63.
Spillane, J. P. (1999). External reform initiatives and teachers' efforts to reconstruct their practice: the mediating role of teachers' zones of enactment. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 31*(2), 143–175.
Spillane, J. P., & Jennings, N. E. (1997). Aligned instructional policy and ambitious pedagogy: exploring instructional reform from the classroom perspective. *Teachers College Record, 98*, 439–481.

Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(3), 387–431.

Spradley, J. P. 1979. The ethnographic interview. New York (ua).

Stecher, B. B. M., & Hamilton, L. S. (2002). Putting theory to the test. *Foresight, 9*(2).

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques. Sage Publications, Inc.

Sunderman, G. L., Tracey, C. A., Kim, J., Orfield, G., & Harvard civil rights project, CM (2004). Listening to teachers: classroom realities and no child left behind. Civil Rights Project At Harvard University (The)

Sundin, E., & Wikman, A. (2004). Work life changes and new forms of production. *Work life and Health. Liber Idéförlag, Arbetslivsinstitutet, Arbetsmiljöverket och författarna, Malmö.*

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the US. Learning Policy Institute. *Retrieved from* https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/coming-crisis-teaching. Accessed Nov 2018

Sverke, M., Hellgren, J., & Näswall, K. (2002). No security: a meta-analysis and review of job insecurity and its consequences. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 7*(3), 242–264.

Tydeman, C. K. (2009). The influence of no child left behind status on teacher perceptions of school organizational cohesiveness. *ProQuest LLC.*

Vang, M. (2017). Racial composition of school district on school leaders' responses to state takeover: a field experiment on the application of Michigan's Emergency Manager Law. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 7*(2), 31–41.

Vaughan, D. (1996). The challenger launch decision: risky technology, culture, and deviance at NASA. University of Chicago Press.

Vogell, H. (2011). Investigation into APS cheating finds unethical behavior across every level. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Weber, K., & Glynn, M. A. (2006). Making sense with institutions: Context, thought and action in Karl Weick's theory. *Organization studies, 27*(11), 1639–1660.

Weick, K. E. (1995). Sensemaking in organizations (Vol. 3). Sage.

Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science, 16*(4), 409–421.

Weinbaum, E. H., Weiss, M. J., Beaver, J. K., & Consortium for policy research in, E. (2012). Learning from NCLB: school responses to accountability pressure and student subgroup performance. Policy brief. RB-54. Consortium For Policy Research In Education.

Weiss, R. S. (1995). Learning from strangers: the art and method of qualitative interview studies. Simon and Schuster.

Welsh, R. O. (2018). Recovery, achievement, and opportunity: a comparative analysis of state takeover districts in Louisiana, Tennessee, and Georgia. Urban Education, 0042085918801884.

Welsh, R. O., & Williams, S. M. (2018). Incentivizing improvement or imposition? An examination of the response to gubernatorial school takeover and statewide turnaround districts. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 26*, 124.

Welsh, R. O., Williams, S., Little, S., & Graham, J. (2017). Right cause, wrong method? Examining the politics of state takeover in Georgia. Urban Affairs Review, 1078087417714061.

Wong, K. K., & Shen, F. X. (2003). Measuring the effectiveness of city and state takeover as a school reform strategy. *Peabody Journal of Education, 78*(4), 89–119.

Wong, K. K., & Shen, F. X. (2007). Mayoral leadership matters: lessons learned from mayoral control of large urban school systems. *Peabody Journal of Education, 82*(4), 737–768.

Wong, V. C., & Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness. (2011). Games schools play: how schools near the proficiency threshold respond to accountability pressures under No Child Left Behind. *Society For Research On Educational Effectiveness.*

Yin, R. (1984). Case study research. Beverly Hills.

Ziebarth, T. (2002). State Takeovers and Reconstitutions. *Policy Brief.*

Publisher's note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.