

The Lessons of Change

Baltimore Schools in the Modern Era[®]

Commissioned by The Fund for
Educational Excellence and
written by Mike Bowler



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Preface

Better learning is what we demand of the students and teachers of Baltimore City Public Schools. Better learning is what we must now demand of ourselves.

As we search again to provide leadership and direction for our schools, we commissioned The Lessons of Change to provide the light of history. It is but one light. We challenge all who care to master its contents and apply its lessons. An understanding of the past can illuminate the future.

All of us at the Fund for Educational Excellence view these trying times from the perspective of the students and teachers who constitute the Baltimore City Public Schools. The classroom is the central focus of our existence, and we hold its fate and future in our collective hands. Combining the contents of The Lessons of Change with our experience and perspective, the Fund hopes all city leaders and involved citizens will consider these lessons as we set the course for the Baltimore City Public Schools through the decade of the nineties.

The Lessons of Change is largely derived from interviews with individuals who have played key roles in public education in the last thirty years. It is a form of oral history. It takes a journalist's view, yet it provides an important perspective that can instruct us, provided we are willing to learn.

• **Lesson One** Our schools reflect our communities and their conditions and there are no quick solutions. Experience across the country supports our own observations that the problems faced in public education are multifaceted and complex. We need long term solutions to which we are committed.

• **Lesson Two** The turmoil and change surrounding the leadership of the Baltimore City Public Schools have not been productive. This partly reflects a remarkable shift in climate. In 1941, a school superintendent described the Baltimore City Public Schools this way: "Placidity enshrouds the Baltimore school system like a benediction today...with scarcely a ripple of discontent or adverse criticism." No modern superintendent would recognize this representation. This changed climate may contribute to the modern superintendent's average tenure of 4.3 years, a length similar to mayoralty terms. This coincidence may arise because elections and reelections place public school performance ever more in the quick-fix limelight. We must learn to work together over the long term to create an educational environment that encourages stability of leadership, making true educational change possible.

• **Lesson Three** Over the past fifty years little has changed in how we educate our children, yet the children and our world have changed. Literacy and the workplace have become more closely related; the need to think is critical; reading and writing are essential. At the same time, there has been a breakdown in two key motivators: the stability of two-parent families and a vision of education as the way up and out. The economic importance of literacy together with equity and demographics will no longer allow us to fail to educate so many

children. We must change how we teach them; we must create an educational environment in which children want to learn.

• **Lesson Four** There has been no consistent strategic direction for our schools. The direction of reform has changed with each administration, and those imposed from the top down have rarely succeeded. Where does this place the system's latest initiative for change, restructuring, or as it is often known, *school based management*? It is an approach that will redefine over time the power relationship between individual schools and the central administration. It is one approach and must be interwoven with a more comprehensive strategy if we are to increase the number of children achieving success. This untested concept will need nurturing and modifications through experience and careful evaluation for us to learn if it works. This can only happen, however, if the strategic direction for our schools is independent of the tenure of any single school board, superintendent or mayor.

To what do all these lessons add up? What is it we must learn? As a community, we must decide on the major components of a comprehensive strategy to educate all our children. We must all pull together, and we must seek the common good above individual goals. We must create an environment surrounding our city schools that permits leadership to succeed. We must do much better by our children and ensure for them an education that truly gives them equal opportunity.

Fund for Educational Excellence
March 1991

Introduction

In the spring of 1990, Jerry Baum, executive director of the Fund for Educational Excellence, approached me with a proposition: Would I research and write a "modern history" of the city school system? The report would concentrate on the major policies and initiatives of the several administrations that have taken Baltimore schools through a turbulent three decades. Its purpose would be to instruct current and future administrations, for it is by understanding the past that we devise more successful approaches for the future.

I undertook the project on one condition: that the report would be essentially an exercise in interpretive journalism, not an academic exercise. Baum agreed. In researching the report, I used the tools of the journalist. I interviewed some 38 people, most of whom have played some role in the modern history of Baltimore schools. I read the "clips" in The Baltimore Sun library and perused many other relevant documents.

I hasten to add that this is not a comprehensive history. If it were, it would be at least 10 times this length. The idea was to concentrate on major policy and programs, not, for example, to chronicle all administrative changes, to list new schools built, or to describe the dozens of reports and other papers issued by commissions, committees, task forces and individuals over the period.

Interviews for this report were conducted in cluttered principals' offices and North Avenue offices, in living rooms, kitchens and backyards. Spouses, children and (in the case of Alice Pinderhughes) grandchildren came and went as we talked. I am grateful for the candor of those interviewed. All four of the living former superintendents and those men and women in the current administration were cooperative and candid. Indeed, "off-the-record" remarks were few and far between. The reader will see that anonymous quotations appear only rarely in this report.

I am particularly grateful to Vernon S. Vavrina, the distinguished Baltimore educator, now retired, whose "History of Public Education in the City of Baltimore, 1829-1956" remains the monumental chronicle of city schools. Vavrina, who still lives in Baltimore, was kind enough to loan me the portion of his history covering the period after 1925.

Finally, I thank Jerry Baum for his kindness, patience and good humor as we went through the summer.

Mike Bowler
Baltimore
March 1991

Baltimore City Public Schools 1960-1990

The Superintendents

George B. Brain	1960-64
Edwin Stein (Acting)	1964-65
Laurence G. Paquin	1965-67
Thomas Goedeke (Acting)	1967-68
Thomas D. Sheldon	1968-71
Sterling S. Keyes (Acting)	1971
Roland N. Patterson	1971-75
John L. Crew Sr.	1975-82
Alice G. Pinderhughes	1982-88
Richard C. Hunter	1988-

The Presidents of the Board of School Commissioners

John N. Curlett	1957-62
Eli Frank Jr.	1962-67
Francis D. Murnaghan Jr.	1967-70
Robert L. Karwacki	1970-71
John Walton	1972-74
Norman P. Ramsey	1975
Mark K. Joseph	1975-80
David C. Daneker	1980-84
Robert C. Walker	1984-85
Robert C. Embry Jr.	1985-86
Bailey Fine	1987
Meldon Hollis	1988
Joseph Lee Smith	1988-

The Mayors

J. Harold Grady	1959-62
Philip Goodman	1962-63
Theodore McKeldin	1963-67
Thomas D'Alesandro 3rd	1967-71
William Donald Schaefer	1971-86
Clarence "Du" Burns	1986-87
Kurt L. Schmoke	1987-

Part I: The Superintendents

The future will take care of itself. It's the past we have to worry about.
Russian Proverb

Important historical eras are often entered quietly, without cataclysm, fanfare or even notice. For Baltimore City Public Schools, it happened in 1960.

That year, George B. Brain arrived from Bellevue, Wash., to become only the city's 12th superintendent since 1866. Brain was the first of what might be called the "modern" superintendents — those who presided over a system in change, whose pronouncements and programs generated extreme controversy and whose employment sometimes fell victim to acrimony.

Previous superintendents had ruled in relative calm. David E. Weglein (1925-1946) had educated a generation of Baltimoreans without much controversy. A top-ranking administrator, Ernest J. Becker, had declared in 1941:

"Placidity enshrouds the Baltimore school system like a benediction today. Under the benevolent totalitarianism of the present school administration, the work of educating the young of the metropolis goes on day by day and year by year with scarcely a ripple of discontent or adverse criticism."

Brain was the first of what might be called the "modern" superintendents...

Even the historic decision to desegregate the schools in 1954, almost immediately after the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, had been made without huge disruption, especially among those who set policy and administered the system. (There had been considerable protest in the neighborhoods, particularly in South Baltimore, but even that was to pass away.) "It was something we knew we had to do, so we just did it," remembers Walter Sondheim, school board president in 1954 and still a community leader 36 years later. "Today, I don't think the board could do what we did in 1954. There'd be endless discussion . . . We did it in a week, which seems incredible now." Sondheim says the educators simply confronted fewer social problems in the 1950's, "and people, somehow, were more polite."

John H. Fischer, the superintendent who presided over desegregation, won the Hollander Foundation Award in 1955 for his "outstanding contribution toward the enforcement of equal rights and opportunities in Maryland." Accepting the award, Fischer praised the "children of both races [who] have been able to work and play together so well and so quickly and the friendly spirit that these children have acquired in their homes."

Another frontier was crossed the year George Brain moved across the continent: Baltimore's school system became majority-black. It had happened rapidly after the unification of the white and "colored" systems at mid-decade, but it had

been going on for years. White enrollment, in fact, had peaked in the 1930's. Black enrollment increased from 31,300 in 1942 to 47,300 in 1952, while white enrollment fluctuated, declining during the war years and increasing in the early 1950's. (Before desegregation, black and white city teachers and officials had been consulting and consorting for some time. The "small town" nature of Baltimore was a factor — and still is. Professionals of both races have studied and worked together throughout the century, before and after desegregation.)

By the '50's, Baltimore was a launching pad for "white flight."

— a sign of difficulties to come. The year Brain arrived, enrollment was 87,634 black and 82,588 white.

Many of the new students were poor. (The white press occasionally referred to them in the early 60's as "migrants," and Brain several times called them "ethnics.") But whatever income they had and whatever they were called, blacks rapidly replaced whites in city neighborhoods and city schools. It was a process that had begun many years before. By the 50's, Baltimore was a launching pad for "white flight." Clifton Park Junior High School had 2,023 whites and 34 blacks just after desegregation; 10 years later it had 2,037 blacks and 12 whites. Garrison Junior High School in Northwest Baltimore went from 2,504 whites and 12 blacks to 297 whites and 1,263 blacks in the same period. Brain predicted shortly after his arrival that by 1970, half of Baltimore's children would be "socially deprived." He was on the money.

And money was leaving Baltimore. This report is not about the phenomenon of suburbanization, but the flight of the white middle class (and later of the black middle class) to the suburbs contributed as much as anything to the severe problems experienced by city schools in the 60's, 70's and 80's. Did the 12 percent of whites who left the city between 1960 and 1966 (while the black population increased 15 percent) flee to escape blacks, to find better schools or to experience the "good life" of the suburbs? Whatever the reason, the effect was the same: These people invested their time and money to help make their suburban schools superior. Their higher incomes were reflected in a state school finance formula that has never "equalized" Baltimore city with most of the rest of Maryland — and that, in fact, finds Baltimore falling farther behind in the 1990's.

And once they establish their homes in the wealthier suburbs, says Mary S. Johnson, retired principal of Montebello Elementary School and vice president of the Metropolitan Education Coalition, "people tend to say, 'I have mine. You have yours to get.'"

George Brain had been on the job only a few months when 14-year-old William J. Murray 3rd walked out of the Bible-reading that was part of opening exercises at Woodbourne Junior High School and virtually every other public school in the U.S. Murray's mother, Madalyn (later Madalyn Murray O'Hair), eventually took her case against prayer and Bible reading in the schools to the Supreme Court, where she won in June 1963. In retirement in central Washington State, Brain is proud of his role in the case, and he still closely follows the prayer-in-the-schools issue.

He's proud, too, of his overall record in Baltimore, where he says he "learned a lot about politics," especially about the politics of raising money for the city. And racial politics. Though the federal Civil Rights Commission declared in 1961 that Baltimore was the only Southern city to have met the challenge of the 1954 Brown ruling, there were signs that racial equality meant more than opening schools to both races, which is what Baltimore had done to comply with the high court's edict. The academic failure rate of pupils from poor sections was higher than that of students in wealthier neighborhoods. And in 1963, most of the 11,200 students attending classes part-time because of crowded conditions were black.

The NAACP, which had been so instrumental in taking the Brown case to the high court, kept the pressure on. Juanita Jackson Mitchell, president of the Maryland NAACP, charged that Brain was discriminatory in his promotion practices. Both Brain and his predecessor, Fischer, moved those blacks they considered the strongest leaders across the color line into formerly all-white schools (but never higher than assistant principal). Mitchell charged that there was not a single black principal in a predominantly white school; in 1963, 53 of the city's 189 schools had all-white faculties and 67 were entirely black.

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The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 gave the city \$4 million for educating the poor. (It was the predecessor of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" program that was to change the face of American urban education.) Brain used the money to expand an "Early School Admissions" project in a 6-square-mile "target area." "We want to expand early admissions and get at the learning handicaps of inner-city children early in their lives," Brain said, "on the theory that this will reduce corrective costs later on."

Brain was also concerned about dropouts. He announced success in a program in which counselors at 23 schools were assigned to interview dropouts and "potential" dropouts. Of 2,000 high school students (and recent dropouts) interviewed, the superintendent said 324 had returned to school and 210 "potentials" vowed they would stay in school. (Twenty-three years later, Baltimore was to launch a similar program, known as Project RAISE, among fifth-graders with a history of poor academic achievement.)

The superintendent also moved to give parents and business leaders a wider role in the affairs of the schools. "I learned quickly," he says today, "that you had to elicit public opinion. You had to endeavor to see that all people have all the facts all the time. You have to make people feel they have a stake in the schools, and Baltimore, at least while I was there, always had a healthy civic interest in education."

Brain says he was aware even in the early 1960's that Baltimore schools were straining economically.

Brain's educational legacy was the report of the Citizens School Advisory Committee, a 25-member body that worked for two years and produced a document in 1964 with 303 recommendations — surely the most elaborate study in the modern history of the system. The committee said Baltimore schools were "geared to a rural society" and that much of what they were doing was "obsolete." Curriculum, it said, "appears loosely knit, fragmented and uncoordinated." It called for greater administrative flexibility in the schools, for establishment of an advanced technical institute similar to Poly but more vocationally oriented, for greater emphasis on "team teaching," for elimination of teachers' lunch duties, for a longer school day and for one or more schools for "chronic troublemakers."

Brain did not stay to carry out his committee's recommendations. Lured by an offer to head the education school at Washington State University and upset over the racial harassment he says his daughter was experiencing at Western High School, he "retired" in 1964.

Brain says he was aware even in the early 1960's that Baltimore schools were straining economically. "We relied on a strong mayor with strong connections and other supplemental support, but we were starting to struggle." The year he left, the city was ranked seventh among Maryland districts in teacher pay and 13th among the nation's 15 largest cities. The city spent \$375 per pupil, \$35 below the Maryland average and \$68 below Baltimore County. (See Cost Per Pupil Chart on p. 40.)

About the time Brain departed, says John L. Crew Sr., who would become superintendent a decade later, "blacks were starting to be a critical mass. There were enough of us around to start saying, 'Look at these raggedy schools.' Brain started to take the heat from some of the neighborhoods. His biggest contribution was a spirit of liberalism. He was a little too liberal for some of these area directors."

Western, Eastern and City College joined Edmondson High School on split shifts. There were too many students, too few places to put them, Brain said. "Another example of the school board's inept planning," declared William Donald Schaefer, chairman of the City Council Judiciary Committee.

George Brain says 70 percent of the recommendations of his Citizens School Advisory Committee were carried out. No observer of the system after Brain's tenure would agree. In fact, most of the committee's opus was deep-sixed by Laurence Paquin, Brain's successor (after an interim period under Edwin Stein). It was a classic example of what happens when a superintendent proposes and leaves it to a successor to dispose.

Paquin was a reformer, a New Englander who came to Baltimore from the superintendency in New Haven, Conn. There, he had established a reputation as a tough administrator. He had banned prayer in the schools and had begun busing students and "pairing" (combining two schools by grade) to end racial imbalance. In Baltimore, he seemed in a hurry to get things done, as though he had an inkling that cancer would end his life after only two years on the job.

City schools were reaching their apex in enrollment. Baltimore was the nation's seventh largest system, with 190,000 students when Paquin arrived. (That is almost twice the 1990 census.) And by 1965, 17,000 students were on "double shifts" — starting the day at two different times in order to relieve overcrowding. Moreover, they were in schools that had deteriorated with age; 30 percent of them had been built in the late 1880's. Baltimore needed a massive school renovation and building program, and Paquin laid the groundwork for that effort.

Baltimore needed a massive school renovation and building program...

Paquin announced his first month on the job that the system "is in financial crisis. We've got to get more help from federal and state governments. They have a broader tax base." And to those who advocated trimming the education budget and cutting Baltimore's property tax rate (already twice that of most Maryland subdivisions), he declared: "We've got to demonstrate to the political leadership of this ... city that there's a lot more political mileage to be [gained] from being for good schools than from being for a lower tax rate." (See Funding Charts on pp. 41-42.)

De facto segregation in the neighborhoods produced racial segregation in the schools. In 1966, Paquin warned that "unless the movement of the white population from the city is halted, the question of integration will no longer have meaning for the city school system." In March of that year, the Community Relations Commission reported that 75 percent of the city's elementary pupils and more than half of secondary students were in "virtually segregated" schools, while 90 percent of black teachers were in schools that were 90 to 95 percent black.

Moreover, segregated education was not helping blacks. Orlando F. Furno, research director of the system, conducted a study of IQ scores in the system for the six years between 1959 and 1965. Furno's report for the U.S. Office of Education showed black IQ scores declining and white IQ's increasing. "To reason that the chances are greater that Negro children probably did not receive the quality of teaching [over those years] that white children did appears to be a valid conclusion," Furno wrote.

Paquin was responsible for establishing Baltimore's first "community schools" — schools that served their communities days and evenings with a variety of programs, including health care, recreation, job counseling and adult education. In principle, the first six community schools — Lombard, Pimlico, Clifton Park, Harlem Park, Garrison and Southern, with four more added later — were not unlike the "restructured" schools planners in 1990 envisioned for Baltimore, but Paquin's community schools died in the early 1970's.

His major scheme — the one for which Paquin is known a generation later — never got off the ground. Early in 1966, he proposed a reorganization of city high schools. Influenced by James B. Conant, a renowned educator and fellow New Englander, Paquin envisioned 13 "comprehensive" high schools. Each would have been a fully integrated campus offering everything from vocational training (Paquin had called the city's general vocational programs "educational dumping grounds") to college preparatory courses. The proposal called for an end to "tracking" — the grouping of students by ability — in all of the city's secondary schools. (Paquin also proposed a combined City-Eastern to be built near the Inner Harbor, where the downtown campus of the Community College of Baltimore eventually was located.)

The proposal called for an end to "tracking" ... in all of the city's secondary schools.

The "Paquin Plan" ran into a wall of resistance at City College, which would have lost its identity as an exclusive college-preparatory school. City College parents and alumni, who were (and still are) politically influential, took their

gripes to a City Council hearing called by Councilman (and City alumnus) Schaefer. City College was not changed. And the Paquin Plan? "It would have strengthened the system and maybe made it a better system today [1990]," says Dennis Crosby, who was president of the Baltimore Teachers Union during the Paquin years. "But when he died, the plan died with him."

Crosby's union staged Baltimore's first teachers' strike — a walkout designed to force the city to bargain collectively with teachers — in May 1967. The BTU had fewer than 200 dues-paying members, according to Crosby, but 1,200 teachers, most of them in secondary schools, stayed out for two days. The strike was ignored by the 6,000-member Public School Teachers Association, but Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro 3rd interceded and granted bargaining rights to the teachers. "Without Tommy," says Crosby, "we could never have done it."

During the same year, the rival PSTA and its parent bodies, the Maryland State Teachers Association and National Education Association, investigated city schools and found them so deficient that "sanctions" were imposed in July 1967 by the NEA. (NEA members are urged not to seek jobs in a system under sanctions.) The NEA said Baltimore schools were "so extremely deficient that many children . . . are being denied the minimum level of educational opportunity," while teachers' salaries and working conditions "are so deficient that it is unreasonable to expect professional teachers to continue their struggle, against virtually impossible odds, to educate the children." Paquin and the Board of School Commissioners took the unusual step of issuing a 39-page rejoinder in October 1967. The

response from the schools suggested that the NEA investigation and sanctions were intended in large part to deflect attention from the activities of the upstart BTU, which had upset the PSTA in a representation election June 16, 1967.

Paquin died on Columbus Day, 1967. On his arrival two years earlier, he had found (in the words of a Baltimore Sun editorial) "a school system oddly varied between topflight schools and schools which stop short of being part-time custodial institutions for indifferent children." Little had changed when Paquin died.



"Paquin had sharp blue eyes that sometimes sparkled," John Crew remembers. "Sheldon had cold blue eyes." Thomas D. Sheldon, the city's third consecutive out-of-state superintendent, was appointed July 1, 1968. It was a harmonious Board of School Commissioners headed by lawyer Francis D. Murnaghan Jr. (now a federal judge) that hired Sheldon. It was a rancorous board (with Murnaghan departed and a five-member majority rejecting almost everything the superintendent proposed) that accepted his resignation in January 1971. (Thomas Goedeke, who was to go on to be superintendent in Howard County, served as interim school chief after Paquin's death.)

***In retrospect, Sheldon was
the city's transitional
superintendent.***

Sheldon, who lives today in Syracuse, N.Y., rejects the notion that his was a bitter departure. "It wasn't the sad scene that people would make it out to be," he says. "Even the board I departed [from] accomplished a good deal. It was just the situation at the end I couldn't countenance. I quit on a matter of principle."

In retrospect, Sheldon was the city's transitional superintendent. He was the bridge from white administration and a white-majority school board to black administration and a black-majority board (although that took a few years). "It was the move from the old order to the new order," says Sterling S. Keyes, a black administrator whom Sheldon brought from his previous superintendency in Hempstead, N.Y., as one of his top aides, and who stayed as acting superintendent after Sheldon's resignation.

Sheldon arrived with a reputation for having successfully and peacefully desegregated the schools of his Long Island district, and he says he had a mandate from Murnaghan to "move the schools into an integrated society." Sheldon says, "I saw it as a very positive mandate."

Directly related to that mandate was the school construction plan that he and Mayor D'Alesandro launched in the fall of 1968 with a successful \$80 million bond issue. (In all, Sheldon would preside over \$133 million in school construction.) Baltimore's black students were concentrated in ramshackle schools, many of them built in the 19th century. "Blacks were the hand-me-down people," says Evelyn T. Beasley, a 36-year veteran of the system who today is principal of Roland Park Elementary and Middle School. "Sheldon understood that."

D'Alesandro called Baltimore "Education City U.S.A." (reminiscent of Mayor Kurt Schmoke's motto, "Baltimore, the City That Reads"), and Sheldon moved on a number of education fronts. Funds from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 were flowing to the city in the late 60's, and Sheldon proposed spending part of that money to hire as many as 3,000 neighborhood people to work as aides in the schools. That program is one of the few that has endured (and that has been copied in several other cities). Aides in Baltimore schools have helped thousands of teachers over the past 22 years and have served to bring schools closer to their neighborhoods. Through a "career ladder" program, 500 aides have gone on to become certified teachers. Sheldon also expanded early childhood education and doubled the number of Model Schools from three to six. Funded by the federal government, the Model Schools program aimed at seeing what could be accomplished if enough resources were concentrated in a school to provide one-on-one teaching, tutoring and extra supplies and books. The program, which died in the 70's when federal funding was phased out, was reminiscent of the modern "Success for All" program at Abbottston, City Springs and other city elementary schools.

Administratively, Sheldon abolished the "Board of Supervisors," the panel of assistant and associate superintendents that for years had made administrative decisions. "It was cumbersome and outdated, and they had meetings that went on all day," Sheldon says. He replaced the board with a triumvirate of associate superintendents. One of them, William Pinderhughes, became the highest-ranking black in the history of the system. (Pinderhughes was to die at his desk a few years later.)

But Sheldon "never seemed to be at peace with the school board," says Samuel L. Banks, who was supervisor of social studies through much of the 80's and is now director of instructional support. Banks should know; one of several clashes between Sheldon and a five-member board majority that consistently opposed him in the late months of his administration was over the hiring of Banks to rewrite the city's social studies curriculum. The idea, similar to the current discussion of "Afro-centrism" — was to shape the curriculum so that it reflected more accurately the historical contributions of African-Americans.

Sheldon also tried unsuccessfully to decentralize the system's administration. In January 1970, he outlined three options for decentralization. He emphasized that none of the plans involved community control of the schools, and this angered the Congress of Racial Equality and others who were advocating community control over budgets and the hiring and firing of staffs. That fall, just weeks before his resignation, the superintendent proposed that, as a first step, half of the system's central office staff be moved into regional offices. The board rejected the idea by a 4-to-3 vote in November.

Sheldon's resignation the following Jan. 6 came after the board turned down all 11 of his nominations for school principalships and demanded that the superintendent submit a new list. "I couldn't do that," Sheldon says. "Maybe looking back at it I should have been tougher, but at the time I saw no alternative."

"Sheldon was a starched, kind of sincere guy," remembers Kalman R. ("Buzzy") Hettleman, a D'Alesandro aide whom the mayor appointed to the board the day after Sheldon's resignation. "He self-destructed because he couldn't take the criticism."

But those were days not only of criticism, but of recrimination and racial polarization. Schools are only mirrors of the communities they serve, and Baltimore had been deeply wounded by racial rioting only weeks before Sheldon's administration was launched in 1968. The riots only exacerbated racial divisions and assuaged any guilt that might have been felt by middle-class parents fleeing the city or choosing private schools.

Sheldon tried. "We're going to live together in this country," he declared, "and we're going to have to address the problem of partnership. The geographical isolationism of the counties from the cities is outdated."



School boards almost never split their votes in appointing superintendents; it's terrible public relations. Roland N. Patterson became Baltimore's first black "permanent" superintendent on an 8-to-1 vote, and that should have been a sign of things to come. (Sterling S. Keyes, who had served as acting chief for eight months after Sheldon's departure, is also black and might be called, perhaps accurately, the city's first black superintendent.) Patterson's tenure, from late 1971 to his dismissal after a public "trial" in 1975, surely was the most turbulent in school system history.

***...two mandates: reshape the system
and get rid of the "deadwood"
at 25th Street...***

Another outsider — he had been superintendent of the central district in the decentralized Seattle schools — Patterson was hired with two mandates: reshape the system and get rid of the "deadwood" at 25th Street school headquarters. He did both, but not without real pain. "We were looking for somebody to shake up the system, not a pea of the same pod," says Hettleman.

One of the first things the new superintendent did was order an outside study of the system. The report by Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratories was completed in a few weeks. It found that Baltimore needed a new "managerial philosophy." It needed administrative reorganization, comprehensive planning (including the use of specially designed "task forces" to look into specific programs and issues) and improved channels of communication. Battelle seemed surprised that its investigators could find no complete chart of the system's organization.

In an exercise in democracy that had only limited success, Patterson submitted various decentralization options for public review and discussion. The final plan as approved by the school board divided the system among nine administrative regions, each with its own superintendent and staff. Patterson also required all 17 top central office administrators to submit their resignations and apply for jobs. The "Patterson massacre," as some called it, affected some 450 bureaucrats and

actually changed the "function or authority" of 262 people.

Many were devastated. Some resigned or retired. Others stayed but found themselves demoted or in new positions of authority. Patterson claimed decentralization would "reduce positions at a savings of \$615,400 per year," but he never explained how the savings would be realized. (Patterson's public relations were a textbook case of how not to do it. He once declared at a City Hall hearing that all teachers in Baltimore were happy — but one. The newspapers were flooded with letters declaring, "I'm the one.")

Meanwhile, the superintendent found himself besieged on all sides, and much of the adversity was not of his making. Almost immediately, he ran afoul of City Hall, which seemed to scrutinize him much more assiduously than it had his predecessors. A movement was soon afoot to strip the school system of what little

Then came 1974, surely the low-water mark in the modern history of city schools.

budgetary autonomy it had. (A proposal to do so went to referendum but failed.) The Board of Estimates denied Patterson the funds to take a business trip to Denver, a symbolic slap in the face. Violence in the schools made big headlines; two students were shot in one day during the superintendent's first autumn at 25th Street. School bus drivers struck in November 1972, and Patterson had to make deep cuts in his budgets to end each year in the black, as required by the City Charter. In September 1973, the first letter arrived from federal civil rights officials that would require two separate desegregation plans. Those plans had to be imposed on a city that had relatively few students to move about; Baltimore's neighborhoods were segregated, and the inner-city was almost entirely black.

Then came 1974, surely the low-water mark in the modern history of city schools. That year saw a month-long teachers' strike; 85 percent of Baltimore parents kept their children home, though schools were officially "open." (And Patterson infuriated the teachers by announcing on the first morning of the strike that most of them were working.) Then there were gas lines, strikes by police and garbage workers, a fuel shortage in the schools, the continued financial crisis and the desegregation order. Parents, teachers and students marched and chanted. (A look at enrollment figures by race shows that thousands of whites left the system in 1974 and 1975.)

Mayor Schaefer returned early from an Ocean City vacation to meet with Patterson and others from his administration at City Hall on Labor Day, 1974. Outside, marchers were protesting the junior high "feeder" plan, which, in effect, had put an end to the concept that city junior and senior high students could attend the school of their choice. Inside, Patterson was using charts and graphs to explain the plan to Schaefer. The two men, both with strong personalities and both on edge, began shouting at each other. Their relationship was never mended.

This eruption took place only a few days after a clumsy but well-publicized (and unsuccessful) attempt by the school board to fire Patterson, a move that led to 11 more months of recrimination. It was not until the next summer that the

firing was accomplished after a remarkable board hearing in the steamy War Memorial building, across the street from City Hall. For both sides, the examination of the superintendent's record was an ordeal and a legal necessity. The board majority had to give the superintendent his day in "court," while the Patterson forces needed to create a record for their eventually unsuccessful \$1 million damage suit against the board. (Larry S. Gibson, a board member who had been instrumental in Patterson's hiring, was now acting as his lawyer.) The commissioners were both judge and "jury," members of the "jury" were witnesses and the verdict of guilty was in before the "trial" began. Patterson had been hired on a divided vote; he was fired on a vote of 7 to 2.

How to judge Patterson? With 15 years of hindsight, Buzzy Hettleman says, "Patterson was aware that no one at City Hall had told his predecessors what to do, but they had plenty of orders for him. He got terribly defensive, closed off all advice and tried to ride it out racially." Mary S. Johnson, retired Montebello Elementary School principal: "His personality got in the way. So many people were attacking him, and he got some bad advice on how to handle Mayor Schaefer and others at City Hall." Edwina Green, longtime parent activist: "He had vision in so many ways, but he was his own worst enemy." Samuel Banks, social studies supervisor and unsuccessful candidate for the city superintendency: "He simply didn't know the territory. And he didn't understand that if you move Lilliputians from point A to point B, you're still going to have a system run by Lilliputians. You're still going to have mediocrity."

John Crew, who was to succeed Patterson as the city school chief: "He realized that [the Baltimore system] could never be the way he envisioned it, and he said to me one morning, 'I'm too deep in. I can't change.'"

Whatever the judgment of Patterson in Baltimore, he moved to a district superintendency in The Bronx, N.Y., working in New York City's decentralized system. "He did an excellent job in New York," says Sterling Keyes, who moved to New York himself to head New York State's urban school programs and had more dealings with Patterson. (Keyes is now superintendent in Wyandanch, N.Y., on Long Island.) "He was a driven man — and one who cared deeply about kids."

***The system needed a
period of calming..***

Patterson died of cancer Aug. 9, 1983. There is a school named for him — in The Bronx.

20

The system needed a period of calming, and John L. Crew Sr. was the man for the job. Crew, a school psychologist and expert on testing, was an outsider-insider. He was not a native Baltimorean, but he had been with city schools since 1955, when the "burning question," he remembers today, "was whether black folks could test white kids."

Patterson had appointed Crew deputy superintendent for planning, research and evaluation in 1972, and Crew had been the architect of the desegregation plans in 1974 and 1975 (the year Crew was acting superintendent). He had taken pains not to align himself with any faction in the controversy over Patterson, and he was on good terms with Mayor Schaefer, so when Crew was named "permanent" superintendent on April 1, 1976, after an eight-month interim, it seemed a fitting and natural progression.

Crew is not an articulate public speaker, but he can express himself with burning intensity. On one such occasion early in his tenure, he told a friend, "I'm going to show the world that black kids can learn as well as whites. I'm going to do it in five years."

That is what he set out to do. Within a month of his appointment, he announced that the schools would home in on the Three R's. Crew developed his own proficiency tests to be administered in each grade in addition to the state-required Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in grades three, five, seven and nine. He tried to generate what he called "instructional intensity," concentrating first on the junior high schools, to which many non-readers had been promoted. He found the money to hire 100 reading teachers, many of whom were assigned to junior highs. "My goal during all of those years," Crew says, "was to get the schools at norms in reading and math, and we did it."

In a book published in 1982, "Effective Public Education: The Baltimore Story," Crew took credit (sharing it with Mayor Schaefer and David C. Daneker, board president during the last years of his tenure) for having turned the system around. By 1980, he wrote, "test scores were up, discipline problems were down and public confidence in education seemed to be on the mend. By running against all prevailing trends, Baltimore's good news became reportable."

Test scores, though, are quicksilver. As Roland Patterson's man in charge of testing, Crew had been assigned to put the best light on scores that were falling. They did rise during Crew's administration. In fact, a footnote in Crew's "Effective Public Education" declares: "It is now clear that the trend has become an established pattern for the Baltimore City Public School students to top national norms." That observation was based on 1981 results. But at the time of the publication of the book, 1982, one survey found that 80 percent of the nation's school districts were claiming test results "above national norms" — an illogical and ludicrous proposition. Perhaps not enough questions were asked of Crew and other superintendents as testing results became the primary factor in judging the quality of city schools over the past generation: If city students were approaching national "norms" on standardized tests, why were their scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests and the state-wide tests under Superintendent David Hornbeck's "Project Basic" so uniformly low — and so far behind those of other Maryland students? How were those national norms established, and how could it be that most districts claimed test results "at" or "above" the norms? And, for purposes of the discussion later in this report, what does the 25-year fixation on test scores in Baltimore say about the centralization of decisions on curriculum, testing and other academic matters?

Crew did much more than administer tests, however. With deft maneuvering, he got money for refurbishing City College and opened it as a city-wide, coeducational liberal arts school in 1977. The hugely successful School for the Arts was developed on his watch. He improved the special education program, which had been sharply criticized in a 1972 task force report written by Crew. Largely verifying charges made by Harrie M. Selznick, the former head of special education, the report had declared that special education "has lacked priority in almost every respect" and that \$6 million earmarked for special education had been diverted by the city into the general fund. The task force made 59 recommendations, many of which Crew attempted to carry out. His job was made easier by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which Congress enacted at mid-decade. Among other things, the act required that each handicapped student have an individual education plan, and it mandated class size for handicapped children.

In the schools, Crew's management style was welcomed. Regional superintendents and principals said Crew did not interfere so long as they seemed to be doing their job. "He knew the cliques. He knew what he could do and what he couldn't do," says parent activist Edwina Green. "He gave parents the information they needed to make decisions. He'd invite us in and let us look over the budget figures. He's one of the few superintendents who had cooperative budget people."

***Retention in grade was
a serious problem...
as it had been a half-century earlier...***

In 1977, the Board of School Commissioners made headlines by calling a virtual halt to "social promotions" — the moving of children from grade to grade on the basis of age rather than academic accomplishment. It was an ironic order. Retention in grade was a serious problem in the system in 1977, just as it was to be a decade later and as it had been a half-century earlier, when Superintendent David E. Weglein had reported that more than half of the boys in white elementary schools and nearly half of the girls were overage for their grade. In the "colored schools" the situation was "more serious," Weglein had said. He had advocated improved classification of pupils, remedial instruction, homogeneous grouping of pupils ("tracking," as it was to be called in later generations) and "trial promotions." The challenge, he had said, was to increase the rate of promotion without reducing standards of achievement.

That was in 1927. Fifty years later, Crew's problem was overcrowding in the elementary schools, though the overall enrollment in Baltimore had begun declining since it reached 193,000 in the late 60's. (See Enrollment Chart on p. 43.) Ten percent of elementary school classes had more than 40 students, and the median class size was 30.6. Crew, confronting the perennial budget crisis he says "was the worst part of the job," needed to reduce the teaching staff by 500 in order to balance the budget. And nearly every year through the 70's and 80's, budget crises plagued the system. Layoffs were common. Many teachers did not know their assignments — if indeed they had assignments — until the first week of classes in the fall. Typically, layoffs and other cutbacks were not as severe as those threatened initially by the superintendent and headlined by the newspapers. But they were harmful, and they were enervating to the system.

The 1980 Census found Baltimore to be a typical urban center with all of the social pathology of the American city. Fifty-three percent of black families with children were headed by women (up from 35 percent a decade earlier). Three-quarters of the births in the city were to unmarried mothers. Two hundred thousand adult Baltimoreans had less than a fourth-grade reading ability. In the schools these statistics were reflected in high dropout rates, 14,000 daily absentees and thousands of poor and underachieving youngsters. Too many teachers lacked the skills needed to teach them — and city teachers were paid less than counterparts in surrounding suburban districts.

Meanwhile, Baltimore and three rural districts in 1978 mounted a legal challenge to Maryland's education funding system, charging that the significant disparities between rich and poor districts were contrary to the state Constitution, which requires a "thorough and efficient" system of public schools. Judge David Ross of the city Circuit Court ruled in the plaintiffs' favor, but he was overturned by the state Court of Appeals, which ruled that the matter was for the legislature and not the courts.

"...money isn't everything, but...every classroom in Baltimore has \$40,000 to \$50,000 less to spend..."

But despite several legislative attempts in the subsequent 12 years, the disparities have increased markedly. Wealthier subdivisions have grown wealthier, while poorer jurisdictions have struggled to hold their

own. "It's a shame," says J. Edward Andrews Jr., the city's deputy superintendent. "I know money isn't everything, but we've got a situation in which every classroom in Baltimore has \$40,000 to \$50,000 less to spend than Baltimore County. Kids don't pick their ZIP codes or their parents."



"I tried not to tear down what John had built," says Alice G. Pinderhughes, who at age 61 was thrust into the superintendency in May 1983 after the school board botched an attempt to land a new school chief from Norfolk, Va. (Pinderhughes was the widow of William Pinderhughes.) The city's 17th superintendent (and first woman) was a home-grown educator, a graduate of Douglass High School and Coppin State College. Like others of her era, she traveled to New York for advanced study because the segregated University of Maryland was closed to blacks. But she never earned a doctorate and had to obtain a waiver from state Superintendent Hornbeck to assume Baltimore's top school job.

Pinderhughes was an insider who had worked her way through nearly every job in the system. She had better political connections than her predecessors — and better relations in the business community. It was during her tenure that the Greater Baltimore Committee, Baltimore's Chamber of Commerce, and BUILD, a church-based community group, joined with the school system in the Commonwealth Plan, a major effort to help students graduate and provide them with college and job opportunities.

While John Crew had made small changes in the central office organization, Pinderhughes made big ones. Essentially, she completed the recentralization of the system. Early on, she eliminated the remaining regions from Roland Patterson's decentralization. (Crew had begun the dismantling process.) Nineteen deputy, assistant and regional superintendent jobs were consolidated to four: one in charge of high schools, one to supervise elementary schools, a deputy and a chief financial officer. (Mayor Schaefer supported the move. Although he hadn't had much to say when Roland Patterson decentralized the system, now he called the regional apparatus "an unnecessary level of bureaucracy.") Pinderhughes also consolidated the 700-person bureaucracy into refurbished headquarters — some called it "Alice's palace" — at Calvert Street and North Avenue.

Pinderhughes never had a "Pinderhughes Plan," though later in her tenure of over five years she came up with a motto, "Focus on Individual Success," which expressed her philosophy that all children can learn and

that the best way to teach them is to "get 'em while they're young." A former elementary teacher and head of childhood programs in Baltimore, Pinderhughes believes that the earlier a child begins formal education, the better. "It's better to spend the money there now than on prisons later," she says.

... all children can learn and that the best way to teach them is to "get 'em while they're young."

"Focus on Individual Success" involved community discussion of where the schools were going. Several committees were formed. "We developed a program we thought would be feasible, and the next step after that was to begin the training and develop plans for implementation, and that was when I left," says Pinderhughes. "... It was a very comprehensive, well-worked-out proposal that I gave to Richard [Hunter, the current superintendent]. I don't know what happened to it."

One of those committees, headed by community activist and Morgan State University history professor Jo Ann Robinson, examined "school-based management," the idea that decisions on running the schools ought to be made by their principals, parents and community people, not by the central bureaucracy. A year later, the "school-based management" concept reemerged, this time called "restructuring" and this time endorsed by the new administration at North Avenue.

Pinderhughes' best-known program was "mastery learning." It is a simple idea based on the proposition that children learn at different rates. Children are tested (not necessarily with pencil-and-paper tests) on specific skills, then taught those skills and tested again. Those who haven't caught on get more instruction, perhaps with a different teaching technique. Those who master the skills receive "enrichment" while waiting for the class to move on.

Mastery learning was a national fad in the mid 80's, at one point said to be the teaching technique for 50 million students. Most elementary schools were using some form of it before Pinderhughes became superintendent, but in September 1985, 120,000 mastery learning booklets, each containing 40 to 60 tests, arrived in Baltimore for use in 131 elementary schools. If the program worked as well as

the superintendent and her associates hoped, pupils would proceed through school not as they completed grades, but as they mastered "competencies."

By Pinderhughes' own estimation, mastery learning "fizzled," although some elements of it are still in use. She believes teachers were intimidated by the number of tests required. "They made it more complicated than it is," she says. "It's as simple as a teacher knowing what her kids are learning, and the problem is that most teachers don't know when kids are learning and when they're not. When I was a supervisor, I'd ask a teacher exactly what her kids learned that day. If she couldn't tell me, I'd say she wasn't teaching."

Pinderhughes, like her predecessors, bore the cross of the city's financial difficulties. She faced them squarely and angered the city's political leaders in doing so. Early in 1987, a city election year, she said Baltimore needed \$157 million simply to bring spending to the level of Baltimore County. It seemed a spectacular amount, and it made headlines (and caused some consternation in political circles), but it was accurate. That year, Baltimore ranked 22nd of the 24 subdivisions in spending on each pupil. (See Cost Per Pupil Chart Adjusted for Inflation on p. 44.) The superintendent noted that Baltimore was

"Baltimore 2000: A Choice of Futures," was not kind to Baltimore schools.

becoming increasingly a ward of the state; despite a property tax rate hovering around \$6 per \$100 in assessed valuation, the portion of the school budget derived from local sources had declined from nearly 50 percent in 1980 to 36 percent in 1987. (The school budget, meanwhile, had passed \$400 million, roughly twice the budget the year Roland N. Patterson came to town.)

It was in 1987, too, that the Morris Goldseker Foundation issued a major report projecting Baltimore's future. The report, "Baltimore 2000: A Choice of Futures," was not kind to Baltimore schools. The system was failing both the gifted and the disadvantaged, it said. The culprits? Inadequate budgets, bloated bureaucracies, poor teachers, unwilling students, inattentive parents, poor security, shortages of books and supplies. There were so many villains, the consultant hired by Goldseker said, "as to leave obscure which were causes and which effects."



To get a sense of some of the problems outlined by the Goldseker report, you can dial Lexington Terrace Elementary School. You'll get a friendly greeting: "Good morning, this is lovely Lexington Terrace." But on a visit to the school, the imagination stretches to call it lovely. High-rise city housing projects tower over the school on three sides; on the fourth, Martin Luther King Boulevard cuts Lexington Terrace off from downtown Baltimore, just to the east.

At 3 o'clock on a fall afternoon, Principal Wyatt Coger's lunch sits cold and uneaten in an office strewn with documents, including a dozen memos from North Avenue school headquarters. There has not been time to eat. Coger, in fact, is outside on the paved-over "playground." He has just broken up a fight. His hand

is on the head of one of the student instigators. It's a calming, even loving gesture, one you could witness every day in dozens of city schools. The hand is not removed as the two walk inside. A connection is made. "You OK now, Darryl?" the principal says. "Got your homework?" A message is delivered. Darryl counts. He has someone who cares for him, who thinks it's important that he attend school, that he do his homework.

Minutes later, Cogger relates to a visitor the challenges of running an inner-city school. Schools reflect their communities, he says, and this community is one in which:

People have been frustrated for years. We have drugs, alcohol, child abuse. Gosh, every week there's two or three cases... People down here haven't learned to deal with their own frustrations. They have no trust in the system, so we have to meet the parents three-fourths of the way, not half-way.

Asked, as was everyone interviewed for this report, about how education has changed since he began teaching 24 years ago, Cogger says: "The demographics are different. It's a whole new child. It's a whole new parent. Parents used to struggle to get off welfare. But now they've learned to be takers.

"So we have to change our methods. We have to realize that kids can't do well if they don't feel good about themselves. We have to make the kids want to come to school. School has to be alive... My teachers are heroes. They could be elsewhere, making more money, having fewer frustrations. They could be where kids learn despite teaching. Here, we have to make them learn because of the teaching."

Baltimore had many schools like Lexington Terrace when Richard C. Hunter stepped in as the city's 18th superintendent on Aug. 1, 1988. Although Hunter had headed two districts smaller than Baltimore, Richmond, Va., and Dayton, Ohio, he came to the city from an academic job at the University of North Carolina, and Hunter, judging by his behavior and pronouncements in his new job, was a man who viewed urban schools from an academic perspective.

***"The demographics are different.
It's a whole new child. It's a whole
new parent."***

"I am here to lead a revival over a school system that is down but not out," Hunter declared at a rally just before the opening of the 1988-89 school year. Hunter's mandate from the school board and mayor (with a thrust from newspaper editorialists) was not unlike Patterson's two decades earlier: trim the bureaucracy, throw out the "deadwood." In January 1989, he fired his top 22 administrators and invited them to apply for jobs. (They would receive their current salaries for a year and could stay on thereafter in lesser positions.) In all, he says he eliminated 116 full-time positions for a savings of \$3 million his first year and another 43 positions, for a \$1 million savings, the second year, with more cuts to come. (Hunter's 1991-1992 budget promises to eliminate 34 more central office jobs. He says this

brings the three-year reduction to 193, for a \$5 million savings.) Hunter also moved curriculum experts out of North Avenue headquarters to offices in Lombard Middle School, from where they were supposed to service the schools. He separated those educators working on curriculum from those working on instruction, a move that his critics said was nonsensical, like separating a car from its chassis and expecting both to run. The reorganization was a painful one. Some administrators said they had never been consulted by or evaluated by their boss. Some in the top ranks said they had never met him before they were dismissed.

Hunter, meanwhile, set out to "redo our whole curriculum." He says revamping the course of studies was made necessary by the "Maryland School Performance Plan," the state school reform effort that, among other things, will require the state's 674,000 students to take new "criterion reference tests" geared to curriculum. (The state plan derives from the 1989 report of the Governor's Commission on School Performance, known as the "Sondheim Commission" after its

...a truth about Baltimore: It is not a uniform system on which a reform plan can be stamped.

chairman, Walter Sondheim, a former Baltimore school board president. The commission called for a strict program under which schools

would be accredited by the state and held accountable for student performance.) Hunter says the new curriculum will be "multi-cultural and multi-ethnic" and will be geared to the "expectations" that employers have for city school graduates. He adds that he also "put more focus on" the city's special education, compensatory education and vocational education programs.

Meanwhile, Hunter discovered a truth about Baltimore: It is not a uniform system on which a reform plan can be stamped. Lovely Lexington Terrace is no more typical than Mt. Washington and Garrett Heights, cut into the hillsides of Northwest and Northeast Baltimore, respectively. The white ethnic schools of the southeast are a different species from the black ethnic schools (with growing enrollments of West Indian pupils) in the northwest. Blacks in East Baltimore have different opinions on school operations (and on most everything else) from blacks in West Baltimore. Patterson High School, in the far east, is a world apart from Forest Park, in the far west.

Hunter's initial attempt to set system-wide goals through an exercise in participatory democracy called "The Night the Lights Went On" was not a resounding success — not only because the lights had been on many nights over many decades in Baltimore schools (during the era of "community schools," for example), but because there was no way Baltimoreans, rallied in such a short time with such an inadequate campaign, were going to express common educational goals for their children.

"Being an outsider, it was hard to confront the distinct neighborhood structure in this city and confront groups and individuals," says Hunter. "It's hard for

Baltimore to come together and say, 'This is what we want to do as a city.' Restructuring [the granting of local autonomy to schools] is the way Baltimore has to go. It's difficult, if not impossible, to devise a reform agenda for the whole system."

***"Restructuring ...is the way
Baltimore has to go."***

Hunter says that North Avenue:

is going to have to give up power if [school-based management] is going to work... It will be a new role for North Avenue people. We won't be directing activities, but supporting activities and holding people accountable. We'll be more client-oriented than we've ever been before... We'll need a good management group to supervise and support individual schools... Our whole education system operates on the premise that the citizens are in charge of it. The only problem is that we don't operationalize it enough at the individual school level, and that's where we've got to put the focus.

Andrews agrees that school-based management could be a good thing for Baltimore:

This city is a collection of communities, not one big community, and that's all the more reason why we should let schools individualize themselves and be accountable for the results. It comes at a good time, because [State Superintendent Joseph Shilling's school performance plan] will have standards that every school is going to have to meet.

School-based management will be examined in greater depth in Part III of this report.

Part II: Reorganization and Reform

"Of the making of reforms, there is no end." Confucius

In the three decades of the modern era, Baltimore schools have had more central office organizations than sand castles on an August day in Ocean City — and with about as much lasting effect on the landscape.

...Baltimore schools have had more central office organizations than sand castles on an August day in Ocean City...

The supervisory staff — first at 3 East 25th Street and then at North Avenue and Calvert Street — has been

pulled apart, put together again, redeployed to offices "in the field," returned to headquarters, divided between elementary and secondary and returned to "K-12." Faces have changed frequently. But in 1990, the system's hierarchy — those who make decisions and determine the direction orders flow — is pretty much as it was in 1960. Orders still flow from the superintendent and his top staff, through the bureaucracy to the principals and teachers. Close observers who know other urban school systems say Baltimore is typical: It has a "top-down" management structure and (despite all the talk of reform), a fairly traditional curriculum and traditional teaching methods that have changed little over the years.

Superintendent Thomas Sheldon did away with the city's traditional Board of Superintendents in 1968, replacing it with a triumverate of associate superintendents. His successor, Roland N. Patterson, created nine administrative regions, each with its own bureaucracy. Patterson also required all of the system's top administrators to resign and reapply for their jobs. (Richard C. Hunter was to do the same thing nearly two decades later.) One of the first things John L. Crew Sr., Patterson's successor, did when he took over in 1975 was reorganize to "establish clearer lines of authority." It hadn't been clear enough with previous superintendents that the superintendent was "the instructional leader of the school system," Crew said. His successor, Alice G. Pinderhughes, made several major changes — she also completed the dismantling of Patterson's regions — and Hunter has reshuffled the staff two more times. He says he saved \$3 million in the first reorganization, \$1 million in the second, and he promises still another \$1 million in savings his third and last year. The Baltimore central office staff has been reorganized at least 11 times since the Patterson administration.

Why do they do it? And do they do it more often than other chief executives taking the helms at other organizations?

The answer to the first question is complex. Walter Sondheim, former school board president, believes there is "built into the educational superstructure a tendency to change for change's sake... A new superintendent wants to show he's a change agent. He doesn't want to just stand there; he wants to do something."

J. Edward Andrews Jr. says the first thing superintendents do is reshuffle the top staff. "It's a power play," he says. "It says to everyone, I'm the boss now, and

you'd better be good.' When it happens, a lot of the survivors stick their heads in the sand and tell themselves, 'We'll wait for the next one.'"

"If you look at it as realpolitik," says Robert Slavin, a Johns Hopkins education researcher who has been observing the Baltimore system for many years, "you reorganize so that the people who have the new high jobs are beholden to you." You do it, according to John Crew, to make sure that underlings who have accumulated political power over the years do not have an opportunity to exercise it. "That's what Roland [Patterson] did," Crew says. "Anybody with power he eased out."

You also do it because "reformers" and editorialists in the community expect it. In big cities, the "experts" on education (many of whom live in the suburbs) take a superficial look at the struggling local system, hear their business friends bemoan the poor quality of its graduates and assume that the culprit is the "deadwood" at the top.

Deadwood is quick, albeit painful, to dispose of, and a mass discarding of deadwood is a dramatic gesture that pleases those

demanding change. (Never mind, as Andrews points out, that most of those "fired" in the Hunter and Patterson massacres weren't fired at all; they remained in lesser administrative jobs or returned quickly to the bureaucratic level they had left, with only their titles changed.)

***"...presumption should be against reorganization
...get rid of the people who are failing, but you
don't have to reorganize to do it."***

Robert C. Embry Jr., president of the state Board of Education and former president of the city board, believes that the "presumption should be *against* reorganization. After all, organizations succeed because people succeed, and they fail because people fail. So, yes, get rid of the people who are failing, but you don't have to reorganize to do it."

"In our society," Hunter says, "we tend to believe that in order to change things, all we need to do is change the people in charge. We seem incapable as a society of taking the long-term view of things. In fact, it takes years to effectuate educational change, real educational change. And the problem is compounded by the fact that we turn over superintendents so often."

Joseph Lee Smith, president of the board that hired Hunter, expresses similar sentiments. "I think most superintendents are reluctant reformers," says Smith, an unpaid board member (as are all city board members, unlike their brethren in other Maryland systems) since 1979, "and most of them would like more time to reform. We don't give them enough time."

While it's true that the Baltimore superintendency has turned over more rapidly since 1960 than the chief executive's job in most area businesses, the city system actually has been more stable at the top than most other urban districts. Excluding the three acting superintendents (Stein, Goedeke and Keyes), Baltimore

has had seven superintendents in the 30-year modern era, only three since 1975. That's an average of one every 4.3 years, higher by more than a year than the average tenure of other big-city school chiefs. Hopkins' Slavin argues that Baltimore's relative stability is related to the fact that it has experienced less political turmoil than districts of similar size. "We're not like Cleveland, for example, where it goes on all the time and everybody's always at everybody else's throat. It's partly because our school board is appointed and the mayor has more direct responsibility for what happens in the system."

What of the size of the city school bureaucracy? Just after World War II, Superintendent William H. Lemmel decried the "curse of bigness" in city school systems like Baltimore. The budget that year (1948): \$18.7 million. Total employees: 4,926. Enrollment: 111,900. As the saying goes, "If you could see us now!" 1990-91 budget: \$503 million. Total employees, 10,791 full-time. Enrollment: 108,900. Forty-three years after Lemmel (and, of course, not accounting for inflation), it takes 27 times the budget and 2.2 times the staff to educate 3,000 fewer students.

Forty-three years after Lemmel...it takes 27 times the budget and 2.2 times the staff to educate 3,000 fewer students.

Certainly the bureaucracy is mammoth, made even more impressive

now that most of it is under one roof on North Avenue. It takes a lot of bureaucracy to run a half-billion-dollar-a-year business.

"When I was in Montgomery," says Andrews, "I had three levels. There were three area superintendents, each with about 40 schools. Here, you've got the principals reporting to directors, who report to the assistant superintendents, who report to the associate superintendents, who report to me. In Montgomery, I met with the principals every month. Here, the directors don't even meet with the [superintendent's] cabinet."

But Montgomery County, as Andrews is the first to acknowledge, is "another country." With nowhere near as large a central office staff — the county's bureaucracy takes up 2 1/2 pages to the city's six pages in the state "Directory of Public Education" — Montgomery educates almost as many students as Baltimore (103,000 vs. 109,000 this year), spending \$200 million more— more than \$1 million a day more than Baltimore in a 180-day school year.

Closer to home, city officials claim that if they had spent as much on each pupil as Baltimore County in fiscal year 1989, the schools would have had \$158 million extra. Where does that extra money go? According to a 1989 Abell Foundation report, "A Growing Inequality," it goes to the number of teachers and support staff each school system is able to hire, to teachers' salaries, to school supplies and to the number of computers and other educational aides a system is able to purchase. For example, for every 1,000 students in October 1987, there were 76.2 professionals in Baltimore County schools but only 65.4 in city schools — a 14 percent gap. Salaries for all city instructional people the same year averaged 83 percent of those in the county. And the gap has widened since 1987.

No doubt part of the reason Baltimore has a larger bureaucracy than suburban districts (despite spending less) is that it takes more people to run the huge federal and state programs designed to serve the poor and handicapped. Montgomery doesn't need Baltimore's level of compensatory education or as many Chapter I services for the "educationally deprived" (\$43.1 million in the proposed 1991-1992 budget) or a budget in special education that, in Baltimore, is larger than the total budget in most districts.

The great bulk of those in the central office never have anything to do with instruction. Most of them push papers, and some don't perform that function very well. Edwina Green, a long-time activist who has pestered several superintendents to open the system to parents, tells of going to 25th Street and rummaging through a bureaucrat's desk until she found the requisition papers for installing a sign on her child's school.

The proliferation of federal and state programs is only one reason there are 5,000 more employees in the city system than there were in the 1940's — with 3,000 fewer students. Class sizes were much larger then, remembers Vernon Vavrina, the system's unofficial historian, who once taught an English history class of 54 students. "The central office was relatively small," he says,

"and we didn't have the number of helping teachers at the elementary level." John Crew remembers there were no guidance counselors in the schools, no social

In 1948, four out of five employees were classroom teachers. One in two is a teacher today.

workers, no school psychologists and relatively few special education teachers. "You didn't have the maintenance people we have today. We've got 100-some security officers we didn't need then," he says. Crew might have added to his list the 1,700 school aides made possible by the federal programs of the 1960's, as well as more than 500 food service workers paid for by federal funds. Part of the change is reflected in the nature of services provided by the system; it is a social service agency as well as an education agency. In 1948, four out of five employees were classroom teachers. One in two is a teacher today.

28

Visit a first-grade class in any elementary school. You'll see reading taught much as it has been taught for the last 15 years. It will be an "eclectic" approach, combining "whole-word" memorization and phonics — the use of sound in teaching youngsters to read. Some teachers start by having their pupils learn perhaps 100 words that will appear later in the early-elementary "basal readers," then employ those words to teach students the phonetic patterns (called "phonemes") of the English language. Some reward achieving students with words of praise or candy. Games are common; pupils like to compete, and there is joy in winning the academic competition. It is a technique employed by teachers from time immemorial, and it is a technique impervious to a generation of directives from 25th Street and North Avenue. In short, if the approach chosen by the teacher seems to work, no one is going to convince the teacher to do it differently.

Elsewhere, in other subject areas and in higher grades, the best teachers use their wits, bring in their own materials, surreptitiously run off copyrighted materials on duplicating machines (where they can find machines that work) and carry teaching materials in the trunks of their cars. By and large, curriculum is loosely defined, and supervision from North Avenue is spotty at best. (Curriculum that helps students prepare for the state functional tests is more tightly controlled.) In fact, there has been little money in recent years for curriculum writing, so, as one teacher says, "The budget is running the system, not the philosophy of the superintendent or anything else. When a new wave of reform comes by, people stick to the rock like barnacles. They filter out what they can't use, and they don't change too much. It would be different if they [the central bureaucracy] would give some time to a new program. But two years is the maximum."

When the system thrives, it thrives on individual ingenuity...

When the system thrives, it thrives on individual ingenuity, and the sad reality is this: At a time when society requires more technical skills of its high school graduates, more knowledge of how to write and think critically, more scientific knowledge, more knowledge of how societies function and political systems operate, more knowledge of the workings of government, city schools have had to lower their standards to cope with the current generation of students.

Superimpose this reality on the many "programs" Baltimore has witnessed in the past three decades. Only a few have had staying power; only a few have changed the way city schools operate. If future superintendents believe they will make a big difference with major reform, they should consider what happened to the major initiatives of predecessors. Many have gone, in the words of Rebecca Carroll, veteran city educator now retired, "the way of all flesh."

* The 303 recommendations of Superintendent George Brain's 1964 Citizens School Advisory Committee, probably the most extensive reform effort in the last three decades — the report was two years in the making — died after Brain departed for Washington State the same year.

* Lawrence Paquin's far-reaching proposals for reforming the high schools of Baltimore died because of community opposition (much of it from City College alumni and parents) — and because of Paquin's death. Had the "Paquin Plan" been adopted and several subsequent attempts to reform the high schools been fully realized, the city's shopworn "neighborhood" high schools might have a very different look today.

* Paquin's community schools program, which opened schools to their neighborhoods around the clock, each offering health services, job counseling and recreation in addition to the regular program, lasted through the term of Superintendent Thomas Sheldon. Sheldon held a charette, a community forum that led to the establishment of the new Dunbar High School as a community school. He invited considerable wrath when he fired the community schools director, John O. Hopkins, for "poor administration" and running a "weak and disorganized program." Hopkins' replacement, Pearl Brackett, who spent 38 years in the system,

watched community schools go down the tube in the Roland Patterson administration. "When you remove the funding," she says, "you remove the plumbing. In essence, that's what happened."

It should be added that the Dunbar High School that resulted from Sheldon's charette has continued to this day as a community school and as a center of educational, political and social activity in its East Baltimore community. As 1991 dawned, a move was afoot to form a consortium of the schools around Dunbar that would work for the common good.

* Patterson's massive decentralization died within a few years. Patterson had the right idea. He wanted to move decision-making closer to the schools, which would "make it possible to hold the individual accountable for his decisions. This should result in an improvement of the individual's performance."

But it was too much, too fast. Patterson seemed to be paying more attention to the structure of the system than how it could best function. And there were ludicrous mismatches. A music teacher, for example, became an elementary supervisor who had to work with teachers in mathematics and reading. (Given education's propensity to stratify, this might have been a refreshing move. But the music teacher knew nothing about math or reading.) "People who were excellent in classroom supervision suddenly became curriculum specialists or planning specialists," remembers Benjamin Whitten, former head of vocational education. "These were people who were not trained to do that." Robert Armacost, one of the top administrators in the system,

He wanted to move decision-making closer to the schools...

later was to comment: "There was little or no attention paid to curriculum development, development of teaching guides, supervision of teachers, evaluation of teachers, evaluation of students or evaluation of administrators." (One of John Crew's first moves when he became superintendent was to return academic specialists to the administrative hierarchy.)

* Right to Read, a federally funded program in the early 70's, was designed to teach all teachers to be teachers of reading. Like mastery learning, it required extensive testing. It faded (though the concept endures) because federal funding faded. But there was another reason. Like so many other programs that have come and gone, it was imposed from the top with little apparent thought about how teachers teach and children learn. A lengthy letter from the faculty of City College to Patterson late in 1973 presented a thorough critique of Right to Read. "The major causes of reading weaknesses are generally much deeper and more complex than implied by the administration," the teachers wrote Patterson, "and cannot be erased by presenting the classroom teacher with a few hours of instruction and the opportunity to administer a frightening battery of tests... Most teachers feel that the Right to Read program, as implemented to date, has been a waste of precious resources. The expenditures of time, money and effort have been excessive, while the results have been marginal."

Most teachers feel that the Right to Read program, as implemented to date, has been a waste of precious resources.

* Mastery learning, a Chicago export that swept the country in the mid 1980's, is still in use in some schools— or at least the idea is. But mastery learning required the administering

of thousands of tests, and teachers simply weren't going to do it. "It was a disaster," says one principal. "It was a disaster partly because it came from [25th Street] all packaged up and ready to go. They didn't do nearly a good enough job of training the teachers how to employ mastery learning. The concept was fine. It was carrying it out that flopped."

These are a few of the productions with short runs on the city's educational Broadway. There are dozens of other off-Broadway productions, many of which are still around in reduced scope or altered form.

There was "management by objectives," an idea imported from the military and private industry by Patterson, who papered his office walls with lists of objectives and the time lines for all of his divisions to reach them.

There was DISTAR, a phonetically oriented reading program sold by one of the major textbook publishers. There were Involving the Very Young (IVY), the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA), the ungraded primary school (an idea dusted off periodically since at least the 1950's), "clustering" in elementary schools (it was known as "platooning" as early as 1926), the Parent-Infant Center for Education, the Teacher Corps, Model Schools, Community Schools, the City High School Recognition Program, Project STAR, Character and Citizenship Education (another reprise, going back to the mid 40's) and the Model Early Childhood Learning Centers.

Many of the programs died after they lost their funding. Funds for the Model Early Childhood Learning Centers, for example, came from a federal program designed to encourage local districts to innovate. After three years, if a project proved successful, the grant recipient was supposed to continue funding. The Model Early Childhood program was so successful that it won national awards, but Baltimore couldn't afford to keep it going. Similarly, the Ford Foundation financed the City High School Recognition Program at Edmondson High School in the early 80's. Again, the system couldn't continue the effort when Ford funds ran out, though the program had received glowing evaluations.

Other programs, like mastery learning, sputtered because they were never accepted by teachers. By and large, teachers weren't trained to work with the program, nor, having had little influence in its planning, were they encouraged to think they had any stake in it. Robert Slavin says the mastery learning experience in Baltimore was "typical of sweeping changes in education that are supposed to affect teacher behavior without concomitant investment in staff development, materials and the other things to make them go."

And always there is the problem of evaluation. The lack thereof is a bone of contention for Robert Embry, former city school board president who also heads the Abell Foundation and, in that capacity, funds a number of local education programs.

City educators are apparently so happy to receive funds for a program that they fail to build into it some accurate measure of whether it is working. Usually this involves setting up a "control group" of students not in the program, then using identical criteria in judging the progress of both groups.

"Right now the system doesn't know what works and what doesn't because it never evaluates anything," Embry declares.

Several educators interviewed for this report say that the lessons learned from failed initiatives are clear: Large-scale reforms dictated from the top don't usually work. Best to take on small projects and to consult from the start the teachers and, yes, parents who will be involved. John E. Chubb of the Brookings Governmental Studies Program and Terry M. Moe, a political scientist at Stanford University, recently studied American schools and produced a book that has been widely praised, "Politics, Markets and America's Schools." They concluded that "bureaucracy vitiates the most basic requirements of effective organization. It imposes goals, structures and requirements that tell principals and teachers what to do and how to do it — denying them not only the discretion they need to exercise their expertise and professional judgment but also the flexibility they need to develop and operate as teams. The key to effective education rests with unleashing the productive potential already present in the schools and their personnel. It rests with granting them the autonomy to do what they do best The freer schools are from external control, the more likely they are to have effective organizations."

...lessons learned from failed initiatives are clear: Large-scale reforms dictated from the top don't usually work.

None of this is to suggest that the ideas underlying programs like mastery learning were (or are) bad. To the contrary, most of them are worthy. It is good to experiment, sometimes to try and fail; it is by overcoming mistakes that humans learn to walk — and run — and then win the race. For example, Hopkins' Robert Slavin recently reviewed 29 studies of "tracking" — that is, grouping students by ability. He concluded that tracking programs are neither favorable nor unfavorable in terms of student performance. As might be expected, Slavin's methodology and conclusions have been challenged. The point here is that there is no way Slavin and other researchers could study what works and what doesn't if educators did not experiment.

In 1970, President Nixon announced the Experimental Schools Program (ESP) as a "strategy for building a bridge between educational research and actual practice." Programs were supposed to be "comprehensive," a word that was never defined but that came to signify, to teachers, orders from the top.

"In terms of the ambitious goals that it set for itself," said Diane Ravitch, the education historian and critic, "ESP failed. For the \$55 million that was expended over a five-year period, the results were meager."

But Ravitch thinks there's value in reform. "Every effort to make the school better... left its mark," she wrote in her book, "The Troubled Crusade." "The more limited and specific the goal, the more likely was the reform to endure."

There are three other points to be made about initiatives in the city school system. The discussion thus far has concentrated entirely on "programs." There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of efforts to improve the schools that can't be defined as "programs" but that are no less sincere and, in some cases, quite effective. These include volunteer tutoring, "mini-grants" to help teachers with small classroom projects and services of all kinds provided by outsiders, usually at no charge. (There is hardly a school in the city without some heroic adult who has not given of himself or herself for years, with no thought of remuneration.) And there are the efforts of colleges and the universities. The University of Maryland System's Center for Excellence in Urban Education, newly established at Coppin State College, has catalogued 120 separate projects in which students and teachers from UM are working in city schools.

The second point is that a number of programs and structural changes have had staying power, so much so that they are considered permanent parts of the system. In the early 1960's, Baltimore's Early School Admissions Program predated the federally funded Project Head Start — and was one of the models for the federal program. Three decades later, it is still going strong. In the early 70's, Baltimore began converting its junior high schools, serving grades seven, eight and nine, to middle schools serving the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. The conversion had been nearly completed by the late 80's, and most (but by no means all) educators consider the middle school structure a better fit for students in the "tween" years.

Then there is Chapter I (formerly Title I), the federal program that provides millions of dollars in extra funds each year to the city's disadvantaged students.

...there are several programs under way in the schools now that, as the editorialists say, "bear watching":

(Chapter I was 25 years old last year.) There is the Partnership program, almost as old as Chapter I, under which city businesses and other institutions "adopt" schools, sharing help and

expertise to give students an idea of life beyond their narrow borders. There is the Baltimore Commonwealth, an undertaking of the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC), Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) and the school system to prepare city students for success after graduation. If the Commonwealth related initiative, Collegebound, can raise all of the \$25 million it seeks to endow the effort, Baltimore will regain some of its lost national reputation.

Finally, there are several programs under way in the schools now that, as the editorialists say, "bear watching":

* Project RAISE (Raising Ambitions Instills Self-Esteem) is a program built on the success of millionaire philanthropist Eugene Lang's "I Have a Dream" project in New York. The program has several elements, but fundamental to it is adult "mentoring" of students who are at risk of failure and of dropping out. The payoff for the student who stays in school and graduates is a college scholarship. Behind RAISE is an idea much older than Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and the program reports some initial success in reducing failure and dropout rates. It is now in 13 schools.

* Writing to Read is unique in one respect: The city has a "performance contract" with IBM, the computer giant, under which Baltimore will pay the company a fee depending on how well pupils in some 36 schools have performed in the program after the second year this spring. The students spend part of their day writing on IBM computers, thus, in theory, learning to read. Writing to Read is among the most controversial of city programs, at least among educators. There is debate over how well the program has been evaluated, despite grandiose IBM claims. Some say Writing to Read was thrust on the system by a city administration anxious to "catch up" with the rest of the state and nation in computer-assisted instruction (CAI). If CAI (one of the multitude of acronyms in education) is a wave of the future, Baltimore has yet to catch the wave. It has one of the least-developed computer education programs in the state. The central office staff numbers one. For years, there have been no local funds to buy computers. Some 50 schools have no classroom computers.

* Project 2000 is the creation of Spencer Holland, director of the Center for Educating African-American Males at Morgan State University. Another mentoring-style program, Project 2000 exposes students at Robert W. Coleman, Coldstream Park and George G. Kelson to male volunteers who tutor and counsel. The program is aimed at boys, but girls won't be ignored. "We're looking for men to help the teachers discipline, and boys respond better to men," Holland was quoted in *The Baltimore Sun*.

Meanwhile, at Matthew A. Henson Elementary School, Principal Leah H. Hasty has formed an all-black, all-male classroom, presided over by a black male teacher. "I thought I might be able to save a handful if I could do something at an early age to give them positive self-images and self-esteem," Hasty told the *Washington Post*.

* The Coalition for Essential Schools at Walbrook High School is the brain-child of TheodoreSizer, a Brown University education critic and former headmaster of Phillips Andover Academy. Sizer wants to remake the American high school; he believes that a typical high school classroom has too much "teacher telling," too much student passivity and too little that is mind-stimulating (for teacher or student). In coalition schools, students attend small classes and take a common core of academic subjects.

* Cooperative learning, another old idea, is a program financed by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation at West Baltimore and Calverton Middle Schools. Cooperative learning, says West Baltimore Principal Sheila Kolman, is a strategy that has worked in elementary schools and "is just now coming into middle

schools." The premise is that learning is a cooperative enterprise. Both teachers and students work in small teams, the latter for eight-week periods, and there is little "frontal" teaching — that is, a teacher lecturing to a full class. Curriculum is being rewritten at both schools and the concept is spreading from reading and writing to other disciplines.

* Three initiatives lumped under the title "school and family connections" are designed to help schools deal with the families they serve in productive ways and to help parents improve their children's education. One of the programs, Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), is in conjunction with the cooperative learning project at Calverton and West Baltimore. Johns Hopkins researchers work with teachers who have developed 70 homework activities designed to involve family members with their children and to make home assignments more productive and meaningful than the drudgery they are for many students. These programs are funded in part by the Fund for Educational Excellence.

* Success for All rests on two other simple propositions — virtually all children can learn and the earlier they begin learning, the better. The program concentrates on the youngest children (although it attempts to improve instruction school-wide), providing tutors (who are certified teachers) and anything else necessary to ensure that they have adequate basic skills by the time they reach the third grade. A "family support team" works in each school to help support parents in ensuring the success of their children. A "facilitator" works with teachers to help them implement the program.

Success for All was mounted four years ago, during Alice Pinderhughes' administration, by a group of Johns Hopkins researchers, a select few from the school system and Buzzy Hettleman. It began at Abbottston Elementary and was soon extended to City Springs Elementary, one of the poorest in the city. Later, a "Chevy" version — the same program but with a smaller staff — was extended to five more schools. (Funds for the program in these schools comes primarily from Chapter I.)

Evaluation of Success for All has been positive (and, as might be expected, more positive at the two "Cadillac" schools, Abbottston and City Springs, than at the five

Success for All rests on two other simple propositions — virtually all children can learn and the earlier they begin learning, the better.

"Chevys"). Failure rates are down in all of the schools (in a city where a third of all pupils

have failed by the time they reach third grade), as are referrals to special education.

Success for All is such a simple idea, resting on such tried-and-proven principles, that you might ask why it isn't in all Baltimore schools. The reason is

money. Abbottston gets about \$400,000 a year on top of its regular Chapter I money. That sounds like a lot. It costs about \$1,000 a year for each pupil over and above Chapter I to operate a "full-service" version of Success for All.

But if Baltimore were to receive state aid at the average level of Maryland school districts, the city could afford Success for All and more.

"We're always working on two different tracks," says Robert Slavin. "One track is what you could do with resources as they currently exist. The other is what you could do with resources as they should exist."

Part III: School-Based Management: Wave of the Future or Passing Fad?

"One of the greatest needs of public education especially in our larger cities is to recapture, in a practical way, the close and intimate relationship between the school and the parents, between the school and the total community. This can best be done, it seems to me, at the principal-teacher-building level. If this relationship is to be effective, it must not be superficial; the community must be a part of the school and the school a part of the community."

William Lemmel, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1948

Every year or two, it seems, a new fad sweeps the education landscape...Some think restructuring... might be different.

This year the buzzword is "restructuring." Last year it was "choice." Every year or two, it seems, a new

fad sweeps the education landscape, uproots a few trees but generally doesn't leave much evidence of its visit. Some think restructuring, or school-based management, might be different.

Again, the idea isn't a new one. Under restructuring, decision-making authority and responsibility are transferred from the central office to the individual schools, which are run by local councils headed by principals and including parents, teachers and community people. These councils set their own goals, plan their own programs, determine how their budgets will be spent and even hire their own principals and teachers.

Exactly how Baltimore's plan will work isn't known; the Board of School Commissioners early last fall approved the concept in principle. Some twenty schools will enter the program this fall as "pilots." (Most observers like the idea of a gradual approach as opposed to that of Chicago, where a reform act dictated that all schools be restructured at the same time.) Superintendent Richard Hunter (see Part I) and his deputy, Edward Andrews, both like the idea, and both like it for the same reason: Baltimore, a city of communities that are much different from each other, ought to allow its schools to reflect these differences.

For decades, Baltimore principals have practiced — informally — a limited version of school-based management. "Where you have good schools and strong principals," says Benjamin Whitten, retired head of vocational education, "you have school-based management. That's what I believe. When I was principal of Cherry Hill, we had the attitude that we know how to work with our constituency: our parents, our children and our teachers. A principal who doesn't do that is not an effective principal."

Mary S. Johnson can dig into her files and produce the six-page list of "school-wide objectives" developed by her staff and parents when she was principal of Montebello Elementary School — 16 years ago! Generally, the stronger the principal and the more confident, the more he or she is willing to share authority with parents and community people. Evelyn T. Beasley, principal of Roland Park Elementary and Middle School (and the very picture of confidence), says: "The mechanism has always been there. It's just a matter of doing it. The school board and superintendent won't interfere if we can prove what we are doing is essentially sound." And Billie Rinaldi, principal of Garrett Heights Elementary in Northeast Baltimore, says: "There's a lot of autonomy there for the principal if you want to use it."

If school-based management is carried out to its fullest, though, there will be autonomy not only for the principal, but for the principal in collaboration with teachers and parents. Together, they will manage their own budgets and control their own staffs. (The Greater Baltimore Committee had laid the groundwork for restructuring in 1982, when it studied the system's management and established the idea that the principal is, in effect, a branch manager, and again in 1983, when it recommended school-based budgeting. The powers-that-be said it was a good idea, but nothing came of it.)

Not everyone is thrilled with school-based management. Samuel L. Banks, director of instructional support, believes it's "mythological. How are you going to manage curriculum and finance at the school level?

You're simply not going to be able to do it . . . This doesn't mean that there shouldn't be input from community folk, or from the corporate community, but to argue that you're going to do away with [central office] bureaucrats is nonsense. Each school cannot do its own thing. What happens if a student goes from School A, where they have one curriculum, to School B, where they've chosen another?"

Not everyone is thrilled with school-based management.

Banks' question is one of many that need to be answered if restructuring is to become more than a passing fad in Baltimore. Among them:

* Will North Avenue really give up its power? Hunter says it will have to, but Jo Ann Robinson and others accuse him of dragging his feet on school-based management while supporting it publicly. "We won't be directing activities but supporting activities and holding people accountable," Hunter says. But when restructuring became reality in Chicago in 1988, the downtown bureaucrats not only failed to support it wholeheartedly; in some cases they sabotaged it. Michael Kirst, a professor of education policy at Stanford University, recently studied the Chicago plan. While it has indeed reduced the size of the central office — entire divisions, such as staff development and curriculum, were decimated — Kirst found the bureaucracy in a state of confusion, with many "demoralized people in cubicles." (Kirst also said budgets are not presented to the new school councils in a form they can understand and deal with.)

* Will principals and teachers be willing to share their power? In Chicago, the

results have been mixed. To share in the management of their schools, principals will have to discard superior attitudes that have made generations of parents feel unwelcome in many schools. Teachers will have to abandon some of their ideas about hewing to the "rule" of a labor contract. Fortunately, one of the leaders in the Baltimore City Public Schools Restructuring Committee, the panel that proposed school-based management, was Irene Dandridge, president of the Baltimore Teachers Union. Dandridge is enthusiastic about restructuring, which she says will allow schools to experiment with nontraditional ways of teaching. "None of that is happening now," she says. But some worry that restructuring in Baltimore has come down to a struggle between labor (primarily the BTU) and management (North Avenue) even before it gets off the starting blocks. If that is the case, those parents and others who would be "empowered" by restructuring already are losers.

* Can parents and community people be brought into the shared decision-making, how much training will be necessary and who will pay for it? To the first part: yes, but with great difficulty. To the second: much more than most people realize. To the third: no one really knows.

Can parents and community people be brought into the shared decision-making...

To middle-class parents, participation in "back-to-school nights," PTA meetings and the like is a sometimes tedious but necessary chore that goes with raising children. But Wyatt Cogger, principal of Lexington Terrace Elementary School in inner-city Baltimore tells a different story of apathy and, in some cases, hostility. "It's a huge job just getting them [parents] in here," he says. Under restructuring, parents will have to be enticed to participate in their children's schools; they will also have to know something about curriculum and personnel and how to participate in a governing body. The modern history of parents' organizations in Baltimore isn't encouraging. Many schools, mostly in the inner city, haven't been able to sustain a PTA.

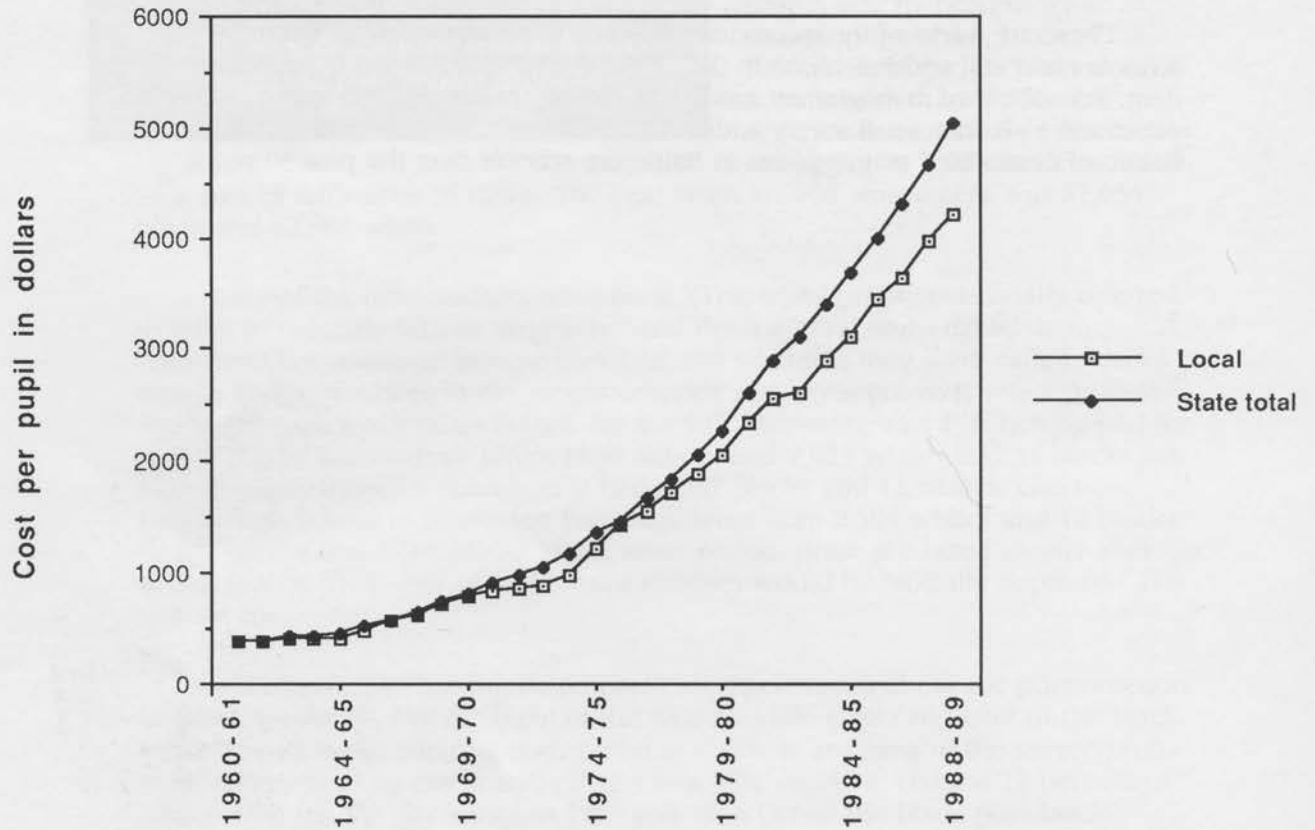
* If schools are to choose their own curriculum under school-based management, why is Hunter rewriting the curriculum? He says it's because many of the schools won't be able to develop their own curriculum, at least at first. These schools will need uniform curriculum from the central office, he says, until they "mature" sufficiently to develop their own. This raises another question: What happens when the schools with successful councils go their own way with their own programs, leaving the rest — and the rest will be inner-city schools — to rely on the central bureaucracy?

Operating revenue sources by percentage

* Finally, how does school-based management jibe with state Superintendent Shilling's major reform effort, "Schools for Success?" The Shilling plan requires a heavy dose of "accountability," and that means testing. The first state-wide "report card," showing Baltimore to be failing in all eight categories (four of which require testing), was issued in November. Already some observers are saying that implicit in the Shilling scheme is state-wide curriculum in reading, mathematics, writing and citizenship. Schools have no choice but to meet the state accountability standards; failure means being taken over by the state, while success means cash bonuses.

These are a few of the questions that need to be answered as Baltimore schools enter still another phase in their history and look for a 19th superintendent. School-based management has the potential of changing the entire culture of education in Baltimore. It surely addresses the criticism of those who see the failure of centralized management in Baltimore schools over the past 30 years.

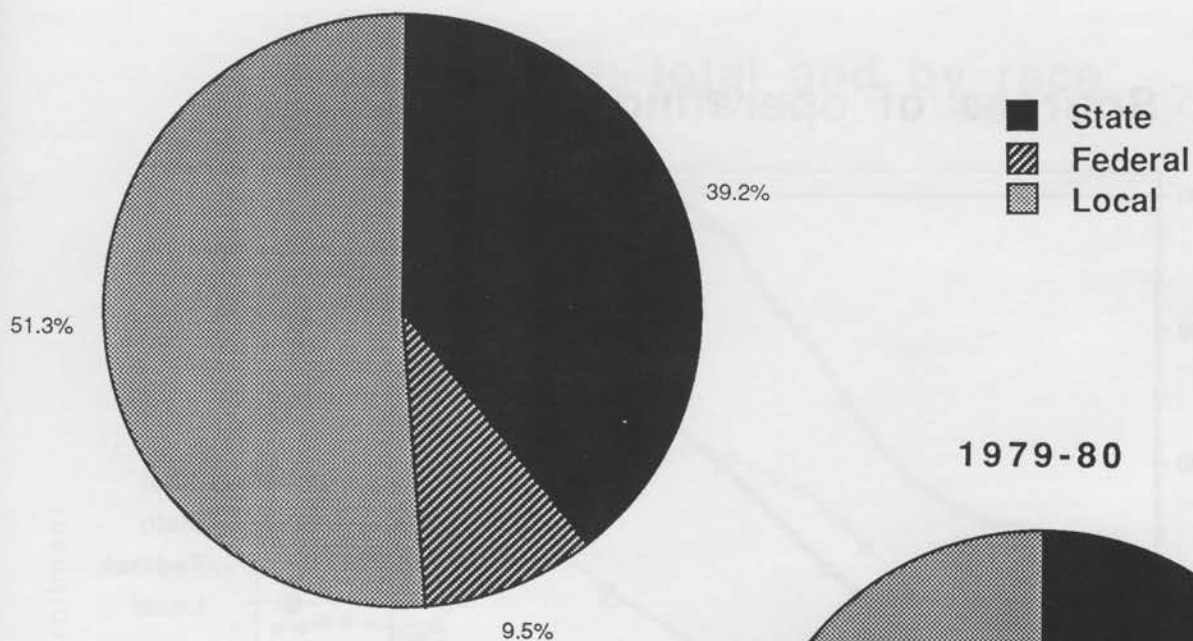
Cost per pupil: state versus local



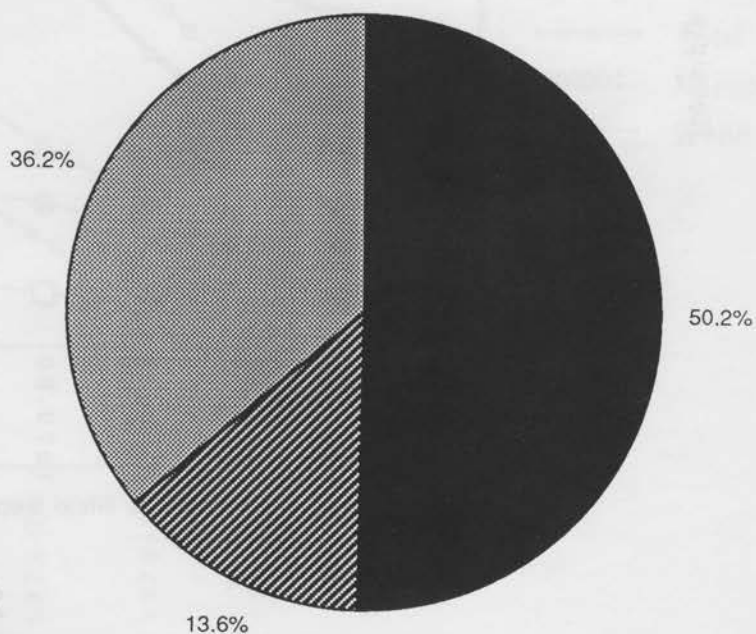
*Data provided by Maryland State Department of Education.

Operating revenue: sources by percentage

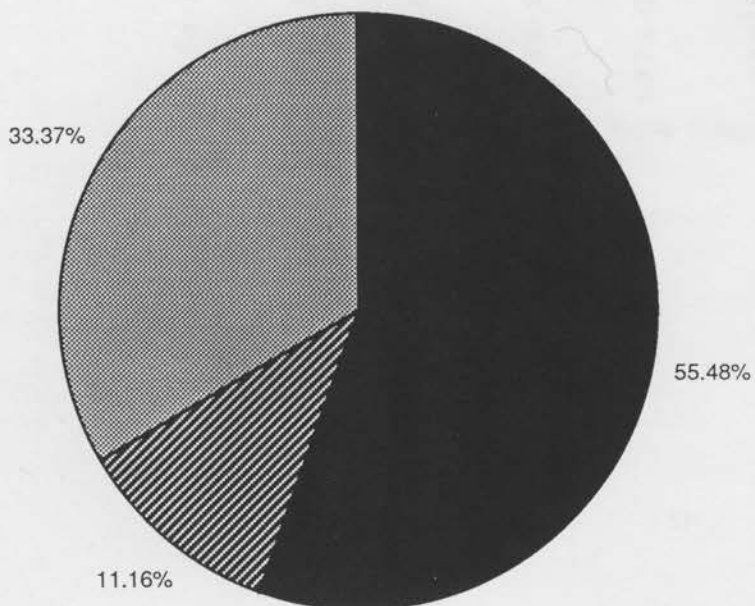
1969-70



1979-80

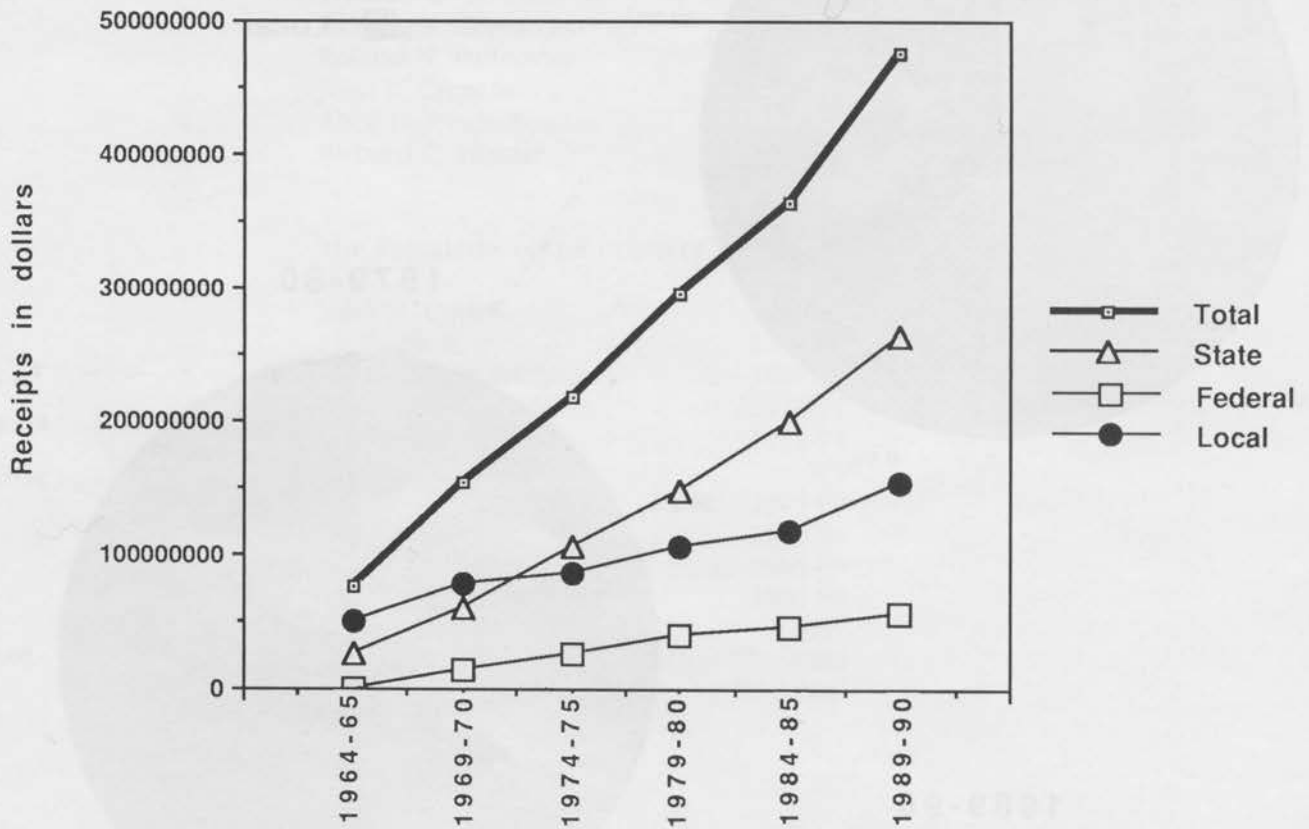


1989-90



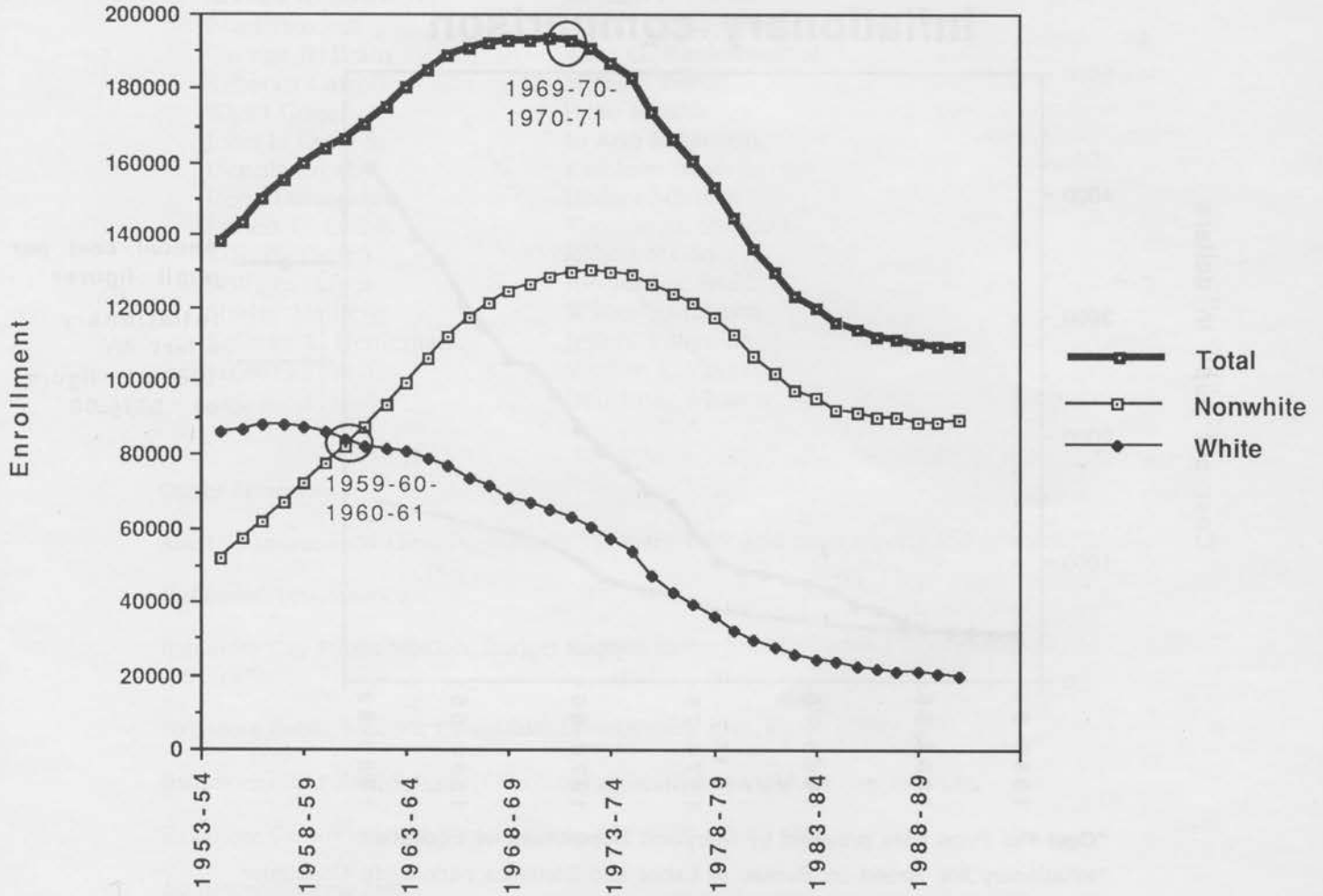
*Data provided by Maryland State Department of Education.

Sources of operating revenue



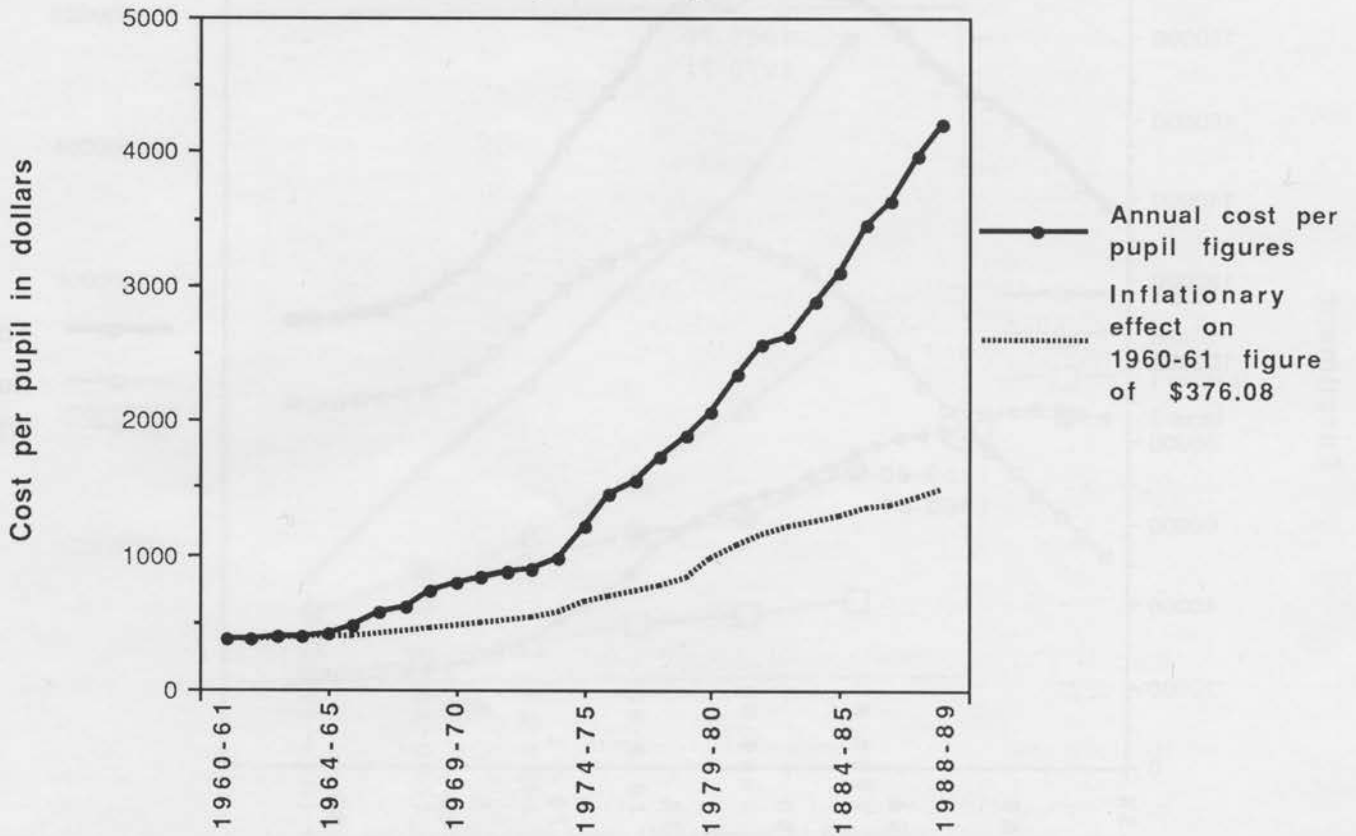
*Data provided by Maryland State Department of Education.

Enrollment: total and by race



*Data provided by Baltimore City Public Schools Department of Planning.

Increase in cost per pupil with inflationary comparison



*Cost Per Pupil data provided by Maryland Department of Education.

*Inflationary line based on Bureau of Labor and Statistics nationwide Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) where 1982-84=100.

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