## Methodology

This analysis examines the reform environments in the nation's twenty-five largest cities, plus five additional smaller communities. We reasoned that, as alleged "hotbeds" of reform, these five would permit comparisons of conditions in big cities with those of smaller but potentially more nimble locales. The five additional cities are Albany, NY; Gary, IN; New Orleans, LA; Newark, NJ; and Washington, D.C.

## Data Sources

Data for the study were collected from three sources: publicly available records, a survey of national providers, and a survey of local authorities in each city (and subsequent interviews with some of those individuals). Interview data were not included in the grades or rankings—but did provide context and texture for the city profiles. More on each of these data sources follows.

### Publicly Available Data

Where possible, extant data were gathered from public sources, including the federal Common Core of Data (for per-pupil expenditures), the Data Quality Campaign (for state longitudinal data systems), the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (for state charter school laws and local charter-school market shares), the National Council on Teacher Quality (for local collective bargaining agreements), and Teach for America, New Leaders for New Schools, and The New Teacher Project (for enrollment in alternative certification programs). (See "Scoring Metric" in this appendix for additional details.)

### Survey Data

In many instances, suitable data were not available from extant sources. Hence, we also drew upon data from two surveys—one focused at the national level and the other locally—that were developed specifically for this study and administered in late 2009. These online surveys added valuable information and nuance to the extant data.

**National Survey.** This survey was administered to senior leaders of sixteen national organizations that are actively involved in multiple cities across the nation (see Appendix C for a partial list of organizations). These national stakeholders oversee organizations that manage human capital pipelines, operate charter schools, develop educational technology and tools, or provide the private dollars that fund them. And they do so in numerous locations. Thus, they were asked to comparatively rate, insofar as they are active in or knowledgeable about, the cities in our sample in such realms as the quality of district leadership, availability of local philanthropy, and support of civic leaders. The national survey was administered in November-December 2009; the response rate was 81 percent.

**Local Survey.** This survey obtained more granular data from on-the-ground education reformers in each city. It was designed for respondents with firsthand familiarity with local conditions. Whereas national respondents rated a number of cities comparatively, local respondents provided more concrete information for their own cities regarding infrastructure for reform and school system behaviors. In four areas—human capital, charter schooling, philanthropy, and local schools—one respondent was identified in each for each city.

Several methods were used to identify such respondents. For human capital and charter school respondents, contacts were requested from senior leaders at Teach For America and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. For philanthropic respondents, contacts were requested from leaders at a national philanthropic support organization; that list was then supplemented with organizations identified by the Foundation Center Directory as contributing to the education reform priorities of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009.[1] Repeated attempts to engage appropriate senior-level school district operations or procurement staffs were largely ignored— though we tried diligently—so local district staff were not included in the survey. A total of 150 individuals were invited to take the local survey in November-December 2009; the response rate was 61 percent. In all, between the two surveys, 106 individuals participated.

The local and national surveys can be found online at http://edexcellence.net/index.cfm/news_americas-best-and-worst-cities-for-school-reform.

### Local Interviews

In order to add context to the thirty city profiles, interviews were conducted with two to three knowledgeable residents of each city. (Interview data were not included in the grades or rankings.) Most had previously completed the local survey; others were recommended by local or national survey respondents. Phone interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes; interviewees could also submit responses via email.

Interviewees were asked to expand upon two overarching questions:

1  What, if anything, makes your city a welcome place for educational entrepreneurs to do business?

2  What, if anything, makes your city an unwelcome place for educational entrepreneurs to do business?

A series of more specific follow-up questions were asked based on responses to the above, but generally included:

1  How receptive is district leadership when it comes to school choice (including charter schooling)? Performance-based pay? Alternative teacher certification? Using new technologies in the classroom?

2  How about the local school board, local teachers' union, and local community (as relevant) on these same issues?

3  In general, how influential are the business and philanthropic communities in this city when it comes to education reform?

Interview data were summarized by question and used as appropriate in the city profiles, typically to contextualize quantitative and survey data.

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1. See http://foundationcenter.org/educationexcellence/top_lists.html (accessed September 15, 2009).

## Data Requirements

Data were gathered in six areas: human capital, financial capital, charter environment, quality control, district environment, and municipal environment. Each area was divided into "indicators," which were typically phrased as questions (for example, indicator 5.3: "Does the teachers' union wield considerable influence?"). Each indicator was further divided into more specific "sub-indicators." For example, sub-indicator 5.3.1 from the national survey asks respondents the extent to which "the local teachers' union wields substantial political influence over district decisions."

Data were not available for every indicator for every city. To ensure that data were sufficient to warrant a grade for that city, we used the following decision rules:

1 Each area (human capital, charter environment, etc.) had to have data from at least two of three sources (publicly available data, national survey data, or local survey data).

2 Within each of the data sources, there were several indicators. No more than one indicator in each data source could have missing data.

3 Each indicator was further subdivided into multiple sub-indicators. No more than one sub-indicator (per indicator) could have missing data.

Further, for the indicators that were informed by survey data, each had to pass three additional thresholds or they were not included:

1 Each city had to have at least three respondents per survey (i.e., three national respondents and three local respondents).

2 Each survey question had to have an overall response rate of at least 60 percent across all of the cities.

3 Each survey question had to have a response rate of at least 60 percent to be included for any particular city.

"Charter environment" presented a unique situation. The data in this category drew only from publicly available data and local (not national) survey data. Since this area had only two, not three, data sources to begin with, the data thresholds were relaxed slightly: Each city had to have at least two survey respondents for the local survey; and each data source was allowed two missing indicators.

In the end, cities received a final grade if we were able to obtain enough data in at least four of the six areas. Four cities failed to meet this threshold: El Paso, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Seattle.

## Grading

Each of the six areas was comprised of five to seven indicators; each area contributed approximately 17 percent to a city's final grade, while each indicator individually contributed 2 to 3 percent. Indicators with sufficient data were averaged, as were individual grades, for each of the six areas.

A 0 to 4 scale was used across the board. For publicly available information, data were typically ranked and curved onto a scale (see Table A-1). For example, one sub-indicator in the "financial capital" area examines per-pupil expenditures in each city's primary school district normed for the cost of living in the district's location city. To convert per-pupil dollar amounts to a 0 to 4 scale, cities were ranked from highest to lowest normed expenditures; the top 20 percent were assigned a "4," the next twenty percent a "3," and so on.

Survey responses were also converted to a 0 to 4 scale. The format of most questions was either a five-point scale (ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) or a two-point scale (*yes* or *no*). For the former, a numerical value of "0" to "4" was assigned to each option (for example, *strongly disagree* a "4," *disagree* a "3," *neutral* a "2," and so on). For yes/no questions, a *yes* was assigned a "4" and *no* a "0."

Table A-1 shows the grading scale.

**TABLE A-1: Grading Scale**

| | |
|---|---|
| >3.0 | A |
| 2.50-2.99 | B |
| 2.00-2.49 | C |
| 1.50-1.99 | D |
| <1.49 | F |

## Scoring Rubric

Six areas were examined in the scoring metric: human capital, financial capital, charter environment, quality control, district environment, and municipal environment. Sometimes the data pertained to the city as a whole, other times to the city's primary school district. (In some cases, state measures, like the strength of the state's charter law were also considered.) The primary school district is typically the city's largest district by enrollment. Detailed questions and data sources pertaining to each area are presented below.

### Area 1: Human Capital. *(6 indicators)*

**Indicator 1.1: To what extent have nontraditional teachers and administrators penetrated the city?**

- **Sub-indicator 1.1.1.** *Absolute current and alumni numbers of three nationwide, "brand-name" alternative certification programs: Teach For America (TFA), The New Teacher Project (TNTP), and New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS).*[2] "Alumni" include program participants who had completed all program requirements as of 2007-08. Since measuring how many alumni remained in a particular city after their teaching/administrative service had ended was not possible, a conservative estimate of 50 percent was used. Thus, current placement numbers in each city for the 2008-09 school year (the most recent year for which there were data) were added to 50 percent of each program's alumni total. Programs that began in 2009-10 were not counted. All data were provided by the respective organizations listed above. All cities with zero current participants or alumni received a score of "0." All other cities were ranked highest to lowest; the top 25 percent of cities received a "4," the next 25 percent a "3," and so on. Each program was ranked separately, and scores of all three programs were averaged for a final score.

- **Sub-indicator 1.1.2.** *Brand-name alternatively certified personnel as percentage of existing overall workforce.* The total current numbers for TFA and TNTP (2008-09) were computed as a percentage of absolute full-time employment (FTE) teachers (2007-08) as reported by Common Core of Data (CCD) (2007-08 was the most recent year for which CCD had data). Since the number of teachers employed by districts stays fairly static from year to year, the mismatch between reporting years is not troubling. Raw NLNS numbers (2008-09) were computed as a percentage of FTE school administrators (2007-08) as reported by CCD. Teacher and administrator percentages were separately ranked, scored, and then averaged together according to the method described in Sub-indicator 1.1.1.

**Indicator 1.2: How restrictive is the teachers' union contract when it comes to the recruitment, hiring, and firing processes of the local school district?**

- **Sub-indicator 1.2.1.** *Restrictiveness of teachers' union contract.* Collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) were assessed on a 0 to 4 point rubric, across three categories: compensation, personnel decisions, and work rules. The same rubric used in Fordham's 2008 report, *The Leadership*

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2. Since alternatively certified teachers and administrators are typically assigned to regions and not districts, we used a city's metropolitan division—as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau—as our unit of analysis. While this measure provides for consistency across locales, using it as our denominator likely underestimated the total.

*Limbo*, was applied here.[3] Data were gathered from the National Council on Teacher Quality's TR3 database for twenty-five of the study's thirty cities. Among the missing five, four were not included in TR3 (Albany, Gary, San Jose, and Phoenix), but their CBAs were obtained and graded using the same rubric. New Orleans does not have a collective bargaining agreement. CBAs were current as of December 31, 2009.

**Indicator 1.3: How easy is it for entrepreneurs to find locally grown talent in this city?**

- **Sub-indicator 1.3.1.** National survey question. "There is a deep talent pool of potential employees for entrepreneurs eyeing this metro area."

**Indicator 1.4: How easy is it for entrepreneurs to import talent to this city?**

- **Sub-indicator 1.4.1.** National survey question. "It is relatively easy to recruit talent and individuals to move to this city."

**Indicator 1.5: How do district hiring processes support or interfere with the talent pipeline in this city?**

- **Sub-indicator 1.5.1.** Local survey question. "Slack district hiring routines or slow district hiring cycles serve to keep alternatively trained teachers out of district classrooms."

**Indicator 1.6: How do district termination processes support or interfere with the talent pipeline in this city?**

- **Sub-indicator 1.6.1.** Local survey question. "The district abides by a 'last hired, first fired' policy when contemplating teacher hiring and firing decisions."

## Area 2: Financial Capital. *(7 indicators)*

**Indicator 2.1: What is the per-pupil expenditure (adjusted for the cost of living) in the city's primary school district?**

- **Sub-indicator 2.1.1.** *Per-pupil expenditures normed for local cost of living.* Average per-pupil expenditures over three years (2004-07) for the city's primary school district, as recorded by CCD,[4] were normed using the ACCRA cost of living index rating for the third quarter of 2009.[5] To convert per-pupil dollar amounts to a 0 to 4 scale, cities were ranked from highest to lowest expenditures; the top 20 percent were assigned a "4," the next 20 percent a "3," and so on.

**Indicator 2.2: Where is money most available? From philanthropic or public sources, or private investors?**

- **Sub-indicator 2.2.1.** National survey question. "Funding in each respective city is readily available for nontraditional providers from philanthropy."

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3. Frederick M. Hess and Coby Loup, *The Leadership Limbo: Teacher Labor Agreements in America's Fifty Largest School Districts* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2008), http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/the_leadership_limbo.pdf.

4. See CCD LEA Finance Survey (F33), available at http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/f33agency.asp.

5. Due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, data for the Recovery School District (RSD), the primary district of New Orleans, LA, were only available for 2006-07. (The RSD was actually created pre-Katrina, in 2003.) The figure for New Orleans is based on per-pupil expenditures for 2006-07 alone.

- **Sub-indicator 2.2.2.** National survey question. "Funding in each respective city is readily available for nontraditional providers from public dollars."

- **Sub-indicator 2.2.3.** National survey question. "Funding in each respective city is readily available for nontraditional providers from private investors."

**Indicator 2.3: Does the local school district seek non-public dollars to further its reform ambitions?**

- **Sub-indicator 2.3.1.** National survey question. "Leaders in this city actively seek non-public funding (e.g., from philanthropists, venture capitalists, corporations, etc.) to support innovative programs."

**Indicator 2.4: Are local dollars available in this city for nontraditional education reforms?**

- **Sub-indicator 2.4.1.** Local survey question. "There is at least one local philanthropy that invests in, or contributes to, one or more of these reforms: charter schools, performance-based pay, alternative teaching routes."

**Indicator 2.5: Are national dollars available in this city for nontraditional education reforms?**

- **Sub-indicator 2.5.1.** Local survey question. "At least one major national foundation is helping to support at least one of the following in this city: charter schools; performance-based pay; alternative teaching routes." [Included pull-down list of national foundations]

**Indicator 2.6: What impact do philanthropic dollars have on nontraditional education reforms in this city?**

- **Sub-indicator 2.6.1.** Local survey question. "Nontraditional reforms (e.g., charter schools, alternative teaching routes, or smart applications of technology) get their fair share of philanthropic dollars available in this city."

- **Sub-indicator 2.6.2.** Local survey question. "Philanthropists and/or philanthropic organizations have been a negative influence in this district because they have promoted initiatives that conflict with district priorities."

**Indicator 2.7: Does the district have a coherent vision for how to spend its dollars strategically?**

- **Sub-indicator 2.7.1.** Local survey question. "The district spends its own money on nontraditional educational tools and programs."

- **Sub-indicator 2.7.2.** Local survey question. "District leadership has a coherent vision for change and is disciplined about pursuing philanthropic/private funding to support that vision."

## Area 3: Charter Environment. *(8 indicators)*

**Indicator 3.1: Are there any high-quality non-LEA charter school authorizers?**

- **Sub-indicator 3.1.1.** *Availability of and support for authorizers.* Two indicators from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS)'s *How State Charter Laws Rank Against the New Model Public Charter School Law* report were used: "Multiple Authorizers Available," and "Adequate Authorizer Funding."[6] NAPCS scores the former on a 0 to 12 scale and the latter on a 0 to 8 scale. Scores were combined for both indicators to create a 0 to 20 scale. Combined scores were divided by 5 to obtain a 0 to 4 scale.

- **Sub-indicator 3.1.2.** *State-level quality control mechanisms for authorizers.* Five indicators from NAPCS's *How State Charter Laws Rank* were used: "Authorizer and Overall Program Accountability System Required," "Transparent Charter Application Review, Decision-Making Processes," "Performance Based Charter Contracts Required," "Comprehensive Charter School Monitoring and Data Collection," and "Clear Process for Renewal, Nonrenewal, and Revocation Decisions." NAPCS scores these indicators on 0 to 12, 0 to 16, 0 to 16, 0 to 16, and 0 to 16 scales, respectively. All five scores were combined to create a 0 to 76 scale. Combined scores were then divided by 19 to obtain a 0 to 4 scale.

**Indicator 3.2: Are charter schools funded fairly compared to traditional schools?**

- **Sub-indicator 3.2.1.** *State of charter funding.* Data from NAPCS were combined with data regarding the federal Charter Schools Program. Two indicators from NAPCS's *How State Charter Laws Rank* were used: "Equitable Operational Funding and Equal Access to All State and Federal Categorical Funding" and "Equitable Access to Capital Funding and Facilities." NAPCS scores both indicators on a 0 to 12 scale. Scores were combined for both indicators to create a 0 to 24 scale. Combined scores were then divided by 6 to obtain a 0 to 4 scale. One indicator regarding the federal Charter Schools Program was used: A city received a "4" if its state had received a Charter Schools Program grant as of October 2009, and a "0" if it had not. The combined NAPCS indicator score was then averaged with the Charter Schools Program score to achieve a final score. The final score was curved as follows: a score of 0 received a "0"; above 0 to 2.0 received a "1"; 2.1 to 2.5 received a "2"; 2.6 to 3.0 received a "3"; and 3.1 and above received a "4."

**Indicator 3.3: To what extent have charters penetrated the market?**

- **Sub-indicator 3.3.1.** *Market share of charter school enrollment.* The percentage of students enrolled in charter schools within the boundaries of each city's primary school district, as presented in NAPCS's *Top 10 Charter Communities by Market Share*, was used.[7] (Title notwithstanding, the report actually includes data for the top fifty school districts by market share.) Percentages were scored as follows: 0 to 9 percent received a "1," 10 to 19 percent a "2," 20 to 29 percent a "3," and 30 percent and above a "4."

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6. *How State Charter Laws Rank Against the New Model Public Charter School Law* (Washington, D.C.: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2010).

7. *Top 10 Charter Communities by Market Share* (Washington, D.C.: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2009).

**Indicator 3.4: What is the status of the state's charter school cap?**

- **Sub-indicator 3.4.1.** *Restrictiveness of the state's charter school cap*. One indicator from NAPCS's *How State Charter Laws Rank* was used: "No Caps." NAPCS weighting (0 to 4 scale) was maintained. It is as follows:

  4=The state does not have a cap.
  3=The state has a cap with room for ample growth. OR The state does not have a cap, but allows districts to restrict growth.
  2=The state has a cap with room for some growth.
  1=The state has a cap with room for limited growth.
  0=The state has a cap with no room for growth.

**Indicator 3.5: What kind of non-district support exists for charter schools?**

- **Sub-indicator 3.5.1.** Local survey question. "The city has one or more non-district charter school authorizers."

- **Sub-indicator 3.5.2.** Local survey question. "There is at least one charter-school support organization in this city (i.e., an entity that provides technical assistance for and/or lobbies on behalf of charter schools)."

**Indicator 3.6: Does the biggest authorizer in this city exercise effective authorizing practices? [Respondents were first asked to name the biggest authorizer in the city.]**

- **Sub-indicator 3.6.1.** Local survey question. "To my knowledge, this authorizing entity is selective about which charters it approves."

- **Sub-indicator 3.6.2.** Local survey question. "To my knowledge, this authorizing entity seeks to improve low-performing charter schools."

**Indicator 3.7: What type of funding is available for charter schools?**

- **Sub-indicator 3.7.1.** Local survey question. "Public funding (from local, state, or federal sources) is available for charter school facilities."

- **Sub-indicator 3.7.2.** Local survey question. "It is relatively easy for current or future charter school operators to obtain facilities funding."

- **Sub-indicator 3.7.3.** Local survey question. "The level of charter school per-pupil funding is 75 percent or more of district school per-pupil funding."

**Indicator 3.8: Is there a charter support organization in this city? If so, is it quality-conscious?**

- **Sub-indicator 3.8.1.** Local survey question. [if yes to above] "To my knowledge, this charter support organization emphasizes quality when assisting new or prospective charters."

- **Sub-indicator 3.8.2.** Local survey question. [if yes to above] "To my knowledge, this charter support organization seeks to improve low-performing charter schools."

## Area 4: Quality Control. (6 indicators)

**Indicator 4.1: How good is the state's longitudinal data system?**

- **Sub-indicator 4.1.1.** *Essential elements and actions of a state longitudinal data system.* The primary indicators from the Data Quality Campaign's *2009-10 Survey Results Compendium*—both *10 Elements* and *10 Actions*—were used.[8]

  The 10 Elements consist of: 1. Statewide student identifier; 2. Student-level enrollment data; 3. Student-level test data; 4. Information on untested students; 5. Statewide teacher identifier with a teacher-student match; 6. Student-level course completion (transcript) data; 7. Student-level SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement exam data; 8. Student-level graduation and dropout data; 9. Ability to match student-level P-12 and higher education data; 10. A state data audit system.

  The 10 Actions include: 1. Link data systems; 2. Create stable, sustained support; 3. Develop governance structures; 4. Build state data repositories; 5. Implement systems to provide timely access to information; 6. Create progress reports using individual student data to improve student performance; 7. Create reports using longitudinal statistics to guide system-wide improvement efforts; 8. Develop a P-20/workforce research agenda; 9. Promote educator professional development and credentialing; 10. Promote strategies to raise awareness of available data.

  One point was assigned for the presence of each element or action for a maximum possible total of 10 points in each category; the two categories were averaged for a total score. Total scores were converted to a 0 to 4 scale according to the following: total scores of 0 to 3.9 points were assigned a "0"; 4 to 4.9 were assigned a "1"; 5 to 5.9 were assigned a "2"; 6 to 6.9 were assigned a "3"; and 7 to 10 were assigned a "4."

**Indicator 4.2: How rigorous is the state test, compared to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)?**

- **Sub-indicator 4.2.1.** *Rigor of state test.* State test proficiency cut scores on the NAEP scale, as computed by the National Center for Education Statistics in *Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto NAEP Scales: 2005-2007*, were analyzed.[9] Respective NAEP scale equivalents for fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math proficiency standards in each state were subtracted from the NAEP proficiency score in each subject and averaged. State average differences were then ranked with the smaller gaps receiving higher scores. Cities from the four states with the smallest gap received a "4"; cities from the next four states received a "3"; and so on. Five states received a "1" due to a tie between Texas and Illinois.

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8. *2009-10 Survey Results Compendium—10 Elements and 10 Actions* (Washington, D.C.: Data Quality Campaign, 2010), http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Elements_Compendium.pdf and http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Actions_Compendium.pdf.

9. Victor Bandeira de Mello, Charles Blankenship, Don McLaughlin, and Taslima Rahman, *Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto NAEP Scales: 2005-2007 (NCES 2010-456)* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, October 2009), http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2010456.asp.

**Indicator 4.3: Are quality-control mechanisms used well in the city?**

- **Sub-indicator 4.3.1.** National survey question. "How this city uses outcomes and metrics to police quality has helped rather than hindered my organization's operations."

**Indicator 4.4: Is there outside support for nontraditional reformers that acts as an additional check on their operations?**

- **Sub-indicator 4.4.1.** National survey question. "The mayor and/or other municipal leaders help nontraditional providers overcome local obstacles or district resistance (e.g., by providing resources, making phone calls on their behalf, or clarifying rules)."

**Indicator 4.5: Are there quality-control mechanisms in place in this city's primary school district?**

- **Sub-indicator 4.5.1.** Local survey question. "The district uses the information that it collects in order to make real-time adjustments in practice or policy along the way."

**Indicator 4.6: Is there organizational support for nontraditional providers in this city, either inside or outside the primary school district?**

- **Sub-indicator 4.6.1.** Local survey question. "There is an entity or individual outside the district that helps nontraditional providers* with one or more of the following: finances, facilities, or regulatory guidelines. *Note: By "nontraditional providers" we mean those who provide alternative sources of human capital, goods and services, and education options such as charter schools."

- **Sub-indicator 4.6.2.** Local survey question. "There is an entity or individual inside the district that helps nontraditional providers* with one or more of the following: finances, facilities, or regulatory guidelines." *Note: By "nontraditional providers" we mean those who provide alternative sources of human capital, goods and services, and education options such as charter schools."

## Area 5: District Environment.[10]  *(7 indicators)*

**Indicator 5.1: Do students in the district have access to online schooling (via a state-run virtual school)?**

- **Sub-indicator 5.1.1.** *The presence of a state-run virtual school.* Data were collected from the Editorial Project in Education's *Technology Counts 2009* report. Cities were awarded a score of "4" for the presence of a statewide virtual school or "0" for the absence of a virtual school.

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10. Many questions in this area dealt with the city's primary school district—each of which was identified for survey respondents. The districts were as follows: Albany: City School District of Albany; Austin: Austin Independent School District; Baltimore: Baltimore City Public Schools; Boston: Boston School District; Charlotte: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; Chicago: Chicago Public Schools; Columbus: Columbus City Schools; Dallas: Dallas Independent School District; Denver: Denver Public Schools; Detroit: Detroit Public Schools; El Paso: El Paso Independent School District; Fort Worth: Fort Worth Independent School District; Gary: Gary Community School Corporation; Houston: Houston Independent School District; Indianapolis: Indianapolis Public Schools; Jacksonville: Duval County Public Schools; Los Angeles: Los Angeles Unified School District; Memphis: Memphis City Schools; Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools; New Orleans: Recovery School District; New York: New York City Public Schools; Newark: Newark Public Schools; Philadelphia: The School District of Philadelphia; Phoenix: Mesa Public Schools; San Antonio: San Antonio Independent School District; San Diego: San Diego Unified School District; San Francisco: San Francisco Unified School District; San Jose: San Jose Unified School District; Seattle: Seattle Public Schools; Washington: District of Columbia Public Schools.

**Indicator 5.2: How easy or hard is it for providers to set up shop in this district?**

- **Sub-indicator 5.2.1.** National survey question. "It is easy for nontraditional providers to establish operations in this city."

**Indicator 5.3: Does the teachers' union wield considerable influence?**

- **Sub-indicator 5.3.1.** National survey question. "The local teachers' union wields substantial political influence over district decisions."

**Indicator 5.4: Does the district support nontraditional providers trying to set up shop?**

- **Sub-indicator 5.4.1.** National survey question. "District leaders are accessible and respond in a timely manner when dealing with nontraditional providers."

**Indicator 5.5: Does the local teachers' union hold tangible sway over district decisions and operations?**

- **Sub-indicator 5.5.1.** Local survey question. "In this district, the teachers' union is usually able to block or weaken reforms, innovations, and entrepreneurial ventures that it opposes."

- **Sub-indicator 5.5.2.** Local survey question. "[The teachers' union] is supportive of alternative certification."

- **Sub-indicator 5.5.3.** Local survey question. "[The teachers' union] is supportive of charter schools."

- **Sub-indicator 5.5.4.** Local survey question. "[The teachers' union] is supportive of performance-based pay."

**Indicator 5.6: Are district leaders visible and effective voices for reform in this city?**

- **Sub-indicator 5.6.1.** Local survey question. "The district has a culture that rewards smart problem-solvers, not only employees who have put in their time or have paper credentials."

- **Sub-indicator 5.6.2.** Local survey question. "District leaders communicate a sense of urgency about raising achievement and improving schools."

- **Sub-indicator 5.6.3.** Local survey question. "In general, district leaders have the political support they need to make things happen."

- **Sub-indicator 5.6.4.** Local survey question. "In general, the superintendent and senior leadership in this district make bold decisions and push to innovate and excel."

**Indicator 5.7: Does the district operate in an efficient and/or innovative manner?**

- **Sub-indicator 5.7.1.** Local survey question. "The district is attentive to making tools (e.g., hand-held devices, online instructional software programs, etc.) easy to use for its teachers and administrators."

- **Sub-indicator 5.7.2.** Local survey question. "The procurement office is well managed and responsive."

## Area 6: Municipal Environment. *(7 indicators)*

**Indicator 6.1: Is there a state-level education reform organization that supports nontraditional providers?**

- **Sub-indicator 6.1.1.** *Presence of a state-level reform organization.* "State-level reform organization" was defined as those members of the Policy Innovators in Education Network (PIE Network).[11] Cities were awarded a "4" if there is an education advocacy organization in their state that is a member of PIE Network, as of December 31, 2009, and a "0" if there is not.

**Indicator 6.2: How favorably, if at all, does the editorial board of the city's largest newspaper cover nontraditional reforms?**

- **Sub-indicator 6.2.1.** *Local editorials and opinion pieces.* A Boolean search of editorials appearing in the city's largest paper (by circulation) was conducted in LexisNexis using a list of reform keywords: charter schools, alternative preparation, alternative certification, teacher pay, merit pay, professional development AND teachers, exit exam, dropouts, teacher layoffs, charters, nontraditional school. The search included dates between Labor Day 2008 (9/1/2008) and Memorial Day 2009 (5/25/2009) as proxies for the typical "school year." Editorials were appraised as "negative" (0 points), "neutral" (2 points), or "positive" (4 points). Points were averaged, ranked by city from the highest to the lowest, and curved according to the following guidelines: 0 to 1.99 points received a "0"; 2 to 2.24 a "1"; 2.25 to 2.49 a "2"; 2.50 to 2.74 a "3"; and 2.75 and above a "4."

**Indicator 6.3: Do municipal civic leaders, including the mayor, business community, and philanthropic community, have the political will to advance potentially controversial reforms?**

- **Sub-indicator 6.3.1.** National survey question. "[The mayor] is willing to spend reasonable amounts of political capital to support nontraditional providers and advance potentially controversial reform ideas (e.g., performance-based pay, charter schools, distance learning, and alternative licensure)."

- **Sub-indicator 6.3.2.** National survey question. "[Other civic leaders] [are] willing to spend reasonable amounts of political capital to support nontraditional providers and advance potentially controversial reform ideas (e.g., performance-based pay, charter schools, distance learning, and alternative licensure)."

- **Sub-indicator 6.3.3.** National survey question. "[The business community] is willing to spend reasonable amounts of political capital to support nontraditional providers and advance potentially controversial reform ideas (e.g., performance-based pay, charter schools, distance learning, and alternative licensure)."

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11. See http://www.pie-network.org/.

- **Sub-indicator 6.3.4.** National survey question. "[The philanthropic community] is willing to spend reasonable amounts of political capital to support nontraditional providers and advance potentially controversial reform ideas (e.g., performance-based pay, charter schools, distance learning, and alternative licensure)."

**Indicator 6.4: Do municipal civic leaders, including the mayor, business community, and philanthropic community, expend their respective political capital on nontraditional reforms?**

- **Sub-indicator 6.4.1.** Local survey question. "For the most part, the mayor is willing to spend political capital to advance bold education-reform ideas."

- **Sub-indicator 6.4.2.** Local survey question. "For the most part, the business and philanthropic communities in this city are willing to exert political influence to advance bold reforms."

**Indicator 6.5: Does the local philanthropic community support nontraditional reforms?**

- **Sub-indicator 6.5.1.** Local survey question. "[The local philanthropic community] is supportive of alternative teaching routes."

- **Sub-indicator 6.5.2.** Local survey question. "[The local philanthropic community] is supportive of charter schools."

- **Sub-indicator 6.5.3.** Local survey question. "[The local philanthropic community] is supportive of performance-based pay."

**Indicator 6.6: Does the local business community support nontraditional reforms?**

- **Sub-indicator 6.6.1.** Local survey question. "[The local business community] is supportive of alternative teaching routes."

- **Sub-indicator 6.6.2.** Local survey question. "[The local business community] is supportive of charter schools."

- **Sub-indicator 6.6.3.** Local survey question. "[The local business community] is supportive of performance-based pay."

**Indicator 6.7: Are the editorial pages of the local papers supportive of reform?**

- **Sub-indicator 6.7.1.** Local survey question. "[The local editorial voice] is supportive of alternative teaching routes."

- **Sub-indicator 6.7.2.** Local survey question. "[The local editorial voice] is supportive of charter schools."

- **Sub-indicator 6.7.3.** Local survey question. "[The local editorial voice] is supportive of performance-based pay."

# APPENDIX C

Individuals from a number of national organizations helped to shape the study design and survey instruments, as well as participate in the national survey. Below represents a partial list.

Achievement First

Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation

Charter School Growth Fund

EdisonLearning

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)

Mondo Publishing

The New Teacher Project

Teach For America

The Walton Family Foundation

Wireless Generation