'Triage, Transition, and Transformation': Advocacy Discourse in Urban School Reform

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Abstract: Advocacy coalitions have the potential to be a vehicle for community-based education reform in urban school systems, where state legislatures have increasingly adopted top-down policies such as state takeover and accountability systems. Yet, coalitions are influenced by and create their own informal and formal power structures that can include or exclude certain stakeholders and perspectives. In this study, the Advocacy Coalition Framework was used alongside critical discourse analysis of interviews, documents, and more than 50 news articles to explore how power and ideology shaped policy in the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren. We find that personal stories, political loyalties, and prior reform experiences shaped the narratives of Coalition members. While discourse from and about the Coalition was narrower in scope

and representation during a tough legislative battle, the group's policy victories and organizational infrastructure created potential for substantive community-led reform in the years following. This suggests that community-based education reform may require advocates to strategically sequence the promotion of diverse stakeholder interests in order to achieve broad coalition goals.
Keywords: Advocacy Coalition Framework; critical discourse analysis; educational policy; urban education

"Triage, transición y transformación": Discurso de defensa en la reforma escolar urbana

Resumen: Como coaliciones para la defensa o el potencial del servicio educativo para una reforma educativa, basándonos en la comunidad escolar, en los sistemas urbanos urbanos, en los legisladores estadísticos, cada vez más en las políticas de la cima para el gobierno, como sistemas de control estatal y de protección de las condiciones. No está permitido, ya que las redes sociales son más importantes y más importantes que las prácticas y la información que puede incluir o excluir las necesidades específicas. Neste estudo, un Advocacy Coalition Framework para el uso y el análisis crítico de discurso de entrevistas, documentos y más de 50 artículos de noticias para el intercambio de ideas como una Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren. Descubrir las historias históricas, las políticas y experiencias previas de la reforma como narrativas de los miembros de la Coalición. El contenido de la Coalición ha sido distribuído durante el año y la duración de la leyenda dura, como las políticas y la infraestructura organizativa del grupo potencial para las reformas sustantivas de la comunidad y la comunidad. También le sugerimos una reforma educativa básica en la comunidad que puede exigir que los defensores secuencien estratégicamente una promoción de las oportunidades intereses diversas, una leyenda de metas y metas.
Palabras-clave: Advocacy Coalition Framework; análisis crítico del discurso; política educativa; educacion urbana

"Triagem, transição e transformação": Discurso de advocacia na reforma escolar urbana

Resumo: As coalizões para advocacia têm o potencial de ser um veículo para a reforma educacional baseada na comunidade nos sistemas escolares urbanos, onde os legislativos estaduais adotaram cada vez mais políticas de cima para baixo, como sistemas de controle estatal e de prestação de contas. No entanto, as coalizões são influenciadas por e criam suas próprias estruturas de poder formais e informais que podem incluir ou excluir certas partes interessadas e perspectivas. Neste estudo, a Advocacy Coalition Framework foi usada juntamente com a análise crítica do discurso de entrevistas, documentos e mais de 50 artigos de notícias para explorar como o poder e a ideologia moldaram as políticas na Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren. Descobrimos que histórias pessoais, lealdades políticas e experiências anteriores de reforma moldaram as narrativas dos membros da Coalizão. Embora o discurso de e sobre a Coalizão tenha sido mais restrito em escopo e representação durante uma dura batalha legislativa, as vitórias políticas e a infraestrutura organizacional do grupo criaram potencial para reformas substantivas conduzidas pela comunidade nos anos seguintes. Isso sugere que a reforma educacional baseada na comunidade pode exigir que os defensores sequenciem estrategicamente a

promoção dos interesses de diversas partes interessadas, a fim de alcançar metas amplas de coalizão.
Palavras-chave: Advocacy Coalition Framework; análise crítica do discurso; política educacional; educação urbana

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Political coalitions and collective impact efforts to improve social services are increasingly directed toward education policy reform, particularly in urban areas where poor performance and inequities have plagued education systems for decades. Advocacy coalitions have become common in state and local education advocacy, where philanthropy and non-profits now play a significant role in creating reform agendas, energizing constituencies, and lobbying lawmakers (Ansell, Reckhow, & Kelly, 2009). These non-governmental organizations occupy a middle space between community activists and traditional political coalitions, and they are uniquely positioned to articulate and promote their vision for education reform. By bringing together representatives from philanthropy, community organizing, business, and education groups, advocacy coalitions can build on the principles of collective impact and potentially bridge the divide between policymakers and local residents. In turn, they may create pathways toward community-based education reform in urban contexts, where state legislators have increasingly adopted top-down policies such as state takeover, accountability systems, and school choice, without the input of local community members, who are often people of color (Horsford & Vasquez Heilig, 2014). The language used to promote coalition recommendations reflects a public discourse about its values and strategic priorities. Yet, little is known about how advocacy discourse is shaped and whether it can upend traditional power dynamics between political elites and urban community members. Thus, there is a critical need to analyze how this public discourse is developed and whether it represents the priorities set forth by coalition members. Without this knowledge, community-led coalitions may not fulfill their promise to advance community interests in education policy reform.

This study applies the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which analyzes advocacy coalitions by the ways they mobilize, learn, use evidence, and create policy change (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993), alongside a critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013) of qualitative data sources from the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren (the Coalition or CFDS), in order to glean new knowledge of policy (Dumas & Anderson, 2014). Detroit represents an important case with implications for school reform in large urban districts across the country. Like other urban school districts, Detroit has experienced loss of enrollment, decline in academic performance, and increased oversight and intervention from the state. It has also seen an enormous increase in the number of charter schools that compete for students and resources with the city school district. As other cities grapple with how to maintain or win back local control and gain support for locally-developed school improvement plans, the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren represents an important case of how stakeholders from a range of political backgrounds can organize to promote policies that improve educational conditions and the trade-offs that are required in order to do so. Our analysis examines how the public language used by members of the Coalition gave weight to certain priorities and ways of advocating, while limiting the influence of others. It has implications for how other education advocacy coalitions organize, establish membership, and communicate priorities. Specifically, we ask:

1) How were the goals of the Coalition portrayed in public discourse?

    2) How did public discourse about the Coalition align with the stated goals and objectives of Coalition members?

    3) What does discourse concerning the Coalition reveal about the potential for community-empowered educational change?

We first review the history of educational coalitions in Detroit and the recent policy context. Second, we explain how the Advocacy Coalition Framework was used alongside critical discourse analysis to interrogate our data and uncover essential themes in the Coalition's advocacy efforts. Our findings show how the discourses used by and about the Coalition revealed aspects of ideology and power in the Coalition's recommendations and its influence in a key legislative battle. Finally, we conclude by exploring how lessons from the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren may be useful in future collective action toward policy change in education.

Policy Context

Coalition politics have played an important role in building the infrastructure of Detroit public education. The Progressive Era was a period of bipartisan governance, when the city's school district was a subject of federal praise, and business, labor, and most civic elites backed educational funding and innovation of practice (Mirel, 1999). Beginning in the mid-1950s and continuing for over a decade, a powerful alliance of labor, white liberals, and black voters, as part of a local civil rights movement, successfully sought increased funding for Detroit schools in order to hire teachers and improve facilities to erase racial inequities. Shortly after the 1967 rebellion, however, the quality of Detroit Public Schools came under public scrutiny. In 1969, 80% of Detroit students scored below national testing norms and not a single majority black or Hispanic school performed at grade level (Mirel, 1999). These renewed academic concerns, a dwindling population, and the turmoil over school busing and desegregation following the ruling in *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) strained the bipartisan coalition, polarizing the educational landscape into the 1980s.

The *Milliken* decision was a key turning point in Detroit's education history, ruling that inter-district desegregation plans were not required by law when there was no evidence of intentional segregation. The ruling reinforced "contours of privilege" by acknowledging racial inequity while continuing to protect the educational "property" of white residents through the maintenance of dual educational systems in the city and suburbs (Green & Gooden, 2016). White flight accelerated in the years following that decision, with more than 310,000 white residents leaving Detroit for the suburbs between 1970 and 1980, further segregating the Detroit school system from the rest of the region (Thompson, 1999). The de facto residential and school segregation that emerged during this time period is a key feature of the current educational landscape. Less than 5% of the students who attended school in Detroit in 2015-16 were white, according to student count data from Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information.

In 2000, after another decade of political fragmentation and dissatisfaction with academic outcomes, the State mandated a mayor-appointed reform board and relieved the locally-elected DPS board of its powers. After five years of running deficits, the board briefly returned to local control, followed by four more emergency managers. In addition to the introduction of emergency management, two major policy changes came to define the 'modern era' of education reform in Michigan: the alteration of the school funding formula to be based mostly on a state foundational grant and the emergence of school choice.

Detroit is the only major city in America that has lost half its population in the last twenty years. In 2015-16, more than 52,000, or over half of the school-age children in Detroit attended

charter schools, roughly 7,000 Detroit children attended public schools outside of the city through Michigan's inter-district choice policies, and another 6,000 attended schools in a state-run district called the Education Achievement Authority (EAA) (Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2014). Detroit Public Schools (DPS), which enrolled more than 100,000 students at the turn of the century, enrolled about 47,000 in 2015-16 (Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2016). The EAA, Detroit charter schools, and DPS have all been criticized in recent years for providing sub-standard educational opportunities for children.

In addition to the enrollment and academic woes, in 2016, DPS faced a debt burden which included over $1 billion in unfunded pension liabilities and half a billion dollars in operating debt. State-appointed DPS leaders predicted that, without an investment from the state, the district would run out of money in April 2016 and would be unable to fulfill payroll. The multiple school systems serving Detroit children were chronically unstable, with teachers, school leaders, and students rotating in and out of the various school options, often in the middle of the school year. The landscape of the schools in Detroit was highly dynamic; since 2010, about 100 schools have closed, nearly 60 have opened, and of those that opened, at least 13 have since closed.

Regardless of governance model, the vast majority of Detroit schools were not performing well. In 2009, 2011, and 2013, Detroit's scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were the lowest in the country by a wide margin. The average math score of eighth-grade students in 2013 in Detroit was 240, significantly lower than the average score of 276 for public school students in large cities (Nord et al., 2011). Following the release of the NAEP scores in 2009, Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, commented:

> The truth here is that no jurisdiction of any kind in the history of NAEP has ever registered such low numbers. […] They are just above what one would expect by chance alone—as if the kids simply guessed at the answers. (Detroit Public Schools, 2009)

Detroit Public Schools' tremendous loss of enrollment over the last several decades was arguably the most striking change in the district's landscape, as the resulting revenue loss outpaced the attempts of DPS leaders and emergency managers to cut services and labor. In the midst of limiting structural and policy factors and academic underperformance, Detroit Public Schools ran a substantial deficit most years since 2000, and issued multiple bond series for hundreds of millions of dollars to service this debt, which totaled about $800 million in 2015 (Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren, 2015). This meant that $1,100 of the $7,434 per pupil funding was allocated to debt service each year, the highest of any Michigan school district.

In 2010, the Excellent Schools Detroit (ESD) coalition, made up of Detroit education, government, civic, community, and philanthropic leaders, released its *Taking Ownership* report, calling for, among other things, mayoral control of the school system, the opening of 70 new "high-quality" schools over the next 10 years, school-based autonomy, and comprehensive talent support and acquisition (Excellent Schools Detroit, 2010; The Skillman Foundation, 2010). Although some of the recommendations were eventually taken up and sustained through the present day (e.g., reestablishing Teach for America in Detroit and increasing early childhood funding), the ESD plan languished both at home and in Lansing. Locally, the plan was hammered by unions and community organizations opposed to mayoral control. In addition, local and state political actors were simultaneously rallying around the idea of a state takeover district similar to the Recovery School District in New Orleans. The move to create the Education Achievement Authority in 2011 soaked up a considerable amount of philanthropic and political resources that might have been directed

toward implementing the policies proposed in *Taking Ownership* (Mason & Reckhow, 2017). Although little progress was made on the report's policy goals, this marked the first time that school choice was publicly embraced in Detroit education by many established political actors. The original 'core' Excellent Schools Detroit coalition members – the Skillman Foundation, United Way for Southeast Michigan, the Mayor's Office, the Detroit Regional Chamber, and assorted charter school operators – quietly abandoned their coalition with ESD and in late 2014 reopened talks to establish the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren, the coalition which is the focus of this study.

The Coalition was formed with an understanding that a coordinated effort of community partners was needed to leverage local and state resources to improve all schooling options for Detroit children (Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren, 2015). There was broad consensus that something needed to be done with the city's schools, or the Detroit community was at risk of losing the local public district to bankruptcy. In addition, the governor's office was expected to announce proposed legislation for Detroit schools, and the Coalition intended to get out in front of that anticipated development.

The formal work of the Coalition took place during a period of heightened interest in Detroit. Detroit's emergence from municipal bankruptcy in the preceding year, facilitated by "the Grand Bargain," served as a model of business, philanthropic, and public sector collaboration in the face of serious financial threats. Although many activists were disappointed in the terms of the "Grand Bargain," one perspective on the bankruptcy is that, under the leadership of the city's emergency financial manager, businesses, foundations, and public employee representatives arrived at agreements that would allow the city to emerge from bankruptcy. These hard-won concessions and contributions provided a backdrop that would prompt state and city leadership to approach the challenges of the Detroit school systems with some hope of resolving them.

Although Detroit represents an extreme case of state takeover of urban schools and failure on multiple measures of performance, the structural challenges and political dynamics among community members, school officials, and state leaders are similar to those in many other major school districts grappling with decline. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, about 42% of fourth grade students in large cities performed "below basic" in reading in 2017, compared to 33% nationally (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Large urban districts across the country have struggled with financial solvency, declining enrollment, segregation, and low academic performance (Payne, 2008). States have taken over many of these districts over the last 30 years, including such high-profile cases as Jersey City, Newark, New Orleans, and Philadelphia. In each of these cases, the political power of predominantly black communities was weakened by state intervention, and communities developed different strategies of influence in response (Morel, 2018). While this study focuses on Detroit, the findings provide evidence for how community coalitions in cities across the country might organize, strategize, and sequence their advocacy of state legislation in order to regain political power over local schools.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework

To guide our research on how Coalition members expressed their policy objectives and revealed the power dynamics within the policy subsystem of Detroit education governance, we drew on the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The ACF derives from the work of Sabatier (1988) and was developed to help guide analysis of policy change over time by drawing greater attention to the role of policy learning – or how Coalition members learn and how that learning informs their policy recommendations. Advocacy coalitions constitute a

policy subsystem in which multiple actors compete for influence over a coalition's priorities. Their power to influence is related to their resources and constraints, which are determined not only by relatively stable parameters (e.g., socio-cultural values and social structure) but also external events. Within this framework, there are four guiding assumptions: a) policy change – or significant shifts in the key policies promoted within a policy subsystem – is best understood as a process that occurs over a decade or more, b) to more fully understand policy change over time it is essential to focus on interactions of actors from various institutions who seek to influence government policy in a specific area, c) these subsystems include intergovernmental agencies and organizations, and d) public policies can be conceptualized as sets of values and theories about how to realize them (Sabatier, 1993).

Coalitions are formed when actors or institutions that represent different constituencies come together around shared values and beliefs, which ultimately shape shared policy goals. Within and across coalitions inside a policy subsystem, policy actors learn through research, experience, and influence, establishing a stronger foundation to support members' own beliefs and values and attack those of opposing coalitions (Sabatier, 1993). Although there is room for shifting beliefs within coalitions, the ACF suggests that core beliefs are stable and "organizational forces create considerable resistance to change, even in the face of countervailing empirical evidence or internal inconsistencies" (Sabatier, 1993, p. 33). At the same time, beliefs within a coalition are subject to change as a result of both internal and external processes and events. For example, loss of political power or specific strategies employed by opposing coalitions may lead to specific changes in beliefs or strategies within a particular coalition (Sabatier, 1993).

Advocacy coalitions have more recently been used toward civic ends, such as uniting a community around an education reform agenda. But advocacy coalitions with narrow, coherent policy objectives can limit the broad-based support that is desirable in efforts to improve community institutions or services, such as public schools (Ansell, Reckhow, & Kelly, 2009). Understanding and ameliorating the tension between coherence and broad support is essential for coalitions that seek to give voice to diverse stakeholders but have specific policy objectives. Yet diverse coalitions can replicate institutionalized power structures in society, lifting up some voices at the expense of others. To understand whether and how power shaped policy learning in the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren, we adopted a critical approach in our methods of analysis.

Applying the Framework to the Study of the Detroit Coalition

The ACF suggests that we examine significant "events" that may have precipitated or constrained the Coalition's actions. In the context of educational reform in Detroit, these "events" appear as issues related to school finance and governance at the state- and city-level, school choice policy changes, and shifts in enrollment, achievement, and economic conditions over time. We view the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren as but one manifestation of policy learning that has occurred in the Detroit education subsystem over the last several decades. To add additional historical detail to our study, our interview protocols focused on how the participants' prior work on educational reform influenced the ways in which they negotiated policy recommendations in the Coalition. All of the interview participants had participated in at least one other prior formal effort to improve schools, and many of them had been involved in educational reform efforts for decades. By capturing interview participants' reflections on prior coalition efforts, reviewing documents from past education advocacy in Detroit, and analyzing Detroit education reform history, our analysis of the Coalition reflects the history of the Detroit education policy subsystem. This makes the ACF, which suggests that subsystem change happens across a decade or more, appropriate for our analysis.

Following the ACF, our primary focus was on the education policy subsystem directly related to education in Detroit, though this also included actors outside of Detroit (e.g., State lawmakers). The ACF poses the following questions, which guided our investigation of the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren: 1) How do people mobilize, maintain, and act in advocacy coalitions? 2) To what extent do people learn, especially from allies and opponents? 3) What is the role of scientists and scientific and technical information in policymaking? 4) What factors influence both major and minor policy change? We used these questions to frame our analysis of Coalition documents and interviews. In the following section, we explain how the tools of critical discourse analysis allowed us to expand the above questions to issues of power, focusing on whose policy learning was prioritized and what that meant for the short-term success of the Coalition and the prospects for longer-term policy change.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Policy Knowledge

In order to understand how the organization, substance, and initial impact of the Coalition of the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren was communicated to public and policy actors, we applied a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to analyzing the policy process. This approach focused our attention on the specific language used by the Coalition co-chairs when describing the process and also on the language used to frame the Coalition's work in popular media articles (Piazza, 2014). In particular, we were interested in how this language illuminated informal and formal power structures that can shape the development and impact of policy learning within advocacy coalitions.

CDA is a methodological approach to analyzing data that connects specific language to discourses within a broader social context (Rogers, 2004), critiquing what that language represents (Fairclough, 2013). In this way, we make meaning of language as a social and political discourse that contributes to our understanding of power dynamics, inequity, and ideology (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). We adopt CDA as an integrated interdisciplinary tool that helps us understand the policy learning that has evolved within the Detroit education policy subsystem, while connecting that learning to issues of power imbalance and ideology in the state political ecosystem (van Leeuwen, 2005). Although there are many different methods of CDA, we follow guidance and examples from other research that situates "micro" instances of language in "macro" structures and events (i.e., Lenhoff & Ulmer, 2016; Perna, Orosz, & Kent, 2019) to identify contours of power. Our analysis sought to identify power asymmetries (Bhatia, 2006; van Dijk, 1993) in the discourses by tracking what information and people had influence in the policy learning of the Coalition.

We use CDA to illuminate methods of policy learning and inform future efforts to reform education through diverse stakeholder coalitions. Dumas and Anderson (2014) argue that qualitative policy research can serve an important role in contributing to policy knowledge, rather than in prescribing specific policies. Qualitative research can show how policy is shaped, how policy activists learn and change over time, and the mechanisms behind the policies that are enacted. In this way, qualitative research can provide rich data with which to see the complexity behind policymaking and implementation. This complexity represents a policy ecology that includes what Sabatier (1993) would call a policy subsystem. It also includes "every contextual factor and person contributing to or influenced by a policy in any capacity, both before and after its creation and implementation" (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 155). Importantly, this ecology also includes the historical and present-day characteristics of the neighborhoods, schools, and institutions that exist within the policy subsystem (Hopson, 2014). The ACF framework and CDA work in tandem, then, helping us uncover and make meaning of the histories, texts, and events that have shaped the policy learning of

the Coalition's members by examining the discursive features of the language used by and about the Coalition (Fairclough, 2013).

Sources of Data and Analysis

Our sources of data include transcripts and notes from semi-structured interviews with the five Coalition co-chairs, reports and public written documents about the Coalition and other education reform efforts in the Detroit education policy subsystem, and media articles about the work of the Coalition. The five co-chairs of the Coalition were influential representatives of distinct constituencies in the Detroit education policy subsystem. Tonya Allen, the President and CEO of the Skillman Foundation, was among the most vocal leaders of the Coalition. The Foundation, which is a placed-based philanthropy focused on improving outcomes for children in Detroit, provided in-kind staff time, meeting space, data analytics, and a communications team to the Coalition. Pastor Wendell Anthony, minister at Fellowship Church and president of the NAACP Detroit branch, was a long-time political activist in the city who had been part of a prior initiative to prevent mayoral takeover of the public schools. The other co-chairs included David Hecker, President of Michigan's American Federation of Teachers union; John Rakolta, CEO of Walbridge Construction; and Angela Reyes, Executive Director of the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation.

Coalition co-chairs were interviewed by one or two research team members, with the exception of Tonya Allen, who was interviewed by all four research team members. The interview protocol was shaped by the ACF, with particular focus on how Coalition members came together, their guiding principles, and the information and processes that informed their learning over time and the Coalition's ultimate recommendations. The interviews with the five leaders were audio-recorded, transcribed, and uploaded into NVivo for analysis. We also composed analytic memos following each interview to share with other team members to sharpen our analysis. More information about the co-chairs can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Characteristics of CFDS Co-Chairs

	Tonya Allen	Wendell Anthony	David Hecker	John Rakolta, Jr.	Angela Reyes
Profession	President and CEO, Skillman Foundation	President, Detroit Branch NAACP	President, AFT Michigan/ AFL-CIO	CEO, Walbridge	Executive Director, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation
Constituency Represented	Philanthropy	Community	Educators	Business	Community
Race	Black	Black	White	White	Latina
Political Party	Independent	Democrat	Democrat	Republican	Democrat

We applied a two-step method to analyzing data for this study. First, we read the transcripts of the interviews with the five co-Chairs of the Coalition. We initially coded one common interview, generating open codes that emerged from the interviews themselves, and the research team shared these open codes. We then conducted a second round of coding using codes generated from the ACF. All four research team members coded the same interview independently using these frameworks, reconciled our codes, and then added and modified codes to capture the substance of the interview where necessary. We then used the constant comparative method (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to move to higher levels of abstraction, using our theoretical framework and broad research questions analytic frames for understanding the discourse practices used. Interrater reliability was high (greater than 80%), and there were very few instances where coding was not identical; there were no instances where codes were not easily reconciled or added where necessary. Once final codes were created, two members of the research team coded each of the remaining interviews, and codes were discussed to reach consensus.

We focused our interviews on the leaders of the Coalition because they were the public faces and voices of the group. We were interested in the public discourse about the Coalition and what it revealed about the values and beliefs that shaped their learning over time, how that learning informed what they prioritized, and the power and ideology in education advocacy in Detroit. The discursive practices of the Coalition are found within the language of these public actors, rather than the language of other Coalition members used internally. We acknowledge that the interview participants are elite members of the Detroit education policy subsystem and do not represent the complete policy development within the Coalition. Therefore, in addition to the interviews, we analyzed publicly available CFDS documents and reports, the CFDS website, and 52 news articles published between March 2015 and May 2016 from the two major newspapers in Detroit, The Detroit Free Press (*n*=29) and the Detroit News (*n*=23). (See the appendix for a complete record of all articles we included in our analysis.) We read these reports to identify key sources of language that revealed broader discursive strategies of the Coalition.

Our sources of data and analytic strategy have important limitations. First, because our interviews were limited to the five co-chairs of the Coalition, we do not have multiple perspectives from non-elites within the Coalition about how policy proposals were developed or the ways in which policy learning influenced the proposals or discursive strategies to promote them. Second, critical discourse analysis requires researchers to critique language and make sense of it from a normative perspective. This means that the positions, ideologies, and prior histories of our research team influenced what we chose to focus on, how we selected our data, and how we interpreted the language we documented. Lastly, while Detroit is similar to many other large urban centers with struggling school systems, it also has unique characteristics that influenced the work of the Coalition and our interpretations of data. Therefore, although we believe this case has implications for other advocacy coalitions trying to influence urban school reform, it may be that Detroit represents an exceptional case of community-led education advocacy.

Findings

In applying CDA to media sources and co-chair narratives about the Coalition, our study demonstrates how an advocacy coalition organized across political boundaries to promote a small set of financial and governance reforms that were adopted by a polarized state legislature. To do so, the Coalition co-chairs made trade-offs. They limited public advocacy for reform positions that were more difficult to accomplish in a pro-school choice political environment. Below, we use ACF's guiding questions to organize our findings about how the Coalition developed and communicated its

advocacy priorities. We then complicate the origin story by analyzing how media discourse shaped public perception and, in turn, political adoption of the recommendations. Finally, we explore how the sequencing of discourse from certain stakeholder interests may have helped set the stage for initially narrow legislative victories and long-term substantive changes with potential for a broader scope and more diverse community support.

The goal of our study was to understand how policy learning among Coalition leaders was related to the discourse used from and about the Coalition and how that discourse may have shaped the influence of the Coalition on policy change. To situate this analysis, it is helpful to know what the Coalition's recommendations were in their initial 2015 report. The Coalition recommendations included the following: 1) return governance of Detroit Public Schools (DPS) to an elected school board; 2) expand transparency for charter authorizers and charter school boards, with a greater focus on quality and coordination; 3) state assumption of DPS debt; 4) create a new nonpartisan entity, the Detroit Education Commission (DEC), to coordinate and rationalize citywide education functions in partnership with Regional Councils to incorporate neighborhood-level input; 5) establish advisory School Leadership Teams to include parents, staff, and students; 6) close the state-run recovery school district, the EAA; and 7) create shared systems of data, enrollment, and neighborhood transportation (Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren, 2015). We now return to questions posed by the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) to frame our understandings of the discourse used to promote these recommendations and interpret their ultimate influence in Lansing and Detroit.

Coalition Mobilization and Influence on Problem Definition

We found two central themes related to the factors that contributed to how and why the Coalition leaders mobilized, maintained, and acted in the development of the CFDS: 1) concerns about the decisions that might come out of Lansing contributed to a "better us than them" discourse about whose ideas, ideology, and values would prevail in identifying solutions; 2) the impending financial crisis in Detroit Public Schools produced a "now or never" urgency to fixing that problem before all others. While the "better us than them" discourse was evident in the interview with the five Coalition co-chairs and some early media articles after the Coalition report was released, the "now or never" discourse served to paper over the diverse set of ideas and values that were promoted by Coalition members in the legislative battle in the year after the release of the Coalition's final report.

Better us than them. In December 2014, Governor Rick Snyder announced that the state government would propose a plan to improve Detroit education in early 2015. As CFDS co-chair David Hecker explained, "We had this time constraint because the Governor said he was going to have things out in April." The governor, a white Republican businessman, had already introduced controversial education ideas to the Detroit landscape, including the EAA and expansions of school choice and charter schools. This history made some Detroit community leaders concerned about what the governor's plan might include.

Dozens of people and organizations who had been working on education reform in Detroit for years began to coalesce around the idea that there should be a local, organized effort to make recommendations to Lansing, ahead of the Governor's plan. The impending financial crisis meant that someone was going to have to come up with a solution to fix the problems in Detroit schools, and there was a sense among the Coalition co-chairs that it would be better if that *someone* had a real stake in Detroit, in the local community, and in the interests of all of the children who live there. This was also a direct reaction to past failed efforts to improve education in Detroit. Co-chair Tonya Allen described her perspective on the damage of those efforts on the local community:

> How we went about the Coalition is directly related to failures. We did the
> Excellent Schools Detroit thing a few years ago; we did this thing where it very
> much looked like an elite group of people behind doors who were trying to figure
> out an approach to come back and I felt passionate about that work and that
> those were the right things to do, but I don't think that we anticipated the
> unintended consequences of that, which were, one: that we just did not have a
> [representative] group of people … and then I think the second thing is I think
> that is we caused harm. Not that I don't think great work has come out of it,
> because I think it has, but I remember talking with people and not really
> understanding the ramifications and how coded the language is in education
> reform and how people respond to that.

The Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren can be seen as the most recent iteration of dozens of attempts to fix the education system in the city over the past two decades. Wendell Anthony had previously chaired former Governor Granholm's Transition Team for Detroit Public Schools, which issued a report in 2005 called *Detroit Public Schools: A New Beginning.* Anthony described that task force as one similar to the Coalition, and a review of the 2005 report shows a committee configuration that is almost identical, including sub-committees on finance, governance, and curriculum. If past education reform efforts in the city had been viewed as "elitist," in that they did not include representatives from all of the constituency groups in Detroit, Allen said, "Part of the Coalition in my mind was … having an eye towards inclusion that we have not traditionally had, so having it in terms of political views, gender, race, and life circumstances, socioeconomic status."

   With the priority of community representation at the forefront, the Coalition co-chairs – led informally by Allen (Hecker described her as the "co-chair supreme") – intentionally invited a diverse range of members, people representing business, unions, educators, DPS, charter schools, grassroots, faith communities, and other interests. Hecker described their thinking this way:

> We knew that the governor was going to put together plans for education in
> Detroit, and we said "We, Detroit, should put together plans for Detroit." Then a
> bunch of us sat around and said, "Okay, we want a representative group on our
> Steering Committee," and we did the best we could and had a whole bunch of
> people involved in figuring out who should be on the Steering Committee and
> then a whole bunch of people involved in recommending people on all those
> subcommittees.

After the first round of member recruitment, John Rakolta, the Republican businessman, was brought in as a fifth co-chair. Rakolta worried that the "progressives, minorities, and Detroiters" who made up the Coalition would result in "group thinking" without new ideas, and that the recommendations would be dismissed by the conservative Republican Legislature. In turn, he recommended that the Coalition explicitly invite more Republican members to join. The co-chairs agreed, and several new members were added. Accounts in media articles reinforced the idea that a broad range of community stakeholders were being represented by the Coalition's initial recommendations. City residents were quoted as saying, "I'm hopeful for the first time because I didn't hear blame being cast on the people" and "It wasn't the same old one-sided, push and bang. […] Everyone is striving to get on one accord to move the city and the public school system forward" (Higgins & Erb, 2015).

   While the Coalition ultimately included a wide variety of people with different political perspectives, there was no effort to include extreme-right conservative voices, particularly from the

Legislature. In fact, four of the five co-chairs had been on multiple such efforts in the past and knew each other well. The make-up of the Coalition and the recommendations for local control may have contributed to the type of language used by Republican lawmakers in assessing the Coalition's recommendations. For instance, Rep. Kevin Cotter, who was then Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, was quoted in a Detroit News article about the Coalition: "If I had to take their 130-page report and boil it down to a sentence, my reading of it was: 'Give us back control and just send a check' (Livengood, 2015). Similarly, Rep. Tim Kelly, then the chair of the Michigan House Appropriations subcommittee on school aid, was quoted in the Detroit Free Press as saying that the Coalition proposal could be summed up as, "Give us our money, give us our board back and leave us alone" (Higgins, 2015).

While the steering committee and individual sub-committees of the Coalition represented diverse viewpoints, the co-chairs largely established the primary values and beliefs that drove problem definition and strategies for addressing problems. The Coalition's final report includes a summary of the "guiding values" of the group: students first; collective responsibility; local voices matter; autonomy and accountability; public funding requires transparency; school choice; and adequacy and equity. These values served as signposts in the collective decision-making process, but also as constraints on the final recommendations. Coalition members Taubman and Stancato (2015) wrote in a Free Press editorial, "Despite their diverse backgrounds, they were able to reach a consensus about shared goals for success and on some bold solutions to create a modern, effective educational system for Detroit."

Now or never. What was clear from the co-chair interviews and discussion of the Coalition in popular media was that the present moment was unique because Detroit Public Schools had fallen so far into debt that something would have to be done to keep the entire school system from collapse. Reyes compared it to being on the Titanic and seeing the iceberg up ahead, "trying to steer this huge ship in a direction away from crashing and sinking." The looming crisis lent urgency to the Coalition's timeline and recommendations, heavily influencing how the co-chairs approached their work.

Rakolta argued that fixing Detroit's education problems would require reforming all aspects of the system: "That's the problem: you can't wave a magic wand, and there is no silver bullet. You don't fall this far without having virtually everything needs to be changed." While many things needed to be changed, the Coalition co-chairs agreed that the finances needed to be fixed first. The financial crisis that Detroit Public Schools faced seemed to infect all other aspects of schooling in the city. The debt burden drained a huge percentage of funding dollars away from school operations, and the proliferation of public charter schools and the use of inter-district school choice in Detroit exacerbated these financial troubles. The financial crisis of DPS also precipitated State lawmakers' interest in a legislative solution, creating the opportunity to ask for broader reforms.

The discourses that revealed the motivations of the Coalition – "now or never," and "better us than them" – played key roles in defining the structural problems the Coalition ultimately sought immediate solutions for: the debt and governance of the city's schools. While the Coalition was organized into six subcommittees (academics, finance, governance, parent and community voice, policy, and support services), the Coalition co-chairs, informal conversations, media coverage, and final recommendations focused almost exclusively on finances and governance, including how to fix DPS's debt, who should be in charge of DPS, and how to oversee and rationalize the various school systems in Detroit, including traditional public and charter schools. In fact, just one of the six final key recommendations is not related to finance and governance, and none focuses on academic improvement in a direct way.

Learning from Allies and Opponents

      The factors that mediated the development and enactment of the Coalition since late 2014 played an important role in how the Coalition members learned about policy and, ultimately, how they recommended it be changed. The intentional diversity of the CFDS created opportunities to learn from both allies and opponents and reflected lessons from prior reform efforts, when community activists felt marginalized by elites who did not share their experiences with the school system. While the Coalition leaders shared a commitment to fixing Detroit's broken school system, there was little agreement at the start about how to go about that. One major point of debate was what to do about Detroit's powerless school board. We found that consensus about the school board emerged from interactions between the values of the Coalition, the specific personalities at the table, and the ways in which the Coalition prioritized policy learning – namely, through talking with each other, across difference, and committing to consensus-building. Three co-chairs (Anthony, Hecker, and Reyes) began the Coalition work with a strong belief that control of DPS should be returned to a locally-elected school board. While Rakolta and Allen questioned whether an empowered school board should be a priority, both shifted their thinking in the course of the Coalition's work. Through personal interactions with other Coalitions members, both co-chairs came to understand how essential local control of the schools was for community empowerment, echoing community control efforts that grew out of the black power doctrine in the 1970s (Hatton, 1977). Rakolta related the following about the influence of one black school board member on his thinking:

> His insistence that the board be returned to local democratic control was a very powerful message, and it went to underscore something that I had already begun to appreciate and that was how important the vote and the ability to have self-determination is to the black community. In my world, nothing is more important than my kids. Everything comes after them, virtually everything. It was hard for me to understand the power of the need to vote because I have always had the right to vote. It is hard for me to understand that and put that ahead of the well-being of the kids and it's a little harsh to say that, but that's how I felt.

And although Allen remained skeptical of a locally-elected school board in Detroit, she was influenced by Coalition discussions regarding the long-term consequences of state control on community capacity to demand change:

> I'm still not a school board fan, but I've come to appreciate that the price of democracy is eternal vigilance, right? I'm willing to have that if we are going to be eternally vigilant. It really came out of understanding that … part of what we don't think about in this city is that, because you have so many different people who are in charge of these systems that are reporting in some form or fashion to people outside the City of Detroit, we have lost agency as a community. People were fatigued. They were tired of talking about something where they couldn't fix change.

Certain personalities on the Coalition played an outsized role. Several of the co-chairs, for instance, mentioned the influence of John Rakolta on their own thinking and on that of other Coalition members. Rakolta, the lone Republican on the leadership team, was assumed by most to be entrenched in a worldview they would never understand. But Rakolta embraced the Coalition's values and deeply appreciated the consensus-building process:

> I think those meetings that we had over at the Skillman Foundation and the free flow of argument and discourse and intellectual tension was something that I would not have predicted. I think that it was really remarkable. Teachers, union officials, a guy like myself all in the same room pounding it out and while we got intense, nobody felt it was personal.

Reyes described Rakolta's influence on specific policy issues, such as his cogent explanations of the city's finances and his reasoning for supporting state responsibility for the DPS debt, but she also thought that he was a symbol of how individual relationships can break down preconceived notions:

> I'm probably left of the Democratic party, have been my whole life. I came to truly respect and like a lot of people from the Republican party and realize that they're people too! That was my thing, "Republicans are people too!" And to realize that there were some things that we can negotiate and that make sense that we can come to agreement on was very eye-opening for me.

Anthony also expressed surprise that he agreed with Rakolta on a number of issues. After comparing the difference in their backgrounds, race, and politics, he said:

> I think one of the good things about the Coalition is that many of us who heretofore had not worked together began to understand a little bit more about each other, and there are some things we can agree on if we come around a common table and start listening to what each other is really saying. It doesn't mean we're going to agree on everything, but we're closer in many cases than we think we might be.

David Hecker concurred, and specifically admired Rakolta's change of position on the issue of DPS debt:

> On the finance committee, John Rakolta said, "Yeah, the state is responsible for this debt." And much to John's credit, he didn't take my word for it at the first meeting when perhaps I said that the state's responsible for the debt; John would never do that and should never do that. A tremendous amount of work was done, and John is, in a positive sense, an unbelievable person. He dug in, as did others. That was big, to me, when a certain political party controls Lansing and so when a major player on this Coalition, who is a major Republican, reached that conclusion after a lot of research and thought, I think that was a major significant time.

For many of the co-chairs, the relationships they were able to build across differences in political party and constituency group established a foundation for the work of the Coalition. At the same time, the co-chairs represented different constituencies but might all be considered "elites" in the Detroit education policy subsystem. Because it was their own learning that shaped the Coalition's recommendations and discursive strategies, it is likely that the learning of others in the Coalition and beyond was marginalized. The prioritization of the co-chairs' beliefs, values, and policy learning poses some risk for the future of community-based education reform that might emerge from the Coalition's efforts.

The Role of Scientific Information

From its inception, CFDS participants were not selected for their knowledge of education policy options or their expertise in systems-level improvement; they were chosen because they represented important constituencies in Detroit, in keeping with the guiding value, "local voices matter." Community representation was valued over expertise; personal viewpoints over scientific evidence. The information that mattered greatly in the CFDS process was the exchange of personal experience. On the one hand, this constrained the policy recommendations of the Coalition; on the other hand, in a city where the feelings of disenfranchisement through emergency management and removal of the local school board still stings, building a sense of democratic participation and personal connectedness was especially valued.

In its opening paragraphs, the final Coalition report reveals an underlying assumption of the Coalition members that much more work will have to be done in order to recommend and enact the necessary improvements to Detroit's school system: "This report is narrowly focused on the most-pressing issues holding Detroit schoolchildren back. It is not meant to be the last word but rather the beginning of a most urgent discussion" (Coalition, 2015, p. 2). In analyzing our interview data and reporting on the Coalition, we found evidence that – despite public relations efforts to the contrary – the Coalition was intentionally structured to produce politically expedient policy goals leading to financial stability in Detroit schools, coupled with building long-term local capacity as a foundation for future education reform.

'Triage, transition, and transformation.' A finding that emerged from our analysis of interviews and news articles about the Coalition was that the recommendations largely focused on urgent structural solutions to the budget crisis and school governance, rather than academics – or the day-to-day work of school leaders and teachers that most directly affect students' experiences in school. Several co-chairs said something similar to John Rakolta: "We've said this over and over again, we're in a three-phase process: triage, transition, and transformation. Each one of those phases is a couple of years at a minimum, maybe four." See Table 2 for a description of this policy timeline.

Table 2
CFDS Priorities by Time Period

Triage: 1-3 Years	Transition: 3-5 Years	Transformation: 5-10 Years
DPS Debt	Stabilization re: DPS and charters	Academics
Emergency Manager	New Talent – DPS Central Office – DPS School Board – Teachers and School Leaders – DEC	Social Supports
DPS School Board	Common Systems – Enrollment – Transportation – Recordkeeping	

"Triage" defined the present period – the time during which, if certain problems were not addressed, the entire system was likely to collapse. Solutions to academic problems were viewed by

virtually all of the co-chairs as important, but not possible to focus on until triage was complete. As an example of why stabilizing the finances and governance problems was important to do first, Tonya Allen described how the teachers in the Coalition could not exercise divergent thinking about how Detroit schools might approach academics differently, due to the lack of stability in the system:

> You will not get educators in these districts, in schools, whatever, to start thinking about what they can do with students until they feel like they have some sense of stability that comes from their financial situation. I mean, it was one of the most remarkable experiences to see strong, smart, opinionated, committed, passionate people fall apart because, while they were in the middle of their professional work that they're an expert at, they could not be expert because they felt confined.

Rakolta believed that the city would not be able to get to academics for several more years, because the problems of finance would take precedent: "The finances are so overwhelming and they're taking so much money away from the kids; that's the first thing we needed to stem." He believed that an academic "fix" would not happen for "another five years:"

> We need to implement these things and we need time to see the outcome. The governance fix – even that is a medium term – even if we have this DEC the way we want it, we're not going to appreciate the fix until there's the first action.

Several co-chairs said that the focus on finances and governance was necessary but insufficient for improving the school system in Detroit. Rakolta said: "Unless there's going to be some different kind of an approach, money and governance isn't going to change the outcome."

While catchy, the "triage, transition, and transformation" frame also seemed expedient and born out of disappointment with the results of the Coalition, rather than any prior understanding that a long-term process was necessary. Allen touched on this disappointment about what emerged from educators on the Academics sub-committee. Rakolta, too, commented that he would have liked to see more innovative ideas on how to fix academics:

> I have been critical that there aren't even 10 good ideas on how we might improve academic performance. We're just sort of leaving it up to the idea, "If we get more money, we have better teachers, and we structure governance better and close some schools, that better performers will come automatically." I would have preferred to see us sort of say, "Here are 10 great ideas that need to be debated."

The policy timeline that emerged through the co-chairs' analysis of the work of the Coalition appeared through some of their comments as retroactive – something they used to understand and justify their own work. Alternatively, though, one Coalition co-chair, Wendell Anthony, initially used the same frame, but then seemed to argue that the Coalition should not be involved in academic recommendations:

> It's like almost a triage, and you've heard some of that. I think academics are high as far as we're concerned, but it's hard to get to that because you can't get folks to get off of these two issues. The academic part of this, the state should have nothing to do with that. Academics, curriculum, and all of that should be established by the board, the parents, and the general superintendent. […] As far

as what kind of curriculum, as far as determining what kind of schools there are going to be, that's a local thing and that comes after all of this.

This tension can be seen in the makeup of the Coalition members and the conflicts described by the Coalition co-chairs. Of the 34 Coalition Steering Committee members, only a handful had prior teaching experience and none could be considered educational reform experts. And, since policy learning was largely accomplished through conversation and debate amongst Coalition members themselves, the absence of strong expert voices on instructional improvement, school turnaround, professional development, educator development, or any manner of academic elements likely played a part in academics being overshadowed by other concerns.

Instead of academic experts, the makeup of the Coalition's members was primarily designed to enhance the ability of the Coalition to influence policy throughout the state. Several lawmakers were explicitly involved in the Coalition, with one co-chairing the policy sub-committee. In addition, a former Michigan House member who had served on the House Education Committee was appointed to the policy sub-committee, along with a current member of the State Board of Education. Other lobbyists and influential advocacy groups were represented in various roles and played an outsized role in the public discourse of the Coalition in media articles. For instance, a Detroit charter school leader was quoted in the Detroit News as wanting the legislature to leave the question of charter school oversight (through the proposed Detroit Education Commission) alone, to focus on DPS financial troubles. He argued that the financial issues were immediate, implying that charter school oversight was not and needed to be debated more (Livengood, 2016).

Strategies for how to influence policy became a stronger focus in the second half of the Coalition's work, before the release of recommendations. It appears likely that the priorities of the Coalition were largely constrained by a desire to get something passed in Lansing as quickly as possible. Academic problems decades in the making are not easily solved by one-line policy recommendations, and solutions are not quickly sold to politicians already weary of Detroit. The language used by many of the Coalition members indicated that there were phases of reform that needed to take place and that fixing the finances and governance issues was the most urgently important, while fixing academics was a long-term endeavor that would need to include other stakeholders.

Factors Influencing Major and Minor Policy Change

The Coalition released its final report in April 2015, with the expectation that its proposals would be crafted into legislation quickly. Throughout the next year, Coalition leaders, members, and paid lobbyists met with the Governor's office, legislative staff, and other Lansing operatives to attempt to win favor with the Republican-controlled State government. The Governor introduced his plan for Detroit schools later that year as part of a Senate bill package; the House did the same months later. Ultimately, the Coalition's efforts to shape legislative action to benefit children in Detroit produced mixed results, as shown in Table 3. Senate bills provided funding to DPS, but far below what most analysts believe will sustain the District. Even the Governor-appointed emergency manager of DPS at the time, Judge Steven Rhodes, said "the inclusion of $25 million to repair and maintain dilapidated school buildings was inadequate" (Eggert, 2016). In the wee hours of the morning on May 5, 2016, key legislators withdrew their support for a more generous package. The school board was reinstated and emergency management was to be phased out. The district was divided into two entities: one, a shell district that would pay down the debt, and the other, a newly named Detroit Public Schools Community District, responsible for school operations.

Language used by and about about the Coalition suggested the state was obligated to find a solution to the DPS debt crisis. In the Detroit News, Tonya Allen was quoted as saying that the foundation community would not "pay bad debt that was mismanaged" by state-appointed officials and a consultant for the Coalition argued that the Coalition's recommendations were a "bailout for the state" (Detroit News Staff, 2015). We also found evidence that Coalition members used the DPS emergency manager's connection to the Flint water crisis as leverage for achieving some short-term goals. Before Darnell Early become the EM for DPS, he was the emergency manager for the city of Flint at the time the city switched water sources, a decision that led to lead contamination in the Flint water supply. Rakolta was quoted in the Detroit News as saying that "the governor can't afford to have DPS run out of cash this spring while the Flint water crisis continues" (Oosting, Lewis, & Jacques, 2016).

The final package included few provisions to improve academic performance, and it did not include an oversight board to manage the opening and closing of schools. The discourse in media articles about the Coalition's recommendations revealed the strong resistance to significant choice reforms from state-level charter school advocates. For instance:

> Gary Naeyaert, executive director of the Great Lakes Education Project, …
> criticized the creation of the education commission, saying it would come at the
> expense of charter schools in the city. 'It is still essentially an entity that is legally
> required to put the interests of the new, traditional district above charter schools
> and choice,' said Naeyaert, whose organization is pro-charters and pro-choice.
> (Zaniewski & Higgins, 2016)

Local news outlets also documented a political row between Mayor Duggan and state charter school supporters about the commission. In a Detroit News article from May 2016, the president of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies was said to have warned charter operators about the Mayor's "bare-knuckles, big-city politics," while the Mayor claimed that "people in Lansing are trying to pit charters against DPS and make this adversarial" (Livengood, 2016). Naeyaert was also quoted as saying that the Mayor was "bullying and intimidating [charter school operators] into not opposing the DEC, and they are justifiably fearful" (Livengood, 2016). News stories that emerged after the passage of the legislation revealed that charter school advocates and conservative donors, the DeVos family in particular, had heavily influenced the tenor of the debate, demanding that school choice not be curtailed in any way. In just the seven-week period after the passage of the final Detroit education package, the DeVos family made $145 million in donations to the Michigan Republican party and individuals (Henderson, 2016).

What do we make of this outcome? It is clear that powerful voices in the state cared about school choice to the point that any regulation of charters was moot. The Coalition's efforts strained, and ultimately failed, to override that agenda, in part because of strong support for choice among local and state advocates and the continued competition between charter school and traditional district leaders. For instance, common enrollment was a key priority of the Coalition and led to the creation of an organization called Enroll Detroit, but only 40 of about 230 schools participated. As of June 2017, the organization was supporting just "300 families and more than 650 displaced students" out of the more than 100,000 school-aged children in the city (Clifford, 2017). Yet, the twin priorities of finances and governance that were revealed time and again in the language of Coalition members and their representative in the media, were ultimately emphasized in the legislation that was passed. Although the Governor had said that any solution needed to be a statewide solution, the final legislation reflected the state's acknowledgment of financial

responsibility and a return to the tradition of local school governance, paradoxically modified by the interests of powerful conservative activists from outside Detroit.

Table 3
CFDS Recommendations Compared to Final Legislation

Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren Recommendation	Recommendation Included in Final Legislation?	Final Legislative Action
1) Return governance of Detroit Public Schools (DPS) to an elected school board.	Included	HB 5384: Allowed for the new district's elected school board (elected in November 2016) to take office in January 2017 and assume management of the new district at that time.
2) Expand transparency for charter authorizers and charter school boards, with a greater focus on quality and coordination.	Partially included	HB 5384: In order to issue a charter for a new charter school, the authorizer must be accredited by a nationally recognized authorizing body.
3) State assumption of DPS debt.	Included	HB 5383: Created a new Detroit Public Schools Community District and earmarked $617 million from tobacco settlement revenue for the district, with a guarantee to fund any additional costs of the legislative package through the General Fund. The 18 mills levied by the old DPS will be diverted to pay off the debt.
4) Create a new nonpartisan entity, the Detroit Education Commission, to coordinate and rationalize citywide education functions.	Not included	
5) Establish advisory School Leadership Teams to include parents, staff, and students	Not included	
6) Close the state-run school district, the Education Achievement Authority.	Included	HB 5384: Dissolved the Education Achievement Authority and moved accountability functions to the State School Reform Office.
7) Create shared systems of data across all schools.	Not included	

Our interviews with the co-chairs revealed a possible path for sustaining the Coalition's work and an unintentional outcome that may prove to be more long-lasting and valuable than the policy

recommendations themselves: building the capacity, knowledge, and urgency in the local community to envision and enact change. Tonya Allen crystallized this idea: "If we came out of here with a stronger civic muscle in the city […] then I think that's game-changing." Several co-chairs remarked on the importance of bringing so many different community members together to tackle what is arguably the most difficult public problem in Detroit. Unlike the municipal bankruptcy proceedings, which were ultimately decided by politicians, attorneys, and emergency managers from far-flung places, in the view of CFDS co-chairs, digging the Detroit school system out of a literal and figurative bankruptcy required the intervention of the people in and around the system itself. However, our analysis also shows that the discursive strategies of the Coalition revealed potential conflicts over whose voices had power in making change. In the next section, we discuss implications of these findings for advocacy coalitions in urban school reform more broadly.

Discussion

Building on a historical tradition of community engagement and localized decision- making, philanthropic leaders across the country have begun to embrace coalitions and collective impact efforts as tools for educational improvement (Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012; Kania & Kramer, 2011). Emerging research has begun to articulate a framework for successful collective impact efforts that includes: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). Yet these collective impact frameworks typically do not address the political activity and social organizing that may accompany or emerge out of collective efforts to improve social services. In combining the concept of collective impact with the Advocacy Coalition Framework, we were able to build off of prior knowledge regarding how coalitions organize to produce policy change, while deepening our understanding of the conditions that might be different in education policy, with implications for community organizing toward school reform in other large urban centers similar to Detroit.

Our work highlights several important considerations for approaching school reform in this way. First, leaders of the Coalition were quite influential in determining the scope of the strategies considered in the immediate legislative session after the release of the report. While there was likely to be momentum around the DPS financial crisis whether the Coalition existed or not, the Coalition's strategic decision to prioritize finances and governance, rather than academics, shaped the public narrative about the problems that had to be addressed in legislation. By pairing these two priorities, they were able to convince state lawmakers – through public discourse in the media – that the state was responsible for the district's debt and that the school board must be reinstated to avoid future financial problems. So, while there was some disappointment that more was not accomplished to improve academics in the district, there was also acceptance that school reform was a multi-phase process that required foundational changes first.

Second, the strategic sequencing of recommendations and advocacy laid the foundation for future education reform initiatives in the city. The most significant recommendation that the Coalition did not achieve was the establishment of the Detroit Education Commission, an appointed board to oversee school accountability and school openings and closings in the city. This was the clearest example of how elite leaders within the Coalition placed priority on achieving key financial and governance reforms, rather than those that challenged the power dynamics that had led to the expansion of school choice with limited guardrails to protect students. In Wilson's (2015) account of African-American women's educational advocacy in Detroit, all of her participants raised "concerns about inequity, choice, competition, and what they perceive as threats of privatization" (p. 18).

Although non-elites within the Coalition and beyond had advocated for more substantial changes to the school choice infrastructure in the city, the Coalition leaders' discourse revealed that these changes would have to wait.

Although we cannot make any causal claims about the influence of the charter lobby on the positions and advocacy of the Coalition, the co-chairs, in the language they used to advocate their positions, typically did not focus on the DEC during the immediate legislative battle. Instead, their arguments centered on empowering a newly elected school board and on solving the immediate financial crisis. In the intervening years, however, the members of the Coalition continued to meet, strengthening what Tonya Allen described as their "civic muscle" and gaining credibility for their positions. In 2018, Mayor Duggan established the Community Education Commission to take on many of the responsibilities the Coalition proposed for the DEC. Allen is on the board, as are charter and traditional public school advocates and the new Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools Community District, who was appointed by the newly elected and empowered school board. This commission was created two years after the passage of the legislation that rescued DPS from financial ruin and would likely not have been possible without the early advocacy and strategic approach to timing that the Coalition members articulated in the media.

Finally, the explicit use of the language "triage, transition, and transformation" by the co-chairs helped to shape expectations within and outside the Coalition. This language allowed the Coalition to be broad and diverse, with many different perspectives represented, while also narrow in its policy aims during the time when DPS needed the most immediate legislative attention. At the same time, it created a platform on which Coalition members could continue to work toward a better school system in the city. After the legislation was passed in 2016, the Coalition re-convened and established new subcommittees to work on more specific problems related to student academics and school resources. In this way, the policy advocacy that defined the first phase of the Coalition's work created the foundation for community-based education reform that has built on that initial progress. Although our analysis revealed the ways in which some community interests were marginalized for the sake of key political wins, there is early evidence that the Coalition helped to set the stage for later efforts to reform schools that would more fully incorporate non-elite voices and methods into a policy strategy. This research provides new knowledge about how community-based education reform might be achieved, as called for by Horsford and Vasquez Heilig (2014). In 2019, education reform is decidedly still in the "transition" phase in Detroit, but our study reveals that the ways in which the Coalition came together and shaped the public discourse about education in the city is likely to continue to play a role in the transformation of the city's schools.

This study has important implications for intergovernmental advocacy coalitions working in urban school reform across the country. Since the passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, states have had more flexibility in determining how to support struggling schools and hold them accountable for their performance. This shift in federal policy has created an opportunity for community-based advocacy groups to demand more control and decision-making authority from state lawmakers. In 2018, large urban school systems in New Orleans and Newark were put back under local authority after years of state control, and cities across Tennessee are following the lead of Memphis to design home-grown school turnaround models as an alternative to takeover by the state's Achievement School District. These developments indicate a growing desire for local community members to create and advocate for their own education reform proposals in urban centers that have lost enrollment, resources, and political power over the last several decades. The case of the Coalition of the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren provides new knowledge about how community-led policy might be established, and it offers key insights into how power and ideology influence local efforts to wrest control back from state legislature. Community-based education

reform may demand trade-offs between distributing power and strategically sequencing the engagement and promotion of diverse stakeholder interests in order to achieve broad coalition goals. As Detroit moves further into the "transition" and then the "transformation" phases of reform, it will be important to examine whether and how the power asymmetries within the advocacy community change over time, and whether these changes influence the reform proposals that Detroiters promote.

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    https://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2016/03/22/dps-legislation/82116574/

Appendix

Table 1
Detroit Free Press Articles

Date	Title	Link
3/30/15	Panel calls for sweeping overhaul of Detroit schools	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2015/03/30/detroit-coalition-report-education-schools/70662762/
3/30/15	Detroit schools plan framed by choices	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/03/30/detroit-school-plan-choices/70683874/
3/30/15	'No silver bullet' in schools plan, Detroiters say	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/03/30/detroit-education-parents-react/70689634/
3/30/15	A good start to finally rebuilding Detroit's schools	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/editorials/2015/03/30/detroit-schools-report/70691732/
3/31/15	Duggan: End DPS emergency management, offer choices	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/03/31/duggan-statement-detroit-coalition-schools/70712502/
4/30/15	Snyder's plan raises concerns about local control	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/04/30/reaction-snyder-plan-detroit-public-schools/26657533/
5/9/15	Two plans, lots of opportunity for Detroit schools	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/editorials/2015/05/09/detroit-schools-editorial/27067919/
5/16/15	How far do kids travel to Detroit schools?	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/raw-data/2015/05/16/student-commutes-detroit/27390145/
5/21/15	Detroiters must have real control over Detroit schools	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/05/21/detroit-schools-control/27674557/
5/27/15	Snyder's tough sell on fixing Detroit schools	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/columnists/nancy-kaffer/2015/05/27/dps-michigan-schools/28027627/
5/27/15	Duggan: Return Detroit schools to Detroiters	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/columnists/stephen-henderson/2015/05/27/duggan-return-detroit-schools-detroiters/28043425/
6/4/15	Detroit Schools head announces central office reforms	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/06/04/dps-central-office-overhauled/28480459/
9/16/15	Lawmaker: Vouchers can fix Detroit's education woes	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/09/16/lawmaker-vouchers-school-choice-detroit/32505165/
10/4/15	Duggan steps into the breach to save Detroit schools	http://www.freep.com/story/news/columnists/rochelle-riley/2015/10/04/schools-reform-falls-on-mayors-shoulders/73243170/
10/19/15	Riley: Where's an education plan for Detroit?	http://www.freep.com/story/news/columnists/rochelle-riley/2015/10/19/riley-wheres-education-plan-detroit-children/74239252/
10/19/15	Snyder's plan to overhaul DPS could cost $715M	http://www.freep.com/story/news/2015/10/19/snyder-offers-more-details-detroit-schools-plan/74208674/
11/4/15	How to begin to stop the decline of Detroit's schools	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/11/04/how-begin-stop-decline-detroits-schools/75095988/

Table 1 cont.
Detroit Free Press Articles

Date	Title	Link
12/30/15	In Detroit school reform debate, focus on accountability	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/12/30/detroit-school-reform-debate-focus-accountability/78033112/
1/14/16	Bills on fix for DPS expected to be introduced Thursday	http://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2016/01/13/bills-fix-dps-expected-introduced-thursday/78741462/
2/18/16	Why DPS reform faces rough road in Lansing	http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2016/02/18/big-divide-house-senate-versions-dps-bills/80570648/
3/19/16	The challenges ahead for the new DPS	http://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2016/03/19/challenges-ahead--new-dps/81636780/
3/19/16	Learn from the costly mistakes of failed EAA	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/03/19/learn-costly-mistakes-failed-eaa/81909750/
3/22/16	Michigan Senate approves Detroit Public Schools reform legislation	http://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2016/03/22/dps-legislation/82116574/
5/5/16	Teachers union, others blast House bills to fix Detroit Public Schools	http://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2016/05/05/union-officials-blast-house-dps-bills/83969616/
5/15/16	Can lawmakers find middle ground on Detroit Public Schools fix?	http://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2016/05/15/lawmakers-struggle-solve-dps-puzzle/84348878/
5/17/16	Cotter to House members: No Mackinac for you	http://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2016/05/17/cotter-house-members-no-mackinac-you/84509278/
5/21/16	Are donors holding sway over DPS bills?	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/05/21/donors-holding-sway-over-dps-bills/84656162/
6/3/16	Michigan House's Detroit schools bills are pure garbage, not about kids	http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/columnists/stephen-henderson/2016/06/03/dps-reform-legislation/85348006/
6/21/16	Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signs $617M Detroit schools bailout	http://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2016/06/21/michigan-governor-rick-snyder-signs-617m-detroit-schools-bailout/86202378/

Table 2
Detroit News Articles

Date	Title	Link
4/21/15	Report: Forgiving Detroit school debt hits all schools	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/education/2015/04/21/report-forgiving-detroit-school-debt-hits-schools/26160213/
6/16/15	Coalition lobbies lawmakers to assume DPS debt	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2015/06/16/coalition-lobbies-lawmakers-control-dps/28835361/
7/17/15	With no new Detroit charters, it's not the wild west	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/columnists/ingrid-jacques/2015/07/17/jacques-new-charters-detroit/30252509/
11/4/15	Letter: Detroit coalition supports charter schools	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/2015/11/04/letter-detroit-coalition-supports-charter-schools/75127504/
11/19/15	Skillman leader: Don't expect foundation rescue of DPS	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2015/11/18/skillman-leader-expect-foundation-rescue-dps/76031940/
12/18/15	Bankruptcy could be option for ailing DPS	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/columnists/ingrid-jacques/2015/12/17/dps-inching-closer-bankruptcy/77528560/
1/13/16	Coalition heads urge state: Fix DPS finances, buildings	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/01/13/dps-sickouts/78728794/
2/2/16	DPS EM Darnell Earley to step down Feb. 29	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/02/02/dps-em-earley-expected-step-today/79689150/
2/16/16	Senate panel hears debate on Detroit school oversight	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/02/16/detroit-school-reform-state-senate-hearing/80475078/
2/26/16	Tonya Allen says she declined to be DPS superintendent	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/02/26/tonya-allen-detroit-public-schools/80980924/
3/2/16	EAA chancellor won't rule out return of schools to DPS	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/michigan/2016/03/02/education-achievement-authority-detroit-school-rescue/81238116/
4/13/16	Lone Brightmoor high school struggles	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/04/13/lone-brightmoor-high-school-struggles/83016932/
4/18/16	Detroit school rescue hinges on charter school rules	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/04/18/detroit-school-rescue-hinges-charter-school-rules/83172258/
5/4/16	Critic: House's DPS debt plan 'gave Detroit the finger'	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/05/04/duggan-house-dps-plan-waste-million/83956108/
5/5/16	Future of DPS hinges on GOP Capitol showdown	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/05/05/future-dps-hinges-gop-capitol-showdown/84003086/
5/9/16	Start-up cash key to DPS rescue	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/05/09/start-cash-key-detroit-schools-rescue/84120894/
5/19/16	Cotter: DPS rescue can't be at expense of charters	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/05/19/detroit-school-rescue-cotter/84594570/

Table 2 cont.
Detroit News Articles

Date	Title	Link
6/12/16	What DPS rescue means for city's education future	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/06/11/dps-rescue-means-citys-education-future/85768140/
6/21/16	Snyder signs $617M DPS bailout	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/06/21/snyder-detroit-public-schools-rescue-package/86194084/
9/4/16	EAA at beginning of end with new school year	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2016/09/04/education-achievement-authority-last-year/89875172/
11/25/16	DeVos selection ignites fight on how to help students	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/11/24/devos-selection-ignites-fight-help-students/94406260/
5/13/17	New Detroit schools chief sees renaissance for district	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2017/05/13/new-detroit-schools-chief-sees-renaissance-district/101640812/
5/30/17	Our Editorial: Build a better Detroit school district	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/editorials/2017/05/30/detroit-schools/102332334/

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