The background features a large, faint watermark of the Stanford University seal. The seal is circular and contains the text "STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY" at the top, "1891" at the bottom, and "DIEBET DER FREIHEIT" in the center. A tree is depicted in the center of the seal.

Panel 2 - Is Education Improving, and if So, Why or Why Not?

THOMAS S. DEE
STANFORD GSE AND CEPA

Is Education Improving in the U.S.? Why?

YES BUT UNEVENLY

- Like Brazil, the U.S. has federalist system of public schooling
- Over the last 12 years, the federal government has been exceptionally active in encouraging (or mandating) state/local reforms
- Several controversial and unusually prescriptive policies

SELECTED LESSONS FROM THESE REFORMS

- School accountability under No Child Left Behind (Dee and Jacob 2011)
- “Turnarounds” of chronically underperforming schools (Dee 2012)
- Teacher performance assessment in the District of Columbia Public Schools (Dee and Wyckoff, forthcoming)



Main conclusions

EACH POLICY INNOVATION PROVIDES A COMPELLING PROOF POINT ON WHAT CAN IMPROVE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

BUT ALSO GROWING AWARENESS ABOUT PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES OF TOP-DOWN REFORM AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF LOCAL CONTEXTS

AND SOME DOUBT ABOUT THE CAPACITY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO DRIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AT SCALE

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

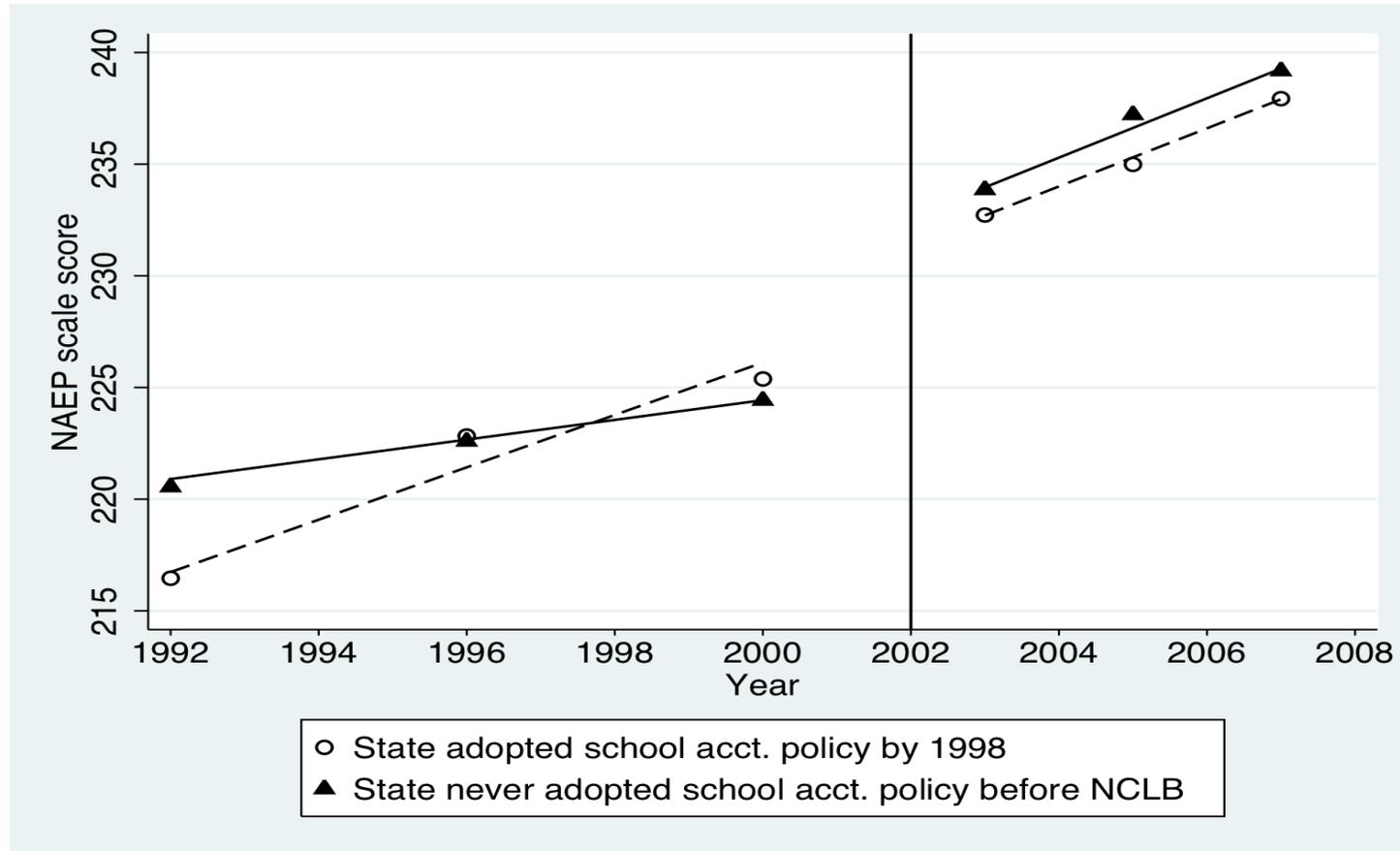
FEDERAL VERSION OF SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

- In 2002, NCLB required all states to design/implement consequential school accountability based on standardized tests
- Public reporting of performance at the school level, including results for individual subgroups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender)
- Increasingly severe sanctions for repeated failure to make “adequate yearly progress” towards proficiency goals

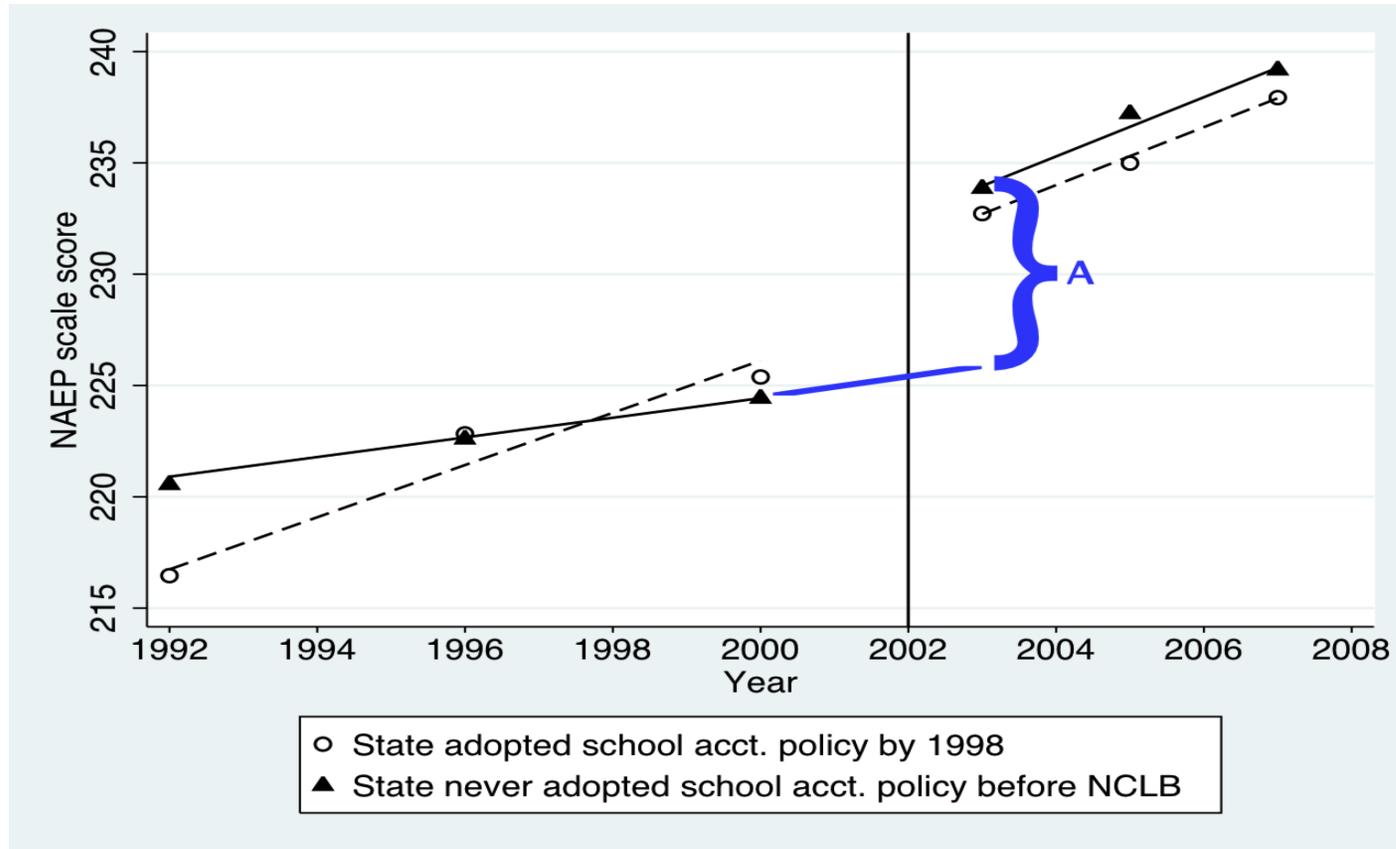
EVALUATING NCLB

- A nationwide policy is difficult to evaluate credibly and high-stakes state tests can show big improvement simply because of “teaching to the test”
 - › But federal “NAEP” scores are low stakes
- A natural “control” group: More than half of U.S. states already had NCLB-like policies prior to NCLB

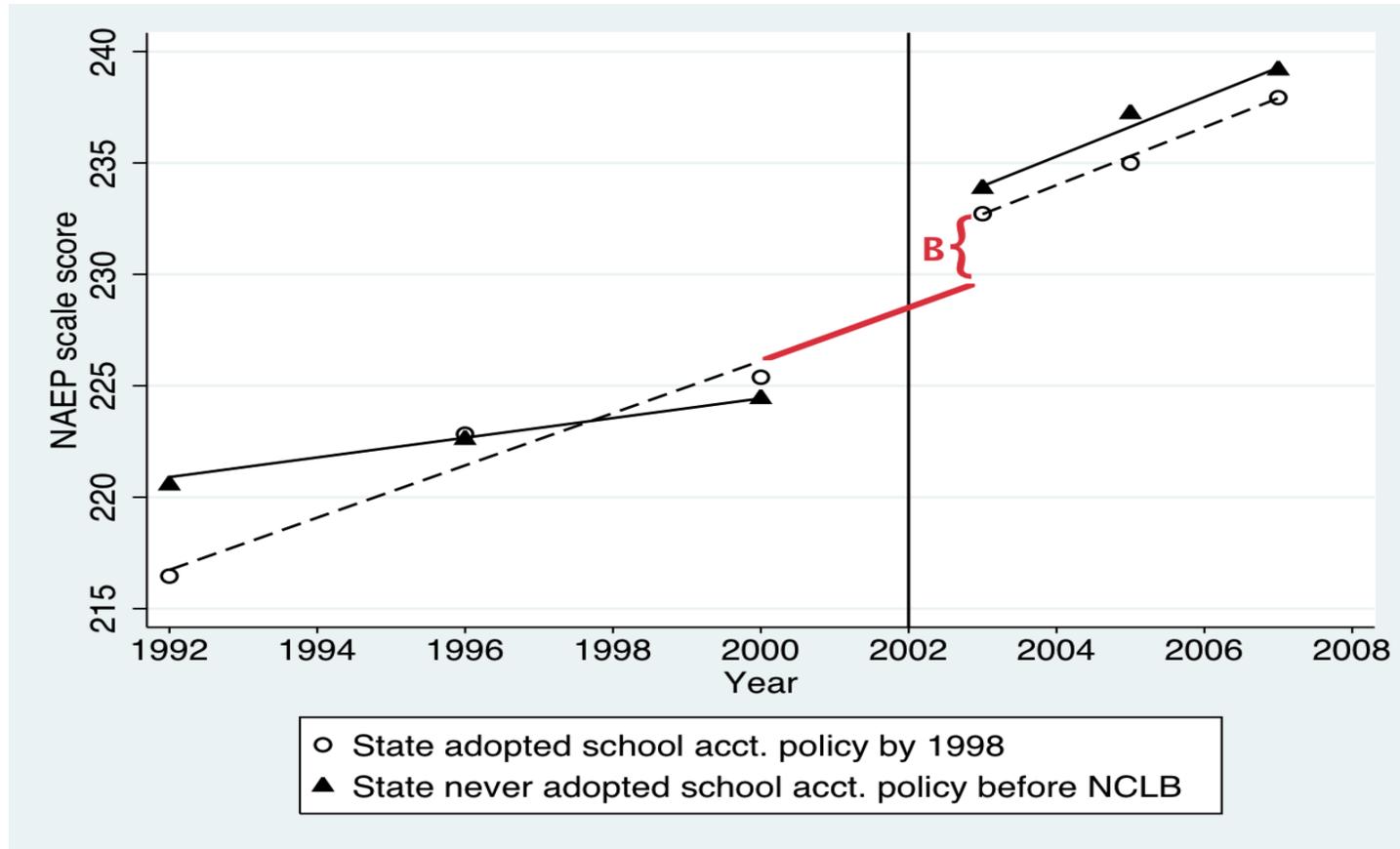
NAEP 4th Grade Math Trends by Pre-NCLB Accountability



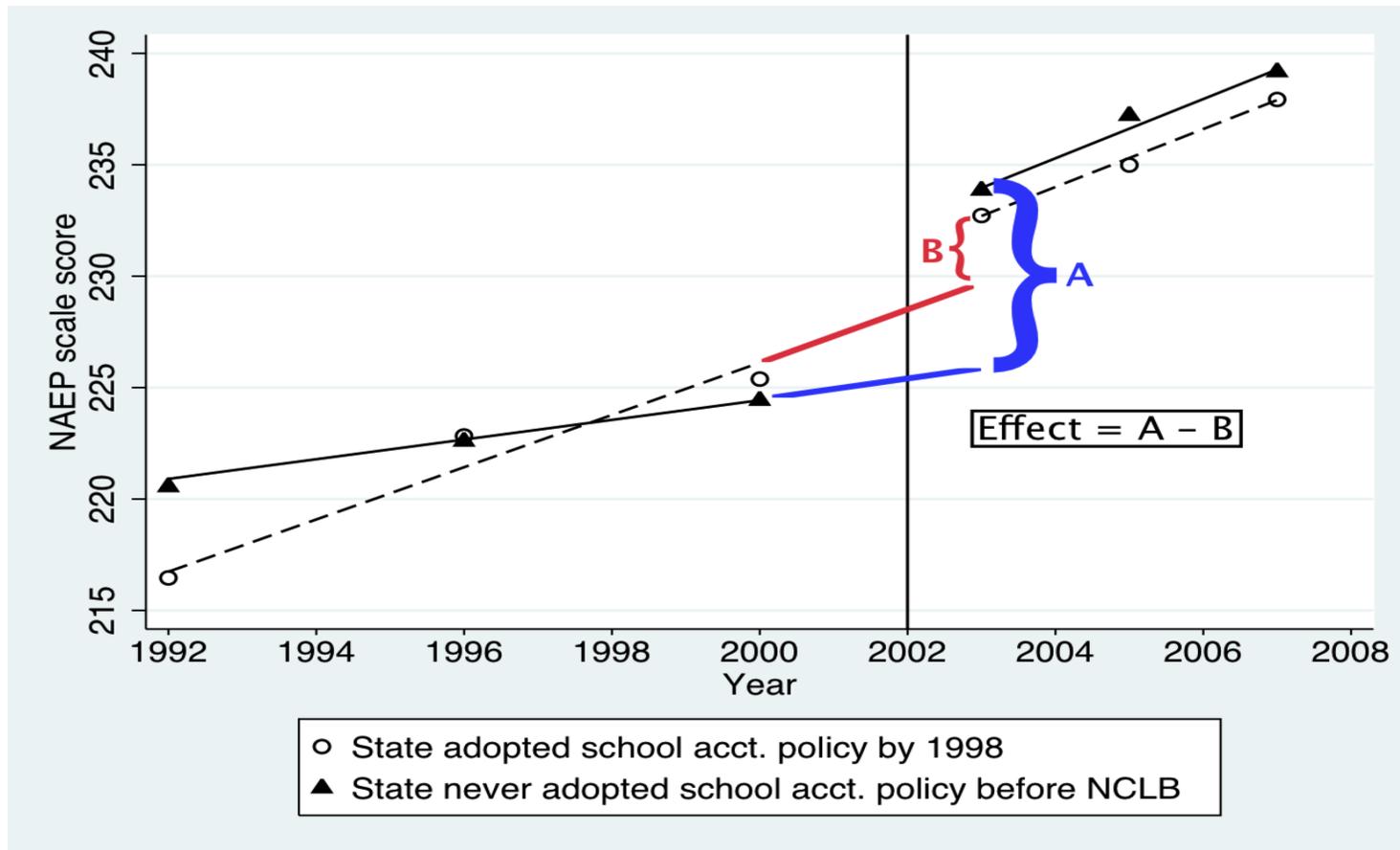
NAEP 4th Grade Math Trends by Pre-NCLB Accountability



NAEP 4th Grade Math Trends by Pre-NCLB Accountability



NAEP 4th Grade Math Trends by Pre-NCLB Accountability



School Turnarounds (Dee 2012)

JUNE 22, 2009

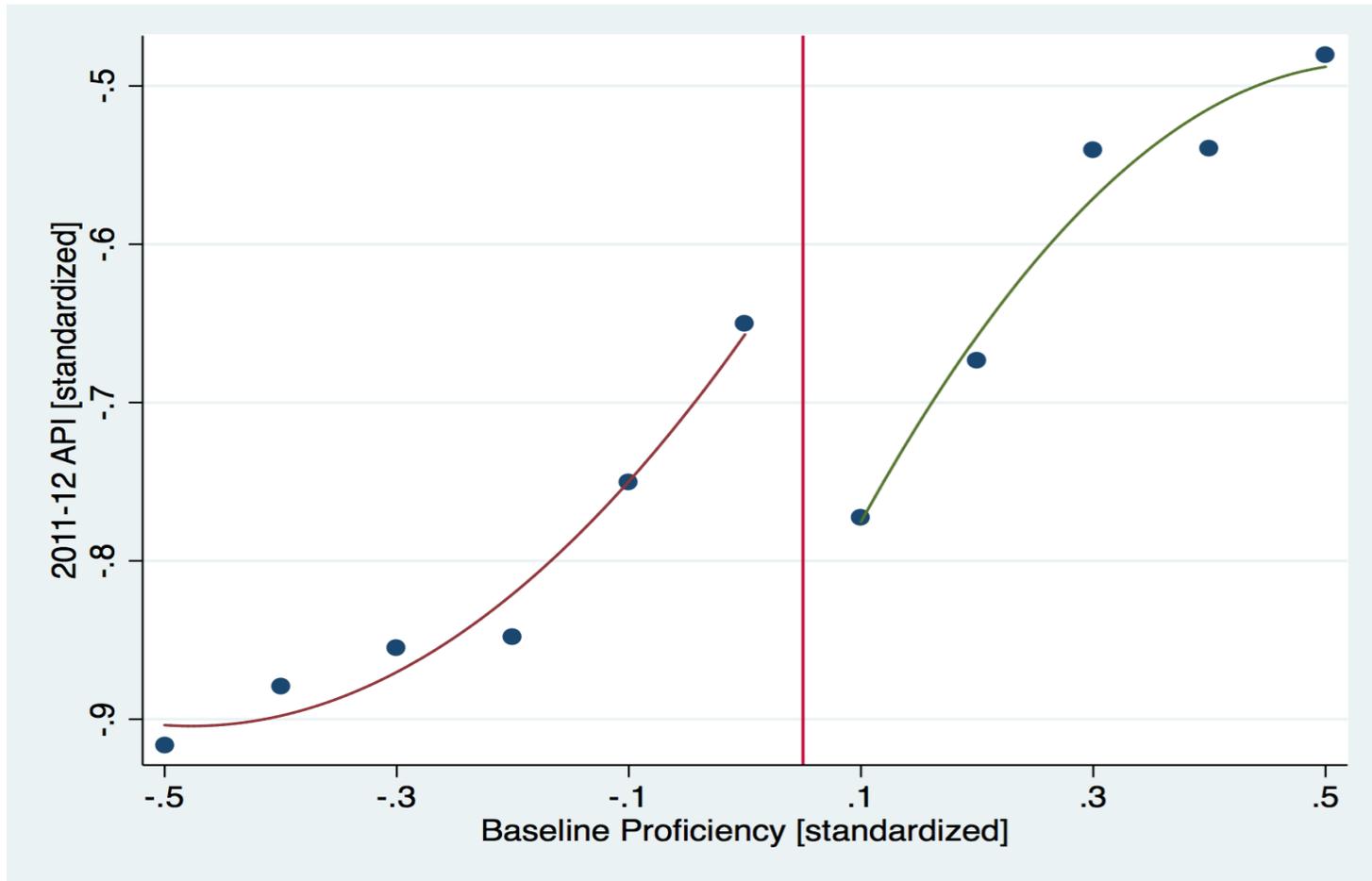
- Arne Duncan calls for a nationwide focus on “turning around” chronically underperforming schools (i.e., the lowest 5 percent): “We want transformation, not tinkering”

THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT (ARRA) OF 2009

- \$3 billion added to redesigned School Improvement Grants (SIGs)
- Prioritized SIG eligibility to “*persistently lowest-achieving*” (PLA) schools
- SIG awards increased to a maximum of \$2 million per school annually for 3 years
- But SIG recipients *required* to implement one of three, multi-faceted reform models (transformation, turnaround, restart) or to close

EVIDENCE FROM CALIFORNIA (N = 92 SIG SCHOOLS)

- “Regression discontinuity” comparing just-eligible to just-ineligible schools → significant improvements in school performance



2011-12 School-Performance Scores

Performance-Based Compensation for Teachers

GROWING CONSENSUS AROUND THE THE LARGE EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC RETURNS TO HIGHER-QUALITY TEACHERS

BUT NO EFFECTS FROM RECENT “CASH FOR TEST SCORE” EXPERIMENTS

ONGOING ROLLOUT OF MULTI-FACETED “PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION SYSTEMS” NATIONWIDE (E.G., TEACHER INCENTIVE FUND, NCLB WAIVERS, RACE TO THE TOP, ETC.)

- Educator effectiveness measures that include classroom observations as well as test scores
- Pay for performance; use in tenure decisions
- Additional pay opportunities for extra responsibilities
- Embedded professional development

The Leading Example: IMPACT in DC Public Schools

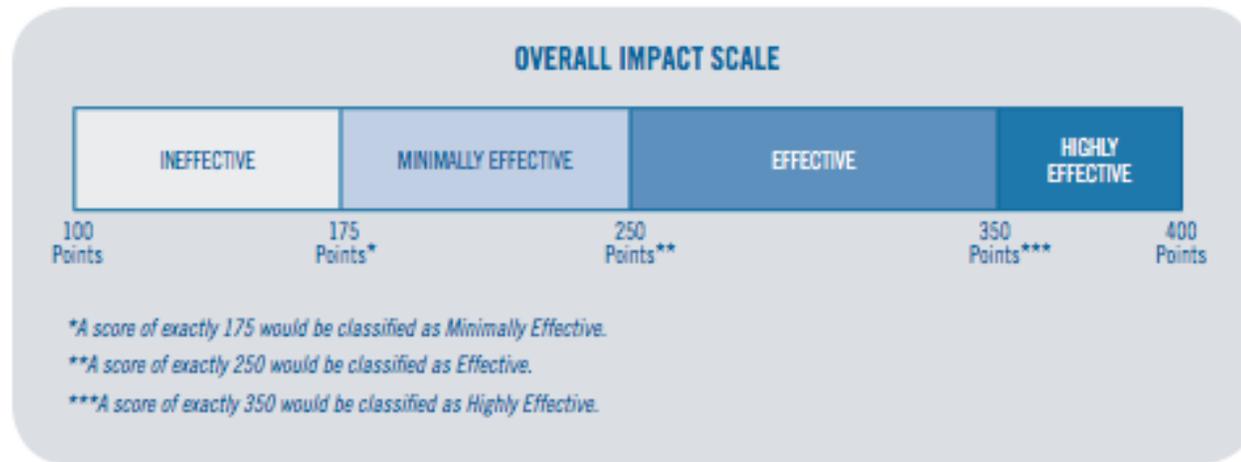


- IMPACT is the high-profile and uniquely aggressive performance assessment system introduced in DC Public Schools (DCPS) under then-Chancellor Michelle Rhee during AY 2009-10

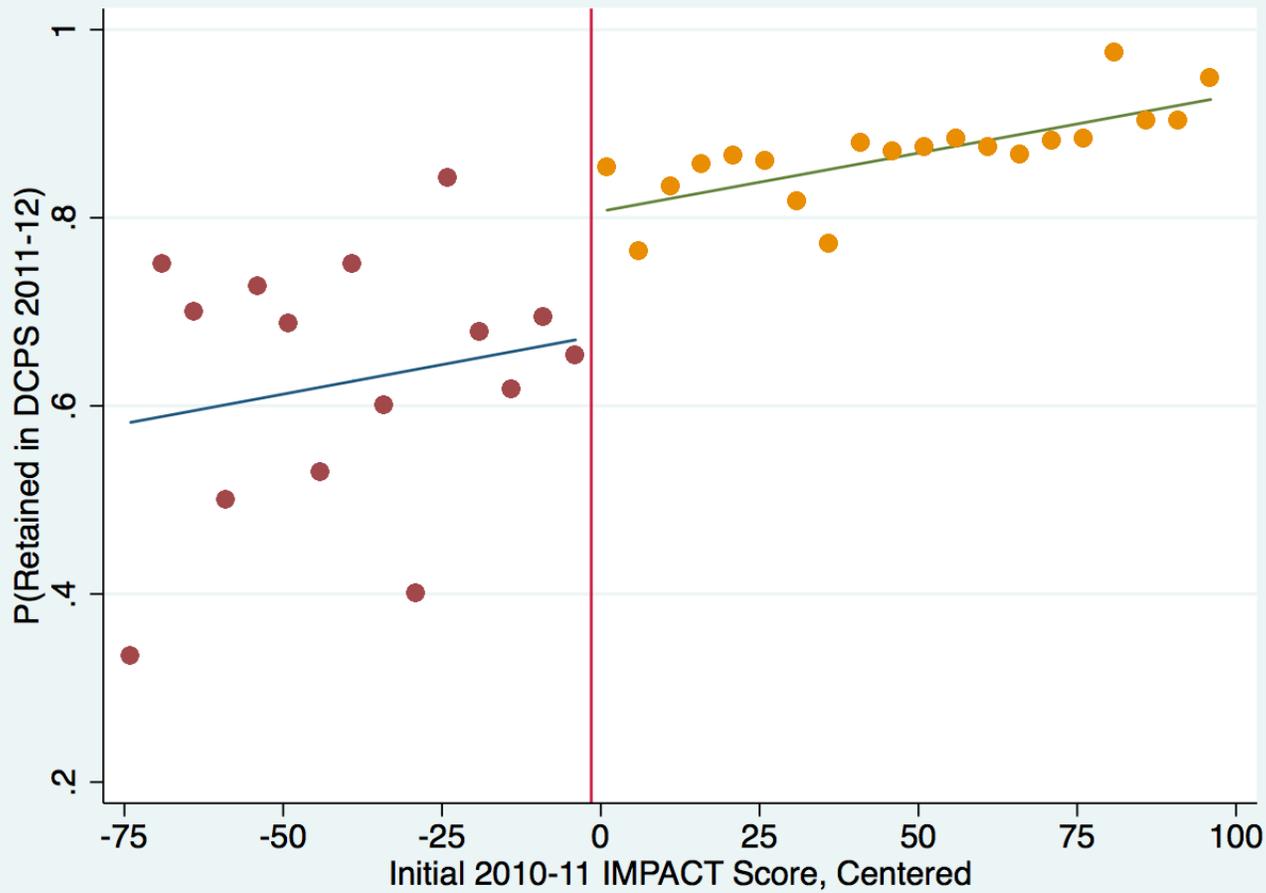
Why is IMPACT Unique?

- *High-powered and individual* incentives (i.e., both large financial incentives but also *dismissal threats*)
- Teacher performance based on multiple measures, not test scores alone
 - › Emphasis on what teachers most clearly control: their instructional practices
- Attentiveness to implementation details
 - › Communication of expectations, rater training & data systems, teacher supports to meet expectations (e.g., instructional coaches)
- Leadership buy-in to the theory of change in an enduring, election-tested system

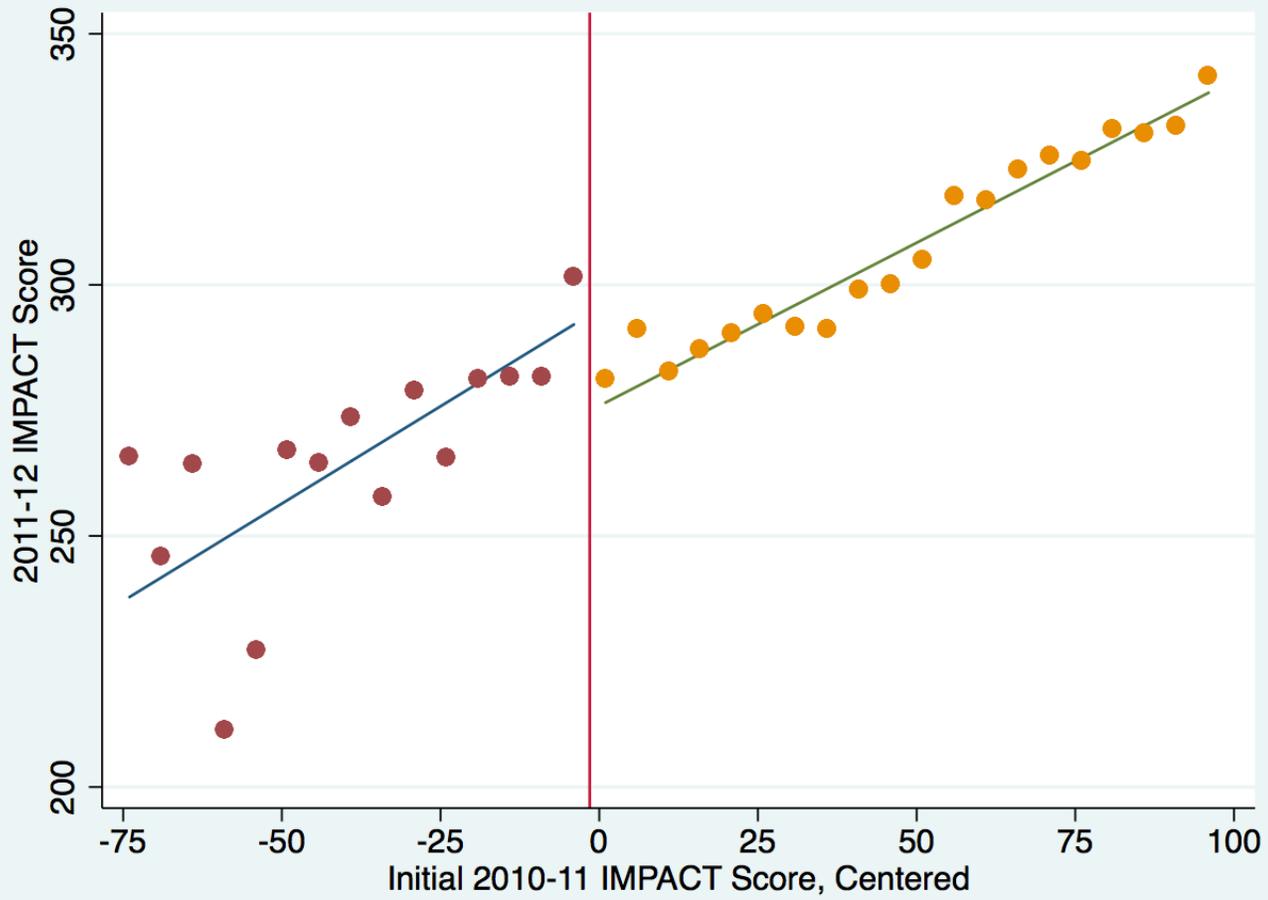
Teacher Consequences under IMPACT: 2009-2012



- **Ineffective** (<175): dismissed
- **Minimally Effective** (175-249): *dismissed* next year if not 250+ (and no step increase in pay)
- **Effective** (250-349): business as usual
- **Highly Effective** (350+): bonus payment + *permanent* base-pay increase if 350+ next year



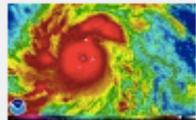
Dismissal threats encouraged “minimally effective” teachers to leave DCPS...



...and
performance
gains among
teachers who
returned

Education

In the News Iran Obamacare Typhoon Haiyan Jobs report Xbox One 'Thor'



PHOTOS | The power of Haiyan



CBS admits major Benghazi gaffe



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D.C. posts significant gains on national test, outpacing nearly every state

109       More ▾

By Emma Brown, Published: November 7 [E-mail the writer](#) ↩

The District's fourth- and eighth-graders made significant gains on national math and reading tests this year, posting increases that were among the city's largest in the history of the exam.

Students at the city's public charter and traditional schools also showed more improvement than nearly every state on the [2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress](#), an exam the federal government has administered every two years since the early 1990s. Results of the tests, known as the Nation's Report Card, were released Thursday morning.

Enduring Reform at Scale?

- Growing cynicism about inflexibility of NCLB and “moonshot” rhetoric
- School Improvement Grants (SIG) in California were awarded *competitively* to schools/districts with most compelling applications
 - › In several other states, *all* eligible schools received awards
 - › Descriptive evidence that reforms were comparatively muted
- Implementation of performance-based compensation for teachers (e.g., under TIF awards) in other districts is fitful and uneven (and cosmetic?)
 - › Several large urban districts had to return federal grants because they could not secure the cooperation of teacher unions

Possible Lessons for Federal policies?

- The federal role for protecting constitutional rights, promoting equitable funding (e.g., FUNDEF, Title I), and supporting basic research is uncontested
- A federal agenda around understanding (and supporting) the political, institutional, and economic contexts that influence the state/local capacity for meaningful reform
 - › For example, rich data systems and reporting
- A possible alternative to prescriptive federal efforts to promote prescriptive change in school practices at scale?
 - › Instead target federal support for well-theorized reforms to *selected* applicants with leadership buy-in & promising implementation fidelity
 - › Better proof points for these reforms without cynicism?