

Remaking School Accountability: Evidence and Recommendations

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July 28, 2011

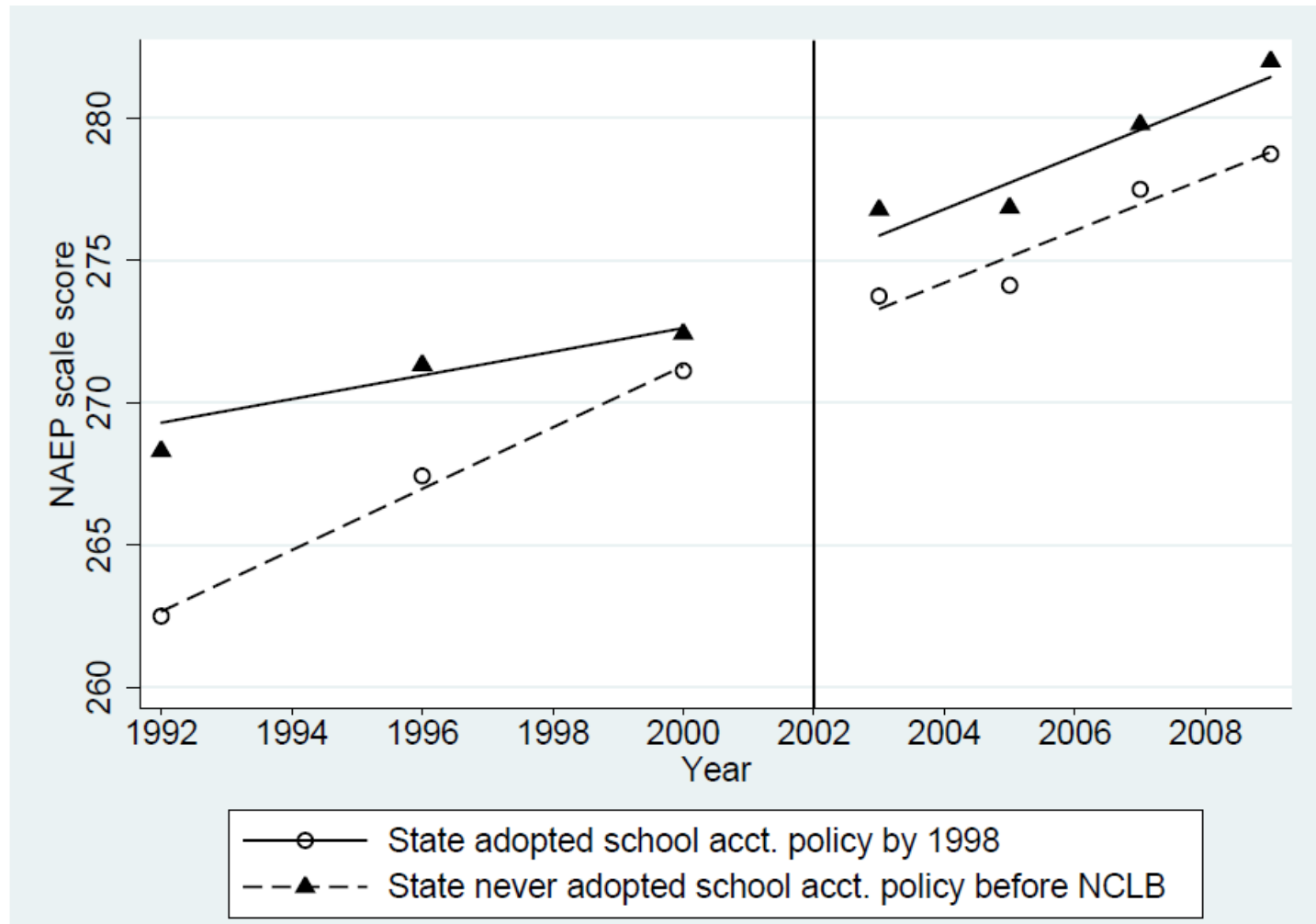
Background

- NCLB dramatically changed school governance and accountability
- The law also included some obvious, large flaws (e.g., how performance is measured)
 - Essentially all schools will be deemed failing soon
- At some point, Congress will re-authorize the law and make some major improvements
- This presents an opportunity for Wisconsin

Evidence from Florida

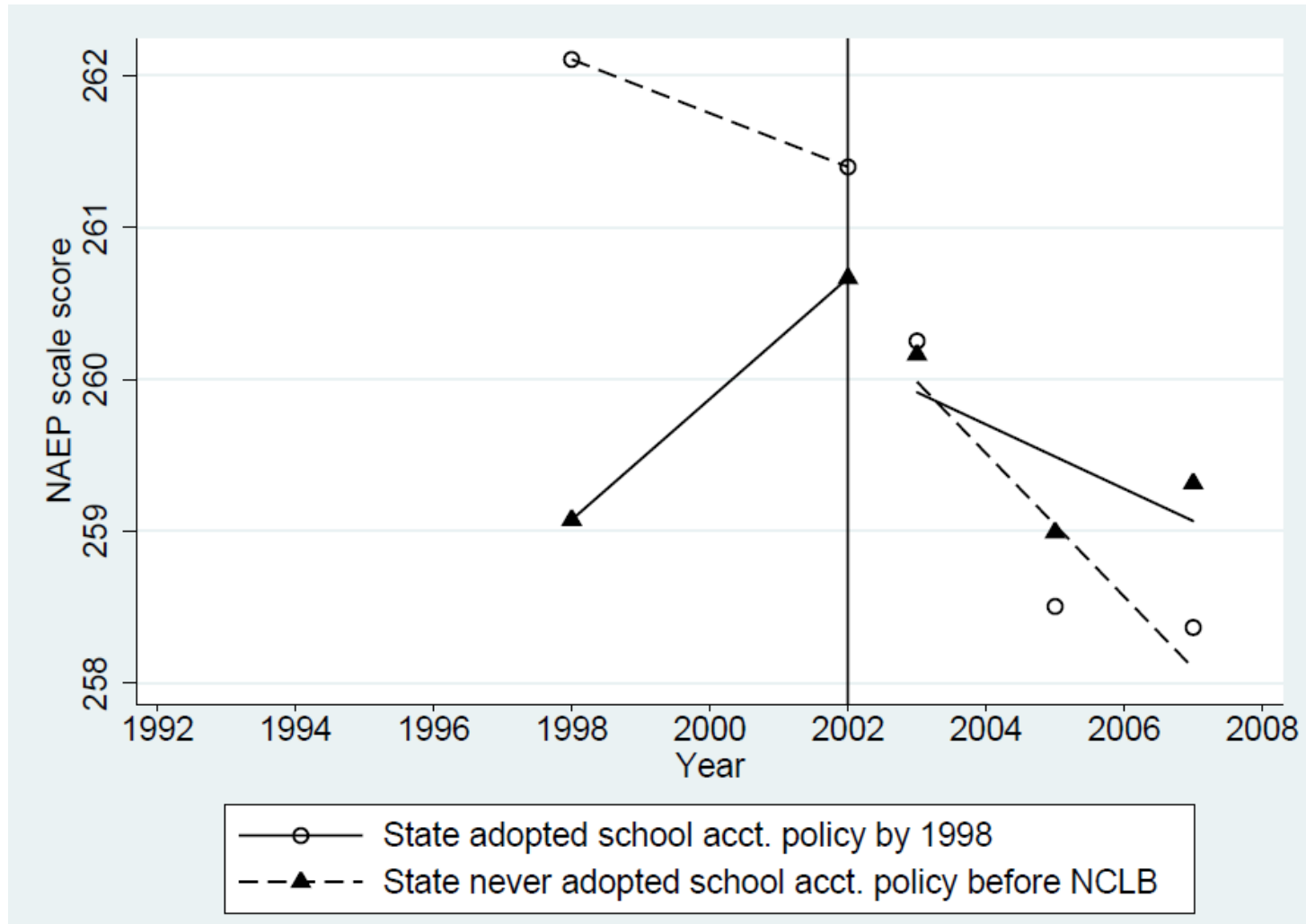
- Florida has been the most aggressive state with high-stakes testing since the 1970s
- Florida's system is much better than NCLB, but still has some problems
- Recent study (Rouse et al.) suggests:
 - Good: Increased planning time and resources for teachers, increased instructional time, policies to help low-achieving students
 - Arguably Bad: Narrowing curriculum
 - No evidence on most of the areas of potential concern (test prep, other aspects of instruction, long-term outcomes)

U.S. 8th grade math trends (NAEP)



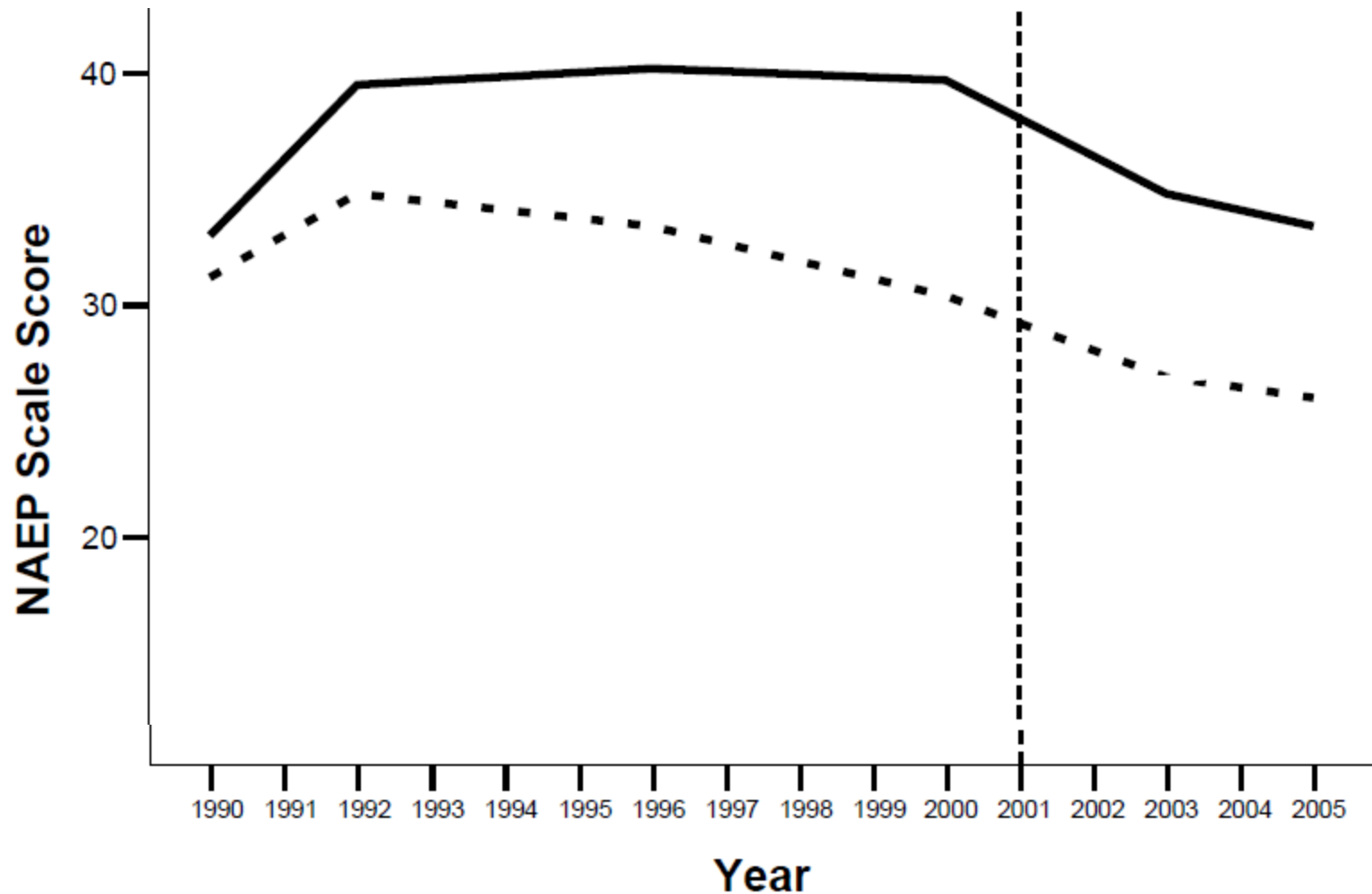
Source: Dee and Jacob (2009)

U.S. 8th grade reading (NAEP)



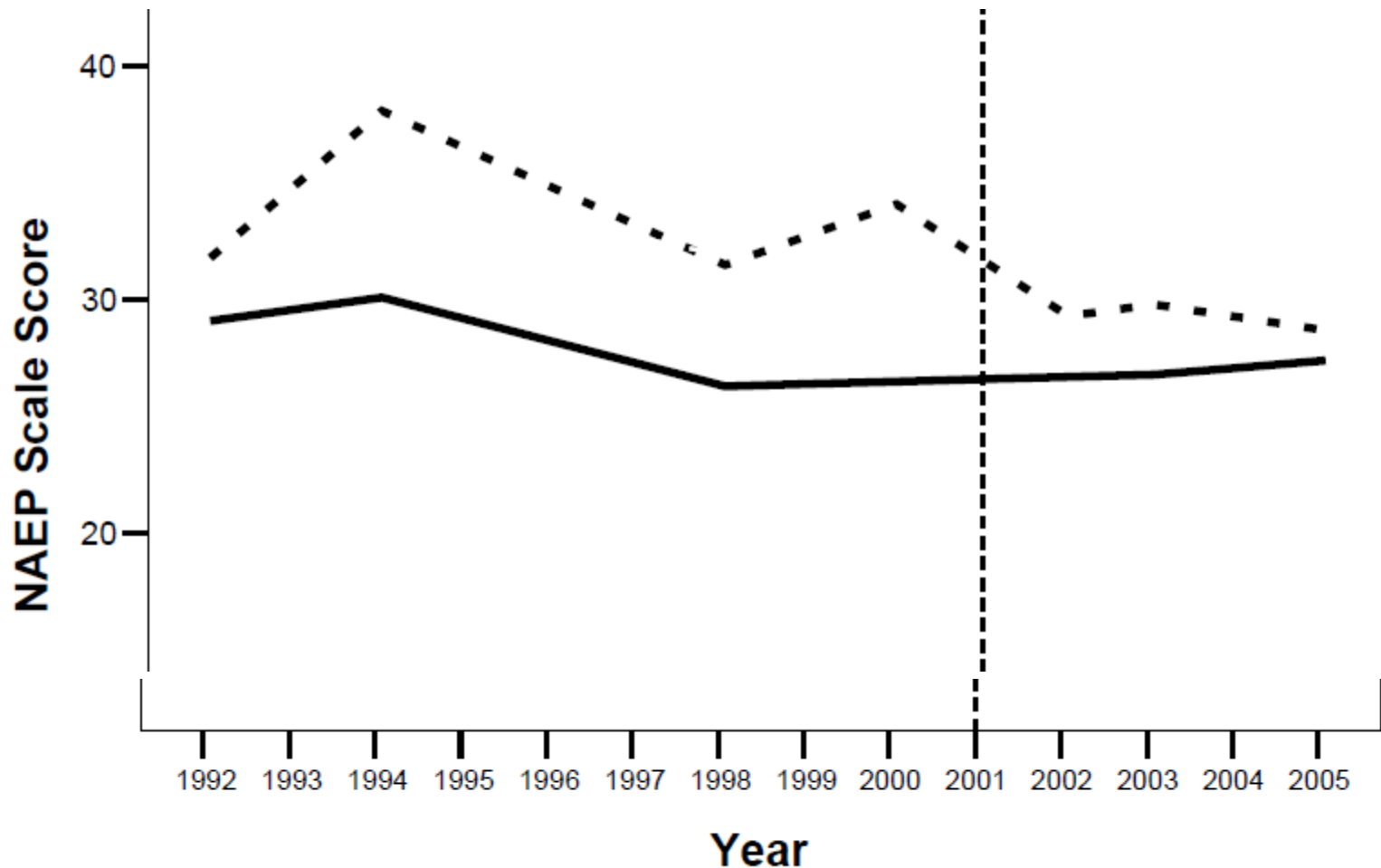
Source: Dee and Jacob (2009)

U.S. math achievement gap trends



Source: Lee (2006)

U.S. reading achievement gap trends



Source: Lee (2006)

Summary of Evidence

- Opponents and supporters of high-stakes accountability are both half-right
- On the one hand, high-stakes school-focused accountability has a modest positive effect on students' academic skills and some positive effects on instruction
- On the other hand, lots of gaming the system and almost no evidence yet on the main outcomes of interest—long-term outcomes

Recommendation (in parts)

- Hold people accountable for what they control—
meaning, focus on value-added
- Use a range of outcome measures that align with
what we want students to learn
 - What gets measured gets done
 - Can apply “value-added” concept beyond tests
- Make the stakes proportional to the quality of the
performance measures
- Pay for “expensive” tests that capture a wide range
of types and levels of knowledge and skill
- Use differentiated accountability (see next)

Recommendation (in parts)

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE TABLE

	1	2	3	4	5
Proficiency categories					
1 (0–19)					
2 (20–39)	Walker			Hoover	
3 (40–59)					
4 (60–79)		Wilson		Roosevelt	
5 (80+)					

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Intervention Rewards

Source: Harris (2009)

One Elephant in the Room

- Wisconsin applied for *Race to the Top* and promised accountability for individual teachers and principals
- Federal NCLB waiver likely to have similar requirements
- The good and the bad of accountability will be amplified when focusing on individuals
- Back to Florida: Its *school* accountability is better than NCLB, but the new teacher accountability system has several problems (too rushed; problematic performance measures; no “middle” performance category; rapid expansion of testing)

Conclusions

- School accountability can improve education if done right, but don't expect miracles
- Unintended consequences can be significant, but can be addressed with careful design
- Wisconsin's education system needs to make significant improvements if we are going to keep pace with other states, and countries
 - The achievement gap is especially large
- Decisions about teacher and principal accountability are arguably more important