DOCUMENTED BRIEFING

RAND

*Profile of the
Santa Monica-Malibu
Unified School District*

Brian M. Stecher

Preface

The purpose of this briefing is to provide administrators, teachers, parents, community representatives, and the general public with an overview of the Santa Monica-Malibu School District (SM-MUSD). Using publicly available data, the briefing describes the students who attend school in the district, the resources available to the district, the way the district spends these resources, and the performance of its students. When these results are compared to other districts, they usefully place SM-MUSD in context. In particular, the briefing compares SM-MUSD to similar districts, to high-achieving districts in the state, and to all of Los Angeles County.

This research, conducted as a gift to the community, was led by senior RAND Education researcher Brian Stecher, also a parent of students attending Santa Monica schools. On May 17, 2000, he presented the following briefing at a public meeting organized by a local citizens' group.

This briefing is available online at www.rand.org/publications/ DB/DB314.

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

During the spring of 2000, a Santa Monica citizens' group, the Community for Excellent Public Schools, scheduled a series of public meetings to discuss the status and goals of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SM-MUSD). In response to the group's request, RAND offered to prepare a profile of the district. The leadership of RAND hoped that this work would enhance the discussion by bringing accurate, fair, and objective information to bear on questions of concern to the community. The data presented here were gathered, analyzed, and organized in about two months' time. As such, they do not represent the "final word" on the performance of the district; instead this information is a systematic first step in a longer conversation.

This briefing represents an initial attempt to describe important features of SM-MUSD in an objective and useful manner. To enhance objectivity, the review relied on publicly available data collected by the California Department of Education (CDE). All the information presented here can be found at the CDE web site, www.cde.ca.gov. To increase the usefulness of the information, data regarding SM-MUSD are compared to information from other districts. Three sets of comparison districts were identified: a set of five districts similar to SM-MUSD in total enrollment and student demographics; a set of four districts with the highest student test scores in the state; and the average for Los Angeles County as a whole.

School districts are complex organizations that perform many functions. A useful starting place for analyzing district performance is to distinguish between inputs, processes, and outcomes. Inputs include the clients served by the district (i.e., students) and the financial, physical, and human resources available to the district. The process component includes the actions taken at the district, school, and classroom levels to achieve the district's goals. This category includes the work of administrators, teachers, counselors, and support staff. The district's educational program is also considered part of the process category, including goals, curriculum, instruction, and the books and materials that are used. Finally, districts produce outcomes in terms of the accomplishments of their students. Student outcomes include enrollment in challenging courses, achievement (usually measured on tests), positive civic attitudes, and post-secondary activities.

A thorough profile of a school district would include detailed descriptions of inputs, processes, and outcomes. However, these features are not equally easy to describe, and the state does not collect data on many of them. As a result, this profile focuses primarily on inputs and outcomes. In addition, some programmatic features described, most notably relative expenditures for different types of employees and high school course-taking. I try to answer three general questions: How great are the district's resources compared to similar districts, high-achieving districts and the average for Los Angeles County? How are the district's resources used compared to these other districts? and What outcomes does the district achieve relative to these other districts?

In terms of resources, the analysis shows that SM-MUSD's total revenues are greater than those of similar districts and LA county (on a per-pupil basis) but below the revenues of high-achieving districts. Santa Monica-Malibu teachers, on the other hand, are among the best prepared in the state. They are highly experienced and well educated relative to the other districts and the county. SM-MUSD allocates resources in ways that are similar to the comparison districts. For example, the proportion of total revenues devoted to administrative salaries is comparable to that of similar districts and high-achieving districts. The percentage of total revenue spent on teacher salaries in SM-MUSD is near the middle of the range for similar districts, but it is below the percentage spent by the high-achieving districts. Average teacher salaries in SM-MUSD are comparable to salaries in both sets of districts, while initial teacher salaries are at the top of both sets of districts. The proportion of revenues spent on counselors' salaries is near the middle of the ranges for other districts. In contrast, SM-MUSD spends more on classroom aides as a proportion of total revenues than most of the similar districts and most high-achieving districts.

The Santa Monica-Malibu district performs above the middle of the range for similar districts on most program measures, and it approaches the range for the high-achieving districts on many measures. For example, SM-MUSD is near the top of both groups in the number of students per computer. It falls in between the two groups in secondary class size. High school students in SM-MUSD are above the middle of the range of similar schools in enrollment in performing arts and above similar districts in enrollment in fine arts. When it comes to the most academically demanding courses, SM-MUSD compares favorably to the similar districts but is well below the high-achieving districts. A higher percentage of Santa Monica-Malibu high school students take AP tests and achieve passing scores than students in

the similar districts, but these numbers are far below those of the high-achieving districts.

The story is similar for other outcomes. Santa Monica-Malibu outperforms similar districts but trails behind high-achieving districts in students' scores on the Stanford-9 test (as reported in the form of the Academic Performance Index), and also in the percentage of students completing the course requirements for admission to the University of California and California State University systems.

Overall, it appears that SM-MUSD has similar resources and uses them in ways that are similar to the districts we identified as being most comparable. SM-MUSD students are doing relatively well in comparison to students in these districts, although they lag behind students in the highest achieving districts in the state. This initial analysis contained no "red flags" pointing out serious shortcomings or deficiencies.

However, this portrait is incomplete. Perhaps the greatest limitations of this profile are a lack of data on the district's instructional program and an emphasis on quantity rather than quality. Although the state does not collect data to fill these gaps, such information could be gathered by the district and/or the community with sufficient time and resources. The first step in such a process might be to focus on a small number of high-priority goals and think about ways to collect information about them.

Profile of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

Brian Stecher, RAND

May 17, 2000

The goal of this profile is to provide an objective description of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. It does not reflect a particular perspective or advocate a particular course of action. Although selecting the information and organizing it in a presentation are subjective by nature, I have tried to minimize any hidden judgments by explaining my choices explicitly.

Key definitions of terms are included in the text below each slide, as are data sources.

About RAND

RAND — A nonprofit, nonpartisan institution that helps to improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis

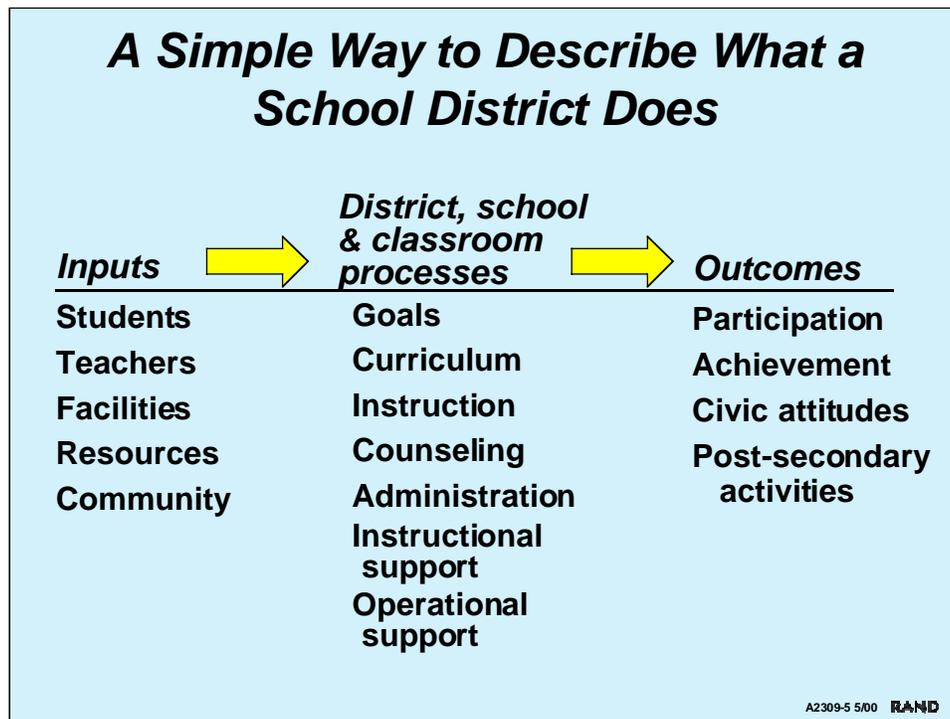**RAND Education — A leading supplier of research on strategies and programs for improving K-12 education for**
- **U.S. Government**
- **State of California**
- **Private foundations and others**

A2309-4 5/00   RAND

RAND, located in Santa Monica for over 50 years, supplied the resources to research, write and produce this briefing. Though the analysis and reporting were supported by RAND, the author is responsible for the contents of the report.

This briefing is available online at www.rand.org/publications/ DB/DB314.

A Simple Way to Describe What a School District Does

Inputs	District, school & classroom processes	Outcomes
Students	Goals	Participation
Teachers	Curriculum	Achievement
Facilities	Instruction	Civic attitudes
Resources	Counseling	Post-secondary activities
Community	Administration	
	Instructional support	
	Operational support	

A2309-5 5/00 RAND

A school district is a complex, multilayered organization that performs many functions. The project adopted a simple structure to organize information about the district. This structure, which is a common way to discuss district functions, has three elements: inputs, processes, and outcomes.

Inputs listed in the left-hand column are the raw material a district works with—the physical and human capital with which it attempts to meet its goals.

The middle column reflects the processes a district uses to deliver basic services. Goals include explicit statements of purpose (e.g., visions, state curriculum and performance standards, local norms regarding classroom content and practice, and individual expectations). Curriculum includes the content to be communicated to students as embodied in standards, textbooks, and course outlines. Instruction includes practices used to promote learning. Also, within "instruction" I include the ways the district meets the needs of all students, including special education and gifted and talented students. Counseling includes career, academic, and social support services for students. Administration includes leadership at the district and school levels. Instructional support includes curriculum support, classroom aides,

and child care programs. Operational support includes personnel, facilities, and transportation services.

Outcomes, listed in the right-hand column, are the educational results that can be observed in the lives and achievements of students, including their participation in specific courses and programs, the knowledge and skills they gain, the degrees and programs they complete, their ability to function as responsible citizens, and their post-secondary paths leading to college, careers, and other kinds of training programs.

The distinction between inputs, processes, and outcomes is not perfect, but it serves as a helpful organizational tool. The reader should not be distracted by the fact that some features probably belong in more than one column. For example, teachers are both resources to the district and providers of instructional services. Similarly, high school students' choices of courses are both part of the educational process and intermediate outcomes of their experiences in the district. The inclusion of these features is important, their classification less so. For the purposes of this description, the three-column model helps to ensure that important features are not omitted and information is presented in a logical order.

This briefing attempts to describe as many features of the school district as possible using public data. The advantage of public data is that they are subject to wider review than data gathered privately, and they are accessible to everyone. Thus, anything I report here can be independently verified by others.
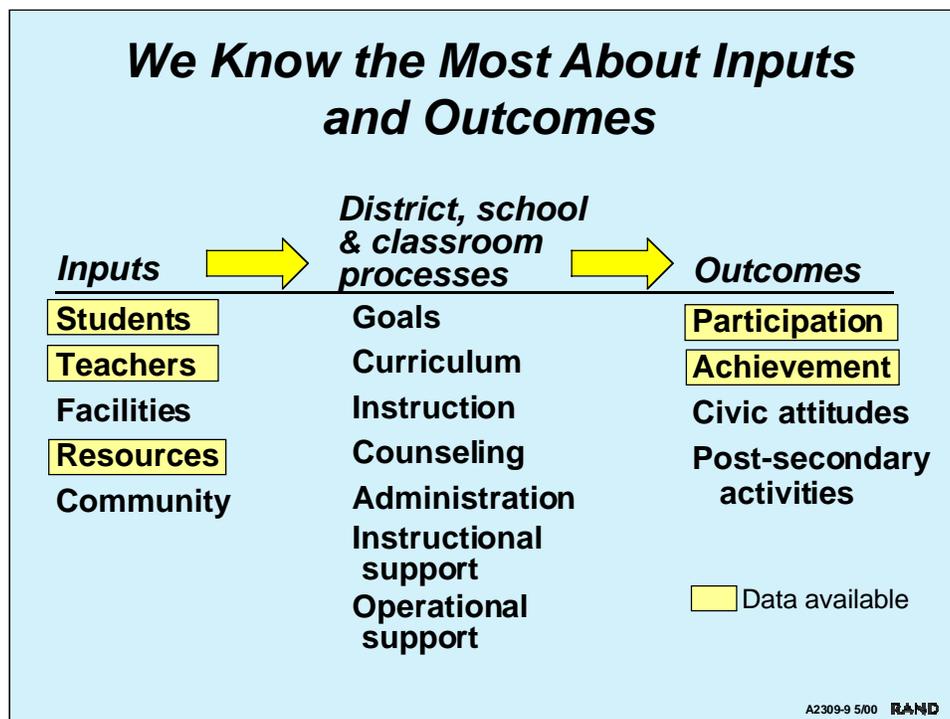
Where possible I present multiyear trends to distinguish between features that have been stable and those that have been volatile. In most cases, 10-year trends are displayed, though sometimes only four or five years of data were available.

The data came almost exclusively from the California Department of Education (CDE), and they are available on the CDE website. However, finding and organizing them into useful formats requires perseverance because they are catalogued under a number of different offices.

The primary source of all the revenue and expenditure data is an annual survey that districts complete called the J-200 Un-audited Actual Revenues and Expenditures. Most of the raw revenue and expenditure data can be downloaded from the California Department of Education at: ftp://www.cde.ca.gov/fiscal/j200_data/.

However, because it had already been conveniently organized and aggregated by RAND California, the revenue and expenditure data used for this report were downloaded from RAND California at http://www.ca.rand.org/stats/education/schoolfin.det.html. RAND California, a subscription website, is accessible from most California libraries.

Some information on school financing came from "Understanding School Finance: California's Complex K-12 System" (2000), produced by EdSource, a nonprofit group providing analysis to support educational policymaking in California.

We Know the Most About Inputs and Outcomes

Inputs	District, school & classroom processes	Outcomes
Students	Goals	Participation
Teachers	Curriculum	Achievement
Facilities	Instruction	Civic attitudes
Resources	Counseling	Post-secondary activities
Community	Administration	
	Instructional support	
	Operational support	

Data available

A2309-9 5/00 RAND

One important lesson to be drawn from this briefing is that little information exists about many important district functions. The boxes highlight the elements of the model for which the most data are available; the bulk of the available information relates to inputs and outcomes. Much less information exists about core educational functions—including curriculum and instruction.

Nevertheless, data exist to describe some important elements of the school district. This briefing highlights the most relevant information collected by the state.

The remainder of this presentation is organized around six questions:

1. Whom does the district serve? I describe the background characteristics of the students served by SM-MUSD.

2. How can we gauge the district's performance? The briefing explains the methods used to compare SM-MUSD with other districts so judgments can be made about its relative standing.

3. What are SM-MUSD's resources? Starting with inputs, I present information about some of the available resources, both human and financial, that the district can draw upon.

4. How are these resources used? The next section presents information that is relevant to the delivery of educational services. As noted above, there is very little data about curriculum and instruction. Most of the information I present focuses on how financial resources are used and how extensively secondary students participate in selected educational program offerings.

5. What outcomes are achieved? This section includes information about student attainment, including test results and other measures of outcome.

6. What other information would be useful to have? Before concluding, I discuss some of the shortcomings of this presentation as a rich description of the district.

7. What have we learned? Finally, I review the main findings and think about next steps.

Enrollment Has Grown, But Student Ethnicity Has Changed Little

Students

Enrollment and Ethnicity in SM-MUSD

OTHER
ASIAN
WHITE
HISPANIC
BLACK

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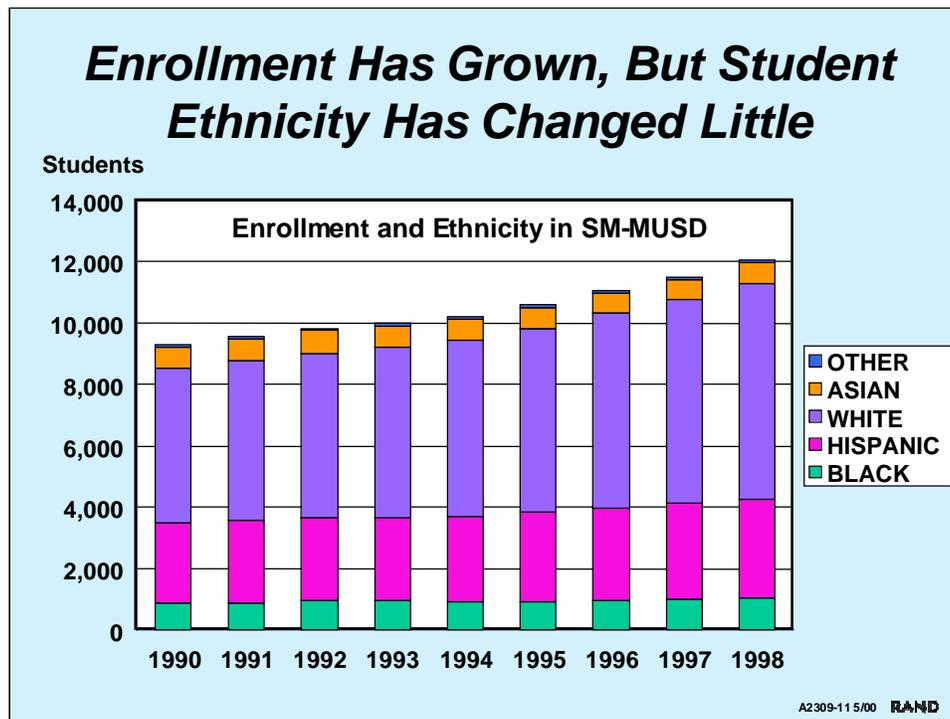
Our starting place for looking at the district is its students. During the past decade, enrollment in SM-MUSD has been rising steadily. As of 1998-99, the district had more than 12,000 students. However, the ethnic composition of the students has remained remarkably stable. Other than a gradual growth in the number of white students, the composition of the district has changed little in the past 10 years.

Explanation of Terms

The "other" category includes American Indian/Alaskan Native, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students. The "Hispanic" category includes all Hispanic or Latino students. The "black" category includes all African-American students, and the "white" category includes white, non-Hispanic students.

Source: CBEDS, School Information Form; data are available at http://www.cde. ca.gov/demographics/files/cbedshome.htm#cbeds.

Other SM-MUSD Student Demographics Have Changed Little
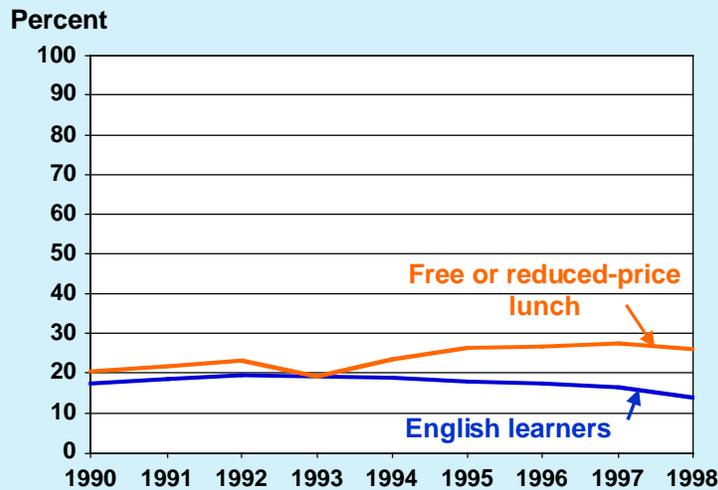
Over the past decade, the percentage of students who receive free or reduced-price lunches has risen gradually while the percentage who are English learners has fallen gradually. Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches is based on family-income level, so this measure provides an indicator of the prevalence of students from low-income families.

Explanation of Terms

Both lines in this graph show district-wide percentages. The presentation does not describe variations by area within the district.

Participation in the voluntary federal free or reduced-price lunch program is based on the income of the child's parent or guardian.

English learners include students who report a primary language other than English and who have not demonstrated adequate English language skills based on state-approved oral language assessments.

Source: CBEDS. English learner enrollment data are drawn from the Home Language Survey, and are available at http://www.cde.ca.gov/demographics/files/ Cbedshome. htm#cbeds. The free or reduced-price lunch data are available at http://www.cde.ca.gov/demographics/files/afdc.htm.

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By "gauging the district performance" I mean presenting information that allows judgments to be made. In particular, the performance of SM-MUSD can be illuminated by comparison to other districts. I developed three different comparisons to provide a range of useful perspectives.

The first comparison is between SM-MUSD and districts that are similar in size and in terms of the ethnicity, family income, and language status of their students. This comparison reveals how SM-MUSD is doing among districts that can be considered to be its peers.

A comparison between SM-MUSD and those districts that have the highest achievement scores in the state offers a second view of the relative performance of SM-MUSD. It suggests how SM-MUSD differs from districts producing exemplary outcomes.

Third, a comparison between SM-MUSD and Los Angeles County as a whole places Santa Monica-Malibu in context within the surrounding metropolitan area. In addition, Los Angeles County is so large that average statistics here are quite similar to averages for the state of California as a whole.

Which Districts Are Similar to Santa Monica-Malibu? (1998-99)

	Total Enrollment	% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch	% English Learners
SM-MUSD	**12,000**	**26**	**14**
Bonita	10,200	24	3
Burbank	14,900	33	21
Carlsbad	8,300	25	12
Claremont	6,600	27	9
Culver City	6,000	38	19
Los Angeles County	1,618,000	61	35

A2309-14 5/00 RAND

The five districts I identified that most resemble SM-MUSD are Bonita and Claremont in northeast L.A. County; Burbank, in the San Fernando Valley; Carlsbad in San Diego County; and Culver City, immediately southeast of Santa Monica.

The choice of these districts was based on two factors: size (total student enrollment) and student demographics, including family income, English language fluency, and ethnicity. Size was the first variable I used in selecting peer districts because size affects almost all administrative functions within a school district. Districts varying greatly in size cannot be said to function with the same set of challenges. District size varies considerably in California, and to have any comparison set at all I had to include districts whose total enrollment ranged from about 50 percent of SM-MUSD's to districts whose enrollment was about 125 percent of SM-MUSD's enrollment.

After identifying districts that were similar in size, I then used student demographics to refine the choice. Ethnicity was the next filter (see next slide); then I matched on free and reduced-price lunch eligibility and language status.

This slide shows the size, free and reduced-price lunch eligibility, and language status data for the five districts that were most similar to SM-MUSD.
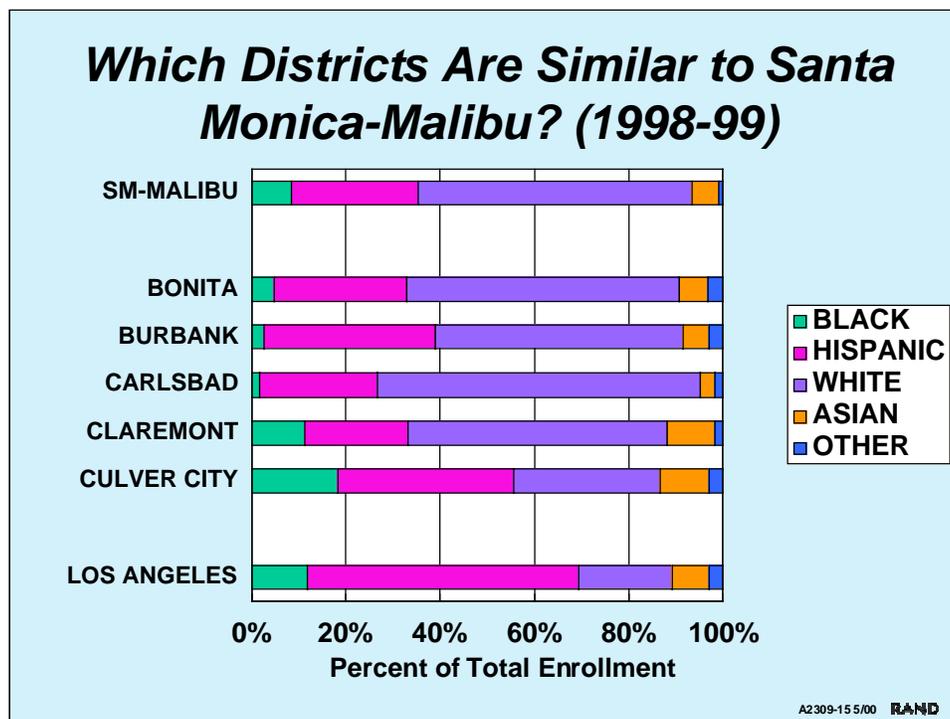
Explanation of Terms

Participation in the voluntary federal free or reduced-price lunch program is based on the income of the child's parent or guardian.

English learners include students who report a primary language other than English. In addition, these students do not have the English language skills that are measured by state-approved oral language assessments.

Total enrollment figures are rounded to the nearest 100.

Source: CBEDS, School Information Form; data are available at: http://data1.cde.ca. gov/dataquest.

Which Districts Are Similar to Santa Monica-Malibu? (1998-99)

Percent of Total Enrollment

Districts (top to bottom): SM-MALIBU, BONITA, BURBANK, CARLSBAD, CLAREMONT, CULVER CITY, LOS ANGELES

Legend: BLACK, HISPANIC, WHITE, ASIAN, OTHER

A2309-15 5/00 RAND

These five districts are also much like SM-MUSD in terms of student ethnicity. Although these districts do not match SM-MUSD exactly in terms of student ethnicity, they are quite similar when compared to other districts.

Note that the ethnic breakdown for L.A. County students looks very different from that of SM-MUSD or of the similar districts.

Explanation of Terms

The "other" category includes American Indian/Alaskan Native, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students as well as students who claimed multiple ethnic backgrounds.* The "Hispanic" category includes Hispanic or Latino students. The "black" category includes African-American students, and the "white" category includes white, non-Hispanic students.

Source: CBEDS, School Information Form; data are available at http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

*Multiple responses to ethnicity questions were first allowed in 1998-1999.

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What Are California's High-Achieving School Districts Like? (1998-99)

	Total Enrollment	% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch	% English Learners
SM-MUSD	12,000	26	14
Palo Alto	9,800	7	5
Palos Verdes	9,600	2	12
Piedmont	2,700	0.1	2
San Marino	3,100	0.7	6

A2309-16 5/00 RAND

The second comparison set consists of those districts whose students scored highest on the Academic Performance Index (API) for 1998-99. The API is based entirely on SAT-9 scores, the standardized achievement test taken by all California students in grades 2-11. (API score ranges for all the comparison districts are displayed on page 45.)

The districts are Piedmont, a city within the borders of Oakland; Palo Alto, located on the San Francisco peninsula; Palos Verdes, southwest of Santa Monica; and San Marino, near Pasadena.

These high-achieving districts differ from SM-MUSD in terms of size, family income and English-language fluency. They have few low-income families and few non-native English speakers.

Explanation of Terms

Districts were selected on the basis of API scores. Only unified districts were included. I calculated separate weighted API averages for elementary, middle, and high schools within each district. In these calculations, the school APIs were weighted by the number of students who took the SAT-9 test. Next, a combined rank for each district was
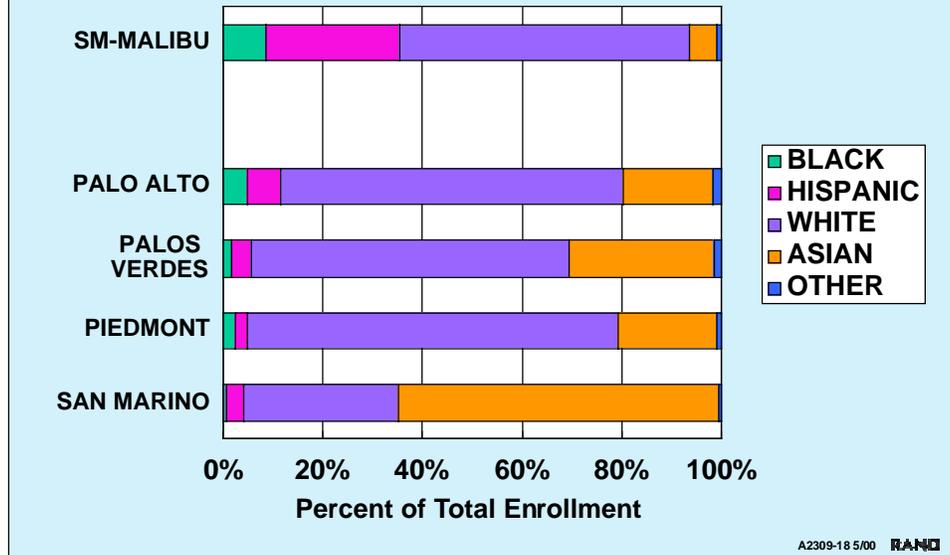
calculated by taking the average rank across school types for each district. The top four districts with at least one school of each school type were selected.

Selection into the federal free or reduced-price lunch program is based on the income of the child's parent or guardian.

English learners include students who report a primary language other than English. In addition, these students do not have the English language skills that are defined by state-approved oral language assessments.

What Are California's High-Achieving School Districts Like? (1998-99)

Percent of Total Enrollment

Legend: BLACK, HISPANIC, WHITE, ASIAN, OTHER

Districts: SM-MALIBU, PALO ALTO, PALOS VERDES, PIEDMONT, SAN MARINO

A2309-18 5/00 RAND

High-achieving districts differ considerably from SM-MUSD in terms of student ethnicity, as well. Generally, they have more Asian and white students and fewer black and Hispanic students.

Explanation of Terms

The "other" category includes American Indian/Alaskan Native, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students as well as students who claimed multiple ethnic backgrounds.* The "Hispanic" category includes Hispanic or Latino students. The "black" category includes African-American students, and the "white" category includes white, non-Hispanic students.

Source: CBEDS, School Information Form; data are available at: http://data1. cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

*Multiple responses to ethnicity questions were first allowed in 1998-1999.

Outline

- **Whom does SM-MUSD serve?**
- **How can we gauge the district's performance?**
- **What are the district's resources?**
- **How are these resources used?**
- **What outcomes does the district achieve?**
- **What other information would be useful to have?**
- **What have we learned?**

A2309-10 5/00   RAND

Our comparison of school districts begins by looking at resources, including revenues and human resources.

Explanation of Terms

The fiscal data in this briefing have been adjusted for inflation to 1999 dollars.

School districts organize their revenue into funds, which can be thought of as checking accounts. The money in each fund comes from particular sources and is designated for particular uses, or expenditures. Spending restrictions are often very complex. The general fund is the largest fund and typically contains about 80 to 90 percent of district revenues, and it constitutes between 90 and 97 percent of the expenditures that are described in this briefing. The *revenue* data reported here—as in many California school finance reports—contain only revenues to the the general fund.

Source: The inflation adjustment factor is the CPI-U from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; it is available from RAND California at http://www.ca.rand.org/stats/economics/inflation.html.

The presentation of resources begins with a brief detour to discuss school financing in California. This is a complicated topic, but it is important to understand what has happened to school finance in California during the past two or three decades.

Over the last 30 years, the state has engaged in a process of equalizing school funding and making it independent of local community wealth. Beginning in the 1970s, the court decisions and laws highlighted here began to change the way that school districts were financed. One of the consequences of these events has been to narrow differences between districts in terms of the basic revenues they receive. Another consequence has been to remove school funding from local control. Currently, citizens can do very little to change the bulk of funding for their local schools.

Base Revenue Limit Levels Fit in Narrow Band for State's Unified Districts

Graph reproduced courtesy of EdSource

Millions of students (y-axis: 0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0)

Dollars Per Student (ADA), 1998-99 (x-axis: $4,000, $4,500, $5,000, $5,500, $6,000, $6,500)
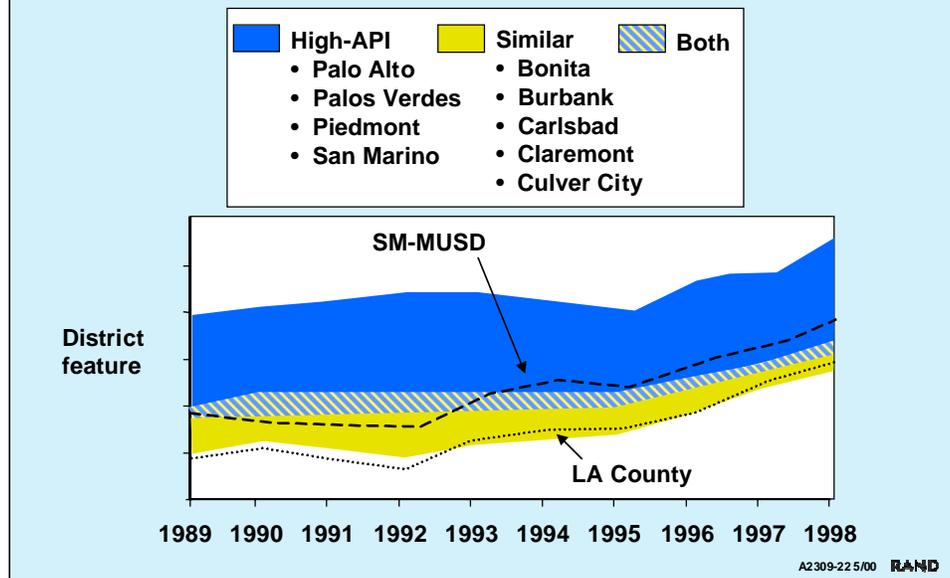
A2309-21 5/00 RAND
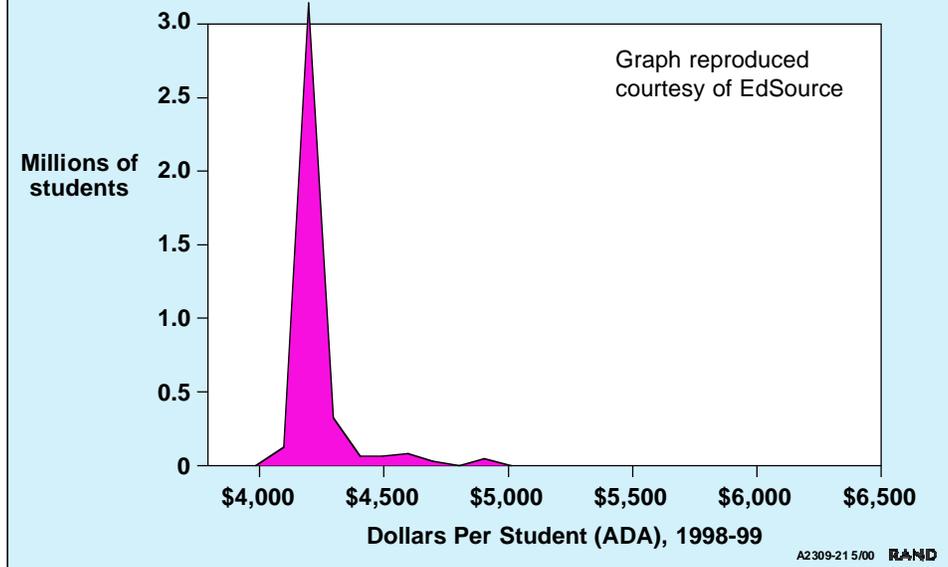
The base revenue limit is the starting place for determining state funding for school districts in California. It includes revenues for general educational services but excludes revenues for categorical programs as well as local revenues. Most California school districts now receive similar amounts of base revenue per pupil as a consequence of school finance reform. The graph illustrates how well equalization has been accomplished across the state. Roughly 90 percent of school districts fall within a base revenue range of $4300 ± $200 per pupil. Variations still exist in the base revenue limit due to historical differences that were not entirely eliminated. As will be shown on later slides, variations in total revenues also exist due to categorical funding—monies targeted to serve specific needs, such as Title I and state categorical funds.

Explanation of Terms

ADA is the Average Daily Attendance of students in California schools.

Source: EdSource. The graph is available in "Understanding School Finance: California's Complex K-12 System" (2000) and can be ordered from the EdSource website at www.edsource.org.
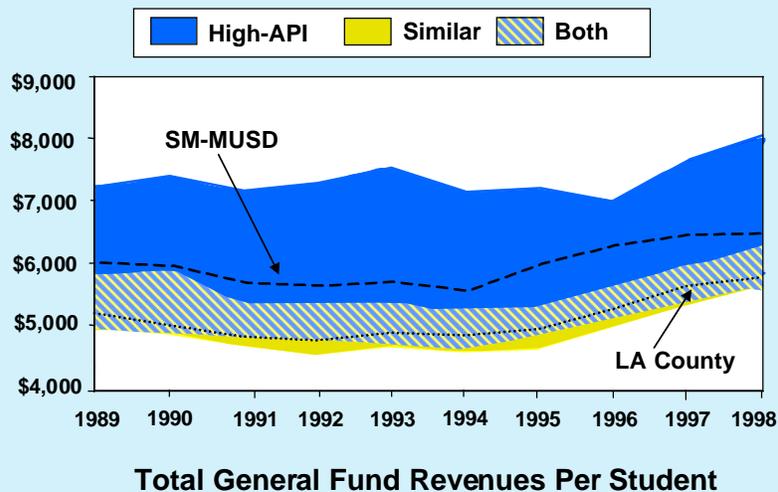
How We Show Comparisons Between School Districts

High-API	Similar	Both
• Palo Alto	• Bonita	
• Palos Verdes	• Burbank	
• Piedmont	• Carlsbad	
• San Marino	• Claremont	
	• Culver City	

SM-MUSD

District feature

LA County

1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998

A2309-22 5/00 RAND

This graph shows how most of the comparisons in this profile will be presented. The five "similar" districts will be represented by a yellow band. The width of the band represents the range of values among these five districts. The four "high-API" districts are represented by a blue band. The width of this band shows the range of values among these four districts. The dotted line is the average for L.A. County, and the dashed line represents Santa Monica-Malibu.

The striped area illustrates where the two bands overlap. The fact that they overlap means that the two groups of schools are similar with respect to the feature being described.

The axis along the bottom shows the years in question.

The axis on the side represents the feature being examined—revenues, teachers' experience, etc.

Santa Monica-Malibu Revenues Are Above Similar Districts'

Legend: High-API (blue) | Similar (yellow) | Both (striped)

Chart: *Total General Fund Revenues Per Student*

Y-axis: $4,000 to $9,000. X-axis: 1989 to 1998.
Labels: SM-MUSD, LA County

A2309-23 5/00   RAND

We begin by looking at total general fund revenue per student. This includes base revenue and categorical funds, but excludes capital funds and a number of other small miscellaneous funds. Categorical funds cover about 80 separate programs including special education, class size reduction, child nutrition, Title I, vocational education, and many others. Such funding has been increasing, and it now accounts for more than one-third of total state funding for schools.

In this case, the yellow band is largely below the blue band, which means that high-API districts have greater amounts of revenue. There is also greater variation in general fund revenue among high-API districts, with some receiving considerably more resources on a per-pupil basis. The graph also shows that SM-MUSD receives more resources on a per-pupil basis from the state than the similar districts and than some of the high-API districts.

Explanation of Terms

This is the only chart where the general fund is the only fund used.

Sources: RAND California at http://www.ca.rand.org/stats/education/schoolfin.det.html. Raw data are from California Department of Education; data are available at ftp://ftp.cde.ca.gov/fiscal/j200_data/. See School District Revenue and Expenditure Report (Form J-200).

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Santa Monica-Malibu Teachers Are Highly Experienced

Years of teaching

Legend: **High-API** | **Similar** | **Both**

SM-MUSD

LA County

25
20
15
10

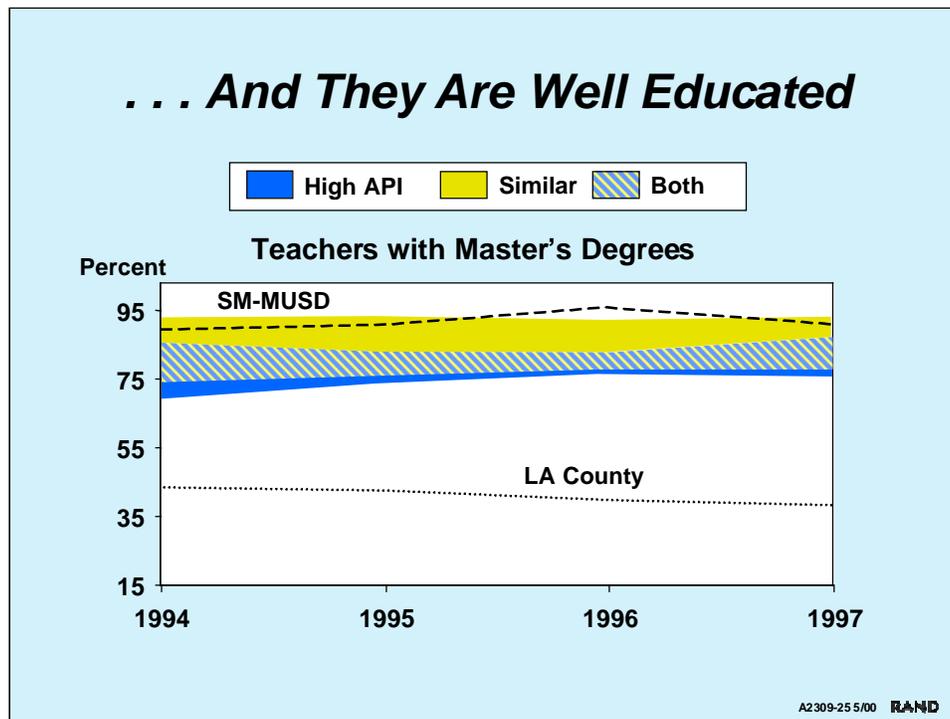1994   1995   1996   1997

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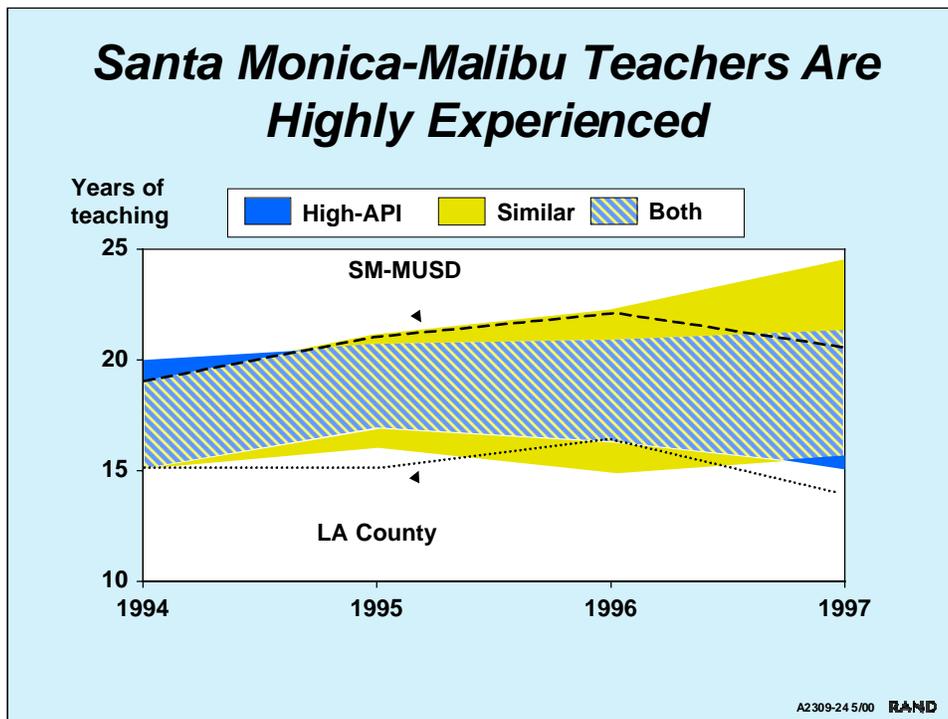
Teachers can also be thought of as a resource that the district has at its command. This graph shows the average teaching experience of SM-MUSD teachers as well as teachers in the comparison districts.

The bands overlap to a large extent, indicating that teaching experience among both sets of districts is similar. However, SM-MUSD teachers are at the top of both bands, while LA County as a whole is at the bottom.

. . . And They Are Well Educated

High API Similar Both

Teachers with Master's Degrees

Percent

SM-MUSD

95

75

55

LA County

35

15

1994   1995   1996   1997

A2309-25 5/00 RAND

Districts reward teachers who have advanced degrees, indicating that they value additional education. This graph shows the percentage of teachers with Master's degrees, which is another indicator of the human resources the district draws upon. SM-MUSD teachers are better educated than teachers in the similar districts, the high-API districts, or the county as a whole.

Outline

- **Whom does SM-MUSD serve?**
- **How can we gauge the district's performance?**
- **What are the district's resources?**
- **How are these resources used?**
- **What outcomes does the district achieve?**
- **What other information would be useful to have?**
- **What have we learned?**

A2309-10 5/00 RAND

The next section of the school district profile examines how the district uses resources to achieve its goals. A thorough profile would include a rich description of the district's curriculum and instructional program, as well as its instructional support services. Unfortunately, very little information about curriculum, instruction, and other school activities is available in the public record.

However, funding information for major categories of service (e.g., administrative expenditures, expenditures for teachers, and expenditures for support services) is available. The next nine slides provide glimpses into resource use.

Information about some aspects of secondary-level educational programs follows the expenditure data.

Explanation of Terms

The fiscal data in this briefing have been adjusted for inflation to 1999 dollars.

In order to provide a more complete picture of school *expenditures*, I report on expenditures from several funds in addition to those from the

general fund. Expenditure data in this presentation include monies from the following group of funds: general (201), cafeteria fund/account, special revenue (203), child development (204), and cafeteria fund/account, enterprise (231). This group excludes funds that are earmarked for capital expenditures because capital expenditures are often made in large "lumps" when districts buy expensive items (such as land and buildings) during individual years.

Expenditures from the general fund typically constitute between 90 and 97 percent of expenditures from this group of funds.

Source: The inflation adjustment factor is the CPI-U from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; it is available from RAND California at http://www.ca.rand.org/stats/economics/ inflation.html.

Santa Monica-Malibu and Other Districts Spend Similar Shares on Administrative Salaries
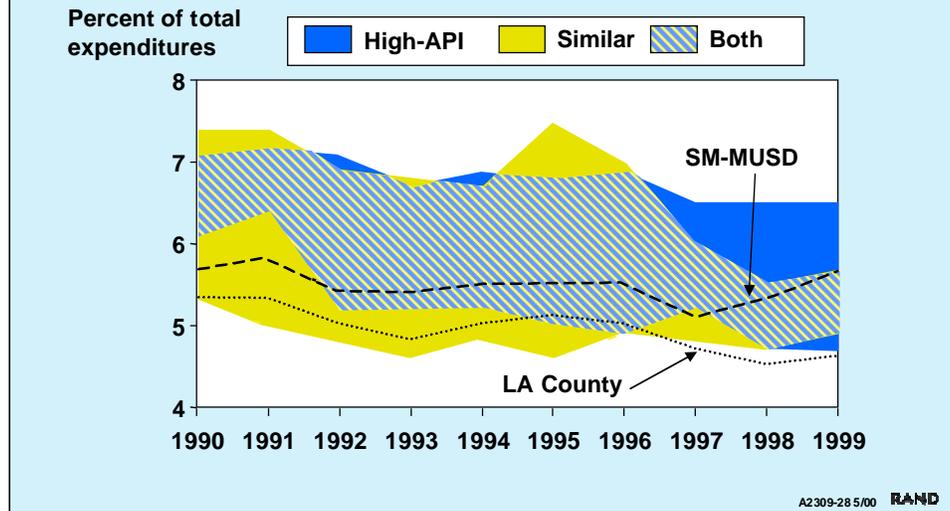
In general, administrative salaries comprise only 5-7 percent of total expenditures in the comparison districts, and these percentages have been declining slowly during the past decade. The large overlap between similar and high-API districts shows that proportional expenditures for administrative salaries are quite similar in both sets of districts. Historically, SM-MUSD's expenditures for administrators have been relatively low compared to both sets of districts, but in the past couple of years they have increased to the mid-range for similar and high-API districts.

Because administrative expenditures reflect salaries for a small number of people, they are somewhat volatile; changes in one or two individuals can have a large impact on the district totals.

Explanation of Terms

The salaries described here include salary expenditures for both certified and classified staff in administrative positions. This group includes certified administrative staff such as school administrators, supervisors, and superintendents as well as classified staff assigned to administrative duties. Benefits are not included in salary expenditures, but they are included in total expenditures.

Santa Monica-Malibu and Similar Districts Spends Like Shares on Teachers' Salaries
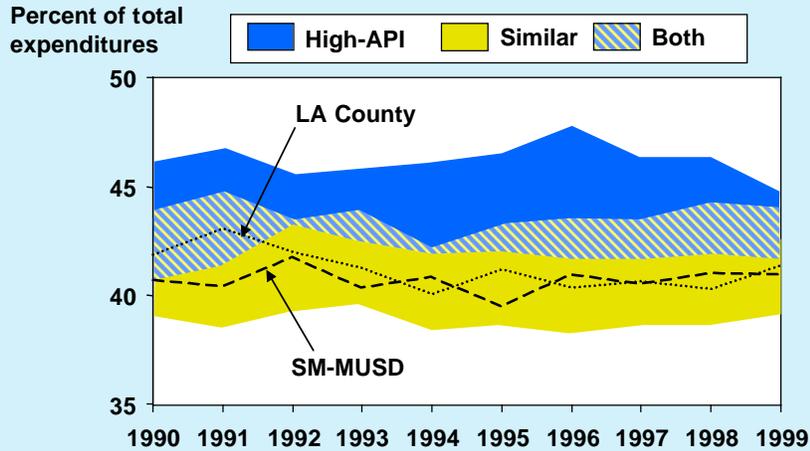
Most districts spend more money on teacher salaries than any other single category of expenditures. This graph shows the percentage of total expenditures used for teacher salaries. The blue band lies partially above the yellow band, indicating that some high-API districts spend more on teachers. SM-MUSD's expenditures lie in the middle of those of similar districts, and they fall below the high-API districts' expenditures.

Explanation of Terms

Benefits are not included in salary expenditures, but are included in total expenditures.

Sources: RAND California at http://www.ca.rand.org/stats/education/schoolfin. det.html. Raw data are from California Department of Education; data are available at ftp://ftp.cde.ca.gov/fiscal/j200_data/. See School District Revenue and Expenditure Report (Form J-200), object code 1100.

SM-MUSD's Teacher Salaries Are Average, But Its Beginning Teachers Do Better Than Others
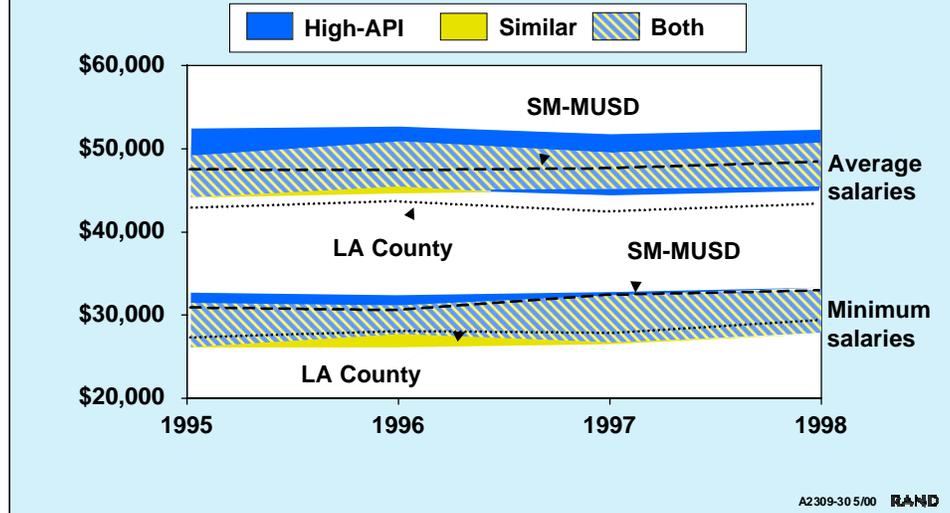
Another way to look at expenditures for teachers is to look at the salary schedules. This chart shows two aspects of teacher salaries, the minimum salary paid to new teachers and the average salary paid to the typical teacher.

Minimum salaries for SM-MUSD teachers are at the top of the ranges for similar districts and high-API districts, suggesting that that SM-MUSD would be quite competitive in the market for new teachers.

Average SM-MUSD's teacher salaries fall in the middle of the similar and high-API districts' average salaries.

It is also interesting to note the large degree of overlap between teacher salaries in similar and high-API districts.

Sources: RAND California at http://www.ca.rand.org/stats/education/schoolfin. det.html. Raw data are from California Department of Education; data are available at ftp://ftp.cde.ca.gov/fiscal/j90_data/. See Form J-90, Salary and Benefit Schedule for the Certificated Bargaining Unit, California Department of Education.

Santa Monica-Malibu and Other Districts Spend Similar Shares on Counselors' Salaries
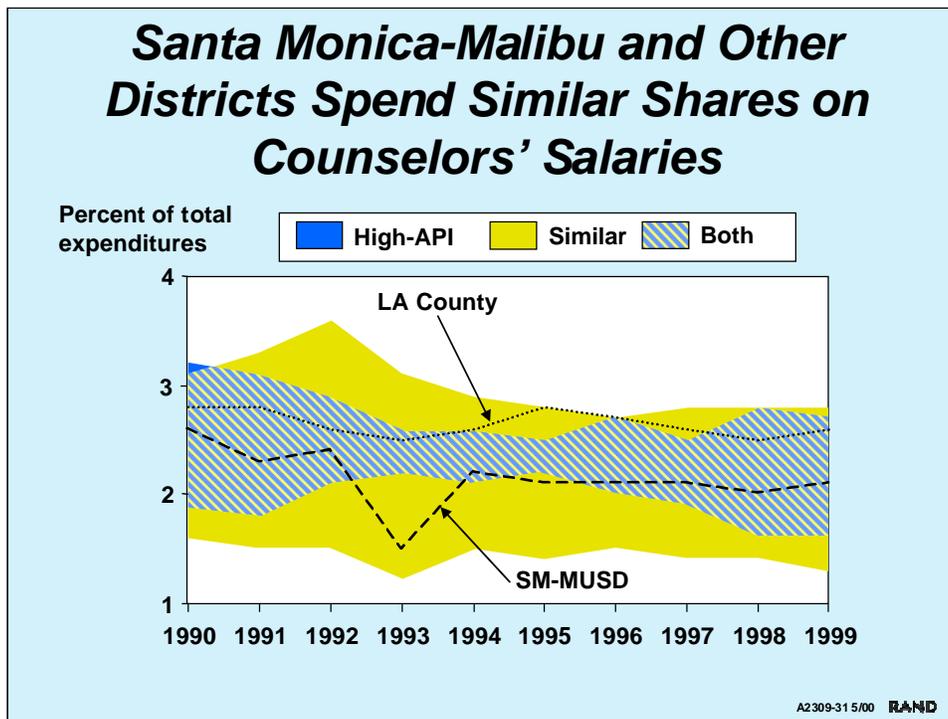
Counselors can provide an important educational support function, but districts vary widely in their use of counselors. The graph shows that the range of proportional expenditures for counselors is much greater in the similar districts than in the high-API districts. In general, SM-MUSD spends an average amount on salaries for counselors. I do not know why salaries for guidance, welfare, and attendance personnel fell by just over 50 percent in 1993-94. However, they returned to earlier levels the next year.

Explanation of Terms

This category includes salaries for guidance, welfare, attendance, physical and mental health personnel. Benefits are not included as a salary expenditure, but they are included in total expenditures.

Sources: RAND California at http://www.ca.rand.org/stats/education/ schoolfin.det.html. Raw data are from California Department of Education; data are available at ftp://ftp.cde.ca.gov/fiscal/j200_data/. See School District Revenue and Expenditure Report (Form J-200), object codes 1500 and 1600.

The Share Santa Monica-Malibu Spends on Classroom Aides Reaches the High End of Other Districts'
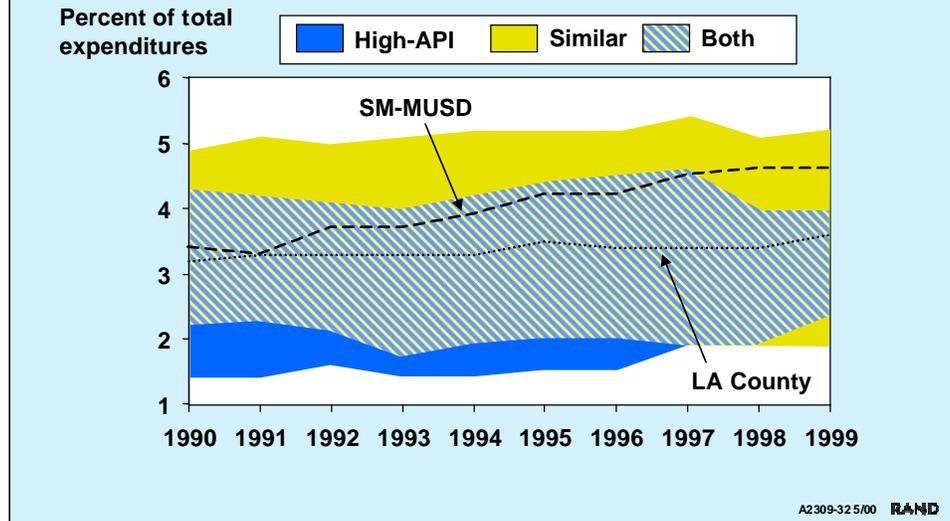
Classroom aides provide direct support to teachers in a variety of ways. This graph shows considerable variation among districts in the percentage of expenditures devoted to classroom aides. Some spend as little as 1-2 percent of expenditures on aides, while others spend 5 percent or more.

Although there is considerable overlap, the yellow band lies above the blue band, showing that the similar districts tend to spend more on aide salaries than the high-API districts. SM-MUSD spends relatively more on aides than most of its peer districts and most high-API districts.

Explanation of Terms

Funding for aides came from both the general and child development funds. Benefits are not included as a salary expenditure, but they are included in total expenditures.

SM-MUSD Spends a Smaller Share on Books and Instructional Materials
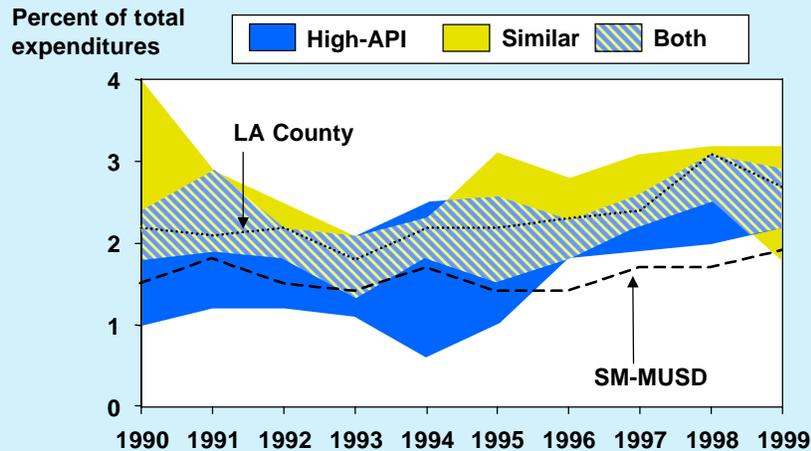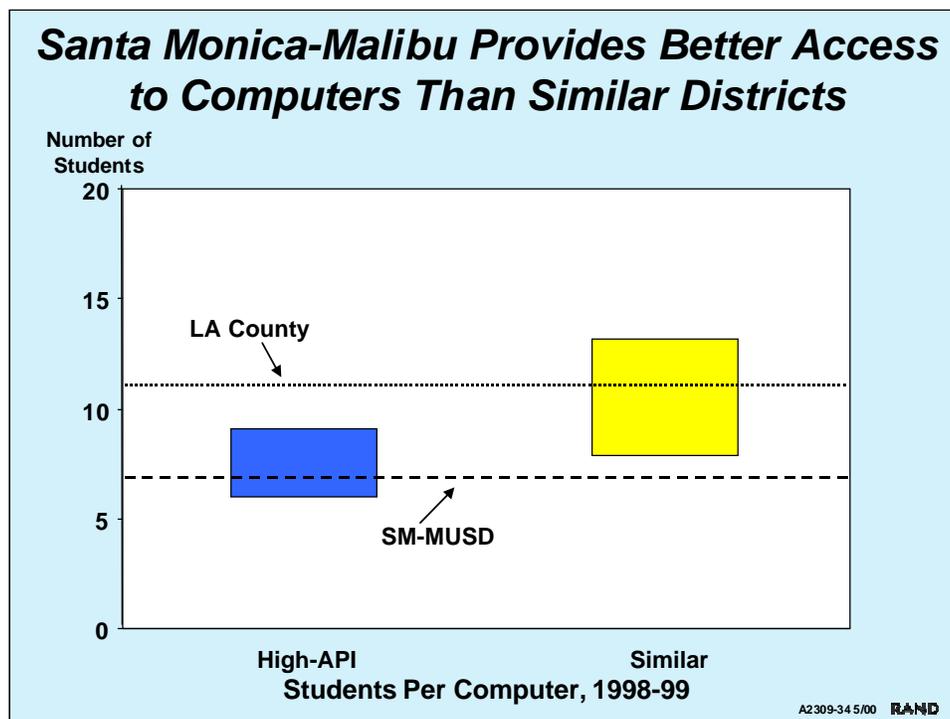
Instructional materials are an essential feature of education, but expenditures on textbooks, books and other materials are episodic. Districts do not purchase textbooks or supplementary books at a uniform annual pace, but in spurts when state funds become available and new textbooks are approved. The graph shows considerable annual variation in these proportional expenditures. For the past few years, SM-MUSD has spent less on books and instructional materials on a percentage basis than the comparison districts and less than the county average.

Explanation of Terms

This graph includes expenditures for textbooks, books other than textbooks, instructional materials, and supplies.

Santa Monica-Malibu Provides Better Access to Computers Than Similar Districts

Number of Students

LA County

SM-MUSD

High-API   Similar

Students Per Computer, 1998-99

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A few aspects of curriculum and instruction can be described from available data. The next six slides describe selected elements of the districts' instructional programs.

This slide shows the average number of students per computer in 1998-99. (This graph can be misleading because a lower number is better.) Providing more computers means that there are fewer students per computer. SM-MUSD's recent investment in technology is clearly visible here. The district has fewer students per computer than any of the similar districts and than most of the high-API districts.

Explanation of Terms

The number of students per computer is the total number of students divided by the number of computers (owned or leased by the school) that are used for instructional purposes.

Source: CBEDS, School Information Form; the data are available at http://data1. cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

Secondary Class Size Lies Between High-Achieving and Similar Districts'

Average Secondary Class Size,1998-99

A2309-35 5/00 RAND
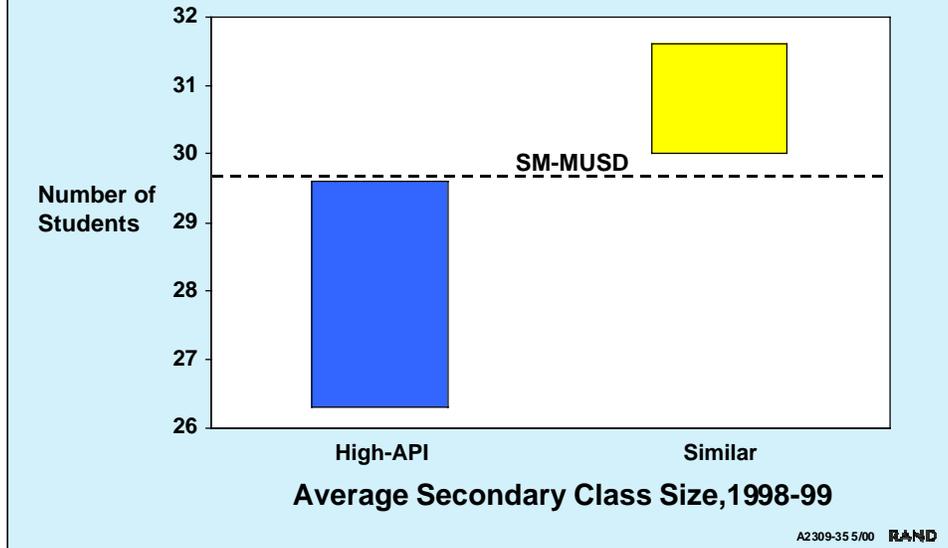
Class size is another important feature of instruction. At the elementary level, class sizes are quite similar because of the class-size reduction program. However, considerable difference exists in class size at the secondary level. In fact, the similar and high-API districts do not overlap at all on average secondary class size. Lower class size at the secondary level is one of the distinguishing features of the high-API districts. SM-MUSD falls in between the groups; its average class size is lower than the similar districts' but not as low as the high-API districts'.

Explanation of Terms

Average class size is the total class enrollment divided by the number of classes. The calculation does not include classes with zero enrollment, classes with more than 50 students, continuing or alternative schools, special education courses, other instruction-related assignments, or class hours for department chairs.

The average secondary class size for L.A. County was not available.

Source: CBEDS, School Information Form; the data are available at http://data1/cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

At the secondary level, we can also compare districts in terms of course offerings and course-taking. The next four slides present information about courses in foreign language, art, career preparation and Advanced Placement.

Because the number of foreign languages offered at high schools is influenced by the size of the school, this slide compares the number of languages taught at the *largest* high school in each district. Santa Monica High School is the larger of the two high schools in SM-MUSD and offers courses in five foreign languages. The other, Malibu High School, has less than half as many students and offers only Spanish. Santa Monica High School's foreign language offerings are on par with the largest of the high-achieving districts.
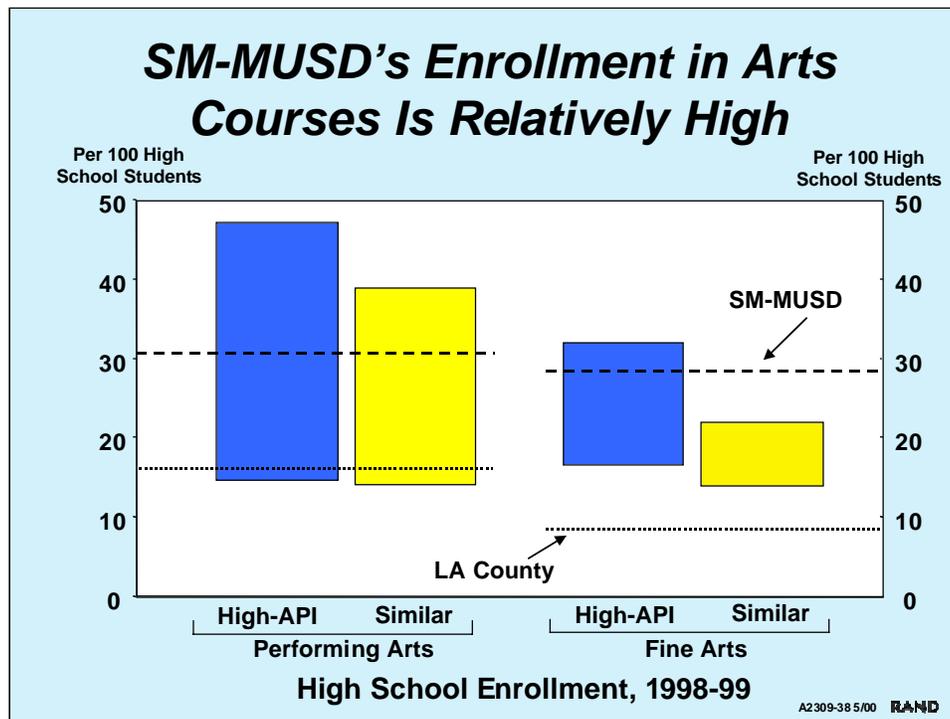
The table on the following page lists the largest high school in each district and its enrollment. The enrollment for both Santa Monica and Malibu High Schools are included for the sake of comparison.

District	High School	Enrollment
1. SM-MUSD	Santa Monica High	3,106
2. SM-MUSD	Malibu High School	1,126

High-Achieving Districts

District	High School	Enrollment
3. Palo Alto USD	Gunn High	1,508
4. Palos Verdes USD	Palos Verdes Peninsula High	2,912
5. Piedmont City USD	Piedmont High	847
6. San Marino USD	San Marino High	1,143

Similar Districts

District	High School	Enrollment
7. Bonita USD	Bonita High	1,663
8. Burbank USD	Burbank High	2,135
9. Carlsbad USD	Carlsbad High	2,446
10. Claremont USD	Claremont High	2,440
11. Culver City USD	Culver City Senior High	1,695

Explanation of Terms

The language classes described here do not include courses targeted to native speakers of foreign languages.

SM-MUSD's Enrollment in Arts Courses Is Relatively High

Per 100 High School Students

High School Enrollment, 1998-99

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Access to art classes is one measure of the breadth of the secondary curriculum. This chart separates performing arts from fine arts and shows the number of art class enrollments per 100 students in each category.
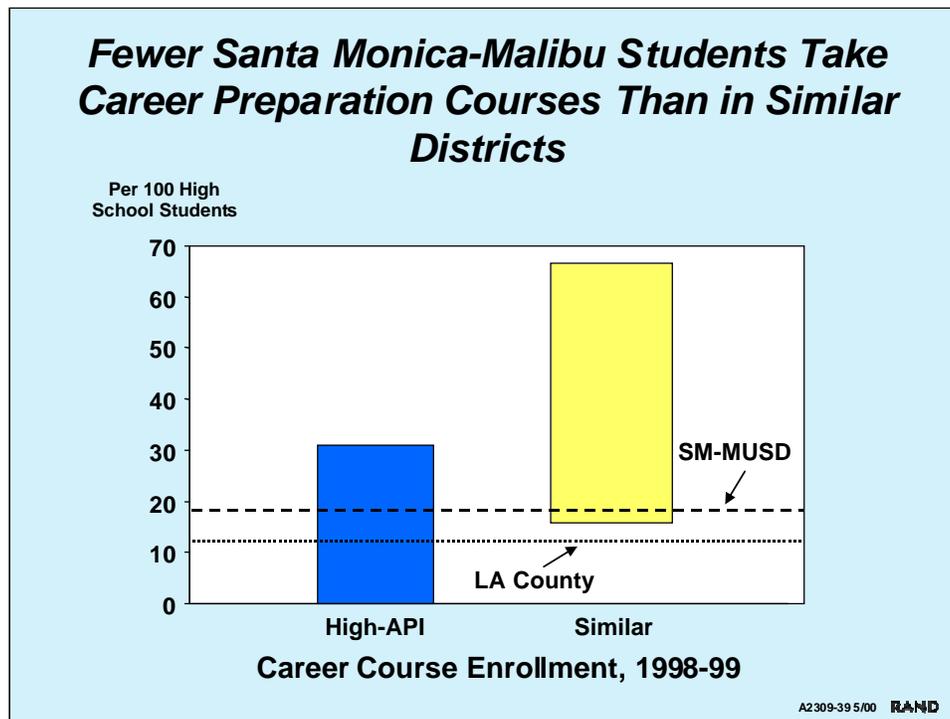
In 1998-99, SM-MUSD enrollment in both types of art classes was higher than in most or all similar districts and within the range of high-achieving districts. The performing arts bands overlap a great deal, and SM-MUSD is above the middle. The fine arts bands overlap less, and SM-MUSD is near the top.

Explanation of Terms

Performing arts courses include dance, drama/theater, and music (including bands and orchestras). Fine arts courses include drawing, painting, and ceramics. Advanced placement courses in the arts are included in these counts.

Because these numbers represent course enrollments, a student who is enrolled in two or more art classes will be counted multiple times.

Source: CBEDS, Course Enrollments by District report; course code ranges are 2300- 2398 and 2900-2998 (performing arts), and 2800-2898 (fine arts). The data are available at http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

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Fewer Santa Monica-Malibu Students Take Career Preparation Courses Than in Similar Districts

Per 100 High School Students

Career Course Enrollment, 1998-99

Many high school students depend on their school for career preparation. This chart shows the number of career preparation course enrollments per 100 high school students. Fewer SM-MUSD students enroll in career preparation courses than in most of the similar districts, and SM-MUSD falls mid-range for high-API districts.
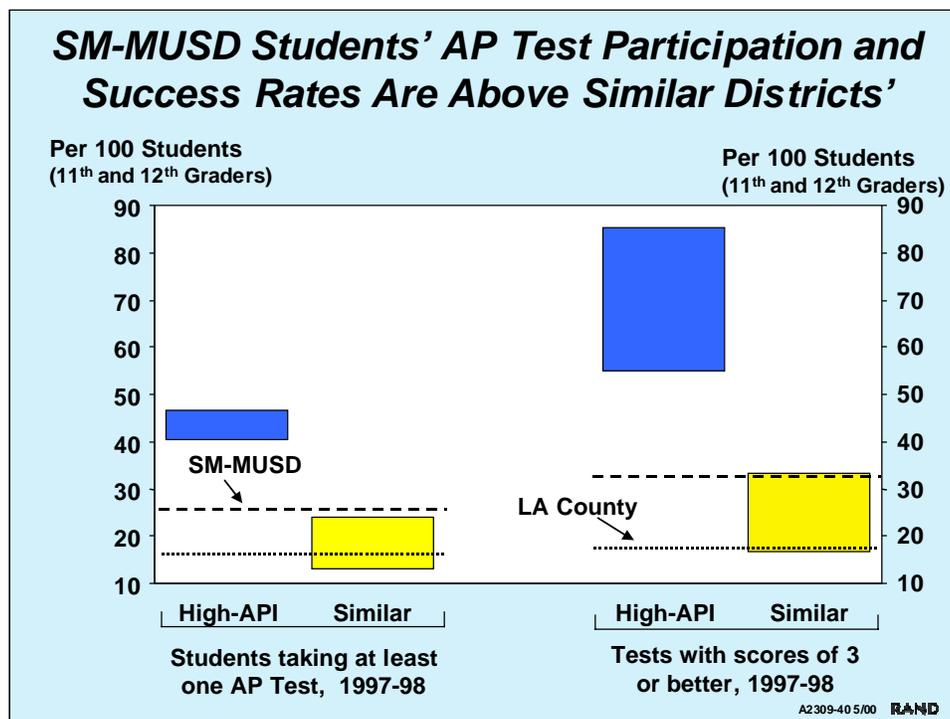
Explanation of Terms

This category includes vocational courses such as agricultural education, business education (marketing and office), consumer home economics education, home economics-related occupations, health careers, and industrial and technological education.

It does not include courses taken at the Regional Occupational Program (ROP).

Because these numbers represent course enrollments, a student who is enrolled in two or more career preparation classes will be counted multiple times.

Source: CBEDs, Course Enrollments by District report; course code ranges are 4000-4900 and 5500-5970. The data are available at http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest.

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SM-MUSD Students' AP Test Participation and Success Rates Are Above Similar Districts'

Advanced Placement courses are often the most rigorous courses offered in high school. The left side of the graph indicates how many eleventh- and twelfth-grade students out of 100 took at least one AP test in 1997-98. This number can be interpreted as a measure of the breadth of the accelerated college preparation program.

The right side of the graph indicates how many AP tests were completed with a score of 3 or higher per 100 students in 1997-98. AP test scores of 3 or higher are accepted for credit at many universities. This number may be considered a measure of the depth of the accelerated college preparation program.

In comparison to similar districts, SM-MUSD does well on both measures, but the district is far below the high-API districts.

Explanation of Terms

The number of students who took an AP test is calculated by dividing the number of test takers by the total number of enrolled 11th and 12th graders and then multiplying the result by 100.

The number of tests with scores 3 or better is the total number of AP tests with a score of 3, 4, or 5, divided by the total number of enrolled 11th and 12th graders and then multiplied by 100.

The following slides summarize information about student outcomes, including achievement test scores, dropout rates, and the percentage of graduates completing the course requirements for admission to the University of California and California State University systems.

Unfortunately, there are many other important outcomes for which no information is available, such as how well the schools prepare students to be effective citizens or the nature of students' post-secondary activities.

Santa Monica-Malibu Has Lowered Its Dropout Rate to That of High-Achieving Districts
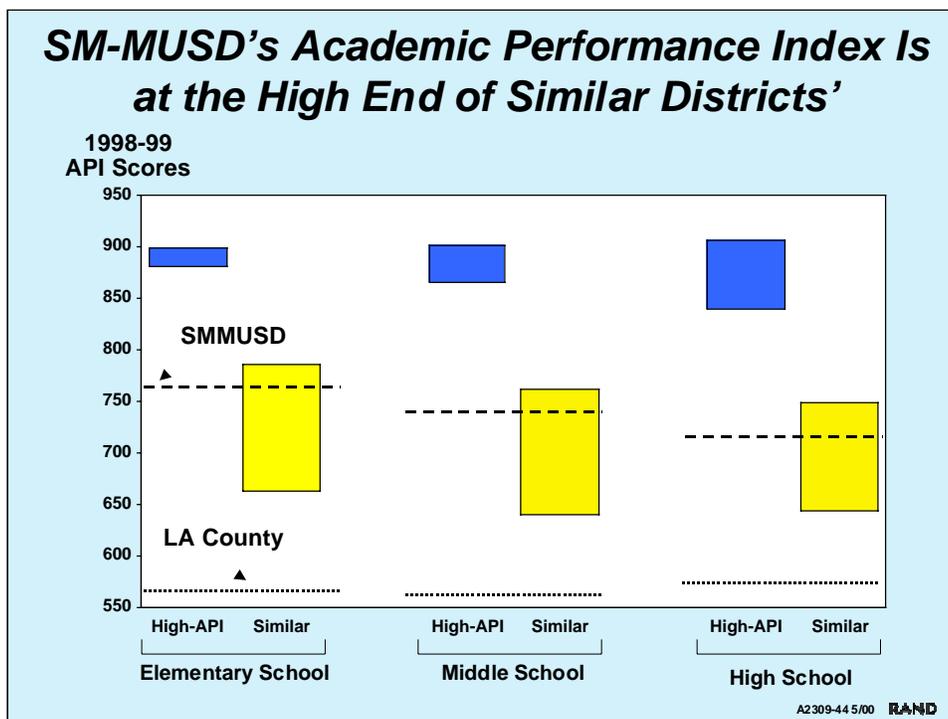
One-Year Dropout Rate

A2309-43 5/00 RAND
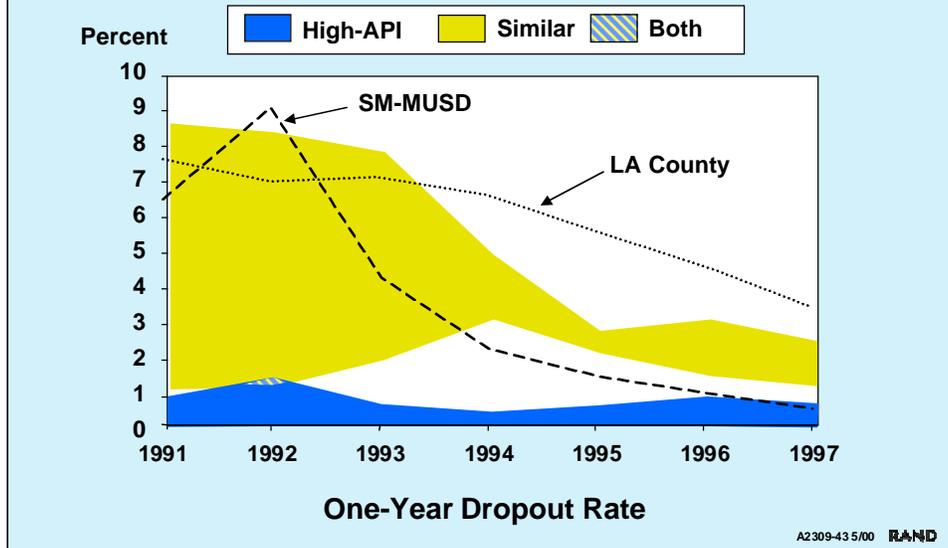
The last decade has witnessed steep declines in one-year dropout rates across the state, and SM-MUSD experienced a more marked drop than the other districts we examined. By 1997, SM-MUSD's dropout rate had fallen to that of the high-achieving districts. Even more impressive was that it fell from a 1992 rate higher than all other districts in this comparison.

Explanation of Terms

The CDE calculates the one-year dropout rate as the number of 9th- 12th grade dropouts divided by the total 9th-12th grade enrollment during a single year and multiplied by 100.

Source: CBEDs, School Information Form. The data are available at http://www.cde. ca.gov/demographics/files/cbedshome.htm#cbeds.

SM-MUSD's Academic Performance Index Is at the High End of Similar Districts'

The Academic Performance Index is a composite indicator computed by the state department of education based on students' scores on the Stanford-9 test. It summarizes the achievement of all students in grades 2-11. This indicator shows a marked difference between similar and high-API districts. In this case, SM-MUSD falls at the high end of the range for similar districts.

Note: It is not appropriate to compare elementary school, middle school, and high school API scores directly because the index includes different subjects at each level and the subjects are weighted differently.

Explanation of Terms

A district's rating on the Academic Performance Index (API) is based entirely on SAT-9 scores, the standardized achievement test taken by all California students in grades 2-11.

These are the weighted averages of all elementary, middle, and high schools in the districts.

Source: SAT-9 test score files, California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. The data are available at: http://star.cde.ca.gov.

More SM-MUSD Graduates Are Completing UC/CSU Admission Requirements Than Graduates of Similar Districts
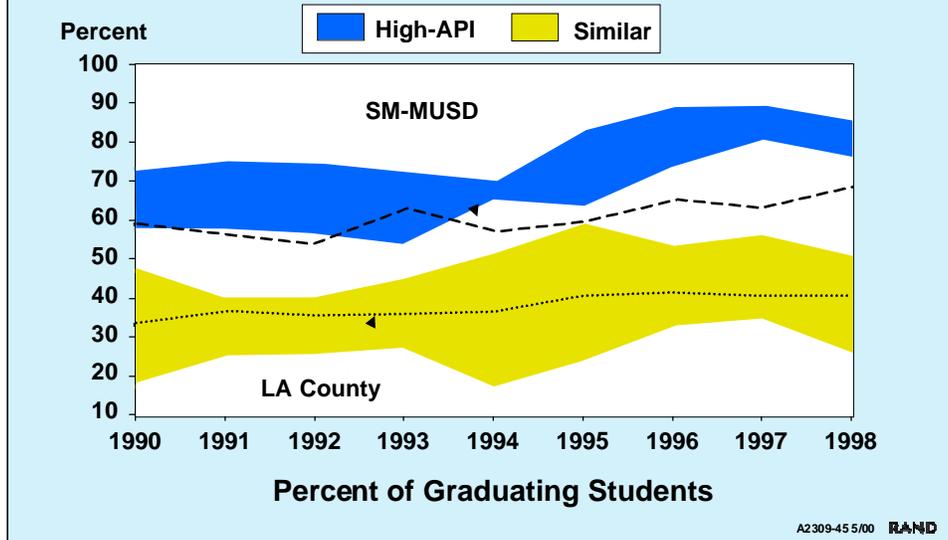
The proportion of graduating students completing admission requirements to the University of California and California State University systems marks another strong difference between similar districts and high-API districts. During the last decade, SM-MUSD has fallen between the two groups on this indicator, though its is nearing the range of high-API districts.

Explanation of Terms

Admission requirements for the University of California and California State University are the same.

To calculate this percentage I divided the number of graduates who completed the UC/CSU course requirements by the total number of graduates and multiplied by 100.
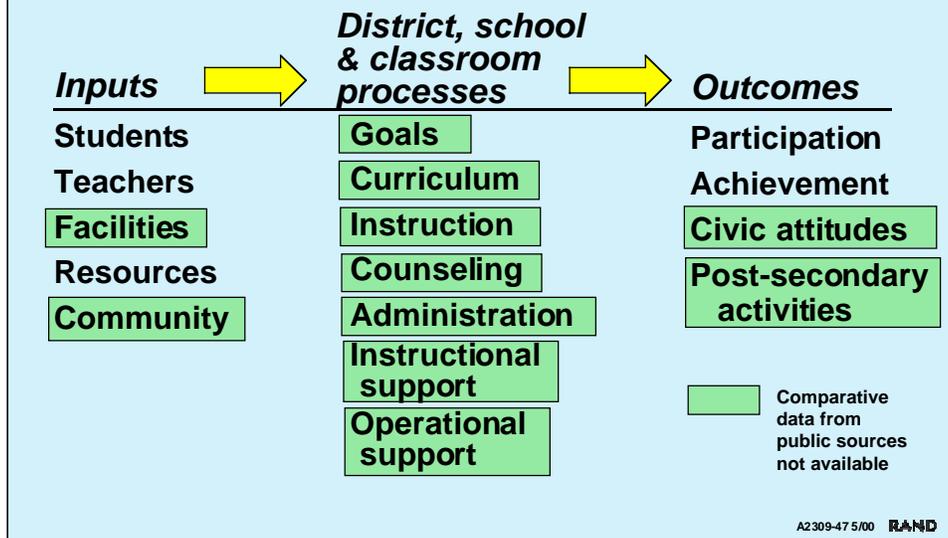
Outline

- **Whom does SM-MUSD serve?**
- **How can we gauge the district's performance?**
- **What are the district's resources?**
- **How are these resources used?**
- **What outcomes does the district achieve?**
- **What other information would be useful to have?**
- **What have we learned?**

A2309-10 5/00 RAND

The briefing concludes with a discussion of the types of information we would like to have but are not available, a summary of the findings, and a look forward.

Little Information Available About Many Key Components

Inputs → *District, school & classroom processes* → *Outcomes*

Inputs	District, school & classroom processes	Outcomes
Students	Goals	Participation
Teachers	Curriculum	Achievement
Facilities	Instruction	Civic attitudes
Resources	Counseling	Post-secondary activities
Community	Administration	
	Instructional support	
	Operational support	

Comparative data from public sources not available

A2309-47 5/00 RAND

The shaded green boxes in this slide highlight the features of the district that I have not described very well. These include most district, school, and classroom processes. An ideal profile of a school district would include a much richer description of these core functions.

Furthermore, the information I did provide on inputs and outcomes is primarily about quantity; very little information about quality is included in this profile. It would be helpful to have more information on the quality of the schools' programs, but it is simply not available from public sources or in a comparable form.

These data present a partial picture of the relative performance of SM-MUSD in comparison to other school districts. In the areas we were able to examine, the district is doing relatively well compared to similar districts. None of the data presented raise a "red flag" about serious problems relative to these districts. However, both SM-MUSD and the similar districts have a long way to go to match the outcomes of the high-achieving districts.

Yet, as noted previously, this portrayal is incomplete. It left whole areas unexamined, and it focused primarily on quantity rather than quality.

More could be done to examine other features of the district. Although it is not easy to judge the quality of district services in an objective manner, it is possible. It requires additional effort and creativity, because most answers will not be found in the state data archives. The district and/or local citizens could gather information about curriculum, instruction, support services, and other features of the system if they chose to focus their energies on these questions. A first step in this process may be to select a few areas to study. I would begin by examining the district's goals and identifying those that have the greatest priority. It would be possible to organize a data collection effort around these questions. It might also be possible to recruit other communities to participate in a similar analysis of their own schools, providing useful comparative information for both groups.