

WORKING P A P E R

Options for Changing the Governance System of the Los Angeles Unified School District

Presented to the Presidents' Joint
Commission on LAUSD
Governance

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RAND researchers prepared this report for the Commission and it does not necessarily reflect this body's opinions. The Commission will issue a separate report with its recommendations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2005, the Los Angeles City Council approved a resolution to establish a 30 member joint commission to address Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD's) governance structure and system. The structure of LAUSD governance has not changed for many years, and there is grave concern about the performance of over 700,000 K-12 students attending LAUSD schools.¹

THE COMMISSION

The Commission is organized for one year, charged with the task of examining the LAUSD's current governance structure. Its mission is:

To determine the governance structure for the LAUSD, which best aligns to the 21st century demands of academic rigor and achievement for all students, equality of educational opportunity, maximum and efficient use of government funds and resources including provisions for school safety, parent and community engagement, and accountability for results.

The Commission was created at the initiative of City Council Member President Alex Padilla and then School Board President Jose Huizar.² Members of the Los Angeles City Council, members of the Board of Education of the LAUSD, and the mayors of cities served by the LAUSD appointed the 30 commission members.

The Commission is co-chaired by former Los Angeles Police Commissioner David Cunningham, III (appointed by Padilla), and former LAUSD Deputy Superintendent Maria Casillas (appointed by Huizar), who

¹ The Los Angeles City Council's authority in LAUSD matters can be found in the California Constitution Article XI, Section 5, and Article IX, Section 16. It specifically provides the City authority over issues of governance, elections, compensation, size of the board and terms of board members, as well as redistricting and annexation or consolidation.

² Jose Huizar, who served two terms as President of the Board of Education of Los Angeles Unified School District (July 2003-June 2005), became a city councilman as of November 29, 2005.

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now is president of "Families in Schools," a nonprofit organization that involves parents in their children's education. Appendix A provides a list of all Commissioners. Commission meetings are open to the public and held the second and fourth Thursday of each month, with some variation. The first meeting took place on July 13th.

RAND was asked to provide research support and assistance to the Commission. RAND carried out several functions:

- Meeting with the co-chairs to structure the meetings and ensure that the Commissioners received useful information
- Conducting literature reviews and targeted interviews with LAUSD and other district officials
- Providing Commissioners with background information and literature
- Identifying and recruiting local and national speakers
- Attending Commission meetings and following up on research requests
- Attending, documenting, and summarizing community forums

In order to proactively generate additional public input, community input meetings were held in each of the seven board member districts. These meetings were not designed to serve as a representation of opinions throughout the District. Instead, they served to elicit ideas. Community members spoke about mayoral involvement, district break-up, board compensation and composition, as well as the right of non-citizens to vote for School Board members.

The Commission began its work by recognizing that governance might not influence student achievement directly. Therefore, Commissioners decided to educate themselves about how governance influences other drivers of achievement. Five drivers were selected: curriculum, finance, family/community engagement, personnel, and school operations, which include issues like facilities and safety.

The Commission held one meeting for each of the five drivers. Speakers and panelists were asked to explore these five drivers at each meeting. For each topic, national experts provided testimony, followed by local employees, constituents, and stakeholders who can discuss how

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the issues play out at the LAUSD. All of the speakers were asked to discuss how the topic, such as personnel, relates to student achievement, as well as how governance affects that particular topic. After these five drivers were explored, a series of meetings focused solely on governance. Members of the public also provided comment at these meetings.

REPORT PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

This report is written for the Commissioners, but it does not reflect the opinion of the Commission. It is based on the testimony presented before the Commission as well as a supplementary literature review. The main purpose of this report is to summarize options for this body to consider in order to improve the LAUSD's governance system. The options presented are those that have been broached by the speakers, community participants, or the Commissioners themselves. RAND is not suggesting additional options. Neither are we providing recommendations to the Commission on which of the options they should consider or select. This report is meant to help guide Commissioners' discussions and analysis.

This report is a draft. The final report will be amended to include Commissioners' feedback on this version and to reflect any new testimony. This draft has not been formally edited or peer reviewed. The final version will undergo both editing and peer review and will be delivered before the end of the Commission's tenure.

The next section summarizes the challenges facing the LAUSD that led to the creation of this Commission and presents the summarized governance options. Further information on each option can be found in the appendices, which include excerpts from experts' testimony, examples of how these options have worked in other districts, and results of a literature review on each option.

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Appendix B presents details on the LAUSD, the challenges it is facing, and some responses to these challenges. Appendix C provides a history of governance of the LAUSD, going back to its founding, and discusses the current LAUSD School Board. An analysis of the relationship between governance and student achievement is presented in Appendix D. Appendix E presents information on past attempts to reduce the size of the LAUSD, as well as general literature on district size. Appendix F discusses options for governing the district, including mayoral control and the status quo. In Appendix G, we provide options on board characteristics that are relevant if the Commission chooses to maintain the LAUSD School Board. Appendix H discusses issues related to the locus of control. Regardless of other options chosen, the Commission may want to make recommendations about where authority lies, specifically considering trade-offs between district and school-level decisionmaking. Finally, in Appendix I, we present information on school choice options, focusing on charter schools and districts.

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2. OPTIONS FOR GOVERNANCE CHANGE

BACKGROUND

Throughout the first five months of the Commission's work, it has heard from experts and from the community and has engaged in many important discussions about the future of the LAUSD. This report summarizes options for changing the LAUSD's governance structure, based on these testimonies and deliberations and supplemented by a background review of relevant literature. While this report does not advocate for one option over another, it does present pros and cons for each option and the implications for implementation, including preliminary legal implications.³

It is important to note that most of the options discussed here lack the full backing of research findings to firmly guide the Commission in one direction or another. There is little evidence on whether or not a particular type of governance structure can improve conditions for learning. However, studies linking school board characteristics to student achievement have concluded that the following nine principles of governance may positively influence student performance:

1. Develop a clear sense of the board's role and responsibilities
2. Establish a clear vision for the District
3. Focus on policy
4. Resist micromanaging
5. Foster a constructive relationship with the Superintendent
6. Set high expectations for students
7. Focus on academic achievement (which should include ensuring that qualified teachers are hired, that schools are safe, that families are engaged in schools, and that curriculum is properly implemented in the classroom)
8. Evaluate and monitor policy implementation
9. Engage in professional development

³ A separate document with full legal implications is being prepared by the City Attorney's office.

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It may be useful for Commissioners to keep these principles in mind when considering governance options. The lack of existing research, or even solid evidence of how options have played out in other districts, should not necessarily hinder the Commission. Policymakers are often called to action without the benefit of irrefutable evidence to guide them.

Before presenting the options, the next section discusses some of the challenges facing the LAUSD that led to the creation of this Commission.

THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Urban school districts unarguably present some of the greatest challenges of today's schooling in the United States. These districts are more diverse - both ethnically and socio-economically - than their rural or suburban counterparts. As various achievement indicators have begun to increase for the nation as a whole, poor and minority students have largely been bypassed, and early gains in reducing achievement gaps have not been maintained (Hess 2005).

The schools in the LAUSD are facing severe challenges. A 2001 poll found that half of LAUSD parents surveyed gave a grade of "C" or worse to their public school (Los Angeles County Alliance for Student Achievement, 2001, see also LA Times, 2000). Many of the parents attending the Commission's community meetings during the fall of 2005 expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the LAUSD. Parents also lamented their lack of options for affecting policy at the school and District level. In addition to the lack of parental engagement in schools, the LAUSD suffers from achievement, progression, personnel, space, safety, and financial problems.

Achievement

LAUSD students score in the bottom third on national standardized tests (NAEP, 2005). The base score of LAUSD schools on the state's Academic Performance Index (API) also remains below the state average.⁴ Based on the State's achievement test, only 23 percent of all LAUSD students were achieving at the proficient or advanced level (meeting or exceeding state standards) in English and 25 percent in math in 2003-04, compared with a 36 percent state average in English and a 34 percent state average in math (LAUSD Accountability Report Card 2003-04). Although recent progress has been made, the District maintains generally low achievement scores and the achievement gap between the LAUSD's white and African American and Latino students is quite high (Ross, 2005).

Progression

The District also has high dropout and low graduation rates. Dropout rates are more than twice as high as the state average, and according to CBEDS data, in 2002-03 LAUSD's graduation rate was 20 percent lower than those in other districts within the state of California. The LAUSD loses the bulk of its students between their freshman and sophomore years -- including 17,000 Latino students who never return for 10th grade (Radcliffe 2005).

There is also some troubling evidence that while the state and federal pressures for accountability are aimed at improving student achievement of all students, the accountability measures may have led to

⁴ The Academic Performance Index (API) is the cornerstone of California's Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (PSAA). The purpose of the API is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools, and monitor progress over time. The API is a numeric index that ranges from a low of 200 to a high of 1000 and is based on the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. Test results are weighted and a formula is applied to determine the school's API score.

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schools actively discharging low-performing students (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005).

In addition, student mobility presents a challenge. The incidence of student mobility⁵ is particularly high within large, predominantly minority, urban school districts with high concentrations of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Ream, 2004, p.41). In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the high school transiency rate (the proportion of students who entered after school started or left before school ended) exceeded 35% across the district for the 2001-2002 school year (LAUSD, 2004). Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that 80% of non-promotional school changes for a cohort of urban Los Angeles area Latino students were within the same district. Types of student mobility include family initiated-student mobility (e.g., family moves for employment reasons), student-initiated student mobility,⁶ and school-initiated student mobility (e.g., opportunity transfers)⁷ (see Ream, 2004).

Personnel

Although the LAUSD teaching force has become more qualified since 2003, there are still critical shortages of math, science, and special education teachers (Hirsch, 2005). In 2003-04 there were almost 11,000 teachers in the LAUSD that were considered mis-assigned, meaning that a certificated employee was placed in a teaching or service position for

⁵ Robert Ream defines student mobility as "the practice of students making non-promotional school changes" (Ream 2004). Student mobility, in this case, occurs when a student enrolls in the first grade level of a school and then transfers to another school before graduating from that school (Rumberger 2003).

⁶ A large percentage of student mobility at the secondary level - nearly 50% in California- is the result of student-initiated requests to change schools (Rumberger, Larson, Ream and Palardy 1999).

⁷ Opportunity Transfer (OT) is a school-initiated disciplinary action to move a student from one school to another.

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which the employee did not hold a legally recognized certificate (LAUSD District Accountability Card, 2003-04).

In addition, teacher quality varies across schools. While Nationally Board Certified teachers are equitably distributed across LAUSD schools, low achieving high schools still lack experienced, credentialed teachers (Hirsch, 2005). Nearly 2/3 of Provisional Interns⁸ teach in the lowest performing schools (Ross, 2005). Some argue that this inequality is due to collective bargaining agreements that provide teachers with higher seniority with more transfer options (see, e.g., Griffith, 2005). Experienced teachers with credentials are particularly less likely to work in low-achieving middle schools.

On average, California spends approximately \$140,000 less on teacher salaries for a student who attends the highest poverty schools from the time of kindergarten through high school than on the K-12 teachers of a student in the most affluent schools (Education Trust-West, 2005). This demonstrates that more experienced and costly teachers are concentrated in schools where parents have a higher socio-economic status and students are likely to be higher performing.

Space

In addition to the inequalities in personnel, overcrowding of schools and their poor maintenance presents an enormous problem for the LAUSD. No other district requires as many children, close to 16,000, to

⁸ At the request of a school district a Provisional Intern Permit may be issued. It allows an employing agency to hire an individual who has not met subject matter competence. Individuals must hold bachelors degrees, have completed defined amounts of coursework in the subject they are to teach, passed CBEST and character identification. Participating employers must provide support to the Permit Holder and must provide assistance in achieving subject matter competence. This permit may be renewed one time for an additional year (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/intern/intern-FAQ.html>).

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ride buses every day because of overcrowding. In addition to busing, the LAUSD has implemented a year-round, multi-track schedule. This approach lengthens the school day, shortens class time, and requires students and teachers to rotate over the year, forcing some to be in classes in the summer months (Korman and Rosta, 2003).

Some Los Angeles residents responded to school overcrowding by suing for improvements in 1992. The state settled one lawsuit by agreeing to thin out densely occupied classrooms. In 1997, school district voters passed Proposition BB, which provided \$2.4 billion, mostly for repairs and modernization (Korman and Rosta, 2003). Since then, several bond measures have been passed to relieve the overcrowding of LAUSD schools.

Safety

The LAUSD also faces serious safety concerns. In the 2003-2004 school year, there were 646 counts of weapons possessions in schools, 345 arrests for robbery /extortion, and 545 arrests for loitering /trespassing (Boghossian and Soddors, 2005). These numbers are higher than they were in previous years. Also, in 2003-04, there were 80,160 suspensions and 726 expulsions. While the suspensions are down from the previous years, there were more expulsions in 2003-04 than in the year before.

According to Los Angeles Police Department statistics, there were three sex offenses, 17 robberies, 25 batteries, and 11 assaults with a deadly weapon at just one LAUSD High School in 2004. Similarly, students of another LAUSD high school suffered five sex offenses, 16 assaults with a deadly weapon, 25 batteries, and 65 property crimes. Seven campuses across Los Angeles had racially motivated brawls in the 2003-2004 school year (Snell, 2005).

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Finances

The LAUSD is facing several financial constraints as well, including increased budget and payroll concerns. The growing numbers of special needs students as well as students learning English⁹ in LAUSD schools result in higher costs.

In addition, the LAUSD offers lifetime benefits for teachers, which presents a tremendous financial burden on the school district.^{10,11} For the last 40 years, the LAUSD has funded retiree health benefits on a "pay as you go" basis, with no money set aside for future obligations. Although the actual value may increase or decrease due to fluctuations in interest rate, employee turnover, retirement rate etc., the liability created by these costs has been estimated at \$4.9 billion (Fullerton, 2005).

The LAUSD is also concerned about declining enrollment due to demographic changes and rising popularity of charter schools. While student enrollment increased through school year 2002-03, it has declined slightly since then (CDE, 2005). State funding is tied to enrollment, and if enrollment continues to decline, fixed overhead and the costs of pre-existing liabilities will need to be spread over fewer students (Fullerton, 2005).

⁹ In 1986 approximately 25% of total number of students enrolled in LAUSD schools were English language learners. In 2004- 2005 approximately 45% of LAUSD's students were English language learners (LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research, R30 Language Census Report 2004-2005).

¹⁰ 70 other schools districts in California also offer lifetime health benefits for teachers.

¹¹ Health and welfare expenditures for retirees consumed approximately 2.4% of the District's General Fund expenditure in 1997-98, approximately 3.7 % in 2005-05 and is expected to reach 4.3 % in 2007-08 (CAFR, Towers and Perrin and Benefits Office, quoted by Fullerton, 2005).

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Two further challenges prevent fully aligning resources to a coherent educational strategy. First, the high numbers of categorical funding sources create significant complexity. Second, in order to demonstrate financial stability to rating agencies, the LAUSD has deliberately reduced its ending balances over the past two years. Smaller ending balances lessen financial flexibility (Fullerton, 2005).

OPTIONS FOR CHANGING THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The problems described above provided the motivation for establishing the Commission. It was created to consider governance options that would improve performance, increase parental engagement with schools, and ensure accountability throughout the system. Although most of the options it has discussed to date are directly related to the School Board, it is important to note that the Board is acting in a resource-constrained environment in which the State determines many of its current duties. Many of the options of interest to the Commission may require changing the State's education code in order to implement them.

The following table presents a summary of options for changing LAUSD governance, based on discussions held during Commission meetings and community forums to date. These options concern:

- District size
- Control of the District
- Board characteristics and selection mechanisms
- Locus of control
- School choice

They do not represent the universe of possible governance change options and they will be updated as the Commission discusses them and generates new ideas. Although this table does not present an option for "no change," that is certainly a choice available to the Commissioners.

Table 1: Summary of Options for Changing Governance

Option	Pros	Cons	Further Information & Implications
<p>Divide District into smaller independent districts</p>	<p>Smaller districts could be more responsive to local communities May lead to improved academic achievement May lead to increased parental ownership of schools and therefore better accountability</p>	<p>Could take many years, resources to determine boundaries Could take many years, resources to determine how to apportion responsibilities for bonded indebtedness, employee lifetime benefits, and other shared costs Lose opportunities for redistributing funds</p>	<p>Would need to comply with State Education Code specifying desegregation and funding equalization</p>
<p><i>Control of the District</i></p>			
<p>Full mayoral control</p>	<p>May lead to better leveraging of citywide resources May lead to stronger citywide coalitions One point of accountability May lead to improved academic achievement May lead to greater flexibility in collective bargaining agreements</p>	<p>Other cities within LAUSD may oppose giving power to LA mayor Citizens lose access to local representatives</p>	<p>Need to consider cities outside of LA Constitution vague about whether City or State has ultimate power to change District's governance structure If selected, further questions arise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Would there still be a school board? ■ Would the Mayor have full appointment powers or would another body select a pool of appointees? ■ Would the Mayor appoint Superintendent?

Option	Pros	Cons	Further Information & Implications
<p>Partial mayoral control</p> <p>Increased Mayoral Role</p>	<p>Could allow cities outside of IA to maintain their level of representation</p> <p>Could provide for citywide leveraging of resources and stronger citywide coalitions</p>	<p>Has failed in other districts, due to conflict between appointed and elected members, mayor's inability to execute agenda</p>	<p>Does not represent significant governance change</p> <p>Role could vary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Superintendent attends Mayor's staff meetings ■ School budget becomes part of the city budget ■ City manages back-office activities ■ City requires its departments to work with District ■ Develop strategies to help recruit teachers ■ Create collaborative advisory group: Mayor, Superintendent, business owners, universities, presidents, etc.
<p>Replace Board with a policy or advisory board</p>	<p>May allow board to focus on important issues</p> <p>Could guard against micromanaging</p>	<p>Either Superintendent, Mayor or another body (e.g., a State board) would need to be held accountable for some tasks that the Board now performs - making changes could be time and resource intensive</p>	<p>Would require changes to the State Education Code to allow for School Boards with limited duties</p>

Option	Pros	Cons	Further Information & Implications
Dismantle the Board	Some critics argue that current system is ineffective and anachronistic	May reduce representation unless other options were created for voter influence Creating other structures for accountability may be time and resource intensive	Changes to State Ed Code required
<i>Change Board Characteristics</i>			
Increase compensation	Provide board members with the opportunity to devote themselves solely to the board May expand pool of persons willing to serve		Almost 2/3 of board members in US receive no salary for their service; only 3% receive \$10,000 or more In large districts, most members are unpaid, with about 25% reporting earnings of \$10,000 or more per year Changes to State Ed Code required
Increase number of board members	May make it easier for board members to respond to constituents and schools	May make it harder for the board to come to a consensus May require more time and attention from Superintendent	LAUSD board members represent about 635,000 residents and 120 schools NYC has the largest board (13 members) with each representing 615,000 residents If 13 members, each LAUSD member would represent about 345,000 residents and 65 schools

Option	Pros	Cons	Further Information & Implications
<i>Change Selection Mechanisms</i>			
Select all or some members by at-large voting	Could broaden the focus of the board	Selecting all members district-wide could reduce the chances of electing minorities Could make it harder for those board members to know schools	Selecting all members district-wide may conflict with the Voter's Rights Act
Appoint some or all board members	Could lead to longer continuity of board members Could ensure a board comprised of individuals with specific backgrounds (parent, business owner, attorney, etc.) May lessen influence of interest groups Could eliminate use of board as political stepping stone	Reduces voter input to elective offices	Appointments could be made by the Mayor, Governor, city council, or a body created for this purpose Some argue that appointed members would face same political influence
Allow non-citizens to vote	Would allow increased participation for parents	Some residents may be opposed to increasing non-citizens' rights	California constitution states that only residents who are U.S. citizens can vote in California elections San Francisco lost a ballot initiative in 2004 to allow non-citizen parents to vote in School Board elections

Option	Pros	Cons	Further Information & Implications
<p><i>Alter the locus of control in the District</i></p> <p>Increase decentralization of authority to schools on specific decisions:</p> <p>Mission or focus</p> <p>Curriculum</p> <p>Instruction</p> <p>Budget</p> <p>Teacher recruitment, hiring, retention</p>	<p>Schools may be better able to respond to local conditions</p> <p>Schools may be able to solve problems quickly</p> <p>Changing authority structures may attract new teachers, principals</p> <p>Teachers and principals may have a sense of personal responsibility</p> <p>Some decentralized districts have improved student achievement</p> <p>Parental ownership may increase which could lead to better accountability</p>	<p>Schools may lack the capacity to be fully autonomous</p>	<p>There are several options for decentralizing, including allowing schools more autonomy as they demonstrate success all the way to implementing a fully decentralized system</p> <p>The Commission could recommend giving a cluster of schools (a high school and its feeders) autonomy and its own local governance structure</p> <p>Any type of decentralization plan may be more successful with some form of centralized oversight</p> <p>Student achievement has increased at the elementary level in some centralized systems</p>
<p>Introduce weighted student formula</p>	<p>Advocates argue that resulting funding levels are more adequate and more fair</p>	<p>May be costly to design</p> <p>May conflict with bargaining agreements</p>	<p>Resources distributed to schools based on specific needs of each student</p> <p>Would allow schools more autonomy over their budgets</p> <p>California is exploring WSF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ San Francisco in 4th year of WSF ■ LAUSD Superintendent has discussed with Board

Option	Pros	Cons	Further Information & Implications
<p>Recommend changes to union contracts</p>	<p>Could make it easier for schools to get teachers it needs</p>	<p>Contentious, perhaps arduous process that could drain resources from the classroom</p>	<p>Various mechanisms have been used to alter power relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mayoral control ■ State legislative changes
<p>Recommend collaborations and/or legally binding agreements on facilities, safety, and/or after school programming</p>	<p>Could reduce land development and use costs for the District</p> <p>Could expand opportunities for use of space</p> <p>Could improve safety</p> <p>Could expand after school programming</p>	<p>Negotiating agreements requires significant staff time</p> <p>In some joint use cases, Districts end up funding construction projects due to higher safety standards for schools</p>	<p>There are existing collaborations for land use, safety, and after school programming but speakers testified that existing arrangements are not sufficient</p> <p>The Commission may also want to explore merging the LA School Police with the LA City Police</p>

Option	Pros	Cons	Further Information & Implications
<p><i>Expand a system of choice</i></p> <p>Accelerate chartering</p>	<p>Parents are free to choose any school</p> <p>Poor performing schools may be forced to close</p> <p>Schools may be better able to respond to local conditions</p> <p>Schools may be able to solve problems more quickly</p> <p>Teachers and principals may have a sense of personal responsibility</p> <p>Parent satisfaction is generally higher in charter schools</p> <p>May lead to increased parental ownership of schools and therefore the ability of parents to hold the schools accountable</p>	<p>Actually attending a school of choice could involve long commutes</p>	<p>There are several options for expanding charter schools including, at one end, changing District policy and State law to facilitate volunteer charters and, at the other end, recommending changing the District into a charter or contract school district</p> <p>The Commission could also recommend that the cities outside of LA become charter districts in order to shrink the size of the LAUSD bureaucracy</p> <p>Research finds no significant difference in terms of student achievement</p>

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SUMMARY

As the Commission continues its important work, the task will not be easy. Existing research and experience do no point to one "best" option. There are no obvious answers to the problems facing the District. Many of the options listed above can only affect student achievement in indirect ways and any option chosen may have both intended and unintended consequences. Breaking up the district, for example, might lead to higher student achievement and greater parental engagement, but it might also divert resources to solving immense political and financial problems that could be better used to support teachers in classrooms. Political, legal, and financial costs are important variables to consider when thinking about these options.

It is likely that Commissioners will want to consider the effects of recommending two or more options. For example, the Commission could recommend a decentralized system in which local parental advisory boards serve schools, funding is distributed using a weighted formula, a policy board replaces the current School Board, a neutral body is created to conduct collective bargaining, and the Mayor directs new collaborations on facilities, safety, and after-school programming. It would be important to determine all of the intended and unintended consequences of the combined options. The options' effects may intersect in ways that would not happen if only one was implemented.

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APPENDIX A. THE COMMISSIONERS

Robert R. Barner, Ph.D.
(Council District 8)
Assistant Superintendent-
Educational Programs
Los Angeles County Office of
Education

Ed Burke
(School Board District 3)
Chief of Staff
Office of School Board Member
Jon Lauritzen

Maria A. Casillas (co-chair)
(School Board District 2)
President
Families in Schools

Dr. Yvonne Chan
(L.A. City Mayor Hahn)
Principal
Vaughn Next Century Learning
Center

Bill Clay
(School Board District 1)
General Manager (ret.)
AT&T

George Cole
(Mayors of Bell, Cudahy,
Huntington Park, Maywood and
South Gate)
President, Pro-temp
City of Bell

Jose Cornejo
(Council District 6)
Chief of Staff
Office of Councilmember Tony
Cardenas

David Cunningham, III (co-chair)
(Council District 7)
Partner
Kelly, Lytton & Vann

Maria Davila
(Mayors of Bell, Cudahy,
Huntington Park, Maywood and
South Gate)
Vice Mayor
City of South Gate

Donald L. Dear
(Mayors of Gardena, Carson and
Lomita)
Former Mayor
City of Gardena

Drew Furedi
(School Board District 4)
Partner, Strategic Partnerships
The New Teacher Project

Marqueece Harris-Dawson
(Council District 13)
Executive Director
Community Coalition

Jerry Horowitz
(Council District 12)
Principal
Byrd Middle School

Cecilia Moreno
(School Board District 7)
Community Relations
Shell Oil Company

Ramon Muniz
(Council District 1)
Program Coordinator
California State University,
Northridge

Mary Rose Ortega
(Council District 14)
Teacher, Los Angeles Unified
School District &
Board of Directors, California
Teachers Association

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Erin Pak
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CEO, Korean Health
Education, Information and
Research Center

Scott Plotkin
(Board of Education Group
Appointee)
Executive Director
California School Boards
Association

Ron Prescott
(Board of Education Group
Appointee)
Deputy Superintendent (ret.)
Los Angeles Unified School
District

Matthew S. Rodman
(Council District 11)
Managing Director
Furst Enterprises, Ltd.

Mary Rodriguez
(Council District 4)
Community and Parent Activist
L.A. City Council District 4

Julie Ruelas
(Mayors of Monterey Park, West
Hollywood and San Fernando)
Mayor
City of San Fernando

Carla Sanger
(L.A. City Mayor Hahn)
President & CEO
L.A.'s Best

Colleen Schwab
(School Board District 6)
Teacher
Los Angeles Unified School
District

Camilla Townsend
(Council District 15)
Retired Principal, LAUSD
Educational Consultant &
Executive Director, Max H. Gluck
Foundation

Howard Welinsky
(Council District 5)
Commissioner
California Post Secondary
Education Commission

Andrew Westall
(School Board District 5)
Senior Deputy
Office of Councilmember Herb J.
Wesson, Jr.

Paul White
(Council District 3)
Teacher/Creator
West Valley Leadership Academy

Dr. Tyree Wieder
(Council District 2)
President
Los Angeles Valley College

Johnathan Williams
(Council District 9)
Founder
The Accelerated School

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APPENDIX B. THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

This Appendix provides background information on the District, highlighting specific challenges. It also presents information on how the current School Board and district staff members are responding to these challenges. Commissioners can use this information to explore how their recommendations could intersect with ongoing efforts toward improvement. Challenges and responses are grouped into six areas: student achievement, progression, personnel, finance, safety, and facilities.

Information in this appendix comes from testimony provided by John Fullerton (Independent Analysis Unit) and Ron Bennett (School Services of California). Supplemental information was gathered from the California State Department of Education website, the LAUSD website, personal communications with District staff, and recent research reports.

THE LAUSD CONTEXT

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is a large, urban district with a diverse student population. The total area of the LAUSD comprises 710 square miles (effective July 1, 1995). In addition to the City of Los Angeles, the LAUSD serves 27 other cities and several unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. The total population within the boundaries of the LAUSD is more than 4.5 million people (LA County, 2004). Currently, the LAUSD is divided into 8 local districts.

There are a total of 858 K-12 schools within the LAUSD (LAUSD, 2005). More than half of them are elementary schools. In addition to the regular K-12 schools there are also 19 special education schools, 79 independent charter schools and centers, as well as 194 other types of

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schools such as adult and early education centers (including 6 infant centers).

The LAUSD is the second largest school district in the country, after New York City. The K-12 school system enrolled 727,117 students in the 2005-2006 school year (LAUSD, 2005). The school-wide average class size is 26.7 (Ed-data, 2005), although most schools have implemented class size reduction for grades K-3.¹² Almost 50 percent of the students are elementary school students. Magnet school¹³ enrollment is about 7.5 percent of the total K-12 student enrollment. There are a total of 85,000 special education students within the District with 4,074 of them attending special education schools.

Nearly 45 percent of LAUSD students are English language learners and more than 75 percent of the students are eligible for free/reduced lunch. Ninety percent of LAUSD students are considered minority. Hispanics form the largest group (72.8 percent), followed by 11.6 percent black (not Hispanic) and 9 percent white (not Hispanic).

¹² California's program to reduce class size began in 1996 when the state legislature passed SB 1777, a reform measure aimed at cutting class size in the early school grades (K-3) from what had been an average of 28 students to a maximum of 20. The initial investment on CSR was \$1 billion, followed by annual investments of approximately \$1.5 billion. The CSR is designed as an incentive system, which offers \$850 per student (initially \$650), with annual incremental increases, for every K-3 student in a class of 20 or fewer (CSR Research Consortium Fact Sheet 2002).

¹³ A magnet school is a public school that draws students interested in specific subjects such as academics or the arts from the surrounding region (typically a school district or a county). LAUSD has both separate magnet schools as well as magnet programs within regular schools.

Table B.1: LAUSD Ethnic Representation (Fall 2004)

American Indian / Alaska Native	0.3%
Asian	3.8%
Black (not Hispanic)	11.6%
Filipino	2.2%
Hispanic	72.8%
Pacific Islander	0.3%
White (not Hispanic)	9.0%

Source: LAUSD Fingertip Facts 2005-06

Student Achievement

Although LAUSD schools compare favorably in terms of academic achievement to other California schools that are demographically similar (Ross, 2005), LAUSD students score in the bottom third on national standardized tests (NAEP, 2005). The base score of LAUSD schools on the state's Academic Performance Index (API) also remains below the state average.¹⁴ In 2004 the LAUSD's API base score was 633, compared to a 692 average API base score statewide (CDE, 2005).

It should also be noted that while LAUSD scores are below the state average, California also ranks low on the national achievement scale (NAEP, 2005). Only Mississippi and the District of Columbia performed worse than California in reading, while three states (New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada) had the same score as California. The situation is not much better for mathematics: Alabama, Mississippi, New Mexico, and the District of Columbia performed worse than California, while four states (Arizona, Hawaii, Louisiana, and Nevada) had the same

¹⁴ The Academic Performance Index (API) is the cornerstone of California's Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (PSAA). The purpose of the API is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools, and monitor progress over time. The API is a numeric index that ranges from a low of 200 to a high of 1000 and is based on the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. Test results are weighted and a formula is applied to determine the school's API score.

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score as California. Seventy-nine percent of California's 4th graders perform at the basic or below basic level in reading and 72 percent perform at these levels in math.

The District is implementing several initiatives to improve student achievement:

- In 2002, the District adopted *Open Court*,¹⁵ a reading program for grades K-5, and required that all elementary schools implement it.
- In 2004, the School Board adopted the Full-day Kindergarten Policy and 374 schools now have full day kindergarten.
- Also in 2004, the School Board adopted the Small Learning Communities Policy, which is being implemented throughout the District.
- This year, the School Board passed a policy to make college prep curriculum a requirement of graduation for students entering 9th grade in 2012.
- The LAUSD is also developing new charter schools.
- To address the student achievement gap, the Board has approved a district-designed action plan. This plan includes access to college-prep curriculum, equal access to the highest quality teachers and administrators, professional development for certificated staff on culturally responsive and culturally contextualized teaching, increased parent and community engagement, as well as on-going (internal and external) monitoring and reporting.

Despite generally low achievement scores, LAUSD students have demonstrated improved academic performance during the past few years. Of the 11 city districts that participated in the 2005 NAEP testing, LAUSD fourth graders outpaced both national increases and California State gains in both math and reading scores since 2003 (Council of the Great City Schools, 2005). Eighth graders in the District also made significant progress in reading and math. Some argue that this increased performance is due to increased alignment of assessments to

¹⁵ *Open Court* emphasizes systematic, explicit, phonics instruction, as opposed to curriculum primarily based on guided literature reading. *Open Court* is a scripted curriculum that emphasizes basic skills broken down into discrete parts and subparts. Its teacher's manual specifies amount of time per activity and teacher language required. Teachers are overseen by coaches who ensure they follow directions.

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standards (Ross, 2005). Others attribute it to the centrally mandated reading curriculum.

Despite these gains, other large urban districts are having more success with their poor and minority students (Education Trust-West, 2005). African-American fourth-graders in New York scored 19 points higher in fourth grade reading than African-American students in Los Angeles on the 2005 NAEP. And in Boston, low-income eighth grade students scored 19 points higher in math than low-income students in Los Angeles on the 2005 NAEP.

Student Progression

The District has high dropout and low graduation rates. To comply with requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), districts in California are asked to have an 82.5 percent graduation rate. According to the LAUSD's District Accountability Report Card for 2003-04, the graduation rate of students in the LAUSD was 67.7 percent in 2002-03. According to CBEDS data, in 2002-03 the graduation rate in LAUSD was almost 20 percent lower than rates in other schools within the state of California (see Table B.2). The LAUSD loses the bulk of its students between their freshman and sophomore years -- including 17,000 Latino students who never return for 10th grade (Radcliffe 2005).

Table B.2:LAUSD and California Graduation Rates

Level	District			State		
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Enrollment (9-12)	181,607	186,984	194,439	1,735,576	1,772,417	1,830,664
Number of Dropouts	11,342	10,706	16,129	47,899	48,454	58,493
Dropout Rate	6.2	5.7	8.3	2.8	2.7	3.2
Graduation Rate	73.7	72.0	67.7	86.7	87.0	86.7

Source: California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS)

There is also some troubling evidence that while the state and federal pressures for accountability are aimed at improving student achievement of all students, the accountability measures have, at the same time, prompted increased accounts of schools actively discharging low-performing students (see, e.g. Rumberger and Palardy 2005).

Student mobility also presents a challenge. The incidence of student mobility¹⁶ is particularly high within large, predominantly minority, urban school districts with high concentrations of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Ream, 2004, p.41). In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the high school transiency rate (which is the proportion of students who entered after school started or left before school ended) exceeded 35% across the district for the 2001-2002 school year (LAUSD, 2004). Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that 80% of non-promotional school changes for a cohort of urban Los Angeles area Latino students were within the same district. Types of student mobility include family initiated-student mobility (e.g. family moves

¹⁶ Robert Ream defines student mobility as "the practice of students making non-promotional school changes" (Ream 2004). Student mobility, in this case, occurs when a student enrolls in the first grade level of a school and then transfers to another school before graduating from that school (Rumberger 2003).

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for employment reasons), student-initiated student mobility,¹⁷ and school-initiated student mobility (e.g. Opportunity Transfers)¹⁸ (see Ream, 2004).

Personnel

The LAUSD employs 37,026 regular teachers¹⁹ and 5,234 other certificated support staff such as school psychologists, nurses, and counselors (LAUSD, 2005). In the 2004-05 school year, 48% of the teachers were white, 28% were Hispanic, and 13% were African American (CDE, 2005). The total number of vacant teacher positions in 2003-04 was 144 (LAUSD District Accountability Report Card, 2003-04).

There are also nearly 3,000 certificated administrators who work at the school, local district, or central office level. Full-time classified personnel amount to 32,669, making the LAUSD the second largest employer in Los Angeles County with a total of 77,754 regular LAUSD employees (LAUSD, 2005).

Although the LAUSD teaching force has become more qualified since 2003, there are still critical shortage of math, science and special education teachers (Hirsch, 2005). In 2003-04 there were also almost 11,000 teachers in the LAUSD that were considered mis-assigned, meaning that a certificated employee was placed in a teaching or service position for which the employee did not hold a legally recognized certificate (LAUSD District Accountability Card, 2003-04).

In addition, teacher quality varies across LAUSD schools. While Nationally Board Certified teachers are equitably distributed across

¹⁷ A large percentage of student mobility at the secondary level - nearly 50% in California- is the result of student-initiated requests to change schools (Rumberger, Larson, Ream and Palardy 1999).

¹⁸ Opportunity Transfer (OT) is a school-initiated disciplinary action to move a student from one school to another.

¹⁹ This includes K-12, adult and early education teachers

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LAUSD schools, low achieving high schools still lack experienced, credentialed teachers (Hirsch, 2005) due to collective bargaining agreements that include seniority rights. Experienced teachers with credentials are particularly less likely to work in low-achieving middle schools. Nearly 2/3 of Provisional Interns²⁰ teach in the lowest performing schools (Ross, 2005). Throughout the state, if a student attends the highest poverty schools from the time of kindergarten through high school, California spends approximately \$140,000 less on all of his teachers than on the K-12 teachers of a student in the most affluent schools (Education Trust-West, 2005), demonstrating that the more experienced teachers (and therefore more costly) move into schools whose parents are in a higher socio-economic status and whose children, therefore, are likely to be performing at a higher level.

The LAUSD has been working to attract more qualified teachers. The District has seen growth in the quality of its teaching force since 2003. In 2005, 92 percent of the teachers were credentialed, compared with 87 percent the previous year and 77 percent in 2003.

The District has also developed strategies to address the inequitable distribution of teaching resources. These include placing more experienced teachers in high poverty schools and providing more professional development to new teachers in those schools. In addition, the LAUSD is attracting qualified teachers to high poverty schools through fiscal incentives; teachers in high poverty schools earn more than the average teacher in the District (The Education Trust-West

²⁰ At the request of a school district a Provisional Intern Permit may be issued. It allows an employing agency to hire an individual who has not met subject matter competence. Individuals must hold bachelors degrees, have completed defined amounts of coursework in the subject they are to teach, passed CBEST and character identification. Participating employers must provide support to the Permit Holder and must provide assistance in achieving subject matter competence. This permit may be renewed one time for an additional year (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/intern/intern-FAQ.html>).

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2005). However, the pay differential has been criticized as too low to make a difference.

Finances

In California, the combined impact of *Serrano* and *Proposition 13* has resulted in state dominance of revenues.²¹ About two-thirds of LAUSD revenues come from the state, and less than one-third comes from local revenues.²² Federal funding constitutes less than 10% of the total school district funding.

The LAUSD's core funding mechanism is based on Proposition 98, which is a voter-approved amendment to California's constitution adopted in 1988. Proposition 98 allocation depends on changes in enrollment, per capita personal income, and projections of state tax revenues (EdSource, 1996). The calculation of the allocations is very complicated. The process usually involves recalculations for previous years as well as estimates for the current year.

Total LAUSD budget in 2005-06 was over 13 billion dollars (\$13,166,864,970). In 2003-2004 the LAUSD spent about \$8,302 per student [expenditures measured per Annual Average Daily Attendance

²¹ In 1971 and 1976 the California Supreme Court ruled in *Serrano vs. Priest* that a property-tax based finance system for schools was unconstitutional. Previously, a local property tax would go directly to the local school system, which minimized state government's involvement in the distribution of revenue. The court ruled that the amount of funding going to different districts was disproportionately favoring the wealthy, and that the state needed to find a way to make the distribution of revenue more equitable. Assembly Bill 65 allowed the state to redistribute property taxes from wealthy areas to poorer districts. In 1978, voters approved Proposition 13, greatly reducing property tax increases. Since then, the level of local revenues decreased from 62.2 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1980, and 31 percent in 2000.

²² Local funding comes from sources including property taxes, cafeteria sales, interest, developer fees, sale of bonds (LAUSD Superintendent's 2004-2005 Final Budget, p.25-34).

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(ADA)].²³ The budget consists of several operating funds such as General Fund Regular Program (GFRP), Child Development Fund, Adult Education Fund, Cafeteria Fund, Capital Projects Fund, Fiscally Independent Charter School Fund, and other funds including financial funds that provide for health benefits, workers compensation, reserves, deferred maintenance, and debt service (LAUSD Final Budget 2004-2005).

The total general fund regular program (GFRP) 2005-06 is \$5.7 billion, which is close to 45% of the overall district budget. Nearly 60% of the general fund expenditures consist of salaries (44.8% certificated salaries and 13.8% classified salaries). Employee benefits made up 20.8% of the total GFRP expenditure (LAUSD, 2005).

Categorical funding is money earmarked for a specific purpose (e.g. Title I funds) accompanied by strict reporting requirements. In 2004-2005 the LAUSD had 134 federal specially funded revenue streams, 111 state specially funded revenue streams, and 89 local specially funded revenue streams. These funds represent over \$1.5 billion dollars, which is about 11% of the total budgeted revenue (Fullerton, 2005).

When Ron Bennett spoke before the Commission he argued that, for the most part, in California, the determination of school district general fund expenditures is local - not state controlled. Districts control the organization of administrative staff at the central office, local, and school levels as well as the compensation of district staff (both salary level and methodology of compensation as well as benefit support and types offered). In addition, Bennett explained that the districts also decide about the range of programs offered e.g. preschools and community schools, and have control over the design of

²³ These numbers reflect the costs of operating the school district. Not included are capital outlay, other outgo, and direct support/indirect costs (Ed-data). The average per pupil funding per ADA in other unified districts in California is \$7,151 and in all districts statewide \$7,077.

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categorical programs, class-size for instructional programs, curriculum and instructional methods, and staffing levels for support programs. School districts also control the level and type of support services, the type and location of facilities, and the range and scope of community support programs. Each school's instructional program requires implementation of the District's guidelines and courses of study that are aligned with state adopted frameworks for all grade levels and subject areas (LAUSD District Accountability Report Card, 2003-04).

The LAUSD uses a centralized budget process to distribute funds throughout the district. Some estimate that this budget process allows the central office to control more than 90% of an individual school's budget in the LAUSD (Garey et al., 2005).

The District is facing several financial constraints, including increased budget and payroll concerns. The growing numbers of special needs students as well as students learning English²⁴ in LAUSD schools result in higher costs.

In addition, the LAUSD offers lifetime benefits for teachers, a practice not required by California law. This benefit presents a tremendous financial burden for the school district.²⁵ For the last 40 years, the LAUSD has funded retiree health benefits on a "pay as you go" basis, with no money set aside for future obligations. Although the actual value may increase or decrease due to fluctuations in interest

²⁴ In 1986 approximately 25% of total number of students enrolled in LAUSD schools were English language learners. In 2004- 2005 approximately 45% of LAUSD's students were English language learners (LAUSD Planning, Assessment and Research, R30 Language Census Report 2004-2005).

²⁵ Health and welfare expenditures for retirees consumed approximately 2.4% of the District's General Fund expenditure in 1997-98, approximately 3.7 % in 2005-05 and is expected to reach 4.3 % in 2007-08 (CAFR, Towers and Perrin and Benefits Office, quoted by Fullerton, 2005).

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rate, employee turnover, retirement rate, etc., the liability created by these costs has been estimated at \$4.9 billion (Fullerton, 2005). While these costs have not yet eroded the LAUSD's ability to function, the district is experiencing rapidly increasing annual costs for these benefits. The district budget included about \$170 million for retiree health benefits in 2004-05 (LAO, 2005). The Legislative Analyst's Office also reports that the District estimates that the annual cost of these benefits will grow to about \$265 million by 2010 and \$360 million by 2015.

New government accounting rules will require the District to formally recognize this liability in 2007-08 (Fullerton, 2005). The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) policy only requires the reporting of such liabilities (as opposed to pre-funding them). The new policy may prod districts to address their liabilities. Large liabilities could affect a district's bond rating and increase the costs of borrowing (LAO, 2005). Pressure from credit agencies, therefore, represents one of the few short-term incentives for addressing retiree costs. The Legislative Analyst's Office argues that the size of retiree health benefit liabilities is so large, that unless steps are soon taken to address the issue, districts may eventually seek financial assistance from the State.

These problems are exacerbated by the uncertainty and volatility of state funding. State allocation depends on changes in enrollment, per capita personal income, and projections of state tax revenues. The process usually involves recalculations for previous years as well as estimates for the current year. The District has to create the budget before it knows how much money it will have - hence the initial and final budgets are often very different. The current state structured budget process has created a situation in which the Superintendent and

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Board must make critical decisions based on information that is highly inaccurate (Fullerton, 2005).

The LAUSD is also concerned about declining enrollment due to demographic changes and rising popularity of charter schools. While student enrollment increased through school year 2002-03, it has declined slightly since then (California Department of Education, 2005). State funding is tied to enrollment, and if enrollment continues to decline, fixed overhead and the costs of pre-existing liabilities will need to be spread over fewer students (Fullerton, 2005).

Two further challenges pose difficulties in aligning resources to a coherent educational strategy. First, the high numbers of categorical funding sources create significant complexity. Second, in order to demonstrate financial stability to rating agencies, the LAUSD has deliberately reduced its ending balances over the past two years. Smaller ending balances, however, lessen financial flexibility (Fullerton, 2005).

Safety

The LAUSD also faces serious safety concerns. Weapons possessions rose 18 percent in the last few years (to 646 in 2003-04); robbery/extortion arrests rose 35 percent (to 345 in 2004), loitering/trespassing arrests increased by nearly 26 percent to 545 (Boghossian and Soddors, 2005). In 2003-04 there were 80,160 suspensions and 726 expulsions. While the suspensions are down from the previous years, there were more expulsions in 2003-04 than in the year before.

According to Los Angeles Police Department statistics, there were three sex offenses, 17 robberies, 25 batteries, and 11 assaults with a deadly weapon at just one LAUSD High School in 2004. Similarly, students of another LAUSD high school suffered five sex offenses, 16 assaults with a deadly weapon, 25 batteries, and 65 property crimes.

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Seven campuses across Los Angeles had racially motivated brawls in the 2003-2004 school year (Snell, 2005).

Facilities

Overcrowding of schools and their poor maintenance presents an enormous problem for the LAUSD. No other city in America requires as many children, close to 16,000, to ride buses every day because of overcrowding. In addition to busing, the LAUSD has implemented a year-round, multi-track schedule. This approach lengthens the school day and shortens class time and requires students and teachers to rotate over the year, forcing some to be in classes in the summer months (Korman and Rosta, 2003).

In 1992, some Los Angeles residents responded to school overcrowding by suing for improvements. The state settled one lawsuit by agreeing to thin out densely occupied classrooms. In 1997, school district voters passed Proposition BB, which provided \$2.4 billion, mostly for repairs and modernization (Korman and Rosta, 2003). Since then several bond measures have been passed to relieve the overcrowding of LAUSD schools.

Based on the success of the bond program, the LAUSD is executing one of the largest public works projects in the nation with a goal of building 185 new schools by the end of 2012. The District is investing over \$14 billion to build these new schools and modernize or repair existing schools. Several bond measures, in order to alleviate the overcrowding of schools, have been passed over the past several years. Voters have approved more than \$9.5 billion in three previous bond measures since 1997. In November 2005, another bond measure of \$3.98 billion passed. This measure calls for about 40 percent of the proceeds – \$1.6 billion – to be spent building a final round of about 25 elementary schools. A similar amount would be spent on repairs to

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existing schools. This measure will continue the repair and upgrade of aging and deteriorating classrooms and restrooms, build new neighborhood schools, upgrade fire and earthquake safety and emergency response equipment, and eliminate asbestos and lead paint hazards (LAUSD, 2005).

When completed in about seven years, the building program is expected to have opened an estimated 185 schools that will provide enough desk space to end involuntary busing for students, return all campuses to traditional, two-semester calendars, and limit enrollment at middle schools to 2,000 students (Rubin, 2005a & b). Since 2002, the District has opened 23 new schools and 15 early education centers, built 39 additions to existing schools, and added 21,353 new classroom seats. By the end of this school year, an additional 38 new schools will open.

SUMMARY

This Appendix summarized the problems facing the District and presented ways in which the current School Board and District staff members are addressing them. The problems are grave. As the Commissioners consider ways to change the governance structure to address these problems, it may want to consider current change initiatives and how their recommendations could continue to support them.

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APPENDIX C. LAUSD'S HISTORIC AND CURRENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

This Appendix presents a history of the LAUSD's governance system. This section is presented to inform the Commission of options that have been implemented in the past, along with their rationale and the degree to which they were successful. The historical section is followed by a description of the current School Board. Criticisms of past LAUSD School Boards are also provided. Information for this chapter was derived from a literature review on LAUSD's history, as well as information from the School Board's web pages and staff members.

LAUSD'S GOVERNANCE HISTORY: 1850-2005

The City of Los Angeles was incorporated by a legislative act on April 4, 1850, and in July of that year, a new city government was organized. Los Angeles had approximately 1700 inhabitants in 1850. When the Americans took over the Los Angeles schools from the Mexican government in 1850, a seven member Common Council (later to become the Los Angeles City Council) took the place of the Mexican *ayuntamiento* and assumed the duties of the School Board (Martin, 1955). In 1854, the City Council appointed Stephen C. Foster, the mayor of the city, to be the first superintendent of the schools. The first public school in Los Angeles was founded the following year.

From 1866 to 1870 both the school board and the superintendent were chosen by popular vote in city elections. In 1870 the office of superintendent was discontinued after it was discovered that there was no authority in the law for such an office. From 1870-72 there was no superintendent; during this period three trustees governed the city schools. To address this problem, the state legislature, in 1872,

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created a City Board of Education consisting of five members who had the power to appoint a superintendent (Martin, 1955).

A new state constitution of 1879 gave more power to local school districts. Local boards were authorized to select textbooks and were given the authority to examine teachers and to grant teacher certificates. In accordance with the new law, the board of education in 1881 adopted a series of textbooks, and appointed a board of examiners. A new superintendent was directed to construct a course of study, as well as rules and regulations for the schools (Bates, 1928).

It was not until the end of the 1880s that the state legislature authorized cities to issue bonds for municipal improvements. In 1889, \$200,000 worth of bonds were voted and sold resulting in the building of 14 new schools (Bates, 1928).

Despite the rapid population growth that facilitated the need for these schools, the Los Angeles Public School district administration had a slow beginning. While in 1885 the central office only had one staff member - the superintendent - there were 25 employees in 1910 (Bettinger, 1999 p.67).

The composition of the school board also changed during the late 1800s. The five-member board of education was changed to a nine-member board, each member elected by and representing one of the wards of the city. This change was occasioned by the adoption of a new city charter, and the first new board under the new arrangement held office during the year 1889-90 (Bates, 1928).

In 1897 several board members came under suspicion for accepting bribes and "general dishonesty" (Raftery, 1992). According to Raftery, some members were accused of extortion against teachers and janitors "to safeguard their positions," and an investigation was ordered. A board member resigned and another was arrested (and was later acquitted).

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Some other resignations followed, but the media and public were advocating for a new election process.

In 1903, the LAUSD was fundamentally reordered. The city charter was changed²⁶ to divorce the district from the politics of city government, mandating a reorganization of the board of education. The number of members was again reduced from nine to seven, all elected from the city at large, and the ward system was abolished. Reformers believed that centralization would allow the schools to be administered more efficiently by a non-corruptible and nonpartisan administration. The role of the board became more administrative, the board made policy and the superintendent carried it out. The certification of teachers became more standardized, and the board lost their power to hire and fire teachers.²⁷

In 1960, the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County decided that the Los Angeles City School District would become a unified school district for elementary and high school purposes, effective July 1961. The two merged districts - the Los Angeles City Elementary District and Los Angeles City High School District - had shared both the Board of Education and Superintendent. The two district territories had been approximately the same, but unification made them exactly the same. Advantages of unification included the common bonding capacity, (high school bonding capacity was reaching its legal limits of 5% of its assets and there were some unused bonding capacity for the elementary schools that could be used to construct more high schools) and the

²⁶ According to Raftery (1992), the reform minded businessman John Randolph Haynes and other professionals founded the Direct Legislative League. The League introduced new ideas and apparently "convinced" the voters about the need for the new Charter.

²⁷ Some teachers were not happy with these reforms, as their promotions and benefits would from now on depend on examinations and education, rather than on seniority (Raftery, 1992).

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reduction of some duplicated functions. This change did not alter the status of the Board.

In 1976, the passage of collective-bargaining legislation (the Rodda Act) transformed the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) into a powerful political organization²⁸ (Kerchner and Menefee-Libey, 2003).

In 1978, Proposition M changed the election of the seven LAUSD Board Members from at-large (entire school district) to by District (seven geographic areas), with the goal of improving local control of schools. The goal of improving local control was re-ignited in the late 1980s.

The district promoted Site-Based Management (SBM) starting in 1989 as part of its negotiations after a two-week teacher's strike,²⁹ giving teachers and parents school budgetary and programmatic decisions. Budget shortfalls led to insufficient assistance to SBM schools; training and support were insufficient, which resulted in the discontinuance of the initiative in 1992 (WestEd, 2003).

During the SMB reform, in 1991, a coalition of business and foundation activists, the UTLA president, and the community organizations behind Kids 1st created the Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now (LEARN). The School Board adopted this reform in 1993. The LEARN reform plan had the backing of community groups, the teachers' union, civic and business leaders, and the district superintendent. It called for system wide decentralization; site-based management of budgetary, curricular, and personnel decision; accountability for results among principals and teachers, including some

²⁸ The Rodda Act gave teachers the right to select a single organization to represent them for purposes of negotiating with their employer a legally binding contract covering wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment (Kerchner et al, 2000).

²⁹ The teacher's strike was mostly over pay and benefits, but also over who should control the functioning of the schools.

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elements of performance-based pay; training for school leadership teams to take on a new role; increased school choice; and redirected school funding based on the numbers and needs of students enrolled in each school. To participate in LEARN, 75 percent of the teachers in the school needed to vote in favor.

In 1995, the LEARN reform was bolstered by a five year matching grant (\$53 million) from the Annenberg Foundation. The Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) built upon LEARN with a focus on accountability for student results. LAAMP was launched in the middle of LEARN, and some schools adopted both because the initiatives shared much of the same leadership and were designed to work together (WestEd, 2003).

By 1998-1999, 43% of the LAUSD's schools had joined LEARN. Despite sound planning and a strong conceptual base, the LEARN reforms were never fully realized (WestEd, 2003). Schools received only minimal budget authority, additional funds never materialized, teachers and principals struggled for control of site councils, and personnel decisions were never decentralized. Modest gains in student achievement were not sustained (WestEd, 2003).

In 2000, the leadership of LEARN and LAAMP decided to merge into a new organization called Los Angeles Alliance for Student Achievement (WestEd, 2003), and later the Los Angeles Alliance for College Ready Public Schools, a charter management organization.

While LEARN was in the development phase, the California Charter Schools Act had passed. It became effective January 1, 1993, allowing 100 charter schools³⁰ to be created across the state with no more than

³⁰ The California Education Code currently reads: "In the 1998-99 school year, the maximum total number of charter schools authorized to operate in this state shall be 250. In the 1999-2000 school year, and in each successive school year thereafter, an additional 100 charter schools are authorized to operate in this state each successive school

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10 charter schools in any single school district. The law outlined six goals: 1) improve student learning, 2) increase learning opportunities, especially for students identified as low achieving, 3) encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, 4) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including gaining responsibility of the learning program; 5) provide parents and students with expanded school choices in the public system; and 6) hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student outcomes and provide a method of switching from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems (Biegel and Slayton, 1997).

In 1993, the District was reorganized from six administrative regions to 24 clusters (Kerchner and Menefee-Libey, 2003). In 2000, the 24 clusters became 11 sub-districts. Then interim Superintendent Cortines started to decentralize operations, but when the new superintendent Roy Romer was hired in 2000, he began to re-centralize some policy decisions. He mandated the *Open Court* reading program in elementary schools, redirected resources to support literacy and mathematics coaches, and asked district superintendents to determine a common approach to elementary mathematics (WestEd, 2003).

The most recent district reorganization took place last year. In June 2004, in an effort to reduce the budget, the Board of Education cut the districts from 11 to 8 (LA Times, 2004; Board of Education Meeting Notes, June 8, 2004).

year." According to <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>, California has 502 charter schools, and Los Angeles a total of 95 charter schools as of 2004-05.

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Historical Themes

Two themes are apparent in this short description of the LAUSD's governance history. First, the district has swayed between centralization and decentralization from its inception in the mid 19th century. The Board of Education, first elected by ward, then elected by the district at large, has reverted back to a sub-district form of elections. Several initiatives, including Site Based Management, LEARN, and LAAMP, attempted to give more control to the local school sites. However, none of these attempts have been judged fully effective.

Second, governance in the Los Angeles school district is multi-layered, and it is not contained within the boundaries of the district. Beyond the Board of Education and the Superintendent are numerous other players, such as the state and federal governments, community organizations, unions, parent associations, and philanthropists, just to mention a few. The five volume, 2,000 page California Education Code is one example of the state's effect on the District. According to Kirst (1992), the code is full of outmoded regulations and duties, preventing school boards from their policymaking role and needlessly inhibiting local flexibility. A consideration of governance must include the larger system and wide variety of stakeholders in which the Board of Education sits.

CURRENT DISTRICT GOVERNANCE

The Board of Education is the governing body of the district. The Inspector General, the Personnel Commission, Board Secretariat, Special Counsel, Independent Analysis Unit, and Superintendent of Schools all report directly to the Board. The Superintendent is appointed by the Board and is the executor of the Board's policies. Each of the eight local districts has a Local District Superintendent, who is appointed by the Superintendent.

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Currently, the Board consists of seven members, elected by their individual districts (that are different from the eight local districts mentioned above). The members of the Board and its respective districts and tenures are shown in Table C.1.

Table C.1: Board Members, Districts, Election Year, and Terms Served

Name	District	Year first elected	Years served
Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte	1	2003	2
Jose Huizar	2	2001	4
Jon Lauritzen	3	2003	2
Marlene Canter	4	2001	4
David Tokofsky	5	1995	10
Julie Korenstein	6	1987	18
Mike Lansing	7	1999	6

Board members serve a four-year term and can be reelected indefinitely.³¹ They were legislated to receive \$24,000 annually, which they can increase by five percent a year. The LAUSD Board has implemented this 5% stipend once; each member is currently receiving a total of \$25,200, which is prorated by the number of meetings they attend. For example, if one member only attends half of the meetings scheduled for the month, he/she will only receive \$1,050, or half of the monthly \$2,100 stipend.

Most official business of the Board is conducted during regularly held meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month.³² All Board meetings are open to the public, except those noted in advance as closed.

³¹ Several school boards in California and other states serve under term limits.

³² More information on the board can be found at its website, at <http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/board/secretary/>.

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The LAUSD Board of Education streamlines its work by using consent agendas. Each agenda item has two readings. During the first meeting in which an item is addressed, the members decide whether to assign it to the consent calendar or the regular calendar. In the second meeting that the item is addressed, if it is in the consent calendar, the whole calendar is approved by a single vote. If the item is part of the regular calendar, it will be addressed by a specific vote for each of the regular items. Usually, consent calendars are the first item to be addressed in the Board's meetings.

Regular meetings begin with the Board taking action on the Consent Calendar items that were bundled together for one vote at the previous meeting. The Board then hears comments from student representatives followed by the presentation of any Initial Negotiating Proposals that might be before the Board and public.

Items requiring Board approval at the next meeting are then introduced. Routine items are assigned to the Consent Calendar. Other items are moved to the Regular Calendar to be acted on individually at the next meeting.

The Board then hears special reports and presentations to the Board by the Superintendent. After the presentations, the Board Members discuss and vote on the items assigned to the Regular Calendar at the previous meeting. Often the Board will also vote on items that were not introduced at the previous meeting, called "Direct Reports." These are deemed as urgent items requiring immediate action.

The next portion of the meeting is spent voting on motions and resolutions introduced by Board Members or the Superintendent. Most of these motions will have been introduced at previous meetings and may have already been reviewed by a Board Committee. Many reports are first heard by a Committee before being brought to the Board for formal introduction and action.

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During the last portion of the meeting, Board Members introduce new motions. Each motion, or resolution, may be assigned to a Board Committee for discussion. Committee meetings are also open to the public. There are 12 current Board committees, including curriculum and instruction, education equity, and facilities committees.

Criticisms of Past LAUSD Boards

Several commentators have criticized past LAUSD School Boards. One of the documents most critical of LAUSD governance was issued in 1999, and reissued in 2001, by the Committee for Effective School Governance. The Committee was formed in 1998 by a group of 26 business and civic leaders, in order to improve LAUSD governance and ultimately improve student achievement.

In its 1999 report "Los Angeles Unified School District Governance—Our Future at Risk. Accountability for Student Achievement," the committee identified some flaws in the Board's functioning, and made a set of recommendations to improve it.

The report suggested that the Board did not study reforms before putting them into place, and that it lacked a broad strategic plan to guide these reforms, resulting in hard-to-implement plans that were doomed to fail from their inception. Some examples mentioned were *LEARN*, *Call to Action*, *L.A. Systemic Initiative*, *LAAMP*, *Hundred Low Performing Schools*, *Early Literacy* and standards based promotions.

According to the Committee, the Board had too many goals, and this made it impossible to establish priorities and judge progress. Also, the Board got involved in the assignment and transfer of principals, other administrators, and senior staff, and this political maneuvering hindered the district's accountability structure. Additionally, the Board concentrated on inconsequential budget items (sometimes reviewing decisions that concern a 1/1000 of the budget). Finally, the report

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cited the long meetings, the lack of an annual agenda, and the undue influence of special interest groups. The Committee concluded that the frequent and lengthy meetings encouraged destructive micro-management.

A possible cause for this failure is what they considered to be a mistaken (though perhaps well-intentioned) view of how to be responsive to the community. The report stated:

Board members tend to see their primary role as satisfying the day-to-day requests of individual constituents rather than representing the community's long-term needs. The board must turn away from inappropriate activities, such as responding to parents' requests to change their children's class schedules, and being overly responsive to special interest groups that are influential in their election. Such behavior perpetuates the district's dysfunctional culture, depriving students of a system that works.

Kerchner and Menefee-Libey (2003) also criticized the Board for its back and forth in the adoption of programs. They argued that "improvisational politics" rules school policy-making in the Los Angeles Unified School District. They suggest that a change of this improvisation will be very hard, since institutions and incentives that allowed it to happen endure.

SUMMARY

This Appendix presented a history of the LAUSD's governance system, as well as a summary of the current governance structure and functioning. While the criticisms of the LAUSD School Board presented in this chapter may be illuminating, one must keep in mind that they do not address the current Board because new members have been elected since the criticisms were levied.

APPENDIX D. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNANCE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

This Appendix presents information on the relationship between governance and student achievement. When the Commission convened, it agreed that it needed to determine what governance changes might affect student achievement. Furthermore, the Commission doubted the ability of governance in and of itself to have a major impact on student achievement. Therefore, it created a framework comprised of the levers by which governance could affect student achievement, including finance, personnel, school operations, community engagement, and curriculum. Governance can affect these mechanisms, which can then subsequently affect how and what students learn in the classroom. Figure D.1 illustrates the framework that the Commissioners selected to guide their investigation into governance.

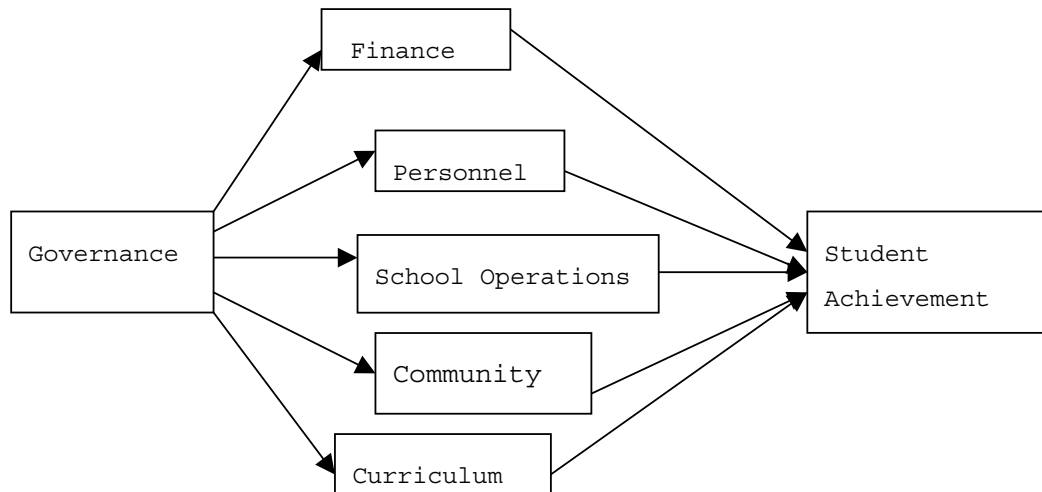


Figure D.1: Commission’s Framework on Governance

This is a very simple framework and is not meant to describe all of the impacts on student achievement. In selecting this framework, Commissioners were not ignoring other important drivers of student achievement, such as parental education and student mobility, but were

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attempting to delineate the aspects of student achievement that likely could be affected by governance changes.

This Appendix first presents information on the direct link between governance and student achievement. The subsequent section focuses on the indirect links between governance and student achievement, in order to demonstrate how governance affects personnel, finance, school operations, curriculum, and community engagement, and how these drivers, in turn, affect student achievement. Information from this chapter is based on a targeted literature review, as well as testimony from experts, including Stephen Sheldon (Johns Hopkins University), Larry Cuban (Stanford), Randy Ross (Independent Analysis Unit), and Cassie Guarino (RAND).

DIRECT LINKS BETWEEN GOVERNANCE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Although the Commission's framework delineates indirect links between governance and student achievement, it is important to explore whether or not existing research has uncovered ways in which school boards directly affect student achievement.

Little empirical research exists on the direct link between district governance and student achievement. As Larry Cuban mentioned in his presentation to the Commission on October 27, 2005, the studies that do exist are correlational and do not demonstrate causation. Cuban asserted that it is difficult to identify key linkage variables because the chain of governance authority does not flow directly from the Board to the district to schools to students; instead it is a complex, multi-directional flow of influence.

A 2002 literature review by Deborah Land of Johns Hopkins University provided an extensive compilation of studies on school boards, their effectiveness, and their impact on student achievement.

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She provides a summary of the qualities that experts say are characteristic of effective boards:

Qualities of Effective School Boards

1. Appropriate overarching concerns
 - (A) Focus on students' academic achievement
 - (B) Attention to policy, while the superintendent focuses on administrative details
2. Good relations
 - (A) Good relations between superintendent and School Board
 - (B) Board member relations: board members representing special interests or particular constituencies appear to impede the Board's ability to function as a unified body. However, there is a conflict between the need for board members to represent diverse constituencies and the need for a unified board focused on the same goals.
 - (C) Collaboration with health and social service agencies may be helpful
 - (D) Boards should increase linkages with local governments
 - (E) Good public relations: boards should increase communication with the public
3. Effective performance
 - (A) Policy-making should be the Board's main function
 - (B) Leadership: boards should establish a clear mission and vision and should empower educators and community members to carry out that vision.
 - (C) Budgeting: since boards are responsible for financial oversight, they should allocate financial resources in a way that is directed to improve students' academic achievement
4. Adequate evaluation and preparation
 - (A) Evaluation: boards should do evaluations as a method of oversight and control. Evaluation can promote development and improve performance, hold staff, schools, and districts accountable, and can hold the Board itself accountable.
 - (B) Board members should obtain training and development

These characteristics are based on several studies. A 1997 study by the New England School Development Council looked at ten districts in five states and compared the governance systems in those with high achievement and those with low achievement. Researchers found that the districts with high achievement had the following characteristics: (1) members of governance teams knew well their respective roles and responsibilities; (2) the boards were true policy boards and supported the superintendent in his role as CEO of the district; and (3) the

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superintendents coached and supported the boards with a feeling of teamwork and collaboration on behalf of the students. In contrast, those districts with low achievement had boards who micromanaged instead of focusing on broad policy and had conflicts with the superintendent regarding their respective scopes of authority.

Similarly, the IASB's 2000 Lighthouse study attempted to link school board performance to the level of student learning. Researchers looked at six small districts in Georgia—three high performing and three low performing—and assessed the differences between the two groups. They found that high achieving districts had the following qualities: (1) boards believed that all students have the potential to succeed; (2) board members were very aware of school improvement initiatives and were knowledgeable about details; and (3) the boards had clear goals and could link policy decisions to classroom-level impacts. In contrast, low achieving districts accepted poor-performing schools as they were, had board members who were only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives and did not seem to have clear connections across the system from the district to the classroom level.

A Dana Center study of ten Texas districts saw a large growth in student achievement when there was a high level of trust between the superintendent and the School Board (Ragland, Asera, and Johnson, 1999). A follow-up study of four of these districts emphasized the importance of the Board establishing goals that would encourage all students to achieve high academic standards, monitoring progress towards these goals, and having a continual discussion of academic achievement (Skrla, Scheurich, and Johnson, 2000). Superintendents in effective districts dealt with management decisions and maintained a well-aligned and complementary role to the Board. Similarly, a Missouri study of 42 districts with provisional accreditation found that failing districts had boards that micromanaged and failed to function as policymaking

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bodies (Porch and Protheroe, 2003).³³ The authors asserted that there needs to be a high level of trust between the superintendent and the board and leadership roles should be clearly defined and should complement each other.

A recent study of high performing urban districts (Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy, 2002) concluded that urban schools with higher student achievement had stable board majorities that focused on policy level decisions that support improved student achievement. These boards did not concern themselves with day-to-day operations of the District.

INDIRECT EFFECTS OF GOVERNANCE ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

As the Commission's framework implies, it is likely that finance, personnel, school operations, curriculum, and community engagement have a more direct influence on student achievement. This section explores the links between these drivers and student achievement, as well as the links between these drivers and governance.

Finance

How money affects student achievement is a controversial topic which has generated much research but with mixed conclusions. A recent RAND publication reported educational inputs and outcomes in California (Carroll, 2005). Researchers found that California's per-pupil spending on education, spending on school facilities, and adjusted teacher salaries are all lower than the national average. On the achievement side, California has lower student achievement and lower college-going rates than the national average. While these data do not definitively

³³ It should be noted that these boards might have felt the need to micromanage if schools in the district were failing. It is impossible to determine cause and effect, in terms of micromanaging and failing districts in this case.

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link lower spending to lower outcomes, they suggest that the two are related.

A number of researchers argue that simply increasing the dollars spent does not increase student achievement. Numerous studies have shown that once student background and family characteristics are controlled for, there is not a strong or consistent relationship between money spent and student achievement (Hanushek, 1989, 1997). Rather than increasing the total money spent, some researchers suggest that it would be better to reallocate resources and target money to particular areas that have been shown to improve outcomes. This shifts the focus from how much money is spent to how and where that money is spent. Of course, determining the best areas to spend money is also subject to debate since the linkages between inputs and outcomes are often indirect and many factors are likely to interact with each other (Odden and Fermanich, 2004).

Accompanying this debate has been a switch in school finance standards from equity to adequacy (Odden, 2003). Instead of focusing on equal spending, states and districts are now thinking in terms of providing adequate resources for students to succeed. Tied into this is the idea of adjusting per-pupil spending for each student based on certain conditions that make a student "easier" or "more difficult" to educate; the assumption is that different students will require different levels of resources to achieve at the same levels. For example, special education students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have specific needs so schools serving these students should receive specific funds to address those needs. Rather than equal across-the-board funding, money would be allocated based on each student's particular needs and conditions.

Neither do school boards have much control over the amount of money that comes into a district. Two speakers before the Commission

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presented their opinions on how governance affects school funding in the LAUSD. Ron Bennett, from the School Services of California, presented to Commission on August 25, 2005, and Jon Fullerton, from the Budget and Financial Policy Unit for the LAUSD Board of Education, presented to Commission on August 11, 2005. In California, district revenues are driven primarily by average daily attendance (ADA), although there are some additional sources of revenue such as federal and state categorical and restricted programs. One could argue that the School Board can affect funds received through local sources such as community foundations and grants, and voted bonds. In general, however, districts like the LAUSD are fairly dependent on the state for revenues due to the effects of *Serrano* and Proposition 13.

The district does, however, have some flexibility in terms of how the money is spent - an area that researchers argue is more important than the amount of money available in total. On one hand, the money from categorical programs must be used for those programs, which makes the budget more complex and means that it may be more difficult to align resources to a unified educational strategy. On the other hand, the district can leverage some categorical funding to decide which types of special programs will be offered. Beyond categorical programs, the School Board and district staff play a large role in staffing decisions including the organization of administrative staff, staff compensation, and the levels of special staff such as health, counseling, and custodial. The district also has some control over curriculum and instructional methods, the type and location of facilities, and community support programs. Even though districts are increasingly constrained in their choices due to state and federal mandates, district-level governance still plays a crucial role in making a range of important decisions.

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Despite the ability to influence how money is spent in a district, there is little evidence that a specific type of governance structure is more effective in attracting or allocating funds to schools. Experts argue that Boards should align funding to programs that they believe will improve student achievement. And some boards have moved to weighted student funding programs, in order to provide more "adequate" funding to schools.

Personnel

Researchers have documented a relationship between teacher qualifications and student achievement. Cassandra Guarino presented to the Commission on October 6, 2005, and summarized findings from a recent RAND review of teacher recruitment and retention (Guarino, Santibanez, Daley, and Brewer, 2004). This issue is particularly pertinent for districts such as the LAUSD since urban school districts and those with higher proportions of minority, poor, and low-performing students have lower teacher retention rates. Guarino summarized studies that have found that teachers' subject matter knowledge, verbal ability, and selectivity of undergraduate institution are related to student achievement while evidence is mixed on the effects of teachers' certification, advanced degrees, and experience.

Both Larry Cuban and Randy Ross argued for the importance of getting qualified teachers into the classroom. Larry Cuban's presentation to the Commission on October 27, 2005 emphasized that teachers are the most direct influence on student achievement and that the quality of the teacher/student relationship matters most. He also asserted that principals provide a significant, although indirect, influence on student achievement by virtue of their ability to set a school climate that is focused on academic achievement. In his opinion,

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personnel provide the most direct lever by which it would be possible to increase student achievement.

Can a School Board ensure that qualified personnel are hired into the District? Research shows that district and school policies can reinforce or hinder teacher recruitment efforts; for example, mentoring and induction programs are associated with lower rates of turnover among beginning teachers, and higher salaries are also associated with lower teacher attrition (Guarino et al., 2004). Guarino suggested that school boards can affect the recruitment and retention of teachers and principals by virtue of their ability to affect hiring policies, design salary schedules, and foster mentoring and induction programs. A member of UTLA who testified before the Commission argued that policies can affect teacher recruitment. As one example she suggested collaborating with the city and other agencies to help teachers secure housing loans.

A school board could choose to make the hiring of qualified teachers a primary focus, although board members would not necessarily need to make the hiring decisions themselves. The board could ensure that there were sufficient policies in place to hire qualified teachers and administrators, delegate this responsibility to district or school staff, and evaluate implementation on a regular basis.

Union's contracts might have language that presents obstacles to ensuring that there are qualified teachers in every classroom. A report just released by The New Teacher Project (Levin, Mulhern, and Schunck, 2005) studied the staffing rules in teachers' union contracts in five urban districts across the country. Researchers found a large mismatch between teachers whom the schools were forced to hire because of teacher seniority rules and the actual needs and desires of the schools. The report argues that union contract rules are preventing schools from improving teacher quality, and thereby improving student achievement.

School Safety

Most educators agree that a safe school environment is a necessary condition for students to perform at high levels. In particular, it is widely assumed that schools should strive to minimize violence in order to promote student safety and allow students to attend school without fear. Researchers have studied the relationship between school safety and student achievement, and studies have shown a connection between safer schools and higher levels of student achievement. A recent survey, for example, asked 2,270 public school principals across the country about school crime, violence, and other conditions (Miller, 2003). Among other findings, it concluded that schools with the lowest achievement (those with greater than 15% of students below the 15th percentile on standardized tests) were most likely to report that they had violent incidents. In addition, there was an inverse relationship between schools in which principals thought students considered academics to be very important and schools with violence or seriously violent incidents.

Another study looked at how school safety affects student achievement in schools in Hawaii (Gronna and Chin-Chance, 1999). When researchers controlled for student background characteristics and school conditions, they found that students in safer schools had higher 8th grade reading and math test scores than students in less-safe schools.

We found no studies demonstrating a relationship between school boards and school safety. We did find examples of partnerships between students, parents, the community, and law enforcement that worked to reduce violence (Boyd, 2000) and integrate basic services to enhance the safety and well being of children (Luongo, 2000). In addition to setting and evaluating policies that affect school safety, board members can to direct district staff to create such partnerships.

Community Engagement

Researchers have found that parental involvement and home environment have strong influences on student achievement. A recent review found a positive relationship between family involvement and academic achievement (Henderson and Mapp, 2002), while a 1999 meta-analysis found a moderate and meaningful relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement (Fan and Chen, 1999).

Regarding community engagement, it may be important for the district to play a role in this effort, although it is less clear that any particular governance structure would work better than others when it comes to engaging families. Steve Sheldon of Johns Hopkins University presented to the Commission on September 8, 2005 and discussed ways that district policies can affect community engagement. Research shows that schools that reported more district support and direct assistance implemented more NCLB requirements for family involvement than those with less district support. He suggested that districts are well positioned to organize partnership teams involving teachers, parents, administrators, and community members. Again, the board could set and evaluate policy to assure community and family engagement in schools.

Curriculum

Curricular decisions affect the choice of material that teachers present and how they present this material to students. Some curricula have been shown to improve student achievement in some settings, but evidence of curriculum effects is mixed. While some districts have pushed for full-scale implementation of particular curriculum choices, several researchers would argue in favor of continued experimentation with a variety of curricula until proven results can be demonstrated.

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Even for those curricula that are shown to improve student achievement, in reality the effect of curriculum policies depends crucially upon the extent to which such policies are implemented. Implementation of a specified curriculum is subject to both adequate resources and administrator/teacher support. In his presentation to the Commission on November 17, Martin Carnoy reported that implementation can be difficult because teachers are largely unsupervised and have a great deal of autonomy. For example, the success of a structured curriculum such as *Open Court Reading* is crucially dependent on the provision of curriculum materials and on a teacher's ability and desire to teach in the way that the curriculum suggests. If these conditions are not in place, it is likely that the implementation of the curriculum policy will not proceed as planned.

When it comes to curriculum, boards can play a role in selecting curricular programs, but they must do so within guidelines set by the state. The No Child Left Behind legislation directs states to set up systems of standards-based accountability for all public schools in the state. In response, many states, including California, have developed state level academic standards, performance expectations, and curriculum guidelines, which guide school districts' curriculum policy. Districts therefore must develop their curriculum policies to align to their state's guidelines and frameworks. Perhaps the most important task that a board can take on regarding curriculum is to ensure that rigorous evaluations are carried out so that they can formulate curricular policy that directly improves student achievement.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The findings presented above suggest that students will succeed in safe schools with actively engaged parents and qualified teachers fully implementing research-based curricula. There is little evidence on

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whether or not a particular type of governance structure can produce these conditions for learning. Studies linking school board characteristics to student achievement have concluded that the following nine broad principles may positively influence student performance:

1. Develop a clear sense of the board's role and responsibilities
2. Establish a clear vision for the District
3. Focus on policy
4. Resist micromanaging
5. Foster a constructive relationship with the Superintendent
6. Set high expectations for students
7. Focus on academic achievement (which should include ensuring that qualified teachers are hired, that schools are safe, that families are involved in schools, and that curriculum is properly implemented in the classroom)
8. Evaluate and monitor policy implementation
9. Engage in professional development

Despite these seemingly straightforward principles, a 2003 WestEd review suggests that urban school boards may face numerous challenges. The article stresses that these boards may be particularly prone to: (1) micromanaging instead of focusing on policy decisions; (2) a lack of commitment to a unified reform vision due to competing special interests; (3) frequent, destabilizing changes in policy direction; (4) confusing and poorly defined roles; and (5) lack of experience and training. In addition, the authors assert that urban districts need policy stability and consistency in order to make lasting improvements.

Furthermore, the admonition to resist micromanaging may not be as simple as it sounds. Roles and responsibilities of superintendents, senior administrators, and school board members are increasingly complex. There is consensus that, in an ideal situation, school boards should focus on the big picture of education: hiring and evaluating the superintendent; developing and popularizing the district's vision for education; setting goals and performance targets; measuring results and reporting them to the public; and engaging the community as a resource for public education; approving and overseeing budgets.

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Superintendents, on the other hand, should deal with the daily business of running school systems, which ideally centers on implementing the board's priorities. However, practically speaking, complete separation of roles is almost impossible, since school boards and superintendents are interdependent in their operations (Land, 2002).

SUMMARY

The Appendix has presented information on how governance relates to student achievement. In the next following appendices, we present options for changing the LAUSD's governance system. It may be useful for Commissioners to keep the information presented in this Appendix in mind as they consider options.

APPENDIX E. DISTRICT SIZE

A few community members have suggested breaking up the District. This Appendix presents information on that option. Since no one has suggested expanding the District, that option is not discussed. Information for this Appendix is based on a literature review that includes information on past district break up attempts.

OPTION: DIVIDE DISTRICT INTO SMALLER INDEPENDENT DISTRICTS

The Commission may want to recommend breaking up the District into smaller independent units. Several community members proposed this option and there is a history within the District of attempted secessions.

Background Information

The question of whether district size contributes to better student achievement and other positive outcomes is actively debated. The question remains unresolved because it is difficult to separate out the direct effects of district size from other intervening factors and because there is no widely accepted definition of "small" or "large" districts. Researchers cite the following benefits to both types of districts (Walberg and Walberg III, 1994; Louisiana Department of Education, 2003):

Possible Benefits of Large Districts:

- Economies of scale can lead to lower per-pupil costs
- Ability to provide specialized courses and services, including those for special education and gifted students
- Opportunities for continuing education, administrative assistance, technical assistance, lower facilities costs, due to more resources

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Possible Benefits of Small Districts:

- Better able to adapt to local conditions
- Less money spent on administration and central costs
- Less bureaucratic red tape

Most of the literature on the influence of size focuses on school size rather than district size. In those studies that do look at district size, school size tends to get included in the analyses because large urban districts tend to have larger schools and small rural districts tend to have smaller schools. It is therefore difficult to determine the effects of district size as opposed to school size. Nevertheless, a body of research has attempted to assess how school district size affects student achievement.

Craig Howley has done a number of studies in different parts of the United States using a similar methodology to assess the implications of school district size on student achievement. Howley's studies have looked at the interaction between district size and socioeconomic status. His research in rural districts in Georgia and Arkansas, and a similar study by another set of authors in Washington, suggests that large districts with high poverty levels are associated with negative student achievement (Bickel and Howley, 2000; Howley, 2000; Johnson and Howley, 2002; Abbot, Joireman, and Stroh, 2002). The studies have also found more equitable student outcomes in areas with smaller schools and smaller districts. District size interacts with many other school and district-level factors, and it would be imprudent to assume that reducing district size would automatically lead to better student outcomes (Abbot, Joireman, and Stroh, 2002).

The U.S. Department of Education and the Urban Institute looked at the effects of district size on a district's ability to promote standards-based reform (Hannaway and Kimball, 1998). They used survey data from a national sample of school districts and found that larger

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districts seemed to be more successful in promoting standards-based reform practices. The authors speculated that larger districts might be able to promote reforms because of their ability to differentiate and specialize: for example, large districts can create an assessment unit to monitor progress towards reform goals. However, the benefits of larger district size were lessened in high-poverty districts.

LAUSD Context

Cities currently served by the LAUSD have attempted to break off in the past. In 2001, a group from the San Fernando Valley³⁴ and another from Carson attempted to secede from the LAUSD. In the 2005 mayor's race, mayoral candidate Bob Hertzberg advocated strongly for breaking up the District. Supporters of district breakup claim that the LAUSD is too large for any single superintendent or school board to handle; they assert that smaller districts would be better able to serve local needs by adapting to community conditions and eliminating the "downtown" central bureaucracy. Others oppose district breakup, including powerful interest groups such as the unions, who argue that their powers of collective bargaining are greatly strengthened by a large district (Blume, 2005).

Senate Bill 699, passed in 1995, was intended to make district breakup easier but it may have made it more difficult from a legal standpoint. Any district breakup must meet the desegregation mandates of the Crawford decision and the funding equalization provisions of the Rodriguez Consent Decree, as specified in California Education Code Section 35730.1 (WestEd, 2001). This means that it could take many years to calculate the exact details of a breakup.

³⁴ San Fernando wanted to be separate city from LA and have two new school districts.

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Potential Benefits

Breaking up the LAUSD might enable smaller districts to be more responsive to local communities. Parents may be better able to engage with schools and thus hold them more accountable. Based on the research summarized above, smaller districts may also realize improved academic achievement. Furthermore, if smaller districts were created, they should not lose their ability to benefit from the economies of scale achieved by the current structure. It is common practice in California for other agencies to piggyback on contracts that have been properly bid by a primary agency.³⁵

Potential Drawbacks

It could take a great deal of time and resources to determine the boundaries. Similarly, it could be difficult to determine a fair division of assets and liabilities currently owned by the LAUSD, including bond indebtedness and the amounts owed to lifetime benefits for teachers. Teacher seniority and placement issues would also present challenges. As WestEd's advisors suggested in a 2001 report to the Los Angeles Alliance for Student Achievement, this process could divert significant funds and resources away from the classroom. Furthermore, currently, the District is able to redistribute resources toward the most needy areas. This advantage would be lost if the District were to break up.

Legal and Other Implications

If Commissioners are interested in this option, they may want to consider mechanisms for oversight of each local district. One option is to create a centralized office structure for each new district that

³⁵ E-mail from Ron Bennett, School Services of California, 11/7/05.

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would perform the same functions that the central office of the LAUSD currently performs. This option would involve the creation of a school board, superintendent, and administrative support staff for each new district. These new structures may or may not be necessary, depending on the size of each new district, coordination between districts, and individual district capacity for administrative tasks. Creating a number of new bureaucracies with duplicate functions is not the inevitable result of breaking up the district.³⁶

The Commission may also want to consider how to break up the District, in terms of the number of resulting stand-alone districts. If the LAUSD were to be broken up, each separate city currently served by the LAUSD could have its own district. Alternatively, groups of smaller cities could join together to create districts; most likely this would be determined by geographic proximity. In addition, one needs to consider what would happen to the unincorporated areas that are served by the LAUSD.

SUMMARY

This appendix has provided information on dividing the District into smaller independent units. There are other ways in which the central office might be reduced in size through distributing its authority to other offices or lower levels without a formal break up, including decentralization and charter efforts. These initiatives are described in other appendices. However, as the Commissioners consider these other options, they may want to evaluate the success of the current eight sub-districts in terms of parental engagement and accountability.

³⁶ This point was voiced by a community member at the Gardena High School community meeting on 11/1/05.

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APPENDIX F. CONTROL OF THE DISTRICT

This Appendix presents options for changing the way the District is controlled. Currently, a seven-member school board holds the ultimate authority over and responsibility for the performance of the LAUSD. This Appendix discusses mayoral control of and association with the District. These options were presented before the Commission by experts on governance and were broached by members of the community. Furthermore, the Mayor of Los Angeles has declared his intention to take over the District by the end of his first term.

This Appendix also presents an option for changing the School Board to an education policy board. Mike Kirst presented this idea to the Commissioners when he testified on November 17, 2005. This option could be selected in conjunction with mayoral control or without a recommendation for any type of mayoral involvement.

Finally, this Appendix briefly mentions the option of not having a school board at all. Some experts are advocating for this option, arguing that the current configuration is an anachronism that has outgrown its usefulness. If Commissioners selected this option, then they would have to consider a new system for executing the current duties of the Board.

Information in this Appendix is based on expert testimony from Mike Kirst, Ken Wong, Fritz Edelstein, and Larry Cuban. Their testimony has been supplemented with information from the literature.

OPTION: FULL MAYORAL TAKEOVER

If full mayoral control were recommended, the Commission would need to consider three issues:

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1. Is there still a need for a Board? Should the mayor appoint School Board members directly? Or would the Commission recommend that others nominate potential Board members?
2. How would the other cities be represented? Or would this option be coupled with a recommendation to break up the District?
3. Should the mayor appoint the Superintendent as well? Or should a Board be given that authority?

Background Information

The movement towards mayoral control of schools in large cities began with Boston in 1991, and since then Chicago, Cleveland, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, and others have followed (Kirst and Bulkley, 2003). This shift went along with a change in the public perception of the role of the mayor; in the 1990s mayors began to assume the role of efficient leaders who were interested in and capable of improving public services. In addition, public frustration over the poor quality of schools increased, and mayoral control presented an opportunity for a systemic change.

The following is a partial list of cities (and one county) that have mayoral control that serve as examples of the variety of possible systems:

New York: 13 board members. The mayor appoints eight members and the Chancellor, who serves as Chairman of the board and CEO of the schools. Each Borough President appoints one of the other five members.

Chicago: seven board members, all appointed by the mayor. The mayor also appoints the CEO.

Philadelphia: five-member School Reform Commission. The Governor appoints three members and the mayor appoints two. The School Reform Commission appoints the CEO and other top administrators.

Prince Georges County, Maryland: nine board members, all jointly appointed by the Governor and the County Executive. Members are chosen from a list of candidates submitted by the State Board of Education.

Boston: seven members of the School Committee, all are appointed by the Mayor. Candidates are selected from a list recommended by the 13-member Citizens Nominating Panel. This panel is composed of four parents, one teacher, one principal or headmaster, one businessperson, one college or university president, the state Commissioner of Education, and four other members chosen by the mayor.

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Cleveland: nine board members, all appointed by the mayor. The mayor selects members from a slate of nominees chosen by a local nominating panel. At least four board members must have significant expertise in education, finance, or business management. Members must be residents of the area served by the district, and at least one must live in the part of the district that is outside the city of Cleveland. In addition, the presidents of Cleveland State University and Cuyahoga Community College serve as nonvoting ex officio members.

Baltimore: nine-member board of school commissioners, each of whom is jointly appointed by the Mayor and the Governor. These members are selected from a list of nominees submitted by the State Board of Education. The board appoints the CEO of the district, and the CEO serves as a member of the mayor's cabinet.

Mayoral control does not mean the same thing in all of these cities. This approach can differ on a number of dimensions:

- Whether a school board exists
- Whether the Mayor appoints all board members or just some
- Whether the Governor has a role in school board appointments
- Whether the Mayor selects whomever he wants to serve on the board, or selects from a pool of candidates
- If the Mayor selects from a pool of candidates, how these candidates are chosen
- If the candidates are chosen by a nominating committee, who sits on this committee
- Whether the Mayor appoints the Superintendent
- Whether the Mayor has the authority to charter schools

Reasons cited for mayoral takeover include the following negative conditions in school districts: (1) bureaucratic dysfunction with a focus on procedure instead of educational outcomes; (2) decreasing faith in urban school boards; and (3) emphasis on greater accountability in schools (Kirst & Bulkley, 2003). Mayors are seen as being able to alleviate or eliminate many of these factors by becoming the single point of responsibility and having clear accountability for results. In addition, mayors are viewed as better positioned to integrate social services with schools, leverage a variety of city resources, and build strong coalitions of diverse stakeholders.

Mayoral takeover can also lead to changes in the relationship between the district and the unions. When Mayor Daley took over in

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Chicago in 1995, for example, a large number of issues that had been bargained in the past were redefined as non-bargainable (Kirst & Bulkley, 2003). The state's 1995 mayoral takeover law removed some bargained items from the teachers' contract.

With multiple urban districts switching to mayoral control in recent years, researchers have begun to assess the impact of this governance change on student achievement. Kenneth Wong analyzed data from a sample of urban districts around the country to determine the effects of mayoral control. He found that mayoral takeovers were associated with a statistically significant improvement in student achievement; the association held across both reading and math for those districts in which the mayor appointed all school board members. Wong's previous research on school-level effects concluded that the gains associated with mayoral control seem to be larger for the lowest-performing schools and for students at the elementary level.

Larry Cuban studied data from Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia—three cities with variations of mayoral control—and also found that the switch to mayoral district governance was associated with moderately improved test scores in the elementary grades (Cuban and Usdan, 2003). However, test scores did not improve in the secondary grades and there was no improvement in reducing the achievement gap between white and minority students.

In his testimony before the Commission, Cuban emphasized that results demonstrating improved student achievement are preliminary and are primarily correlational. It is difficult to ascertain that mayoral takeover actually causes improvement to student achievement. Although these results seem promising, because mayoral control is such a recent reform, little empirical research has been done to date. More work is needed in order to accurately assess the impact of this type of governance change on student achievement.

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There are critics of mayoral control. Some argue that it is not the structural reform itself that makes the difference, but rather the particular mayor's personality and the contacts and networks that he or she brings to the table. Furthermore, mayoral control may shut out alternative viewpoints and diminish the ways that those with contrasting views can have influence. Mayors may reinforce top-down reform strategies and apply one method to the entire city, thereby disempowering teachers, parents, and local communities. Critics assert that it is a mistake to place someone with no education experience in charge of the schools, and some argue that mayoral control may lead to a politicization of what should be non-political decisions.

LAUSD Context

The district's schools serve the city of Los Angeles, parts or all of 27 other cities, and some unincorporated areas. According to a 2005 Education Beat article, approximately 20% of all district students live outside of Los Angeles.³⁷

This situation makes the LAUSD quite different from every other large urban district in the country. At the November 17 Commission meeting, both Michael Kirst and Fritz Edelstein noted that all other examples of cities with successful mayoral control have contiguous boundaries for the city and the school district. The citizens of Los Angeles elect the mayor of Los Angeles only, while the citizens of those cities elect the mayors of the other cities served by the LAUSD.

If the mayor of LA were to take over the LAUSD, he would then be in control of schools serving students whose parents did not have any say in his election. This naturally brings up the question of

³⁷ See http://www.politicalpulse.com/edbeat/subscriber/081205/081205fs_villarai_gosa.asp

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representation for those 27 other cities and unincorporated areas. Under the current system of governance, School Board members are elected by geographic region. This means that some Board members represent cities and unincorporated areas that are not Los Angeles; this system ensures that citizens of non-LA cities are represented in some manner.

Despite these challenges, during his 2005 mayoral campaign, Antonio Villaraigosa expressed his desire to assume increased control of the LAUSD. In August 2005, State Senator Gloria Romero introduced Senate Bill 767, which would have given the Mayor of Los Angeles control of the LAUSD if the District's schools failed to meet certain standards. The structure of the proposed system was as follows:

- Seven board members would be approved by an advisory panel and then selected by the Mayor as seats became vacant
- The Mayor's choices would have to be approved by the city council
- Areas within LAUSD but not within the city of Los Angeles would together choose two board members
- Communities outside LA would have the choice to opt out of the LAUSD if they wanted.

Although Mayor Villaraigosa did not give his support to the bill and it was later declared unconstitutional by the state legislative counsel,³⁸ it did generate a great deal of attention toward LAUSD governance. It also exposed potential opponents of mayoral control, most notably the powerful teachers' unions (Fausset, 2005).

In mid-November, Mayor Villaraigosa began speaking out again about his desire to take over control of the LAUSD.³⁹ Villaraigosa has assembled a team to develop a takeover strategy, and he says that he wants to put a plan in place before the end of his first term. This would likely require the approval of the State Legislature, local

³⁸ The school board cannot be altered without a change in the Los Angeles City Charter.

³⁹ See, <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/la-me-takeover21nov21,1,1266227.story>

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voters, and possibly the City Council. The State Constitution is somewhat vague as to whether the State or the City has the authority to make these changes. Regardless of the mechanism for change, it appears that many groups are opposed to mayoral takeover, most notably the leaders of outlying cities and unions.

Potential Benefits

Given the examples from other districts discussed above, there are at least four potential benefits to mayoral control. First, some researchers have modest evidence that mayoral takeover has led to higher student achievement. Second, mayors are able to leverage citywide resources for use by the schools. On a related note, mayors can also build strong coalitions to work collaboratively on school-based problems. Finally, the mayor serves as one point of accountability and therefore everyone should know whom to blame if student performance does not improve. In addition to these potential benefits, other experiences have shown that mayoral takeover with subsequent changes in union contracts can increase the leeway to implement reforms.

Potential Drawbacks

Some argue that mayoral control will lead to more political interest groups influencing education decisions. Others argue that mayoral control shuts out alternative viewpoints. This argument may represent the largest drawback to mayoral control of LAUSD given that the city and the district boundaries are not contiguous. Residents in the outlying cities do not vote in Los Angeles mayoral elections and there are some strong signals that they would not support mayoral takeover.

Some advocates for mayoral control counter that voter turnout is low for School Board members, indicating that most district residents do

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not value representation. While systematic data is unavailable, it is not unusual for school board elections to report turnouts of 20 percent or less. Turnout usually increases when board elections are held with more visible elections (e.g., national/state/mayoral/city council elections) (Hess, 2002, p.33-34).

In the 2003 LAUSD school board elections, on average, 15% of registered voters across the District voted for a school board member. In 2005, 34% of registered voters in Los Angeles voted for mayor. In that same year, an average of 28% of registered voters across the District voted for a school board member. Voter turnout was higher during the mayoral election, but still lagged behind the proportion voting for mayor. For the eight council seats up for election in 2005, there was an average voter turnout of 29% of registered voters - a proportion almost identical to that voting for school board members.

Legal and Other Implications

The Commission could recommend ways for the 27 cities outside of Los Angeles to be represented. Assuming the District stays intact, two fundamental options exist: either those 75 other cities and unincorporated areas receive no representation in the LAUSD governance process, or a system is devised to give them some means of being represented.

If the mayor of LA were to take over the LAUSD, the other cities and unincorporated areas served by the district might choose to forego any formal representation. Citizens of those areas would still vote for local government officials but would not play a role in school district governance as controlled by the Mayor of LA. If instead it were decided that these cities and unincorporated areas should have representation, then various options are possible. A coalition of small-city mayors could work with the Mayor of LA to appoint School Board members and/or

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the Superintendent, make other district governance decisions, etc. Another option is proportional representation, where the Mayor of LA would appoint a percentage of Board members and the mayors of the other cities together (or separately) would appoint the rest (this option is discussed below). A third option is for the other cities' mayors to give up the ability to make district decisions in exchange for the right to appoint one or more Board members. These alternatives are by no means an exhaustive list but serve only to illustrate the range of options available for consideration.

OPTION: PARTIAL MAYORAL TAKEOVER

Partial mayoral takeover may seem like a good compromise. The mayor could represent Los Angeles, while voters in the other 27 cities could elect the remaining Board members. Experiences in other cities, however, speak to the limited likelihood of success. In other cities where this has been tried there has been conflict between elected and appointed members and mayors have expressed their frustration over not being able to fully implement their agendas. In Oakland, California, for example, a city charter amendment in March 2000 allowed the Mayor to appoint 3 additional members to the 7 elected members, increasing the number of board members to 10. The appointed members clashed with the elected members and the mayor lamented his inability to execute his agenda. In his testimony to the Commission, Michael Kirst recommended that the Mayor either be given full or no authority over the schools, based on other cities' experiences.

OPTION: INCREASED MAYORAL ROLE

The Commission could recommend that the Mayor be more centrally involved in the LAUSD without having authority over the Board or the Superintendent.

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Background Information

In his presentation to the Commission on November 17, Fritz Edelstein discussed a number of ways that mayors can play an important role in education without necessarily "taking over" the system.⁴⁰

Possible roles for a mayor include:

- Adding the superintendent of schools to the mayor's "cabinet"
- Making the school budget part of the city budget
- Managing back office activities by the city
- Requiring directors of city departments to work with similar officials in the school system
- Developing policies and programs to help recruit and retain teachers
- Holding regularly scheduled meeting between the Mayor, Superintendent, and the heads of colleges, universities, and local businesses to focus on schooling issues

Other mayors have played an important role in joining schools and city services together by leveraging their authority to help form joint-use partnerships and other collaborative agreements. One example of this is in Akron, Ohio, where the mayor used municipal bonds to match state funds for a new school construction effort. The new school facilities will be available for use by the community as a widespread joint-use project (Edelstein, 2004). Yet another kind of mayoral involvement took place in San Jose, where the mayor used his authority to help the city provide subsidized housing for teachers (Kirst and Bulkley, 2003).

LAUSD Context

The LAUSD has a history of mayoral association. Former Mayor Richard Riordan, for example, asserted his influence in Los Angeles by backing a slate of four school board candidates. He raised \$2 million

⁴⁰ Taken from Fritz Edelstein's presentation to the Commission on November 17, 2005.

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to help elect his chosen slate, who then overthrew the incumbent board and replaced the Superintendent.

Potential Benefits

An increased role for the Mayor may have some of the benefits of mayoral control. He may be able to leverage citywide resources for use by the schools and build strong coalitions to work collaboratively on school-based problems.

Potential Drawbacks

Without full a full mayoral takeover, the Mayor may lack the authority to leverage association with the District for improvement.

OPTION: REPLACE THE BOARD WITH AN EDUCATION POLICY OR ADVISORY BOARD

Currently, the LAUSD Board serves executive, legislative, and judicial functions. While these functions are common across school boards, some experts are starting to believe that boards cannot serve all of these functions well.

Background Information

Several prominent school board authorities have proposed that local school boards change into *local education policy boards* (Danzberger, 1992, 1994; Danzberger et al., 1992; Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1993; Kirst, 1994; The Twentieth Century Fund, 1992). The most essential characteristic of the local education policy boards is a focus on policy making and oversight without involvement in daily administration (Danzberger, 1992; Danzberger et al., 1992; The Twentieth Century Fund, 1992). Local education policy boards are, foremost, responsible for setting an overall vision for education in their districts and, in alignment with this vision, establishing short- and

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long-term goals, school performance indicators, and assessments of students (Danzberger et al., 1992, 1993).

The proposal for local education policy boards has received a great deal of attention partly because it is based on findings of a comprehensive study of school boards, conducted by Carol and colleagues (1986), and other work sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL]. The IEL has issued guidelines to assist states in redefining the role of school boards in a report entitled, "A framework for redefining the role and responsibilities of local school boards" (Danzberger et al., 1993).

Deregulation is a critical component of the proposal; states must repeal legislation requiring school boards to be responsible for virtually every aspect of education, which experts contend compels them to become overly involved in administration (Danzberger, 1994; Danzberger et al., 1992; Kirst, 1994; Reid, 2000; The Twentieth Century Fund, 1992). Furthermore, state legislation is necessary because school boards are unlikely to reform themselves, according to many critics (Danzberger, 1994; Danzberger et al., 1992, 1993; The Twentieth Century Fund, 1992). Refocusing school boards on policymaking and oversight and restraining them from administration are fundamental aspects of two educational governance models proposed by the Education Commission of the States (1999), John Carver's (1997) policy governance model, and reforms proposed by Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) to raise students' achievement.

The IEL report also recommends that legislators pass laws that encourage school districts to increase site-based management, authorize school boards to approve charter schools and/or contract out the management of their schools, and authorize the establishment of local children's policy councils to oversee coordinated education, health, and social services for all children and families within the district.

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These recommendations are controversial; there is limited data to support them and limited consensus among educational scholars and practitioners regarding them (Arnsperger, McElhinney, and Ziebarth, 1999; Ziebarth, 1999).

Nonetheless, some states have passed legislation that encourages districts to establish education policy boards. The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 designates the school board as a policymaking body and the superintendent as the CEO to manage the district. Boards in the State are directed to establish goals, policies, and budgets, and select, work with, and evaluate their superintendents. The superintendent is the only person actually employed and evaluated by the board in Massachusetts (Education Policy and Leadership Center, 2004). Kentucky and Tennessee have similar laws, focusing boards on policymaking and budget adoption, and assigning management responsibility, including the responsibility for hiring and managing personnel, to superintendents (Education Policy and Leadership Center, 2004).

Michael Kirst has suggested that the Commission may want to explore establishing an educational policy board to oversee the LAUSD. According to his conception of this type of board, an Educational Policy Board would not:

- Preside over grievances, suspensions, or transfers. Instead, the district could use ombudsmen and administrative law judges for these functions.
- Approve competitively bid contracts.
- Approve specific payments in approved budgets.
- Approve all change orders in construction projects.
- Approve specific personnel, except cabinet.
- Approve detailed items such as field trips, student transfers, and bus routes.
- Encourage annual turnover in board chairmanship.
- Manage the collective bargaining process - but would set goals and objectives.

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Such a board would:

- Hire local CEO, define superintendent role
- Establish strategic plan
- Approve budget or spending priorities
- Approve negotiated collective bargaining contracts
- Approve curriculum frameworks
- Set staff development policies
- Link policies to pupil outcomes, curriculum framework, and assessments
- Serve on local children's boards
- Approve construction projects
- Contract for charter schools
- Hire administrative law judge advocate for public education to hear complaints and appeals
- Convene community forums
- Formulate school-based management policies and site reviews

Potential Benefits

The hope is that a change in this direction would allow the Board to focus on setting policy that affects student achievement.

Potential Drawbacks

Given current political and institutional structures, it could take substantial time and resources to change the School Board to an Education Policy Board.

Legal and Other Implications

If the Commission were to recommend that the Board become an education policy or advisory board and therefore relinquish some of its current duties, this change would require altering the State Education Code. If the Board did relinquish some of its current functions, new structures may be needed in order to ensure that relinquished tasks would be transparently conducted with clear oversight mechanisms.

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OPTION: DISMANTLE THE LAUSD BOARD

Some critics argue that current educational governance is anachronistic and chronically ineffective and they advocate for the abolition of school boards (Land, 2002). Alternatives include having the state, mayor, local school boards, or some combination of these three, fulfill the role of the district school board. District staff could also take on some tasks now performed by the Board.

This change would be a drastic change. If the Commissioners selected this option, they would be sending a strong signal as to their dissatisfaction with the current Board. It would also require changes to the State Education Code.

The public is likely to resist such change, both because they would lose their opportunity to elect their own representatives and because they rely on the public board meetings as a venue for influencing the District.

As was the case with the option to narrow the focus of the Board, the Commission also needs to consider that any role that the district Board is not fulfilling must be assumed by the Superintendent (or other high level professional, if new positions are created) or a replacement governance system comprised of the Mayor, State, or local school boards.

SUMMARY

This Appendix has presented information on different mechanisms for controlling the District, including introducing mayoral control, changing the School Board to an education policy board, and dismantling the Board altogether. In the next Appendix, we present information on modifying the School Board. If the Commission decided to give power to the Mayor or to reduce the power of the board, most of the options presented in the next Appendix would be irrelevant.

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APPENDIX G. SCHOOL BOARD CHARACTERISTICS

This Appendix presents information on changing characteristics of the current School Board, including its compensation, number of members, and methods of selection. Options include increasing compensation and the number of board members. Community members and Board members themselves have recommended both. No one has recommended decreasing either compensation or the number of members. In terms of selection mechanisms, options including electing some or all members at-large, appointing some or all members, and allowing non-citizens to vote. All of these options have been recommended by a community member or broached by a Commissioner. Information in this appendix is based on a review of practices in the top 20 urban districts throughout the United States as well as a targeted literature review on school boards.

OPTION: INCREASE COMPENSATION

LAUSD School Board members receive an annual salary of \$25,200. The California Education Code stipulates that board members of districts with an ADA above 400,000 (the LAUSD being the only one) should be assigned a stipend of \$24,000. There is a provision that the Board members can increase this by five percent in a given year, which the LAUSD Board members did this year. This stipend is paid monthly and is based on the number of meetings that each Board member attends per month.

Board and community members have suggested an increase in compensation in order to be paid fairly for the time spent on board matters.

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Background Information

Most district boards receive little or no compensation. In his survey of board members, Hess (2002)⁴¹ found that almost two-thirds of respondents reported receiving no salary for their board service, and only three percent receive \$10,000 or more. However, board members in large districts are more likely to earn a salary. Approximately 50 percent of Great City Schools (GSC)⁴² board members receive salaries for service on the school board. The average salary for GCS board members is \$14,935, ranging from \$2,000 to \$37,426 (Council of the Great City Schools, 2005).

In the 20 largest districts in the United States, the only state that provides for higher board pay than that received in the LAUSD is Florida. Board members overseeing the large county districts such as Palm Beach, Broward, Orange, and Hillsborough County receive approximately \$37,000 for their service. Alternately, in New York City, board members are only reimbursed for expenses. Board members in Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston, and Dallas receive no salary. In Detroit, board members receive \$30 for each meeting attended.

Other types of board and council members do earn higher salaries. For example, Los Angeles City Council members earn \$149,160 per year, a salary equal to that prescribed by law for judges of the Municipal Court of the Los Angeles Judicial District (Los Angeles City Charter, Section 218). The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors members receive

⁴¹ In 2001, Hess conducted a survey of board members using a stratified random sample, over sampling for large districts. He received responses from 827 boards, representing 41% of his sample. There are approximately 14,000 school boards across the country.

⁴² The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its 65 member districts (all are urban districts) in the fall of 2004 to determine the characteristics of school boards and board members. Surveys were received from 45 of the member districts, for a response rate of 69.2 percent.

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\$143,838 - the same salary as a judge of the Superior Court of County of LA. The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco consists of 11 members elected by sub-district. Each of these members earns \$75,000 per year.

Potential Benefits

The argument behind the suggestion to increase compensation is that board members could devote more time to board matters if they were offered a higher salary, because it would allow members to serve full time. Some board members argue that they are already working full-time on board matters. A full-time salary might also enable some people who cannot afford to quit their current job to seek office.

Potential Drawbacks

It is not clear that spending more time on board matters or meeting more often should be a goal in and of itself. To make a decision about compensation, it is important to first define the Board's role. These choices would have implications for time commitments and salary. After the mission is defined, then it may be possible to estimate the optimal amount of time that the Board should spend working on the issues; thus determining an appropriate compensation package.

Legal and Other Implications

Increasing compensation would require changing the State's education code.

OPTION: INCREASE NUMBER OF BOARD MEMBERS

Suggestions have been made to the Commission to increase the number of Board members in order to decrease the number of constituents and schools that they represent.

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Background information

A recent trend to reduce the number of board members in school districts appears to be linked to the trend of mayoral takeover (Marschall 2005). According to Land (2002), most school boards have between 5 and 7 members, with about half of all large districts (25,000 or more students) having 7 or 8 board members (Hess, 2002). Of the city and county-based districts in the U.S., New York City has the largest board, with 13 members.

Each School Board member represents a district of about 635,000 residents and 120 schools. For comparison purposes, in New York City, each of the 13 board members represents approximately 615,000 people, and in Chicago, each of the 7 members represents approximately 414,000 people. The Los Angeles City Council has 15 members, elected by districts with almost equal populations of approximately 230,000 residents per council member. If the LAUSD School Board membership were increased to 13, each member would represent approximately 345,000 people and 65 schools.

Potential Benefits

Supporters of increasing the number of board members argue that representatives would be able to develop better relationships with their constituents and their schools.

Potential Drawbacks

Some experts argue that more members are not necessarily better. When the Commissioners questioned our governance speakers about this issue, some responded that the more people on the board, the harder it is to come to a consensus. In addition, Mark Slavkin, who served as an LAUSD School Board member from 1989-1997, cautioned the Commission to consider the extra burden that could be placed on the Superintendent

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from additional board members demanding his time and attention. Unfortunately, there is no study that determines the optimal number of board members given a certain population.

OPTION: CHANGE METHOD OF BOARD SELECTION

Board members can be appointed or elected, and if elected, they can be elected by the district as a whole or by specific board (or city) districts. The relevant question for the Commission is whether political structures and selection procedures affect both representation itself and the quality of that representation. The literature has explored these issues and indicates that any one method is no better than any other in terms of better governance. Most studies conclude that each district should think hard about its defining characteristics, goals, and constraints, and define the best structure of governance according to this analysis (Meier and Juenke, 2005). The empirical research on the relationship between board structure and student achievement is limited and does not point to a clear solution.

Sub-Option: Elect Some or All Members From the District At-Large

Community members have recommended electing some members of the Board on an at-large basis in order to ensure that the Board focuses on the District as a whole.

Background Information

In an at-large voting system, school board candidates can reside anywhere in the district, and voters select candidates to represent the whole district. Some districts combine at-large voting with by-district elections. The Hillsborough County, FL, school district elects five members by district and two at large. In the Fairfax County Public

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Schools, VA, voters in sub-districts elect nine members and voters at-large elect three members.

Potential Benefits

Some argue that board members elected on a by-district basis tend to have a narrower agenda, focusing only on the constituencies that elected them and their needs, which can preclude a broader policy perspective (Land, 2002; Carol, Cunningham, Danzberger, Kirst, McCloud, and Usdan, 1986; Danzberger, 1994; Kirst, 1994). Representing different constituencies may also affect the cohesiveness of the board and its ability to work productively.

Potential Drawbacks

Others argue that if board members were elected at-large, there is even less of a chance that these representatives could get to know their constituencies and their schools than there is under the current sub-district voting system. There is some evidence that in elections by a sub-district, there's a higher probability of a minority being elected to the school board.

Legal and Other Implications

To overcome the minority under-representation problem, some school boards have adopted a cumulative voting system as a variation of at-large voting. Under cumulative voting, voters have as many votes as there are positions to be filled, and can apportion them however they wish. Voters can use all their votes on a single candidate or distribute their votes among contenders for several seats.

This system of voting requires rather complicated strategic thinking and coordination on the part of voters. Under cumulative

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voting, voters need to decide for whom to vote, and how to vote for that candidate.⁴³

Minority representation advocates tend to support this form of voting because they believe that they could (by concentrating their votes on a small number of minority candidates) ensure minority representation. However, if non-minorities engage in similar strategic behavior, the ultimate goals of this system may not be reached. But, studies have shown that cumulative voting elections have helped elect Native Americans, African Americans, and Latino candidates (Bowler, Donovan, and Brockington, 2003).

According to Bowler et al. (2003), 100 towns, cities, and school districts are using this alternative voting system. It is currently used in school districts in Illinois, Texas, South Dakota, New Mexico, and Alabama. The Amarillo School District, in Texas, is the largest district with a cumulative voting system.

Amarillo aside, the typical school district that uses this system is small, rural, and southern. Most districts that implement cumulative voting are doing so in response to problems with at-large voting systems. Cumulative voting is often presented as a cost-saving option to sub-districting.

Sub-Option: Appoint Some or All Board Members

Even though most board members in the United States are elected, there is a recent trend towards appointments by the Mayor,⁴⁴ Governor, city councils, other executive officers, or some combination of these (Marschall, 2005). According to Marschall, 24 states have recently

⁴³ For an extended discussion on cumulative voting coordination and implications, see Bowles et al, 2003.

⁴⁴ Board appointment is a concept closely related to mayoral control.

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passed legislation authorizing the transition from elected to appointed members.

Potential Benefits

Advocates of appointed boards tend to focus on four arguments. First, school board member position may be the first stepping-stone towards a long-term political career. Therefore, elected board members may be more focused on their own interests than on improving the school system (Cronin and Usdan, in press). Second, advocates argue that because continuity is an important feature of governance, that appointments can be made for longer terms than the standard election terms.

Third, advocates of appointed boards argue that the appointing person or body can specify experiences and backgrounds, thus ensuring that the board as a whole has relevant knowledge and skill sets. For example, in Cleveland, at least four of the nine school board members must have "significant expertise in either education, finance, or business management."⁴⁵ The Baltimore City Public School district requires that the Board consist of:⁴⁶

1. At least four (4) voting members who possess a high level of knowledge and expertise concerning the successful administration of a large business, nonprofit, or governmental entity and have served in a high level management position within such an entity;
2. At least three (3) voting members who possess a high level of knowledge and expertise concerning education;
3. At least one (1) voting member who is a parent of a student enrolled in the Baltimore City Public School System as of the date of appointment of the member; and
4. At least one (1) voting member whom has knowledge or experience in the education of children with disabilities, which may be derived from being a parent of a child with a disability.

⁴⁵<http://www.cmsdnet.net/board/>

⁴⁶http://www.bcps.k12.md.us/School_Board/Board_Rules/PDF/Article_1.pdf

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Finally, advocates of appointed boards point out that voter turnout for board members is usually low.

Potential Drawbacks

Advocates for elected boards point to research concluding that when the public is discontented with the state of the school system, voter turnout increases (Land, 2002). Furthermore, they argue that elected candidates should work as hard as appointed members because election to higher office could be contingent on how well they perform as a school board member. And of course such advocates argue that elected boards give citizens the right to vote for their representative and that those elected members then better represent their constituencies than do appointed members.

Legal and Other Implications

If the Commission suggests moving to a form of appointing Board members, it may want to include mechanisms for holding Board members accountable for performance. In other words, if constituents do not vote for representatives, there should be a clear way of measuring performance and terminating board member contracts if performance does not increase under their tenure.

OPTION: ALLOW NON-CITIZENS TO VOTE FOR BOARD MEMBERS

Community members and Commissioners have suggested allowing non-citizens to vote for school board members.

Background Information

The practice of non-citizen voting has spread to more than 20 countries around the world, including to communities in New Zealand, Chile, Israel, and all Member States of the European Union. The U.S.

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Constitution gives states and municipalities the right to decide who is eligible to vote. Non-citizens enjoyed voting rights for most of the country's history--from the founding until the 1920s--in much of the country.

In New York City, all immigrants - legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants -who had children in public schools could vote in school board elections from 1970 until 2002, after which time the school boards were eliminated. Although citizenship remains a requirement for state-level voting, at the local level, Chicago allows non-citizen voting in school council elections. In 1988, the Illinois school code was changed to allow cities with populations of over 500,000 (i.e., for Chicago) to allow all community residents and parents of children in schools, regardless of citizenship, to vote in school site council elections. Maryland allows non-citizens to vote in local elections in five towns including Takoma Park. Amherst and Cambridge, Massachusetts, voted to approve non-citizen voting, though they are awaiting a state enabling law. Similar initiatives have been launched in a dozen other places from coast to coast, including Washington, D.C, Denver, and Connecticut.

LAUSD Context

The California constitution specifically states that only California residents who are U.S. citizens at least 18 years of age can vote in California elections. Currently, non-citizens cannot vote for LAUSD school board members.

In 2004, San Franciscans considered a ballot initiative that would have amended the San Francisco city charter to allow non-citizen parents and guardians of children in the public school system to vote in local school board elections (Proposition F). Dianne Feinstein's opposed Proposition F in San Francisco (2004).

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From its first days, our nation has been strengthened by immigrants who have come to the United States with the dream of becoming citizens. I strongly support the naturalization process and encourage it whenever I can. I believe that the greatest right and responsibility of being a citizen is the right to vote. That is the core of democracy. Allowing non-citizens to vote is not only unconstitutional in California, it clearly dilutes the promise of citizenship. Article II, Section 4 of the California Constitution specifically states that only California residents who are U.S. citizens at least 18 years of age may vote in California elections. It seems clear that this section would prevent the extension of voting rights to non-citizens, even in local elections.

On November 2, 2004, San Francisco voters narrowly defeated the measure.

Potential Benefits

Providing non-citizens with the right to vote enables them to influence their students' education.

Potential Drawbacks

Some argue (as Feinstein has) that only citizens should have the right to vote.

Legal and Other Implications

Whether California courts will require a state constitutional amendment in order to uphold any future local reform initiatives on non-citizen voting has been debated.⁴⁷ At least one court has ruled that a change to allow local non-citizen voting requires an amendment to the state constitution, but some scholars contend that the language of the

⁴⁷ Harper-Ho explains that "[t]he California Constitution can be amended by legislative referendum or by direct initiative. A legislative amendment requires a two-thirds vote in each house to approve the proposal and a majority vote for ratification. To amend the constitution by direct initiative, a petition must be signed by eight percent of the voters for all gubernatorial candidates in the last election and the amendment must be passed by a majority vote in a referendum. Approved initiatives can be amended as specified or repealed, but not vetoed; defeated initiatives can be refiled. Changes to statutes can be made by

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state constitution can be interpreted less restrictively to mandate citizen voting while neither requiring nor prohibiting non-citizen voting.⁴⁸

SUMMARY

This Appendix has presented options to change characteristics of the current School Board, including paying them a higher salary, adding more members, and changing the way they are elected. Even if the Commission decides to change the current board to an education policy or advisory board, it might still want to select some of these options, such as appointing board members. But, these options are primarily relevant if the Commission decides to maintain the basic governance structure of the District.

direct initiative, legislative referendum or citizen petition." Harper-Ho, *supra* note 1, at 315 (citations omitted).

⁴⁸ For the view that a constitutional amendment is necessary to permit non-citizen voting at the local level, see discussion in Harper-Ho, 2000, *supra* note, at 314. Harper-Ho also notes that "[i]n 1974, the California Court of Appeals for the Second District rejected permanent residents' constitutional challenge to the Article II citizenship requirement under the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause." *Id.* at 314. For the view that the California Constitution can be interpreted as mandating suffrage for U.S. citizens without precluding suffrage for non-citizens, see, e.g., Rachel Moran, *quoted in* Mello, *supra* note 7; and Tara Kini, *Hamline Journal of Public Law & Policy*, January 2005.

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APPENDIX H. CHANGING THE LOCUS OF CONTROL

This Appendix presents information on the locus of control of specific functions. Community members, expert speakers, and Commissioners themselves have discussed ways to decentralize decisions to from the central office to lower levels with the school system. These decisions include those on mission as well as curriculum and instruction. No one recommended further centralizing decisions to the central office.

This Appendix provides background information on decentralization, including examples of related initiatives in other districts. One specific initiative raised by a few speakers is moving to a weighted student formula as a school funding mechanism. This move would decentralize the budgeting process within the LAUSD. It is presented as a sub-option under decentralization.

Two options are presented in this Appendix that are not related to decentralizing authority from the central district office to the schools, but would alter the locus of control within the District. The first focuses on altering the power balance between the District and the unions. The second option focuses on collaborations with local cities. Community members and expert speakers alike have recommended both changing union contracts and expanding collaborations.

Information in this Appendix is based on a literature review, the expert testimony of Martin Carnoy and Paul Hill, and examples from other districts.

OPTION: DECENTRALIZE DECISIONS TO SCHOOLS

There are several options for decentralization within the LAUSD. Two main issues for consideration are the level of decentralization and the manner of implementing it. The Commission could recommend that all

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schools have full autonomy and authority over curricular decisions, pedagogy, budgeting, hiring and firing teachers, and professional development, for example. Alternatively, Commissioners could recommend that schools be given authority over a few of these decisions, but not all.

The second issue concerns the manner of implementation. The Commission could recommend that all schools be decentralized at once, for example. Alternatively, the Commission could recommend that schools that would like greater authority volunteer for it. These schools could either be granted such authority, or autonomy could be based on their meeting a set of performance indicators.

For example, in Cincinnati, schools that "prove" themselves can become more autonomous. The district takes a portfolio approach by dividing schools into five categories according to a variety of performance indicators. High-performing schools receive autonomy, moderate performers receive assistance, and low performers receive prescriptive direction and can be closed and replaced if they do not improve.

It has been argued that by decentralizing incrementally and voluntarily, districts can give existing schools the opportunity to step forward and become more independently operated, without mandating such independence. The voluntary nature of decentralization may make it more likely that change will take hold at the school (Hassel 2003, p.5).

Another option involves the District doing more purposeful planning in terms of selecting certain schools for greater autonomy, based either on meeting performance indicators or on their association with feeder schools, or on a combination of the two. Former board member Mark Slavkin advocated for this option when he testified before the Commission on December first. He suggested creating clusters around a high school, its middle school, and its elementary school feeders. A

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local board could be created for each of these "clusters," and a centralized body could oversee business operations, such as food service, transportation, payroll, and construction.

A more radial alternative of this option turns the District into a fee for service organization. The District would tell each school how much it would charge for these business services (e.g., one dollar per student for transportation) and the school would then decide whether or not to use the District for these services. This model would only work if student funding went directly to the school, rather than to the District.

The Council on Great City schools recently released the results of an audit it performed on the LAUSD. It suggested, among other things, that the LAUSD retain the current eight regional local districts, but re-deploy instructional and non-instructional staff from the central office location to the local districts (Council of the Great City Schools, 2005). Although this option does not decentralize more authority to schools, it does decentralize some decisionmaking from the central office to the local districts.

Background Information

In the United States decentralization of education tends to refer to shifting the locus of decision-making authority from districts to individual schools (see, e.g., Caldwell 2005). For more than two decades now, two opposing theories of reform have clashed on the national stage: one side trusts each individual school to decide its own strategy for success; the other believes that the unified leadership and coherent vision of a school district's central office is needed to implement positive change at scale (Hornblower 2005, p.1).

In the late 1980s, just as the standards movement was beginning to gain a foothold, the pendulum swung toward decentralization and various

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forms of site-based management. However, most site-based management efforts were not implemented as envisioned and failed to produce the desired results. By 2000, state accountability systems had begun to take hold, and the pendulum swung back toward centralization (Vander Ark, 2002 p. 323). Some argue that this swing was the result of decentralization increasing the fragmentation and complexity of city schooling, thus paradoxically expanding administrative burdens, bringing pressure to re-centralize (Wong, 1990).

Recently, many districts have started to experiment again with new forms of decentralization (Hansen & Roza, 2005). In theory and practice, centralization and decentralization are in tension, with centralization preferred when the values of control, uniformity, and efficiency are in ascendance, and decentralization preferred when freedom, differentiation, and responsiveness are deemed more valuable (Caldwell 2005, p. 4). Michael Kirst, in his presentation to the Presidents' Joint Commission on the LAUSD Governance, on November 17, 2005, referred to this frequent change of reform strategies as "centralization / decentralization ebbs and flows."

Elmore (1993) writes that shifts from centralization to decentralization and back are meaningless, because these reforms focus more on changing the status quo than on finding the best organizational structures for school improvement (see also, Cooper and Bloomfield, 2003). He argues that more or less decentralization has made little difference in past reform efforts in terms of efficiency, accountability, or the effectiveness of public schools. He argues, instead, that reformers swing back and forth between centralization and decentralization in an attempt to find something that will work and that is different from the current situation at hand.

While there are many arguments in favor of both centralized and decentralized education models, many (see, e.g., Caldwell, 2005, Fiske,

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1996) argue that the real challenge is to achieve a balance, depending on capacities and values. Decentralization of schools is often equated with valuing better representation of all concerned, shared decision-making, cooperative control, and greater involvement of parents and the greater community. Such forms of decentralization merge the function of administration with the function of representation (Bimber 1993). In fact, several highly visible decentralization efforts in the United States (New York City in the late 60s, Chicago in the late 80s) were motivated as much or more by a political goal (democratizing decisionmaking by involving local communities and other actors) as by an educational one (Hansen and Roza 2005a).

Potential Benefits

Carnoy (2005) argues that even if an administration has a clear vision to improve student performance, implementation is difficult, because educational practice in America remains highly decentralized and autonomous despite the appearance of increased centralization and control. In other words, systems are already highly decentralized, regardless of whether or not district officials think otherwise. Teachers are largely unsupervised in their work, curriculum varies from school to school despite ostensibly centralized control of curriculum, and implementation of curriculum is only indirectly controlled by testing and implicit sanctions (Carnoy 2005).

Even if one believes that schools are decentralized by virtue of their loosely coupled nature, there are still District directives to follow. Decentralization advocates argue against District control for five reasons. First, reformers argue that districts are overly bureaucratic to the detriment of the students. Second Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that direct democratic (and bureaucratic) governance turns schools into incoherent institutions dominated by interest groups rather

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than by a shared sense of educational mission and public purpose. To lessen the influence of interest groups, Paul Hill argued before the Commission that Boards should devolve some of their authority to the school level, in order to locate the decision making as near to the child as possible. He advocated that boards make the school the employers, and allocate money transparently by funding students, and not programs. These changes would limit the Board's scope of action and, in theory, further distance them from making decisions based on patronage.

Third, many opponents of centralization claim that district level administrators are too disconnected from the day-to-day operations of schools, and centralized decision processes tend to result in uniform policies that do not meet the particular needs of specific schools and student groups. Fourth, Cibulka (1991) argues that opportunities for parental involvement in a centralized system are more limited. Researchers are finding that when districts decentralize, individual schools become more compatible with neighborhood traditions, needs, and values. Fifth, advocates of decentralization believe that schools will become more effective only if teachers and principals gain a sense of personal responsibility for their student's performance by removing external constraints on schools (Bimber, 1993).

The following are examples of decentralization from other districts.

Edmonton, Alberta. Edmonton is a highly decentralized district. For more than a decade, education reformers have admired the achievements of the Edmonton Public Schools in Canada and have attempted to replicate their success (Deroche, Cooper, and Ouchi 2004). By the year 2002, 87% of first grade students and 92% of twelfth grade students scored at or above grade level on the Alberta Provincial Standardized test, and the decentralized approach has been popular with teachers, principals, and parents (Deroche et al., 2004, p. 8).

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The district of 81,000 students and 200 schools is similar to the LAUSD in that its population is diverse and it covers a wide geographic area (Garey, Paulson, Sonenshein, and Toby, 2005). However, most other districts trying to repeat Edmonton's successful form of decentralization have stopped short of implementing Edmonton's policy of allocating resources to schools. Edmonton's radically decentralized system of school governance gives principals authority over 80 percent of the district's budget (Archer, 2004). In the LAUSD, in contrast, principals report discretion over less than ten percent of their budgets (Garey et al., 2005; Deroche et al., 2004).⁴⁹

Chicago.⁵⁰ The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is the nation's third-largest school system. It includes more than 600 schools and serves about 431,000 students. Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, Chicago has designated 85 schools as "Autonomous Management and Performance Schools (AMPS)," allowing them to opt into system wide curricular initiatives, schedule their own professional development, and be exempt from routine oversight and monitoring. In order to qualify for AMPS, all schools have to meet most of a list of criteria determined by a committee made up of CPS administrators. The criteria encompass student performance, management, school climate, and special education. Schools are able to implement a restructured day calendar, tailor their own

⁴⁹ Despite repeated attempts at decentralization, the three largest school districts in North America: New York, Los Angeles and Chicago still use strict enrollment formulas to dictate what resources a given school will receive. In Los Angeles, for example, a middle school in 2001-02 received one teacher per 39.25 students, plus \$24 per student in materials and supply money. Ratios like these drive the allocation of almost every type of operating expenditure, including administrator positions, counselor and nurse time and textbooks. In these systems of enrollment ratio formulas, principals and teachers have little control over the school's staffing, schedule or educational program (Deroche 2004).

⁵⁰ For more details please see Chicago Public Schools, Press Release, June 6, 2005.

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professional development schedule to their individual needs, and may spend funds and transfer funding from one program to another without central office approval. They may also choose to be operationally self-directed. The CPS is considering other options in the future for AMPS schools, including per-pupil funding allocation and policy flexibilities. All AMDS schools will be reviewed annually, and can lose their autonomy if they fail to meet the required number of criteria, change principals, or are recommended for removal by the Office of Instruction and School Management (which oversees elementary schools) or the Office of High School Programs.

Potential Drawbacks

There are at least four arguments against decentralization. First, detractors argue that current school leaders and teachers do not have the skills to be fully autonomous. Although decentralization means that people closest to a problem have the opportunity to solve it (Hannaway 1993a & b, Plank & Boyd 1994, Bimber 1993), one should not assume that they have the necessary knowledge and resources to do so effectively (Bimber 1993). Some schools, particularly those with weak organizational structures, may have difficulty capitalizing on autonomy (Wohlstetter & Griffin 1998). Decentralization can actually degrade service provision if local capacity is weak or poor communities lack the ability to voice their concerns, thus increasing inequality.

Studies have found that despite their desire for autonomy, charter schools, which represent the most decentralized form of recent public school reforms (Wohlstetter, Wenning & Briggs 1995), often struggle with decentralized management (Griffin and Wohlstetter 2001) and turn to their district bureaucracy when they need help (Wells et al. 1998).

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Even schools that do not need help may find themselves spending more time on managerial tasks than they would like. One study found that schools with greater autonomy from their central offices/districts were better able to create and sustain a learning community and respond quickly to problems, but were more consumed by managerial decisions (Wohlstetter & Griffin 1998).

A second argument against decentralization is that students are increasingly mobile and should therefore be able to transfer to schools within a district with minimal disruption. A number of districts, especially urban districts with mobile student populations, are beginning to believe that a common curriculum across schools may be beneficial. Without such centralized curriculum, students can experience a fragmented program over the course of several years, a situation that is particularly negative when students change schools frequently (Resnick and Zurawski, 2005).

Third, detractors argue that it is simply more efficient to operate a centralized system, given the complexity of today's educational systems. District central offices grew dramatically after the 1960s, largely in response to federal and state categorical programs and court mandates. As school districts became legally responsible for issues such as equity, and entered increasingly complex agreements with teacher unions, the demand for new central office specialists increased. Some argue against devolving responsibility to schools for these complex issues. Martin Carnoy argued before the Commission on November 17 that more control and coordination rather than less control is required to strengthen the school district's ability to implement its vision for the schools within its borders. According to Carnoy this requires overseeing elements of the education system that may be outside of the realm of the District such as university training of teachers, community

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health-care, pre-school education, adult pre-natal training, and pre-school nutrition programs.

Finally, others simply believe that school districts are the best force to drive positive change within the public school system (Hornblower, 2005; NCREL, 1993; Carnoy, 1995). The Institute for Learning (IfL) at the University of Pittsburgh, founded in 1995 as a partnership of school districts committed to standards-based education and system-wide reform, is an advocate of centralized decisionmaking and control. The Institute believes that for educational reform to be broadly effective and equitably distributed, the unit of change must be the district. The IfL further believes that school districts are both the seat of accountability for school reform and the organizational entities that can control what happens in large number of schools - by influencing curriculum, providing professional development opportunities, and establishing performance standards (Glennan and Resnick, 2004, p.517).

Martin Carnoy, in his testimony to the Commission, concluded his plea for more central control by arguing that

Decentralization is a nice, but unrealistic idea, which will only be effective if there is a large pool of talented school entrepreneurs and teachers who, operating independently, can create better schools.

Many previous attempts at decentralization have had disappointing results despite promising ideas. Several studies (Wohlstetter and Odden, 1992; Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz, 1990; Bimber, 1994; Clune and White, 1988) have documented the failure of previous decentralization efforts to produce the desired improvements in performance. For example, to many U.S. educators, "site based management" (SBM) is a reform that has been tried with little success. However, advocates of decentralization argue that the previous attempts at SBM never produced real changes in institutional and governance structure or educational

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practice - often because the shifts in decision-making authority were incomplete (Bimber 1993, 1994; Wohlstetter and Odden 1992), and also lacked some other important contextual preconditions currently present (Hansen and Roza 2005a). Such conditions include the presence of new federal and state accountability systems, the growth of school choice options, and the impending retirement of many principals and teachers, opening the door for new employees who may be more accepting or even more demanding, of decentralization (Hansen and Roza, 2005a).

Partially because of the shortcoming of many recent and initially promising decentralization efforts, centralization, as a reform strategy, has been re-emerging in many school districts in the recent years.⁵¹ A recent study of high performing urban districts found that these districts selected curriculum and instructional approaches at the central office level (Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy, 2002).

In 1998, the San Diego City Schools launched one of the nation's most ambitious efforts in school reform (Hess, 2005). Prior to 1998, principals and teachers were in charge. According to the former San Diego school board president, "teachers basically ran the schools and they did whatever they felt was best at their schools" keeping the interference from the district to a minimum (Hornblower 2005). The role of the central office was limited to offering each school the freedom and resources it needed.

The 1998 reform effort was driven by a strategy of setting standards, building the professional skills of teachers and administrators, and identifying system-wide instructional needs, then aligning resources and organizational structures to address those needs (Hess, 2005).

⁵¹ Interestingly, however, this "top-down" pressure has also been instrumental to the development of charter schools (Teske et al 2005).

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The battle between the competing visions of site-based vs. district-directed reform was fought out in the San Diego school board which was split narrowly, 3-2, in favor of the reform, with the two opponents on the board largely representing the union's dedication to site-based reform (Hess, 2005). The 2004 school board election put a new anti-centralization majority into power. The board terminated the Superintendent's contract and began dismantling other elements of the centralized reform.

The San Diego reform had a mixed record of success. Scores in elementary and middle schools improved. Between 1999 and 2004, the percentage of elementary schools scoring at the top rung of California's academic performance index increased by more than 35 percent (Hess, 2005). The number of low performing schools during Bersin's tenure was reduced by more than 90 percent. The number of schools scoring in the bottom category fell from 13 to 1. Also the performance gap dividing white and Asian students from black and Latino students narrowed significantly in kindergarten through eighth grade. However, in high school the results did not improve significantly.

LAUSD Context

There are two obstacles to decentralization that might impede success in the LAUSD. First, several current school principals are relatively new. However, others argue that if the principal position is restructured to include greater autonomy, more qualified candidates will step forward. Second, the high rate of student mobility in the LAUSD indicates an itinerant family population. If each school in the LAUSD had its own curriculum, students who change schools could fall behind their peers. And, for students who wanted to attend higher performing

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schools, families could potentially face extremely long commutes (Garey et al., 2005). Furthermore, the LAUSD and other large urban districts have witnessed some benefits of their centralization efforts in terms of improved test scores at the lower grade levels.

Legal and Other Implications

There is a growing consensus that even in decentralized systems, there should be a central office to monitor quality and equality. Particularly in decentralized systems that are concerned about inequality, central authorities need to guarantee a minimal level of service provision through targeted interventions to lagging schools (Galiani, Gertler, and Schargrotsky, 2005). Decentralized organizations are generally designed so that higher authorities decide on goals and specify desired outcomes but leave local units to decide on the means used to achieve those goals with a sufficient control over resources and the discretion over the major decisions affecting their structure and operations (Bimber 1993; Hill and Bonan 1991; Wilson 1989).

Despite their plea for decentralized decisionmaking, Hansen and Roza (2005b) emphasize that most districts and schools are currently not ready for decentralized decisionmaking. New budgeting and tracking systems need to be developed. District personnel need to learn how to use these systems, and shift from a command to a service mentality. Principals have to develop new skills to exercise their new roles as both resource allocators and instructional leaders of their schools. Districts have to make a host of operational decisions aligned with the principle of decentralization. Advocates of decentralization further argue that success requires a well-defined vision of what decentralization means, as well as a supportive infrastructure, a comprehensive restructuring of decisionmaking authority, incentive

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systems, and collaborative relationships between schools and the central authority (Hansen and Roza, 2005; Bimber 1993; Hill & Bonan, 1991).

Sub-Option: Introduce Weighted Student Formula into the LAUSD

The Commission may choose to recommend that the LAUSD introduce weighted student funding in order to provide differential funding for each unique student. The Superintendent of the District did explore this option with the School Board last year. The Commission may want to investigate where the District now stands in terms of weighted student funding.

Background Information

In recent years, several large districts in the United States have taken steps to reduce their reliance on traditional position-based funding formulas by introducing weighted student budgeting (Miles & Roza, 2005). Developed in Canada's Edmonton school district in Alberta in the 1980s, weighted student budgeting is now used in several U.S. districts, including Seattle, Cincinnati, San Francisco, and Houston.

The weighted student funding or formula (WSF) holds promise for reducing intra-district resource disparities and it is often implemented along with more general decentralization efforts designed to provide enhanced management and resource allocation discretion to school personnel (Rubenstein and Miller, 2005). In a system with a weighted student formula, each student receives an allocation - weighted according to his or her specific needs - that follows the student to the school (Deroche et al., 2004). A student with special education needs or a student who does not speak English requires more than a native speaker of English with no special education needs.

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LAUSD Context

California's Governor has expressed support for this practice. The San Francisco Unified School District is implementing decentralization through the Weighted Student Formula.⁵² As mentioned above, the LAUSD Superintendent has discussed this option with the School Board.

Potential Benefits

Advocates argue that WSF is more fair, particularly for schools educating English language learners and special education students. The WSF can also make the largest part of the District's budget more transparent. The public can see exactly why each school gets the resources it does. In a 2004 survey of teachers in California,⁵³ a majority reported favoring a weighted student funding approach⁵⁴ (Harris, 2004). High support was found in Los Angeles County with 62% of the teachers supporting it.

Potential Drawbacks

The WSF may conflict with standing bargaining agreements. It is likely that schools in the LAUSD in which students are the easiest to educate employ the most expensive teachers. Rubenstein and Miller

⁵² The following description is excerpted from the website of San Francisco Unified School District (Office of the Superintendent 2002).

⁵³ Between February 12 and March 7, 2004, the Peter Harris Research Group on behalf of Louis Harris conducted a total of 1056 telephone interviews with teachers in California. The margin of error for a survey of 1056 teachers is approximately ± 3 percentage points.

⁵⁴ Some versions of the reform proposal have suggested funding changes that potentially could reduce funding to some schools, while other versions would focus on giving some preferences for future additional funding. Teachers who initially favored or were neutral on the proposal were asked if they would still support the weighted funding feature "if schools with higher need students would be able to spend more for teachers, but schools with fewer student 'needs' would lose

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(2005) argue that ensuring an equitable distribution of teachers while protecting teachers' workplace rights is one of the most intractable challenges of implementing WSF. Some also caution that schools might try to seek additional funds through alternative labeling practices. However, to date, researchers have found no connection between WSF and the increase of special education funding within schools (Petko, 2005). Finally, moving to a WSF system would require major changes in the method of administering personnel and budgets.

OPTION: RECOMMEND CHANGES TO UNION CONTRACTS

Unions may be presenting obstacles to ensuring that there are qualified teachers in every classroom. A report just released by The New Teacher Project (Levin, Mulhern, and Schunck, 2005) studied the staffing rules in teachers' union contracts in five urban districts across the country. Researchers found a large mismatch between teachers whom the schools were forced to hire because of teacher seniority rules and the actual needs and desires of the schools. The report argues that union contract rules are preventing schools from improving teacher quality, and thereby improving student achievement.

The Commission may want to recommend that union contracts do not prohibit schools from getting the teachers they need. Such a change would probably require the State legislature to redefine bargainable issues. Selecting this option could be politically contentious.

OPTION: RECOMMEND COLLABORATING TO BUILD AND MANAGE NEW FACILITIES AND CAPITALIZE ON EXISTING FACILITIES

In his testimony to the Commission on July 13, 2005, Alex Padilla stressed the importance of the LAUSD creating positive relationships

money?" Support for the weighted school funding aspect of the proposal then drops to 47%, with 30% opposed, and 22% neutral.

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with other entities, including the city of Los Angeles and other cities. More specifically, he mentioned that a more optimal environment for learning could be obtained by the joint planning and use of facilities such as parks, libraries, computer labs, and playgrounds.

Background Information

As defined in "Joint Use Agreement: A How-to Guide," a publication by the California Association of School Business Officials, "Joint use agreements provide a school district and another entity, whether it be a city, county, non-profit, or private organization, with the opportunity to construct a facility and share both the capital and operating costs and responsibilities" (Rizzuti, Silva, & Roop, 1997). A number of other cities and school districts have established joint construction authorities to construct new facilities or joint use collaborative agreements to share the use of facilities. The following examples illustrate the wide range of possibilities for this type of activity:⁵⁵

- The city of Costa Mesa and the Newport-Mesa Unified School District set up a joint use collaborative agreement to use facilities and active-use areas.
- A joint-development collaboration between Glendale Unified School District and the city of Glendale (Edison School/Pacific Park Project) will result in a new elementary school, community center, library, and expanded park.
- Clovis Unified and Fresno Unified School Districts set up a Joint Powers Authority to operate and maintain the shared Center for Advanced Research and Technology. 1,500 students attend the center half time and attend regular high school half time; the Joint Powers Authority contracts with each district to provide human resources, food services, and fiscal support for the Center.
- The Santa Ana Unified School District built the Mendez Fundamental Intermediate School on top of a shopping center parking structure.
- Other examples in California include combined school play fields and park space (Paramount), community library and community performing arts center (Elk Grove), community recreational-athletic facilities (Rocklin), library-homework center (Scotts Valley), and a multipurpose facility (Sacramento).

⁵⁵ For further examples and information, see http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/funding_partnerships.cfm

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LAUSD Context

In Los Angeles, there are planning projects between LAUSD and the Department of City Planning. This Department has brought non-profit and for-profit developers together to create joint use projects with the District that include schools, parks, housing, and early childhood centers. The Commission may want to evaluate this effort to determine whether it is successful and whether it could or should be expanded.

Potential Benefits

The importance of pursuing such opportunities becomes apparent when one considers the lack of available land within the district boundaries. Joint use agreements have the potential to achieve many positive results, including significant cost savings in the form of reduced land acquisition, construction, and operating costs. In addition, the joint use of facilities is often cited as a way to strengthen communities by locating critical services together and as a way to revitalize neighborhoods by providing parks, community centers, and libraries that might not otherwise exist.

Potential Drawbacks

These agreements are not without their faults, however, and the potential negative ramifications must also be considered.⁵⁶ From the school district's perspective, joint use may achieve overall cost savings but may cost the school district more money than a facility built just for the school. Additional costs are sometimes incurred because the district ends up funding projects to ensure that the higher construction safety standards are met. Additionally, negotiating joint use agreements requires a large amount of staff time, and under-

⁵⁶ Ibid.

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resourced school districts may not want to provide the necessary staff for this purpose. Districts must also consider the long-term burden of their share of maintenance and operating costs of the new facilities. As far as the other partner is concerned, it may be easier for cities and private developers to build facilities without the additional regulatory constraints required of schools, and there are legal constraints on where schools can be constructed if state funds are used.

Legal and Other Implications

In California, the statutory authority for joint use agreements is established in various parts of the Education Code.⁵⁷ In addition, in 1998, the California legislature passed Senate Bill 50 - a comprehensive school facility and finance reform bill. As part of this law, the State Allocation Board is required to adopt guidelines to achieve cost reductions in school construction, which include recommendations for joint use.⁵⁸

New Schools, Better Neighborhoods is a statewide civic organization based in Los Angeles. Their goal is to create small, neighborhood-centered schools which: (1) function as community centers open at night and on weekends; (2) provide other social services such as day care, health clinics, libraries, and recreation space; and (3) reduce suburban migration by more efficient use of limited city and suburban land. They have studied the issue of joint ventures in depth and have identified

⁵⁷ Ibid: EC 6500 (Joint Exercise of Powers Act), EC 384030 (Civic Center Act), EC 10900-16 (Community Recreation), EC 35275 (Joint use Provision), EC 17751 (Joint use Allowance), EC 17750 (Outsourcing Provision), EC 38052 (Public Transportation), EC 17061-62 (Joint-Venture Allowance), EC 17485 (The Naylor Act), EC 17527 (Surplus Facilities), EC 17230 (Surplus Facilities), GC 54222 (Redevelopment Clause), GC 65852.9 (Surplus Facility Zoning)

⁵⁸ *New Schools, Better Neighborhoods*. "The Development of Educational Facilities Through Joint Use Mechanisms." Joint use Case Study. 2003.

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conditions that they believe are necessary for successful joint use development. These include the following (CRA, 2002):⁵⁹

- Civic leadership committed to collaborative land use planning and development
- Underlying land use policies that allow for and support mixed-use development
- An area experiencing severe physical and economic blight
- An area within an approved CRA redevelopment project area with all its redevelopment tools available
- A densely populated area with a limited availability of land and financial resources
- Community infrastructure projects planned for the area
- A market for community infrastructure and services
- A well-established organization with the pre-development funds necessary to initiate a master planning effort.

The article identifies this last point—the need for an appropriate pre-development partner—as being particularly important in order to connect many diverse stakeholders and unify them towards a common goal. A pre-development partner adds three important qualities to the partnership: (1) access to predevelopment funding; (2) a willingness to take on the initial risk of funding the master planning and site design efforts; and (3) the ability to leverage other public funding sources.

OPTION: RECOMMEND PARTNERSHIPS TO INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY

Districts can form partnerships to increase safety in schools and in the community. Because there are safety concerns for some schools in the LAUSD, Commissioners have discussed ways of improving the work of the LAUSD school police. The Commission may also want to further investigate the organizational structure of the school police. Neither New York City nor Chicago have a separate school police - districts in both cities use the city police department officers in their schools.

⁵⁹ New Schools, Better Neighborhoods. "A New Strategy for Building Better Neighborhoods." Presented to the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, October 2002.

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Background Information

In the wake of a highly publicized school shooting, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice published a report on school safety in 1998 and a follow-up report in 1999. Both reports identify the need for community collaboration to effectively address school safety; the reports center on the idea of developing comprehensive school safety plans and state that the first step in developing such a plan is to establish school-community partnerships. Such partners can include schools, law enforcement, elected officials, business leaders, probation officers, local nonprofits, health and social service agencies, recreation departments, colleges, religious groups, students, teachers, and parents. Community organizations can help schools prevent violence by sharing information on youth crime in the area, assisting with funding, mobilizing volunteers, and providing learning materials, services, and special programs for youth.

One particularly important partnership is with local law enforcement, even if the school already has its own security or police officers (as does the LAUSD). The importance of connecting schools with law enforcement agencies was echoed in a 2000 report by the Safe Schools Task Force, which was charged with making policy recommendations to improve school safety in California.⁶⁰

A number of schools and school districts have implemented partnership programs designed to increase both school and community safety. Examples include the following:

- The Mayor of Philadelphia has launched a new unit within the city police department called "Operation Safe Schools" to improve school safety. Among the 11 staff members in the new unit are five city police officers and two school police officers.
- San Diego Unified School District partners with the County and City of San Diego, the YMCA, and Social Advocates for Youth to provide after school programs and other services. The schools work

⁶⁰ Attorney General and State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Safe Schools Task Force. "Final Report." June 2000.

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with police officers, juvenile judges, and probation officers and also run a number of special health, wellness, and life skills programs.

- The GRIP (Gang Risk Intervention Program) operates in counties throughout California. School, teachers, parents, community organizations, and gang experts work together to try to prevent youth from joining gangs. Community organizations and businesses provide positive alternative activities, and students can participate in counseling, cultural activities, and apprenticeships.
- Riverside Unified School District partners with the City of Riverside Police Department, Riverside County Departments of Mental Health, Probation, and Health Services, UC Riverside, and Youth Service Center to operate Wellness Centers at five schools. The Centers provide counseling, therapy, mentoring, family outreach, and health education.

LAUSD Context

As mentioned above, the LAUSD has its own school police. The Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD) is the fifth largest police department in Los Angeles County and the largest school police department in the nation deploying 350 police officers and 175 school safety officers. Every high school has at least one Police Officer assigned to the campus and every middle school has one Police Officer or School Safety Officer assigned to the campus. The Los Angeles School Police Department also deploys patrol officers into all five geographic Divisions. Patrol officers are responsible for providing police services for over 1,030 schools, centers, and offices not already assigned a campus officer. Additionally, officers respond to calls for service at secondary campuses. Last year the LASPD responded to over 60,000 calls for service.

The District does have collaborations to improve school safety. For example, the District is partnering with the city attorney in a program called "KidWatch LA" that is designed to keep elementary school children safe when they walk to and from school. The program recruits and trains volunteers, who look after children during the times they come and go to school (Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families, 2005). The

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Commission may want to explore this program and determine whether the partners could expand this initiative or serve as the managing partner of other safety-based collaboratives.

Potential Benefits

Establishing collaborative relationships with juvenile justice organizations, probation officers, and courts may be also useful because these groups can work with schools to support at-risk youth and coordinate the services that they should be receiving. Similarly, social service agencies can work with schools to provide mental health and other services for those children who need them.

Potential Drawbacks

All collaborations require staff time and effort to develop and maintain.

OPTION: DEVELOP COLLABORATIONS TO EXPAND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

After school programming is an important initiative that can deter students from inappropriate behavior. Experts who have testified before the Commission have argued that there are not enough programs targeted at middle and high school LAUSD students. LA's Best is an after school enrichment program that provides safe and supervised after-school education, enrichment, and recreation program for elementary school children ages 5-12 throughout the City of Los Angeles at no cost to parents. Perhaps the Commission could explore expanding this program to older students.

SUMMARY

This Appendix presented information on the locus of control of the District, providing information on decentralization, weighted student

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funding, collective bargaining, and collaborations, including examples of related initiatives in other districts.

APPENDIX I. CHOICE

INTRODUCTION

This Appendix presents information on charter schools. While charter schools can be considered a decentralization mechanism, they are more often considered a choice-based reform. In his testimony before the Commission, Paul Hill argued for moving the District toward a system of charter or contract schools in which parents would choose among all schools. Information in this Appendix is based on his testimony, as well as a supplemental literature review.

OPTION: ACCELERATE CHARTERING IN THE LAUSD

The Commission could elect to recommend the acceleration of charter schools in the District. They could further hone this recommendation in at least three ways. First, they could examine State laws and District policies regarding charter schools to determine if changes to either would accelerate chartering. Second, they could recommend a plan for additional charter schools, such as converting a specified number of schools each year. Finally, Commissioners may want to recommend establishing one or more charter districts. Commissioners have discussed the idea of converting schools in outlying cities to charter districts. Charter districts could be run by a number of different entities, including the School Board, city mayors, the State, universities, and new boards set up to charter schools.

Background Information

Charter Schools

Forms of choice in K-12 education include open enrollment and inter-district enrollment policies, magnet schools, theme schools, and

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schools-within-schools. While these forms of educational choice exist within the existing public education system, charter schools and systems go beyond other forms of choice by injecting market forces into a policy arena traditionally governed by political and bureaucratic forces (Gill et al., 2001).

The charter school movement in the U.S. has grown significantly since the first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992, and politically, the reform has attracted support from both the right and the left ends of the ideological spectrum (Vergari, 2002; Griffin and Wohlstetter, 2001; Finn et al., 2000). There are currently over 3,400 charter schools enrolling nearly 1 million students nationwide (Vanourek, 2005). Harvard University and the Ford Foundation have recognized the charter idea as one of the nation's best public policy initiatives (Nathan, 2002).

Charter school achievement outcomes have proven to be not very different from those of conventional public schools (see e.g. Zimmer et al., 2003). However, only recently have researchers been able to provide any quantifiable results of academic achievement in charter schools, and the evidence is mixed.⁶¹

Hoxby and Rockoff's (2004) study examined three charter schools in Chicago, providing some evidence that charter schools outperform non-charter schools. Carnoy, Jacobsen, Mishel, and Rothstein in their recent book "The Charter School Dust-Up (2005)," reviewed federal data and the results from 19 studies in 11 states and the District of Columbia. They found that charter school students, on the whole, "have the same or lower scores than other public school students in nearly every demographic category." Not only did they find that charter

⁶¹ One of the challenges of assessing charter performance is that there is no single charter school approach (Zimmer and Buddin 2005b, p.352).

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schools do not generate higher student achievement in general or improve the educational performance of central city, low-income minority children in particular, they also found that charter schools are associated with increased school segregation (see also Bifulco and Ladd, 2005).

Many studies have focused on statewide charter school performance, without particular attention to urban environments or demographic characteristics. Zimmer and Buddin (2005), however, examine the performance of charter schools for different demographic characteristics, using longitudinally linked student level data in Los Angeles and San Diego. The results of their study suggest that charter schools are not consistently producing improved test scores for minorities above and beyond traditional public schools.

Miron and Nelson (2002) note, however, that although a charter school has not demonstrated gains in students achievement, its ability to change student attitudes toward learning and school climate might augur well for future improvements in achievement. In addition, the parental data suggest that academic achievement is only one outcome that parents care about (Gill et al, 2001; Wells et al., 1998).

Charter Districts

Charter or contract school districts in their purest form are meant to be universal choice-systems of autonomous schools, not designed as alternatives to the conventional system of public education, but as a system that would replace the existing educational governance and finance structure with an entirely new system in which all schools are autonomous and every family must choose a school.

In a charter district, the school boards and superintendent (or another entity, such as a mayor's office or a public university) authorize, fund, and oversee schools, but do not directly operate them

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(Ziebarth 2003). Every school's contract specifies the amount of public funds received, the type of instructional program it provides, and performance goals it sets for its students (Hill, 1994).

Schools operating under contract control their own budgets, hire, evaluate and promote their own staff, determine their own student/teacher ratios, and set their own pay scales.⁶² Schools in charter or contract districts often use existing public school buildings and equipment, thus avoiding major upfront investments while they build a reputation and clientele. The local public education authority can also provide a negotiated amount for capital expenditures not specific to the operator's instructional methods such as utilities, incidental repairs, and maintenance (Hill, 1994).

Local school boards might exist, or the state might create new local or regional entities in their place. State governments often create performance standards that would apply to all schools. These standards could limit the range of possible schooling approaches, but they would not have to be so specific as to force all schools to be alike.

The schools attract students on the basis of clear promises about what would be provided, and survive or fail on their ability to meet goals individually negotiated. While parents, teachers, and other school personnel have strong incentives to collaborate for the sake of their school's performance and reputation, public officials typically retain ultimate responsibility for school quality (Hill, 1994). Authorizers can reward schools that work and they can also withdraw funding from those that do not work by terminating the charter or contract (Ziebarth, 2003). They can also replace the operator that

⁶² Although the local education authority could set minimum teacher pay scales, and specifications of employment conditions.

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failed to deliver, or force substantial quality improvements if performance in schools fell below acceptable levels.⁶³

At present, states and school districts in the United States are creating charter districts in two ways. Some states have created new charter districts (that can manage several charter schools dispersed geographically), in which they allow entities other than traditional school districts to grant charters (e.g., District of Columbia). In some other states, existing, smaller to medium size districts are converting all or part of the district to a charter district (e.g., the San Carlos School District in California). Although no large district has converted all its schools to charter status, some urban districts have launched efforts to grant charters or contracts to a significant number of new or converting schools - in effect, creating a charter district within a larger traditional district (Ziebarth, 2003. p.2). In addition to Los Angeles, the New York City and Philadelphia school districts all have significant and/or growing numbers of charter or contract schools. In New York, District 33 is a formal sub-district, whereas Los Angeles and Philadelphia have no formal charter sub-districts (see Ziebarth 2003 and Hassel 2003).

Charter districts (like charter schools) obtain revenues from the same sources as other public schools: state determined allocations of state tax revenue, local taxes, federal funds, and miscellaneous funds, including interest, fees, and contributions. Charter districts also have to abide by the same restrictions on taxing and spending that affect non-charter school districts, such as Proposition 13 in California (Augenblick, 2003). Whether or not charter districts have to abide by collective bargaining agreements, depends on the type of

⁶³ The New Zealand experience shows that this is not always easy, however (see Fiske and Ladd, 2000). Early interventions and support for "failing schools" are therefore encouraged.

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charter district and whether the state's charter school law requires charter schools to be bound by school district collective bargaining agreements. In the case of existing districts that convert fully or partially to a charter district, 16 states require them to be bound by school district collective bargaining agreements for all schools, while five states require some schools to be bound (in most cases, existing public schools that are converted into charter schools). Eighteen states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico do not require districts to be bound to such agreements (Medler, Hassell, and Ziebarth, 2003). In the LAUSD, charter schools do not have to adhere to collective bargaining agreements.

The role of the central office in a charter district is different from its role in a traditional school district. Although the central office's role is narrower, it still has an important role in protecting equity, ensuring accountability and seeing that schools obey the law.

The following are examples of charter systems.

District of Columbia. One example of a new charter district is the District of Columbia (D.C.) Public Charter School Board, which was authorized by the U.S. Congress in the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 to grant charters to establish public charter schools in Washington, D.C.⁶⁴ The Board has been operating since late February 1997. The Mayor of the District of Columbia appointed members of the D.C. Public Charter School Board from a list of 15 nominees presented to him by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

The Board issues charters to new and conversion charter schools in the District of Columbia, and it is, in effect, a charter district functioning as a separate entity within the geographical boundaries of

⁶⁴ The following information is excerpted from District of Columbia Charter School Board website 2005.

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the District of Columbia Public Schools (Ziebarth 2003, p. 2-3). In school year 2004-05 the D.C. Public Charter School Board oversaw 26 public charter schools, operating on 31 campuses serving over 11,000 students. One charter school closed voluntarily in June 2003.

Twin Ridges Elementary School District⁶⁵ and San Carlos School District (CA). The Twin Ridges Elementary School District has established several charter school programs while building a district support infrastructure that has transformed this small, rural school district into a charter school sponsor. District enrollment has more than quadrupled. The District's Superintendent and Board of Trustees, supported by the District Service Center, with oversight and training provided by a Charter Coordinating Council, guide this endeavor.

The 2005/2006 school year opened with 12 schools in the Twin Ridges Elementary School District. Two of these are traditional schools, and 10 are charter schools operating in various cities throughout northern California.

California's San Carlos School District is another small school district experimenting with charter schools. In San Carlos School District, where most of the schools are now charter schools, made the transition incrementally; schools have converted to charter status one by one over the years (Hassel 2003).

Philadelphia.⁶⁶ In 1997, Pennsylvania enacted its charter school law. By fall 2003, there were 91 charter schools operating in the

⁶⁵ Information excerpted from Twin Ridge Elementary School District Website, online at: <http://www.tresd.k12.ca.us/about.html> (accessed 11/26/05).

⁶⁶ Excerpted and summarized from the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition (GPUAC) website at: <http://www.gpuac.org/media/CharterSchoolsIntroduction.html> (accessed 11/26/05).

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Commonwealth, more than half of them in the City of Philadelphia. Pennsylvania has the sixth largest charter school population in the nation. The School District of Philadelphia includes 264 schools – some privately managed – and 52 public charter schools. Nearly 21,000 students attend charter schools in Philadelphia. Based on total enrollment of over 191,300 students, this means that nearly one in ten public school students in Philadelphia currently attends a charter school.

The local school board in the district in which the school is located reviews applications for charter schools in Pennsylvania. The School Reform Commission (SRC) was appointed by state and local officials in 2002 to replace the Board of Education in Philadelphia. The SRC reviews all applications to create new charter schools in the City, and has the jurisdiction to approve, deny or renew charter school applications. If an application is denied, the charter operator has the right to appeal the decision before a state Charter School Appeals Board. Once an application is approved, the school must use the public funds it receives to find a suitable building, appoint a Board of Trustees, hire administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses, and other staff, and purchase supplies, equipment, food, and other services that are necessary for school operations.

Although they receive their funding through their local school district, charter schools operate as separate, independent, nonprofit corporations with legal responsibility for their own activities. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, charter schools are exempt from most state mandates—except those insuring the health, safety, and civil rights of students.

However, charter schools are held accountable for meeting annual goals set by the new Pennsylvania Accountability System. This system

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applies to all public schools and incorporates requirements from the 2001 "No Child Left Behind" Act. All students attending charter schools take the state's standardized test, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), just as students do in the traditional public school settings. In Philadelphia, charter schools also must administer the TerraNova test, just as traditional schools do.

While charter schools must meet all Pennsylvania academic standards that traditional public schools must meet, they are able to develop a specific purpose or academic focus. Some charter high schools offer an academic focus that is related to a certain occupation; others offer a focus based on students' racial or ethnic heritage.

Indianapolis. The Mayor of Indianapolis has the authority to grant charters in Marion County. All of the schools he has chartered comprise a charter district that is separate from the other 11 districts in the county. There were ten mayoral charter schools by August, 2004, serving primarily students with academic challenges (Hassel, 2004). These schools have been successful, as measured by state test scores and parental satisfaction.

LAUSD Context

Although there is not a charter "district" within the LAUSD, the District has expanded the number of charter schools in recent years to 79. In Los Angeles, Hispanics are under-represented in both elementary and secondary school charters, while African-Americans are over-represented in both charter elementary and secondary schools.⁶⁷ Charter school students are also a relatively small share of enrollments in the

⁶⁷ Hispanics comprise 73 percent and 69 percent of traditional elementary and secondary enrollments. Respectively, but make up 44 and 23 percent of charter elementary and secondary enrollments, respectively. However, African-Americans are overrepresented in charter schools compared to traditional elementary and secondary schools in Los Angeles (Zimmer and Buddin 2005).

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LAUSD – approximately 4 percent of elementary students and 2 percent of secondary students in Los Angeles are charter school students (Zimmer and Buddin, 2005).

Potential Benefits

Studies of charter schools in California suggest that parent involvement tends to be greater in charter schools than in conventional public schools (Ascher et al., 1999; Becher et al., 1997).⁶⁸ By competing with the public schools for students and resources, charter schools will force all schools to be more responsive and accountable to the demands of parents.⁶⁹ And since charter schools cannot compete by lowering their “prices,” they must compete primarily on quality (Solmon, Block & Gifford, 1999). There are only a few studies of satisfaction levels of charter school parents, but the ones that do exist indicate that charter-school parents are generally happy with their children’s schools (see Finn, Manno, and Vanourek, 2000; Miron and Nelson, 2000; Gill et al, 2001 and Zimmer et al., 2003).

Many charter school advocates argue that charter schools will do a better job teaching students, because they have more flexibility than conventional public schools, which are burdened by central administrative mandates (Nathan, 1996; Miron and Nelson, 2000; Danner and Bowman, 2002; Koehler et al, 2003). But flexibility and a

⁶⁸ While this may reflect the fact that that charter schools are schools of choice and therefore serve students whose parents are especially motivated, but there is also evidence that many charter schools are more effective than conventional public schools at engaging parents (Finn et al., 2000; see also Zimmer et al., 2003).

⁶⁹ However, Wells et al, 1998, McMillan 1998, Jepsen 1999, Bettinger, 1999, Eberts and Hollenbeck, 2001 found no evidence that nearby public schools benefited from the opening of charter schools. The most prominent study that finds competition to have a positive effect on public-school quality is that of Carolyn Hoxby (1994, 1996).

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different learning environment do not automatically translate into improved achievement (Zimmer et al., 2003).

Potential Drawbacks

Shifting to a contract-based system is a complex undertaking, involving dozens of tough decisions about how to structure the new relationship between the district and its schools (Hassel, 2003, p.3). Hassel (2003) therefore argues that a mix of new schools and conversion schools may be the preferable approach. Such a system seeks to capitalize on the advantages both bring, without placing all the district's proverbial eggs in one basket.

Legal and Other Implications

Hill (1994) argues that the choice of school performance measures and standards is critical to the success of a charter or contract system. Performance measures and standards must be of two kinds: those that reflect the school's own particular instructional objectives and strategies, and those that permit valid comparison between schools and over time. All students, for instance, could be required to pass statewide student proficiency tests.

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